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# AN INTERSTITIAL HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL IBERIAN POETRY

*David A. Wacks*

## Whose history?

The Iberian Peninsula during the period ca. 1000–1500 was home to a poetic culture that was not defined by a national agenda. Poetry emanated from the monastery, the synagogue, the court, and the literary salon. Poets composed and performed in a variety of Ibero-Romance and classical languages, often more than one. The nationalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has produced a literary historical legacy emphasizing the individual, national language – in some cases (Galician, Catalan) a language striving for political recognition. The works of medieval Iberian poets who wrote in more than one of these vernaculars – and there were many – were divided, edited, and studied as parts of separate traditions, the distinct patrimonies of Spain, Catalonia, Galicia, or Portugal. Hebrew and Arabic poets came to be identified with the national literary histories of other countries and linguistic groups who likewise divided their works according to national language and cast off those poems written in other tongues. Latin, the liturgical, administrative, and creative language of Christian Iberian kingdoms and to a lesser extent the Christian communities of al-Andalus, suffered tremendous marginalization in the modern era, and to this day there is a vast corpus of Iberian Latin belles lettres that has evaded the gaze of the modern literary critic. The resulting literary history is a series of silos, each containing a rich corpus and interpretive tradition of a single language, with little exception prior to the 1980s.

The most significant disruptor to this pattern of national literary history was Américo Castro, who during the second half of the twentieth century promoted the thesis of the Three Cultures, the idea that Spain's national culture was not a product of a Roman-Visigothic-Habsburgian cultural continuity, but rather was the hybrid product of the various religious and ethnic traditions who had always populated the Iberian Peninsula, including the Andalusi Muslim and Sephardic Jewish traditions (Castro 1948, 1954, 1961, 1962). While he did not go as far as displacing Castile from the center of Spanish studies, he opened the field to Hispano-Arabic and Hispano-Hebrew studies. One effect of this intervention was to privilege the literary voices of non-Christian residents of Christian Iberia. Castro's thesis was an important intervention and corrective to the excesses and particular distortions of the national literatures approach, but ultimately essentialist because his multicultural vision was still in service to a national

(Spanish) project. María Rosa Menocal later took Castro's work a step further, challenging the hegemony of Castilian and the idea of "Europeanness" that informed the approaches of her teachers' generation toward medieval Iberian culture (Menocal 1987, 1994, 2002).

The idea of examining these various textual traditions at their linguistic and religious interstices is not to ascribe a modern "national essence" to the medieval reality, but rather to demonstrate that the breadth, variety, and interaction of traditions that are now considered distinct was simply the regular state of affairs. That is, what to us appears to be interstitial was to audiences at the time not. The "hybrid," the "cross-cultural," the "mutual influence" are all anachronisms. Medieval Iberian audiences did not experience these forms in this way. To them it was poetry, plain and simple. They were not struggling against a national languages model of literary history – that's our problem today.

As a corrective to the national language approach that has dominated literary history for the past two centuries, John Dagenais suggests, in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, that we "focus on the myriad points of intersection among traditions we might today recognize as separate literarily and linguistically" (Dagenais 2004, 47). In so doing, we can begin to develop a vision of the texture of the literary history of medieval Iberia that approximates how "they" lived it. This in itself presents at least two methodological and ideological problems. First, what does an "accurate" or "scientific" literary history mean? Can we actually aspire to a "better" representation of literary history? Any criteria we introduce to replace that of national language will have its own (flawed) ideological basis. Second, even in reacting to the national language model we are preserving its structures, observing it in the breach.

What is the problem, exactly? The national languages model of literary history serves a national linguistic policy that values uniformity and linguistic hegemony of a single language. A nationalist ideology is strengthened by common linguistic and cultural identity. This narrative, while perhaps productive from an early capitalist perspective (capitalism favors interchangeability, uniformity, reproduceability), is problematic from the point of view of a society (such as ours today) that at least officially values cultural and linguistic diversity. If we cannot avoid falling into the trap of shackling our literary history to a given ideology, at least we can try to be transparent about our motives.

I am going to begin with Arabic, not because it was the first language in which poets composed in the Iberian Peninsula, but because it is, in terms of Hispano-Romance literary history, the Elephant in the Peninsula. Despite the work of scholars such as Américo Castro and María Rosa Menocal who opened the literary history of Spain to the richness of its Semitic cultural legacy, the practice of Spanish literary history is still largely the history of Castilian. Only rarely in anything that bills itself as a literary history of Spain does Arabic appear. In the *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, John Dagenais (2004) and María Rosa Menocal (2004) discuss the plurilinguistic situation of "medieval Spain" (itself, as Dagenais points out, a back formation), but there is no chapter devoted to Arabic and/or Hebrew literature of the Peninsula, let alone Catalan, which in the medieval period is undeniably a richer, aesthetically superior corpus when compared with the Castilian. In fact, as Menocal herself points out, in all of the histories of Spanish literature produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, only one dedicates a chapter to Hispano-Arabic literature (Millás Vallicrosa 1949). The other notable exception is the volume of the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* dedicated to al-Andalus, which spans the Arabic, Hebrew, and Romance literary production of what one might call "greater al-Andalus," for it includes authors such as Petrus Alfonsi and Ramon Llull, who lived in Christian Iberia (Menocal et al. 2000).

## Arabic and Hebrew poetry in al-Andalus

Arabic was the official language of state in al-Andalus, first in the Umayyad Caliphate and then in the Party Kingdoms, the *muluk at-Tawa'if* that rose in the wake of the disintegration of the Caliphate. It was not the native language of all Andalusis, who spoke Arabic, Tamazigh, and Romance languages respectively, but rather was a lingua franca that united the various ethnic and religious groups living in al-Andalus. Classical Arabic was the language of Islam, of the court, the legal system, of scientific inquiry, of poetry (López-Morillas 1999; Wasserstein 1991). Arabic writers of al-Andalus participated in the vast literary culture of the Arab world, which stretched from al-Andalus in the West to Mughal India in the East. In some cases they introduced new styles that distinguished al-Andalus as a center of innovation at the far edge of the Arab world. Over time the Caliphal capital at Córdoba became known as a court that competed (or at least imagined itself competing) with Abbasid Baghdad in poetic, artistic, and intellectual refinement (Cachia 1992; Jayyusi 1992; Monroe 2004, 3–71).

As elsewhere in the Muslim world, religious minorities such as Christians and Jews were not barred access to public life and regularly served in highly placed positions at court. Jewish courtiers distinguished themselves, and by the reign of Abd ar-Rahman III in the tenth century a man such as Hasdai ibn Shaprut could rise to prominence at court, where he served the Caliph as physician, advisor, and diplomat. During this time Dunash ben Labrat developed a Hebrew poetics that mirrored the aesthetics of the Arabic poetry of his day, mapping Arabic meters, motifs, and genres onto Biblical Hebrew language (Brann 1991, 29–33; Cole 2007, 23–24; Schirmann 1956, 31–41). Over time, this Arabicizing Hebrew poetry became the dominant aesthetic in Hebrew poetry in al-Andalus and beyond. This embrace of Arabic poetics meant not only that Sephardic poets such as Dunash ben Labrat and those who came after him adopted the meters, motifs, and commonplaces of the Arab poets, but also that they began to use Hebrew poetry to express themes and give voice to ideas that were not in the service of liturgy (Schippers 1994). Arabic thus enabled Hebrew to move beyond the synagogue; for the first time since the Biblical era, Hebrew poets waxed lyrical over the generosity of great men, the beauty of young girls and boys, the delights of drinking wine in a fragrant garden, and the philosophical (but not always devout) musings of the poet. In turn, this secular poetics inspired new innovations in the poetry of the synagogue, which was now populated by the gazelles and beloveds of the Arab poets, who took their place beside the traditional Biblical motifs with which Hebrew poets had been praising God since the Biblical era (Cole 2007; Scheindlin 1986, 1991). In its mimicry of Arabic, Hebrew developed a secular poetics and a rich corpus of poetry both profane and devout that would go on to become the classical tradition of modern Hebrew literature. However, were one to open a modern history of Hebrew literature, the poems of Andalusí authors such as Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Moses ibn Ezra would not include their Arabic writings, which were just as “Jewish” as they were “Andalusí.” Modern literary historiography obscures just as much as it edifies, and would have us think, as Menocal has written, that the work of medieval poets was “little more than the primitive stages of what will eventually become the real thing” (Menocal 2004, 61) whether that real thing be “Arabic,” “Hebrew,” or “Spanish” literature.

When literary critics write about cultural crossings, mutual influences, or exchange they inevitably turn to translation as one of the conduits of literary material between linguistic or national traditions. Poetry is notoriously resistant to translation, and in the medieval period we see almost no translation of poetry that is not scriptural. In the Andalusí period the closest we come to poetic translations are perhaps the Hebrew rhyming prose works translated from

Arabic, such as Judah al-Harizi's translation of the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri, the *Mahberet Itti'el* (al-Harizi 1952, 1965, 2001). However, even in these cases the poet replaces the Arabic verses of al-Hariri interspersed with the rhyming prose with new original verses in Hebrew.

At the court of Alfonso X "The Learned" of Castile-León, poets composed verse in several languages, including Latin, Galician-Portuguese, Provençal, and Hebrew (Alvar 1984; Cabo Aseguinolaza et al. 2010, 398; O'Callaghan 1993, 144–146; Procter 1951, 130–132; Salvador Martínez 2003, 2010; Snow 1977, 7; Targarona Borrás 1985). Only Castilian, the official language of Alfonso's court, was not used for poetry. So resistant was poetry to translation that even when the Castilian itself was not considered a fit vehicle for original poetic composition, there is still no evidence of poetic translation into Castilian (Burnett 1994; Gil 1985; Jacquart 1991; Sáenz-Badillos 1996a). Why might this have been? In a time and place where writers produced volumes of history, law, religious narrative poetry, scientific treatises, and all manner of secular prose in Castilian, not until the mid-fourteenth century do courtly poets begin to compose in the language of the court? Castile was ironically out of step with Galicia, Catalonia, Occitan, and Sicily, where poets had been composing profane courtly verse in the vernacular since the late eleventh century, when William X of Aquitaine famously penned the first lines of troubadour verse (Akehurst and Davis 1995; Bonner 1972; Gaunt and Kay 1999). Frederick II of Hohenstaufen's court at Sicily, in so many ways a cultural model for that of Alfonso X in Castile, was home to poets who wrote sonnets in the vernacular that would be the inspiration for the Tuscan *stil novisti* and in turn for Petrarch (Abulafia 1988, 272–279; Gensini 1986). But not in Castile. It was not for a lack of poets or appreciation of verse. Alfonso retained many poets who versified in Provençal, Galician-Portuguese, even Hebrew (C. Alvar 1978, 35–38, 54, 81, 123, 230; 1984, 181; Beltrán 2006, 165–166; Milá y Fontanals 1966, 179–199; O'Callaghan 1993, 144). Alfonso himself authored (or at least directed) a large collection of Marian verse in Galician-Portuguese, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, as well as a corpus of satirical and jocular verse in the same language, the *Cantigas d'escarnho e maldizer*. But although Castile thrived as a language of science, history, law, and even religious narrative poetry, it would make no inroads into courtly poetry until well after Alfonso's time (C. Alvar 1984, 7). Why?

We really cannot be certain. It is possible that Galician-Portuguese and Provençal, prestigious poetic languages in their own right, were sufficiently intelligible so as to be serviceable as poetic languages for educated Castilian speakers. Another is that courtly audiences did not feel it necessary to fully comprehend poetry presented at court – and to be honest, we have very little information about poetic performance at the court of Alfonso. What the poets themselves tell us mostly refers to Alfonso's patronage rather than to the actual conditions or practices of composition, performance, and circulation. It may well have been, and this could be the case for the whole of the Peninsula, that the material record that has arrived to us is only the tip of the iceberg of medieval poetic practice. We know very little about the performance practice of medieval poets (a bit more about the Arabic and Hebrew poets of the Peninsula who documented, or at least fantasized about poetic gatherings, readings, and the composition process, as did some of the Provençal troubadours). One Hebrew poet, Judah ibn Shabbetai, who lived during the reign of Alfonso VIII, reports having performed his rhyming prose narrative at court, where Alfonso rewarded his performance generously (Ibn Shabbetai 1991, 2: 33, ll. 779–793). This was probably a fictional, quite possibly parodic account meant to demonstrate the poet's influence, but gives us some idea as to the nature of poetic performance at courts where multiple poetic languages thrived (Cynthia Robinson 2001, 280; Nykl 1946, 381).

Interstitial poetics are the tip of the iceberg of poetic practice. National literary history tells us that the glorious present of your national language has a glorious past as well. Interstitial

poetics appear as a blip on the screen of this narrative, a glitch, a fluke, or at best a quaint innovation. But these moments are indices of a broader poetic practice that has been lost to us by the literary scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This vision of medieval poetic practice was forged in a present that privileged monolingualism, and in which the role and function of poetry itself had changed and no longer looks very much like what it was in 1000 or 1400 CE. Today popular poetry is still very much a part of our lives, mostly in the form of popular recorded music, which we consume and enjoy, but we rarely sing for others, except perhaps in ritual settings (Christmas caroling, “Happy Birthday,” etc.). The *romance*, or ballad, once a very living tradition, survives in Mexico as the *corrido* but even in Spain is in decline as a living tradition (Díaz Roig 1992; Catalán 1970; Menéndez Pidal 1968; Orta Velázquez 1981; Smith 1996). There is arguably little to no poetry at court or in the halls of power of our governments, and it is extremely rare that a high government official publish verse. Thus the practice of poetry itself has been transformed in such a way as to be unrecognizable to an aficionado of twelfth-century Santiago, León, Valencia, or Granada.

In al-Andalus itself this interstitiality was not always a question of Arabic/Romance bilingualism or diglossia. Andalusí vernacular Arabic differed a great deal from the Classical Arabic used in poetry; so much so that one had to learn the poetic register as a Classical language in school. The Arabic of the home and the market was not the Arabic of the mosque, the academy, and the court. Even so, there are poetic texts that tell us Andalusis sought to experiment with mixing the vernacular with the Classical, to bring the street and the court into contact in their verse. The earliest and most famous examples of these are two poetic genres that began life in al-Andalus and later spread through the Arab world.

The *muwashshah* was, according to legend, the innovation of a blind poet from Córdoba named Muqaddam of Cabra (10th century). In his day, Classical Arabic verse was declaimed or recited in monorhyme verse, but was not sung to a melody. Muqaddam defied these conventions: he composed songs in Classical Arabic that were set to popular melodies from oral tradition that one might hear in the market. What’s more, his verses were written in a variable rhyme scheme, like the popular melodies upon which he based his compositions. To make things worse, he ended his poems with a couplet from the popular tune itself. Critics would later call this couplet the *kharja*, or “exit” from the poem, which readers of Spanish will recognize as *jarcha* (Abu-Haidar 2001; Armistead 1987, 2005; Monroe 1992; Zwartjes 1998).

This inter-register interstitiality would become common practice with the learned *glosas* of popular couplets written by the courtly *cancionero* poets of fifteenth-century Castile, but in Córdoba in the tenth century it was highly unorthodox, even shocking to prevailing literary tastes. Muqaddam’s experiment in linguistic and poetic interstitiality was a success, and soon poets throughout al-Andalus and the broader Arabic world began to compose *muwashshahat* based on popular melodies and incorporating a bit of a popular verse as the final couplet. The sudden shift in register and/or in language (in the case of a *kharja* in Andalusí Romance) shocked and delighted audiences, according to the twelfth-century literary historian Ibn Basam (Zwartjes 1998, 59–60). Some poets took this example of early Arabic literary vernacularization and ran with it, composing *zajals* in Andalusí Arabic using a verse form (aaab cccb dddb, etc) which would come to be known in Italy as the *ballata* and in France as the *virelei* (Zwartjes 1998, 94–124). In the twelfth century, the Andalusí poet Ibn Quzman would achieve renown working in the *zajal* genre. He left an entire corpus of scandalous poetry in a quasi-colloquial register of Andalusí Arabic (Buturovic 2000; Ibn Quzman and Corriente 1984; Monroe 1985). However, because he operated in the interstices of what would become modern national literatures, he never achieved that status accorded to other Bacchic poets who wrote in Classical, rather than colloquial Arabic (Monroe 2013).

This literary appreciation of the Andalusí vernacular was a defining characteristic of Andalusí literary culture (López-Morillas 2000). Later, writers such as the Granadan Abu Yahya al-Zajjali would edit collections of popular sayings and proverbs that elevated Andalusí Arabic both as a poetic language and as a source of culturally authentic lore that passed muster at court (Al-Zajjali 1971).

The success of the muwashshah and zajal genres echoed through Arabic cultural history. Well into the age of recorded music, iconic Arab singers such as Fairouz (Lebanon) and most notably Umm Kulthum (Egypt) recorded dozens of hit muwashshahat. Singers throughout the Arab world continue to cultivate the muwashshah in both secular and devout settings (Reynolds 2000; Shannon 2006, 29–30, 32, 117–119, 132; 2007). Current-day practitioners of the zajal in Morocco or Lebanon use the form as a vehicle for parody, satire, and invective and do not necessarily consider it to be an Andalusí tradition (Beinin 1994; Hazran 2013).

The literary and linguistic porousness displayed by Arabic Andalusí poets inspired similar innovations in the Hebrew poetry of al-Andalus and later in Christian Iberia. Jewish Andalusí poets followed this fashion and composed scores of muwashshahat in Biblical Hebrew, with final couplets or *kharjat* written in either Andalusí Arabic or in the dialect of Romance spoken in al-Andalus. These Hebrew compositions added another voice to the interstitial poetics of their moment, blending the language of the Bible with the imagery, conceits, and habits of thought of the Arab poets of the dominant culture in which they lived.

Like their counterparts who wrote only in Arabic, Jewish courtiers in al-Andalus were well educated in Arabic letters, including the Qur'an and its commentaries (Decter 2006). Their Hebrew muwashshahat blended images from the Song of Songs with the gazelles and beautiful boys and girls of the Arab tradition, with the lovesick maid of popular Andalusí song (Roth 1982, 1991). Tradition tells us (though we would do well to question it) that the first poet to bring Arabic poetics over into Hebrew was the tenth-century courtier Dunash ibn Labrat, who studied in Baghdad under the sage Saadia Gaon and returned to al-Andalus to shock the Jewish literary establishment with his innovation which would forever transform Hebrew poetry. Labrat's innovation was to map the traditional meters of Classical Arabic poetry onto the Hebrew language, which some contemporary critics saw as hammering a square peg into a round hole. Despite these objections, Labrat's innovation transformed Hebrew poetry forever, and for centuries poets in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond wrote using the Arabic metrics he pioneered. Labrat's wife, whose name has been lost in the archive, is thought to be the author of the only surviving Hebrew poem composed by a woman from the Andalusí period.

Jewish writers would cultivate the zajal and muwashshah genres for centuries, in all the languages of the Peninsula. The great scholar Maimonides, who was born in Córdoba but later migrated to Fez and thence to Cairo, decried the composition of vernacular (Ar. *ajamiyya*, literally “non-Arabic” but in the Iberian context referring to either Andalusí Arabic or Andalusí Romance) as “improper,” from which he can conclude that it must have been fairly commonplace among Andalusí and North African Jews (Monroe 1988). Andalusí Hebrew writers likewise cultivated narrative genres, such as the *maqama* (rhymed prose narrative interspersed with verse) in Hebrew, adapting the formal, thematic, and aesthetic conventions of the Arabic *maqama* in Hebrew (Drory 2000a, 2000b). As with poetic genres, they populated the structures of the Arab poets with Biblical Hebrew language, and in their lines the commonplaces and imagery of the Classical Arabic tradition mixed freely with Biblical toponymy; imagery drawn from the Psalms, the Prophets, and other poetic texts; the narratives of Genesis and Exodus; and even the technical priestly texts of Leviticus (Cole 2007, 253; Kozodoy 1977; Pagis 1976, 70–79; Schippers 1994; Yellin and Pagis 1972, 118–149).

## La “thèse arabe” and national literary history

At the height of the Andalusī Arabic and Hebrew poetic ferment, a young nobleman in what is now Southern France began to compose courtly vernacular verse. At the end of the eleventh century this would have raised no eyebrows in Córdoba or Seville, where poets had been composing vernacular *zajals* for over a century, but across the Pyrenees this represented a revolutionary break in poetic practice. William IX of Aquitaine, the “first troubadour,” is credited with writing the first verses of courtly poetry in the Romance vernaculars. This claim, made effortlessly by literary historians since the nineteenth century, is certainly disputable, given the pre-history of Romance *kharjas* and *zajals* in al-Andalus in the century before William IX’s innovation. Without going into a round of “who got there first” brinkmanship, the question arises (and has generated volume after volume of scholarly speculation and no little controversy) as to whether and to what extent the two phenomena might be related. The so-called *thèse arabe* posits that Andalusī poetic practice crossed the Pyrenees with William VIII of Aquitaine in the form of a troop of Andalusī *qiyān* – technically singer-slaves but in practice closer to indentured professors of music. The father of the first troubadour had crossed the Pyrenees in the assistance of Sancho Ramírez of Aragon in the Siege of Barbastro (Huesca), then held by al-Muzaffar of Zaragoza. As part of the spoils of this successful campaign he brought back with him to Aquitaine a troop of Andalusī *qiyān*, who then introduced Aquitainian musicians, singers, and audiences to courtly strophic song in the form of *muwashshahat* and *zajals* (Boase 1977, 62–75; Menocal 1987, 28–33; Nykl 1946, 371–411; Robinson 2001, 295–299). As the story goes, young William IX, having been reared on such musical and poetic fare, simply followed the lessons of his father’s *qiyān* in composing the first verses of troubadour verse, thus converting himself into the Muqaddam of Cabra or Dunash ibn Labrat of the north.

The poetic movement begun (according to tradition) by William IX soon spread southward into the Peninsula, where poets working in Provençal, Catalan, or Galician-Portuguese performed at the courts of Christian Iberian monarchs. Even by the thirteenth century, Alfonso X “The Learned” was patron to many poets who performed troubadouresque poetry in Provençal and Galician-Portuguese. These Romance languages, as we have noted, still held pride of place in poetic practice, while Castilian was as yet not used for profane courtly poetry (though by the time of Alfonso X it was already a well-established language of prosaic learning and religious narrative poetry). Modern literary history makes very little of this important poetic practice at the court of Alfonso X, and the courtly poetry performed in Provençal and Galician-Portuguese receives very little attention in literary histories of the period, particularly in those studies geared toward more general or student audiences (Alborg 1966; M. Alvar 1980; Deyermond 1980; Valbuena Prat 1937), with some exceptions (Deyermond 1971, 10–11; Filgueira Valverde 1949, 599–603).

This is to be expected, because the interstitial, the poetic practice that crosses the linguistic and national boundaries constructed in modernity, is often minimized or altogether omitted in the story of what poetry used to be. After all, if literary history is an “act of forgetting” (Gies 2001, 3), something must be forgotten. This can be true even in the case of a single author, such as the iconic King Alfonso X, who himself composed a great deal of verse. His canonical songs of devotion to the Virgin Mary, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, despite being written in Galician-Portuguese (due to their royal authorship) achieved canonical status. The same Alfonso is also author of a corpus of scurrilous invective poetry in Galician-Portuguese, the so-called *Cantigas d’escarnho e maldizer*, that have almost completely evaded the gaze of the literary historiographer (Snow 1990). This is most likely due to the off-color nature more than



to the language in which they were written, but the fact that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* pass muster while the *Cantigas d'escarnho* do not tells us much about how modern literary historiography distorts the data to produce neater, more linguistically and culturally homogeneous narratives that serve national and regional agendas.

This distortion is even more extreme in the case of non-Romance languages. Literary histories of the court of Alfonso X make almost no mention of the Hebrew poets working in the service of the Learned King, the most notable of which was Todros Abulafia, who wrote a number of poems in which he writes of Alfonso's literary patronage and of life at his court (O'Callaghan 1993, 144–146; Procter 1951, 130–132; Roth 1985, 440; Salvador Martínez 2003, 446 n 44). Seen from the angle of Hebrew literary history, Abulafia is an outlier for his experimentation with troubadoursque styles, and as a consequence has received less critical attention than other Hebrew poets of his era who hewed more closely to the Andalusí models favored by Sephardic poets. These models mixed freely in Abulafia's verse with Biblical, troubadoursque, and other themes, motifs, and techniques of his own innovation, in a massive corpus totaling more than 1,200 compositions (Brann 1991, 149; Cole 2007, 257; Doron 1989, 42; Schirmann 1956, 2: 416; Targarona Borrás 1985).

If one accepts this still debated *thèse arabe* or Andalusí genesis of troubadour verse, this mixture of Andalusí and troubadoursque verse performed at the court of a Castilian king is nothing less than a poetic family reunion. In Abulafia's verse, the Andalusí muwashshah that gave rise to the Provençal *cansó* are reunited in Hebrew back in the Iberian Peninsula, where interstitiality was the norm and was responsible for any number of important innovations. The role of the court of Alfonso X in the emergence of courtly lyric says otherwise: al-Andalus was home to unparalleled poetic traditions in both Arabic and Hebrew, celebrated to this day as important classical legacies in the histories of both languages. Provençal gave us the troubadours, Galician-Portuguese gave us Alfonso's great collection of Marian verse, but all that Castilian could manage in the thirteenth century, when the Sicilian poets were inventing the sonnet that would catapult Petrarch to immortality, was Marian and hagiographic verse for priests and the faithful, but nothing actually sung at court (Antonelli 1989; Pötters 1998; Weiss 2006). Castile-León during this period was home to a great deal of poetic innovation by poets working in the interstices of national linguistic traditions, who for purposes of the history of Spanish Literature were not Spanish, despite the fact that they might have lived their entire lives in Castile-León.

Similarly, poets writing in the interstices between Hispano-Romance language and Semitic languages or even simply Semitic alphabets have been glossed over in the history of the Peninsula's literature (and when we say this we often mean the history of Castile-León). A quick perusal of almost any literary history of Spain, Portugal, or Catalonia written in the twentieth century reveals little to no mention of the Hebrew, Arabic, or Hispano-Romance other than the national tradition in question. Even Hebrew poetry written in the full flower of Romance vernacularity does not make the cut, with very few exceptions (Barletta et al. 2013; Cabo Aseguinolaza et al. 2010; de Riquer 1997). Though the histories of Hebrew literature tend to minimize the contributions of poets who wrote after the flowering of Romance vernacularization in the thirteenth century, Hebrew poets in Castile and Aragon were active well into the fifteenth century. Their work (as demonstrated in the Andalusí period by the Hebrew muwashshahat with Romance *kharjat*) was in constant dialogue with the Romance literatures of the Peninsula, a dialogue likewise minimized by critics of medieval Hebrew literature, who have tended to focus on what they perceive as the hermetically "Jewish" aspects of the Hebrew literature of the period. Just as the Hebrew poet Todros Abulafia experimented with troubadoursque motifs and techniques, including the *cansó* (love song) and *tenzó* (invective) forms, other poets working in Hebrew likewise participated in the poetic practice of the

day, in ways that would not seem extraordinary among poets working in Romance languages (Sáenz-Badillos 1996b). Some, such as Shem Tov ben Isaac Arduziel of Carrión (Castile, 14th c., known as Santob de Carrión in Spanish), wrote verse in both Hebrew and Castilian, and carried on an internal dialogue between both languages which, for the modern literary critic, is crucial to fully understanding Arduziel's work (Alba Cecilia 2008; Arduziel 1947, 1980; Shepard 1978; Wacks 2012; Zemke 1997). Others, such as Vidal Benvenist (Zaragoza, 14th–15th c.), adapted popular themes and motifs in learned Hebrew compositions. Benvenist's *Tale of Efer and Dinah* is a rhyming prose narrative gloss on the *canCIÓN de malmaridada*, in which a young girl laments her loveless marriage to an older man. Benvenist reworks this topos into a morality tale ostensibly sung – or perhaps produced on stage – for the Purim festival of the Jewish communities of Zaragoza (Benvenist 2003; Wacks 2013).

In other cases Hebrew poets borrowed the melodies themselves of popular lyrics for their compositions in Hebrew, as they did in the Andalusi period for the Hebrew and Arabic muwashshah. We have manuscripts of Hebrew poetry both devotional and secular from the fifteenth century that specify, at the end of each composition, the first line of the Castilian popular lyric that lends its melody to the poem (Seroussi and Havassy 2009). In Catalonia we have a collection of bilingual Catalan-Hebrew Jewish wedding songs in which the bulk of each verse is in Catalan, with rhyming words in Hebrew. These *Cants de noces* demonstrate a literary diglossia that (as the muwashshahat and other genres of lyric poetry practiced on the Peninsula) crossed both language and register, in this case colloquial Catalan with Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew (Argenter 2001; Riera i Sans 1974).

It is not surprising that Jewish or Muslim Iberians sang the songs of their day in their native languages; nor is it surprising that they would produce poems in which elements of their colloquial and confessional languages intertwine. We should remember that at no point in their history did Iberian Jews speak Hebrew as a native language, and that by the fifteenth century there were significant populations of Iberian Muslims whose primary language was Castilian or Aragonese (Boswell 1977, 382; Harvey 1990, 7; López-Morillas 2000, 54–57). However, literary histories that focus on the poetic production of a single dialect of Hispano-Romance or a single Semitic language of the Peninsula tend to obviate these interstitial voices.

Just as the Jewish Iberian who wrote in Hebrew, and the Muslim poets who wrote in Arabic, have been marginalized in national literary histories, the poetry of the Iberian Muslims who wrote in Castilian or Aragonese, but in the Arabic alphabet, have likewise suffered poorly in literary history. The *aljamiado* poetry of the Morisco authors of the fifteenth through early seventeenth centuries gives us an example of Islamic Spanish literature that, like the poetry by Iberia's Jews, demonstrates a familiarity and facility with the poetics of the dominant culture while putting these in the service of Islamic religion in a specific ethno-cultural milieu (Harvey 1974; López Baralt 2009, 24–25; Vázquez 2007). While the majority of *aljamiado* texts are in prose, there is a corpus of *aljamiado* poetry that bears striking resemblance to the *mester de clerecía* genre of hagiographic and Marian verse that flourished in Castilian in the thirteenth century (Barletta 2005, 151–55). Later *aljamiado* poets, writing at or after the time of the Moriscos' expulsion from the Peninsula, write sonnets and other popular forms in imitation of the most renowned Christian authors of the day.

In similar fashion, the Jews expelled from the Peninsula in 1492 continued to practice poetic forms both popular and learned that they brought with them from Spain well into Modernity and throughout the Mediterranean and the New World. A tour of the “afterlife” of medieval Castilian poetic forms as practiced by Sephardic Jews would take you around the Mediterranean and across the centuries. In the seventeenth century you might attend a prayer service of the Muslim-Jewish *donmeh* sect of the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi in Constantinople, where

they would sing the ballad of “La linda Melosina” as a kabbalistic hymn for welcoming the Sabbath on Friday night (Perets 2006). One hundred years later we join a Purim celebration in Izmir where we hear the story of Queen Esther sung in *coplas de Purim* (Hassán 2010; Romero 2011). In another hundred years, while out walking in Salonika we hear a mother singing a medieval *romance* (ballad) to her child at bedtime (Díaz Mas 1992, 123). Finally in current-day Jerusalem we enjoy a drink in a café while a young singer fronting a jazz band performs a program including traditional songs such as *Los bilbilicos* and her own original compositions, likewise sung in a dialect of medieval Castilian mixed with loanwords from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and French (Cohen 2011).

Other poetic forms forged in the interstices of medieval Iberian poetic practice continue to bear fruit in the present day. In the Arab world, popular singers perform muwashshahat and zajals. Classical Andalusí orchestras in North Africa, France, and Israel perform settings for compositions by Andalusí poets. Many of the popular Iberian poetic forms that were born at the interstices escaped literary history, and were free to live their own lives outside of books and without being linked to the modern national project.

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