

1 The Persistence of Philology: Language and Connectivity in the Mediterranean

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Mare Magnum est quod ab occasu ex Oceano fluit et in meridiem vergit, deinde ad septentrionem tendit; quod inde magnum appellatur quia cetera maria in conparatione eius minora sunt. Iste est et Mediterraneus, quia per mediam terram usque ad orientem perfunditur, Europam et Africam Asiamque disterminans.

– Isidore, *Etymologies* 13.16.1 (ed. Lindsay 2.98)

[The Great Sea is the one that flows from the Ocean out of the West, turns to the South, and finally stretches to the North. It is called “great” because the other seas are smaller in comparison with it. This is also called the “Mediterranean” because it flows through the “middle of the land” (*media terrae*) all the way to the East, separating Europe, Africa, and Asia.

– (trans. Barney et al. 277)]

Homer was more Mediterranean than Greek.

– Ezra Pound (“New Paideuma” 255)

The Mediterranean is an inland sea, but the term can also be used in a broader sense: to describe the geographical region that includes the sea, its islands, and the surrounding lands; to describe the cultural environment thought to be typical of this part of the world, even – as in the quotation from Pound above – a characteristic way of thinking and feeling, one determined by the nature of the region itself. While the form of national history has long been dominant, the attractions of conceiving of Mediterranean history synthetically, as a complex whole made up of many parts, have only recently begun to be felt. This impulse appeared with

dramatic force in the mid-twentieth century, in the influential study by the *Annales* historian Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. This work not only had a dramatic impact on studies of the sixteenth century, which was Braudel's particular focus, but also appealed to scholars who were eager to move beyond the framework of national history both within the field of early modern studies and also in other periods as well.¹ Simultaneously, impelled largely by new work in comparative archaeology and anthropology, over the last decades Mediterranean Studies has become an increasingly important area in studies of the ancient world, especially in the disciplines of classics and history (Harris, "Mediterranean and Ancient History"; Alcock, "Alphabet Soup"). It is therefore unsurprising that when, in 2000, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell published their wide-ranging study of the Mediterranean, *The Corrupting Sea*, which extends from prehistory through the early Middle Ages, it engendered a profoundly challenging and complex set of responses.

Horden and Purcell were explicit both about the audacious breadth of their undertaking and its debt to Braudel's *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, which they refer to as "our project's great inspiration and progenitor" ("Four Years" 358). In the book, Horden and Purcell attempt to demonstrate the "unity and distinctiveness" of Mediterranean culture (*Corrupting Sea* 9), an effort which has continued in a more extended form through their lengthy and cogent responses to the many critiques that the book has elicited ("Four Years"; see also Purcell, "Boundless Sea"; Horden and Purcell, "New Thalassology"). In this sense, Horden and Purcell's work on the Mediterranean has been less an intervention than a series of proposals and responses, part of an exceptionally fertile dialogue – or, better, a symposium – on ways in which Mediterranean culture can be seen as wholly "distinctive" ("New Thalassology" 732–4), having special qualities that set it apart from any analogues. At the same time, the debate engendered by Horden and Purcell's work has created a powerful counterargument that sees the Mediterranean not as unique but as representative of a particular form of cultural and economic connectivity. In this view, espoused most articulately by David Abulafia, the model of cultural interaction that can be traced in the pre-modern Mediterranean can be seen as representative of a whole series of other "Mediterraneans," including not only other similarly interconnected seascapes but also other geographically distinctive environments that facilitate trade and cultural exchange, such as the Silk Road or the Sahara Desert (Abulafia, "Mediterraneans"; on thalassology and the Silk Road, see Whitfield, "Perils of Dichotomous Thinking").

Horden and Purcell themselves point out the striking differences to be seen in the ways in which various disciplines have responded to their provocative work. While the impact of *The Corrupting Sea* is clearly evident in the fields of

anthropology, archaeology, and ancient history, its effect has been less dramatic – or, at least, has been much slower to appear – in the fields of late medieval and early modern history, including cultural and literary history (“Four Years” 349–53). In part, this discrepancy may be due to disciplinary divisions within academic institutions, especially in the case of literary history, where the framework of national literature is still of paramount importance, at least in terms of institutional structures such as departmental boundaries, fellowship programs, and so on. This rigidity has begun to be challenged, however, not only through the medium of Comparative Literature and World Literature, where a range of synthetic frameworks for reading literature and language have been introduced, but also through the emergence of new conceptions of how one might place literary and linguistic histories in their broader context, one that emphasizes inter-cultural and cross-linguistic exchange. In this effort, the work of María Rosa Menocal has been seminal, not only in terms of her own specific contributions to the field of Iberian studies but also in broader terms, in the ways in which her work has inspired methodologies that reach beyond the narrow framework of national histories.

In 1987, Menocal published a study that would have a decisive impact on the practice of medieval literary history, and particularly on the study of medieval and early modern Spanish literature and culture. *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* challenged standard paradigms of European literary and intellectual history in a simple but forceful way, illustrating how, for earlier generations of scholars, arguments regarding the role of the Arabic language in the emergence of Romance vernacular poetics had largely fallen on deaf ears. This lack of receptivity was not due to any weaknesses in the arguments, for the textual evidence was strong; rather, it was due to an unwillingness to acknowledge the permeability of the cultural veil that separated Christian and Muslim communities on the Iberian peninsula during the Middle Ages. Largely due to Menocal’s influence, literary historians began to reconsider their assumptions about the interrelation of cultures not only in the territories that would become the modern nation of Spain, but in Europe more broadly. A new understanding of literary history began to emerge, one in which the Christian writers of medieval Spain took inspiration from the poetry, music, and philosophy of the Arabs. Comparable work on the art and literature of Sicily soon began to emerge, providing yet another example of the fruitful interactions between Christian and Muslim culture in the medieval Mediterranean. In addition, the study of the interplay of Romance languages and Arabic in medieval Spain soon expanded into an increased focus on the even more complex communications between Hebrew and these languages, as the different roles of Christians, Jews, and Muslims in medieval Spain came into sharper focus. Instead of a crude model of linguistic and literary succession, in which one dominant culture simply wiped out the other like waves on a beach, a more

complex model came into view, offering a sharper image of the polyvalent cultures that existed in the contact zones of the pre-modern world.

The importance of Menocal's work, then, is twofold. Both through her initial intervention in *The Arabic Role* and in her subsequent writings on the flowering and subsequent fall of the culture of al-Andalus and the emergence of Castilian Spain (especially the widely popular *Ornament of the World* and the richly evocative *Arts of Intimacy*, co-authored with Jerrilynn Dodds and Abigail Krasner Balbale), Menocal has brought the complexity of one particular region – medieval Spain – into brilliant, vibrant view. At the same time, however, Menocal has opened the door to a whole new way of thinking about European literary history, through the lens of a comparative philology nuanced by a deep understanding of the intellectual and cultural history of the region. It is crucial not to lose sight of this broader contribution to be found in Menocal's work, for it is here that her insights dovetail with other work on the dynamic intercultural exchange that took place in the medieval Mediterranean. Spain was far from being the only crossroads of intercultural and cross-linguistic contact: Sicily, both under Muslim rule and, later, under Norman Christian rule, was another such point of contact. In addition, other centres provided a comparable nexus for the meeting of cultures, as illustrated (for example) in Goitein's magisterial work on the expansive "Mediterranean society" that could be reconstructed through the documents found in the Geniza of medieval Cairo – a dramatic locus of "connectivity" inexplicably neglected by Horden and Purcell (Bagnall 340–1). The territories of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem also formed a region of cross-cultural interaction whose literary history, as witnessed in the local redactions of romances and universal chronicles, we are only just beginning to understand. Finally, brilliant work has been done by Susan Einbinder in exploring the ways in which Jewish communities in France and Italy interacted with their local Christian neighbours. While at times this interaction ended in violence and exclusion, at other times moments of cultural connection clearly took place, witnessed by the literary forms that remain from both communities on each side of the religious divide.

In approaching comparative literary history in the new light offered by Menocal's groundbreaking work, some scholars have taken inspiration from the methodologies that have emerged from postcolonial studies. Representative work of this kind can be found in the collaborative volumes on this topic edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen: Horden and Purcell single out the first of Cohen's two volumes, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, to introduce their account of how territories and frontiers had become "taboo" in recent studies of pre-modern discourse ("New Thalassology" 722n1), while the second of Cohen's volumes, *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages*, pushes the geographical dimension even farther, positing a reading of England not as the pre-modern avatar of the modern nation-state but

rather as part of a broader formation that Cohen identifies as an “archipelago.” As in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, in *Cultural Diversity* Cohen seeks to reposition the national, metropolitan centre so that “it is no longer the world’s umbilicus, but one center among many” (*Cultural Diversity* 7). In his recent survey of postcolonial approaches to medieval literature, Simon Gaunt also highlights the usefulness of Cohen’s approach, though he emphasizes the practical limitations that all too often constrain such efforts: in spite of the *desire* to move beyond national parameters, as evinced in Cohen’s avowed intention to reposition England as only “one center among many,” in practice “the training of most medievalists within disciplinary structures that are largely determined by modern national languages and literatures means that little scholarship ranges beyond the confines of one literary tradition” (“Can the Middle Ages Be Postcolonial?” 165). Gaunt proposes that the solution to this difficulty lies, in the first instance, in the improved training of graduate students in a range of medieval languages: students must learn to “work across different languages” and “understand the dissemination and use of different languages in the Middle Ages” (172). Beyond this, collaborative research can expand the field of study even farther, bridging the gaps that separate national literatures, or even clusters of interrelated national literatures.

Perhaps one of the most suggestive and potentially fruitful recent moves from within postcolonial studies has centred on the role of religion in dividing and unifying groups within the borders of the ethnic community, the language group, or the nation. In their probing essay “What Was Postcolonialism?,” Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge interrogate the grounds on which religion serves as a vector of identity within postcolonial experience. Their insights, although developed on the basis of modern cultural formations, offer potentially useful ways of viewing pre-modern religious experience in the contact zones around the Mediterranean. Building on the work of Gauri Viswanathan, Mishra and Hodge propose that religious conversions must be seen not merely as “acts of incorporation into centers of power” and therefore “an aberration,” but rather – at least in the case of voluntary conversions – as “intentional acts aimed at correcting ... inequities of class, race, and sex in culture” (Mishra and Hodge 392). Such recognition of “the enduring force of religion in culture” illustrates its instrumental role, the ways in which religion could serve as one vector among many in the movement of the individual person (or the communal group) across cultural and political boundaries. Significantly, this aspect of the pre-modern Mediterranean is identified by David Abulafia as among the most significant omissions from Horden and Purcell’s capacious study, *The Corrupting Sea*. Abulafia notes that their account of “the nature of cultural and religious exchanges” is very limited, especially with regard to “the relationship between those exchanges and trade” (65–6), and goes on to focus particular attention on “the confrontation between Islam and Christendom

in the Mediterranean,” which in Abulafia’s view “needs to be re-examined from the perspective of trade” (69). Like Mishra and Hodge, but from the very different position of the medieval historian, Abulafia highlights the vector of religion in the Mediterranean “connectivities” that form the heartstrings of Horden and Purcell’s “corrupting sea.” In their response to Abulafia’s critique, Horden and Purcell acknowledge that this remains “an undeveloped aspect of the subject” (“Four Years” 371).

More recently, a second theoretical position has begun to rival postcolonial approaches to the complex cultural interactions of the pre-modern Mediterranean region: that is, cosmopolitanism. Although we are only beginning to see studies that explicitly place Menocal’s work on al-Andalus in the context of cosmopolitanism, nonetheless it is already clear that some of the idealization of the multi-faith, multicultural environment of medieval Spain bears a strong affinity to idealizing impulses in cosmopolitan theory. This can be seen not only in the occasionally facile celebration of the *convivencia* of medieval Spain (a notion sharply critiqued in Brian Catlos’s account of “conveniencia”), but also in what William Granara has memorably named the “Andalusian chronotope.” In “Cosmopolitanism and Medievalism,” John Ganim surveys a range of examples of what he labels “utopian cosmopolitanism” (5, 7), including evocations of Granara’s “Andalusian chronotope” in Tariq Ali’s 1993 *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*. For Ganim, works such as Ali’s novel posit a conflict between “utopian cosmopolitanism” and a “repressive theocracy” (5), whether Muslim or Christian. While this conflict may not be happily resolved within the confines of the novel, Ganim suggests that it nonetheless serves the function of resolving the conflict of cosmopolitan and theocratic in the imaginary of the modern reader: such works “insist that the medieval past is not origin or lost paradise, but a continual double of the present” in which “history turns back on itself” (10–11). The pre-modern figure of exile and resistance thus becomes an avatar of the modern “cosmopolitan intellectual” (11). Ganim points out the unsettling way in which Menocal’s more recent books, *Ornament of the World* and *The Arts of Intimacy*, “seem almost as if they could stand in for the scenarios” described in the novels he surveys (10). While this is arguably a simplification of Menocal’s work, Ganim nonetheless offers a glimpse of what is potentially lost in the joyful rediscovery of the shared cultural past of al-Andalus: that is, a history of violent conflict and exclusion, a past that David Nirenberg has worked particularly hard to maintain in scholarly view.²

While cosmopolitanism has had a relatively lengthy history in the context of ethical philosophy, its role in the remapping of literary history is comparatively recent. For our purposes, the most important figure in this effort is Sheldon Pollock, who has offered an articulate, ambitious reading of how cosmopolitanism can be used as a lens through which to view large cultural formations, with a particular

focus on the role of language and literature. In “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular,” Pollock argues that cosmopolitanism can be posited against vernacularity in a binary opposition that reveals how sacred or administrative languages, such as Sanskrit or Latin, operated in contrast to the vernacular languages that would ultimately supplant them. While “cosmopolitan” is “unbounded and potentially infinite in extension,” “vernacular” is “practically finite and bounded by other finite audiences” (17). While “cosmopolitan” “assumes the universal intelligibility and applicability of a very particular and privileged mode of political identity, citizenship in the *polis*,” “vernacular” by contrast “refers to a very particular and unprivileged mode of social identity” (20). While Pollock’s primary focus is the interplay of the cosmopolitan language of Sanskrit and the Asian vernaculars that would ultimately take its place, he chooses to embed his analysis in a comparative study of what he calls “Latinitas” (as a counterpart to the “Sanskrit cosmopolis” [29]) and the romance vernaculars that grew up in its shadow. While there is much to dispute in Pollock’s argument (which he develops at greater length in his 2006 monograph *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*), his work is nonetheless useful precisely in the same way as is Horden and Purcell’s *Corrupting Sea*. In each case, the generalizations and sweeping narrative generate many points of friction and a range of critical responses; nonetheless, the effort bears fruit in that it helps to clarify what sort of questions ought to be asked, and what sort of inquiries need to go forward.

A third approach, which is central to much of the work engendered by Menocal’s pioneering study and, more specifically, to many of the essays gathered in this volume, centres on the role of philology. Throughout the period of imperial expansion, from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, the study of philology was deeply intertwined with the foundation myths of nations: national philology became the handmaiden of colonial ideology. Yet other kinds of nationalist philology were also possible, as Karla Mallette has established in vivid detail in her most recent work, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*. For several southern European nations, in contrast to their northern counterparts, philology was instead a way to craft a myth of nation that explicitly drew upon the cultural and linguistic plurality of the Mediterranean. In Italy, Spain, and Malta, Mallette suggests, Orientalist philology provided the tools to invent a myth of the nation that posited the Arabic language and even Islamic culture as not external to European culture, but constitutive of it. Philology provides a way into deep intellectual history, as well, in Stuart Elden’s recent work on the notion of and the terminology surrounding the concept of “territory.” Elden’s approach to his topic is narrow but extremely deep, ranging from Roman antiquity to the present day, focusing on the many connotations of the term *territorium* and the vocabulary that developed around it. By means of this central, philological thread, Elden is able to

illuminate the complex web of political, ethical, and linguistic filiations that have governed the discourse used to express the nature of the power that is held *over* land and possessions, as well as the nature of the power that is expressed *through* the medium of land and possessions. As Elden makes clear, it is essential to regard territory not just as “a word” or “a concept,” but as “a practice”: through the expression of the discourse of territory, territory itself is called into being. In the broadest possible terms, territory functions transhistorically and transnationally; at the same time, Elden cautions, territory must be understood in its local context, “in its historical, geographical and conceptual specificity” (14).

This seemingly paradoxical union of the general and the specific, the global and the local, is essential to any study of the pre-modern Mediterranean. Inspired by the impact of María Rosa Menocal’s work – both by the foundations she has explicitly laid in her own publications, and in the call to action she has implicitly evoked through her foregrounding of the “Arabic role” in European literary history – the essays in this volume seek to illuminate some of the most provocative questions currently in play within medieval and early modern studies. The postcolonial, the cosmopolitan, and, above all, the philological are central to the essays gathered in *A Sea of Languages*. While Menocal’s work has focused on medieval Iberia, its effects have been felt much more broadly – and its impact often acknowledged more explicitly – in scholarship generated within fields lying outside of Hispanic Studies, especially in the emergent field of Mediterranean Studies. The essays in this volume reflect a tension that persists between these two fields: like any form of scholarship grounded in a national language and history, Hispanic Studies is at odds with the self-consciously transnational formation of Mediterranean Studies. Spain, however – thanks to its insularity well into the modern period, and thanks to the developmental delay that resulted in part from its isolation – is a special case. In the Spanish context, national history is by definition Mediterranean: the waves of conquest that brought Greeks, Romans, Vandals, and Umayyad Muslims to its shores, followed by the centuries of *convivencia* during the Middle Ages, make the Iberian peninsula a Mediterranean in microcosm, a polity and a history unimaginable without the broader backdrop of Mediterranean history.

Yet the conditions of Spanish history have contributed to a paradoxical insistence on Spain’s exceptionalism and separation (from other parts of Europe, from other shores of the Mediterranean) on the part of Hispanists. Scholars of the literary history of Spain have expanded our understanding of what it means to create literature within a given national context by insisting on the multiplicity and complexity of the Spanish literary tradition. They have not responded coherently, however, to the fundamental provocation of Mediterranean Studies to work beyond the category of the modern nation, to see local microhistories and the macrohistory of the sea in indissoluble and essential continuity. In compiling

this volume, we have aimed to juxtapose essays showcasing the important interventions of scholars working within the discipline of Hispanic Studies alongside works that contextualize that scholarship and propose new directions, methodologies, and foci for future scholarship. In this respect, Menocal's *Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* has proved to be foundational to this volume, whose essays use Menocal against the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean against Menocal. Menocal's interventions provide a blueprint for a literary approach to the Mediterranean that responds energetically to the well-established Mediterranean scholarship of social and economic historians, while Mediterranean scholarship serves in turn to challenge Hispanists to think beyond the limitations of national literary formations.

Spain has a unique position in the Mediterranean, at once peripheral and metropolitan. Its marginality – its geographical distance from the centers of Arab civilization and European civilization alike – and the paradoxically cosmopolitan nature of its literary and intellectual history make it a fascinating test case for some of the fundamental insights of Mediterranean scholarship. To put it another way, our central purpose in this volume is to frame Spain: that is, to point out what is exemplary and what is anomalous about Spanish history, highlighting Spain's role as a gateway or frontier in the medieval history of cultural, religious, and linguistic encounter in the Mediterranean region. We draw Spain more fully into the Mediterranean setting by putting Hispanists into dialogue with scholars working on Mediterranean topics from other shores of the sea. The opening sequence of essays provides a range of ways to approach the connectivity and mobility of medieval Mediterranean culture, while the second sequence focuses on the Spanish context, enriched by the broader framework of Mediterranean Studies. Taken together, these two juxtaposed angles of approach produce a dialectical account of both Spain and the Mediterranean, in which Spain is at once a special case and the very paradigm of medieval connectivity.

As Isidore of Seville makes clear in his great encyclopedia, the *Etymologies*, the Mediterranean is more than a sea: it is the space that makes the whole world coherent. In the passage that appears as an epigraph to this introduction, Isidore for the first time gives the Great Sea the name we know it by, "Mediterranean":

The Great Sea is the one that flows from the Ocean out of the West, turns to the South, and finally stretches to the North. It is called "great" because the other seas are smaller in comparison with it. This is also called the "Mediterranean" because it flows through the "middle of the land" (*media terrae*) all the way to the East, separating Europe, Africa, and Asia. (Trans. Barney et al. 277)

Horden and Purcell suggest that not until the nineteenth century do we witness the real "invention" of the Mediterranean, "as a region and not just a sea": only

at this time, they claim, “did it become ... a full-fledged geographical expression” (“New Thalassology” 728). Without taking away from the historical specificity of that nineteenth-century moment and its role in the emergence of a modern conception of the region, it is worth pointing out the extent to which, already for Isidore, the Mediterranean was much more than just a great sea.

In this seminal passage, written by the Spanish bishop not long after the fall of the Roman Empire, and not long before the first Islamic armies would enter the Iberian peninsula to establish a new kind of rule and a new kind of society, the “Great Sea” is already a principle of order, embracing within its watery arms the four cardinal directions. It unites West, South, North, and East; but it also divides, separating out the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia into distinct parts. In the medieval world maps appearing in the works of Isidore, which display the conventional “T-O” form, the Mediterranean appears as the letter T dividing what the map rubrics call “the three parts of the world.” The T also evokes the figure of the Cross on which Christ was crucified, a remembrance made explicit on some monumental world maps that actually inscribe the head, hands, and feet of Jesus at the corners of the ecumene. Yet Isidore’s evocation of the Mediterranean is at once global and local, for the description of the Great Sea immediately transitions into an account of the regions proximate to it. For the Spanish bishop, these regions are the parts of Iberia. Isidore begins his detailed account of the Mediterranean Sea with the local, stating that “the curve of its first part, which washes the Spanish regions, is called Iberian and Balearic. Then comes the Gallic part ...” (13.16.2; ed. Lindsay 2.98, trans. Barney 277). Once he finishes his catalogue of the various watery regions of the Mediterranean, Isidore begins to enumerate the regions of the surrounding land, which in his presentation also constitutes the “Mediterranean,” the so-called “middle land” of the world: “And just as the land, though it is a single thing, may be referred to with various names in different places, so also this Great Sea is named with different names according to the region; for it is called Iberian and Asiatic from the names of provinces, and Balearic, Sicilian, Cretan, Cypriot, Aegean, Carpathian from the names of islands” (13.16.5; ed. Lindsay 2.98, trans. Barney 277–8). For Isidore, the Mediterranean is general, the central form that gives the whole world its shape; yet it is also specific, particular to the Spanish bishop’s own homeland.³ Here, the global and the local appear as two sides of the same coin.

A Sea of Languages consists of two strands of essays, with a cluster titled “Philology in the Mediterranean” followed by a second cluster titled “The Cosmopolitan Frontier: Andalusí Case Studies.” The strong transnational impulse of the opening strand is evident in Sharon Kinoshita’s exploration of the various romance vernaculars of the pre-modern Mediterranean. In “Beyond Philology: Cross-Cultural Engagement in Literary History and Beyond,” Sharon Kinoshita

illustrates the disturbing narrowness of the nationalist narratives through which French literary history is too often read. Grounding her analysis in a reading of the foundational text of the French “nation,” the *Chanson de Roland*, Kinoshita shows how this epic continues to provide the basis for contemporary readings of medieval engagements with Islam, even those that explicitly position themselves within a postcolonial perspective. Instead, Kinoshita argues, we should be looking more closely at the range of medieval French romances and epics that demonstrate the extraordinary fluidity and interpenetration of Mediterranean culture, as well as at material artifacts that reveal the contours of the routes of trade and exchange that crisscrossed the region. This evidence, in Kinoshita’s view, reveals the extent to which the Mediterranean was “a transitional space – a contact zone of commercial exchange and cross-confessional interaction.” This insight, in turn, requires us to revisit conventional notions of periodization, re-examining the ways in which an explicitly non-Arab, non-Islamic Middle Ages came into being through the self-conscious foundation of the Renaissance subject. This is especially visible in the figure of Petrarch who – at least in his own self-presentation – functions as a kind of “hinge” between periods, drawing a sharp line to separate an abject medieval past from an exuberantly modern future.

In the strand’s second essay, “Linguistic Difference, the Philology of Romance, and the Romance of Philology,” Simon Gaunt continues to interrogate the nationalist myths of origin that underlie French philology. Unlike Kinoshita, however, he situates his analysis in the borderland of hybrid literary languages, arguing that the mixed vernaculars such as Franco-Italian and Franco-Occitan in which many medieval verse romances and *chansons de geste* were composed were far from being defective, sub-standard expressions of proper, normative French. On the contrary, though an intricate reading of the Catalan-Occitan verse narrative *Frayre de Joy et Sor de Plaser*, Gaunt suggests that such hybrid literary vernaculars functioned as a powerful expression of social and mercantile networks. Building upon his earlier work on the hybridized literary language of Franco-Italian, Gaunt shows how the nationalist philologies that underlie histories of southern France and northern Spain often minimize the extent to which the regions share a common, complex literary and linguistic history.

The next two essays in the “Philology in the Mediterranean” strand move from the literary expression of cultural and social exchange to the field of history of religion. The essays of Tolan and Saleh are essentially dialogic in nature, laying out the different constituencies involved in an assessment of medieval Spain in particular, and the Mediterranean more broadly: not only the medieval communities – Muslim, Christian, and Jewish – that inhabited the region, but also the modern stake-holders, both scholars and non-academics, who continue to participate in imagining what might have been the reality of al-Andalus. In “Forging New

Paradigms: Towards a History of Islamo-Christian Civilization,” John Tolan builds upon Richard Bulliet’s influential study, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, arguing that medievalists are obliged to speak out regarding what they know of the “shared intellectual and cultural inheritance” of the “linguistically and religiously hybrid societies that ringed the Mediterranean.” Tolan is cautious about drawing any simple lessons from the pre-modern past in order to inform the post-modern present; he is, however, acutely aware of the dangers that lie both in the idealization of the Andalusian past, and in its denigration by those who subscribe to the pernicious ‘clash of civilizations’ model popularized by Samuel Huntington.

In “Reflections on Muslim Hebraism,” Walid Saleh explores the vulnerability of the scattered Muslim communities that struggled to maintain a toe-hold in fifteenth-century Spain. As Saleh shows, these Muslims lived in an increasingly tense and fragile environment as the inevitable final expulsions got closer and closer. Through the case-study of a late medieval Arabic manuscript written by a Muslim in a predominantly Christian environment, Saleh allows us to glimpse a community in crisis, acutely aware of the way in which it has been cut off from the central body of the community of Muslims or *umma*, and the extent to which knowledge of Islamic law and theology as well as facility in learned Arabic had declined in the last few generations. For such Muslims, attempts to refute anti-Islamic polemics entailed an increasingly direct engagement with the Bible, a text towards which they were “ambivalent”: in Saleh’s words, “The Bible was a shadow of the Qur’an, always accompanying it, and always impossible to ignore.” Saleh makes a special appeal to scholars working in his own field of Islamic Studies to pay more attention to the moments of cultural, theological, and linguistic engagement on the part of Islamo-Arabic authors with Jewish and Christian texts. For Saleh himself, this project entails a detailed study of the history of Bible in Islam, work that complements the growing field of studies of the Qur’an in the western tradition pioneered by Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny and continued today by Thomas Burman.

With Paulo Horta’s “‘Mixing the East with the West’: Cosmopolitan Philology in Richard Burton’s Translations from Camões,” we turn to the remarkable nineteenth-century explorer and diplomat who prided himself on his ability to pass unnoticed across religious, cultural, and linguistic borders. Horta focuses on Burton’s largely unknown, as-yet unpublished translations of Camões’s *Lusiads*. Like his wildly popular translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, Burton’s rendering of Camões’s narrative of national might and imperial conquest inhabits a curious cultural space, one which seeks to recreate the qualities of a people within the English language by making philology the privileged vehicle of ethnography, both of these in the service of a renewed imperialism. Burton’s engagement with

the Portuguese experience of empire, especially as seen in his work on Camões, reveals more than a simple desire to build the structure of a British Empire upon the foundations laid by the Portuguese; instead, “the cosmopolitan travel and sensibility” of Camões and his fellow explorers provided “a positive model” for “reform and reinvigoration of . . . an ailing British imperial enterprise.” What Burton admires most of all in Camões, however, is the “Mediterraneanism” he finds in his Portuguese fellow cosmopolitan. In Burton’s self-reflective engagement with Camões, we observe “the palimpsest quality of the imperial philologies, Portuguese and English, which would bridge the Mediterranean and ‘Oriental’ worlds.”

The cluster’s final essay, Karla Mallette’s “Reading Backward: *The Thousand and One Nights* and Philological Practice,” begins with a word-history of the term “philology” itself, offering a “bouquet” of definitions of the word. Mallette continually evokes the metaphorical and allusive, anchoring her argument with a glittering through-line that is perhaps most visible in her naming of the renowned Galland manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights* not as “it,” but as “her,” thus metonymically linking it to the voice of the storyteller Shahrazad. On closer examination, however, these feminine sites of narrative origin prove to function as intermediaries through which the *Nights* gives voice to the suppressed history of Abbasid Baghdad, a dark tale of betrayal by the Barmakids followed by their subsequent accusation and massacre. Mallette’s reading – an audacious “reading backward” – provides a way to read history against the grain by means of the medium of literary regeneration and fecundity, following the thread of philology through the labyrinth of interlocked tales.

Mallette’s “Reading Backward” brings the first sequence of essays on “Philology in the Mediterranean” to a close. The second sequence, “The Cosmopolitan Frontier: Andalusí Case Studies,” opens with Ross Brann’s “Andalusí ‘Exceptionalism,’” an exploration of the faith communities that inhabited medieval Spain: the Jewish population of Sefarad, and the Muslim population that struggled to survive as modern Christian “Spain” came into being. In “Andalusí ‘Exceptionalism,’” Brann offers a comparative analysis of the imagined communities of Muslim “al-Andalus” and Jewish “Sefarad,” illustrating the extent to which nationalistic celebrations of the region, rooted in climate theory and geographical idealizations, were shared across cultural and religious boundaries. He shows the ways in which both modern scholars and pre-modern poets have described the territory of medieval Spain in terms of “exceptionalism,” asserting that this land – whether identified as “Sefarad” or “al-Andalus” – was fortunate in its climate, its geographical situation, its cultural excellence, and the quality of its artistic achievements. Even after the expulsion of Jewish and Muslim communities, Brann shows, a strong nostalgia continued to be expressed for the “paradise” that had been left behind, and which persisted only in memory.

Ryan Szpiech's contribution, "The *Convivencia* Wars: Decoding Historiography's Polemic with Philology," explores the complex history of the fields of study – history and philology – that have attempted to take stock of the multicultural, multi-faith environment of pre-modern Spain. Szpiech gives an expansive account of the intertwined genealogies of philology, historiography, and philosophy in the wake of the Enlightenment, highlighting the ways in which the study of the languages and culture of medieval Iberia has been inflected by the profoundly different methodologies that competed for primacy. Szpiech argues that a fuller understanding of this history allows us to "frame the discussion in new terms that do not reduce the question of interaction between the faiths of medieval Iberia to a facile one simply of tolerance or intolerance, but instead emphasize the importance of methodology in determining the outcome of historical and philological research." Philological approaches, in Szpiech's view, must be explicitly situated as literary analysis, on the one hand, and as a mode of history, on the other. Only with such a fully self-conscious, self-reflective approach can philological study of pre-modern Spain – and, by extension, Mediterranean societies more broadly – avoid the Scylla of teleological myths of the nation, and the Charybdis of an artificial and idealized *convivencia*.

Cynthia Robinson turns to the intersection of pictorial art and religious text in northern Spain to explore how Muslim devotional practices fertilized the cultural productions of the Christian *Reconquista*. "In One of My Body's Gardens: Hearts in Transformation in Late Medieval Iberian Passion Devotions" hauntingly conveys how medieval Christian artists incorporated Islamic materials into the most intimate of religious milieus, the representation of Christ's Passion. Like Ryan Szpiech in the preceding essay, Robinson interrogates the value of the often over-idealized notion of Spanish *convivencia*, seeking to displace it with a more nuanced way of reading devotional materials from a cross-cultural perspective. Her interpretation of the Passion narrative written by the Franciscan Francesc Eiximenis models how a comparative devotional reading can bridge the divide that separated fifteenth-century Muslim and Christian faith communities. Castilian readers of Eiximenis's narrative were encouraged to meditate on the stainless heart of Mary, rather than on the broken body of Christ as was typical of Latin Passion texts written in European lands north of Spain. Christ's body appears not as abject or in a state of humiliation, inviting compassionate sorrow and pain, but rather as a "vessel devoid of all human content," analogous to the pure heart evoked in the devotional poems of Ibn 'Arabi. For Eiximenis, the heart of the worshipper comes to mirror the heart of Christ and the heart of his Mother, united through "the mimetic identification of lover with divine beloved."

Robinson's exploration of the cross-cultural exchange of devotional imagery finds its musical counterpart in Dwight Reynolds's masterful study of the

movement of musical motifs among diverse ethnic and religious communities. In “Contacts, Influences, and Hybridization: Rethinking the History of Medieval Music in the Iberian Peninsula,” Reynolds draws upon Menocal’s arguments concerning medieval literary history in order to illustrate the extent to which musical history conforms to and deviates from larger patterns of cultural interaction. For the field of musicology, as for the field of Romance philology, medieval Spain was long a site of contention: the “Arab hypothesis” was hotly disputed within both fields of study, with the claim frequently being put forth that not only the lyric content but also the melodic forms of the Occitan and Catalan troubadours had been derived from Arab sources. Reynolds persuasively demonstrates the ample opportunities for such cross-cultural transmission, based on historical sources concerning performance practices and the movement of musicians and poets among courts both Muslim and Christian. Yet while we can clearly trace shared poetic themes, metaphors, and lyrical motifs, other areas of overlap are more difficult to find. These include the use of end rhyme, whose origins still remain somewhat obscure, and the close correspondence of melodic changes with shifts in rhyme – a standard feature among Arab musical poets, but unattested within the surviving corpus of troubadour poetry. Reynolds demonstrates that both the “European nationalist” vision of the development of music in medieval Spain and the “Arab hypothesis” that posits transmission from Muslims in al-Andalus to passively receptive Christian Europeans are equally misguided: “Instead, the evidence points to complex genealogies and patterns of cross-fertilization which resist being captured in simple master narratives.”

The complexly interwoven courts of Muslim and Christian rulers surveyed by Reynolds are mirrored in the equally intricate relations that linked medieval Spain with Sicily. In “Sicilian Poets in Seville: Literary Affinities across Political Boundaries,” William Granara surveys the poetry of Sicilians who made their way in the late eleventh century to the Abbasid court at Seville during the Norman Conquest of Sicily, focusing particularly on the Siculo-Muslim poet Ibn Hamdis. Although Muslim Sicily is often seen as a satellite state of medieval al-Andalus, Granara challenges this view, arguing that the web of filiation between the two regions was both complex and variable. While both Sicily and al-Andalus might loosely be described as “frontier” cultures, Granara makes clear the extent to which the two domains differed from one another, and how the nature of those “frontiers” varied over time. Granara uses the paired concepts of philology and “worldliness” in order to describe the interactions that can be charted in the shared history of Spain and Sicily: following Edward Said’s formulation, Granara juxtaposes a philology that entails “a detailed, patient scrutiny” and “a lifelong attentiveness” to the use of language and rhetoric with a “worldliness” that serves as a foundation for “humanistic praxis.” In Granara’s view, the relationship of the exiled Sicilian

poet Ibn Hamdis to his Andalusian patron al-Mu'tamid Ibn 'Abbad was based neither in an established, historical link between Sicily and Spain, nor in a shared religious outlook, nor in a common ethnic origin; instead, their bond was founded on the "worldliness" that each man recognized in the other, forming a substrate of mutual understanding expressed through the medium of poetic sensibility.

Granara illustrates how audiences in Seville might have understood the exilic poetry of their Sicilian guests as a harbinger of the fate that might await the Abbasids of al-Andalus at the hands of some future conqueror. David Wacks's essay, "Vidal Benvenist's *'Efer ve-Dinab* between Hebrew and Romance," turns to the aftermath of this future event. Wacks contributes to a radical realignment of literary history by arguing that Iberian Hebrew literature must be read in tandem with medieval Arabic texts, and that both participated in the early formation of Spanish vernacular literature. While *'Efer ve-Dinab* has most commonly been studied within Hebrew literary traditions, Wacks shows the many ways in which the text can be fruitfully situated within vernacular traditions, juxtaposing it with texts such as the French *Floire et Blancheflor* and the Castilian *Grisel y Mirabella*: in sum, this narrative mixture of prose and poetry should properly be read "not only as Hebrew *mahberet*, but also as European novella or romance." While the beleaguered Jewish community of early fifteenth-century Zaragoza clearly lived under enormous pressure, to which they responded with an increasingly desperate "proto-nationalism," writers such as Benvenist also lived in a world of thriving Romance vernacularity: "this was a Jewish community that shared a common vernacular culture, language, and literature with their Christian neighbors ... these are authors working in the Romance world." Wacks shows how the Hebrew story of tragic love and misguided marriage found in *'Efer ve-Dinab* may have laid the foundations for the rise of Hispanic "malmaridada" narratives such as those composed by Lope de Vega and Cervantes, thus establishing the Hebrew building blocks for some of the best-known literature of Spain's "Golden Age."

In "The Shadow of Islam in Cervantes' 'El Licenciado Vidriera,'" Leyla Rouhi turns to the greatest figure of Golden Age Spain, reconstructing Cervantes's curiously ambivalent relationship to the Arab past of his emphatically Christian nation. Cervantes's traditional place as a founding father of Spanish literary history, often couched explicitly in nationalist terms, is challenged in Rouhi's reconstruction of the nostalgic longing for al-Andalus that emerges from the pages of Cervantes's short story. In "'The Finest Flowering': Poetry, History, and Medieval Spain in the Twenty-First Century," María Rosa Menocal draws upon her profound knowledge of the Andalusian past and its place in Spanish and European narratives of national history in order to articulate the nature of the lessons that the past can teach the present. Menocal offers an elegant philological reading of the past that does not flatten its difference while still making clear its relevance to

the present. She shows how poetry – as a representative of all the arts – is simultaneously able to illuminate and contradict the apparently self-evident “facts on the ground” revealed by conventional modes of historical analysis. In Menocal’s words, “poetry reveals the sometimes unbearable contradictions that political and ideological discourse rarely tolerates”; as a result, poetry is able to convey “a very different story and one which is at least as true,” so that we twenty-first-century readers are able to “learn things about society from aesthetic forms that would otherwise be unknowable.”

With the retrospective vision of Menocal’s “Finest Flowering,” the second sequence of essays in *A Sea of Languages* comes to a close. The volume concludes with co-editor Karla Mallette’s “Boustrophedon,” an essay that is Janus-faced, at once retrospective and prospective. It looks back in an elegiac remembrance of the remnants of Mediterranean literature and culture that are the focus of *A Sea of Languages*, but it also looks forward in what can only be called a philological manifesto, aiming to take some initial steps towards “a literary theory of the Mediterranean.” As “Boustrophedon” makes clear, the editors’ undertaking in this volume has also led us to try to articulate in direct, even polemical, terms what kinds of avenues a “new philology” might pursue, based on the foundations established by the essays contained in *A Sea of Languages*. In this respect, “Boustrophedon” emphatically looks not just backward, but forward. Like Simon Gaunt in his survey of postcolonial approaches to the Middle Ages, Mallette highlights the need for broader linguistic training of the students who will make up the next generations of scholars. She goes on, moreover, to highlight the special role that might be played by the philologist, asking what strategies literary historians might use to write the history of a region in which linguistic formation has always been multiple, dynamic, even mercurial. If in recent years literary historians have learned crucial lessons from social and economic historians, now, Mallette argues, philologists must bring a peculiarly *literary* sensibility to bear on medieval Mediterranean history in order to define the next phase of research. Our vision of the history we study is, at times, clouded by the instruments we use to analyse it, as Ryan Szpiech demonstrates in detail in his essay in this volume. In order to produce a fresh account of the medieval Mediterranean, we must devise a new template for our analyses, a new repertoire of images that we might use to interpret medieval texts. Mallette identifies linguistic complexity as the central challenge of writing Mediterranean literary history, and points out that the analytic metaphors that philologists have used to characterize pre-modern texts have not done justice to this complexity. Though they have worked admirably to enable sophisticated descriptions of specific literary historical problems – the evolutionary descent of the Romance languages from late Latin, for instance – the arboreal metaphors of traditional philological scholarship occlude the sorts of readings proposed by the essays in *A Sea of Languages*.

It is crucial, however, to point out that one potentially very fruitful approach to comparative literary studies, Franco Moretti's recent work on genre, is founded precisely on the same arboreal metaphors that have long formed the backbone of philological method. Significantly, Moretti explicitly situates his own literary-historical methodology in the context of Braudel's historiography, in an approach that is at once narrowly formalist (25n14) and yet capacious enough to take in the "longue durée" (13–14). Through three conceptual models – the graph, the map, and the tree – Moretti establishes formalist frameworks through which it is possible to see the big picture of comparative European literary history.⁴ Moretti's model of the tree, unlike its counterpart in conventional philology, is polyvalent: it is both "interconnected *and* branching," illustrating "syncretism *and* divergence" (79; emphasis in original). The formal variations within a given genre are not to be characterized simply in terms of conformity to a norm or departure from it, but rather in terms of the dialectical relationship of both processes: "Convergence ... only arises *on the basis of previous divergence* ... Conversely, a successful convergence usually produces *a powerful new burst of divergence*" (80). Moretti's approach to modern genres, which centres on the emergence and development of the novel, works equally well as a way of dealing with medieval genres, especially the capacious and sprawling genre of medieval romance. One could imagine a Mediterranean genre theory that would select a text that appears in a large number of redactions across a wide range of vernacular languages – for example, *The Book of John Mandeville*, the hugely popular *Roman de Fierabras*, or Orosius's universal chronicle of world history – and use it to take a broad sample of the dissemination of a particular narrative form across the languages and cultures that cluster about the shores of the Great Sea and inhabit its many islands. Such a comparative mode of reading would be broad but not deep, in a strategic choice to sacrifice sharpness of the individual reading in order to catch a glimpse of the movement of narrative forms and thematic motifs as they crystallize in a range of different milieux.

Such work, however, still lies ahead, and it is very different from what we hope to have achieved in the present volume: one might describe it as the horizontal counterpart to the vertical mode of philology, which twists and turns its way into the subterranean past – and into imagined futures – like Ariadne's twine. If an approach to the pre-modern Mediterranean patterned on Moretti's work on genre will allow us to map the labyrinth and even to superimpose on it all the other possible architectural models to which it might correspond, a philological approach of the sort we have proposed in *A Sea of Languages* offers a way to penetrate the hidden core of the maze – or, perhaps, to find the way out. In order to capture the interplay of languages in the medieval Mediterranean, in order to describe the significance of historical events which social, economic, and now literary historians

have so meticulously excavated in recent decades, we need more robust rhetorical and symbolic strategies to represent a historical complexity characterized in particular by linguistic density and connectivity. This is a task that necessarily falls to the specialists: philologists, familiar with the material history of writing and the rhetorical strategies and image banks used by the writers of the past. In the closing pages of *A Sea of Languages*, Mallette presents the “boustrophedon” text – in which alternate lines run from left to right and from right to left – as a model for alternate ways of viewing texts and textual generation. It would be all too easy to read teleologically, moving from the ninth-century riddle that attests to the earliest traces of Italian vernacular to the Arabo-Romance novel of the twenty-first century: instead, we propose a reading that circles back to the point of origin, and then turns about to face the future.

This move might be seen as a corrective counterpart to Petrarch’s famous ascent of Mont Ventoux, the moment in which he self-consciously inscribed himself within an ancient lineage extending back through Augustine, Seneca, and Cicero to the passionate epic heart of Greek verse. On the mountaintop, Petrarch imagined himself to be standing wholly outside of the clutter of the intervening ages, united with the classical authors who were – in this imagined community of letters – his beloved friends. Here, he could be free of the Islamo-Arabic heritage that permeated the medieval Mediterranean, a legacy that – as Tolán, Kinoshita, and Mallette all remind us – Petrarch so energetically sought to repudiate. It is fitting that Petrarch would ascend the mountain in order to shake off these medieval bonds: as both Braudel and Horden and Purcell tell us, in terms of climate, “every mountaintop is outside the Mediterranean” (Braudel, *Memory* 26–7; Horden and Purcell, “New Thalassology” 734). No matter how much Petrarch worked to inscribe himself within a pure linguistic and literary lineage, positing a philological umbilicus connecting him to ancient Greece by way of the glories of Rome, he was not able to suppress completely the traces of the Mediterranean, with all its complex and impure cross-cultural heritage. Even for the father of all poets, Homer, the many shores of the Great Sea were constantly in corrupting flux, leading both soldiers and sailors astray.⁵ In spite of – or, perhaps, because of – his heroic efforts to be the poetic heir to Homer, Petrarch may also have been “more Mediterranean than Greek.”

NOTES

- 1 Braudel made an additional, posthumous contribution to the developing field of Mediterranean Studies in *Les Mémoires de la Méditerranée* (based on an unpublished draft manuscript written in 1968–9).

- 2 Contrasting “anti-semitic” and “philo-semitic” approaches to the pre-modern past, Nirenberg argues that both of these “miss what I think is the more important conclusion: that both exclusion and inclusion are inseparable faces of a debate over Islam that appears in tandem with the idea of Europe itself” (Nirenberg, “Islam and the West” 24). For a sensitive appreciation of Menocal’s work and its important place within what Nirenberg identifies as the “philo-semitic” mode of scholarship, see Nirenberg, “Islam and the West” 18–20. For a more polemical engagement with the political stakes riding on idealizations of the multi-faith, multi-cultural medieval past, see Nirenberg, “Hope’s Mistakes.”
- 3 Isidore’s special emphasis on the place of Spain within world geography can also be seen in his account of the nations and languages of the world; similar nationalist impulses within universal histories or encyclopedias can be found in the work of the English writers Bartholomaeus Anglicus and Robertus Anglicus. On Isidore and Bartholomaeus, see Akbari, *Idols in the East* 42–6, 64; on Bartholomaeus and Robertus, see Akbari, “Diversity of Mankind” 162–3.
- 4 On mapping, especially the labyrinthine schematic, see Moretti 43, 55–7; on the verticality of the tree model, see 69–70, 91.
- 5 On the role of Homer in the conception of the “corrupting sea,” see Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea* 24–5, 43; “New Thalassology” 724; and “Four Years” 359: “Our Mediterranean is partly discourse, with the *Odyssey* as its creator – but only partly.”