

AL-ANDALUS AND 1492: THE WAYS OF REMEMBERING

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I. *Forgetfulness*

It is a most peculiar and ambiguous anniversary that is celebrated in this volume and elsewhere throughout much of the world in 1992, a pointed reminder of the ineluctable marriage of life and death. While some commemorate a remarkable beginning, the birth of a radically new order in what we call the "New World", others will lament the various ends that are so intimately tied to that birth: the shattering of the indigenous civilisations of what we would come to call the Americas, and, in the Old World, both the new diaspora of the Spanish Jews and the termination of al-Andalus. These latter two endings are also deaths explicitly tied to births: the expulsions are a critical aspect of the political and ideological contingencies that made Spain itself possible, that defined what it was and could do, including settling vast new worlds. What our constructs of history have done, by and large, and certainly in the broadest institutional contexts, is, unnaturally, to divorce life from death, beginnings from terminations, and thus—to put it in terms of the single most pointed and simplistic example to hand—to see al-Andalus as being ages and continents removed from the modern world, on either side of the Atlantic.¹

Much of this volume evokes the often stunning details of a spectacular and surprising past. It is a past that is largely unknown to the European and American public—and one means here, of course, the unusually well-educated public, those who know about Aristotle, about the founding of Rome and its recounting in the *Aeneid*, about Renaissance Florence. But these events, these recountings, these foundational stories and glories are part of our most elementary educations and memories and visions, because, although the Athenians lost the Peloponnesian war, and Rome was sacked in 410, and the death of Lorenzo dei Medici was arguably, at the time, one of the most ruinous of those of 1492, we see those pasts as stages of our own present. But al-Andalus, in part for reasons I have discussed extensively elsewhere,² is something that has become foreign, which lies outside the fundamental constructs of westernness we use to define ourselves, and which we thus study (when we do, occasionally) as a charming and exotic jewel. Although it is crucially important not to underestimate the cruel role played by some very fundamental prejudices in the relegation of the Andalusis to an inactive and foreign past, this anniversary, which at every turn asks who and

what we are, reveals an equally fundamental reason for the disjuncture that 1492 should summon up: the spectacular chaos and multiplicity of voices, the scattered and many selves that make up that lyrical and fragmentary world.

Indeed, the medieval world which is so palpably Andalusi (and by this I mean, in shorthand, the world revelling in the superb relativisms and multiplicities that make the *muwashshahāt* sing and the stories of the "Seven Sages" multiply in every language), both inside and outside the Iberian Peninsula, fits with great difficulty, if at all, into the kind of smooth and continuous narrative our historiography craves and our sense of identity seems to need as a firmament. In a number of crucial ways al-Andalus and its progeny—and they are many in a medieval Europe far less orthodox in every way than we have imagined—has presented a virtually insurmountable challenge to the narration of European culture and its history: our scholarship of the continuum, of what in other spheres is called the grammatical, has left out the many cultural shapes that are not thus narratable, or thus subjectable to the rules of grammar. The crucial question is how we remember al-Andalus, particularly on an anniversary that is logically construed as a mournful one; and the challenge for those who believe that Andalusi culture was pivotal and foundational in the carving out of European culture continues to lie in the means we have devised of inscribing a memory of that ancestral past into the narrative of our ancestral past—which is one that largely excludes al-Andalus. I want to suggest, in what follows, that the memory of al-Andalus must be evoked through translation and the imagination, and I will tie together two seemingly paradoxical manifestations of translation: how modern scholars can mimic the medieval past and use translations to establish Andalusi culture as central; and how we can use the principal area in which no medieval translations were made, poetry, to imagine an aesthetic surprisingly like our own. Perhaps, in 1992, we can begin to see that this aesthetic is neither very foreign nor very past.

II. *Translations*

Why is it so difficult to map the medieval entity that occupied the geographical space now roughly occupied by something we call Spain? There are two ways to answer the question. We might say, as a first answer, that it is because of the peculiar historical circumstances that prevailed roughly between 92/711 and 897/1492. These, of course, made varying parts of the Iberian Peninsula an entity of sparkling flux, made up of Arabic/Muslim, Hebrew/Jewish and Latin/Christian cultures, in an almost infinite variety of mixes and distributions (and rarely, if ever, in the sort of simple, cartoonish black/white, "Moors" versus "Christians" configurations we are all too used to). Even more significantly, perhaps, it was a hybrid entity whose cultural peaks—reached, according to one vision, in the period from the 4th/10th to

the 6th/12th centuries—were explicitly the result of that very hybridness, of the rich cultural interaction which was far from always peaceful, but which often, even in strife, seemed to ignite and provoke and produce. Thus, the first answer to why it has been so difficult for European historiography to write an appropriate history of al-Andalus, one that integrates it into the European continuum itself rather than making it a separate and very different chapter, is that it is anomalous, overly different, in terms of what the rest of Europe was.

The other side of this coin is that this presents a difficulty—not for any intrinsic reasons, but rather because our canon, largely formed and elaborated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, does not allow for the existence of such an entity within either its epistemological or its imaginative systems. At its most basic, in fact, it simply does not allow it at a linguistic level. One need not even go into questions of “Orientalism” (although I strongly believe they obtain) to grant that the most rudimentary divisions into language/culture groups were dictated, quite logically, by the national language/culture configurations obtaining at the time the disciplines were being defined and established. How could it possibly be otherwise? One might say, in a fit of *navet *, that the divisions in fact correspond to objective linguistic criteria—hence the Semitic languages are separate from the Romance, and so forth; but a peek beneath the surface reveals this to be far from the major criterion, and one that is readily modified when the need arises.³ In the end, the unsalvageably logical reason for the exclusion of a central and shaping Andalusi chapter in the history of Europe was the combination of contemporary political/cultural definitions of cultural entities—which were, of course, inextricably bound to the models, at times mythological, that served as revered notions of cultural histories and hierarchies.⁴

But pre-1492 Spain, that cacophonous delight, is the great exception to the philological rule: it is the single conspicuous case in which the circumstances obtaining after 1492 are radically at odds, or at least seemingly so, with those beforehand. It continues to be treated, all too often, with virtually no changes in the definitions of knowledge that may obtain for Germanic or Slavic studies, but which are so drastically inappropriate if one is studying the “modern” (i.e. post-Roman) history of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, Hispanists who are medievalists, do not, as a rule, know even two of the three “classical” languages dominant in the Peninsula over a significant period of time, and Hispano-Hebraists or Arabists have not, traditionally, been required to know the third, namely the medieval Romance spoken, in almost all cases, by the people in whose written cultures they are “experts”.⁵ We house, in different departments and in parts of the curricular canon that have virtually nothing to do with each other, the students of the people who in the 6th/12th century not only lived next door to one another, but whose “neighbourliness” may be seen to have wrought many of the cultural up-

heavals that our own historiography considers a turning point in western history—what Haskins called the Renaissance of the 12th century.⁶

In part what is odd and problematic is that the canonical barriers to a mapping of this society were not bypassed or established differently—quite simply because it is such an exceptionally important case, a case that is not on the margins either of history or of Europe, but at their very centre. In other words, one is struck that—while it would, indeed, be an “exception” to see an Arabic culture as a principal component of cultures that were not, subsequently, at all Arabic—it is not hard to construct a case for it being the exception worth making, the odd case, in the context of cultural development, that requires different kinds of programmes and reading lists and language preparations. The sort of adaptation that has taken place has, on the contrary, been in the other direction: the cultural parameters of 19th century Europe are regularly applied to 6th/12th century “Spain”, this resulting, necessarily, in severe cultural demarcations where once there was productive hybridness. Thus it is that poems such as the *muwashshahāt* are divvied up along the language lines that define modern departmental structures—and which result in grotesque internal divisions within the poems themselves. How many other cultural/literature study areas can one name, or even begin to imagine, where the divorces and schisms of the present age are permitted so to impinge on a past, or at least a part of a past, so that its very poems are divvied up, strophe by strophe, among different departments? Are the first five strophes of a *muwashshaha* part of the Middle East, and the sixth (which also happens to be its refrain, incidentally, and thus probably repeated after each other stanza) a part of Europe? How can one possibly, given our most fundamental divisions of knowledge—our languages—and what they allow us to imagine, begin to imagine the culture that wrote such poems? How can we ever, in fact, begin to read such poems, since our canon tells us, in effect, that they do not exist? This, then, is one of the various, seemingly intractable canonical problems of al-Andalus.⁷

This is the point in the argument at which the sympathetic colleague and the enthusiastic reader are likely to shrug and say, no doubt sincerely, that it is too bad, but that basically there is nothing to be done about it, because one cannot make any of the radical institutional changes required really to alter the situation. Can one really imagine that departments of Spanish—to take a simple example—will redefine their programmes so that the medieval component is predominantly Arabic? The grim response one is asked to accept is that there is no practical way to alter the canon (and by this one means everything from the nature of departmental divisions to the structure of encyclopaedia articles and everything in between), even in a case such as this, where one can, despite the barriers, effectively argue that a highly significant cultural moment is thus grossly distorted or even rendered invisible. To put it bluntly, Spanish departments study literature written in Spanish, and the lite-

rature of al-Andalus written in other languages is not part of the purview of those departments. (And of course, what one is localising by applying to departments is *a fortiori* true of the general concept of what is "our" culture and what is not.) If we were not so intractably attached to some current notions of scholarly propriety, perhaps this situation could be significantly altered.

Indeed, the first step in creating a canon that would be conducive to a significantly richer vision of medieval Spain is the almost shockingly simple one of breaking that remarkable commandment about texts in translation—the one that is stated as: "Thou shalt not use a translated text", with its positive correlative: "True scholars work with original texts". Well, yes, and no, and sometimes. The "original language" versus "translation" issue turns out to be, on close inspection, one of remarkably widespread repercussions, one of those seemingly small problems—an apparent matter of detail—which, under a certain kind of scrutiny, reveal themselves to be the heart—or at least one of the hearts—of the matter. Indeed, the suggestion I make that we cannot begin to remember al-Andalus as part of our past culture until we make it part of our present culture, by reading its texts in our own language(s), is rejected as unsound and unscholarly by many, and it is worthwhile considering why this is so—and why I am suggesting we break the rules.

It is hardly surprising that, particularly in the language and literature branch of scholarship, we tend to value above almost all other activities and "virtues" that of being able to work in the "real" languages of the texts we deal with. The various philologies, of course, began as linguistic-reconstructive enterprises, and in many ways one version or another of the philological/linguistic enterprise has remained dominant. The most crucial of all tasks for the philologist was (and in certain areas, such as Arabic, clearly continues to be) the establishment of editions of texts. But one of the central aspects of that tradition which appears increasingly odd in a modern context clamouring for the "native speaker" and the "original text" is that scholars have not needed to have anything like the kind of "native" knowledge of the languages whose texts they professed.⁸ On the contrary, very few people would have imagined really wanting to speak the language: *the goal was to be able to translate*.

But we cannot, once again, necessarily apply the values that may be positive in some areas to other areas. It is one thing to require students to be able to speak French—and thus obviously read it—in order to take a survey course in 20th-century French literature, while the implications—and the net effect—of a comparable requirement before a student can study the pre-1492 Peninsular versions of the *Thousand and One Nights* or Ibn Ḥazm's *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma* are radically different. A great deal of clarification is needed,⁹ but perhaps one should, for the moment, consider the crucial role that translations can and do serve in our broadest cultural constructs. One of the crucial things

we forget when we righteously hold up the rules of philology is that at the heart of the philological enterprise lies prestige: that notion of (desirable) cultural bonds that has led us to know about the founding of Rome and not about the loss of Granada—and it would be disingenuous to argue that it is because we all read the *Aeneid* in Latin but cannot read Ibn Ḥazm in his language.

Indeed, it is, overwhelmingly, prestige and ideologically-bound need, perceived value, that lead to the possibility, at the far end of the line, of being able to read texts only in the original, only in “definitive” editions and with some degree of literary sophistication. It should be no less clear that other varieties of prestige and need dictate what languages are studied (and not), and, although nowadays one hears an enormous amount of discussion about “practical” considerations, I would maintain that the cultural-prestige models still hold sway—certainly nothing else could explain the continuing popularity of the study of French, for example. Al-Andalus, of course, is not perceived as a significant part of our central cultural “heritage” and concerns and, as a result, it lies well outside the major canonical structures. At the heart of the memorialistic enterprise lie the questions of perception and evaluation: Why should we know about it? Why should this be a part of my scrapbook, of my little, limited treasury of memories of my past?

In great measure, as I have tried to argue in the past, one can begin to do this by revealing the extent to which the evaluations that marginalised that culture in the first place, those of the latter half of the 19th century and thereafter, were based on the ideological needs and cultural values of that moment—and by showing how our own times’ ideological needs and cultural values are not only substantially different, but patently favour a much more central role, in the making of the West, for what was Other for our grandparents. But beyond that, at the heart of this ideological and memorialistic enterprise, must, for practical and obvious reasons, lie the translated text. It is only that text which can provide the first necessary resolution of the two principal canonical-epistemological difficulties: it can bypass, at least partially, the barrier of “knowability” and it can diminish the distortions of extant disciplinary boundaries. The “objective scholarly standard” that requires that, as “serious scholars”, we work only in the original language can only reasonably apply in cases where prestige and interest has created a body of people able to work with the original texts. This is, patently, not the case at hand, and here the translated text must, conversely, lie at the beginning of the cycle, if the cycle is to get under way at all: the *Thousand and One Nights* must be read and studied in dozens and dozens of courses, undergraduate and graduate alike, it must be written about in all the obvious kinds of comparative literature dissertations and articles, and in literary histories of European literature;¹⁰ and all this in a context in which a great part at least of the vast panoply of “Middle Eastern” literature—again via translations—is shown to be mappable far further West (or the West further East, more likely) than anyone much now imagines or admits.

Finally, curiously enough, the translated text usually lies at the other end of the spectrum as well: the works that end up being granted "world literature" status are read *overwhelmingly* in translation: if the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or *War and Peace*, or the *Divine Comedy* were read only in the original languages, and were discussable only by those scholars who could work with them in the original, then the canon we currently have would surely be minus all of those—and minus the discrete and fundamental notions we have that those texts' cultures are a fundamental and central part of the "tradition" we claim for our own.

But perhaps the strongest argument I can make is the one most explicitly rooted in tradition itself: let us look back at the ethos of the cultures we are trying to recapture, to remember. And, from such a perspective, there is a compelling irony in the "original language" fetish; for the specific historical moment we are trying to recapture, the Arabic moment in European history, is one built on translations, when an extraordinary amount of what would today be called scholarship was translation and commentary on translated texts. Is Aquinas to be disdained because he was an Averroist—because, that is, he read Ibn Rushd's Aristotelian commentaries in Latin? Is Ibn Rushd himself to be dropped from our list of worthies because he worked with translations from the Greek texts? Thus, the very individuals to whose "original" texts we now accord sacred cow status would have found such a value peculiar—and would themselves be excluded by it.

And in the literary sphere, no less, perhaps more, the spectacular success of the Andalusí phenomenon lies precisely in its aggressive cultivation of the different version in the different language: what, indeed, could one claim to be the "original" or "definitive" language of texts like the widespread and infinitely varied framed tales that permeated European literary culture for centuries? One of the many anachronisms of medieval studies—and one which lies at the heart of the philological enterprise—is the idea of an original, definitive text vis-à-vis which a translation is a secondary and derivative artefact. But if we take as exemplary something like the framed narrative tradition, the one to which the almost infinite versions of the *Alf Layla* belongs, and of which various sub-cycles appear throughout medieval Europe, it becomes clear that the very success of the texts is rooted in their translatability and in the explicit textual denials of authenticity and originality. The "original" language and text issue has almost always been a red herring, and the one most often used to deny the centrality of Andalusí culture in medieval Europe: where is the manuscript, we are asked, that gives us the story that Boccaccio used? The point, clearly, is that the literary traditions, much like the philosophical tradition which is also rooted in primary translations, caused the enormous upheaval they did, and rewrote the face of Europe when they did, because the textual traditions and their agents—the commentators, the storytellers—understood how translation, with all its

vaunted imperfections and limitations, is often life and continuity itself, while the deep respect for an "original" can mean the opposite: the death, for a text, of lying unread, unheard, unknown.

A reformation, literally, of the canon is not then nearly as difficult or impossible as many claim it to be, and in 1992 we are perhaps far closer to seeing Andalusí culture established as central to the European canon than we might suspect. If I am teaching an undergraduate course in the medieval European lyric, for example, or writing an article on the Provençal *canço* that we all believe revolutionised European poetics, it is a relatively minor change to add a handful of the poems of the Hispano-Arabic tradition (so ably translated into English by James Monroe) and another fistful of the Hebrew poems of Judah Ha-Levi, (of which a charming volume in Spanish recently appeared, as well as a new and wonderful batch of translations by Raymond Scheindlin). The gesture is a small one, but the impact, the ideological and canonical impact, is enormous: in one stroke the Western lyrical tradition, at its origins and during the formative stage of the modern period, is revealed as multi-cultural and multi-religious, as Jewish and Muslim, as well as Christian; as Andalusí. In one stroke, the teleological and institutional divisions that had previously separated Semitic from Romance are seriously eroded, and a different map of medieval Spain—and of medieval Europe, as a whole—has begun to emerge. Suddenly we are able to remember, because we hear and read texts we did not realise we knew.

But now let us return to the moment when that world was about to change, or so it seemed, in order to grasp some of our other difficulties in imagining it as present, as part of what we continue to be, and not something so long past, not so separated by the chasms and ruptures that history is said to create ...

III. Images

These are the first days of August, 1492. If we tried to stand on the docks in the great Spanish port of Cádiz we would be overwhelmed, barely able to find a square inch on which to stand, to look over the ships amassed in the harbour. The throngs of people are unbearable, particularly in the damp summer heat, and worst of all are the tears, the wailing, the ritual prayers, all those noises and smells and sights of departures. And this is the day—the hour and the place—of a leavetaking more grievous and painful than that of death itself, an exodus inscribed in all the sacred texts, anticipated and repeated. For the Jews of Sefarad, what Christian nomenclature would call Spain, this is the last day in that most beloved of homelands, the one that almost made them forget that it, too, was but a place of exile, a temporary home in a diaspora.¹¹

But the second diaspora did come, and the second day of August had been set, months before, in March, as its permanent marker. During that summer, all roads led to the sea, to ports such as Cádiz, to the desperately

overbooked ports and ships, and they were filled with the sounds of exile, that mingling of the vernacular sorrow of women and children and the liturgical chanting of the men. Of course, only one of the trips set out for that summer and begun on the second of August, among the thousands of others, would be really remembered, the one our children commemorate at school every year. It was on the same day, but from the port of Palos because Cádiz was far too overcrowded with the "Jew-bearing ships", that Columbus sailed the ocean blue. The scandalous suggestion has been made that Columbus himself was the most conspicuous of *conversos*, the forcibly converted Jews, usually readily identified by their excessive devotions, their fanatical and public protestations of the banal and ritualised pieties of Christianity.¹² But whether he "really" was or not would scarcely matter if we had adequately written that history—those histories—that were being so conspicuously worked out that very day, on the docks all over Spain. For if, in the palimpsest that is the Renaissance writing of its immediate past, and our own adaptation of that version of our heritage, we had not erased and forgotten all the others, that unwieldy and ungrammatical cacophony of voices, it would be clear even to schoolchildren that all those voyages of exodus and discovery, of exile and searching, begun on that day, are necessarily tied to each other. But we have not, in fact, ever considered this at all—the "coincidence" of the two events is mostly unknown, and when it slips out is merely that: an amazing "coincidence" and thus impervious to further exegesis. The word "coincidence" itself suggests exactly that: an intersection that would be highly meaningful—if it were not so fantastic and obviously meaningless, beyond rational exegesis. But exegesis of this remarkable and obviously meaningful intertwining of events is begging to be made: what is at stake is whether we can start to see how we are still, especially today, so intimately tied to al-Andalus.

We should, to begin with, be immensely curious about the way everyone avoids knowing that the day Columbus leaves Spain is the day of the beginning of the second diaspora—with "Columbus" himself the first of those avoiders. In his justly famous biography of Columbus Samuel Eliot Morison notes, with obvious and considerable puzzlement in his tone, how Columbus completely ignores the remarkable scene of the expulsion of the Jews, which was not only the event of the season, and all around him, but which obviously complicated and even compromised his own obsessive mission quite directly.¹³ In fact, the more one dwells on the subject the more one realises that the expulsion, itself intimately tied up with the pathetic and dishonourable last dance with Granada, is necessarily a principal condition obtaining throughout: it shapes everything Columbus does, from the long-sought approval of the trip (granted only in the conspicuous aftermath of both the decree of expulsion and the taking of Granada, that last outpost of Muslim Spain) to the fact that, in rerouting from Cádiz to Palos, Columbus lost not only the better

port as such but also the far better market for experienced seamen. Most sailors, that August, were already engaged for the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of trips into exile by the Jews which took place between March and August.

Morison the historian is thus quite right to be surprised and ultimately baffled by Columbus' stark avoidance of the subject; but this highlights the most obvious evidentiary problem at hand, since, as is well known (and as Morison himself knew quite well), "Columbus'" narration is not his at all, but rather the regularised version—the Renaissancised version, one is tempted to say—of Las Casas. Indeed, in miniature and exemplary form, the transformation of Columbus embodied in the Columbine texts that have come down to us is a perfect example of the sort of palimpsest one sees when one contemplates the normalisation and classicisation of the medieval world that so swiftly and effectively took place. For a medievalist—at least for a certain kind of medievalist, the one who appreciates how polymorphous, how Andalusī, the medieval world really was—Columbus is poignantly medieval in a world ever less understanding of his unruliness, a stranger in a strange land, his search for an Orient readily understandable. Consider, if nothing else, the question of his languages and that of his text: he was a man of multiple languages, all spoken, a student of the kind of wild and irregular vernacular text produced by the likes of Marco Polo, in languages that celebrate heterodoxy and defy the grammarians. But this was no longer the time of Dante in Italy. This was the Italy of Bembo; and Columbus, the most famous and celebrated of Italians in the New World, left Italy never having learned "Italian".¹⁴ But he soon added another fistful of vernaculars, no doubt easily, to his repertoire, and eventually found it advantageous to learn—although it is unclear to what degree of grammaticality—the two codified languages that appeared to have some control over his destiny, Castilian and Latin.

Most importantly, he knew, of course, what the lingua franca of the civilised world was, and provided himself with a speaker of Arabic to serve as translator when he reached the Indies. Indeed—and this piece of great and fitting poetry is also left out of most of our narrations—the first official diplomatic conversation in the New World took place between Luis de Torres, a Jew of recent conversion, speaking in Arabic of course, and a Taino chief in the hinterlands of Cuba—the Cubanacan that Columbus took to mean "el gran can". But in the narrations left to us these conversations are gone: this riot of languages, this society where everyone spoke two or three different languages at least, these hundreds of years of productive hostilities between stern and fixed father tongues and the always ungraspable, unfixable *lingue maternelle*. Columbus' original diaries, undoubtedly as mongrel as he and as his world, are erased, "lost"—conveniently, after Las Casas rewrites them in correct Castilian.¹⁵ Good and smooth paper is made from the pulp of illiterate and undisciplined cacophony that sprang, without a doubt, from the voices of the shiploads of mongrels of the old world—and that of

course did include the Jews, the half-Jews, the Muslims, whose ancestry was as ethnically mixed as everyone else's, all those speakers of unregulated vernaculars by the fistful, including Arabic. And on this paper is written a smooth trip, over even seas, all according to the new rules of the new universe, all following the rules of Nebrija's grammar of Castilian—that, too, is written in 1492 and is perhaps an even better example of the first text of the Renaissance in Spain. And once again, we can see the intimate dance of death with life: the single new official language is fixed at the expense of the many that had characterised Andalusī culture since—and this is perceived as an irony by some—the sacred status of the language of the Quran had encouraged the richly polylingual culture it became. In the end, a language sure of its essential and intrinsic worth (and in this respect, of course, it is supreme) does not squabble for territory with others and flatters itself, lives in a house where so many others can live, basking in its magnanimity.

If we look very closely it is not hard to see, not far below that rewritten text, the mongrel Columbus that our pristine narrations of European history have replaced with something far more orthodox and proper. And in seeing that Columbus what we might also see, if we do not cultivate purity for ourselves, is the reflection of the Andalusī past that is also an American present: the culture where everyone is an exile and an émigré; the house where at least two or three languages are spoken and the oldest son falls in love with a girl from a different culture and religion; the philosophy that is always translated; and the literature that is revolutionary and sung. Let us listen to a bit of this, so we can hear how much we are like that past—how much more like it, perhaps, than we are like others we are fonder of calling "ours".

There is one central area of literature in medieval Europe where there are no translations from the Arabic, a fact that contrasts pointedly with the vast quantities of translations existing in other areas. As I noted in my arguments for using translations in our own scholarship, there are various viewpoints from which Andalusī culture might well be seen as a culture of translation. Within such a context, indeed, it is this conspicuous contrast—that relatively few translations were made of the literary tradition, and within that virtually none from the essential lyric tradition—that has served as the cornerstone of the argument that, in fact, there was no significant interaction and influence in the literary sphere between the Arabic culture of al-Andalus and the nascent European literatures of the Romance vernaculars. And because at the heart of this issue there lies the most important literary genre of all, the lyric, the stakes are extraordinarily high here. Were Europe's first vernacular lyrics—its first modern flower—born in the context of some sort of interaction with the Arabic culture of Europe? For reasons I have discussed in detail elsewhere (and which I think are actually rather easy to grasp) the lyric becomes the striking symbol of the newness and distinctiveness of post-classical Europe. Thus, the cultural conditions at the moment of its birth (for

it has always been seen as a birth, a fairly clean and momentous break with the past) seem to define Europeanness itself.

It is no accident that the troubadours have been the first chapter in the study of "modern philology" from Dante, in the previously cited *De vulgari eloquentia*, on. And the lack of any translations of lyric poetry from Arabic, when so many other sorts of translation exist, is eagerly fallen back on as the ultimate proof that, despite insistent suggestions from many quarters over the years, the lyric is not like glass or paper or sherbet: it has little or nothing to do with the "foreign" culture to the south of the heartland of European culture, France. Indeed what usually emerges is the direct distinction between the abundance of translations, and thus influence, in areas that are basically external to the essential self—all manner of scientific discourse, for example—and the ultimate discourse of the self, the love song. In this latter there was no traffic—no translations—between East and West. Given that a simple reading of the poetic traditions in question, the lyric poetry of Provence and that of al-Andalus, would rapidly reveal the poetics of the *canso* and the *muwashshahāt* to be closely related, the lack of translations appears to be the ultimate trump card. And I would like to re-emphasise that the stakes here are very high, since we are indeed arguing over the fundamental cultural parameters of our heritage, our "Great Tradition".

So the question is of particular interest: why are there no translations of the lyric poetry of al-Andalus, and of the *muwashshahāt* particularly? Or, to ask the same question differently, why does the fact that there were no translations not mean that the first Provençal poets were unlikely to know that poetry?¹⁶ I have come to realise that at the heart of this matter—as is so often the case—lie our most basic epistemological assumptions, in this case what we imagine the *muwashshahāt*—or the Provençal *canso*, for that matter—to have been. The traditional view, although largely unstated, is that this is literature like all the other texts of medieval Europe, a literature not only preserved in writing but whose essential nature is written. This is another of the many instances of considerable anachronism in medieval studies, often stemming from a very misplaced sense of élitism. But in fact, we know, we have always known, that the medieval lyric is not at all a written genre, that it bears no essential relationship to the kind of poetry published in slim volumes or in the pages of the *New Yorker* every week.

In fact, if, instead of calling the *muwashshahāt* or the *canso* poems, as we almost invariably do, we call them by their proper name, the literal translation of *canso*, we should consciously and explicitly understand that these are rather songs. And while a considerable amount of scholarship may pay this distinction some sort of lip service, we are, in the end, literary historians who react to the written word in certain ways, most of them inculcated from the time we learned to read, and we are almost exclusively—particularly if we are medievalists—trained to deal with the written text and its poetics. It

is difficult to make even the most basic and fundamental shifts in our conceptualisation of the genre, and this is certainly aggravated by the simple and unalterable fact that we are constrained to study these songs through a silent and private reading of the lyrics that survive in a written form.

And yet, would it not make a crucial and telling difference in at least some of the ways in which these lyrics are "read" if we made the conscious and consistent effort actively to conceive and imagine them as songs, and to imagine too that their original and primary existence as works of literature was in public performance? There is of course, a model close at hand that we could use, rather than that of the slim volume of written poems on our shelves that we so unconsciously fall back on. But for many (perhaps most) scholars to imagine that the Provençal canso or the Andalusi *muwashshahāt* more closely resembles the popular song tradition, which in our culture is, of course, that known as "rock", is a suggestion many would find at least as appalling as the theory that the two schools of songs are, indeed, closely related to each other, that the difference between an Andalusi "Arab" and a Provençal "European" might not be readily seen or heard. This too, however, is like my suggestion that we start using and spreading the Hispano-Arabic corpus in English translation: it may be heterodox, but I take it very seriously, and believe it, in fact, to represent a sound "traditional" approach.

Indeed, rock is the tradition within our own lifetimes, the conceptual model that most closely resembles the radically new medieval lyric tradition, all too obviously Andalusi at the outset, which so transformed the cultural parameters of Europe. Let us count the most obvious ways in which these lyric cultures resonate of and for each other.

Firstly, we see the explosion of renegade new song traditions, unambiguously in open rebellion against the forms and languages of classical predecessors, and yet, of course, really just in quest of a new tradition.

Furthermore, we hear the establishment of the song itself as the pre-eminent cultural form of a generation, and that song is a lyrical form that seamlessly melds contemplation of self, the artist and his creation, with the lyrics of "love".

We notice that many of the salient—and "revolutionary"—features of these lyrical traditions are conscious and direct appropriations of popular forms (the Mozarabic of the *muwashshahāt*, the black beats in the first generation of rock), and these are meant to redefine the tradition with a direct infusion of new blood that also serves to establish a distance from a brand of classicism that excludes those forms, those songs of the Other. (These appropriations, of course, must not lull us into believing that the lyric, either in the 12th century or in our own, thus becomes a "folk" or truly "popular" tradition, since we would thus be confusing, as many traditionalists are wont to do, "revolutionary" with uncultured, vernacular and sung with illiterate or primitive.)

Finally, in this very cursory sketch of the issue, we must realise that at its peak—before it is classicised and thus made written instead of sung (and in this too we remember Columbus and the palimpsest of the native vernacular replaced with the official grammar)—this is a tradition which finds its great effect in performance. Indeed the misleading irony, in these and other cases, is that our seemingly insatiable urge to classicise what we love, to fix what may be fluid, is the very factor that has preserved the *muwashshahāt*, and also the *canso*, for posterity—in a written form, of course, which was clearly not their original medium or form.¹⁷ Thus, while we do well to reject the notion that some scruffy troubadour in the outskirts of Perpignan or Montpellier spent a lot of time at the local monastery studying now-lost translations of the *muwashshahāt* of some obscure poets who wrote in an unintelligible script, what we really have to do is substitute a more plausible scenario in the first place. And that is why the model provided by rock is so crucial.

Clearly, it is crucial to consider why this modelling issue is problematic. From a methodological point of view we often have no way of knowing how a literary tradition may have worked, we have no way of imagining a distant cultural moment, except through the process of analogy with a comparable form we can, in fact, observe from up close. After all, until Lord and Parry found some epic storytellers in the hinterlands of central Europe, we all read the works of the epic tradition as if they had been written down for us readers to read quietly in our book-lined studies. Indeed, in the scholarship dealing with the medieval Spanish epic—whose single surviving text has that hero with the Arab name, al-Sayyid—the orthodox view is still derivative of a model within which the artist was a monk who went to France to study the French epics for a period of his life, and then returned to his cell in Spain to write the “Poem of the Cid”. As a brilliant critic of this version has recently noted, this is a model that smacks of a British don’s view of himself, a model that conceives of the artist as a scholar.¹⁸ Indeed, what is at stake is the fundamental model we have of the artist, both as a young man and later on. It is also why the analogy with rock will stick in many scholars’ craw; for, once again, what we are doing, consciously or not, is painting a picture of our venerated ancestors, and the suggestion that they might resemble Mick Jagger or, to take a recently visible example, Jim Morrison, is an unacceptable and offensive idea to many—much as is the idea that those ancestors’ portraits would show them to have been Arabs or Jews. If we talk about it in these terms, it is difficult to avoid the often-avoided issue of the role of the imagination, and to understand that the choices made in accepting and rejecting ancestors, a choice which has removed al-Andalus from a foundational to a marginal place in the European family tree, rest on how we see ourselves and our cultures.

And, in fact, most of our scholarship, particularly in the medieval area, is enamoured of a model of culture that sees the past as if manuscripts had

always been quaint, of literature as a learned enterprise and of the artist as a sort of scholarly type—above the vulgarities of fame and a public, most respectful of the Great Tradition, at home alone double-checking references to those Old French epics or to Virgil. Petrarch, of course, was instrumental in helping us carve out such a model (and it is far from irrelevant that he had a well-known hatred of the revolutionary cultural forms the Andalusis and Sicilians had foisted on the rest of Europe)—and we are happy to overlook the fact that all the while he had been home, wishing he were popular and famous, and writing some of the most superb love songs ever written in a language he never tired of saying was too vulgar to be a part of the Great Tradition. In our model, which tends to mimic what Petrarch preached but differed from so radically from his practice, and which smacks of our own most élitist images of ourselves, it is seen as part of the decline of civilisation as we know it that the artist in modern times, i.e. in a period where we can see their pictures and know about their lives and hear their songs, so rarely measures up to our standards, so infrequently looks anything like that writer-scholar.

It is bracing, in such a context, to read Ibn Quzmān, for example, and imagine what he looked like and where he would fit on the cultural spectrum today. The pre-eminent impact of the classicisation process, that incorporation of revolutionaries and outsiders into the mainstream, that making the once-black sheep into an ancestor we can be proud of, is a purification: we clean things up and make them respectable. Just as we made Columbus a pure European, in the worst post-1492 sense of the word, so we make Byron, to take yet another salient example, fit company for the dignified tea party (conveniently forgetting he was a drunk and a compulsive lecher, and scandalised good society with his debauches and his midnight swims in the Grand Canal in Venice). Behind all of this there is a variety of crucial oppositions at play: the classical versus the vernacular; the written versus the sung; the orthodox versus the revolutionary; and so forth. And by and large we have come to define the culture and literature we study as the former—the classical and the exclusive, the written and “high”. That is our work after all, since we see ourselves as the guardians and preservers of the Great Traditions—and thus must conceive of that tradition in that way. Moreover, the hard and ironic fact is that the only way any literature is preserved is by being successful enough to become classical, to get fixed and written down and emulated—only to become someone else’s revered ancestor and be overthrown by some brash young artist looking to make it new.

But the fact that something became a classic does not mean that it always was a classic, any more than the fact that a song was eventually written down means it was always a written literary form. Indeed, what we must be careful not to do is to project our own reverence backwards: when the poets of Provence—the troubadours—began to compose and sing their songs, and

reached the peak of their popularity, they did so in flagrant and rather shocking rebellion against the Great Tradition of their moment. And it was only one of their many wildnesses and transgressions that their instruments—and thus their tunes and their beats, at the very least—came from that ever-irritating source of subversion of the traditions, of new technologies that were undermining the old ways, of secular thinking that was making the young and impressionable abandon the traditional religions—al-Andalus, of course. From there, too, no doubt, came the appalling idea that one could do without Latin, the great father tongue, since, with the great decline in educational standards, you could hardly find a young man who could read it any more. Why, after all, that was the sort of place where even Jews and Christians sang bastard songs, half in Arabic, half in the vulgar street language of ignorant women. What the offended scholars and guardians of culture in Provence in the 12th century may well have known, and taken at least some consolation from, was the realisation that those bastard songs were no less offensive to their counterparts in Seville or Córdoba.

The crucial function performed by this model, this construct that allows our imaginations to see how much of al-Andalus is not the exotic Other, scattered in long-abandoned ruins in the Spanish south, is that it lets us see the factors so amply contributing to the lack of translations of the *muwashshaha* tradition. This was, first of all, a vigorous sung tradition that in crucial ways thumbed its nose at the most basic rules of classical Arabic poetry and was not written down for a number of generations, at least in part because its poetics mitigated strongly against incorporation into the written canon. It was, no less, a tradition which lived in performance and would have been known to others—foreigners and neighbours alike—in concert. We can also see now, I think, why the transparently revolutionary songs of Murcia would have been so attractive to the troubadours of places as far as Toulouse, as close by as Barcelona: what more stunning and attractive “influence” could one invent for the brash young artists of Laungedoc also out radically to redefine a new poetic world? What better inspiration than these songs that turned the old rules on their head, and in which every verse in the old classical language is answered by one in the brash and harsh tongue of the streets, the clearly understandable language of a woman in love? Finally, we perceive the apparently insoluble historiographical problem: the fixed written text, the written translation, will by definition not exist until it is not as vital a living tradition any more, until classicisation has taken place and, most likely, until the first moment of great impact and influence is long past. But the vital relationship between the songs of the Hispano-Arabic world and those of the troubadours whom Nietzsche rightly noted as representing the very flower of European culture took place while the traditions were very much alive, in creative performance, before either tradition had to be studied in its written form or in a translation. And those (many) scholars who have

asked how we should believe that unscholarly troubadours, speaking only the dialect of Provence, could have absorbed the fundamental poetics of the Arab poets of al-Andalus, have simply never paid attention to the comparable tradition in our midst: songs are sung hundreds of time; what little translation and interpretation is needed is an integral part of the performance itself, is part of who sings it and who is in the audience; understanding of the lyrics is expected to be limited; and everyone knows it is an unhappy love song. We forget that we may need definitive editions and good translations, but that the troubadours just had to go and listen to the stuff. The very living and very influential culture of al-Andalus that was its song, needed no translator, no official introductions when it went abroad. And in this it did differ from the Columbus whose story we should return to briefly, in closing.

IV. *Home*

It is a cliché with considerable truth that the whole idea of the Renaissance, beginning with its very name, acquires meaning first of all through contradiction to a medieval past whose various deaths require various rebirths. But what these narrations can reveal is not just the kind of thing Haskins wanted to show, and which scholars working on al-Andalus have shown to be so centrally located in medieval Spain: that the "rebirth" is earlier, that Aristotle was brilliantly commented on in the 5th/11th century, and so forth. What the untranslated *muwashshahāt* and the spectacularly prolific tradition of philosophical and scientific translation—again the unholy unity—also reveal, when we look closely below the rewritten text and read the prolific versions of narratives begging to be retold by all the cultures and in all the languages, is a medieval past that is not dark, but rather too flashy to fit in with the cool lines of a certain kind of classicism, the sort of eclectic cultural hodgepodge which, like post-modernism in our own times, makes those with a certain preference for neatness want to tidy up. What our histories have wanted is the post-1492 European ideal: a coherent narration in a language with a codified grammar, a smooth trip across the Atlantic. But the Andalusī Europe that precedes that world, and the American hodgepodge that develops across the sea, have, naturally enough, not taken such notions of purity very seriously. Indeed, what is thrown overboard in the neat narration of a pure past (and the success of this story is everywhere around us) was once said to be darkness, ignorance, superstition and chanting: the medievals as much as the primitives of the New World. But if one tells the story from an aesthetic that can see and celebrate the riotous pluralities and often-chaotic poetics that made up the Andalusī medieval world, the Renaissance palimpsest might be seen as the neo-classical line meant to provide relief after the baroque, the unity to restore harmony after the chaos of the post-modern. The baroque, of course, would eventually be the dominant aesthetic of a New

World, perhaps the only aesthetic adequate for that lush and unstandardisable cacophony.¹⁹

The tension and the problem in all of this is, transparently, that histories are written and rewritten in the languages of the great grammars, and philology can only describe the dialects of Romance in the tongue and the rhetoric of the grammarians. Indeed, what is difficult or even repugnant about the rest of the story—the Jews that made and unmade Spain, the Islamic empire that thrived on the sort of cultural syncretism and apparent relativism we see in the *Alf Layla wa Layla*—is that it seems to be tellable only in the near incoherence of the lyric. Indeed, the brilliance of the concept of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, that first of the literary histories of Romance, is that it explicitly sets out the *folie à deux* that is the dialogue between the love lyrics and the Latin descriptions, the "dialogue" between father and parricide. In this Dante is mimicking the sort of literary history inscribed in the *muwash-shaḥa* corpus: the life and death struggle between tradition and revolution, and their dependence on each other for real meaning. Like the hermetic lyric, the bumps in the story and the radical pluralisms resist the smoothing-out effect of institutional exegesis and the successful historical narrative we have inherited, as a standard, from the Renaissance; and it is because al-Andalus is such a riotous bump that it comes to be set aside.

The story, told with all its many bumps, without smoothing over, could perhaps only end up, to steal from the great Cuban writer, Alejo Carpentier, as a baroque concerto. I think Carpentier understood this—just as he understood, in his last major work,²⁰ that Columbus' authentic relics are everywhere in the New World and that all the claimed burial sites are authentic—because, like all Cubans, like all Americans in the end, he is a descendant of that conversation that took place in 1492 in Cubanacan, between the Jew who spoke Arabic with a strong Andalusi accent and the Taino who spoke a language that never had the chance to resonate for us. And there, indeed, is the rub, for the Taino is gone from history because he did not have Nebrija to fix it and write its grammar and make its singers sing on key. It did not have Las Casas to rewrite it and edit it, to make the pulp good paper. And al-Andalus is gone from Europe because it could only be a smooth part of the narration of the East, where the language and the culture provide the sort of continuum that the classicising narrative seeks relentlessly, and perhaps inevitably. That is the dilemma because, with few exceptions, what survives is the palimpsest, the accentless narration: in Europe the Andalusis have a heavy accent and in the Arab world they don't—but of course, these assumptions too, on closer inspection, are revisable if we understand that this is in great measure the model we assume, the image we want: Columbus had an accent, too, let us not forget, as have all our ancestors in the New World, per force; and in that too we are remarkably Andalusi, always expatriates, always polycultural. But will future readers of Carpentier's marvellous novel

miss the greatest joke of all? Will they read it in clean and classical Spanish accents? Carpentier himself had a strong French accent, which only made his native Cuban Spanish more mongrel, more lyrical. More medieval and Columbus-like. More Andalusí. How close and familiar, finally, is al-Andalus in 1992.

¹ The only studies that have seen any sort of connection made between the two sides of 1492 are those that have focused on the extent to which the Conquest of the New World is related to the "reconquest" of Spain by the Christians and away from the Muslims, a view predicated on—among others—the dubious idea that the notion of "reconquest" was a contemporary one (see Charles Gibson, "Reconquista and Conquista", in *Homage to Irving A. Leonard: Essays on Hispanic Art, History and Literature*, ed. R. Chang-Rodríguez and D. A. Yates, Ann Arbor, 1977). My argument will be a more or less diametrically opposed one: that the most telling connections between old world and new are those characterised by the flourishing multi-cultural life of al-Andalus and the New Worlds, which would be discovered when Andalusí culture was but a memory.

² For extensive discussion and documentation of the varieties of prejudice that have kept Western scholarship from acknowledging the remarkable centrality of Andalusí culture for the formation of medieval (and thus, by extension, modern) Europe, see María Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*, Philadelphia, 1987, especially the first chapter.

³ Thus, students of Romance philology (the principal discipline I will focus on as crucial in the exclusion of al-Andalus and Andalusí culture from the history of European literatures) have been expected to be very strong in Germanics, and, concomitantly, most of the strongest, most traditional departments of Comparative Literature have focused intently on the combination of French, German and English. Moreover, although only a minuscule number of Romanists are trained in Greek, that has scarcely meant that ancient Greek culture is seen as less central to our heritage.

⁴ One could argue quite reasonably that such divisions of knowledge, i.e., the carving up of territory into, roughly, Germanics and Romance and Semitic philologies, were not only logical enough but have, *grosso modo*, served their purposes well in most cases—certainly their historical/reconstructive purposes. Drawing the historical maps with those tools of the 19th century may, in some cases, have involved some rough edges or bits of necessary "borrowing" here and there, but by and large things seemed to work: French was written and spoken in 14th century France as much as in the 19th century (granted the historical development it was the job of philology to trace) and Arabic was spoken in Damascus and Baghdad in both eras.

⁵ Certainly the most perversely charming and telling example of applying inappropriate divisions to Peninsular artifacts is the now famous case of Stern's "discovery" of the *kharija*, the name given to the final strophes of *muwashshahât*. The texts had in fact long since been "discovered": they were known about and existed in print, but they remained undeciphered, and thus functionally undiscovered, because, in an all-too-predictable expression of a certain cultural-linguistic reality, the texts featured a final refrain in Romance as a counterpoint to the body of the poem, in Arabic or Hebrew. No one had deciphered the texts because Arabists did not imagine the apparent gibberish might be Romance—and the Romance scholars who might have deciphered the texts knew, of course, neither Hebrew nor Arabic. In Menocal, "Bottom of the Ninth, Bases Loaded", *La Corónica*, 17, pp. 32-40, I note how the poems continue to be studied according to our contemporary canonical divisions, even in a case such as this where it could scarcely be more obviously and radically inappropriate, since a plurilingual society created such plurilingual poems, and the poems themselves are, moreover, expressly juxtaposing the various cultures that make up the one—the Andalusí.

⁶ Charles Homer Haskins' revolutionary book had as its principal aims to show the multiple ways in which the "Dark Ages" had been no such thing, and how many of the Renaissance conceits about the creation of modern Europe, which our modern historiography had bought wholesale, effectively ignored how foundational the cultural explosion of the 12th century had been. Unwittingly, Haskins work reveals (in the light of the far greater knowledge we now have about

the flourishing of Andalusi culture) the seminal nature of al-Andalus in this "Renaissance": almost without exception the features of modernity Haskins sets out (the universities, the scientific revolutions, the emergence of the vernaculars, the rediscovery of the classical philosophers, etc.) can be seen as the result, direct or indirect, of al-Andalus being a vital part of the rest of Europe, to which it exported its many revolutionary ideas and institutions.

⁷ In passing I will note my impression that it is also a crucial canonical problem for the more traditionally definable "Middle Eastern" studies, which, again with the handful of exceptions that prove the rule, has been just as incapable of making the necessary adaptations to such a different past as would be required to map al-Andalus; a "Middle Eastern" canon that has, often explicitly, said that what happened in Spain could have happened anywhere else in the Middle East, that the Arabs of al-Andalus are, in the end, just Arabs. Again, we may leave out of this, for the moment at least, the extent to which these are explicitly "orientalist" arguments, and say, merely, that such statements and the behaviour that follows from them are the necessary result of the epistemology at hand. But, clearly, the need to rewrite the parameters so that Spain—and Sicily for that matter—can be reimagined, is as great for Arabists and Hebraists as for Romanists, since it would be silly to argue that, yes, the Arabs were really just as much "pure" Arabs and Muslims as in Baghdad but, on the other hand, the Christians were different. Versions of this are, in fact, argued every day, for that is precisely what is said when someone teaches or writes about Ibn Hazm or Ibn al-'Arabi in the context of a "Middle East" that was for some six centuries transplanted to the West—as far West as one could go in those days.

⁸ This was of course true in all sorts of areas until not long ago: I certainly never discussed the *Song of Roland*, when I first read it in an Old French class, in the fluent Parisian-last-quarter-of-the-twentieth-century French I had had to learn as a French major. It was not that long ago, in fact, that the relationship of original language to goal was much the opposite of what it has rapidly, recently, come to be for many, since the dread Sputnik and a whole host of related social changes that have made languages in and of themselves an academic "goal". The goal was once, clearly, the artefacts, the texts "themselves", and the languages were the codes that needed breaking and massaging—if one happened to pick up spoken fluency along the way, then that was nice but hardly indispensable, and really a different thing altogether.

⁹ I present a lengthy and detailed discussion of these issues in a forthcoming article in *Edebiyat*, "Contingencies of Canonical Structures and Values of Change: Lessons from Medieval Spain".

¹⁰ The *Alf Layla* itself presents a whole range of textual issues that are exemplary for this discussion, beginning with the fact that the text itself has always resisted the notion of "originality" and "definitiveness", and, as Muhsin Mahdi has recently shown, the 18th and 19th century versions in European languages played a crucial role in the redaction of what would later be considered more "original" Arabic versions (notably the Cairene Būlāq). Moreover, the Galland version of the *Alf Layla* is itself an important part of the history of European literature, although, as Georges May points out in his sparkling and persuasive study, it has been unfairly and inaccurately relegated to a very minor position as a "mere" translation. Finally, in an amusing circularity, May's own study has (not surprisingly but quite fittingly) aroused the ire of a number of Arabists annoyed by the fact that he does not know the original Arabic texts, and is thus, presumably, unequipped to deal with it as a literary text. This is, of course, to miss the very point May is quite appropriately making: that the Galland "translation", whatever its merits as an "objective" or "accurate" translation might be, itself became a remarkably important and canonical text for several hundreds of years of mainstream European literature. And this is true, at least in part, because, even as late as the 18th century in European culture, translations had yet to be relegated to secondary status. Moreover, many other far earlier, i.e. pre-modern translations, some of which have survived and others which have not, no less clearly became a part of the canonical Western traditions, the *Kalila and Dimna* and the *Sendebar* being only two of the most significant.

¹¹ Two of the scholars who have most enriched our knowledge of al-Andalus have provided comparable, poignant images of the last days of the Andalusis, when diversity and tolerance were memories: see the opening of the introduction of Consuelo López Morillas, *The Qur'an in Sixteenth Century Spain: Six Morisco Versions of Sura 79*, London, 1982, and chapter VI of Luce López Baralt, *Huellas del Islam en la literatura española. De Juan Ruiz a Juan Goytisolo*, Madrid, 1985. Both studies evoke poignantly the loss of the sacred Quranic language for the Moriscos in the 16th century.

¹² For a lucid and detailed discussion of the *converso* proposal see Juan Gil, "Colón y la Casa Santa", *Historiografía y Bibliografía Americanistas*, 21, pp. 125-35. Gil believes the proposal to have considerable merit.

¹³ Among the copious bibliography on Columbus, Morison's *Admiral of the Ocean Sea. A Life of Christopher Columbus* (Boston, 1942) is still reliable and, for historiographical reasons, of exceptional interest; I have also profited from the extensive discussions of Columbus and his trip in Daniel Boorstin, *The Discoverers. A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself*, New York, 1983.

¹⁴ Dante, who wrote what is properly seen as the first history of poetry in the Romance vernaculars—hence, the first text in the Romance philological tradition—had a superb appreciation of the dialectal richness of Italy and, in all his works of fiction, clearly sided with the revolutionaries of the previous two centuries who had ousted the paternal tongue, the classical model of Latin, in favour of the fluid spoken language until then left for gossip among women and their children. Bembo was the most redoubtable and well-known advocate of the conservative linguistic position, the "purism" that sought to impose a single linguistic standard on Italian culture and select acceptable literary models for it.

¹⁵ In what is either an astonishing coincidence or a telling parallel, the other earliest text describing the New World in the first years of discovery goes through a comparable textual transmission. In 1494 Columbus left Fray Ramón Pané, a Catalán who spoke Castilian, the newly established "Spanish" less than perfectly, in Hispaniola to write a report on the indigenous peoples; Pané duly went and lived among the Tainos and by 1498 had produced the famous *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios*. Like Columbus' diaries, the original was lost; this time, remarkably, it was Columbus' son who copied it into the biography he wrote of his father, but, in a further twist this remarkable biography, which had been translated into Italian, was also lost. For an extensive discussion, as well as the most lucid analysis of the role of an aesthetics of multiplicities in Latin American literature see the brilliant Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive. A Theory of Latin American Narrative*, Cambridge, 1990.

¹⁶ I confess that the difficulty of these questions made me bypass them altogether when I wrote my *Arabic Role* on these issues—and argue that we should simply suspend the issue of genetic relatedness and study the *canso* and the *muwashshahāt* together as an exercise in comparative literature. I can stand by that answer as such, but I think the questions do require less evasive answers.

¹⁷ I am indebted to Pierre Cachia for pointing out how many of our difficulties in reading the *muwashshahāt* and their *kharijas* have to do precisely with the fact that, when they were preserved, classicised, many of the revolutionary features were disguised and glossed over; perhaps, as in the case of the Las Casas version of the Columbine texts, this is the necessary "translation" from the oral to the written, from the transient to the permanent, from the revolutionary to the classical.

¹⁸ For this, and for other very telling parallels in epic scholarship, see Joseph Duggan's remarkable new book *The Cantar de Mio Cid. Poetic Creation in its Economic and Social Contexts*, Cambridge, 1989. Duggan points out how the model proposed by Colin Smith, and duly accepted by a surprising number of Hispanists, assumes that true, "high" literature—that which has long-lasting value—is learned and high from the outset rather than being made so by the canonical and classicising process. Indeed, the debate among medieval Hispanists about the nature of the epic has to do precisely with whether something as "good" as the *Cantar de mio Cid* could have been composed by scruffy and illiterate types.

¹⁹ I can only allude here to the rich possibilities that open up if we consider Andalusi and American literary aesthetics as intimately related, particularly from the perspective of the struggle between lyric multilingualism and the standardising narrative; for an eloquent and enlightening discussion of New World aesthetics see Gustavo Pérez Firmat, "The Strut of the Centipede: José Lezama Lima and New World Exceptionalism", in *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*, ed. G. Pérez Firmat, Durham, North Carolina, 1990. There is also a telling and uncanny coincidence in the scholarship of the bilingual poems of the Cuban Nicolás Guillén: the final strophes of one of his best-known poems were long thought to be nonsense until one scholar noted they could well be a poetic version of the African language still spoken within Cuba's considerable black communities. Those medievalists who have learned the story of Stern's discovery of the *kharija*, and especially those who see the *kharijas* as the vernacular

female counterpoint in dialogue with the classical male voice of the rest of the text, will read González Echevarría.

²⁰ The best commentary on *El arpa y la sombra* can be found in Roberto González Echevarría, *The Pilgrim at Home: Alejo Carpentier*, 2nd ed., Austin, 1990. For our purposes the most revealing sections are those that have been added to this edition, a preamble and a final chapter on *El arpa y la sombra* and the sort of lyrical historiography that emerges from that singular novel.

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