

Medieval Spanish literature in the twenty-first century

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Medieval Spanish literature is changing rapidly. The end of the Franco regime and Spain's membership in the European Union have transformed the Spanish nation, giving new life to cultural diversity within Spain at the same time that economic and even political differences among the nation-states of Western Europe have been renegotiated in view of common European goals. Transnational corporations and global movements of large populations have changed the way we think of centers of power and the ethnic composition of "peoples." The old European order of monolingual and monocultural nation-states has been rocked to its foundations and, to a significant extent, those foundations rested upon a particular way of conceiving the European Middle Ages. The Middle Ages provided the early evidence of the language, literature and the "soul" of the people who would create the modern nation-state. This evidence then served, in a rather circular way, to confirm the naturalness of the nation-state as the inevitable outcome of historical forces in place for centuries if not millennia. The Middle Ages legitimized the modern nation-state. Such a view is obviously reductive, not to mention teleological. It must focus on those aspects of the Middle Ages which can be made to predict the cultural, political, ethnic, and linguistic unity which constitute the founding myth of modern European nations.¹

In this era of pan-European union and regional autonomous governments within Spain, however, the destiny of the order of nation-states seems much less manifest than it was thirty years ago. If this destiny has changed then it is also time for us to re-examine with a critical eye the foundational narratives of that destiny, including the stories we tell about the history of something we have called "medieval Spanish literature." The idea of "national" literary canons and literary traditions in a national language which founds collective volumes like the present one belongs to a rapidly changing, if not already outmoded idea of the ways in

¹ For a spectrum of views on "nation" and the stories we tell about it, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Rev. edn. London and New York: Verso, 1991); Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); and Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

which peoples, languages, and literatures exist. The stories such volumes tell about the Middle Ages no longer ring true. It is time to begin to think about the shape of the new stories we will tell about the medieval past of that place we now call “Spain.”

“Spain” did not exist as a political unit in the Middle Ages. “Medieval Spain” (and, by extension, “medieval Spanish literature”) is a back-formation, extending the idea of a unified and uniform “Spanish” political, linguistic, and cultural entity back into a period in which such an idea was very far from the minds of most inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula. For much of the period we call the Middle Ages, the idea of Hispanic unity was most often invoked by Iberians in the face of outside threats, whether from the Moorish south or the trans-Pyrenean north. Among the Christian realms of the Peninsula, however, identities were more often defined in opposition to those of other Christian kingdoms. The Catalan chronicler Ramon Muntaner provides a useful, if idealized, view of the nuances of both division and unity in the Hispania of the thirteenth century: “If those four kings of *Espanya* [that is, Castile, Aragon, Majorca and Portugal], who are one flesh and blood, hold together, they need fear little any other power in the world.” Muntaner glimpses the potential strength of an alliance among these rulers, even as he recognizes how unlikely such an alliance was. As often as one hears ideals of geographical, cultural, or military unity expressed, one hears assertions of the superiority of one Crown over the other: “Pero de toda España Castilla es mayor, / porque fue de los otros el comienço mayor, / . . . , quiso acrecentar la ansí nuestro Criador” (“of all *Spanna* Castile is the best; the Creator chose to advance her because she was greater in the beginning than the other [regions],” lines 157a, b, and d) said the *Poema de Fernán González* (c. 1250, a narrative poem about the founding hero of Castile, Fernán González).² A Catalan admiral complains to the Aragonese King Jaume II about the difficulties of working with his temporary Castilian allies in the siege of Algeciras in 1309: “You know the people I have to deal with, for, Lord, I never knew what pains, anxiety, and care were until now.”³

Both of these assessments will sound remarkably familiar to anyone who has spoken to modern-day Castilians or Catalans. Since the death of Franco in 1975, a variety of Peninsular cultures which trace their roots back to the Middle Ages and beyond have reasserted themselves with increasing effectiveness. The cultural and political hegemony of Castile on which Franco sought to base his rule has faded in importance as democratic government has taken firm hold in Spain. Within their own

² John Lihani, ed., *Poema de Fernán González* (East Lancing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991), p. 24.

³ J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250–1516*. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976–1978), vol. 1, pp. 5–10. Translations in this paragraph are Hillgarth’s.

autonomous regions, Catalan, Valencian, Basque, and Galician are co-official with Castilian, the language known in most of the world as Spanish. Literature in these languages is given equal time with Castilian in secondary education. Indeed, many Spaniards educated in these regions since the late 1980s, not to mention many Spaniards in other regions of the country, might find the idea of a discussion of “medieval Spanish literature” which deals exclusively with Castilian literature to be simply the relic of another time, a time which most would prefer not to commemorate.

The goal of the present chapter is to explore the forms that a literary history of “medieval Spain” might take in the twenty-first century. How will changing ideas of what constitutes the Spanish “nation” (or “nations”), and indeed the concept of “nation” itself in a someday, perhaps, federated Europe, affect the way we tell the story of “medieval Spanish literature”? What, in fact, do we mean by “a literature”? The idea that multiple literatures exist and can be presented in volumes like this one rests ultimately not only on ideas of authorship and on aesthetic and textual categories worked out after the medieval period, but also on the now rapidly changing view that the world is composed of multiple and mutually exclusive nations. For that matter, what do we mean by “a language” when our topic is the medieval period? Like literature, this term is deeply implicated in post-medieval concepts of nationhood, especially the idea that one nation possesses one and only one language. How might we begin to achieve a balanced approach to the distinct modalities of both diversity and unity in medieval Iberia? Can we avoid egregious anachronisms of our own and resist the temptation to solve the problem by exoticizing the “difference” of the Middle Ages? In the face of a world ever more preoccupied with “presentist” concerns, what place will there be for something we might call “medieval literature,” when its chief props – especially nation, ethnicity, and history – are shifting so rapidly in cultural value?

There are, of course, two ways in which we can understand the “Spanish” in “medieval Spanish literature.” One is to see it as referring to the language now almost universally called “Spanish,” a language which derives from the varieties of Ibero-Romance spoken in the medieval Crown of Castile. This language is spoken in two dozen countries around the world today, including Spain. Understood this way, “Spanish” refers to the language of Peninsular hegemony and world empire. This language emerged as a result of standardizing influences emanating from the Castilian court, which was ever more dominant in the Peninsula through the Middle Ages. This language went on to achieve global importance in the period immediately thereafter. Our history of “medieval Spanish literature,” then, would be the literary history of a group of initially

undifferentiated dialects that would go on to become the language of conquerors. There may well be good reasons to undertake such a history. The rise of “Spanish” is of clear historical interest for the development of world literatures in the past 500 years and for many of the 400 million people worldwide who are speakers of this language today. Nor should we ignore the fact that in the great majority of institutions of higher learning outside of Spain, if “medieval Spanish literature” is in the curriculum at all it is there as an adjunct to instruction in the Spanish language in its projection as world language. Reasons exist, then, for writing a literary history which focuses exclusively on medieval Castilian literature, the literature written in some early forms closely related to that language which is the official language of the entire present-day Spanish state and which is known throughout the world as “Spanish.” We cannot dismiss an exclusive focus on Castilian literature out of hand, but we must be aware of the historically contingent reasons for choosing such a focus.

The other meaning of “Spanish” would have it refer, not to a language but to the nation of Spain. As “Spain” did not exist as a political entity in the Middle Ages, we will have to understand the term “medieval Spanish literature” to be merely a useful shorthand for something like “the literature written in the medieval period in that geographical area corresponding, roughly, to the borders of the present-day Spanish state (plus a few areas which were under the control of Peninsular powers in the Middle Ages but no longer are).” Obviously the content of such a chronologically and geographically organized study will be very different from that of a study which is organized around the official language of the present-day Spanish state.⁴

What would such a history include? The presence of a dynamic multicultural center in al-Andalus in some key centuries of the medieval period is discussed in the chapter by María Rosa Menocal. The complexities are not limited to al-Andalus, however. The Iberian peninsula was the crossroads of a number of languages and literary traditions we identify today with names like Latin, Occitan, Catalan, Galician-Portuguese, and Aragonese, in addition to the Arabic, Hebrew, and Castilian. These must be taken into account in any history that seeks to address literary production in the geographical area of the Iberian peninsula in the medieval period, rather than literary production in the language that became the language of empire and nation (essentially in that sequence). If we ignore the presence of literature written in languages or dialects other than Castilian in the Middle Ages, our resulting image of literary activity in medieval Iberia will be deficient and fatally skewed. We cannot afford to ignore,

⁴ Valerian Bertolucci adopts this approach to some extent. See Bertolucci *et al.*, *L'area iberica. Storia delle letterature medievali romanze* (Rome: Laterza, 1999).

for example, the key role of the Catalan-speaking regions as receptors for the rest of Iberia, not just for the Arabic culture of the Iberian Levant and North Africa, but also, early on, of the culture of Occitania, today southern France. Later, this area will be the first to register the impact of Italian humanistic ideas, many of these arriving via the Aragonese possessions in Sicily and Naples. To understand fully literary developments in Castile in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century we will have to know what was going on in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Crown of Aragon, and, in particular, in Valencia.

The case of Galician-Portuguese literature is in some ways even more telling in this regard. Before the late fourteenth century this is the language used exclusively by many poets from Castilian-speaking areas of the Peninsula when they turn to writing lyric poetry. To put it another way: there are very few examples of lyric poetry in Castilian until the late fourteenth century. Juan Ruiz (fl. second quarter of the fourteenth century) is one notable exception, for he has given us some religious lyrics and some beggars’ and student songs in Castilian. Even in the case of religious lyric, however, Galician-Portuguese dominates through the famous *Cantigas de Santa María* (“Songs of Saint Mary,” c. 1250–1280), in its final form a collection of more than 400 songs in Galician-Portuguese, with music, lyrics, and illustrations, compiled under the close supervision of the Castilian king, Alfonso X, the Wise. So, once again, even if our focus were to remain on Castilian, our understanding of that literary tradition in the core centuries of its development would remain impoverished indeed if we were to ignore the presence of Galician-Portuguese lyric written by people with names like Pero García Burgalés (Pedro García from Burgos, in the heart of Old Castile).

It is not the goal of this chapter to present these “other” literatures. In fact, the concept of “other literatures” can be as dangerous as that of “national literatures,” as the infelicitous title of Díez Borqué’s otherwise excellent and important *Historia de las literaturas hispánicas no castellanas* (“History of the Non-Castilian Hispanic Literatures,” 1980) illustrates. Nor do we seek to imply that the considerations here regarding the medieval period are necessarily applicable to later periods of Peninsular literary history. We merely hope to suggest that the story of “medieval Spanish literature” is far broader, far deeper, and, above all, much more complicated and more interesting than a history which focuses on the literature in a single Peninsular language can hope to portray, even if that language goes on to become one of the most important languages in the world.

As has just been suggested, it would be a fundamental mistake to believe that the way to rectify perceived imbalances in our approach to medieval Spanish literature lies in an assertion of “other” literatures – call them “national literatures,” if you wish – “against” Castilian. That is, it would

be an error to try to “right” the situation by allowing some sort of “equal time” to, say, a Catalan literary tradition or a Navarrese one. It is the very idea of “nation” (and its similarly anachronistic corollary “national literature”) which is the impediment to our understanding of the realities of literary life in the medieval Peninsula. “Medieval Leonese literature” or “medieval Aragonese literature,” in the context of the Middle Ages, are precisely the same sort of back-formations which give us “medieval Spanish literature.” They have been evolved in the service of modern nationalistic goals, including resistance to Castilian hegemonic nationalism, and, as the role and function of nations changes, they will lead, increasingly, to the same intellectual dead end.

A much more productive approach for future literary histories must grow from an understanding that it is the idea of “a literature” itself which is at issue when we look at the early period. It is an outgrowth of the same search for or assertion of national identity. The idea has been that, through the centuries, certain writers and landmark texts serve to establish a corpus or canon of literature in a particular language which constitutes a repository of a national literary culture and testifies to the genius and soul of a particular culture or ethnic group. When we examine the realities of literary activity in the Iberian peninsula during the medieval period, we quickly find that this activity was at once more local and more “international” than the framework of national literature suggests. This is one of the most fundamental reasons for which “national” approaches to literature are problematic for the Middle Ages. Many works which we now view as key steps in the formation of Spanish literature never made it to “Spain.”

To take the example of Gonzalo de Berceo (1196?–1264?), the first poet of the “Spanish” language whose name we know, there is evidence of just two medieval manuscript copies containing his *Vida de San Millán* (“Life of St. Emilian”): Q (around 1260, now lost) and F (around 1325), both probably based on an earlier manuscript of which no other notice has survived. As late as the 1740s, both manuscripts were still in the monastery in which Berceo presumably composed the work in the mid thirteenth century. In his edition of the work, Brian Dutton has revealed the particular admixture of local devotion and economic motivations which were behind the creation of this work: Berceo is trying to persuade some recalcitrant towns in an area roughly corresponding to La Rioja and Old Castile to resume paying to the monastery the “Voto de San Millán” (“Offering to St. Emilian” in gratitude for the saint’s past aid in driving the Moors from the territory).⁵ In reference to Berceo’s *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*

⁵ Gonzalo de Berceo, *Obras completas*. Ed. Brian Dutton (2nd edn. London: Támesis, 1984), vol. I, pp. 177–203.

(“Miracles of Our Lady”), Dutton argues: “las obras marianas de Berceo se relacionan con un culto especial del monasterio de San Millán de Yuso, y no son puramente ‘universales’” (“the Marian works of Berceo are related to a specific cult [of the Virgin] in the monastery of San Millán de Yuso and are not purely ‘universal’”). At the same time, he goes on to remind us, the *Milagros* seem also to have been destined for the “entertainment and instruction” of that traveling society of pan-European pilgrims along the nearby Road to Santiago de Compostela.⁶ The *Milagros* occupy two niches at once, then. One is quite local; the other pertains to the uniquely fluid society of pilgrims from all over Europe. Neither of these niches corresponds to the national Spanish niche in which modern literary histories attempt to place this work and its author.

A very different case is that of Ramon Llull (1232/3–1316), a near-contemporary of Berceo. He is considered to be the creator of *Catalan* literary language. While Berceo’s life seems to have been largely circumscribed by the area between his native town and the monastery of San Millán, a few kilometers away, the Majorcan Llull traveled throughout the European and Mediterranean world of his day, from Santiago de Compostela in the west to, perhaps, as far as Cyprus in the east. In an attempt to promote, as well as to live, his dream of universal conversion to Christianity through the mechanisms of his “Art of Finding Truth,” he visited North Africa and Paris, lived, studied, and taught in Montpellier, Genoa, Naples, and the Papal *curia*. He wrote more than 230 works in Catalan, Latin, and, he claims, Arabic. These works survive in well over 2,000 manuscript copies, some made as late as the eighteenth century. There are also numerous early printed editions as well as medieval or Renaissance translations into Occitan, French, Italian, Castilian, Scots, and English, including a work printed by William Caxton in London, probably in 1484.⁷

The point of this is not to assert the superiority of one artistic life or production over the other. It is merely to show that an approach to literary history which seeks to co-opt either writer to some sort of “national” literary tradition will miss the point of what either writer was striving to achieve and, more significantly, the way in which they viewed their work and their world. We would oppose the reductive view of these writers’ works as mere milestones to be ticked off in the manifest destiny of an ethnic or national group to a view which gives priority to the political and economic goals of the writers themselves, that is, to the cultural context, both broad and narrow, which produced them and their works. And it seems evident that neither writer intended to found a national literary canon.

⁶ Berceo, *Obras completas*, vol. II, p. 12.

⁷ Ramon Llull, *Selected Works of Ramon Llull (1232–1316)*. Ed and trans. Anthony Bonner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), vol. II, pp. 1257–1304.

The foregoing should already have suggested that the same issues affect that *sine qua non* of both nation and literature: language. The idea of what constitutes “a language,” in particular a medieval Iberian language, has been under serious revision of late. And with this revision comes the question of just what we mean when we say that a work of literature is written “in” a language. Until recently “dialect” (in the non-pejorative sense used by linguists) studies have been of prime importance in the presentation of medieval Iberian languages, especially in attempts to date the supposed origins of national literatures. For literary histories organized around the principle of nation, it was naturally vital to find the first written evidence of a language identifiable with the modern Castilian tongue. Indeed, for scholars interested either in demonstrating the importance of competing national languages or in showing the importance of regional traditions in the formation of such languages it was similarly important to find the first evidence of linguistic traits which show kinship with recognizable modern forms. Thus, the language of the *Razón de amor* (“Speech about Love”), a lyric poem of the early thirteenth century, has been variously characterized as Galician, Aragonese with Castilian traits, or Castilian with Aragonese traits.⁸ The arguments in favor of one or the other of these often seem to have more to do with the region of origin of the scholar who makes them than with observed facts. The earliest surviving work of theatre from central Iberia, the so-called *Auto de los reyes magos* (“Play about the Three Magi,” mid twelfth century), has received an even more varied set of linguistic labels through speculations that the author may have been a “Gascon,” a “Mozarab” (a Christian living under Muslim rule), a “Riojan,” or a “Catalan.” For scholars like Carlos Alvar, the “problem” is in determining if the *Auto* represents an “autochthonous Castilian text” or is an “adaptation of a foreign model.”⁹ If the work turns out not to be by a “Spaniard,” then its value to the enterprise of establishing a canon of works which trace the development of Spanish literature is much diminished (and this is especially unfortunate if, as is the case here, a work is the only example in its genre for the next 250 years). An emphasis on telling the story of national literature forces us into such concerns. It creates a system of authorial or linguistic *limpieza de sangre* (“purity of blood”). It obscures the significance of the simple fact that this play was almost certainly copied into this manuscript in Toledo for use in that cathedral in the very heart of Iberia, whatever the geographic or ethnic origins of its composers.

⁸ Enzo Franchini, *El manuscrito, la lengua y el ser literario de la “Razón de amor”* (Madrid: CSIC, 1993), pp. 187–241.

⁹ Carlos Alvar, “La letteratura castigliana medievale.” In Bertolucci et al., *L’area iberica*, p. 151.

More recently scholars have begun to challenge the linguistic identity of those most cherished of documents in Spanish literary and language history: the “glosses of San Millán and Silos” (second half of the eleventh century). These glosses have transformed the lovely valley in which they were found into what has been called “the cradle of the Spanish language,” for they contain paraphrases of Latin texts in what has seemed to be a local Romance vernacular. The glosses, however, belong to “Spanish” only by projecting back onto them a linguistic unity which began to form, linguistically and politically, much later (recent scholarship has suggested that whatever their original language, the San Millán glosses may well have been copied in Aragon rather than La Rioja). Far from being translations from Latin into some form of vernacular, these glosses may well represent a quasi-phonetic transcription of Latin texts for oral presentation in the “accent” of the local audience. Once again, the preoccupation with appropriating these glosses for some story of linguistic development has obscured or relegated to second rank the nature of the glosses as designed to serve a very specific function in a specific local context. It seems clear to many scholars today that well into the thirteenth century, the geographical, even proto-national labels, given to these glosses and to other early “Romance” texts are anachronistic. At most we can speak of a general “Ibero-Romance” in which, outside any attempts to overdetermine specific regional traits, the Iberian Romance speech exists in an “ample elastic gamut” of shared linguistic forms and lexicon.¹⁰

The foregoing suggests a crazy quilt of local linguistic variety, ethnicities, political, theological, and religious motives, local and international perspectives and goals. The only element conspicuously absent is the idea that these texts, their language, and their authors belong to something we can call “Spanish.” A much more powerful model for the future would be one which recognizes the sporadic nature of medieval literary traditions and the shifting and often undifferentiated identities of “language” itself in order to focus on the myriad points of intersection among traditions we might today recognize as separate literarily and linguistically. This has the additional advantage of minimizing the sort of tropes which assert one “national” tradition against another. When we take away the rigid boundaries and bloodlines enforced by the ideas of national or linguistic canons, we find, and it is probably no surprise, that these intersections are, in fact, the most fertile and productive part of Peninsular literary culture. Menocal has discussed the remarkable cross-fertilizations of al-Andalus, but this dynamic interactiveness was characteristic among literary traditions in

¹⁰ See Roger Wright, *A Sociophilological Study of Late Latin* (Utrecht: Brepols, 2002), Chapter 16.

Christian areas of Iberia as well. In fact, as we examine the record of medieval Iberia and adjacent areas we find that literary activity *across* linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries (as we view them today) was far more prevalent than some narrow nationalistic and monolingual process of canon formation.

Until the fifteenth century Catalan poets continued to write their lyric poetry using the Occitan poetic *koiné* of what is today southern France. Among the earliest collections of Romance poetry in the Peninsula is MS V, a collection of Occitan troubadour verse copied in Catalonia in 1268. Occitan-language troubadours born in the area of Catalonia – two dozen poets in total, according to Martí de Riquer¹¹ – participate in the broader literary culture associated with the diffusion of troubadour lyric along that fertile West Mediterranean crescent from the Iberian Levant to Tuscany and beyond. Their works are anthologized in manuscripts compiled not just in Occitania and Catalonia, but in Italy as well. Occitan-language troubadours and minstrels from this larger European cultural world outside Iberia, in turn, refer to the Iberian kingdoms beyond the Pyrenees with remarkable frequency and more than two dozen of them visit the courts of rulers from Catalonia–Aragon to Portugal.¹² A knowledge of the Old Occitan *canso* (courtly song, generally on love) is believed to have played a key role in the development of the Galician-Portuguese *cantiga de amor* (“song about love”). Raimon Vidal from Besalú in Catalonia (fl. 1190–1220), who himself visits the court of Alfonso VIII of Castile, writes the *Razos de trobar* (“Rules for Writing Occitan Poetry”), an early attempt to make the Occitan *koiné* more accessible to would-be poets whose native language was not Occitan.¹³ This treatise represents clear evidence that Iberian people were substantially interested in functioning *across* linguistic boundaries.

Poets born in Castile and adjacent areas, as we have seen, write most of their lyric verse in Galician-Portuguese, not in Castilian, until the end of the fourteenth century. The courts of Fernando III of Castile and his son Alfonso the Wise are centers of poetic activity in Galician-Portuguese and in the court of Dom Dinís, king of Portugal (ruled 1279–1325), it is the king himself who is the center of a circle of active poets. Alfonso also plays host to numerous Occitan poets, including Giraut Riquier (fl. 1254–1292), who sets a delightful *pastourelle* (poem in which a traveler, often a knight, jousts verbally with a shepherdess he encounters along his way) on the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela.

¹¹ Martí de Riquer, *Història de la literatura catalana; Part Antiga* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1982), vol. 1, p. 39.

¹² Carlos Alvar, *La poesía trovadoresca en España y Portugal* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1977), p. 287.

¹³ Riquer, *Història*, vol. 1, pp. 111–122.

The king himself engages with Riquier – how directly is still a matter of dispute – in a poetic debate in that language. Indeed, in and around the court of Alfonso, as Aviva Doron has argued, Jewish poets such as Todros Ha-Levi Abulafia (1247–1298?) begin to produce Hebrew poetry which reveals traces of hitherto exclusively Christian literary motifs.¹⁴

The case of the earliest known written copy of a *romance* (ballad), a popular poetic form most often identified with Castilian, shows what we gain and lose when our first impulse is to discount works of literature which reveal linguistic and ethnic miscegenation. The poem survives because it was written into a personal copybook by Jaume d’Olesa, a Majorcan student in Bologna (c. 1421). Unfortunately for nationalist literary history, Olesa writes down this ballad in what has been called a “Castilian riddled with Catalanisms.”¹⁵ The preoccupation with “firsts” obliges historians of Castilian literature to mention this distressingly impure copy as proof of the early existence of the Castilian ballad form. What is missed, however, by historians of both Castilian and Catalan literature (Riquer uses the more neutral “great number of Catalan forms”¹⁶) is that this is a genuine piece of Iberian literary language, used by a genuine Iberian to write down a piece of Iberian “oral literature” he obviously thought was worth recording in the very Iberian context of the law school of Bologna where students from Iberia had their own college. The linguistic *limpieza de sangre* which literary histories of the national era must impose on their object of study has hitherto prevented us from appreciating this dynamic interaction – really, intermingling – of Iberian languages (and, perhaps, even to ignore the obvious appreciation of Castilian folk song which motivates it) by an Iberian student abroad.

The “impure” or “foreign” origins of the *Auto* on the Magi suggest another area in which the waning of older forms of nationalism may help us to gain new appreciation of medieval literary life: the large corpus of adaptation and translation which makes up such a large part of vernacular literature in the Peninsula. If our goal is to discover the true and authentic genius of a particular language and ethnic group (and the nation which claims inheritance from it), then translation and adaptation must necessarily be considered lesser forms: they are “borrowed” from “others,” they bear a false genealogy and offer only a hybrid genius at best. For medieval writers, however, productive transformation, that is, adaptation not just to new languages but to new settings and times as well, rather than autochthonous originality, was a primary goal. Ideas of

¹⁴ Aviva Doron, “La poesía de Todros Ha-Levi Abulafia como reflejo del encuentro de las culturas: la hebrea y la española en la Toledo de Alfonso X El Sabio.” In *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación de Hispanistas*. 4 vols. Ed. Antonio Vilanova *et al.* (Barcelona: PPU, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 171–178.

¹⁵ Alvar, “La letteratura,” p. 287.

¹⁶ Riquer, *Història*, vol. III, p. 379.

literary property and of a “canon” of original work possessed by a nation are far in the future. In the medieval context, we must avoid tropes like “mere translation.” Berceo’s *Milagros* are a translation of a preexisting Latin miracle collection, which Berceo adapts to the particular cult of the Virgin in the Monastery of San Millán de Yuso, as we have seen. The *General Estoria* (“General History”), compiled in part under Alfonso the Wise, incorporates wholesale adaptations from Ovid’s *Heroides* among many other sources, Classical, biblical, and medieval. Don Juan Manuel (1282–1348) re-uses the frame of Ramon Llull’s *Libre de l’orde de cavalleria* (“Book of the Order of Knighthood,” 1279–1283?) in his own *Libro del cavallero et del escudero* (“Book of the Knight and the Squire,” before 1330), and Joanot Martorell (c. 1413–1468) will use the frame yet again in the fifteenth century, although he seemed unaware of the Llullian paternity, in his *Tirant lo Blanc* (first edited 1490). A century later, translated into Castilian, *Tirant* became, in the mouth of Cervantes’ priest, “por su estilo . . . el mejor libro del mundo” (“for its style . . . the best book in the world,” *Don Quixote*, pt. 1, ch. 6). A lengthy section of Juan Ruiz’s *Libro de buen amor* (“Book of Good Love,” second quarter of the fourteenth century) is a translation of the medieval Latin comedy *Pamphilus*. Andreu Febrer (c. 1375 – bef. 1444) manages a Catalan translation of the *Divine Comedy* in the original *terza* rhyme scheme and meter. “Breton” *lais* are translated and adapted into Galician-Portuguese, and French Arthurian prose romances make their way into that language as well. Diego de San Pedro’s *Cárcel de amor* (“Prison of Love”) is translated into “valenciana prosa” (see below) by Bernadí Vallmanya in 1493, a year after its original publication.

Nor should we forget that literary multilingualism continues throughout the medieval period, whether it was Latin–vernacular, Romance–Semitic, among Romance literary languages, or in varying combinations of all of these. Enrique de Villena (1384–1434), who has ancestors in both the Castilian and the Aragonese royal families, frequents the organized poetic contests of Barcelona. He writes the *Dotze treballs d’Hercules* (“The Twelve Labors of Hercules,” 1417) in Catalan, translates his own work into Castilian, and writes most of the rest of his works in Castilian. Pere Toroella (fl. 1436?–1486?) writes an extensive body of work in both Catalan and Castilian. Traditional literary histories have transformed the works these men wrote outside their “appropriate” native language into footnotes of literary history. Both should rather be seen as significant *Iberian* figures. We might wish to consider that it is these works, in fact, which are central from the historical point of view. It is multilingualism, not monolingualism, which is most characteristic of literate Iberians throughout the Middle Ages.

The focus of scholars on “texts,” by “authors,” and especially on texts in the proto-national vernaculars has meant that we simply have not even looked at the great bulk of the evidence for medieval written culture already easily available to us. Tens of thousands of Latin manuscripts exist, for the most part ignored, which could teach us much about the interests and level of culture in those very monasteries where, say, Berceo’s work was being read. Reader’s glosses abound in these manuscripts, which could teach us how medieval people who could read (and write) approached their texts. For example, a manuscript from San Millán, now in Madrid, is filled with marginal glosses of a literary nature: on the six types of allegory, on *anticipatio* (foreshadowing) and *recapitulatio* (brief review or summary) in narrative, on metaphor, irony, hyperbole, and even *geminatio* (repetition of a word or phrase in close proximity). Every once in a while we can even glimpse in medieval Latin manuscripts a comment such as “*pulchra comparatio*” (“a beautiful simile”) which may reveal an immediate aesthetic reaction to a text (or, perhaps just as interesting, a teacher’s comment to students that such and such a comparison is “*pulchra*”). Glosses to Latin (and vernacular) texts, whether in Latin or the vernacular, provide a wealth of information on medieval approaches to literature, whether ethical, formal, or aesthetic, which is essential to any history of medieval Iberian literature, even if our only goal is to understand the categories by which authors themselves understood the objects they sought to create.

Manuscripts and their margins provide still more to those interested in the culture of literate people in the Middle Ages, once we leave our preoccupation with texts behind. For the general public, illuminations are perhaps the most familiar non-textual feature of medieval manuscripts. As one digs deeper into manuscripts one finds everything from snippets of song to elaborate genealogical charts of Christ’s lineage to doodles of faces and animals to an inscribed circle showing just how large your tonsure should be. We have a long way to go in understanding the medieval visual language of doodles and squiggles, found in the millions in medieval manuscripts. Even in the realm of textual material we can often find glimpses into the lives of those who wielded pens in the Middle Ages: someone complains in the upper margin of a manuscript “tres veces fui azotado por Fray Juan de Campos” (“I was flogged three times by/for Friar Juan de Campos”). Two folios later we find “quatro veces fui azotado” (“I was flogged four times”). Do the assonances of “azotado” and “Campos” suggest a snippet of song or song in creation, or is this a glimpse into the lived experience of a medieval reader who records that experience in time with the pace of his reading? Perhaps it is both. In a manuscript of Burgo de Osma, we find traces of a reader in the midst of

a text from the famous passage on the origins of the Navarrese people drawn from the twelfth-century *Pilgrim's Guide to the Road to Santiago de Compostela*: "Unde Navarrus interpretatur non verus, id est non progenie aut legitima prosapia generatus" ("'Navarrese' should be glossed as *non verus* [not true], that is to say, *not* generated from a true lineage *nor* from a legitimate stock").¹⁷ This reader, almost certainly a Navarrese, though of what period we cannot know for sure, has scratched away the "not" and the "nor" from the text, thereby restoring the legitimacy of the Navarrese with the scrape of a knife.

Taken alone, such details seem inconsequential, however charming we may find them. They offer none of the familiar gratification we may derive from editing the manuscript works of a medieval author into a "book" we can place on our shelves next to other authors in a national tradition. To date we have largely neglected the vast bulk of our evidence for literary activities in medieval Iberia, simply because it does not fit our categories of what literature is or of what literary scholars should do. Only by patiently collecting thousands of such seemingly trivial details and coming to understand their patterns and meanings will we be able, over time, to come to know that literary world completely. Unfortunately, we are far from even beginning such investigations. In fact, we have not really established which of the tens of thousands of medieval manuscripts currently held in libraries in the Iberian peninsula and other European libraries were actually *in* Iberia in the Middle Ages and could serve as a basis for such an inventory.

We have deliberately postponed discussion of Latin literature in the medieval Iberian peninsula until now. More than thirty years ago Keith Whinnom stressed the fundamental importance of Latin letters to Iberian literatures of the Middle Ages, describing the relation of vernacular letters to the Latin as that of an archipelago of islands peeking up out of a vast ocean of Latin letters.¹⁸ This remains almost literally true, as the earliest works of vernacular literature in the central Peninsula seem to have been copied down in spaces left between Latin texts: the opening portions of the *Auto* occupy a blank space on one page at the end of a glossed biblical text; the *Razón de amor* and the Iberian texts which accompanied it are sandwiched between two Latin sermon collections, perhaps on a gathering left blank when the first of these collections was left incomplete. Another fragmentary early Ibero-Romance work, the *Debate del alma y del cuerpo* ("Debate between the Soul and the Body," c. 1200) is found on the

¹⁷ C. Meredith-Jones, ed., *Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandii ou Chronique du Pseudo-Turpin* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972 [1936]), p. 257.

¹⁸ Keith Whinnom, *Spanish Literary Historiography: Three Forms of Distortion* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1967).

verso of a Latin legal document from Oña confirming the donation of a monastery. It is Latin literature which, in a very physical way, defines the shape of early vernacular literature in its interlinear spaces, margins, and blank folios.

Perhaps it is inevitable that Latin literature of the Iberian peninsula, too, clings to the margins of Latin texts. The so-called "Carmina Rivipullensia" (poems from the monastery of Ripoll) are twenty Latin poems – the core of them love poems – by an "Anonymous Lover." Despite their affinity with the Goliardic world, perhaps most familiar through the slightly later *Carmina Burana*, these poems have so far been found only in this Iberian source. The poems seem to have been copied in the late twelfth century onto some folios left blank after a tenth-century copying of a *Liber glossarum* ("Book of Glosses"). Latin will come into its own again as Humanist ideas began to enter the Peninsula in the late fourteenth century. Writers in Eastern Iberia like Bernat Metge (1340/6–1413), as well as the writers of the Aragonese royal chancellery, begin to appreciate anew the culture of Roman Antiquity and to attempt to imitate it in their works. Antoni Canals (1352–1414) translates works of Valerius Maximus and Seneca as well as Petrarch into "our beloved maternal Valencian tongue." These translations, in turn, will be re-translated into Castilian over the course of the fifteenth century. The influence of Classical Latin culture is seen most strikingly, perhaps, in the "valenciana prosa" (Valencian-style prose) of writers like Joan Roís de Corella (1433/43–1497), who used Latinate syntax (including hyperbaton, that is, unusual syntactic order) and lexicon to create an elevated and sometimes elegant rhetorical prose. Similar stylistic experiments are carried out in Castilian by writers like Juan de Mena (1411–1456) and Enrique de Villena, and in Castilian sentimental romances like Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*.

Iberian writings in Latin and the impact of Classical, medieval, and Renaissance Latin on both Ibero-Latin and vernacular writing remain, then, one other area which we may be better able to explore once this language which belonged, in the Middle Ages, to no nation and to every nation is freed from nationalistic needs to promote the vernacular as the major index of cultural soul. Medieval Latin is doubly orphaned under the order of nation-states for its internationalism does not lend itself easily to nationalist goals, nor has its unique culture, so different from that of Antiquity, been fully appreciated by Classicists. Despite the labors of Manuel Díaz y Díaz to bring the large corpus of "Hispano-Latin" works under bibliographic control and to begin to explore its riches, significant works like the *Planeta* ("Planet," 1218) of Diego García de Campos (fl. 1138–1218?), remarkable for its exegetical and verbal pyrotechnics,

remain the delight of a few specialists.¹⁹ A reading of the *Planeta*, together with works by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (1170–1247), or even the fascinating work of the glossator who signs his name “S.” and who may have worked in Jiménez’ circle, gives an entirely different picture of culture in medieval Castile than that we can glean from the few surviving vernacular works of the time. It is time for their story to be told as an integral part of the story of medieval Iberian literary life.

The shape of that story will be subject to our understanding, not only of national destinies, but also of the function of that period with the odd name: Middle Ages. For nationalist histories the Middle Ages occupy an odd dual role as at once the grandparent of national culture and its childhood. The Middle Ages are what the culture was before it grew up to be us. This allows us both to revere the Middle Ages and to characterize the period as an age of innocence or ignorance, or both. In either case, much of what has been important for our understanding of the Middle Ages lies in our ability to measure the distance we have come from it. There is much at stake for literary historians, then, in putting an end to the Middle Ages (Iberia offers the especially convenient year of 1492 for this end), in allowing new and more sophisticated versions of national cultures to emerge. Once we are able to separate the Middle Ages from some story we would tell of national cultural maturation, however, we come to see that the Middle Ages do not go away quite so easily. Elements of what we call medieval culture continue well past any artificial periodizations we might establish. The *Spill* (“Mirror”) or *Book of Women* (c. 1460) by the fifteenth-century Valencian medical doctor Jaume Roig (1400/10–1478) has been reprinted or translated at least once in every century since its composition. The works of Llull, as we have seen, continue to be printed, translated, and even laboriously copied in manuscript form down to the present day and the influence of his ideas was felt by Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716). The impact of medieval modes of thought and culture in the colonies established by both Castile and Portugal is part of the Iberian peninsula’s legacy to the New World.²⁰

Any full appreciation of medieval Iberia must also take into account the survival and continued evolution of medieval Iberian Jewish culture outside the Peninsula following the expulsion of 1492. Sephardic culture already escapes any national claims which might be made on it by Peninsular powers and offers many ironies to those who would equate language and nation. Flory Jagoda, a well-known singer of songs in Ladino (one name for the variety of Spanish spoken by Sephardic Jews), recounts in

her concert appearances that, as she was growing up in Bosnia, the fact that one spoke “Spanish” was an unambiguous marker of Jewishness: anyone who spoke that language was by definition a Jew. It was not until she was eight years old that she learned the remarkable fact that there were other people in the world who spoke a variety of her language and that the great majority of them were not Jews. The remarkable flourishing of Sephardic culture, including numerous publications in Ladino, often using the Hebrew alphabet, in the centuries following the expulsion, as well as the survival today of hundreds of ballads whose origins can be traced back to late medieval Spain among the Jewish communities of North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and the New World,²¹ give a shape to “medieval” Iberian literature which defies not only the national and ethnic boundaries but also the temporal ones we might place upon it. It requires a rethinking, especially, of what such temporal boundaries mean.

This chapter has focused chiefly on the Latin and Romance cultures which arose in Christian-dominated Spain. Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived together in most areas of the Peninsula throughout the Middle Ages. Not surprisingly, many Iberian individuals’ own lives involve a crossing of borders. As we emphasize connections among Peninsular literatures and cultures, figures such as Moisés Sefardí, baptized as Petrus Alfonsi in Huesca in 1106, or Pablo de Santa María (formerly the important Rabbi Shelomó ha-Levi), named Bishop of Burgos in 1415, become key Iberian figures, not merely signs of cultural triumphalism or betrayal. Anselm Turmeda (c. 1355 – c. 1430), a Franciscan friar from Majorca and student in Paris and Bologna, travels to Tunis and converts to Islam, changing his name to “Abdallah.” From there the good friar writes, in Arabic, the anti-Christian “Tuhfat al-‘arīb fi-l-radd ‘ala ahl al-ṣalīb” (“Present of the Believer to the Followers of the Cross”), along with other less overtly polemical works in Catalan.

Such characters and the complex cultural currents which produced them inevitably seem exotic to those raised on the idea that the Middle Ages were the age of monolithic Christian faith. This is one danger to those who would study the Iberian Middle Ages: it is all too easy to emphasize difference, to exoticize the peculiar situation of medieval Iberia as a land of three religions. It is all too easy, too, to emphasize the attractive ideas of intercultural coexistence and cooperation, especially in present times when such ideals seem so unattainable. Positive intercultural exchange was certainly present at many points throughout the Iberian Middle Ages and this exchange constitutes a significant moment in European history.

¹⁹ Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Index scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi Hispanorum*. 2 vols. ([Salamanca]: Universidad de Salamanca, 1958–1959).

²⁰ See Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*. Trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992).

²¹ See Samuel G. Armistead et al., *Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Oral Tradition*. 2 vols. to date (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

But along with remarkable tolerance came remarkable intolerance. The challenge in reappreciating the Iberian Middle Ages is to understand the peculiar nuances of tolerance and intolerance throughout this period (David Nirenberg provides an excellent beginning in *Communities of Violence*²²). It is easy, too, to make monoliths of each of the “Three Religions” and the political apparatus which served at least two of them. At times “Islamic Spain” was divided into as many as two dozen “Party kingdoms.” We have emphasized the variety of Christian cultures in Iberia in this chapter, but such variety was also present, both geographically and across time, in medieval Iberian Islam and among the Jews. Heresies, sects, and religious controversies arose within all of the “Three Religions.”

To return to the present, the European Union has, thus far, paid lip-service, at least, to the existence of “minority languages.” Recently, the Educational Council of the European Union affirmed, rather tepidly, that “all European languages are equal in value and dignity from the cultural point of view and form an integral part of European culture and civilization” (14 February 2002). The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages exists to look after the status of European languages which meet the definition of “lesser used.” One thing we must hope that Europeans also keep in mind, however, is the enduring existence, in hundreds of thousands of documents tucked away in national libraries – those warehouses of the old order – of the ultimate European minority languages: those no longer spoken by anyone at all. In this respect, medieval Castilian is just as “minor” as medieval Catalan or medieval Galician. Today there is a real danger that in future generations only an increasingly diminishing minority will ever have the chance to know in the original language Pleberio’s powerful lament on the death of his daughter which closes *Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas (c. 1475–1541); or the tormented, yet somehow affirming tones of the *Cants de mort* (“Songs of Death”) by Ausiàs March (1397–1459); the crystalline beauty of the mystical prose poems “in the style of the Sufis” by Llull in his *Libre d’amic e amat* (“Book of the Lover and the Beloved”); or the deceptively simple repetitions of the Galician *cantigas de amigo* (“boyfriend songs”), written by male poets, perhaps in the style of women’s folk songs. In these and hundreds of other works of medieval Iberian literature there are bits of vocabulary, turns of phrase, proverbs and similes, rhymes and meters, which must be known in the original medieval language if they are to be known at all. It would be a great shame to let go this vast treasury of human experience expressed in words. As the ideas of nation and national language shift in meaning and importance, one clear negative result is that

medieval languages no longer have the cultural and political apparatus of the nation-state to defend them. Those who would wish to keep these silent languages and their texts as a part of the discourses of the present will have to find new structures – social, political, intellectual, economic – which will allow them to serve the needs of the present or they will be lost.

²² David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

3 Beginnings

MARIA ROSA MENOCAL

Genesis and chronicles

At the beginnings of literary histories lie the most alluring questions. We want to know all about what we call the origins of the tradition whose story is about to be told. Few start with “once upon a time” and yet nearly all are tempted down that road marked “sources” or “birth” or “genesis,” even when we know that it is a path that, nearly by definition, can have nothing like an unambiguous endpoint or resolution. Why do we persist in our scholarly tradition’s most quixotic quest, the search for that grail, that moment of birth, that earliest text or, as it is often called, “monument”? Why do we persist, even when we know (for we ourselves teach this) that what does survive from the earliest sources, in relatively remote times, may be largely a trick of history, and may bear only an accidental relationship to what there really was? Why do we not begin, more simply and cleanly, in some indisputable *medias res* and from there go bravely forward into the future, rather than backwards to where the question of the source of that particular river may lie? Why are we most insistent of all, when writing about those periods often charmingly called by poetic names (such as the “springtime” of our literature), on the need to clarify what we call “influences” – and what can that mean other than the poetic company that poets kept? Why are the histories of medieval literatures (whether free-standing or, as here, as the origins stories of later literatures) so consistently our versions of the story of Adam and Eve, sometimes down to and including quasi-biblical titles such as “the creation of literature in Spanish”? Also down to and including the interpolated different accounts? Why do we lapse into our own versions of fundamentalism, even when these stories are transparently mythical, when we ourselves are at times the priests who explain the iconic – rather than historic – importance of these “where do we come from” stories?

At play is that compelling human need to establish beginnings – which means in part to establish causes and meanings – and it is why most individuals, as well as traditions, struggle mightily with competing origins stories (so that even within the Book of Genesis two story traditions about the Creation have survived alongside each other). Yet we never seriously

think about abandoning the quest for the most satisfactory account of our beginnings. “A beginning; this is the source of the fascination medieval literature exercises on the mind . . . A beginning that is not really a beginning; this is the source of the complexity and originality of medieval literature,” is how the senior historian of the Middle Ages in France puts it in the introduction to his own history of French medieval literature.¹ Implicit in Zink’s provocative résumé of the particular interest of medieval literature is the recognition that most beginnings do not spring from any true void but rather from the destruction of something that went before. In *Genesis* itself the beginning of mankind, as we know it, is predicated on the destruction of that first period of innocence in the Garden of Eden.

In the beginning was . . . well, just what was there at the beginning? Was it the word, the text, the manuscript, the story, the song? What was its language? What languages did it replace? Who were the singers of those songs and the tellers of those tales? Saying just what we believe constitutes the beginning of a literary tradition – its new languages and its half-new forms – is what the philologist was created to do, and his task is really working out the etymology of a whole culture. Because both language and literature are what we take to be the vivid external markers of the most intimate qualities of communities, the stories of where they come from are of more than passing or academic interest and likely, instead, to be widely perceived as revealing the soul of a people. First there is, indeed, the word; and from the words come the songs sung with them, delighting in them; and then those stories, and then the stories about the stories, and so on. These are always difficult puzzles to piece together and often the literary historian is working from a series of fragments, and attempting to create a picture – to write a *genesis* story – that sheds light on much later literary phenomena. Difficult as any of this might be, however, it is still easy enough to argue that no creation story among those of the modern nations of Europe is more vexed than the one this book attempts to retell, that of Spain.

Spain’s history stands out conspicuously in the annals of Western Europe and its culture, because of the singular fact that, beginning in the eighth century, it was incorporated into the expansive Islamic Empire whose center was, in that initial period, in Damascus. The far western province of a civilization that on its eastern frontier reached nearly to China, al-Andalus (as it was called in Arabic, the *lingua franca* of the Empire), was not, however, destined to remain a primitive outpost or a poor cousin of the brilliant Islamic world. In 750 a bloody coup

¹ Michel Zink, *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*. Trans. Jeff Rider (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), pp. 1–2.

overturned everything: while staying at their family estate at Rusafa, some 250 miles to the northeast of Damascus, the Caliph and most of his family were executed. In one bloody moment were thus eliminated the Umayyads, who had ruled the *Dar al-Islam*, the “House of Islam,” since 661, and had presided over the staggering expansions of that century. The Abbasids, their rivals who engineered the dramatic rupture in the leadership, both religious and civil, of the vast Islamic polity, moved their capital to Baghdad, and there and then began a new chapter in Islamic history. This was not only an end but also the dramatic beginning of a distinctive new western history of Islam and Arabic-based culture. In this story that begins in the Near East lies the striking new foundation for medieval Spain: it turned out that one of the Umayyads had miraculously escaped the slaughter of his family. The young and intrepid Abd al-Rahman spent five years making his way to the far western provinces because that was the land of his Berber mother, and he correctly assumed he would find loyal men there. By 756 the last of the Damascus Umayyads had established himself in the colonial capital of Cordoba (and even built a new Rusafa on the outskirts of the city) and, as the first of the Andalusian Umayyads, he began the project of material transformation that would make this permanent exile of his a place worthy to eventually declare itself, as it would in the middle of the tenth century, the true caliphate.²

This, then, is the genesis of a transformed world order, and from this point forward the languages and cultures of Spain are markedly different from those of the rest of Europe, which is overwhelmingly Latin and Christian – and by and large still in that state of cultural dimness that had been the rule in Visigothic Spain as well. The contrast will mean that for the next four centuries or so Spain (the new Spain that is so dramatically transformed, even down to its topography and botany, with dozens of plants from the Old World soon thriving in the New) will be markedly the more civilized place, and the source of both material and intellectual innovations for the rest of Europe. Latin and its regional spoken variants survived, as did Christianity, but in virtually every respect – including the forms of Latin spoken and of Christianity practiced in the peninsula – the universe was changed.³ The question of how to write the history of this transformation, and its many complex consequences over the next seven centuries (at least), is the toughest of historiographic problems. Many, perhaps most, of the accounts of the history of Spain after this dramatic break directly or indirectly portray the consequences as a Spain thereafter divided between, on the one hand, the true “Spaniards”

² See D. F. Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (State Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), on the transformation of the Iberian landscape under Umayyad rule.

³ See Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World* (New York: Little, Brown, 2002).

(the descendants of the Latin-speaking Christians from before the invasion of 711) and, on the other hand, the Muslim invaders who, along with the Jews (a community that in fact flourished under the Umayyads and for centuries thereafter), were a foreign and “oriental” culture. The political and demographic facts, however, as well as the cultural landscape as it evolved over some seven centuries (it is worth stating explicitly that this is as long a period as that covered by the entire literary history of the years *after* 1492: from 1492 until our own times), suggest that this simple dichotomy does little justice to the complexity of the situation and its dozens of variations over such a vast expanse of time and space.

While this is not the place to attempt any detailed retelling of that history that spans some seven centuries and at least as many languages (three classical written languages, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew, as well as a number of distinct vernaculars, one based on Arabic and the others on Latin), it is crucial, at this beginning at least, to dismiss the most conspicuous distortions of the vision that posits that we can simply put aside, as somehow foreign to the true Spain and true Spaniards, the languages and cultures and literatures that first arrive with the Umayyads and that undergo a dozen different adaptations and flowerings and declines over those many centuries and under many different kinds of cultural circumstances. The broadest vision of what Spain was – and was not – in the Middle Ages deserves better than to remain the implausible caricature all too often accepted by those working on the literature of later periods, who are likely to see the medieval past as little more than the primitive stages of what will eventually become the real thing.

Crucially, it must be established that Arabic was from the outset, and for several centuries thereafter, the language of a book-loving and poetry-rich culture that was not remotely restricted to Muslims, but ultimately shared by most cultured Spaniards, including Jews and Christians. By the eleventh century, medieval Spain was also the place where Arabophone Jews re-invented poetry in Hebrew, and, beyond that, this was an easily multilingual society, a civilization whose aesthetic hallmarks were in creative intermarriages and adaptations and translations of all sorts. The untidy truth is that medieval Spain was home to a greater variety of interrelated religions and cultures, as well as more languages and literatures, than seem plausible or convenient to attribute, as origins, to the literature of a single modern national literature. If unified nations and single national languages are the benchmarks for the divisions of literatures established in the modern period, then the medieval universe which precedes it cannot be fit into those same parameters and divisions, without distorting the past to make it seem as if its only lasting value was in laying the groundwork for a distant and ultimately unimaginable future.

What is Spanish, before there is Spanish?

What was Spain, in the beginning? Or, more appropriately, what is the beginning of the Spain whose literary history this is? The grave difficulty for the medieval period is determining just what it is that we can legitimately call “Spanish” before any language of the peninsula is remotely understood as the unifying language of a modern nation, a time during which a remarkable range of both vernaculars and classical languages were in use and, tellingly, during which there thrived in the peninsula the most vigorous culture of translation in European history. A time and place, in other words, about as far as possible from the monolingual (and monoreligious) national culture of “Spanish” whose pre-history we presume this is. It has long been understood, in fact, that *español* was originally a trans-Pyrenean word, and that well into the Middle Ages the inhabitants of the peninsula identified themselves by their religion, or by the cities or regions they inhabited – Leon or Navarra, Toledo or Seville. Moreover, linguists understand clearly that even to conflate *castellano* with *español* – i.e. leaving aside the problem of the non-Romance languages – is a problematic procedure.

Even if we do not conflate these terms, and instead limit our canon *geographically*, to what was written in that place that is occupied by the modern nation of Spain (which comes into viable existence in the configuration we know not in the Middle Ages but, instead, in 1492), then how do we deal with the many literatures in the many languages that populate the peninsula before *that* relatively clear beginning, a beginning based in some measure on the destruction of that same long past that had included both Jews and Muslims, and their languages and literatures? If it is the language that determines filiation, then the lack of “Spanish” in the medieval period – and in fact the abundance of other languages, and the supreme literary and belletristic importance of languages that are linguistically unrelated to Spanish – presents a logical problem; and if it is the place that determines whether the literature belongs to the larger history then why do we, indeed, not count the vigorous and culturally central literatures in those other languages?

These are the toughest questions, then: what can we plausibly deem “Spanish” and “Spain” to be in the medieval period, and thus what is properly the literary tradition that lies behind that watershed year of 1492, that decisive year when both the modern state and its language were consolidated and codified? Self-evidently these are not questions that exist in isolation. Quite the contrary: they are subsections and offshoots of the largest historical questions about Spanish history and about Spanish “identity.” In these most iconic realms, language and literature, these questions and especially their answers carry special weight. The matter

of how we deal with these multilingual and multi-religious complexities that bear so little relationship to what follows – that one could argue is what the modern nation-state was built to deny and to destroy – is extraordinarily thorny. Perhaps the only reasonable answer is one that no modern literary history is likely to propose: to declare that what lies before that moment when Spain so dramatically turns its back on its own past and sets about disavowing it and destroying its icons (the pyres of burning Arabic books in Granada are an apt symbol of a far more widespread and deeply destructive phenomenon) is so different in its essentials, and so complex in its differences, that it no more belongs in the same literary history as what follows it than does the Latin literature written by Roman citizens born in the province of Hispania, during the “silver” years of the Roman Empire.

Of course, not including the Romans of Hispania is also a judgment call, and a matter of the cultural visions and customs of the moment at which the history is being written. The long-canonical work of José Amador de los Ríos, for example, *Historia crítica de la literatura española* (“Critical History of Spanish Literature”), fearlessly begins with the Romans from the earliest moments of their recorded writings in the peninsula, continues with the Christians of the Roman world, and after the Fall of Rome includes the Visigoths. This trajectory leads to Isidore and from there to the popular Latin poetry of the last years before the Islamic conquest. The first volume of Amador de los Ríos in fact ends with the legendary materials concerning Rodrigo and the last of the Visigoths and, without skipping a beat, or ignoring the overwhelming shift in power and social structures and religions that follow, continues with the “escritores cristianos del Califato” (“Christian writers of the Caliphate”). One might quarrel with the ideology that underpins this trajectory, which establishes that the Spaniards are defined first by geography and secondarily by conversion to Christianity, and then, ultimately, by remaining Christian in the aftermath of the Islamic invasion and colonization (which in fact led to wholesale conversions to Islam). It has, however, the merit of defining the complex terms forcefully – it is not simply geography nor a single language, but a clear identity unembarrassedly defined – and then drawing a line of descent and development consistent with those terms.

At the outset of the twenty-first century Amador de los Ríos’ nineteenth-century vision, when laid out so explicitly, might seem quaint and unsustainable in a number of ways, and yet it is little different in practice from the default position developed over the course of the twentieth century, and nearly universally accepted. Our more recent versions, however, are less straightforward, since some scholars might, indeed, be embarrassed to admit that they would define medieval Spaniards as really Spaniards – or not – according to their religion. The less direct rationalization for the continuation of the same divisions used by Amador de los Ríos

(if it is Castilian – or a linguistically related dialect – it counts) is that this is the linguistic first step in what will develop into the national language. This position sets the standard for inclusion within the orbit of “Spanish literature” *avant la lettre* (i.e. before 1492 and throughout the medieval period) by saying that it is the linguistic relationship to the language that will eventually become the language of the nation that makes it count or not. This now-canonical vision of the literary history of Spain subsumes a number of dubious principles: that literary history is developmental, so earlier stages are those that lead to later stages; that the literary history of a people in a given period can legitimately be defined by the extent to which their literature is composed in the linguistic harbinger of what will become, some 400 years later, the language of the nation that will succeed and replace those people and their cultures; and that the literatures in other languages, even though they may have been vibrant and indeed central in the earlier period, may be ignored altogether or, at best, studied insofar as they may have constituted “influences” on what is then understood to be the “real thing,” i.e. what would one day become important. One need only begin to imagine applying these principles to other historical circumstances – or, perhaps, to imagine what its application might mean 400 years from now when scholars will be writing the literary history of our own times, based on whatever might by then have become the literature of the dominant culture of North America – to begin to understand the gross distortions of cultural history this creates and then reinforces. Beginnings, in this vision, matter only if they lead to certain ends, and this is a treacherous path indeed for the literary historian to follow.

The very widely used literary history of Juan Luis Alborg may be taken as exemplary although it is in fact superior to many (and in that comparable to Amador de los Ríos) in its direct exploration of the prickliest questions.⁴ Alborg begins by raising the question of whether it is a matter of the language itself that can determine which of the premodern literatures of the peninsula belongs in a literary history of modern Spain. He does eventually answer that it is, indeed, a linguistic choice, and that *literatura española* is *literatura castellana*, and that the only historical conundrum is the question of the true first instances of Castilian literature. He does not do this, however, until he has conceded that there were a whole series of other languages that might be considered as players in that same literary history: Latin (both classical and medieval, and the versions of these used by the Visigoths and their putative descendants the Mozarabs) as well as *judia* (*sic*) and *árabe*. For Alborg, though, the decisive factor is ultimately, as a result of that same anachronism of working from

back to front, what he describes as being “su repercusión en el *posterior proceso cultural español*” (“its repercussion in the *later* Spanish cultural process”;⁵ emphasis added), and yet even this formula suggests greater cultural or historical nuance than is really the case here. Alborg and, with him, and after him, an overwhelming majority of scholars (not to speak of the curricula of the majority of Spanish programs) simply rest the case with a direct equation of “castellano” with “español.” The two other Romance dialects that were major players in the medieval cultural scene, Catalan and Galician, are, nowadays, allowed secondary roles, in part as a reaction to the rise of the regionalisms in Spain. Yet Arabic and Hebrew, and their extensive literatures, are disqualified, because those languages did not “become” Spanish – and, presumably, because their speakers and writers, and their descendants, did not become Spaniards.

By working backwards (as if the past had serving the present as its principal function) and furthermore by using linguistic criteria without cultural context (or to disguise rather simple cultural-religious prejudices), the commonplace vision of the origins of the literature of Spain has as its own beginning the dismissal of hundreds of years and many libraries’ worth of writing by Spaniards, that is, Spaniards who were not Christians – in an era in which Christianity was not at all a passport to citizenship – and who wrote in languages other than Castilian – in a very long era in which Castilian was, at best, one of many legitimate languages, at worst non-existent in the world of culture and literature. Through much of the period Castilian had little or no literature and it was eventually established in great measure through a massive project of translation from Arabic. It may continue to appeal to some to tell the origins story of modern Spain focusing on the tale of how the Castilians worked their way up the literary ladder of medieval Spain, and it serves certain purposes central to the project of creating the modern (i.e. post-1492) Spanish identity. Nevertheless, it egregiously misrepresents the culture of the medieval period, which (much like our own) imagined that its importance was within its own time, and on its own terms.

What is medieval?

The truth is that a new approach to the medieval literary history of Spain – which may or may not then be regarded as the true origins of the rest of Spanish literary history – already exists. A viable model and starting point was created in the mid twentieth century: the conspicuous and exceptionally useful exception to that general practice of excluding all but

⁴ Juan Luis Alborg, *Historia de la literatura española* (2nd edn. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1970).

⁵ Alborg, *Historia*, p. 12.

what looks like what will become Castilian is the multi-volume *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas* ("General History of Hispanic Literatures"), published in 1949 under the general editorship of Guillermo Díaz-Plaja. The adjective "Hispanic" has been adopted (and adapted) to include *both* of those historical possibilities that make the Spanish case so different, and so much richer, than any other among the modern European national languages: the full range of literatures written by communities living in the peninsula before there was Spanish *and* literatures written in Spanish, regardless of location. That Latin-American literature is thus included as part of this history is hardly revolutionary, although perhaps in the middle of the twentieth century it would have seemed far more audacious than it does today. Still, the first of the six volumes, which has the expected and formulaic "In the beginning" title ("Desde los orígenes hasta 1400" ["From the Origins to 1400"]), is in fact anything but the expected. Instead, it is a radically unconventional depiction of those origins, and the parameters of the study are defined quite directly by Díaz-Plaja in his preface when he says that this book is "una obra en que se intenta captar cuantos valores estéticos ha producido el genio literario albergado en los confines históricos y geográficos que se conocen o que se han conocido alguna vez bajo el nombre de España" ("a work in which we try to capture whatever aesthetic values have been produced by literary genius located in the historical and geographical confines that are known, or that have at some point been known, as Spain").⁶

The first of the essays in Díaz-Plaja's volume (following a long general preface by Ramón Menéndez Pidal) takes us back to the seemingly arcane and even eccentric posture of Amador de los Ríos, beginning at the absolute beginnings of any knowable literature from the Iberian peninsula, i.e. with the literature written in Latin during the Roman period. (This literature formed a substantial part of the canon of the "Silver Age" of Latin-Roman letters, including as it does the younger Seneca, Lucan, Martial, and Quintillian.) The second of the chapters also suggests it will follow that much earlier pattern, focused as it is on the "literatura latinocristiana" ("Latin-Christian literature"), a chapter that includes the writers (not many, to be sure) of Visigothic Spain and culminates in the great Isidore of Seville, whose lifetime dovetails almost uncannily with that of the prophet Muhammad. During the sixty or so years they lived (the prophet's years are known more precisely, 570–632, and Isidore's years are generally given as c. 560–634), their universes were as different from each other – and as unimaginable and unknowable to each other – as can be conceived. Within a century of their deaths these starkly different

planets would in fact collide, that new order created by the prophet from the Arabian desert replacing and remaking the struggling old order that Isidore had valiantly attempted to keep alive. Therein lies the great challenge to writing a history of the literature of the peninsula: how do we deal with the radical transformations of the old Hispania of Isidore and his ancestors? What follows from that revolution that today would no doubt be cast as a "clash of civilizations"?

Díaz-Plaja's mid twentieth-century functional answers to these and a host of comparably difficult questions are exceptional. The structure of this first volume of the larger history recognizes the pivotal position of Isidore and the complexity and legitimacy of the heterogeneous heritage he represents, and to this the first sections are devoted. Isidore's ancestors were those who, first, shared his language, Latin, and later, and in only a partial continuum with the "HispanoRoman" ancestors (which was a linguistic kinship but a cultural and religious divide), those who shared his religion and its culture, Christianity, but who, unlike the citizens of Rome, had only the most rudimentary appreciation of anything like literature. In that sense, and in others as well, this is not only the first stage but indeed one of the crucial foundations of the medieval chapter – and the classical Latin heritage that stands behind that was important even as a shadow, as a lost standard that made men like Isidore nearly despair of their own times and cultural conditions (and that may have contributed to the attraction of the book-crazed Arabophone world, to which so many Christians would convert). Díaz-Plaja understood that this early medieval Christian culture would encompass the advent of Islam in the peninsula, as well as the flourishing of the Jewish communities and the spectacular renaissance in Hebrew letters that is one of the results of Muslim rule and universal access to Arabic letters. This history openly rejects the widespread conceit that the "Spanish" culture that Isidore represents – and the Latin foundation that lies as a haunting shadow behind that culture – went into isolation until it could re-emerge, fundamentally unscathed, centuries later. It openly maintains that the legitimate trajectory of the literary cultures of Spain must include those that developed in the peninsula that were not Christian and not Castilian or proto-Castilian – those that perhaps did not "lead" to Spanish in the reductive ways we are given to understand the concept of "leading to."

So it is that in this history the complexity of the mid eighth-century transformations get something like their due credit. The bearers of the new faith – which as it happened was radically logocentric and already had a distinctive and revered poetic tradition – were in the very first instance a band of conquering foreigners, a handful of Syrian Arabs and the majority rank-and-file Berbers from just across the Straits of Gibraltar. Within a generation, and in a steeply increasing curve thereafter, and for

⁶ Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas* (Barcelona: Editorial Borna, 1949), p. ix.

several centuries after that, the Muslims of this newly named place, al-Andalus, were overwhelmingly converts from all of the older ethnic and religious groups of Isidore's time, and they intermarried with the newer arrivals. "Así pues no se puede dar con propiedad el nombre de 'árabes' a los españoles, sino el de 'españoles musulmanes'" ("So we cannot with any propriety call the Spaniards 'Arabs,' but rather 'Muslim Spaniards'") is the pithy and refreshingly lucid statement on the subject by Elías Terés, author of the central chapter of this section, on "La literatura arábigoespañola" ("Arabic-Spanish Literature").⁷ This means, among many other things, that the fantasy elaborated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that Christians were of a different race from Muslims (and Jews, of course), and thus always of a different language and culture along with their different blood, is delusional in various ways.

In the first instance, as Terés points out (and as most historians have known for some time), most of those Muslims participating in the extensive and rich Arabic literary culture that was the hallmark of Andalusian culture for many centuries were the descendants of converts and of intermarriages. Even beyond that, what we also know is that, with the exception of a radicalized minority, even those who remained Christians became, like the Jews, members of the multilingual community of medieval Spain, which means that even if we were explicitly to restrict the original "Spanishness" as an identity admitting to only one religion, Arabic literary culture would, even then, need to play a central role in the medieval Spanish canon. The famous lament of Paul Alvarus of Cordoba, the outspoken mid ninth-century opponent of the Arabization of the Christians, paints a vivid enough picture of the integration of Christians into the Arabophone community, which included both Muslims and Jews:

The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to form a correct and elegant Arabic. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets or apostles? Alas! All talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian literature as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their own language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves.⁸

⁷ Elías Terés, "La literatura arábigoespañola." In *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas*. Ed. Guillermo Díaz-Plaja (Barcelona: Editorial Vergara, 1949–1968), vol. 1, p. 219.

⁸ Jerrilyn Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (State Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1990), p. 67.

Like Amador de los Ríos, Díaz-Plaja includes a chapter on the culture of these Arabized Christians but the context could not be more different, following as it does both a chapter on "Literatura hebraicoespañola" (written by the then-dean of that field, Millás Vallicrosa) and, centrally, the comprehensive piece on the nearly seven centuries of literature in "arábigoespañol" by Elías Terés.

This vision of Spain in the Middle Ages, both implicit and occasionally explicit in this volume, thus provides a rather different point of departure than the one most literary histories offer, where a rough-and-tumble frontier people in the eleventh century begin the long process of creating a new literature from scratch, singing about their warrior heroes in a language that knows no written form, and which can only lay the essentially primitive (even if sometimes moving) groundwork for what will one day achieve true poetic status, roughly around the time that Castilian is well on the way to being the only form of Spanish literary culture. Here, instead, it begins with a community for which, already in the eighth century, Arabic had long been the language first and foremost of immensely sophisticated poetry (as well as of all the other belletristic forms, including philosophy and the sciences). As Terés puts it: "Siendo objeto de universal cultivo por parte de los árabes, la poesía irrumpió en España en el momento mismo de la invasión. Según una noticia – que parece falsa pero aún en su falsedad es simbólica – ya Táriq el conquistador cantó en verso su paso del Estrecho" ("Being the object of general cultivation by the Arabs, poetry burst into Spain at the same time as the invasion. According to one report – which seems to be false, although in its falseness it is still symbolic – the conqueror Tariq already sang in verse his ride over the Straits [of Gibraltar]").⁹

Even if this attribution to the conqueror of a first poem for this new beginning in Spain is apocryphal (and thus all the more telling, as Terés perceptively notes), there is a historically better documented first poem from later in that same eighth century. This different beginning for the brand-new Andalusian culture is one written by the man who, a generation later than the conqueror, is readily identifiable as its truer founding father, Abd al-Rahman. He was a first-generation immigrant in exile in what was, when he arrived, the outer province of al-Andalus. At the same time he can legitimately be understood as the first poet of the brave new world he himself would craft, transforming that outland into a new center, a homeland for the not-quite-extinguished Umayyads, and for their expansive cultural vision of Islam. Abd al-Rahman himself is a symbol of the productive fusions of that civilization, himself the child of an ethnically mixed marriage, as well as the scion of a dynasty that had promiscuously

⁹ Terés, "La literatura arábigoespañola," p. 233. Emphasis added.

taken and reshaped so much from the cultures it had encountered during its previous century of vast expansion. In a literary history of Spain creative or audacious enough to define the radical reconfigurations of the eighth century as the legitimate beginnings of a crucial chapter in that history, Abd al-Rahman's famous ode to a palm tree could stand as an iconic first monument of Spanish literature:

A palm tree stands in the middle of Rusafa,
Born in the West, far from the land of palms.
I said to it: How like me you are, far away and in exile,
In long separation from family and friends.
You have sprung from soil in which you are a stranger;
And I, like you, am far from home.¹⁰

This linguistically, religiously, and culturally complex picture of pre-fifteenth-century Spain is eventually continued with a chapter by Menéndez Pidal on the so-called “School of Translators” and then, and only then, moves on to a section on “España romance, siglos XII–XIV” (“Ballad in Spain, 12th–14th centuries”), which now self-evidently follows in a variety of complex ways – accepting or rejecting, as often as not some of both – from everything that has preceded it. The architecture of Díaz-Plaja’s volume, and the ideology that lies behind it, suggest a number of principles about Spanish literature *avant la lettre* that may seem, today, self-evident and valuable, and yet very few of them have shaped literary histories in the more than half-century since that ambitious work was published. This is a picture of a Spain which, before the establishment of Castilian as the national language (and with it Christianity as the unique national religion, and presumably with a correspondingly orthodox literary culture), was not really that later Spain at all, but rather one radically different from it, at least as different as the long-vanished Roman past, which is rarely adduced as the “origins” of Spanish literature. What does not happen here is that all-too-typical retrospective imposition of the later development on the earlier stages.

The answer to what is medieval here is simple but unusual, and it ought to be our own: it is not merely what develops into the modern, it is in fact a great deal more than what would survive (or be allowed to survive) into the properly Spanish era. Here, then, there is far more than the usual passing mention (if that) of the Jews having a reinvention of poetry in their Golden Age in Spain (which in fact occurs during the same century in which the nascent Romance vernaculars are creating new poetries). Here, instead, the Jews (to take only this example, for the moment) are as much (or as little) Spaniards as anyone else inside the volume – from Seneca to

¹⁰ Cited in Ruggles, *Gardens*, p. 42.

Alfonso el Sabio – and their literature the subject of an extensive central chapter. This reflects the reality in the historical moment in which their culture flourished in Spain; their literature is in Hebrew, but that too is part of a Spanish tradition defined now as being multifaceted and encompassing languages that would later be rejected and exiled, and is thus named *literatura hebraicoespañola* (“Hebrew-Spanish literature”). One notes that here it is not even “hispánico” but “español” that is married to “hebreo” – as it is in “árabigoespañol.”

What is lost?

The greatest challenge for literary histories that would want to follow this as a model is the *de facto* segregation it allows, since what these separate (if theoretically equal) chapters cannot really do is give a sense of how these different religious communities mostly also lived inside the shared cultural community that was the very essence of medieval Spain. What is lost, in the universe in which one community of scholars (and literary histories and courses and reading lists, the whole canonical apparatus that passes knowledge on, from one generation to the next) is devoted to one of the several languages of Toledo in the eleventh and twelfth and even thirteenth centuries (to take an easy example), while a completely different scholarly community, mostly incomunicado from the first, takes care of another of those languages, and the same for a third, and so forth? Clearly, we are never able to recover much of a sense of the extent to which the originality and achievements of medieval Spanish culture lay precisely in the lavish interplay of these languages – and their people, and their literature – and in all of the arts, in fact, since these productive intermarriages are everywhere, strikingly visible in architecture, for example, and understood clearly in music. Even when there were intact and separate religious communities, with their separate religious languages and beliefs, there was at the same time a degree of cultural intermingling and interchange whose first recorded – and lamented! – instance is perhaps that complaint by Paul Alvarus, about how well all those young Christian men knew their Arabic poetry. It does not occur to most literary historians of our own time that when they exclude that Arabic literature of which those Christians were so enamored (and much of which had in fact been written by Spaniards, Muslims whose ancestry in Spain by the mid ninth century went back more years than most Americans can claim for theirs in the United States), they are following the ideological program of religious and linguistic separation that Alvarus and others like him (eventually including the whole of the Inquisitorial tradition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) wanted the Spaniards of their day and age

to follow. This separation has been more successful, ironically enough, among twentieth-century Hispanists, who seem to believe, by and large, that the long and venerable Arabic poetic tradition of Spain – the one so adored by even mid ninth-century Christians, who learned Arabic to read it and write it – is, after all, to be left to the Arabists.

What we should understand is that throughout the Middle Ages that segregationist and monolingual principle simply did not exist, or utterly failed when attempts were made to enforce it, and that, clearly, is what Alvarus' lament reveals: it is the depths of cultural assimilation and give-and-take that we glimpse there – and not its opposite, not what it is normally taken to mean, that the Christian community successfully resisted the cultural intermingling. Indeed, most of the other evidence surrounding the case of the famous Mozarab martyrs whom Paul Alvarus wrote about suggests that the Christian hierarchy of Cordoba was opposed to and appalled by their acts of gross and suicidal provocation of the Islamic state, into which most Christians (and churchmen) were fully integrated and within which they were protected (short of the sort of public blasphemy in which the martyrs indulged, knowing it would get them executed). Indeed, the old Visigothic liturgy in Latin was eventually translated into Arabic and it was in that language that it survived, intact and in its original form, for hundreds of years – only to be replaced eventually by the reformed Roman rite brought by the French Benedictine monks from Cluny toward the end of the eleventh century, a change bitterly contested by Spanish Christians for hundreds of years, since for them it was the Mozarabic rite, in Arabic (and not the newfangled version the northerners brought with them), that was the symbol of authentic Spanish Christianity, and its rite the remaining traditional one in Christendom. Medieval Spaniards of many different stripes appreciated that there was a radical difference between a religion, on the one hand, and a literary and philosophical culture, on the other.

It is difficult, when there are separate accounts of each of the religious-language communities, to convey how central a role both social and literary integration played in defining the character of medieval Spanish literature. One relatively straightforward example can stand for much else here: the Jews of the eleventh-century Golden Age were also, easily and simultaneously, readers and writers of the Arabic literary traditions, and in fact it was their expertise in Arabic letters that frequently won them high-ranking positions in Muslim dominions and, eventually, in Christian Spain, where their role as translators is well known. It was that intimate knowledge and love of Arabic poetry that made possible their creation of a quasi-vernacular literary Hebrew, the basis of the extraordinary reinvention of secular poetry in that long-fossilized liturgical language. At the same time, the Jews would also have been speakers of whatever the

vernacular was wherever they lived, certainly the Arabic vernacular during the years of the caliphate, but also one or more of the Romance vernaculars as well, beginning with the Romance spoken by the Mozarabs, those Christians who were so thoroughly assimilated into the Arabophone world, and ending, well, ending with the fifteenth-century Castilian they called *Ladino* (from “Latino,” to distinguish it from Arabic and Hebrew) and took with them into exile after 1492, and continued to speak in exile until the twentieth century. To return for just one more moment to that eleventh century: when the Andalusian Jews were dramatically rewriting the history of Hebrew poetry it just so happens that other poetries were being dramatically reinvented as well. This is the pivotal moment in the history of the nascent Romance languages when the vernaculars were boldly emerging as the poetic languages that would throw out the old (Latin) and “make it new,” as Ezra Pound, a devoted student of the earliest Romance lyrics, would famously say in his 1934 Modernist manifesto.

Medieval Europe in general (and Spain exceptionally so) is infinitely more variegated than the later periods can imagine, following as they do the establishment of single and defining national languages. The powerful culture of translation – a far more ubiquitous and disorganized and defining cultural phenomenon than what might be understood if we focus only on the phenomenon of the official “School of Translators” – was the Latin-Christian reaction to its direct exposure to the riches of the vast Arabic libraries, and this too began in the same eleventh century in which the new poetries in Hebrew and Romance were the poetic avant-gardes. In 1948, when we must assume the first volume of the *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas* was in press, a Hebraist named Samuel Stern published an article that would reveal that there were, after all, surviving texts attesting to a literature that directly reflected those very interactions among languages and traditions and peoples that are nearly impossible to account for in a scholarly universe demarcated by national (and even religious) boundaries that were anything but divisions in the Middle Ages. What Stern exposed (and deciphered) was a body of poems written in either classical Hebrew or Arabic with a refrain – which in fact sets the versification and rhyme scheme for the whole of the poem – in a vernacular, most notably in the Romance vernacular that was the other language (besides Arabic) of the Christians known as Mozarabs. These poems were, and are, self-evidently the product of that complex and energetic universe of the Spanish eleventh century, and the news of their existence provoked scholarly excitement, although principally, and very ironically, on something like “nationalistic” grounds, since it was hailed as an earlier springtime for Romance verse than anyone had imagined. The Romance part of the poems – the refrains, and only the refrains in Mozarabic, for that matter – are divorced from the rest of their poems,

from the Hebrew and Arabic strophes which the Romance verses punctuate. As isolated snippets they become, in Spanish literary history, that elusive "first monument" of Spanish literature. Perhaps nothing speaks more clearly to the folly and the distortions of this backwards approach to the Spanish Middle Ages than this, the dismemberment of a bilingual poem, a poem whose bilingualism is not casual but rather foundational, and where the vernacular is not carelessly tacked on at the end, but rather, as with the society that produced it, the various languages, sometimes tied to religions and sometimes not, are intimately interlaced throughout.

What is lost in medieval Spanish literature is, in the first instance, the texts that did not survive the ravages of history: first, the commonplace conservation problems, those that wreak havoc with manuscripts, and that no doubt destroyed textual evidence of earlier versions of the story told in the famous *Poema de mi Cid* ("Poem of the Cid," written in the mid twelfth century, first copied down in 1207), to take but this one famous example; and second, the particular Spanish problems that led to the wholesale and purposeful destruction of books in Arabic and Hebrew in (especially) the sixteenth century. This latter practice was slyly satirized by Miguel de Cervantes with his "Inquisition of the Books" in Part I (chapter 5) of *Don Quijote* (1605) and then even more poignantly reflected in that most self-referential moment, in chapter 9, when the narrator discovers the manuscript that contains the story he is telling: an Arabic manuscript, about to be turned into pulp, in the old Jewish quarter of Toledo. Far more is lost than what has vanished materially, and perhaps the limits of our understanding of the literary history of medieval Spain are best symbolized by what happened to these bilingual poems after they were discovered, a fate of dismemberment worthy of Cervantine satire: we segregate the rich and interwoven traditions of the peninsula in ways that do extreme violence to the original literary cloth, that tear into rag-like pieces what was originally crafted as a luxurious fabric.¹¹

If the medieval is going to constitute the "beginnings" of the Spanish tradition then it can only do that after the medieval literary scene is understood on its own terms, and in its own languages.

¹¹ Two recent books which attempt to provide a grounding in the literatures and cultures of Islamic Spain are the encyclopedic tome edited by Salma Khaddra Jayyusi (*The Legacy of Muslim Spain* [Leiden: Brill, 1992]); and *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Al-Andalus*. Ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4

The poetry of medieval Spain

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In common with other European societies, the earliest vernacular narrative poetry in Spain originated in the form of the heroic epic, a type of poem that has often been defined as dealing with the pursuit of honor through risk. Narrative poetry of this type generally developed later than its lyric equivalent, and this can be attributed to the fact that its content requires the existence of a degree of social, political, and cultural sophistication on the part of the audience for whom it was intended. This sophistication, however, does not imply that vernacular poets and their audiences were yet fully literate, because the earliest epics were likely to have been orally composed and diffused by *juglares* ("minstrels"), whose works were seldom committed to writing; of those that were, it is thought that many were obtained as a result of dictation, and none has survived in its original form. The essence of this type of poetry lies in its communal spirit and in the telling of great deeds undertaken by larger-than-life heroes whose actions embody the values of the community and celebrate the existence of a bygone, heroic age. Its effect is threefold: it informs and entertains while also inspiring the audience to emulate the heroism of their forebears.

The earliest heroic epics in Spanish dealt with the Counts of Castile and the events that were believed to have transpired under their rule. If other types of epic were composed, no record of them has survived, and so these texts represent the first steps in the establishment of an autonomous Castilian identity. The earliest poem, the *Siete infantes de Lara* ("Seven Princes of Lara"), has long since been lost, but as it was reworked into chronicles by scribes who plundered it for information, its contents can be partially reconstructed on the basis of assonance (or vowel rhyme) patterns that became fossilized within their prose. Some 550 or so lines have so far been reconstructed, and although not all critics remain convinced of their authenticity, they nonetheless tell an interesting story. What is most noticeable is that the *Siete infantes* is founded on a metrical system that consists of irregular assonanced lines of between fourteen and sixteen syllables gathered into *tiradas* ("narrative sections") of uneven length. Formulaic phrases and epithets are common, and there are many other hallmarks of an oral style; but the nature of the reconstruction makes it

difficult to determine whether the arrangement is necessarily a product of oral, erudite, or mixed composition.

The text of the *Siete infantes* reveals a good deal about the nature of society at the close of the millennium: the power of bonds of kinship and of feudal loyalty, the savagery of blood feuds and of military confrontation, and the fragile nature of life itself. Nowhere are these elements more touchingly expressed than in the lament of Gonzalo Gústios over the heads of his seven sons. Yet, the poem's most important attribute lies in its religious, ethnic, and political consciousness, and in the depiction of a series of noble values challenged not by Muslim Spain, but by the enemy within. This factor underlines the vulnerability of Castilian independence in this period, and it is by no means coincidental that similar sentiments are displayed in three related texts: the *Condesa traidora* ("Treacherous Countess") and the *Romanz del infant García* ("Poem of Prince García"), which have survived only as prose, and the *Poema de Fernán González* ("Poem of Fernán González"), a mid thirteenth-century clerical reworking. These texts describe the fortunes of the Counts of Castile from the time of Fernán González through to the reign of his great-grandson, García Sánchez, and although some evidence suggests that they were composed in the form of an epic cycle, it is more likely that they appeared in isolation from one another.

The emergence of Castile as a dominant force in the peninsula is also attested by a later branch of epic dealing with the exploits of the Cid, Rodrigo (or Ruy) Díaz de Vivar. Born around 1043, the Cid served as a knight under Fernando I until the king's death in 1065; his allegiance then passed to Sancho II, king of Castile, until he was murdered as he laid siege to his brother and sister (Alfonso and Urraca) at Zamora in 1072. (These events are depicted in a lost epic known as the *Cantar de Sancho II* ["Poem of Sancho II"]). Thereafter, the Cid maintained an uneasy relationship with the new king, Alfonso, and was twice exiled from his kingdom. The second exile provides the starting point for the *Poema* or *Cantar de mí Cid* ("Poem of the Cid"), a heroic epic of some 3,700 lines, the date of which remains uncertain (critics place its composition between 1105 and 1178). The *Cantar* is a masterpiece of early Spanish literature that exists in a unique manuscript, copied in 1207. Theories concerning the composition of the text are many, but most would now agree that it is the product of a learned poet with legal training, and with ecclesiastical connections in the Burgos area, most probably with the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña.

The *Cantar* is a subtle blend of fact and fiction that characterizes the Cid as the embodiment of a series of noble, Castilian virtues. These include the conventional characteristics of *fortitudo* ("strength") and *sapientia* ("knowledge") as well as *mesura*, a quality that embraces prudence,

forbearing, and moderation. The *Cantar* itself is composed in a style akin to that of the *Siete infantes*, and this allows the poet flexibility in the way that he shapes materials. Structurally, the poem is divided into three sections, although the essence of the plot is binary: the first part dealing with the Cid's banishment, and the second, the Infantes de Carrión. These sections are unified by the Cid's loss of honor and by Alfonso's role in restoring it, and this has led critics to focus on the national sentiments of the work, and how Alfonso, a Leonese king, is educated by his Castilian vassal. This dimension is introduced at an early stage with the exclamation "¡Dios, qué buen vassallo, si oviése buen señor!" ("God what a good vassal, if only he had a good lord!" line 20), and reaches its climax when the poet finally characterizes Alfonso as a good Castilian king. To describe the *Cantar* as a purely political text, however, would be to overlook the power of its human perspective: the concern of a man for the wellbeing of his wife and daughters. This aspect of the poem is finely blended with its wider national sentiments and produces some of the most remarkable poetry.

By the close of the twelfth century, the social and political instabilities that had coincided with the age of heroic epic had largely passed, and so literary attention turned instead toward a type of poetry that dealt with more universal, rather than strictly national, themes. These poems, composed in octosyllabic couplets, share the metrical irregularity of the epic and were probably designed for oral performance rather than private reading. Two of them, the *Disputa del alma y del cuerpo* ("Debate between the Soul and the Body") and the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* ("Life of Saint Mary of Egypt"), are based on near-contemporary French models, and this may reflect the expansion of Cluniac power in the peninsula and the popularization of the tomb cult of Saint James in the form of the Pilgrim Route to Santiago de Compostela. A third text, the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient* ("Book of the Three Kings of the East"), is derived from the Apocrypha, while the source of a fourth, *Razón de amor con los denuestos del agua y del vino* ("Poem of Love with the Debate between Water and Wine") has defied attempts at identification; its second part, however, assumes the form of a debate, and this has often been taken as a hallmark of Goliardic influence. As a recognizable grouping, these poems marked a sea change in literary tastes, for in contrast to the acutely introspective nature of epic, they each deal with foreign subjects. The *Vida* and the *Libre* take place in the eastern Mediterranean, the *Disputa* describes the fate of an anonymous knight (although there is some local color), while the narrator of the *Razón* declares that he has lived in Germany, France, and Lombardy; the extent to which this can be interpreted as an indication of textual provenance, however, remains debatable, particularly in the light of a rather oblique, subsequent reference to Spain.

The most significant common denominator of these works, apart from their pan-European focus, is that they generate much of their meaning through contrasts between antithetical states of being. To some extent this could be regarded as a continuation of the partisan ethos of epic, but the themes that are considered are more wide-ranging: body versus soul, sin versus sanctity, faith versus doubt, and water versus wine. In two of the four this type of construction is a natural consequence of the narration of debates between rival parties; in the *Vida* and the *Libre*, on the other hand, the contrasts are internal: the former describes the chiasmic evolution of a libidinous sinner into a model of saintly perfection (as Mary grows spiritually, her once beautiful exterior withers and dies as her inner corruption is drawn to the surface), while the latter draws a spectacular threefold distinction between groups of virtuous and ignorant characters. In view of the binary flavor of these works, it is hardly surprising that critics have searched for similar contrasts in *Razón de amor* – the solution most commonly proposed being the distinction between chaste and sexual love. Scholarship, however, has not yet arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, or, indeed, demonstrated how the encounter between the narrator and his lady in the first part is unified with the subsequent debate between water and wine. Some have even postulated that the *Razón* consists of two poems rather than one, although there is little agreement on how they might have been joined.

The extent to which these works can be regarded as products of a school of writing is debatable, but it is noticeable that the similarities that exist between them outweigh the number of differences, chiefly in the selection of a rhyming (as opposed to assonanced) verse form, the adoption of a popular tone suited to oral delivery, and the relative universality of their content and focus. These elements are made more noticeable by the emergence in the early thirteenth century of a poetic school known as the *mester de clerecía*. These poets, whose works grew out of the monasteries of northern Spain, developed a verse form known as *cuaderna vía*: quatrains of monorhymed Alexandrines (or fourteen-syllable lines), divided by a central caesura. This type of verse lends itself both to private reading and to recitation among small groups; little is known about performance, but it is assumed that some would have been read to groups of pilgrims and monks, while secular compositions would have been read elsewhere. The earliest poem of this type, the *Libro de Alexandre* ("Book of Alexander"), offers a comment on the emergence of this style, affirming that the metrically correct poetry of the *clerecía* stands in opposition to the sinful works of the *juglaria* ("minstrels"). Although the nature of this distinction is exaggerated (the *clerecía* poets borrowed various minstrel techniques, and its most famous exponent even referred to himself as a

juglar), the advent of this type of poetry marked the death knell of the early, popular style.

The earliest poems of the *mester de clerecía* are outward-looking, and deal not with Spain, but with the rich and exotic world of the eastern Mediterranean. The *Libro de Alexandre*, based on a subtle combination of Latin and vernacular sources, paints a vivid picture of the life and campaigns of Alexander the Great, a figure of constant fascination in the Middle Ages. The structure of the text has often been criticized, particularly the digression on the Trojan War, which seems long and cumbersome; yet, in recent years, critics have commented on its relationship to the main narrative and how it carefully underlines Alexander's flaws, chiefly his pride and his insatiable craving for yet greater glories. Similar in focus is the *Libro de Apolonio* ("Book of Apolonius"), a work that deals with an intellectual protagonist whose youthful, academic vanity leads him into a series of misadventures that are resolved only in the twilight of his life by an act of divine intervention. In many ways Apolonius and Alexander resemble each other: their lives take place in distant, bygone ages, they assemble great empires (whether by desire or default), and they suffer as a result of their imperfections. Yet, while Alexander inspires respect and awe, Apolonius elicits pity and compassion; this is partly the result of the interpolation of moralizing digressions by the *Apolonio* poet, but it can also be seen in their respective fates: Apolonius repents and spends many years in a state of strict asceticism, refusing even to cut his hair or fingernails; Alexander, in contrast, remains unrepentant and there is no clear evidence to suggest that he is saved.

Although the poems of the *mester de clerecía* differ from those of the minstrels, there is, nonetheless, a good deal of common ground. An example of this can be seen in the *Libro de Apolonio*, for, despite its status as a romance, its content is by no means dissimilar to that of hagiographic texts such as the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*. All three poems describe journeys through the lands of classical antiquity, and in each there is an evolution from youthful transgression to a mature resolution with the divine; critics have even noticed elements of hagiography in the character of Apolonius himself. In view of these similarities it hardly seems coincidental that the only surviving copies of the poems can be found in a single, unique manuscript. This type of overlap, however, is relatively common, for the development of early Spanish poetry cannot be classified according to a series of watertight categories. The *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* and *Razón de amor* borrow much from the early lyric tradition; hagiographic elements, on the other hand, have been traced in the lives of epic heroes such as the Cid; even more noticeable is that the only early poetic treatment of the

first Count of Castile (the *Poema de Fernán González*) exists not as an epic, but in a *mester de clerecía* form. The result is a fascinating hybrid: a heroic poem, composed in a clerical style (around 1250), that makes good use of history and folklore as well as the Bible and Christian tradition.

The *Poema* itself is a retrospective piece that, in common with the poems on Alexander and Apolonius, narrates the achievements of a heroic figure of the past in order to encourage the audience to imitate his actions in the present. Yet, unlike its counterparts, the national and local flavor of the piece is unmistakable: Fernán González is not a distant figure, whose deeds are of theoretical or abstract significance, but a Castilian, the sweat of whose brow was spent in ensuring the liberation of Castile from Leonese hegemony. In many ways, however, the poem is more local than that, for, just as the *Cantar de mío Cid* is related to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, Fernán González maintains an equally palpable relationship with the monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza. Once again, a degree of cross-fertilization is at work: religious centers, eager to exploit the potency of the relics or reputations of secular heroes, accorded them a degree of respect that was otherwise granted only to the saints; in this way they could increase their prominence, and, as a result, attract much-needed revenues.

In the work of the Riojan poet, Gonzalo de Berceo, monastic interest in literary production reached its zenith. As far we can be certain, Berceo, the first named poet to write in the vernacular, was born in 1196 and educated at the Benedictine monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla. Following his investiture as a deacon, he may have attended classes at the University of Palencia, and then served not as a monk, but as notary to the abbot. Despite the demands of this position, Berceo dedicated much of his time to literary production, and the various poems that have survived (several others are lost) make him the most the prolific poet of the thirteenth century. Berceo's earliest works were probably written after the *Alexandre* but before the *Apolonio* and the *Fernán González*. Although many aspects of the chronology of the *mester de clerecía* remain uncertain, critics agree that his writing continued unabated until the 1260s. His poetry, therefore, straddles a period of nearly forty years, and, on this basis, critics have sometimes been tempted to overstate his involvement in the *clerecía* style: his alleged authorship of the *Alexandre* is based on stylistic similarities and the inclusion of a corrupt stanza bearing his name in one of the extant manuscripts, while his supposed association with the *Fernán González* poet in Palencia is probably no more than a geographical coincidence.

Berceo's poetic output falls into four overlapping phases. His first and most enduring love was hagiography and the cults of the saints associated with the monastery. His earliest works, the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla* ("Life of Saint Æmilian") and the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*

("Life of Saint Dominic"), date from the 1230s and deal with saints who dedicate themselves to a variety of roles before embarking on monastic vocations. Both poems are divided into three books: the first narrating the saints' lives; the second, their miracles; and the third, their posthumous interventions in the lives of the devout. This structure produces similarities, particularly at the level of character, and this underlines an important theological principle: that the suffering of the saint is a reenactment of that of Christ, and thus, by definition, of the fact that all saints are one. Yet, in other respects, the poems are different. *San Millán*, for instance, contains a propagandistic section in which Saints Æmilian and James appear in the sky above a battle fought by Fernán González. This part of the poem exudes the spirit of heroic epic and attempts to legitimize the status of a forged decree that Castile should pay tribute to the monastery. Although *Santo Domingo* is equally propagandistic in its attempt to attract pilgrims (the most conspicuous evidence being the narrator's negative view of lengthy pilgrimages, presumably to Santiago), it includes a vivid allegorical dream and a confrontation between Church and State in which the saint comes close to suffering martyrdom. A further distinction lies in the treatment of banishment, for, like the Cid, Dominic is forced from his homelands, only to return after establishing a formidable reputation in exile. This aspect of the text represents a Christianization of the mythic hero pattern.

In the years following these poems Berceo moved away from hagiography in order to explore other subjects. Two of his works are doctrinal: *Del sacrificio de la Misa* ("On the Sacrifice of the Mass") offers a detailed analysis of the symbolism and ritual of the Mass while *Los signos del Juicio Final* ("The Signs of the Last Judgment") presents an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world. A more significant phase in Berceo's development is his treatment of the cult of the Virgin in three poems thought to have been composed between 1236 and 1252. The earliest of these, *El duelo de la Virgen* ("The Virgin's Lament") and the *Loores de Nuestra Señora* ("A Eulogy on Our Lady") deal with Mary's position as the mother of Christ and with her role in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The poet's most accessible Marian work, however, is the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* ("Miracles of Our Lady"). This text, arguably Berceo's most accomplished, is based on a Latin prose collection of twenty-eight miracles, the majority of which existed in various versions throughout Europe. Of these, Berceo discarded four, and, in their place, interpolated an allegorical prologue and an introductory miracle dealing with Saint Ildefonsus.

In common with the miracles in his early hagiographic texts, the quality of the *Milagros* is mixed: some are weakly constructed (notably Miracles I and x), while others contain some of the most skillful poetry to have

been composed in medieval Spain. An excellent example is “El clérigo ignorante” (“The Ignorant Cleric,” Miracle IX), a short, bipartite poem dealing with a cleric whose intellectual shortcomings are redeemed by his devotion to the Virgin. This text represents Berceo at his best, blending coarse vulgarity with complex theological problems relating to the development of the medieval Church. Yet, despite the nature of the collection, readers are offered few details about the identity of the Virgin herself. In *La boda y la Virgen* (“The Wedding and the Virgin,” Miracle xv) she is presented as a jilted bride, angered at the marriage of a young cleric, while in *La abadesa preñada* (“The Pregnant Abbess,” Miracle xxi) she becomes a female confidante, able to understand and to forgive the sexual transgression of an abbess; this text, one of the longest of the collection, offers a unique insight into ecclesiastical and lay attitudes toward women and their sexual and hierarchical status.

In the twilight of his life Berceo returned to hagiography, and composed poems in honor of two other saints associated with the monastery. The earliest of these, the *Vida de Santa Oria* (“Life of Saint Oria”), is a unique composition that focuses on the life and visions of a humble Benedictine anchoress, while the *Martirio de San Lorenzo* (“Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence”) deals with the Hispano-Roman martyr. These poems underline the extent to which Berceo’s interests developed, for, in contrast to his early hagiography, the tripartite structure is abandoned, and in its place we are offered a more flexible exploration of individual suffering: the inexorable physical atrophy of an anchoress in her cell and the death of a martyr roasted slowly on a grid-iron. Yet both poems are problematic: *Lorenzo* ends prematurely, while the extant manuscripts of *Oria* contain several lacunae and a sequence of stanzas that is obviously corrupt. Reasons for these problems have been considered by various critics, but there is little agreement on how they might be resolved. This is largely due to the fact that while *Lorenzo* departs significantly from its source, *Oria* is a more original composition based on local traditions and hagiographic borrowings.

With the death of Berceo the *clerecía* style fell abruptly out of fashion and was replaced by a period of innovation that soon declined into a literary crisis characterized by stagnation and decay. This was partly the result of social upheaval: the final years of the reign of Alfonso X were marked by bitter conflicts, and the succession of the child kings, Fernando IV (1295) and Alfonso XI (1312), only served to exacerbate existing tensions. The pace of the Reconquest – the campaign to recapture the peninsula from the Moors, who had successfully invaded in the year 711 – had decreased, and depopulation and economic decline had thwarted attempts at commercial development. Intellectual resources, on the other hand, remained weak, and despite a number of minor

chronological overlaps, it appears that Spain could not yet sustain more than one poetic tradition at a time. The result of this crisis, while not in itself catastrophic, was nonetheless undesirable: a series of predictable and mediocre works punctuated by the occasional mature and sophisticated composition. The advances made in the early and central portions of the thirteenth century were thus neglected, and it was not until the mid fourteenth century that Spanish poetry began to reassert itself with confidence.

The latter years of the thirteenth century had in fact promised a great deal. A small but interesting group of works, many with a surprising degree of structural and metrical inventiveness, had departed from earlier traditions in order to explore more imaginative styles of poetic cohesion. One of these, a short lyrical piece known as *iAy Jerusalem!* (“Oh Jerusalem!”), partially fills a lacuna in the literary history of Spain, for, in contrast to the flourishing traditions of other nations, it is the only extant poem to deal with the Crusades. The absence of parallel compositions is understandable: Spain’s internal struggles (against Muslim and Christian alike) prevented it from taking an interest in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet *iAy Jerusalem!* is by no means a simple curiosity, for it contains a series of unique features, including a polymetric verse form with long and short lines, a flexible refrain, and an acrostic derived from the first letter of each stanza. The poem is accompanied in a unique manuscript by a version of the Ten Commandments composed in rhyming couplets, and a contemplation of the Fall (*El Dio alto que los cielos sostiene* [“The God on High who Maintains the Heavens”]; this piece, composed in *cuaderna vía*, contains traces of Judaic involvement, principally in the use of *Dio* (as opposed to *Dios*). The most remarkable aspect of the manuscript, however, is the blend of poetic forms: *cuaderna vía*, rhyming couplets, and the more elaborate *iAy Jerusalem!* This multifaceted quality ranks it alongside the *Apolonio – Santa María – Tres reys* manuscript in terms of broad poetic diversity.

In the *Historia troyana polimétrica* (“Polymetric History of Troy”) the process of innovation that characterized literary production at the close of the century is taken to an unparalleled extreme in a cycle of eleven poems that are most notable for their sophisticated fusion of form and content. The *Historia* recounts the events of the Trojan War, and, in many ways, its fascination with the lands and lessons of antiquity makes it akin to works composed more than half a century earlier. The scope of the texts, however, is more wide-ranging, with epic descriptions of battle (iv), hypnotic prophesies (ii), and a particularly fine series of compositions dealing with Troilus and Cressida (v–vii). These poems, dominated by the rhetoric of courtly love, medievalize the events of antiquity by recontextualizing classical characters according to contemporary norms. A less sentimental

representation of love is present in *Elena y María* ("Helen and Mary"), an incomplete debate thought to have been composed around 1280. This poem, in common with earlier French models, presents a dialogue between the mistresses of a knight and a clerk, with the two speakers making a series of absorbing, if outlandish, claims to supremacy. The courtly ethos is unmistakable, with palaces, hawks, and falcons much in evidence, but this is tempered by moments of rugged earthiness. The poem, however, is perhaps best understood as a satire of the three estates: an effete and indolent aristocracy versus a voracious and sexually corrupt clergy; the existence of the peasantry, irrelevant to the other estates, is not even recorded.

Despite the advances made by *iAy Jerusalem!* and the *Historia troyana*, by the turn of the century the atmosphere of poetic inventiveness had waned as writers began to look more to the past than to the future. To some extent this can be seen in the resurrection of earlier traditions: *Roncesvalles*, for instance, is a fragment of a heroic epic dealing with Charlemagne and the death of Roland. The majority of works in this period, however, are religious compositions that adopt the *cuaderna vía* stanza of the earlier *clerecía* poets. The *Vida de San Ildefonso* ("Life of Saint Ildefonsus"), composed by a "Beneficiado de Úbeda," for example, is a hagiographic narrative dealing with the celebrated Archbishop of Toledo. This poem bears an uncanny resemblance to Berceo's early hagiographic narratives, but it generally lacks his inventiveness. Similar accusations can be levelled against the *Libro de miseria de omne* ("Book of the Misery of Man"), a short hagiographic piece known as the *Oración a Santa María Magdalena* ("Prayer to Saint Mary Magdalene"), and a number of minor Marian and doctrinal works. These include the *Oficio de la Pasión* ("Office of the Passion"), a poem dealing with the Crucifixion and its relationship to the canonical hours, and two incomplete works on the Virgin: the *Oración a Santa María* ("Prayer to Saint Mary") and the *Gozos de la Virgen* ("Joys of the Virgin"). These poems, although appealing, are by no means as technically accomplished as their thirteenth-century antecedents; and it is perhaps significant that the majority of devotional and hagiographic works composed in the fourteenth century were cast as prose rather than verse. A similar type of evolution can be detected in the didactic and sapiential (dealing with wisdom) tradition with the *Proverbios de Salamón* ("Solomon's Proverbs"), a short poem on the *De contemptu mundi* theme, and two minor pieces on the philosophy of Cato.

In contrast to the majority of early fourteenth-century compositions, the *Libro de buen amor* ("Book of Good Love") displays a degree of sophistication that makes it one of the most important works to have been composed in Spanish in the Middle Ages. The *Libro* itself is cast as *cuaderna vía*, but a prose sermon at the beginning and a variety of metrical systems within it combine to make it considerably more inventive than

other poems, and, to a large extent, impossible to classify. Thematically, the *Libro* is elusive: its central theme of *buen amor* ("good love") is identified by its author as being the key to the work. Yet, the nature of this love is constantly shifting, and while at some points it refers to divine love, at others the focus switches to sexual conduct and the art of seduction. Although many aspects of the *Libro* are hotly debated, the ambiguity of its focus appears to be deliberate, encouraging the reader to appreciate the subtleties of contrasting and conflicting points of view. This is partly the result of the eclectic combination of sources on which the *Libro* is based (learned and popular sermons, *exemplum* collections, the catechism, *fabliaux*, Goliardic poetry, Ovid, Latin drama, and religious and popular lyric), but it can also be attributed to a sense of mischievousness on the part of its author, Juan Ruiz, the Archpriest of Hita (d. 1351–1352). At times it seems as if Ruiz's intention is simply to undermine the reader's desire to understand the information being offered, a factor most acutely apparent in the introductory tale of the Greeks and the Romans, where the interpretations of wise and foolish readers are considered equally right and equally wrong.

The *Libro* derives much of its meaning from autobiography, and the early sections of the book describe how the protagonist falls in love and dispatches a go-between in order to woo his lady. The go-between is twice rebuffed and in each instance an *exemplum* is offered as a means with which to interpret the rejection. The delicate balance between autobiographical and didactic materials sets the tone for much of what follows, and although at times the link between the two is rather tenuous, the emphasis on generic interplay provides the *Libro* with a degree of variety that is absent in earlier compositions. In the central and latter portions of the poem the blending of such seemingly disparate materials continues unabated: we are offered descriptions of several further romantic infatuations, a number of *serrana* poems dealing with terrifying mountain women, and a series of bawdy and religious lyrics. In view of its diversity, critics have often assumed that the various sections of the *Libro* were composed over a wide chronological period, coming together only when the Archpriest decided to present them in the form of a single, unified book. The nature of this arrangement makes it suitable for private reading rather than oral performance; and yet a number of individual sections are believed to have circulated orally.

Although the *Libro de buen amor* influenced a number of eminent writers, including Chaucer, its impact on the development of contemporary poetic styles was limited. This can be attributed in part to the uniquely multifaceted genius of its author, Juan Ruiz, but an equally telling factor is the rapidly changing nature of life itself in early and mid fourteenth-century Spain. The most noticeable testament to this instability is that, in

contrast to the relatively homogeneous nature of mid thirteenth-century poetry, the majority of works composed in the corresponding portion of the fourteenth century bear little relation to one another. The *Libro*, as we have seen, is a bafflingly complex analysis of varieties of love, but of the many works composed in this period, it is the only one to deal at length with such a theme. Santob de Carrión's *Proverbios morales* ("Moral Proverbs"), for instance, deals with contemporary ethical and spiritual values, while Rodrigo Yáñez's *Poema de Alfonso XI* ("Poem of Alfonso XI") and the *Mocedades de Rodrigo* ("The Youth of El Cid") have a noticeably epic and political flavor: the latter dealing with the youthful exploits of Ruy Díaz de Vivar, and the former, the life of Alfonso XI until the capture of Algeciras from the Moors in 1344.

The earliest of these works, the *Proverbios morales*, composed by Rabbi Sem Tob ibn Arjudiel ben Isaac (Santob de Carrión), is thought to be the first vernacular poem to have been composed by a Jewish writer in medieval Spain. Although various other texts bear hallmarks of Jewish involvement, the *Proverbios*, completed in 1345, represent the highpoint of *convivencia* ("coexistence"), a situation that, with the pogroms of 1391, would soon decline into one of religious intolerance, culminating in 1492 with the expulsion of the entire Jewish community. In this respect the *Proverbios* stand out as a fine example of the benefits of a pluralistic cultural perspective, a feat that is achieved as the poet identifies himself with peninsular culture while reserving the right to express his own essential otherness. The result is a captivating and noticeably individualistic composition, characterized by a penetrating approach toward questions of everyday reality as well as spiritual reservation and doubt. At times, the gnomic flavor of the work produces melancholy, if not pessimism, and this can, perhaps, be taken as a reflection of the social upheaval that marked the early years of the reign of Pedro I. The poem, however, is equally important in terms of its relationship to *cuaderna vía*: some critics, for instance, see it as a work composed in rhyming Alexandrines with full internal rhyme (a modification of the *cuaderna vía* form), while others arrange it as a series of 686 heptasyllabic quatrains, rhyming ABAB.

Similar problems can be seen in Rodrigo Yáñez's fragmentary *Poema de Alfonso XI* (1348), a work that can be arranged either as sixteen-syllable couplets with full internal rhyme, or as a series of octosyllabic lines, rhyming ABAB. Unlike the text of the *Proverbios*, the majority of recent editors have preferred to print the *Poema* in octosyllabic form, thereby detaching it from *cuaderna vía* poetry, and, most conspicuously, from the *Libro de miseria de omne*, a work composed in sixteen- rather than fourteen-syllable lines. Thematically, however, the *Poema* is different: its treatment of Alfonso XI is generally optimistic, and the use of epic materials, such as descriptions of battle (many of which are embellished

with images of hunting), makes it more akin to the *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, a late heroic epic, notable for its decadence and exaggeration. Although both poems are lacking in literary quality, the *Mocedades* has received a substantially greater degree of critical attention. This is partly due to the fact that it promotes a relationship between the Cid and the diocese of Palencia (recalling the propagandistic context of a number of *clerecía* compositions), and partly the result of its tendency toward chronic overstatement: its latter stages, for instance, depict the Cid at the gates of Paris in an attempt to thwart an alliance between the king of France, the Pope, and the Holy Roman Emperor.

Although epic tales continued to prove popular in the fifteenth century and thereafter, they were progressively displaced by the rise of the popular ballad, an octosyllabic form unified by assonance rather than rhyme. The origin of the ballad is far from clear and a good deal of controversy surrounds its presumed relationship to the epic. It may well be that, in certain instances, ballads were derived from epics, but a number of dissimilarities, including narratorial technique, have produced critical disagreements. The earliest ballads exist only in fifteenth-century manuscripts, but linguistic and thematic evidence suggests that they had circulated orally for many years before being collected. Some have proposed that they might first have emerged in the 1320s, but it seems safer to assign them to the final third of the fourteenth century, as they undoubtedly flourished at this time. Reasons for the success of the ballad are legion, but the most telling factors are the gradual decay of other forms of popular poetry, the social upheaval created by the Trastámaran wars, and the waning of the power of the monasteries. These factors created an explosive cocktail that effected a number of irrevocable changes in the development of early Spanish poetry.

The subject matter of ballads is varied. Some deal with epic heroes and can be read in conjunction with works such as the *Mocedades* as products of a collective yearning for the relative stability of the past. Other ballads, in contrast, focus on the bitter legacy of contemporary events such as the Trastámaran wars, often in an attempt to vilify one side or the other. A related branch of balladry deals with the events of frontier life, presenting a surprisingly ambiguous attitude toward questions of war and conflict. The most striking examples are *Álora* and *Moraima*, where Moorish protagonists can be seen either as treacherous liars or as pitiful victims of Christian aggression. The most accessible ballads, however, are those that deal with timeless problems such as love and romance. Although a good number of epic, historical, and frontier ballads deal with these themes, the so-called "novelesque ballads" explore them in greater detail, more often than not making an emotional rather than moral appeal to the reader's sensitivities. Many ballads of this type, for instance,

condone behavior that, in the age of monastic literature, would have been treated with contempt. A fine example is *Blancaniña* ("The White Lady"), where it becomes difficult not to sympathize with the sexual frustration of women in transmitting and modifying ballads in the oral tradition becomes most apparent). Other ballads deal with sexual themes in a more magical and mysterious environment: *Rico Franco* is based on an unlucky hunt motif while *La dama y el pastor* ("The Lady and the Shepherd") depicts an encounter between a young country lad and a *serrana* who attempts to devour him.

Although the popularity of the ballads can be explained in many ways, it is difficult to believe that the artificial and abstract world around which so many of them are based is not in itself a form of escapism from a society consumed by civil war, urban and agricultural deprivation, and, perhaps most importantly, the Black Death, which ravaged Europe in the mid fourteenth century. In other poems of the period these problems are explored in a particularly dark and brutal manner as escapism is replaced by a macabre contemplation of the inevitability of death. The earliest of these poems, the *Disputa del cuerpo e del ánima* ("Debate between the Body and the Soul"), is a sophisticated piece that makes use of a symbolic geographical landscape in order to frame a dialogue between a human soul and a rotting body covered with worms. In contrast to the earlier body-and-soul debate, the *Disputa* is an unrelentingly desolate work that replaces feudal imagery with a shockingly realistic assessment of the nature of death and damnation. Equally ferocious in tone is the *Danza general de la Muerte* ("Dance of Death"), a more aesthetically accomplished poem, based on a simple but effective structure in which members of the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies are summoned by Death to their fates. The success of both poems is attested by the fact that they were adapted by later poets: the *Disputa* in the form of the *Revelación de un hermitaño* ("The Hermit's Vision"), and the *Danza general* in an expanded version published in Seville in 1520.

The changing social circumstances that were a characteristic of late fourteenth-century literary production can also be seen in the emergence of *cancionero* poetry. Just as the work of the minstrels had eventually given way to other types of popular literature, the gradual decline of the power of the monasteries had produced a void in erudite poetry that was filled in this period by a group of writers who composed both *canciones* (octosyllabic pieces, generally but not exclusively concerned with love) and *decires* (longer narrative, panegyric, and satirical poems based on a twelve-syllable amphibrachic line known as *arte mayor*). This development did not happen by accident: lyric poetry, which had been composed in Galician-Portuguese until the death of King Dinis of Portugal

(1279–1325), its last great patron, had gradually yielded ground to Castilian until the latter had been adopted as a literary norm. The work of these poets is generally known through *cancioneros* ("songbooks") rather than individually, and, until recently, the complex web of relations that exists between the various *cancioneros* was little understood. A breakthrough in scholarly awareness was achieved by Brian Dutton, who catalogued the sources (and, in the majority of instances, transcribed the texts) of more than 8,000 poems composed between 1360 and 1520. As a result of his endeavor, a generation of scholars has been allowed access to a previously impenetrable area of literary inquiry.¹

The earliest *cancionero*, compiled by Juan Alfonso de Baena, was presented to King Juan II in 1445. The anthology includes more than 600 poems by more than fifty poets, many of whom were active in the final decades of the fourteenth century at the court of Juan I. Although the *Cancionero de Baena* is not an all-encompassing collection (a prominent omission is Pablo de Santa María's *Edades del mundo* ["Ages of the World"]), it provides a wealth of information with which to counterpoint the explosion of poetic activity at around the turn of the century. Among the most noteworthy poets are Pero Ferrús, perhaps the oldest of the earliest Baena generation, and Macías, who, according to popular legend, became a martyr to love. The most technically accomplished writers, on the other hand, are Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino (d. 1425) and Pero López de Ayala (d. 1407). Álvarez de Villasandino's work is most significant in view of its gradual evolution from the language and rhetoric of Galician-Portuguese to an exclusively Castilian register. Pero López de Ayala, in contrast, is acknowledged as much for his *cancionero* poetry as for his *Rimado de palacio* ("Palace Poem"), a moral and political composition of more than 2,000 stanzas. The *Rimado*, like the *Libro de buen amor*, was compiled over a wide chronological period, and its various sections deal with an impressive number of issues; these include the Great Schism and its effect on ecclesiastical unity, as well as the theme of social displacement. Yet the poem lacks the coherence of the *Libro*, and the combination of *cuaderna vía* and *arte mayor* characterizes the poet as a type of Janus, a figure conscious of the emergence of fresh poetic forms, yet unwilling to relinquish the legacy of earlier traditions.

Although the charm of the earlier Baena poets is undeniable, their works are generally not as proficient as those of subsequent generations. Many of the later poets were of continental or *converso* ("converts from Judaism") origin: Francisco Imperial, for instance, was the son of Genoese parents who had settled in Seville, while Mohamed el Xartose de Guadalajara

¹ See Brian Dutton, with Jineen Krogstad, ed. *El cancionero del siglo XV* (Salamanca: Biblioteca Española del Siglo XV / Universidad de Salamanca, 1990–1991).

was of Moorish origin; *converso* writers, on the other hand, included Ferrán Manuel de Lando, Ferrán Sánchez Calavera, and possibly Diego de Valencia and Juan Alfonso de Baena himself. The rich cultural diversity of this second generation brought an additional dimension to their work. Imperial's *Dezir a las siete virtudes* ("Poem on the Seven Virtues"), for example, reveals an easy familiarity with Dante, while Sánchez Calavera's uncomfortable attitude toward Christian ethics can be detected in much of his work. One of his poems, a *pregunta* ("question"), in fact served as a catalyst for a poetic exchange on the issue of predestination; another dealt with the Trinity. The various *respuestas* ("answers") that he received were among the earliest examples of an intellectual poetic debate, an exercise that became increasingly popular as the century developed.

A more comfortable attitude toward religious matters can be seen in the poetry of Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (d. 1460?), who composed a number of lengthy pieces, of which his *Coplas de vicios y virtudes* ("Poem on Vices and Virtues"), *Confesión rimada* ("Poetic Confession"), and *Loores de santos* ("Eulogy of the Saints") are the most significant. The most accessible of these is the latter, a partially framed series of hagiographic works containing panegyrics in honor of a number of saints. Also worthy of note are Gonzalo Martínez de Medina and Ruy Páez de Ribera, who composed a number of moral and divine works. The youngest generation of *Baena* poets, however, wrote predominantly about love, often parodying the language and rhetoric of religion in order to express their ideas. The rich and powerful Álvaro de Luna (c. 1388–1453), known as much for his political ambition as his poetry, is a notable example. In one of his compositions, the speaker boldly affirms: "Si Dios, Nuestro Salvador, / oviera de tomar amiga, / fuera mi competidor" ("If God, Our Saviour, took a lover, he would be my rival," lines 1–3). Luna's audaciousness is matched by that of Suero de Ribera, whose *Misa de amores* ("Mass of Love") reworks the structure and rhetoric of the Mass in order to create one of the finest examples of religious parody to have been composed in medieval Spain. The earliest works of the Galician poet, Juan Rodríguez del Padrón (d. 1450?), also belong to this period, and among the most interesting are *Los diez mandamientos de amor* ("Ten Commandments of Love") and the *Siete gozos de amor* ("Seven Joys of Love"), in which the speaker presents himself, along with Macías, as a martyr to love.

The success of *Baena* was matched in subsequent years by a plethora of new *cancioneros*. Among the most impressive are the *Cancionero de Palacio* (compiled in the 1460s), the *Cancionero de Estúñiga* (comprising the work of the court poets of Alfonso V of Aragón), and the *Cancionero general* of 1511. These compilations embrace the work of many poets whose works circulated throughout the fifteenth century. The most poetically

accomplished writers, however, emerged in the latter years of the reign of Juan II; and two figures, in particular, tower above the majority of their contemporaries. The earliest of these, Íñigo López de Mendoza, Marqués de Santillana (d. 1458), spent his formative years in Aragón and was influenced by poets such as Francisco Imperial and Enrique de Villena. The poet's early works are among his most entertaining, and these include *canciones* and *decires* as well as *serranillas*, which may have been influenced by those of the *Libro de buen amor*. His best poetry, however, belongs to a period in which he dedicated himself to an ambitious series of allegorical and narrative creations, based on earlier Italian and classical models. The *Triumphete de amor* ("Triumph of Love"), for instance, is derived from Petrarch's *Trionfo d'amore*, while his *Sueño* ("Dream"), borrows material from Boccaccio's *Fiammetta* (1334) as well as Lucan's *Pharsalia* (c. AD 61–65). Both works deal with love from an allegorical perspective, and they are matched in quality by the *Infierno de los enamorados* ("Lovers' Hell") and the *Comedieta de Ponza* ("Comedy of Ponza"). In later years Santillana composed a series of moral and philosophical poems of which his *Bias contra Fortuna* ("Bias against Fortune") is the most distinguished example. He also composed a series of forty-two sonnets on a range of subjects; these include a contemplation of the fall of Constantinople (xxxii) and a number of hagiographic pieces, of which Sonnets xxxiv and xxxviii (on Saint Clare of Assisi and Saint Christopher) are fine examples.

The quality and diversity of Santillana's canon is matched by that of Juan de Mena (d. 1456), the other great poet of the court of Juan II. Both men were pioneers, particularly in the adoption of continental ideas and the construction of innovative styles of poetic cohesion, but despite the extent of their similarity, they are more commonly regarded as antitheses: Mena, as a supporter of Álvaro de Luna, and Santillana, as one of his detractors. Mena's early poetry embraces a number of dimensions and includes amatory *canciones* as well as anti-clerical satires and burlesque parodies of themes such as the *malmaridada* ("unhappily married woman"). His first major poem, the *Coronación* ("Coronation"), is an octosyllabic composition that denounces the evils of contemporary society. His greatest work, however, is the *Laberinto de Fortuna* ("Labyrinth of Fortune"), a text that endorses Luna's cause, often veiling references to contemporary figures and events through the sophisticated manipulation of language and syntax. The poem itself is a complex, tripartite piece, structured through the use of allegory: the narrator, guided by Providence, is transported to a palace of Fortune where he notices three great wheels representing past, present, and future; each wheel contains seven magical spheres (representing the planets), and it is through these that he is able to catch a glimpse of the future. When in 1453, however, Luna fell from power, the effect on Mena was devastating: his last poem, the *Debate de*

la Razón contra la Voluntad ("Debate between Reason and Will") exudes feelings of disillusion and personal disappointment; his *Razonamiento con la Muerte* ("Dialogue with Death") may also date from this period.

Although Mena's interest in the literary debate represents an important aspect of his work, it is significant that, in common with other debates, the *Debate* and the *Razonamiento* have seldom been appraised in terms of genre. The paucity of research in this area can be seen most acutely in relation to medieval drama, where a remarkably small number of works have received a good deal of critical attention. The corpus of literary debates, in contrast, is much larger and covers a broader range of subjects, and yet, despite the richness of the tradition, the majority of works have been virtually ignored. Poems such as the *Debate de alegría e del triste amante* ("Debate between Happiness and the Sad Lover"), Estamariu's *Debat d'una senyora et de su voluntat* ("Debate between a Lady and her Will"), and Furtado's *Debate con su capa* ("Debate with his Cape") are relatively minor pieces, but it is difficult to ignore the refined elegance of Rodrigo Cota's *Diálogo entre el amor y un viejo* ("Debate between Love and an Old Man") or its anonymous reworking, the *Diálogo entre el Amor, el viejo y la Hermosa* ("The Debate Between Love, the Old Man, and the Beautiful Woman"). These works, characterized by an imaginative use of imagery, depict the fate of an ageing protagonist, who, after initially rejecting Love, eventually falls into its trap. An equally significant debate is Antonio López de Meta's *Tractado del cuerpo e del ánima* ("Debate between the Body and Soul"), an intriguing treatment of the body-and-soul theme. Although little is known about the *Tractado* and its author, critics have focused on the way in which it departs from the earlier tradition by concluding with the written sentence of an angel. Also of interest are Castillejo's (d. 1550) *Diálogo con su pluma* ("Dialogue with his Quill") and a series of poems composed by Pedro de Cartagena (d. 1486); these include debates between the Tongue and the Heart, the Heart and the Eyes, and the Lover and the God of Love.

By the time of the deaths of Santillana and Mena in the 1450s the various *cancionero* styles had long since been the dominant mode of poetic composition in the peninsula. Although this, in itself, was an improvement on *cuaderna vía* (which had outlived its usefulness by the time of its demise), in the hands of the more derivative and unimaginative poets of the period, it produced even greater complacency. Many were content to base their compositions on obscure puns and cliquish references that make their work virtually unreadable when taken out of context. Yet, other poets were more successful, and a particularly sophisticated group is that of the court of Alfonso V, the Magnanimous. These included Juan de Andújar, Carvajal (or Carvajales), Juan de Dueñas (d. 1460?), Pedro de Santa Fe (d. 1450?), Juan de Tapia, and Lope de Estúñiga (d. 1477?). In

contrast to the continental influences of other groupings, these poets, who were based, paradoxically, in Naples, adhered more closely to traditional Spanish forms, particularly in their treatment of courtly love, where the speaker, devoid of the hope of attaining his lady, stoically accepts suffering as a natural consequence of his infatuation. Perhaps the most entertaining poems to emerge from this group are a series of seven *serranillas* composed by Carvajal. Although these are not as technically accomplished as those of Santillana, the poet's decision to vary the identity of his female protagonists leads to a greater degree of diversity, and, in certain instances, to an idealization of the pastoral setting.

The poets of Alfonso's court were matched in quality by those who were active in Castile during the latter stages of the reign of Juan II (1404–1454) and the early years of the turbulent rule of Enrique IV (1454–1474). A good number of these devoted themselves anonymously to satirical composition, and among the most interesting creations are the *Coplas de i Ay panadera!* ("Poem on the Battle of Olmedo"), the *Coplas del Provincial* ("Provincial Poem"), and the *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* ("Poem on Mingo Revulgo"). Religious poetry, on the other hand, is perhaps best exemplified by Íñigo de Mendoza, whose *Coplas de Vita Christi* ("Poem on the Life of Christ") is composed of nearly 4,000 octosyllabic lines. Equally worthy of note is Juan de Padilla, El Cartujano (d. 1468?), the author of the *Retablo de la vida de Cristo* ("Altarpiece on the Life of Christ") and *Los doce triunphos* ("The Twelve Triumphs"), a substantial panegyric on the Apostles. Padilla's achievement in the *Retablo* is matched by that of Diego de San Pedro (d. 1500?) in his *Pasión trobada* ("Poetic Passion") and by Comendador Román in his *Trovas de la gloriosa Pasión* ("Poem on the Glorious Passion"). An equally interesting, but all too infrequently studied poet, is Juan de Luzón, whose works are known only in his *cancionero* of 1508. The most prolific religious poet of the period, however, is Fray Ambrosio Montesino (d. 1514), whose corpus includes a number of hagiographic and biblical works, many of which are cast in the style of popular lyrics and ballads. Among his most interesting compositions are poems on Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist.

The rich vein of religious and satirical writing that emerged in mid to late fifteenth-century Castile was matched by the work of a number of more secular poets; these included Suero de Quiñones (d. 1458) and Pero Guillén de Sevilla (d. 1480?) as well as the *converso*, Antón de Montoro (d. 1477); the earliest works of Juan del Encina (d. 1529), Garci Sánchez de Badajoz (d. 1526), Juan Álvarez Gato (d. 1510?), and Florencia Pinar (the earliest significant female poet to compose in Castilian) also date from this period. Yet, the most eminent literary figures are those of the Manrique family. Gómez Manrique (d. 1490), Santillana's nephew, was a prolific poet whose work embraced a considerable degree of thematic diversity;

among his best creations are the allegorical *Planto de las virtudes e poesía* ("Lament on Virtue and Poetry") and the elegiac *Coplas para el señor Diego Arias de Ávila* ("Poem on Diego Arias de Ávila"). Jorge Manrique (d. 1479), on the other hand, is known almost as much for amatory and satirical works as for his *Coplas por la muerte de su padre* ("Poem on the Death of his Father"), arguably the most sublimely accomplished lyric ever to have been composed in Spanish. The *Coplas* deal with the death of the poet's father, but the inclusion of a number of theological and doctrinal commonplaces broadens the scope of the composition, allowing the speaker to transcend his grief and to contemplate the fundamental values of human existence. The combination of personal and universal produces an emotional intensity that is reinforced by a sophisticated fusion of form and language: a brutally direct register welded perfectly into the *pie quebrado* form (octosyllables interspersed with half lines in full rhyme). In Manrique's hands the *pie quebrado* attains an unrelentingly haunting quality, nowhere more so than in the early sections, where his precision in reworking familiar metaphors produces some remarkable poetry: "Nuestras vidas son los ríos / que van a dar en la mar, / qu'es el morir" ("Our lives are the rivers that flow into the sea, which is death," lines 25–27).

With the marriage of Isabel of Castilla and Fernando V of Aragón in 1469, the dynastic instability that had dominated the Middle Ages gave way to a mood of cautious optimism; and with the fall of Granada, the discovery of the New World, and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, it became possible to speak of a unified Spain: a major political and military power, equipped for the first time since the early eighth century with an inkling of its own destiny. The curtain was not immediately drawn on the Middle Ages, but change was in the air. The publication of the *Cancionero general* in 1511 collated the works of a final generation of medieval poets, and in subsequent revisions various other compositions were added. Yet, the benefit of hindsight shows that the days of the poets of the *cancioneros* were already numbered, for their achievements would soon be eclipsed by those of a younger generation, whose familiarity with Italianate forms and meters would, before long, revolutionize the future trajectory of poetry composed in Spanish.

5

Medieval Spanish prose

JAMES BURKE

The foundations of the study of medieval literatures in the modern era were, of course, essentially philological. The preparation of a readable text from existing manuscripts (if more than one was available), the provenance of the manuscript(s) and the work(s) inscribed thereupon, and finally the ability to read and understand the medieval language(s) transmitted by these texts were the principal aims of an earlier generation of scholars and students. Some students of these works also understood that it was necessary to understand the modes of procedure of the scribal culture in which these literary artifacts originated. Later some scholars and critics began to apply a "new critical" approach in their analysis. Why were these pieces in and of themselves worthy of attention as literary objects?

New ways of viewing the so-called "literary text" began to emerge as the scholarly community came to appreciate and elaborate upon various approaches (linguistic, psychological, structural) which produced a notable effect upon the manner in which medieval works were read and interpreted. In recent years the "new historicists" have begun to question the validity of many of these approaches. Their views, which to some degree must have evolved from and along with those of the French historical writers concerned with "mentalités," understand the medieval text as an artifact best analyzed in context, that is, in relation to the cultural codes which prevailed when the work was composed.

For many years, analysis utilizing these new approaches has not received much attention among medievalists working in Spanish. In the latter part of the 1990s, however, several studies were either completed or initiated which incorporated recent trends, most notably those dealing with sexual identity or based upon new evaluations of the role of women in the development of literature and culture.

Prose writings in the vernacular first begin to emerge in the thirteenth century, but a tradition of writing in Latin had existed in the peninsula since Roman times. Our understanding of the relation of such compositions to those produced there in the various Romance derivatives has been complicated by Roger Wright's 1982 study, *Late Latin and Early Romance*