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These diaspora Muslims are engaged in a process of negotiating their identity in a non-Muslim country: they have to redefine their identity as a minority group so that it can include their past and present realities and lives. At the same time, they must renegotiate the relationships between religion and politics—and religion and society—in a Western secular context.

As a whole, *Modernizing Islam* is interesting and provides a broad range of theoretical and empirical perspectives to understanding the current framework of Islamic political representations. The points of departure are diverse and a partial incoherence cannot be avoided. However, in terms of wholeness, the variety of approaches and standpoints is justified: the empirical richness meets the variability of theoretical discussions rather successfully.

The main value of this book is to present Islam to Western non-Muslims with a relatively weak understanding of the basic features of Islam's political dimensions. The book does not underestimate the capability of readers to comprehend the theoretical dimensions of the politicization of religion. It also avoids the pitfalls of some frustrating approaches toward Islam that are unable to overcome its religious dimensions when explaining primarily social and political phenomena.

Maria Rosa Menocal. THE ARABIC ROLE IN MEDIEVAL LITERARY HISTORY: A FORGOTTEN HERITAGE. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004 [originally published 1987]. 208 pp. Pb. $19.95, ISBN 0 8122 1324 6.

Reviewed by *Karla Mallette*, Assistant Professor, Civilization Sequence Program, American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

Maria Rosa Menocal's *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* first appeared in 1987 and international events have since focused public attention upon the history that she addresses in it. In the "Afterword," which was written for the 2004 reprint, Menocal mentions 11 September and its international fallout as evidence of the enduring relevance of the history of Muslim-Christian cultural contact. Equally important in this regard, however, is the significant increase in the immigration of Muslim workers to Europe, which has generated both productive and scandalous encounters between Muslims and Christians on European soil. In response to the rise in curiosity about contemporary and historical relations between Muslims and Christians, the University of Pennsylvania Press has reissued Menocal's book in paperback. The reappearance of the work invites, therefore, speculation on the ways in which it has changed our view of literary and intellectual history—and on the attitudes and intellectual habits that have *not* changed, despite Menocal's 1987 intervention.

Menocal's thesis is simple. She argues that Arabic and Latinate cultures overlapped during the Middle Ages and, specifically, that Arabic literary and intellectual traditions influenced developments in the Christian world. She names the Muslim-Christian borderlands of the northern Mediterranean—al-Andalus and, to a lesser extent, Sicily—as the centres of gravity of Arabic influence, through which Arabic learning passed to the Christian world. The core of the book consists of a philological study surveying the evidence of cross-cultural influence, with prefatory and concluding chapters that function as manifestoes calling for a revision of our understanding of medieval literary and intellectual history.

In the first chapter, "The Myth of Westernness in Medieval Literary Historiography," Menocal argues persuasively against the chauvinism that sees in medieval history a pristine image of a thoroughly *Western* cultural identity and that resists acknowledging the importance of Islamic influence during the late Middle Ages. In chapter two, "Rethinking the Background," she marshals a host of medieval Christian figures who straddled the boundaries between the Christian and Islamic worlds—William of Aquitaine, the first of the Provençal troubadours; Peter the Venerable, who oversaw the first translation into Latin of the Qur'an; and Frederick II, king of Sicily, among others—to illustrate the complexity of the medieval cultural landscape. In these two chapters, her command of the material and her ability to negotiate the complexities of intellectual history, both medieval and modern, are equally impressive. The philological core of the book surveys the Romance vernacular poetry of courtly love, the Andalusian *muwashshaḥāt* and the culture of medieval Italy, with emphasis on Dante's *Divine Comedy*—three case-studies of cultural phenomena in which scholars have long adduced the possibility of Muslim-Christian cultural contact. The final chapter serves as a call to arms, a review of work to be done in order to outline the indebtedness of Christian culture to the culture of (largely) Andalusian Arabs.

Now, almost twenty years after the book's publication, the 'manifestoes' at its beginning and end retain their power and their relevance, while the philological chapters at the centre—which have been superseded by the scholarship that Menocal urged—pale somewhat in importance. In reviewing that scholarship, one notices paths suggested by Menocal that scholars—intriguingly—have not followed. Menocal calls insistently for the reception of Arabic poetry as an integral part of the 'European' canon; that is, she encourages readings of Arabic poetry by scholars who have not been trained as specialists in the Arabic literary tradition and who are not necessarily able to read the poetry in the original language. Furthermore, she designates the Arabic literary traditions of al-Andalus as part of the 'Spanish' literary canon and invites

Hispanists to receive it as such. Indeed, the years since the publication of *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* have seen increasingly sophisticated analysis of the Arabic-Andalusian canon. But this scholarly attention has generally come from Arabists and Islamicists, rather than from Hispanists or other Romance specialists. And the scholars who have written about Andalusian traditions have been more likely to consider them in the context of *Arabic* literary history than to annex the Andalusian material to *European* literary history.

Menocal encouraged scholars to break down the boundaries between the Arabic and Romance-speaking cultural spheres during the late Middle Ages in order to explore their investment in each other. Due, in part, to her timely intervention and, in part, to independent recognition of the necessity of such work, scholars have indeed turned their attention to the cultural history of the Muslim-Christian borderlands of the northern Mediterranean. But they have not generally crossed disciplinary boundaries in so doing. European literary historians have not, by and large, accepted the Arabic literary tradition of al-Andalus as a fundamental part of the European heritage. Rather, scholarship on Andalusian history in general and literary history in particular—which Menocal surveys in the "Afterword"—has been conducted, in time-honoured tradition, by trained specialists: by Arabists. It seems ungracious to lament this fact when the work that has been done is of such consistently high quality. Rather, the reluctance of non-specialists to handle the Arabic material may indicate a commonsensical acknowledgement of the difficulty of treating literary history divorced from the bulk of the literary tradition to which it responds.

Yet, in the years since the first appearance of *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, the scholarly terrain has shifted in subtle, but decisive, ways. To Menocal's list of scholarly works produced by specialists, I would add a small, but significant, number of studies by European social and economic historians who have acquired Arabic much as earlier generations of Europeanists acquired Latin or Greek—because it is an essential language for archival research. In the past two years, for instance, two important works based upon new analysis of the Arabic *diwān* of Norman Sicily have appeared: Jeremy Johns' *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Alex Metcalfe's *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily* (Routledge, 2003). Such works, I believe, are indicative of historians' growing awareness of the interpenetration of the Arabo-Islamic and Latino-Christian worlds in the northern Mediterranean. And, although scholars who do not read Arabic seem to have been reluctant to produce *scholarship* on Arabic literature, it seems that they are now more likely to teach Arabic literature in translation. The Modern Language Association,

the American professional association for instructors of modern languages and literatures, will soon release *Approaches to Teaching the 1001 Nights* for use either in courses on Arabic literature or—more likely—in survey courses. It is difficult to imagine that the MLA would have seen such a volume as necessary (or marketable) 20 years ago.

Menocal's work forecasted (and, to a great extent, served to provoke) a shift in scholarly attitudes concerning the relevance of medieval Islamic history to medieval Christian history. And yet, despite this renaissance of interest, the intelligence and conviction of her call to action remains as fresh, as germane and, indeed, as provocative as ever. While advances have been made—with historians less likely to discount the relevance of the Islamic world to the history of Christianity during the late Middle Ages—still, local chauvinisms and popular perception often resist acknowledging the story that Menocal tells in *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*. The legacy of indebtedness, the intimate links that connect the Islamic and Christian worlds, may be visible to specialists, but have not entered the popular imagination. And recent historical events suggest that the relevance of Menocal's 'manifesto' will only increase with time.

Robert A. Orsi. Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. 245 pp., 13 halftones. Hb. $26.95 (£17.50), 0 691 04903 3.

Reviewed by *Lawrence S. Cunningham*, John A. O'Brien Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, USA.

Robert Orsi is Warren Professor of American Religious History at the Harvard Divinity School. He is best known for his studies of Catholic popular piety in the United States—a topic for which he has a natural disposition because he himself is the child of Italian immigrants. His current book consists of six chapters which are reworked scholarly essays that he has already published in various venues. Some of the essays reflect his long-standing areas of interest. What makes them so interesting beyond his care in research is the way in which he is able to weave into his work reflections (devoid of nostalgia) about his own upbringing and family. He speaks of his grandmother's devotion to Saint Gemma Galgani in relation to the making of that saint just as he explores Catholic attitudes toward the handicapped and his relationship with a handicapped uncle. In both cases, one sees a rather well-wrought study that reflects both *pietas* and *scientia*.

The particular area in which Orsi does his research is particularly fruitful for the study of religion because no major world religion has undergone such a seismic shift in such a relatively brief period of time as