the DR. IRENE HALMOS CHAIR OF ARABIC LITERATURE

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EXILE AND LOVE

ON THE SHAPE OF WRITING LITERARY HISTORY IN OUR LIFETIME

אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

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To the memory of Carlos González

My original opening for this talk was to ask the far from rhetorical question of why I, who am not an Arabist, find myself in the pleasant and flattering - but in many ways incongruous - position of delivering the Halmos Lecture in Arabic Literature in Tel Aviv. I will try to get to this question eventually. But last Sunday's *New York Times Magazine* (December 26, 1993) which as all of you probably know is read as part of the secular Sunday ritual indulged in by virtually everyone in the United States who flatters themselves to be an intellectual - or even just sort of vaguely culturally literate - provided me with a far better beginning: it includes an article by Anton Shammas, the Palestinian novelist, exiled now in Michigan, who writes in Hebrew. It is a piece entitled "The Art of Forgetting" and in it Shammas describes what is happening to the Palestinians today as their "Andalusianization", by which he means that process of poignant and yet completely romantic - and thus impractical - memorialization of a lost homeland. It is symbolized, as we all know, I think, by the touching fact that, among Sephardic Jews and descendants of the Andalusian Muslims alike, the keys to homes in Sefarad, al-Andalus, lost now for a half a millenium, have been passed on from generation to generation. As Shammas says, "The fall of Granada has always marked for the Arabs the last glimmer of their golden centuries, an everlasting tombstone for their irretrievable cultural defeat."

But, by mentioning the Sephardim as well as the Muslim Andalusis in this context I have just given you a significantly distorted picture of what Shammas actually says since one of the various remarkable

things about this *New York Times* article is that its author discusses both the glory of that homeland - and the pain of its loss - only in terms of what he calls the Arabs - a very problematic term in this context, I might add. Ironically, astonishingly, in this piece on the acute problems of figuring out how Palestinians will live among the Jews of Israel - and vice-versa - there is no hint that al-Andalus was also Sefarad, that 1492 is the year of the second Diaspora of the Jews as well as the fall of Granada, and, moreover, that the two are so intimately related to each other that one cannot, must not, be discussed without the other. But it is more than possible that many of the readers of last Sunday's *Times*, among whom there are many, certainly, for whom 1492 means only the year of Columbus' discoveries - and a Columbus who is imagined as "Italian" at that - will not fully grasp that it is precisely in the memory of 1492, in the exile from what we have, since 1492, called Spain, that Jews and Muslims are very much one, that terms like "Spaniards" and "Arabs" (and "Italians" for that matter, especially as applied to a man like Columbus), are the most damaging of misrepresentations. And in this case, unlike in many of the others that arose last year, in 1992 when there were hundreds of articles written about the different events of 1492 as if they had nothing to do with each other, it is a particularly grievous omission in part because it is not based on ignorance - Anton knows exactly what the relationship is among the different exiles of 1492 - and in part because it would have given far greater moral depth to his pointed arguments, his lamentations, to have noted the simple fact, poignant and ironic at once, that it is precisely in the complex process of both celebration and grieving that he rightly calls Andalusianization, that the past can be constructed to shed light on the future, that Jews and Arabs, to return to that ultimately facile dichotomy, are not so easily dichotomized.

Let me rehearse for you the chief events of that watershed year, events which are, of course, the simple markers of long historical processes, many hundreds of years in the making. It is a story worth

telling. On the first of January, of 1492, the Agreements of Capitulation of Granada are signed, the end of al-Andalus, or what is more commonly called Arab Spain. Exactly three months later, on the 31st of March, the Edict of Expulsion is signed, the end, now, of Sefarad, or what is called, in parallel fashion, Jewish Spain. The political and ideological connection between these two events is self-evident, I think, and I won't belabor it here, although I must note that, as in the case of Anton Shammas' piece, that specific cause and effect is too often neglected, and what is far less understood, too little emphasized, is the profound cultural tie that makes these, in effect, *not* two separate events, as our post-1492 histories would have it, but two only slightly different articulations of the same event. But there are other links even more ignored by our tradition of positivist and nationalist historiography: the original grace period for the Jews was to be exactly four months, the original last day in Spain was to have been the 31st of July. But during the excruciating and, in the end, fruitless negotiations that summer during which the most prominent Spanish Jews attempted to convince the Queen Isabella of the grotesque injustice of the expulsion, the date was slightly but crucially reset. So it comes to be that that summer, while the Jews were weighing the grievous choice between forced religious conversion versus permanent exile from their homeland, the Muslims of Granada were weighing the same options, learning how quickly and ruthlessly the religious tolerance clauses of the Capitulation agreements would be violated and then unilaterally rescinded, the first grammar of any European vernacular was published. The appearance of Antonio Nebrija's Grammar of Castilian in the midst of this radical redefinition of what it takes to be Spanish, during that summer of 1492, is as intimate a piece of the picture here as all the others - although this, too, I hasten to add, is invariably considered as a separate event, in all ways. At best someone might note the "coincidence" of it appearing that particular year.

What emerges from the summer's negotiations we are told by the most prominent of the rabbis, Isaac Abravanel: the symbolically momentous last day of Sefarad would, in the end, be not July 31st

but rather the 2nd of August - three days later, clearly a delay of no practical value. But the 2nd of August of 1492 is of stunning value in a very different respect: it is the 9th of Ab, the anniversary of the Destruction of the Temple. So that one Diaspora will mimic the other, so that the tears for the loss of the first homeland will be indistinguishable from those of this one. And, indeed, if we believe Abravanel's narrative - and many do not - it was on the 2nd of August that dozens and dozens of ships with the last of the free Spanish Jews left from every port of what was, as of that day, modern, Renaissance Europe. The first day of the second Diaspora is, indeed, the last day of the Middle Ages.

But what we mostly remember about that day, the 2nd of August of 1492, is something we are led to believe is completely unconnected: the most famous of the departures from Spain that day is certainly that of the three ships under the command of one Christopher Columbus, who was forced, because of the demands for sailors and the overflow of ships at the best of the Spanish ports, Cádiz, to leave from Palos instead. The question which is almost never seriously asked, at least not in polite company or on the pages of the *New York Times* - which may amount to the same thing - and even less so in scholarship, which flatters itself to be the most objective of all - whether this too, we are to imagine, is another coincidence, that the morning Columbus sets sail he is just one among many others. Indeed, we seem to never even ask the question of what coincidence can possibly mean in such a context, in our constructs of literary and cultural history.

There is yet one more essentially unknown - at least undiscussed - event this year that speaks, quite literally, to what we have in hand here: It is some three months later, and Columbus has made landfall in what we call, then and now, the New World. At first, the signs are not promising; these small islands are, self-evidently, not the land he is looking for, until he comes to a much larger place and is told, he believes, that the Great Khan he is looking for resides just a ways inland. He prepares for the first official, diplomatic conversation to

take place in this New World, and for that he sends the official translator he has brought explicitly for this purpose. It is thus that the powerfully emblematic beginning of the New World takes place, in a little place called Cubanacán - thus the confusion about the Khan - on the island we have since called Cuba, and the representative of the Old World is one Luís de Torres, what in Spanish is called a *converso*, a converted Jew, and he speaks to the Tainos, the natives, in Arabic. In some ways, this is perhaps the most powerful emblem of the remarkable historical and cultural dislocations of which 1492 is the marker: classical Arabic, now officially dead and very quickly to be forgotten and made not only foreign but grounds for torture and expulsion in Spain, is in fact offered as the official language of civilization itself. And that language is spoken by a Jew who had officially, by necessity, become a Christian on the very day he had left , on Columbus' ship, a universe named Sefarad that had simultaneously ceased to exist. He was thus the official representative of a Spain which officially and legally had no Jews, speaking an official language now forbidden, the language of al-Andalus, which also no longer existed.

What I believe is most telling in all of this is what we remember and what we don't: the simple fact is that this powerful but in the end simple story - the whole story of 1492, that is, beginning on the 1st of January - is never really told. On the one hand, the different parts of the story are, in the end, recounted as if they were completely separate and separable from each other. If you read not only the press coverage of the 500th anniversary commemorations but also the proceedings of the dozens and dozens of academic conferences that took place last year, what you could see clearly was that there was, first of all, the Columbus story - and this never, ever, was accompanied by any indication that it had any tie to the story of the Expulsion of the Jews (except, perhaps, the most crude of political connections). The expulsion itself was an event that was covered, again, in both the mass media and in the academic world, as if it were an event onto itself and of concern, in the end, only to Jews. And the third strand, the fall of Granada, was the most rarely mentioned of

all, at least in the United States, and that too, as Shammas' piece shows us, as if it were a matter of interest only for Arabs and Arabists.

Never mentioned at all are the events that are almost shocking and unassimilatable in our modern imagination - and that are inescapably the emblems of why these are not separable histories: the 2nd of August as the 9th of Ab, the fact, as a number of historians have argued cogently, that Columbus himself was quite likely a *converso*, the fact, finally, that it is a Jew speaking Arabic who stands and speaks as the first official emblem of the Old World in the New. And the rather simple reason we cannot tell the whole story as one - the reason we insist on making all of these into separate stories and dismiss from those the bits and pieces that can only be a part of the single and in many ways uncanny story - is, in essence, that our historiography is that of the world being created in 1492. It is a historiography rooted in an explicit rejection - an expulsion and an exiling - not simply of the Jews and the Arabs from Europe, although that is very much so, but even more importantly, of the very notion that there can and did exist a universe in which what was crucial and defining and glorious about culture itself was that it was an inseparable admixture, a whole universe of Luis de Torreses and Columbuses and people we call "Arabs" who in fact were, more accurately, Spaniards who happened to be Muslims - and thus, of course, speak Arabic, as well as Spanish.

The fact is that since 1492 and very much into our own times, we have written the history of the medieval period, particularly that of Europe, working with the principal constructs of the Renaissance, many if not most of which were explicitly based in a radical opposition to the salient features of that medieval period. And what is most grievous is not what I have just noted, that we do not know how to tell the story of the death and closure of that world - the remarkable story of 1492 - but that we do not know how to tell the story of the life of that world, of what it is that is shut down for good that year. The fact that we don't know the connections between the

1st of January and the 31st of March and the 2nd of August is damaging mostly because that reflects how well we have absorbed the ideology of those expulsions - how much we are, indeed, the products of the expulsions - especially in our roles as literary and cultural historians.

The most telling marker in 1492 of the literary and linguistic historiography we are trained in, and which we by and large practice, is certainly the publication of Nebrija's grammar of Castilian - a Castilian which would, of course, soon be Spanish, pure and simple. Obviously, once again, the historical reality is that by 1492 absolute closure is largely symbolic since, for example, we must understand that the breakdown and serious decline of al-Andalus as a viable and productive entity had really begun two and a half centuries before. But in linguistic - and thus cultural and literary - terms what the publication of Nebrija's grammar marks is the rejection of a variegated universe, of a culture in which a native speaker of Arabic might be Christian, Muslim or Jewish, in which devout Jews would alter the poetics of Hebrew lyrics to compete with the secular glories of Arabic poetry, in which literature written in Romance vernaculars - again by individuals who might be of any one of the three religions and be, at the same time, more than competent in one or more of the three classical languages - would be an act of retelling or resinging stories or songs whose other versions were heard, next door, down the next block, in another language. But that was while "Spain" - and the term here must certainly be used with quotation marks - was an entity not only of many languages, but of languages and their literatures so intimately crossed with each other that what is really at stake is a concept of culture we know relatively little about because we have come to define culture as pertaining to a single language.

Indeed, what the following centuries would see, not only in Spain, of course, but virtually everywhere else in Europe, would be the ever-hardening perception of cultural unities defined by nations and languages - individual nations with single languages and correspondingly unified cultures. In the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries we see the birth and development of our own profession, which would come to be defined as literary and linguistic studies, strictly aligned with those concepts of unified national cultures. It is well known, of course, that the development of national literary studies was often the handmaiden - at times unconsciously, just as often quite programmatically so - to the political and ideological fixing of national identities. And literary historical studies, to make a complicated story simple here, soon enough became the marvelously anachronistic project of telling the story of how the national language and culture came to be, came to flourish, came to be culturally ascendant - and in many cases, of course, as was most uncompromisingly pointed out by Edward Said, all of this was a central part of the various projects of imperialism. I use the word anachronistic to describe the evolution of this concept and practice of literary history because it is one that begins at the endpoint and writes the past as if it had all been an inevitable development towards itself.

Within such a system, of course, it is clear that medieval culture and literature in particular would suffer several radical distortions. The first is the most obvious and the most obviously relevant to the arguments I am making: the medieval world came to be presented as the most primitive and yet clearly distinguishable of the stages in the evolution towards the national cultures of modern Europe - and in thus writing its history, what is left out either completely or in all significant measure are the languages and texts and cultures which would have no obvious bearing on the present. This, of course, would necessarily be true not just in the semi-conscious ideology of the literary historians but in the more powerful and yet unconscious institutional structures within which literary history is written: fields of study. Thus, in a universe in which the fields of study are "French" and "Spanish" and "Italian" - on the one hand - and, on the very remote other hand - "Hebrew" and "Arabic," it is inevitable that what is constructed as "medieval Spanish," for example, will be the texts - and their cultural contexts - that are early or proto-Castilian. The others become, at best, someone else's concern - that of Arabists

and Hebraists, themselves separated along very comparable lines from each other. At worst, of course (and this is more often than not the case) the separation itself is far from benign since by definition - very much by the definitions first given voice in 1492 - what is Spanish, and, in fact, in most cases, what is European - is explicitly what is purged of Arabs and Jews and their languages and cultures.

But worst of all, I believe, is that these powerful paradigms of perception make it extremely difficult for even the best intentioned among us to perceive and deal cogently with a cultural complex that has little or nothing to do with unified national languages and cultures and the results of that are apparent in the smallest but most telling of details: we don't know what to call a Spanish Muslim - we fall back on calling him an "Arab" for example, because we assume that speakers of Arabic are "Arabs" and yet it doesn't take much to realize the utter inadequacy of this in a universe in which both Maimonides and Ramon Llull wrote more comfortably in Arabic than in Hebrew or Latin, respectively, in which the most widely read Latin text throughout Europe, eventually translated into virtually every European vernacular, is an extraordinary mixture of Talmudic reasoning, Greek philosophy transmitted through Arabic (mostly but not exclusively by Muslims), and traditional vernacular stories. In short, the very terms and definitions of our intellectual structures, developed as they are in the context of the Renaissance and then the 19th century, are not only inadequate to deal with this universe, they are hostile to it, rooted in a denial of it.

Indeed, in dealing with medieval culture as heirs to the legacies of what is flatteringly called "humanism" we regularly indulge in the powerful distortion that is our own concept of what History is or should be. To reduce a very complex argument to its basics, for the moment, it can be argued the the very notion that History is something to be narrated diachronically, to be understood dispassionately and in the mode we have come to call "scholarly" is not only an invention of the Renaissance - a self-serving invention at that - but one which, once again, exists as part of the often nearly

desperate attempt of the most influential Renaissance writers to wipe out their immediate past. It has long been appreciated, although I use that word quite loosely, that one of the regnant historiographical ethics among medievals was an understanding that History is in fact indistinguishable from Memory - indeed, it is often tellingly referred to as a memorialistic culture - and that the relationship of the past, particularly the texts of the past, is and should be an intimate one, more synchronistic than diachronic, more a part of the most intimate structures of memory than of those of some sort of detached enterprise we would nowadays call scientific. Of course, it is a rather brutal shorthand to call of this a Renaissance paradigm, although it is the case that the seeds of such constructs do lie in the complex relationship that humanism had with its past - the combination of a desire to eradicate what was closest to it, what it would so influentially call the Dark Ages, and the desire to establish a link with the more distant, classical past, a combination which led to a concept of historical narration as the imperfect mediation with what was irretrievable, not intimate. This model, then, which we have elevated to the highest degree of ancestor worship in the West - how many among our colleagues would call themselves heirs to the kabbalists rather than to the humanists? - was in turn finely tuned, once again, in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly as part of the refinement and ascendancy, over hundreds of years, of positivism.

Let us consider, for a moment, the story of the shift in dates for the departure of the Jews from the 31st of July to the 2nd of August. The story of the resetting of the dates, so that it would then be the 9th of Ab, is told by Isaac Abravanel, but listen to the evaluation of this by Yitzhak Baer, one of the foremost historians of the Jews of Spain* :

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* Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America (1961) 1971. Vol 2, p. 439. See the more extended discussion of this issue in Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 1-7 and 192-197.

> On July 31, 1492 (the 7th of Ab) the last Jew left the soil of Spain. The few who weakened and happened to stay behind were soon rounded up by the secular and ecclesiastical police, and were either baptized under duress or forcibly expelled from the country. According to a legendary report - among the first to give it currency was Rabbi Isaac Abravanel, one of the men who figured very prominently in the whole chapter of the Expulsion - all the Jews left Spain "on a single day, the 9th of Ab." This is nothing but a fable invented in the bright light of history. On the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple all the Jews of Spain were either wandering outside its borders on land and sea, or were confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition and bound by the fetter of an alien faith which had been forced upon them.

At one level, the historiographical issue is relatively straightforward: Abravanel tells us that when it became clear that the Edict would not be rescinded altogether the postponement of three days - clearly intended to give a permanent and fixed, transcendent Historical corollary to this Second Temple being destroyed - was asked for and granted. Baer, who is as good a representative of that positivist construct of scholarship as any, rejects this, in part because the demographic evidence is confusing but mostly because he cannot "believe in" that vision of History - and of an individual's intimate and even mystical and kabbalistic relationship with one's history that lies behind the tinkering with the dates. When he says it is a "fable invented in the bright light of history", the word fable is clearly meant to stand in condescending contrast to his own notion of history as a scientific and thus objective and impersonal narrative.

What we have here is exactly the sort of imposition of one world view - which, again, we can characterize as that springing from the various impulses of 1492 and eventually codified in the 19th and 20th centuries- applied, by definition in hostility, to the world it thus interprets and rewrites in its own terms. In my view, there is painful irony in Baer's last line on the subject, when he says the Jews then

found themselves "bound by the fetter of an alien faith which had been forced upon them" since Baer's own faith in a notion of History that rejects and disdains the fundamental principles of Abravanel's own powerful historical faith - and thus leads him to call it false - is a no less profound and damaging fettering by an alien faith. I hasten to point out that this reading of one faith through the necessarily hostile prism of another, to continue with the metaphor, is the most common of procedures in medievalist scholarship. It is, of course, what happens when we we read mystical poetry, as we so often do, through the prism of the codified principles of the normative and institutionalized religion, and it is clearly what happens when we assume a man writing poetry in the 11th century is either an Arab or a Spaniard and thus to be read through the constructs of either Arabism or Hispanism - both of which, of course, will violate his most fundamental being, although perhaps in different ways. Most of all, to return to the example of the 9th of Ab, it is what happens - and it happens constantly in our analysis of the medieval universe - when we assume that our notion of historical truth is Truth itself- now with a capital T - and that our relationship with those texts must be the relationship of distance and what we call "objectivity" rather than that of intimacy, communion, and "subjectivity". Abravanel, who was far from a stupid man, who was not in the least ignorant or superstitious, and who probably knew that the "truth" was that Jews left Spain every day from the 1st of April until well after the official last date - whether that was the 31st of July or the 2nd of August - knew most of all that he and others needed to understand the transcendental truth of this unimaginable catastrophe, the expulsion from Spain, and that the best mode of understanding it, of making it into True History, was to see it as the next version of the Diaspora. It is not a "fable" but the expression of a grappling with the meaning of the universe, which is of course, what the most enduring literature is always doing and what we should be doing, as literary historians. What has happened, instead, is that we have thrown over the principle of intimacy - Love, actually, is the right word. We have come to believe that being "subjective" - having a powerful personal

relationship with our texts - is bad and that being "objective" - having a detached relationship which, indeed, "objectifies" texts written to penetrate and move the soul and the spirit - is good. We no longer worship at the Church of Love - as the great Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi urged us, in the most powerful of his poems - even to read love poetry; rather, we worship at the Church of Reason and Positivism, as well - in a lesser but connected way - as at the Church of distinct and unambiguous cultural identities. While it is conceivable that Baer, in refusing to have the same sort of relationship with Abravanel that Abravanel has to his own texts, is revealing some incidental fact, it is more than clear that he has not understood Abravanel's Truth.

I first became acutely aware of the massive problems in dealing with what we rather blithely call the "medieval west" when I was a graduate student in the largely idiosyncratic and largely dying out field called Romance philology - a field in which I was, significantly, the last recipient of the Ph.D. at my own institution. It is crucial to understand here that Romance philology was a field radically different from the national philologies in many ways, a distinctly minoritarian discipline embodied in the work of scholars such as Eric Auerbach and works such as his justly famous - and yet very idiosyncratic - *Mimesis*. Alone among the modern literary projects, this rather oddball thing called Romance philology has stood very much in opposition to the construction of literary history as the story of the development of national cultures. It is, in the end, not greatly surprising that this philology was a version of European literary history invented not by the French or the English or the Spaniards but instead by the early 19th century, distinctly nationless Germans. And its most eminent practitioners in the 20th century have been, prominently, a number of German Jews in exile - *Mimesis*, most famously and most tellingly, is written by an Auerbach who had been forced to go into exile in Istanbul in 1936. Indeed, in this work and that of the relatively small handful of other practitioners, most of the

aspects of what I have called the Renaissance paradigm of literary historiography are absent: all the languages of a very loose construct called Romania are to be found here - and also, of course, ancient Greek as well as Biblical Hebrew - although Auerbach ferociously defended his work as part of the study of "Romance". In this exilic - rather than nationalist - notion of Romance, the languages and texts to be included follow the very medieval paradigm of personal love and memory. Indeed, one of the conspicuous features of *Mimesis* is that it was, and this Auerbach specifies punctiliously, written by him when he was completely cut off from his library and his books, and there are, in fact, no citations or footnotes. His texts are the texts of his love and thus memory, they are the keys to a destroyed homeland he carried into his exile. The book, as a result, is one of those classics of modern literary history, which, at least in my field, we are taught to admire but certainly not to imitate, since our own positivistically-driven notion of what constitutes true scholarship cannot really tolerate, let alone teach, personal love and memorialism - and far less the lack of footnotes and all those other details that show the world we are scientists too. Let me add, parenthetically, that in our own times the best example of this sort of love-and-memory driven approach to literary studies - which we claim to admire but actually, in practice, disdain - is certainly Harold Bloom, who may not be a normative medievalist but is certainly a gnostic and probably a kabbalist. And he quotes from memory - and thus occasionally "misquotes". But in misquoting - or, to put it more revealingly, in quoting subjectively rather than objectively - Bloom is, of course, defining literary history as an Abravanel or as an Auerbach would and thus participating in that exilic tradition.

Most conspicuously, in *Mimesis* we see altogether absent the notion that literary history is a detached developmental narrative, or any notion that the enterprise of writing literary history can or should be something one might call an objective or scientific endeavor. For Auerbach, as well as for others, among them his fellow German Jew in exile, Leo Spitzer, literary history is morality and ethics itself, and, as is well known although little appreciated, *Mimesis* is not only

written in Istanbul, but as he tells us, it is written exactly between May of 1942 and April of 1945. It is, of course, his complex, powerful, and passionately personal response to the horrors that destroy European civilization during those years - and his strongly anti-nationalist perspective is, in such a context, a very pointed critique - and it is quite unambiguously his answer to the pain of his own exile from that civilization. In the upholding of loved and remembered texts as keys to a lost home and a destroyed civilization one might say there is romantic idealization - a form of Andalusianization - but there is also a powerful investment in the present and most of all in the future, which is, after all, what writing history is all about. Indeed, this branch of literary studies, beginning with its foundational figure of Dante, who writes its first book, the famous *De vulgari eloquentia*, in his own bitter exile from Florence, conspicuously cultivates the ethics of exile - and stands, thus, in stark contrast to those of the national philologies. Unfortunately, for those of us who love more the virtues of exile than those of nations (at least in the ethos of literary historiography) that version of Romance philology, despite practitioners and house philosophers as powerful as Vico and Nietszche - or perhaps it is because of them - was always a relatively minor practice within the larger field of literary studies and, in recent years, particularly since the boom of literary studies in the 1960s in the United States, it has been almost completely replaced by the departments of national literatures and the whole intellectual and scholarly apparatus that goes with that kind of institutionalization

So, it is true that although as a graduate student I was working within an idiosyncratic paradigm in its largest constructs, my work on the different medieval literatures was necessarily shaped by the national paradigms that were regnant then and essentially universal now. In other words, although I was doing all three of the major Romance language literatures, each one was taught and shaped by scholars, indeed, by a whole tradition of scholarship, that is medievalist within the national paradigms. It was within such a context that I first "discovered" - I use the term with a very full sense of the irony

involved - the problem of medieval Spain and its cultural identity, and particularly the problem of why and how we could draw a picture of medieval Spain that said that what was Arabic was not Spanish, and vice-versa. I have belabored the point about how Romance philology in its Auerbachian mode is distinct from the national philologies because it is all too easy to analyze the problem of medieval Spain and its ethnic, linguistic and cultural makeup as an isolated problem, and a problem of crude prejudice, whereas, in the end, it is not, or at least not simply that. It is rather easy, in fact, to point out all the ways in which the Arabic and the Jewish aspects of medieval civilization are systematically blocked or marginalized in our construct of medieval history because these are, of course, the Other, as Said would famously point out in *Orientalism*. And it is true, and very much not to be forgotten, that the elaborate edifice of the history of Western culture cannot account for a central and positive role within it of languages and cultures of peoples it has come to see as culturally backwards - which is the case with the Arabs - or as difficult interlopers, outsiders and unbelievers in our midst - as it so often sees the Jews.

But it is both more difficult and more revealing to also understand that this is but a part of the larger picture, a symptom as well as an independent problem, since within the paradigms of nationalist literary historiography everything that does not lead, in the end, to the triumph of the dominant culture is tucked away in one corner or the other. Indeed, what was once the most famous and foundational and controversial of the Romance literatures, the lyric poetry of Provence and its troubadours, is nowadays studied only in a small handful of departments in the United States - and almost invariably those are not French departments, it must be added, but departments of Comparative Literature. This, of course, is quite simply because there is no nation to which Provençal corresponds or to which it led - on the contrary, the infamous destruction of the culturally revolutionary land of the troudabours - and this would include the kabbalists, of course, who would then relocate, at least temporarily, in Spain - was a destruction necessary in order to create France and

what is French. And without a nation and a national language and culture and literature there are no departments, no degrees. But as a graduate student I did study the Provençal lyric - on my own, since there were no longer any courses in it - and from there stumbled into the so-called Arabist question, what we might crudely reduce to the question of whether there was any connection between what appeared to be the first vernacular poetry of Europe and the remarkably kindred poetry - vernacularized, strophic, rhyming, and so forth - that had flourished at the same time in the very nearby al-Andalus.

The complexity of the problem can be summarized by pointing out that it is not only that the two poetries are parts of literary constructs that now have nothing to do with each other - Romance on the one hand, Arabic and Hebrew on the other - but that in the average department of Hebrew or Arabic literature scarcely more was known about the poetry called the *muwashshahāt*, and this, in the end, because in Arabic and Hebrew the paradigms of national cultures have been at least as powerful. So, while it is easy to account for the fact that virtually no Europeanist specializing in the medieval period would know about the hybrid culture and literature that flourished in al-Andalus because of prejudice of the sort aptly symbolized by the expulsions of 1492 - the crude but widespread notion that al-Andalus and its culture is not part of Europe proper - it is crucial to understand that, in fact, Andalusian culture in its hybrid and culturally ambiguous manifestation has presented problems of at least as great a magnitude for Hebraists and Arabists. Arabists cope as poorly as with an "Arabic" poem "corrupted" by Romance as a Hispanist does with a "Spanish" poem that is Arabized. That is why, to cite the best-known and most telling example, the *kharja*s of the *muwashshahāt* (the little refrains written in a vernacular in contrapunctal variation with the stanzas in a classical language, either Hebrew or Arabic) were not "discovered" until 1948 and why, even today, it is a poetry and a field marked in equal measures by neglect and by rancorous debates over such questions as whether the metrics of the classical Hebrew and Arabic can conceivably be scanned according to the

obviously infiltrating Romance vernaculars or, worse still, whether Romanists have any "right" to work in the area - or whether it is not properly left to true Arabists, for example, rather than to mongrel Hispanists, as has actually been suggested. And, to make matters worse, we are also saddled with the prejudice that medieval literature is pre-literary by modern hermeneutic standards - another crucial element in the Renaissance paradigm we enforce - and thus, to take the most conspicuous example, if we want to discuss what the *muwashshahāt* may have to do with the poetry of Provence one has to "prove" clearly marked "influence". Indeed, the very word "influence" - which as it is understood in reading modern literature is the most complex and subtle of mechanisms, especially since Harold Bloom's masterful and and permanently influential construction of it - that same word in the mouth and in the work of a medievalist is the most crude and reductive of concepts. It is assumed that in medieval literature - particularly between what we have defined as separate literatures - influence, what we also call "borrowing," will be as clearly marked and acknowledged as any footnote in our own work. So, in the end, we not only do not adopt the medievals' ethics of love and memorialism, we make them over in our own image and deal with their literature as if it were an earlier version of our own positivist scholarly modes. We must be able to prove that William of Aquitaine had a scholar's knowledge of classical Arabic before we can talk about the relationship between the songs of the troubadours and those of their brethern in the next town.

The ultimate question, in the end, is what difference it all makes, and the answer, I believe, is a great deal. The shape of our memories - the way in which we conceive of our cultural history - is an immeasurably powerful element in the way we construct our future. Obviously, the Renaissance and then the 19th and 20th centuries' constructs of the European past were fundamental weapons in the forging of European national identities - in the first instance banishing the medieval past as mongrel and commensurately

elevating the classical past as a worthy ancestor and in the second instance in defining cultures as linguistically distinct entities that had rightly led to the nation states. In both cases the canon of literary texts, and preceding that the canon of languages, that were included and excluded, played vital roles in the cultural consciousness of both intellectuals and the hoi-poloi.

The related question, to return to Anton Shammas' terms, is whether Andalusianization is an essentially romantic activity. The case of al-Andalus is, I would argue, the most special of cases. It is not just any old chapter in the history of Western civilization. It is a singular chapter, both in its length and in its profound shaping effects on its own time and that which follows: singular because it both embodied and represented the remarkable cultural achievements that could and did flow from a more culturally and linguistically variegated circumstance than Europe has ever seen since, including today, I might add, when we may indeed be returning to a very medieval type of situation, although we now call it post-modernism, and the intellectual classes treat it with fear and disdain instead of doing what their counterparts did in the 12th century, which was run off to Toledo and learn Arabic. Until now, however, the only ones who have had the keys to that lost homeland have been the exiles; and in their hands it is true that, as Shammas laments, it has not been a politically powerful thing, it has been a part of what he calls the art of forgetting.

But the point is that it is historians, I believe literary historians most of all, who, by adopting the virtues of exile, very much in the manner of Dante in the 14th century and Auerbach in our own, can play very powerful roles by redefining the cultural shape and possibilities inherent in the past, the Andalusian past in particular. Forgetting that past is what canonical literary history has wrought. Sadly, the constructs of the history of Western culture have kept from us many of our major achievements: the Arabized poetry of Judah Halevi, the *mir'aj* subtext of the Divine Commedy, the longing for religious tolerance and relativism in all the framed-tale

collections, the many ways in which the songs of Provence - which would become, in turn, the foundation for Anglo-American modernist poetry - are part of a radical foundationalist movement that is inseparable from the vernacularized poetry of al-Andalus and from the powerful and always mysterious kabbalist cults of the time. What is forgotten is not only the past but the possibilities we have in the future, what culture can be. And our responsibility as literary historians, I believe, is to reshape the fundamental tenets of our own discipline so that the keys to the until-now lost culture and homes of al-Andalus and Sefarad. If the keeping of such keys is an act of powerless nostalgia on the part of the exiles themselves it is only because we have failed in our duties, for in the hands of literary historians Andalusianization, or the adoption in our work of the virtues of exile, can have immense power in the shaping of culture in our lifetimes and beyond.