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historical context, the nature of the work of the scholars, and the extent of the king's intervention in works produced at his command. He argues cogently for 1276 as the date the original manuscript would have been completed. No manuscript from Alfonso's time, however, survives, the earliest extant manuscripts dating from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. MacDonald surveys in painstaking detail the 25 manuscripts and editions used in preparing his edition. MacDonald's is not a critical edition, but rather a semi-paleographic edition of the manuscript he dubs c (Escorial Z.I.19), with copious variant readings from the other texts. In addition, he includes in appendices full transcriptions of the texts of two other early manuscripts which he finds to be of special interest (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional 23 and Salamanca: Biblioteca Universitaria 1862). An exhaustive vocabulary of words appearing in the text is also quite useful, especially for terms dealing specifically with gambling.

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Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth: From Borges to Boccaccio. By María Rosa Menocal. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1991. 223 pages.

Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric. By María Rosa Menocal. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1994. 295 pages.

These two books by María Rosa Menocal are less openly polemical than her first book on *The Arabic Role in Medieval History* (1987), yet no less passionate. Menocal explores from a variety of perspectives the peculiar intersections of narrative (and, thus, history and literary history) with the lyric, challenging many of the stories we tell about the lyric and about ourselves as students of song.

Together, the books offer a wide-ranging treatment of "Romance Philology" or, better, "Romance," which includes for Menocal, as she convinces me it should, the literatures in Arabic and Hebrew of southern Iberia and Italia. The names which emerge stake out a bidirectional narrative of Romance: Arnaut Daniel, Guido, Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch (a pivotal figure in both books), Pound, Eliot, Curtius, Auerbach, Spitzer, Borges. Joining these are other figures less frequently a part of the received story of Romance: Ramon Llull, Eric Clapton, Samuel the Nagid, Nizami, Ibn 'Arabi.

Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth appears initially to announce a categorization of writers from Arnaut Daniel through Borges into those for whom poetry is a form of Truth and those for whom lyric is a purely esthetic object, an object whose only truths are beauty and delight. Thus, Dante and Eliot write "a poetry whose meaning and unequivocal truth exist *a priori*

outside itself and its own frame of reference, a poetry preinscribed in the cosmos" (27; on Dante). Beatrice is no metaphor: "Beatrice is love . . . is a nine" (37; emphasis mine). From this analysis emerges a powerful new reading of the *Vita nuova* which sees it not as a mature reworking and retelling of youthful amatory verse, but as a discovery by Dante of the Truth behind a life story only lately understood. Writing variously against (but still within the ineluctable shadow of) Dante's cult of Truth, Arnaut, Petrarch, Pound, Borges, perhaps, and others believe in "the simple joys of song" (143). For the "larger universe of meaning" (46) of Dante, they prefer the "universe of belief in the great and powerful magic of poetry" (155).

The initial division, which may appear at first too reductive, works as a rhetorical strategy, then, allowing Menocal to range widely among the writers she discusses and to set them off against each other in interesting and illuminating ways. Especially valuable is Menocal's rereading of Dante's praise of Arnaut in Canto 26 of the *Purgatorio* as *faint* praise: Dante exiles Arnaut by referring to him as "il miglior fabbro" (even as Eliot will apply the same damning trope to his mentor Pound). Menocal reads this, convincingly, as a dismissive statement, a reduction of the poet's work to mere (though, almost grudgingly, "better") craftsmanship, a craftsmanship disconnected from Truth. It is Petrarch who first identifies this reading and rehabilitates Arnaut in his *Rime sparse*. It is Boccaccio who takes the "Galeotto" of the most famous scene of the *Inferno* and founds it as an ethical paradigm for his *Decameron*: truth is the reader; ethical uncertainty is also a truth. The point is not then, finally, that poets write for or against, within or without, a cult of poetic Truth, but that after the founding moment of the *Commedia*, these poets establish a complex set of reactions and repetitions concerning the nature of poetic and universal Truth.

The opening section of *Shards of Love*, "The Horse Latitudes" (an explicit reference to the Doors), has become required reading for my graduate students, celebrating as it does, the "fragments and the riotous pluralities" (10) of late-medieval Spain on the eve of its encounter with a new world. Menocal unearths multiple ironies in these events, beyond the fact that Columbus arrived in a world he never realized was "new": the harbor from which he sailed was probably choked with boats full of exiled Jews; Columbus brings along a *converso* to serve as interpreter using that, then, most universal of languages Arabic; the account of his journey turns out not to be by Columbus at all, but by Las Casas; the early Castilian *Relación* (1498) by the Catalan Ramon Pané is lost and re-lost only to surface finally intercalated in an Italian translation of Columbus' filial biography. What is truly lost, in our sanitizing, unifying, and smoothing narratives of these events, is the "cacophony" that was late medieval Spain.

The focal point of *Shards* is the idea that lyric "is invented in lonely exile" (121). That is, our own stories of the lyric are founded in exile: Dante's

from Florence with *De Vulgari*, Spitzer's and Auerbach's in Istanbul (and later in the U.S.) occasioned by the rise of Hitler, and, by no means incidentally, the author's own status as exile from her native Cuba. This book can (and should) be read as a link in a chain, then, of inventions in exile. (Nearly half of *Shards* is an innovative bibliographic essay in which Menocal acknowledges the chain of personal readings and relations which have led to her writing the book).

But "exile" is not a thread we should expect to follow slavishly throughout the study; a variety of ancillary insights await us at every turn. An example of such insights is Menocal's reframing of the famous remarks by Cortés in his *Relación* to Charles the Fifth that the cities of Tlaxcala had many "mesquitas." Traditional scholarship has seen this as a tendency on the part of the Spaniards to view the Aztecs as an exotic Oriental other, like the Moors. But, as Menocal keenly points out, this exoticism comes from us, from our European and modern perspective. There was nothing particularly exotic, or even "other" about *mesquitas* to the early sixteenth-century Spaniard. Cortés could have been describing the skyline of many a Spanish city; he was attempting to give the ruler a familiar point of reference (44–45). I also applaud Menocal's observations on what we might call the "puerilization" of the Middle Ages in her critique of our tendency to see medieval culture in terms of "origins" rather than as something fully developed in its own right (76).

One may feel that Menocal is a bit too easily dismissive of "scholasticism" in *Writing* without seeing that both "Truth" and "lyric," not to mention delight, fit into many of its productions in ways which would provide additional context for those suggested here. In *Shards*, Menocal rightly rejects the cartoonish periodization founded on 1492 (39), but does not seem quite ready to let go of similar periodizations of her own: 1300–1500 as a new era of intolerance in medieval Europe; the century from Ibn 'Arabi to the death of Lull as a period, consequently, of "pivot and closure" (58). I also think the author is a bit too ready to go along with the received notion of a strong institutional culture in the Middle Ages, a notion she needs as a foil to her bad-boy counter-culture of lyric and rock-and-roll. I would like to have seen an analysis of rock/lyric which took into account the millions made off youthful rebelliousness by the recording industry, its investors and stars and the work of medieval lyric in supporting as well as undermining the cacophonous institutions of its own day (38–39).

These are not easy or simple books. Menocal is not just widely read but deeply thoughtful. She reclaims our right to speak about larger issues in our work as Hispanomedievalists and to speak about ourselves in doing it. This is the kind of writing medieval Iberian studies need more of: essays broadly informed and beautifully written in an awareness of the craft and profession of letters as situated in history. These books make "Romance"

new, make it possible for us to see our own work as part of a trajectory that includes Pound or Borges, or Eric Clapton, for that matter. Out of the announced themes of fragmentation and exile, there emerges in these books a renewing sense of connection and participation in a community and a history of reading, writing, and thought.

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Studies on the Spanish Sentimental Romance (1440–1550): Redefining a Genre. Ed. Joseph J. Gwara and E. Michael Gerli. London: Tamesis, 1997. 219 pages.

This provocative collection of erudite analyses of texts from the period and genre known loosely as "early modern sentimental romance" demonstrates the vitality of a range of critical approaches. Appropriately enough, no one embodies this range more faithfully than the collection's two editors, who perform seemingly choreographed tasks at relative extremes of the spectrum of literary studies. This is especially evident in the dialectic between their Preface and Introduction. In his assessment of the significance of each article, Gwara begins by playing the part of the collector and cataloguer. His positioning of the Spanish tradition with respect to the rest of Europe, his recognition of the irony of the collection's deconstructive potential for the genre, and his approval of the fruits of a collaborative criticism are all wise patriarchal gestures. By contrast, Gerli's Introduction is an ecstatic paean to the more modern approaches of theoreticians like Bakhtin, Hutcheon, and Derrida. Calling sentimental romance a "hallmark of modernity" (xiii), Gerli relishes in the authors' "enterprising plundering of Ovid and Boccaccio" (xvi) and concludes that they "make the failure of the communicative act the recurring, dominant action of their works" (xvi). For him these texts "configure a new epistemology as they define a novel sense of time and space that reflects deep-seated changes in attitudes in the society from which they spring" (xvii). If Gwara plants the signified to be studied with the flatness of a purposeful exercise, Gerli rushes to unveil its inevitable decay into an infinite system of signifiers with something that borders on a hysterical tautology, an overwrought and occasionally tedious discovery of the same sophisticated literary theory at every turn of the early modern page.

But Gerli's opening article makes up for any excess in his Introduction and demonstrates that his theoretical taste has not come at the expense of philological rigor. The cogent presentation of the intertextual problems