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The Pugio Fidei (Dagger of Faith)

A New Look at Ramón Martí’s Attack on Judaism and Islam

by Professor Ryan Szpiech

Professor Ryan Szpiech is currently working on multi-lingual manuscripts containing works of religious polemic (attacks and debates), largely from the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the manuscripts date from between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries. One work in particular, MS 1405 of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, has yielded an exciting new find: short citations of the Qur’an and Hadith (traditions about the Prophet Muhammad) in Arabic, but written in Hebrew letters and translated into Latin. This work is the oldest surviving (and complete copy) of the Pugio Fidei (Dagger of Faith) by the Dominican polyglot from Barcelona, Raymond Martini (also known as Ramón Martí, d. after 1284). Most of the work—an attack on Judaism and Islam and a defense of Christianity—is one of the longest works of its kind from the Middle Ages—contains abundant citations from Biblical and Rabbinical sources in Hebrew, followed by translations into Latin.

Because the Qur’an citations in Arabic are written in Hebrew letters, they have escaped the notice of virtually all scholars of Martini’s work. Szpiech has determined that the citations represent the earliest known example of citations of the Qur’an in Arabic in Hebrew letters within a Christian work. This practice, well attested among Arabic-speaking Jews, became more common among Christians in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. Because Martini did not take his Latin translations from the earliest known citations of the Qur’an in Arabic, but took them from the Latin work by Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo, the Pugio Fidei represents a fascinating new source for discussions of Latin translations of the Qur’an in medieval Iberia. With the help of three undergraduate students working in the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), Micah Kantors, Thomas Topping, and Nathan Torreano, Szpiech has edited and translated the Arabic and Latin texts, taking account of all known manuscript copies of the Pugio Fidei. The texts, translations, and introductory study are forthcoming later this year.

National Destiny and Picturesque Portrayals

by Professor Giorgio Bertellini

Professor Giorgio Bertellini explores the picturesque painting style and its effect on early 20th-century photographers and filmmakers

Once associated with landscape painting in Northern Europe, the picturesque painting style came to symbolize Mediterranean Europe through evocative views of distant landscapes and exotic characters. Showing viewers how this aesthetic traveled to America and was transferred from 19th-century painters to early-20th-century photographers and filmmakers, Bertellini moves from Western films and travelogues to urban melodramas featuring Southern Italians, the picturesque’s original characters. Taking its cue from a picturesque stage backdrop from “The Godfather Part II,” Italy in Early American Cinema offers readings of early films that pay close attention to how landscape representations and narrative settings conveyed distinct ideas about racial difference and national destiny.

Message from the Chair

Everyone in RLL seems to agree that this year is off to a busier start than ever. Planning for our external review, when a team of four scholars from other universities will visit the department, is already under way. We also have a full program of speakers, conferences, and other events scheduled for the coming months.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Karla Mallette as associate professor of Italian. Dr. Mallette is a specialist of the medieval, and indeed modern, Mediterranean, and in addition to her position in RLL holds a “dry” appointment in Near Eastern Studies. We are excited to enhance the Mediterranean aspect of Romance studies, an important new area of research which has become a particular strength of our department. With a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, Dr. Mallette published a first book, The Kingdom of Sicily 1100-1250: A Literary History (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), and she has a second book forthcoming, also with Pennsylvania, entitled European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean.

We are pleased to welcome our new Department Manager Carin Scott, who joined the department in June. Carin comes to us from the Department of Astronomy, where she was the key administrator for four years. She previously worked at Wayne State University where she earned an MBA. Carin will be heading up our excellent team of staff and overseeing the general administrative operation of the department.

By the time this newsletter appears, we will have had occasion to celebrate the achievements of two of our senior faculty. Professor William Paulson, Edward Lorraine Walter Collegiate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, will have given his inaugural lecture, “Timely Interventions: On the Corrective Vocation of Literary Culture,” on September 30th. Professor Frank Casa, who will retire at the end of 2009, will have received the Encomienda de Numero de la Orden de Isabel la Católica, an honor bestowed by the Spanish government, presented to him by Ambassador Javier Rupérez. Spanish consul to Chicago, in a ceremony on October 1st. A conference of distinguished speakers and a reception were held around the event.

You can read about the activities of our faculty on pp. 4 and 5. Two associate professors were promoted to the rank of Professor: Professor Vincenzo Binetti (Italian) and Professor David Caron (French). Professor Larry La Fountain-Stokes was promoted to associate professor of Spanish, and also received the Harold R. Johnson Award for service to diversity. Several of the department’s faculty published books in the past year, including, I am happy to say, myself! You can read about these on pp. 5, 10, and 11. A number of our faculty won prestigious grants and fellowships which you can read about on p. 5. Dr. Amaryllis Rodriguez, lecturer in Italian, was appointed to the position of coordinator of first-year Italian.

Our graduate students have been very active and successful in their various endeavors. Ten successfully defended their dissertations, and several others received fellowships, prizes, and awards. You will find all their news on pp. 8 and 9.

The 28th Keniston Lecture will be given on February 8, 2010, by Professor Anne Fausto-Sterling, Professor of Biology and Gender Studies at Brown University. Professor Fausto-Sterling has written a number of books on gender and science which have engaged the general public and crossed the traditional divide between the “two cultures.” On April 22-25, 2010, the department will host the annual conference of the American Association for Italian Studies. You can see the plans and program on the conference website: www.lsa.umich.edu/rlaas.

As I look forward to handing over to my successor (I complete my term as Chair in June), I would like to thank all those alumni and friends of the department who have kept in touch with us and supported our mission and activities. In these difficult economic times, your support is all the more appreciated. UM President Mary Sue Coleman has launched a campaign to increase dramatically the number of students going abroad, and RLL is excited about the possibilities which this holds for our undergraduates (see p. 12). Please keep up your support if you can, and do join us for one of our events if you are in Ann Arbor.

Michèle Hannoosh
Chair

Check us out on the web: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll
The Literary Traditions of the Medieval Mediterranean

by Professor Karla Mallette

What happened to works of literature and natural philosophy when they translated their way around the Mediterranean? Some tales and treatises were translated, retranslated and commented on until they became something entirely new: a body of literature created by the encounters between Greek, Arabic and Latin in the medieval Mediterranean.

Aristotle’s Poetics — to name one of my favorite examples of transformative translation — was translated from Greek into Syriac and from Syriac into Arabic by the early tenth century. The greek philosophers of the Arab Middle Ages — al-‘Arabī, Avicenna and Averroes — commented on it. And Averroes’ commentary on the Poetics was translated into Latin, and was studied in the centers of Christian learning. Naturally, because the literary traditions these men knew differed radically from the ancient Greek, their perspective on poetics too were distinct from Aristotle’s. Aristotle’s discussion of drama, and his division of drama into tragedy and comedy, vanished; drama did not hold a central place in either the Arabic or Latin literary traditions. The theory of mimesis too had disappeared from Aristotle’s treatise by the time the medieval commentators received it. Medieval philosophers viewed poetry as an art of argumentation — the late antique and medieval tradition believed that the Poetics was part of the Organon, Aristotle’s treatises on logic — rather than a briefly aesthetic activity. And countless tiny shifts in Aristotle’s treatise were introduced.

Consider, for example, Aristotle’s discussion of peripeteia. In Greek drama, the term names a turning point — a sudden and unexpected reversal of fortune. The early Syriac and Arab translators confused the noun peripeteia (reversal) with the verb peripateo — which means to walk around, and is the source of the adjective peripetetic (used to designate Aristotelian philosophers, because Aristotle paced while he taught). Instead of a reversal, the Arabic and Latin commentators on Aristotle’s Poetics spoke of a circulation or circumambulatio. Rather than an abrupt and unforeseen change in the fate of a fictional character, the medieval commentators discussed a kind of poem that starts by presenting an unanticipated image, that makes you feel what the poet wants you to feel by upending your expectations.

The poets kept meaning in play by tinkering with familiar images, spinning old clichés into gold. So too did the philosophers keep the philosophical works of Greece in circulation, cycling round the Mediterranean, acquiring new meaning with each new translation or commentary. The West discovered Aristotle’s real treatise on poems when the Greek text was brought to Italy from Constantinople, following the city’s fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. A Latin translation made directly from the Greek appeared in 1438, and a Greek edition of the text was published in 1508. During the course of the sixteenth century no fewer than eight retranslations (into Latin or Italian) or reprints of translations were made directly from the Greek. But during the same century, translations of Averroes’ commentary on the Poetics appeared in ten editions and reprints. It took a century of translation, analysis and debate for European intellectuals to accept Aristotle’s as the true version of the Poetics, rather than an abrupt and unforeseen change in the fate of a fictional character, the medieval commentators believed that the Poetics was part of the Organon, Aristotle’s treatises on logic — rather than a briefly aesthetic activity. And countless tiny shifts in Aristotle’s treatise were introduced.

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The Literary Traditions of the Medieval Mediterranean

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arla Mallette joins the faculty of Romance Languages and Literatures this year, as associate professor of Italian. She also has a dry appointment in Near Eastern Studies. She received her Ph.D. from the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto in 1998; she taught at Stanford University, Northwestern University, the American University of Beirut, and Miami University of Ohio before coming to Michigan. Her research focuses on Italy and the Mediterranean, and on communications between Arabic and Romance poetics in the medieval Mediterranean. She has written two books: The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100-1250: A Literary History (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), which traces the transition between Arabic and Italian literary traditions in medieval Sicily; and European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean (University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming) reevaluates a Southern European tradition of scholarship that identifies the origins of modernity in the contact between Islamic and Christian civilizations in the medieval Mediterranean. She has also written and edited a number of works on medieval Romance and Arabic poetics and Mediterranean historiography.

At Michigan, Mallette will teach courses on medieval Italian literature and on Italy and the Mediterranean. During her first year here, she is teaching a freshman seminar on two of the most popular framed narratives of the Middle Ages — the Thousand and One Nights and the Decameron — and a seminar on Petrarca. She will also take over coordination of a course in the Great Books sequence, GB 291. Her appointment will be sponsored for her first three years by the International Institute, which oversees international programs and area studies centers at the University, and she looks forward to participating in the Institute’s activities.

Mallette’s new research project, tentatively titled “Lingua Franca in the Mediterranean,” studies language and linguistic difference in the medieval Mediterranean. Mallette writes: “During the last decade, medievalists have become interested in applying the insights of postcolonial studies to the medieval world. The difficulty with using this model to read medieval literature is that linguistic, religious and cultural differences were understood differently during the Middle Ages. For instance, in the medieval Mediterranean, nobody wrote in the language he spoke; bilingualism — at a minimum — was the world. In this project, I’m studying the linguistic strategies used to communicate across the boundaries that language created in the medieval Mediterranean, in order to talk about how postcolonial theories apply to that literary history.”

Mallette was born in 1967 in South Bend, Indiana, and raised in Springfield, Illinois. She received her B.A. in classics from the University of Illinois in 1988, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in medieval literature from the University of Toronto in 1991 and 1996, respectively. During her first year at the University of Toronto, she was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Rockefeller University in New York. She then spent a year as a visiting scholar at the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. In 1997, she was an assistant professor of Romance languages at the University of Chicago. In 2000, she received a fellowship from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to do postdoctoral research at the University of Toronto. In 2001, she was a visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for Literary History in Hamburg, Germany. In 2002, she was a visiting scholar at the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. She was a faculty associate at the Institute for Advanced Study at Rockefeller University in New York in 2003-2004. She was a co-chair of a panel at the Association of Medieval and Early Modern Culture in America (AEMCA) conference in 2003, and a member of the editorial committee for the journal of the AEMCA, Medievalia Anglorum. She is currently series editor of the Arberry Lectures in Middle Eastern Studies, published by Cambridge University Press.

Mallette is married to Andrew Zirkel, an assistant professor of French at the University of Toronto. They have two children: Raffaela (b. 2002) and Zan (b. 2005). Mallette is a member of the Romance Studies Association and the Medieval Academy of America.
In July 2009, Spanish Lecturer Tatiana Calixto and María Dorantes took 14 students from different concentrations to Cuzco and Chinchero, Perú with the Global Intercultural Experience for Undergraduates (GIEU) Program, now part of the University’s new Center for Global and Intercultural Study (CGIS). There they lived among the Quechua indigenous weaving community for four weeks and learned the traditional art of weaving.

In Chinchero, the students prepared typical meals such as huatia, and potatoes cooked underground after a mound of earth was prepared. They also built their own fires. The students had the opportunity to live with the families in Chinchero and in Cuzco who had very different accommodations from those they are used to in Michigan, gaining experience in the indigenous community and the city. While in Cuzco, students learned more about the Incan Empire by visiting several museums and archeological sites, such as Machu Picchu, Moray, Salineras de Maras, and others.

By the end of the experience, all of the students had woven two belts. Some students were so enthusiastic that they also completed handbags. Their experience was very rewarding and culminated with the students writing the life stories of the weavers for the website of the Centro de Textiles Tradicionales de Cusco.
The RLL Graduate Program

One of the main academic events is the Fraker Conference that graduate students organize every year. We are always proud of the excellent presentations our students make at this conference. Next year’s conference, which will take place in late March 2010, promises to be an intellectually engaging exercise on the rhetorical use of the word “crisis.” Indeed, the “Turning Point: Crisis & Disaster” will be a major event for our graduate program.

Graduate student reading groups, RLL film series, and mock job talks for graduate students who are going on the job market this year, are all activities of a vibrant group of young scholars who continue to keep us aware of our commitment to excellence both in teaching and in research.

This year’s cohort brings nine new additions to our graduate student body. Selected from a pool of highly competitive candidates, we give an enthusiastic welcome to Erika Almenara, Elizabeth Barrios, Keith Christensen, Matthieu Dupas, Pierluigi Erbaggio, Camela Logan, Anna Mester, María Robles Gila, and Rodrigo Toromoreno. They are already adding to the academic program with their willingness to contribute to discussions, teaching and research.

I am currently in San Marino. I have been offered a position as a visiting professor at the University of New Hampshire in Ascoli Piceno (Italy) for winter 2010, where I will be teaching advanced courses in Italian film. Since my defense, I have worked on two articles “De-colonizing Italy: Migrant Writers and the Tradition of Picturesque” and “Listening to the Sound of Anti-Fascism in Federico Fellini’s Amarcord.” The former has been accepted for publication by The Italianist, while the latter is a conference paper which I am revising for Mnemosyne o la costruzione del senso. I am currently applying for a European Union-funded, two year research grant (Marie Curie) in collaboration with the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Translation, Languages and Cultures of the University of Bologna.

After my graduation in June 2009, I moved to Hanover, New Hampshire to start my position as assistant professor of Spanish at Dartmouth College, where I will be teaching mostly classes on early modern Spanish literature and culture. My plans are to continue teaching and studying the Spanish early modern past and actively contribute to my field of study. I spent the summer preparing syllabi and teaching materials for my classes and sketching out the directions in which I will transform my dissertation into a book. But also, I have to admit, I enjoyed an absolutely delightful summer filled with hours of canoeing on the Connecticut River and delicious Vermont cheese-tasting.

We also offer our best wishes to the following Ph.D. recipients this year:

Manuel Chinchilla (Spanish)
Assistant Professor, Sewanee: The University of the South

Raquel Vega Durán (Spanish)
Assistant Professor, Claremont McKenna College

Pedro Porben (Spanish)
Assistant Professor, Bowling Green State Univ.

Julie Robert (French)
Post-doc, Univ. of Michigan

Silvia Marchetti (Spanish)
Assistant Professor, Claremont McKenna College

Noelia Carriñanos
Assistant Professor, Univ. of Central Arkansas

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Assistant Professor, Univ. of Central Arkansas

Meet the New Graduate Students

Radost Rangelova

After defending my dissertation in July 2009, I moved to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where I recently began my first semester in the Spanish Department at Gettysburg College. I am teaching language and Caribbean literature courses and I am involved in the programs in Latin American Studies and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. In the past month I have enjoyed a rich array of lectures and social activities.

In the short term, I am working on two conference papers and on an article based on the work that I did for my dissertation. My long-term research plans include the revision and publication of a manuscript based on my dissertation, as well as work on a new comparative project, that studies the construction of gender and sexuality in the detective genre in Hispanic Caribbean literature.

I have taken advantage of Gettysburg’s proximity to several big cities and cultural centers in the area. I recently went to Washington, DC to attend the Library of Congress National Book Festival, and I look forward to future trips to Baltimore and Philadelphia.
"It is a living museum of a long-gone Jewish life and, supposedly, a testimony to the success of the French model of social integration. It is a communal home where gay men and women are said to stand in defiance of the French model of social integration. It is a place of freedom and tolerance where people of color and lesbians nevertheless feel unwanted and where young Zionists from the suburbs gather every Sunday and sometimes harass Arabs. It is a hot topic in the press and on television...And for better and for worse, it is a French neighborhood."—from My Father and I

My Father and I
by Professor David Caron

"In my new edition, I have tried to bring out these various aspects of Delacroix's diary. It consists of a wholly new text, established on the basis of the original manuscripts and of a number of new manuscripts sources. It also includes hundreds of pages of unpublished texts which I discovered in two private archives in the course of my research. These had remained more or less intact since the painter's death in 1863: notebooks, travel diaries, loose pages of jottings and reflections, drafts of unpublished or unfinished articles, these works are among the painter's most interesting writings, encompassing his ideas on painting, literature, sculpture, music, and philosophy, pages on modern beauty, on realism, on the antique, on the sublime, notes on a wide variety of readings from antiquity to the contemporary press, discussions of artists past and present. I have also reconstructed a number of notebooks which had been dismantled after his death and their pages scattered across the globe. To the known sketchbooks on his famous journey to North Africa in 1832, my edition adds numerous new texts and unpublished testimonies by his contemporaries, including his own thoughts on the then recent French conquest of Algeria. The edition features a substantial critical commentary and an introduction on the importance of the diary as a work about art, as the writing of a painter, and as a means for interpreting the culture of nineteenth-century France. For me it was a project of absorbing interest and I feel privileged to have had it to work on over the years."—from History as Art: Exploring Eugène Delacroix's Journal

History as Art: Exploring Eugène Delacroix's Journal
Professor Michèle Hannoosh talks about her new work on Delacroix and the new sources she discovered

Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora
by Professor Larry La Fountain-Stokes

"I recently re-connected with many people who were in Michigan's Junior Year Abroad in Aix-en-Provence in 1974-1975. The Wisconsin members of the program held a reunion in Madison, WI in June 2008. We plan to organize another reunion. Meanwhile, I set up a Google Group on which we have posted our updates and old and new photos. If you were in the Aix program in 1974-1975, and want access to that website, send an email to me at Annpecker@comcast.net."—from We want to hear from YOU!

Send an e-mail to rll.editor@umich.edu. Be sure to include your full name, your graduation date and degree/language, your email address (optional), and what you're doing these days.
The President’s Donor Challenge for the Student Global Experience

Today’s students are preparing for lives in a world very different from that of their predecessors. Instantaneous access to information has brought the world to their fingertips, while global economic development presents them with remarkable new challenges and possibilities.

Whether our graduates return to their hometowns or take jobs halfway across the world, they will need the skills and knowledge to connect with people from different cultures and traditions.

You can help graduate and undergraduate students gain this expertise and expand their worldviews by responding to President Mary Sue Coleman’s Challenge for The Student Global Experience. By providing a $1 match for every $2 in endowment gifts between $25,000 and $500,000, the President’s Challenge maximizes your support for foreign study and learning.

For more information, please visit http://www.giving.umich.edu/opportunities/index.php?page=president_challenge.

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