

# Contingencies of Canonical Structures and Values of Change: Lessons from Medieval Spain

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Medieval Spain presents a classic — perhaps the classic — example of the great difficulties inherent in writing any single or “objective” literary history. At least one possible construct of medieval Spain yields a moment in space and time with a given configuration of languages and texts which essentially disappears from the maps drawn in later centuries when that same political configuration no longer holds true and is, moreover, anathema to many of the mapmakers. There could be no more distinct instance of a lost world, certainly, than that entity which we call “Spain.” And the almost-forced use of that name is not only an anachronism, but much more: a naming using post-medieval, largely nineteenth and twentieth century parameters that discretely but effectively outlines a vision or a map for us. It is at best, however, an uneasy and ill-defined map, one with which virtually every mapmaker has struggled and which all readers interpret with subtle, unspoken, but enormous ideological constraints.

## I. Contingencies

There is an entire scholarly tradition that pretends, to itself as well as to others, that the accomplishable task at hand is capturing, “objectively,” out of time and space, an earlier reality and then reading the artifacts, its texts, exclusively in terms of that reality. This pervasive myth of a possible “historically accurate” reading, a reading of texts “in their own terms” or “in the historical context” is, in my view, almost transparently untenable.<sup>1</sup> It denies the circularity (and ultimate interchangeability) of the processes of “interpretation” versus “background” and is a prime example of the hubris of teleological systems that claim to have banished contingency. A humbler (or more perceptive) tradition will both admit and perhaps even embrace the fact that a truly accurate mapping

of a culture distant in either time or space or both is quite illusory in great measure because what constitutes "accuracy" itself is a highly relative concept and standard. It is within a general context that we freely acknowledge the considerable contingencies and constraints of reconstruction that I believe we must operate in attempting to imagine a vanished world and read its texts within that imagination.

In such a context, my claim that a "medieval Spain" is the ultimately unmappable entity might well seem like the all too typical hyperbole of scholars in search of new frontiers, frontiers which in too many cases have to be invented, or cut from whole cloth. Clearly, all cases of historical reconstruction under such premises will be, *a priori*, limited and tenuous partial readings, partially "accurate" acts of imagination. But I would sustain that the differences between the case at hand and, if not all, then certainly most other cases, are considerable, and that they are of both kind and degree. We cannot (and this is a large part of the contingent difficulty) divorce ourselves from our present(s), even when to do so would appear to be beneficial to the imaging process; and in the case of Spain, the "presents" are radically different in ways other past/present dichotomies cannot even begin to be. The Russia of Catherine the Great is, in its modern metamorphosis, literally, still roughly, in the same place. Yes, it is now a part of the (former) Soviet state; yes, the language has changed, at least somewhat; and yes, the vicissitudes of radical historical changes have made it, in countless other ways, a cultural moment that would be difficult for the eighteenth century Russian to recognize as a vestige of his own and to blend into immediately. Nevertheless, it is roughly in the same place on the world map: the Urals and the Volga are still there (even if they were called something different and even if and when Russia is called something different), and the descendants of Catherine and her millions of serfs know that they are, in a number of critical ways, the descendants of Catherine and her serfs.

Can the same kinds of things be said for that lost world the Arabs called *al-Andalus*, the Jews called *Sefarad* and the Christians had, for a long time, no single name for? The fact that a discussion about the canonical status of "Spain" takes place at a conference on "Middle Eastern" texts, and appropriately so, in effect answers that question. Is the implication that medieval Spain — let us continue to use the terminology, however problematic — was a part of the "Middle East"? Did the Middle East once cover farthest southwest Europe and then retreat; or was *al-Andalus* further east, until five hundred years ago, than it has been since? Were all the Arabs and Jews banished, and does that then mean that what was once a Semitic culture did in fact become the pristinely Catholic one legislated in the aftermath of the expulsions? These, and a thousand other closely related questions, have always hovered about Hispanic and Hispano-Arabic and Judeo-Hispanic studies, consciously or unconsciously, and a few scholars have even tackled them directly. But, perhaps because they seem to resist any kind of resolution that meshes with our most

inviolable present, with the most unshakeable of our contingencies — that of the academic, canonical structures of academic institutions and, by extension, of the divisions of knowledge we accept as necessary (no matter how “awkward”) — no consistent attempt is really made to reconstruct al-Andalus, Sefarad, pre-Spain “Spain” in ways that would account for these apparent radical ruptures.

We cannot, in fact, do that, because we are either Hispanists or Arabists or Hebraists, and the distinctions are neither mere niceties nor convenient but ignorable classifications. These contingencies are, in fact, the canon: the courses we take as students, the degrees we get, the departments we belong to, the conferences we attend, the majors and dissertations we supervise. The texts are not the canon: texts are the logical results of the canon, what the canon allows as possibilities, what we choose to teach and what our chairmen will let us teach, the kinds of books we can write and still be promoted. That canon, the real canon, is, *pace* Allan Bloom, Plato, and all the rest, radically contingent, radically dependent on concepts and institutional structures of knowledge and culture that are themselves inevitably bound and defined by the same texts that are then privileged. It is much the same problematic circularity that exists in any attempt at historical reconstruction. We depend critically — if often unconsciously — on the ability to project, to transfer from present to past or from past to present: one is able both to project backwards from the (more or less) knowable present to the less knowable past, and to project forwards, to perceive which of our own “modern” features are both “shared” with the past we are trying to reconstruct and, trickier still, “inherited” or “absorbed” from the artifacts or texts of that time.

In other words, if I am a French scholar and I am going to read an Old or Middle French text, I depend, no matter what my critical stance is,<sup>2</sup> on notions of what “old” or “middle” France were that are delicate balances between past and present ideologies and their expressions, linguistic and iconographic. Moreover, I am probably highly dependent on the most fundamental notions of what an Old French text is (both linguistically and literarily) by the very choice of Old French texts I have been able to read, by the texts the canon has chosen or allowed. And the canon, in this instance, is one quite specifically traceable to the complex and evolving quest for a “national” character in the French nineteenth century, one which chose texts, quite logically, according to *its* needs, political and ideological. Do I have certain notions of what valor is in the Old French epic because they are the logical projections into a reconstructed past of my own notions of what valor is, notions, let us admit for the sake of argument, I know to be those of the modern Frenchman, Roland’s descendant? Is the *Roland* the *Roland* because of its “greatness” in some sort of retrievable medieval context, or in a nineteenth century one, the nineteenth century one that found and edited the text? And how can I possibly arrive at any objectively independent notion of a concept such as valor or, better

still, "Frenchness," when the only apparent clues I have are other textual artifacts, all of them dependent on each other for such deciphering?

It is the same trick as in philology, only infinitely more complicated: how do you know what *x*-sequence of phonemes means? The answer is twofold: *x*-sequence of phonemes means *y* because (a) the obvious descendant of that same sequence means *y* in modern French, a language we can know; and/or because (b) a study of the many appearances of *x*-sequence in the old texts would indicate, contextually, that it must mean *y*. Thus our reconstructed past, at the more "simple" linguistic level as well as at the apparently more complicated literary/philosophical/iconographical level, is completely dependent on the delicately and precariously balanced epistemology (or is this an ontology as well?) that says the present is a product of the past and the past is thus retrievable from the present, and, moreover, that a close study of the fullest possible configuration of past artifacts will, when assembled, give us the necessary context and keys to be able to read it.

The rub is that with a handful of exceptions, themselves largely problematic, both the "present reality" and the canonical structures of knowledge we all grew up with and share make such a task essentially impossible, *a priori*, for medieval Spain. The present conspicuously and consciously defines itself as radically different from its past, and is so in a number of crucial ways: the colorful Alhambra and a few other such tourist attractions aside, modern (i.e., post-fifteenth century) Spain is aggressively and successfully *not* an Arabic or Jewish entity, having banished and "de-Hispanized" the languages and religions and texts of those other cultures and peoples that were once integral and even dominant. Thus the first part of the equation, that of projection backwards from the present day and its meanings, is either impossible or, at best, treacherous. It is possible, for example, to do the sort of work that the brilliant Américo Castro was able to do, and to define the present-day Spaniard and his cultural artifacts in terms of remarkably complex and repressed versions of a more Semitic past. But how often can one indulge in such subtleties, how canonical can a theory based on presence through absence and repression and unconscious transference really become? The answer is that a near half-century after Castro first started publishing his revolutionary work in this area not much has changed in the canon.

And what about the second part of the equation, that part that tells us that like good morphologists working with an unknown language we gather all the disparate parts of the paradigm together until we can see the patterns emerging, those patterns that will tell us, in terms of "the past itself," what things mean? Once again, medieval Spain cannot even pretend to play the game, for who will create the new branch of "knowledge" that combines the elements, now radically disparate, that were the essential bits of information, the paradigms of medieval Spain? Instead we have Hispanists who study the Latin/Christian sphere, Arabists the Arabic, Hebraists the Hebrew, and the exceptions that can

be pointed out prove the rule. It is as if, in the morphological exercise, we had one person work with the words that start with a through f, a second with the next third of the alphabet, and so on. What a remarkable description of the language one would end up with! In fact, what this exercise in analogy can also ultimately illustrate is the extent to which even the most explicitly "objective" attempt at reconstructing the past is more than tainted with our "knowledge," our canon, of the present: the very items of information that are available for us to analyze, not to speak of our most fundamental analytical methods and our (necessary) preconceptions of what the puzzle will look like when we solve it, are among the many contingencies that can never be banished.<sup>3</sup>

But to say that they cannot be banished is not to say that they cannot be changed or altered, that one is obliged to simply shrug and say, "That's too bad, isn't it?" In fact, it is in the very recognition of contingency that lies the possibility of change, when and if that should seem desirable; and the key to some modicum of success must certainly lie in an open and continuous analysis of our modes of knowledge and analysis, of all the constraints that are pre-selecting our texts, dictating our canon, of the colors of the magic pens we use to draw our maps with. Prejudice, in the etymological sense of the word, cannot be banished, of course, short of the frontal lobotomy — at least of the literary sort — that empties the brain and disconnects the nerve endings. But it can be laid out, sorted through, parts accepted, parts rejected, and, best of all, defined and acknowledged so that the result — our vision, our reading, our interpretation — can be understood as explicitly as possible in terms of the paradigms that dictate and shape it. And those paradigms can and do change over time and space, despite the rather naive arguments to the contrary by those religiously committed to "true" and "eternal" values and texts, those who believe that "some books are still bad." We would all, by now, quickly and tartly respond to the graduate student who says she "doesn't want to do theory, just wants to read literature," by saying that there is always an underlying theory of reading and interpretation whether or how one talks about language or themes or characterization, and there is no such thing as "just reading" as if there were some remote possibility of doing so without a critical and theoretical underpinning. The critical difference is whether or not this underpinning is articulated; what the student in question finds hard to understand, perhaps, is how excruciatingly arduous that process can be. What the student (or scholar) in question too often fails to acknowledge in either case is that the unconscious or unarticulated value system or theory is just as powerful (arguably more so, being an unexamined life, so to speak) as that which is spelled out.

And yet many of us, perhaps most of us, continue to approach the text of history, particularly the text of history which serves as our given "background" for deciphering and interpreting literary texts, as if it were a relatively straightforward thing that could be "just read," as if the underpinnings did not

dictate what we assume and what we find as much as they do when we carefully read a short story. Not only are "theory" and "pre-knowledge" just as severely implicated in reading the historical text, one which does not exist in any "objective" or "pure" form, but the historical text, particularly that which serves us in literary historiography, is far more difficult to read "objectively," far more dependent on ideological and epistemological constraints. This is true for a variety of reasons, foremost among them the fact that the historical text is so much more fragmented, made up of a variety of different artifacts that, in turn, correspond to different codes, different epistemologies<sup>4</sup> and, no less central, the fact that so very much depends on it. Almost everyone has a *conscious* stake in "history," while far fewer of us would feel that a different reading of a given literary text would radically alter our notion of ourselves — although it is perhaps true that this is to a great extent an ephemeral difference, one dependent on gross perceptions.

In the case at hand, that of medieval Spain, the major historical concepts are explicitly and overwhelmingly dictatorial of the "canon" of texts: as a Hispanist if you believe medieval Spain was one thing, in general terms, then you are likely to start out your survey course with the *Cid*, and with a certain specific reading of the *Cid*. But if you were a Hispanist with a different view of what that medieval map looked like, you would never start out with the *Cid* but, say, with the *Tawq al-ḥamāma* (in for example, García Gómez's fine Spanish translation). Beyond that, national identities and egos and personal heritages and the very parameters within which most texts are read are all explicitly dependent on notions and definitions of history. And, once again, Spain presents among the thorniest of all possible cases.

## II. Spain

Why is it so difficult to map that 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 711 and 1492. These made varying parts of the Iberian peninsula an entity made up of Arabic/Muslim, Hebrew/Jewish and Latin/Christian cultures, in varying mixes and rarely, if ever, in the sort of simple black/white "Moors" versus "Christians" cartoonish 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 tenth through the twelfth centuries, were explicitly the results of its hybrid nature and of the rich cultural interactions among the different groups. But the other side of the coin, and the second approach to answering the question, is that this presents a difficulty not for any intrinsic reason, but rather because our canon, a canon largely formed and

elaborated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, does not allow for the existence of such an entity within either its epistemological or its imaginative systems.<sup>5</sup>

One need not even go into questions of "orientalism" (although I strongly believe they are relevant) to grant that the most rudimentary divisions into language/culture groups were dictated, quite logically, by the national language/culture configurations prevalent at the time the disciplines were being defined and established. How could it possibly be otherwise? One might say, in a fit of naiveté, that the divisions 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 was readily accommodated when the need arose. Thus, students of Romance philology, including the handful that remain to this day, were expected to be very strong in Germanics; concomitantly, most of the strongest, most traditional, Departments of Comparative Literature have focused intently on the combination of French, German, and English. In both cases, and in many others, it is evident that whatever the stated "objective" (i.e., supposedly value-free) criteria, the real criteria were, inevitably, a combination of contemporary political/cultural definitions of entities and, at times inextricably, the models, often mythological, that served as revered notions of cultural histories and hierarchies.<sup>6</sup>

One could argue, and I would not protest, that such a division of knowledge, the carving up of territory into, roughly, Germanics and Romance and Semitic philologies, was only logical enough but in most cases has, *grosso modo*, served its purposes well, even its historical/reconstructive purposes. Drawing historical maps with those tools of the nineteenth century may have in some cases presented some rough edges or bits of necessary "borrowing" here and there, but by and large things seemed to work. After all, French was written and spoken in fourteenth century France as much as in the nineteenth century, granted the historical development it was the job of philology to trace; and Arabic was spoken in Damascus and Baghdad in both eras.

Spain, then, is the great exception to the rule, the one case that is, in effect, radically dysfunctional in these circumstances. But what is remarkable is that, having made so obvious an observation, we must then recognize that virtually no accommodation was or is made for the exceptional status of this entity. It was and continues to be treated by and large, with virtually no changes in the definitions of knowledge similar to those that may obtain in 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. Hispanists, medievalists, do not know, as a rule, two of the three classical languages dominant in the peninsula during a significant period of time; and Hispano-Hebraists or Arabists have not traditionally been required to know the third, the medieval Romance spoken, in almost all cases, by the people whose written

cultures they are experts in.<sup>7</sup> We house, in different departments and parts of the curricular canon that have virtually nothing to do with each other, the students of those people who in the twelfth century not only lived next door to each other, but whose neighborliness, so to speak, wrought many of the cultural upheavals that our own historiography considers a turning point in western history, what Haskins called the Renaissance of the, twelfth century.

Thus, what is odd and problematic is that the canonical barriers to a mapping of this society were not, as an exception, brought down *because this is an exceptionally important case*, a case that is not on the margins either of history or of Europe but at their very center. What is odd and problematic (but also the logical result of our belief in absolute and universal values and structures) is that patently and radically inappropriate contingencies (such as inapplicable linguistic divisions) have never been redefined when contemplating medieval Spain and its impact, and that the only significant and widespread adaptations that have taken place have been in the other direction: "Oh, fine, there are these final strophes in Romance of poems in Arabic and Hebrew, so we'll study them;" but it turns out that "them" means only the final strophes, since they are in a language we can study. How many other cultural/literary areas of study can one name, or even begin to imagine, where the divorces and schisms of the present age are permitted to so impinge on a past, or a part of a past, that its very poems are divvied up, strophe by strophe, among different departments? Are the first five strophes of a *muwashshaḥa* part of the Middle East, and the sixth (which also happens to be its refrain and thus probably repeated after each stanza) a part of Europe? Given our divisions of knowledge and what they allow us to imagine, how can one possibly begin to imagine the culture that wrote such poems? How can we even begin to read such poems, since our canon tells us that, in effect, they do not exist? This, then, is the radically difficult canonical problem of medieval Spain.

In passing I will note that it is also a crucial canonical problem for the more traditionally definable "Middle Eastern" studies that, 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 the extent to which these are explicitly "orientalist" arguments and say merely that such statements and the behavior 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 the Arabs were really just as much "pure" Arabs and Muslims as in Baghdad but that the Christians were different. Versions of this are argued every day, for that is precisely what is said when someone



teaches or writes about Ibn Ḥazm or Ibn al-ʿArabi in the context of a “Middle East” that was for some six centuries transplanted to the West, as far as the West went in those days.

### III. Translations

This is the point in my argument where sympathetic colleagues are likely to shrug and say, no doubt sincerely, that it is too bad, but basically there is nothing to be done about it, because one cannot make any of the radical institutional changes required to alter the situation. The response is that there is no practical way to alter the canon, 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 and/or rendered invisible. This is nonsense, and it is nonsense based, in varying degrees in different people, on yet another series of canonical precepts that we have, as well as on the prejudice embodied in the “orientalist” argument. Once again, it is difficult to know cart from horse since the detailed canonical constraints (for example, “thou shalt not use a translated text”) are themselves far from free from the political and ideological constraints of the founding moment and its founding myths. And one of the most enduring parts of the mythology, one which most of us either share or have shared in the past, is that “objective” scholarly criteria are and must remain regnant, as if such criteria had been handed down from Mount Sinai. And if both these criteria and academic structures, also presumably carved in stone, militate against dealing with medieval Spain as a hybrid which could not be recognized in the nineteenth century, too bad. But the great advantage of understanding the preponderance and strength of contingencies is that it allows us to see that it is the standards that derive from the vision, the (necessarily) relative values of the moment, and that an altered vision can logically produce the changes that otherwise would be impossible.

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 the commandment about texts in translation, a commandment that others might state in the positive as “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, that under a certain kind of scrutiny reveal themselves to be the heart — or at least one of the hearts — of the matter.

It is hardly surprising, at one level, that all of us in our branch of the profession (which I will momentarily define as all language/literature groupings) would 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 a linguistic-reconstructive enterprise, and for the better part of the history of the profession, as a *bona fide* profession, one version or another of the philological/linguistic enterprise has been dominant. The most crucial of all tasks for the philologist — and for philology itself during what one might call its anthropological period — was (and in certain areas, such as Arabic, continues to be) the establishment of editions of texts. First you dig up the artifacts, then you clean them up, and finally you make them visible to society as a whole, mostly via your students.

Most of us in the profession are old enough to remember this phase either directly, through our own experience, or indirectly through teachers who were in one way or another either products or pillars of that system. One of the (now) most curious aspects of that tradition, of that phase of our profession, is that scholars did not need to have anything like a “native” knowledge of the languages whose texts they professed. It was not that long ago, in fact, that the relationship of original language to goal was much the opposite of what it has recently and rapidly become, for many since the dread Sputnik and a whole host of related social changes made languages in and of themselves an academic goal. The goal was once the artifacts, 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, that was nice but hardly indispensable, and a different thing altogether. It was not that long ago, and well into the academic lifetimes of many of us who are not yet relics, that the infamous *la plume de ma tante* sort of language textbooks ruled the day. But in our current benighted enlightenment we must be careful to remember that, at least in part, this was not because of some kind of inexplicable ignorance and lack of understanding as to how you learn how to speak a language. *Au contraire*, very few people would have imagined actually wanting to speak the language: *the goal was to be able to translate*.

Because we all tend to forget history (those of us who are historians of one sort or another as well as anyone else) a surprising number of people accept the premises that have been regnant only in the last several decades as if they, too, had come down from Mt. Sinai and were somehow the natural mission of the profession. But for better or worse, we have *not* always been primarily a language-learning profession; we have not always prized “original” languages much at all, let alone to the point of making them the only acceptable idiom in which to talk about the artifacts; we have not always had the fetish of the “native speaker” as the cornerstone of foreign language and literature departments. Clearly, the profession has in many ways left behind an anthropological phase for one of “proficiency.” In many ways and for many purposes both the ideology behind this radical shift in purpose and tone, as well as its results, are admirable and socially useful. What is extremely problematic, however, is the extent to which the shift is seen by many — or used as an excuse by some — as necessarily all-encompassing, as supreme in every area, as an absolute value.

As in all cases grounded in the dubious notion that if something is (contextually) "right" it is thus "true" — and therefore inviolably and universally true — a great deal of subtlety and nuance is left by the wayside and the canon is commensurately impoverished, particularly in the linguistic areas furthest removed from our everyday experience. For it is one thing to require students be able to speak and read French in order to take a survey course in twentieth-century French literature; but the implications, and the net effect, of a comparable requirement before a student can study the *Thousand and One Nights* are radically different — an issue I will return to below.

A great deal of clarification is needed here, since I am well aware that this is one of the touchiest of issues in this profession. Most of all one has to distinguish between means and ends and among a variety of different goals, and certainly between the very different historical moments at which the different sub-branches of the profession find themselves and, consequently, what their needs might be. To say that the student of nineteenth and twentieth century French or Spanish literature must or should be perfectly fluent in that language, for a variety of (largely) ideological reasons that are currently deemed appropriate, is not to say that such a requirement is necessary for the budding medievalist who wants to have some notion of what the literature written in the Iberian peninsula in the tenth century might have been like. The difference is not merely one of logical relevance: you could certainly convince me that to understand Balzac fully I have to be able to utter and hear his language, and that the French I can learn is close enough. But in the case of medieval texts one has introduced a third language into the equation since if I chat with my students in contemporary Arabic or Spanish about a medieval Mozarabic<sup>8</sup> poem (or if I discuss Dante in post-Manzoni standard Italian) the correlation between the text's language and that bouncing off the classroom walls is largely iconic.

The difference is, additionally and far more importantly, that of the respective stages of the disciplinary studies: if I am going to teach a course on the novels of Gabriel García Márquez in Spanish, with the texts in the original language, or on Baudelaire in French, I would have absolutely no problem filling a classroom in almost any of the universities recently ranked as the top twenty in the country nor, for that matter, in any number of less prestigious institutions. There is, of course, no institution in this country where one could say the same about any text or author (or combination thereof) in Hispano-Arabic or Arabic, although, for reasons that are very much a part of my argument, one could and regularly does attract hefty numbers of students to classes on Hebrew texts and authors. The most simple-minded, and often-adduced, reason for these rather radical differences is the "intrinsic" one: that "those" languages are more foreign, harder to learn, and thus harder to attract students to (although the case of Hebrew should certainly make one reflect on the accuracy of these notions). Thus, the argument goes, you cannot draw a

classroom full of students (or scholars, for that matter) to read Maimonides in the Arabic he mostly wrote because not enough students (scholars) know Arabic — a tautology if there ever was one. A more appropriate explanatory statement is certainly the opposite: few people learn Arabic because they have no knowledge of texts and authors of the prestige and interest that would make them *want* to learn Arabic, or feel that they *need* to. The classrooms are empty because, in our zeal to jump from the anthropologist to the pseudo-native, we have forgotten the important contingencies that dictate what languages we study in the first place. The students that fill a Hebrew literature class do so not because Hebrew is any easier for Jews to learn but because it is a prestige language they *wish* to learn (or their parents wish them to learn), and because there is a critically important perception that the authors who wrote in Hebrew are part of the cultural continuum of which the student in a twentieth-century American classroom is a part. That, in the end, is the same complex of reasons and perceptions that have made us value those languages and texts we privilege: French or Shakespeare. We have forgotten that the first phase of a philology is prestige, a notion of desirable cultural bonds and the interest that derives from such constrained perceptions; and we have forgotten that if those initial steps are skipped we do little more than spin our wheels in the sand.

Thus the stage that precedes what I have dubbed the anthropological is an explicitly ideological and political one. There is no coincidence in the fact that the “modern” philologies (Romance, Germanic, etc.) were established in the period during which the modern nations, with their clear concepts of themselves and their identities and heritages, were taking shape: the two enterprises are not separable from each other. In that context, a whole series of texts were accorded (or assumed) the kind of importance that allowed for everything from their “discovery” to their establishment as viable texts (from a manuscript tradition) to their translation into other languages and their study as anthropological artifacts, the earliest forms of the culture whose end-product was the culture at hand.<sup>9</sup> In other words, we must understand that cause and effect is not only not “objective” (i.e., value-free) but quite the contrary: that in this case in particular, the *belief* that x or y or z texts merit the lavish expenditure of time and other resources to edit, to read and study, necessarily and logically precedes the expenditures themselves. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? It is only in the waning years of this stage of the tradition (in the area of Romance, at least) that PhD students would make editions of “minor” or “insignificant” texts for their dissertations, and that such an exercise is no longer considered, at most institutions, a valid thesis, unless, of course, it is an “obviously important” text. The editing, i.e., establishment of texts was (until the task was almost completely accomplished) the bedrock of literary studies, and was based on crucial perceptions of “importance.”

The historical lesson seems a simple one: prestige and ideologically-bound need, i.e., perceived value, are the overwhelmingly determining factors, the

first step in a clear chain of developments that leads 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 or are not studied; and although nowadays one hears an enormous amount of discussion about "practical" considerations, I would sustain that the cultural-prestige models still hold sway. Certainly nothing else could explain the continuing popularity of the study of French, for example. Moreover, I would also maintain that the only way to alter the patterns is via prestige- and ideologically-based models: perhaps some part of the undergraduate student population is now taking Spanish instead of French as a requirement because it is more "practical," presumably because there are more Latin Americans than Frenchmen, but that is largely irrelevant and may not even be true. The important shift, the one that will affect the graduate students who will write books, become teachers, run programs, etc., — the shift in the canonical structures — will only take place when, for example, it becomes a widespread belief that Latin American literary culture is (and was) chic and "world-class", a shift that is in the process of taking place. Once again, however, it seems to me critical not to confuse cause and effect, not to fall into the trap of believing in "objective" realities, since those preliminary perceptions of chic, prestige and value are not natural or intrinsic to texts or cultures. Otherwise, how could we possibly explain any of the infinite shifts in critical perception from period to period and from culture to culture?

The case of medieval Spain, then, is not very different from that of most other Middle Eastern languages and literatures: it has virtually none of the major cultural prestige that precedes a vigorous and widespread anthropological phase; the anthropological phase itself is but barely embarked on by a minuscule and often marginalized branch of the profession. The later stages of development are barely visible: the literary cultures in question are rarely a part of mainstream canonical concerns, relatively few students study the languages in question and almost never to the point of being able to deal easily with the original texts, and editions of the texts themselves, let alone translations, are scarce. These cultures are, in sum, not perceived as a significant part of our central cultural heritage and concerns and, as a result, lie outside the major canonical structures.

What must be changed, if there is to be change, is the perception and evaluation of them. In great measure, at least in the case of medieval Spain, that can be done by revealing the extent to which the evaluations that marginalized that culture in the first place, those of the latter half of the nineteenth century and thereafter, were based on the ideological needs and cultural values of that moment, and that the ideological needs and cultural values of our own time are not only substantially different but patently favor a much more central role, in the making of the West, for what was Other for our grandparents. (I am not

an expert but I should think in the most general terms the same kind of observation would apply to other branches of "Middle Eastern" studies: the Garden of Paradise, of course, was in the Middle East and the supposed schism between East and West is Kiplingesque.)

So we come full circle (and to the thorniest of issues); for at the heart of this ideological enterprise must, for practical and obvious reasons, lie the translated text. It is only the translated text that 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. I am well aware of how heretical a proposition this is, and that is precisely why I have gone on at such length about the relevant history of the profession, in order to put the translation issue in some sort of context. The "objective scholarly standard" that requires that as "serious scholars" we work only in the original language can clearly only apply in cases where the anthropological stage is in full swing or completed and where a commensurate level of prestige and interest has created a body of people who can 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 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,<sup>10</sup> and all this in a context in which at least a great part of the vast panoply of "Middle Eastern" literature — again via translations — is shown to be mappable far further west (or the West further East) than anyone now imagines or admits.

Many of my colleagues, perhaps most in Middle Eastern studies, would be willing to grant that translations are acceptable and even fine tools for undergraduate teaching but not for "real" scholarship, but once again one is compelled to point out that the standards of scholarship (real or otherwise) are as contingent, and thus as redefinable, as everything else. Moreover, to make the distinction between one kind of teaching and another in cases in which there are few or no students to teach in the first place seems to me to wish to win what can be only a very Pyrrhic victory. I suggest it would be far more meaningful to go ahead and "demean" ourselves by using translations at the highest levels of scholarship for the generation or two it will take to alter perceptions and affect value structures. I suggest those of us in Hispano-Arabic and in Middle Eastern studies cannot afford the luxury of dealing only with "original" texts and "definitive" editions — unless, of course, we find it acceptable to have essentially no impact on the larger communities (beyond the handful of fellow specialists) of which we are a part. It must also be noted that there is a great irony in the "original language" fetish in that the specific historical moment we are trying to recapture, the Arabic moment in European history, is one built on translations, during which almost all scholarship was translation and

commentary on translated texts. Thus, the very individuals to whose "original" texts we now accord sacred cow status would have found such a value peculiar. 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*, *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, the canon we currently have would surely be minus all of them, and minus the discrete notions we have that those texts' cultures are a fundamental and central part of the "tradition" we claim for our own.

A reformation, literally, of the canon, is not then nearly as difficult or impossible as many claim. There is no reason, in fact, why the canon should not be altered to reflect alterations in the value systems in the rest of our society. This involves, first and foremost, recognizing that the fundamental precepts of the canon are highly value-laden and that values, in turn, are alterable, sometimes with very minor twists in our behavior as teachers and scholars. If I am teaching an undergraduate course in the medieval European lyric, for example, it is a relatively minor change to add a handful of the poems of the Hispano-Arabic tradition (ably translated into English by James Monroe, 1974) and another fistful of the Hebrew poems of Judah ha-Levi (1973) (of which a charming volume in Spanish recently appeared [1987], to supplement the available English translation). The ideological and canonical impact of these seemingly small additions, however, 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. In one stroke, the teleological and institutional divisions that previously separated Semitic from Romance are seriously eroded, and a different map of medieval Spain — and medieval Europe as a whole — begins to emerge.

When enough such alterations are made, and the historical and ideological bases of such changes are explained often enough, the bases of the canon will have been changed without, indeed, having required everyone to learn Arabic in the first place. It is not up to my students to learn Arabic perceiving, somehow, miraculously, that it is the *sine qua non* of a medievalist's training. It is up to me, in my crucial role as a mediator of the canon, to persuade enough generations of students of the joys and "relevance" of Ibn Ḥazm's *Tawq al-ḥamāma* so that the two most important and practical canonical changes will follow. First, a reasonably large body of students will end up studying Arabic, and Hispano-Arabic in particular, because they will have accepted Arabic (since I will have presented it as such) as a naturally "prestigious" and "important" and "influential" culture and body of texts. Secondly, as a result, a reasonably large corps of well-trained scholars will produce, among other things, a far wider range of texts, translation, and studies than are currently

available, and that will have very different epistemological bases than the older ones. These, in turn, will make it impossible or more difficult, i.e. more ideologically/culturally shameful, to teach, for example, a course in Spanish mystical poetry without including Ibn al-'Arabī, or a course on the framed narrative without the *Thousand and One Nights*, or a course on "courtly love" poetry without the *muwashshahāt*. We can only map what we can imagine exists: Columbus had to convince Isabella that there was anything out there worth all that money to map and to explore. It is belief, finally, that tells us what is true.

#### IV. Values

I have left until last the point about canonicity, and attempts to understand it and change it, that seems to me ultimately the most important. I have elaborated an argument, not particularly original (although not widely accepted), about the radical contingency, the relativism, of the frameworks of literary studies, the frameworks that are both historical and procedural. One of the most essential aspects of that argument is that there is no such thing as "objectivity" in the sense of a valuation that is "value-free." On the contrary, epistemological systems, the ways in which we classify cultural areas, the way in which we divide departments: all of these are value-laden activities. To argue, or even merely to assume, that they are value-free is not to place oneself outside the value system but rather to collaborate in it. Thus, if I say to a student in my comparative literature class that she cannot do a study of the *Decameron* and the *Thousand and One Nights* because she cannot read the latter in the original, even if I fervently believe that I am merely bowing to an "objective" standard of scholarship I am, rather, perpetuating a heavily and intricately (if often covertly) value-laden system. If I choose to perpetuate such a system because I honestly believe in its values, share them, then so be it: I am, indeed, ethically responsible for handing down a tradition I wish to see handed down. But as with the education of children, we are relatively free — far freer than we want to believe, in fact — to pick and choose the values we wish to pass on and those we wish to reject. Any number of readers of this piece could walk away from it thinking I am arguing that my vision of medieval Spain is "truer" in some absolute sense, and thus that I am trapped in the very same belief system that cultivates "objectivity" that I have attempted to take apart. But this would be to misconstrue my principal argument: that the vision of medieval Spain and Europe I believe we should invest in is more valuable — and value, of course, is radically contingent as well.

It is crucial to realize that our professional behavior, particularly as it relates to larger institutional structures, is quite the opposite of what many believe scholarship means or ought to mean. It is not only *not* "value-free and



objective" but quite the contrary: it is a highly charged enterprise with any number of possible ethical and political implications. If and when I begin my survey course of medieval Spanish literature with the *Cid* I am not only accepting a vision spun out in the nineteenth century that both accepted and fed that moment's cultural ethics, I am advocating it, I am teaching it, and I am saying it is good and worthy. But I can also choose to say that it is *not* good and worthy, and that a far different notion of that literary history is the one whose values I want to teach, to inculcate and, in the best of cases, to perpetuate. I, ultimately, am the canon, at least when I reach the point of being the teacher and not the student, the writer of articles and encyclopedia entries.

I believe that most of the values taught, the texts revealed and "explained" in the received canon of medieval Spanish literary history are inadequate because they reflect the cultural ethics and moral vision of a period whose cultural ethics and moral vision are no longer acceptable, at least in their overt form, to most of us. But our misguided notions about "objectivity" prevent us from seeing that in our scholarship we have been covertly perpetuating an ethic that we would never perpetuate in our "real" behavior. It is an irony, I believe, that when our academic structures and their ideologies were put into place in the nineteenth century absolutely no one would have quarreled with my basic premises: everyone knew that education and scholarship were ethical behaviors. I suspect most scholars who taught the *Cid* first and ignored the *Tawq* would have been able to articulate elegantly the ideological reasons for and the implications of such a choice; and while I may disagree with the ideology and the moral and cultural vision such an individual would espouse, I have considerable respect for the frankness of the enterprise and its lack of disingenuousness. That, though, was before we learned to retreat behind the "New Criticism" and the variety of "objectivities" we have today, a series of maneuvers that lead us, grotesquely at times, to separate one sphere of moral behavior from another.<sup>11</sup> Thus, we might find it unacceptable and repugnant to "be" or "act" anti-Semitic socially, and yet find it not at all difficult to write about the medieval Spanish poetic corpus and not know who Jehudah ha-Levi was, nor read his magnificent "Zionist" poems. What is wrong with Allan Bloom's now infamous argument is not that he is arguing that education is and should be an instrument for the inculcation of values: he could not be more correct. What is rather, for some of us, highly objectionable and to be rejected, is the particular moral system he is saying we should be teaching, as well as his paradoxical retreat, in the end, to the argument of absolute or objective value. But the relatively simple act of reading a poem by Ibn al-'Arabī or ha-Levi in a course is an ideological statement of substantial proportions, and I think the moment has come to put aside our false embarrassment about the moralities that we teach every day in our classrooms and perpetuate, willy-nilly, as part of the canon in our publications, (whether we admit it or not). So what if the student — or my colleague reading my article, or even I — cannot read the Hebrew original? Is that value,

that of "original language," a greater one than the value taught if we don't read those poems? Since we take a stand either way it seems imperative that it be the stand whose value, relative of course, is the *most* valuable; this can only be done, in any systematic fashion, if we stop pretending that belief is not a strongly shaping factor in scholarship.

The best possible medieval Spain (and its outposts throughout the rest of Europe) was not, of course, a perfect place, a kind of tri-religious Paradise where Christians, Jews, and Muslims always lived in flawless harmony. That is not the point. The point is that they did live together, at times in remarkable harmony and often, harmoniously or not, quite productively, and that the fruits of what may have been an exceptionally vigorous hybrid period were strong and valuable, even though our historiography has in many cases obscured this fact.<sup>12</sup> The point is that "the facts" can support the cohabitative, hybrid model as well as any other, and provide readings of many texts that are otherwise unreadable, without excluding any texts of the other model.<sup>13</sup> The final point is that, from my ethical perspective, this is a vision whose values are quite positive: one of a rare, harmonious historical moment many of whose most enduring products were the fruit of the interactions among peoples whose historical relations since have left something to be desired, and during which many of the great struggles, armed and otherwise, were between the fundamentalists of all three religions, on the one hand, and the varieties of artists and "secular humanists" that irritated them, on the other. Maimonides was in the same boat as Ibn Rushd; the indignation of the Almohads at the decadence of Seville would have found strong sympathy among Christian and Jewish fundamentalists alike; and the burning of books in the Inquisition had important precedents in the attack on the caliphal library at Córdoba. Once again, our cartoon notions of a pitched battle between Christians and Other provides a vision of medieval Spain within which it is difficult to interpret all sorts of evidence, beginning with texts like the *Cid* — a text, lest we forget, whose hero's name is an Arab one, given him by the Arabic-speaking allies and admirers who help in his struggle against both the Christian king and, later, the rabid fundamentalists who cross the straits.

Why is this the "Golden Age" for Jews? Why is "Córdoba" one of the magical moments in the Arabs' cultural history? Why does this give us so much of what would set Christian and Latin Europe back on its feet again? Are these three separate historical "accidents," whatever that means? In 1492 a feeble Granada was retaken and its helpless Muslims eventually betrayed; in that same momentous year began the second Diaspora, when the Jews were expelled from Spain. As long as we tacitly continue to accept the vision offered by 1492, by pretending in our courses and in our scholarship that the Jews and the Arabs were hardly there at all but had just been passing through, and were certainly never "really" Spaniards and Europeans,<sup>14</sup> we are its accomplices. And each time we remember the Jews and the "Moors" outlawed in that momentous year

we are denying that small and often vicious ideology and asserting the potential superiority of another.

In many ways this is the most inauspicious imaginable moment to articulate a vision of an essential turning point in European history which was dependent on the liberality of Arab rule; the fruitful collaboration of Jews and Christians and Muslims, all speaking the same vernaculars and sharing their classical tongues and authors; the transcendent and shared values of the "Judeo-Christian" brotherhood; and the sparkling and productive fertility of hybridness. And yet it is perhaps at exactly such a moment that a reiteration of that vision and that historical possibility is most appropriate, and most necessary; for our cultural and canonical values produce not only the texts we read but, *as a result*, the possibilities of the world we live in. The most effective response to the tragedies of the Middle East is to make sure that our best and our brightest know that there can also be a Córdoba and a Toledo and that poets like Ibn al-'Arabī are a central part of the Western *and* Eastern tradition, a tradition that resided in a place we can barely see today, medieval Spain. Ibn al-'Arabī saw it, and his poetic vision should certainly enrich ours:

My heart has adopted every shape; it has become a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,

A temple for idols and a Pilgrim's Ka'ba, the tables of a Torah and the pages of a Koran . . . (Monroe, 1974: 319-20).

## Notes

1. For the most extensive and articulate critique of absolute values in literary criticism and a full, lucid, and at times moving presentation of the relativist position see Smith (1988). I am deeply indebted to this work for the major theoretical apparatus that clearly underlies this paper, as well as for the original inspiration to formulate my thoughts on this specific canonical problem, of long-standing concern, in the terms of a canonical relativism that Smith's work has now made not only possible but, it seems to me, obligatory. It is astonishing, I must add, that resistance to any real relativism in the literary academy is strong to the point of (occasional) hysteria (see, as a random example, the review of Smith (1988) by Anthony Savile in the *New York Times Book Review*, 4 June 1989, "But Some Books Are Still Bad").
2. The possible varieties of critical stance are really far less relevant than one would suppose: it boils down to whether one works with a conscious and well-defined notion which is itself a part of the argument (the so-called "new historicism" and other variants); or whether notions of the shape of the past remain or are kept unconscious and undiscussed, dismissed from the scene (the New Criticism and its variants); or, finally, whether the notions are so conscious and so discussed, i.e., a part of the indispensable cultural and linguistic framework, that they need little or no belaboring (philology and the other "old-fashioned" critical approaches that take as given certain of the elements of, for example, "the Great Tradition").

3. I had a telling lesson in the inerradicable effects of "knowledge," especially when it is bypassed or ignored, when I was learning to do "objective" and "scientific" morphological analysis. I used a workbook each page of which had lists of morpheme strings, a handful of keyed items with a meaning attached; the student had to work out the components of the paradigm herself. Being mathematically- and puzzle-minded I was good at the exercises, and generally got them right, i.e., knew how to divide the strings between stems and endings, deduce the structure of pronoun systems from the weight of internal evidence, etc. But I did fail two of the exercises, and in both cases it was ultimately because my "knowledge" of the system in question overrode my "objective" analytical abilities. The easiest of the two examples to illustrate is one that can be drawn from the verbal paradigm of modern French. This is a paradigm that we "know," for a number of historical and mythological reasons, has the desinence at the end of the morpheme sequence, just like the other Romance languages and the Latin from which they all descend. In fact, no such thing is true according to the rules of descriptive morphology: the modern French verbal paradigm in a preponderance of cases, served up as an unknown language to a morphologist/anthropologist, would easily and effortlessly be analyzed as having the person marker at the *beginning* of the morpheme sequence. It is only our strong conditioning to expect otherwise that blinds us, and who knows how many thousands of teachers of French, to believe that the person marker is the -es on the end of the *tu* form, etc. The easiest conclusion to draw from this I have already drawn: the extent to which, despite our most noble efforts, we cannot logically empty ourselves of a whole range of present knowledge that necessarily impinges on our building of a different (i.e. past or "foreign") construct. The more difficult conclusion, which is certainly complementary to the first, is that *all* analytical modes are contingent, and that given a certain definition of a paradigm which included the historical and ancestral dimension, one could "correctly" analyze the French verbal paradigm as being marked at the end.
4. All too often literary texts, even poems, are the "best" or even the only artifacts for the "social" history of a period. They are then used (read, interpreted, and propagated) as if their clear intent were to convey to the reader a sense of social conditions. The last step of the gruesome circle is that the resulting "knowledge" strongly conditions, consciously or unconsciously, how we read the texts in question. The most infamous and flagrant example of this I know is the case of so-called "courtly-love" poetry, at once the "source" and the "example" of social mores in twelfth-century Provence that, so the story goes, privileged women over men and favored adulterous liaisons. In fact, if one assumes neither of those to be true, it is exceptionally difficult to find a poem in which an adulterous relationship exists; the superiority is invariably that of the loved object *vis à vis* the supplicant or lover, a phenomenon certainly universal in both desire and the poetry of desire. Curiously, and not surprisingly, recently published poems by the female troubadours, the *trobairitz*, portray the male loved one as superior to the female poet. The point is that reading literature is difficult and conditioned enough; to read it as if it were "objective history" (also a myth) is to compound the perceptual distortion.
5. There is nothing in and of itself unimaginable or bizarre about this situation; moreover, a fair number of medieval "documents," including such texts as the

*Roland* and, especially, the *Cid*, are readily read so that they show no real trace of any sense of peculiarity of the situation.

6. Hult (1988) has studied the correlations between ideology and the technical as well as textual developments in the nascent discipline of Romance philology; Gumbrecht's study (1986) is extremely useful in revealing the strong connections between French and German studies in the nineteenth century.
7. The most perversely charming and telling example of applying inappropriate divisions to peninsular artifacts is the by-now famous case of Stern's "discovery" of the *kharjas*, the name given to the final strophes of *muwashshahāt*. The texts had long before been "discovered," i.e., were known about and existed in print, but remained undeciphered, thus functionally undiscovered, because, in an all too predictable expression of a certain cultural-linguistic reality, they featured a final refrain in Romance as a counterpoint to the body of the poem, in Arabic or Hebrew. No one had figured out what went on because Arabists did not imagine the apparent gibberish might be Romance, and the Romance scholars who might have deciphered the texts knew neither Hebrew nor Arabic. Elsewhere I note (Menocal, 1988) how the poems continue to be studied according to our contemporary canonical divisions, even when this is clearly radically inappropriate.
8. Mozarabic is a Romance dialect spoken in areas where Arabic was the dominant classical language; the dialect is, not surprisingly, heavily Arabicized. It has survived primarily in *aljamiado* texts, i.e., in the Arabic (or Hebrew) alphabets, and is the vernacular language of many of the *kharjas*.
9. Again, the studies of Hult (1988) and Gumbrecht (1986) are instructive.
10. The Galland translation of the *Alf Layla* itself an important part of the history of European literature although, as May points out in his sparkling and persuasive study (1986), it has been unfairly and inaccurately relegated to a very minor position as a "mere" translation. May's own study has aroused the ire of Arabists annoyed by the fact that May does not know the original Arabic texts. This is to miss the very point May is quite appropriately making, i.e., 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 hundred years of mainstream European literature, in part because in earlier phases of European culture translations had not yet been relegated to secondary status. Moreover, many other far earlier, pre-modern translations, some of which have survived and others not, no less clearly became a part of the canonical Western traditions. The *Kalila and Dimna* and the *Sendebar* are but two of the most significant examples, and it is yet another irony that while medieval and post-medieval authors, the same "great writers" we are studying, never hesitated to draw on that translated material for their own literary enterprise we, as "scholars," are prohibited from doing the same thing!
11. It may turn out that the obsessive emphasis on "native-speaker-ism" may not have been the only reaction, within our discipline, to a perceived need for greater technical and technological prowess. In a number of recent studies (e.g., 1988), including a forthcoming book, E. Wilson traces the development of the New Criticism as an attempt by the foremost branch of the humanities to compete with the varieties of sciences, whose "objectivity" and otherwise measurable "value"

- put them at the forefront of both prestige and funding within the American academy.
12. One of the most significant and telling examples, and one which dovetails with my interests in this paper, is the way in which translators and translated texts are dealt with, so that someone like Ibn Rushd, when noticed at all, ends up as a "mere" translator of Aristotle. This kind of presentation results in a series of distortions, among them the fact that Aristotle was an integral part of the Arabic philosophical tradition and was not "brought" to Spain to serve the needs of his "true" heirs, and that in the twelfth-century Averroes, the great interpreter and commentator, *was* Aristotle. I discuss these matters at considerable length in Menocal (1987).
  13. Although, certainly, far different readings of those texts, such as the *Cid* or the *Libro de buen amor* or the *Celestina*, may impose themselves.
  14. This is a position as soundly reified by those Arabists and Hebraists who see their Spaniards as nothing but other Arabs and Jews whose Middle East happened to be a bit further west than usual.

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