

Medieval Cosmopolitanism and the Saracen-Christian Ethos

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Abstract: In her paper, "Medieval Cosmopolitanism and the Saracen-Christian Ethos," Marla Segol argues that in *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*, two medieval Occitanian romances, the writers work actively to incorporate Islamic culture and its accomplishments into a hybrid communal identity. The hybrid elements of this identity are demonstrated in two ways: first, through the portrayal of mixed couples and second, through depiction of a biculturally constituted landscape and culture. Intercultural relations between the characters are dramatized through the structures of religious conversion. Each romance features a mixed couple, with one member Christian and the other, formerly Muslim but converted at some point in the narrative. In each work, the validity of Muslim lover's conversion is probed through an interrogation and a problematization of the process. As these conversions are probed, the hybrid identities of both the characters and their adoptive societies are revealed and accepted. In so doing, these works express cosmopolitan ideals that serve to distinguish Occitanians from their northern and western Christian neighbors. Much of the conflict in each work centers on negotiating an assimilable knowledge of Other within, and as such, the hybrid self.

Marla SEGOL

Medieval Cosmopolitanism and the Saracen-Christian Ethos

In this paper I argue that in *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*, two medieval Occitanian romances, the writers work actively to incorporate Islamic culture and its accomplishments into a hybrid communal identity. The hybrid elements of this identity are demonstrated in two ways: first, through the portrayal of mixed couples and second, through depiction of a biculturally constituted landscape and culture. Intercultural relations between the characters are dramatized through the structures of religious conversion. Each romance features a mixed couple, with one member Christian and the other, formerly Muslim but converted at some point in the narrative. In each work, the validity of Muslim lover's conversion is probed through an interrogation and a problematization of the process. As these conversions are probed, the hybrid identities of both the characters and their adoptive societies are revealed and accepted. In so doing, these works express cosmopolitan ideals that serve to distinguish Occitanians from their northern and western Christian neighbors. Likewise, compositely cultured landscapes are explored to assert the hybrid nature of the landscape and the home culture itself. In both works, which are intensely focused on interrogating the construction of alterity and the framing of cultural relations between Christians and their Saracen neighbors, Arabic material culture is repeatedly and knowledgeably represented. Arabic culture appears on the home turf as well as abroad, and in each case it is ultimately shown to be an integrated part of the "home" Occitanian culture. Much of the conflict in each work centers on negotiating an assimilable knowledge of Other within, and as such, the hybrid self.

Most discussions of medieval hybridity concern representations of monsters, hybrid creatures constructed of a mixture of man and beast. In so much as they are monsters, from *monstrare*, meaning to show, they are apparitions (Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* 85). It is their visibility that horrifies. In my discussion of the hybrid, we encounter precisely the opposite -- the writers in question are processing an encounter with the invisible, with assimilated Muslim culture and lineage which has been repressed and recoded as "French." Thus their assertion of a hybrid identity, culture, and genealogy is a form of "outing" that both marks and assimilates difference as it reveals. In both works, the religious conversion, which imperfectly fuses the hybrid elements of Christian and Islamic culture, has happened in the past. It is through the problematization and the interrogation of this conversion that differences are brought to light. The Old French, aristocratic version of *Floire et Blancheflor*, a late-twelfth-century romance, is positioned as a genealogy of the Carolingian empire. The two main characters, Floire and Blancheflor, are introduced as the grandparents of Charlemagne, whose celebrated accomplishments include, among others, a medieval revival of Latin learning, and the successful conquest of Barcelona and Cataluna, which later proved a stronghold in the Reconquista. Floire is a Muslim prince (a *Paynim*) and Blancheflor is the daughter of his mother's Christian slave. They are brought together as a result of Floire's father's raid against Christian pilgrims to the shrine of Saint James of Compostela. Blancheflor's mother is taken as a spoil of war and becomes a slave to the queen, as does her daughter.

The description of the characters, their relations, their social world, and their environment is striking in a few ways. The first is its accuracy. Traditional scholarship of medieval literature has it that there was little contact between Christian Europe and Muslim Iberia. History shows otherwise, and evidence of that appears throughout this romance (for more information on this debate, see Akehurst and Davis; see also Snow; Gaunt, Simon, and Kay). Second is what we can only call the lack of dehumanization of the "Paynim" characters. Identity is asserted between Christian and non-Christian characters throughout, expressing a point of view transcending regional and religious boundaries. Throughout this work the poet creates compositely cultured landscapes that show a familiarity with Iberian culture and appear to value cultural exchange. Both the home turf and the foreign are compositely constructed, and informed depictions of Iberian landscapes work in many cases to assert a genealogical relationship between Iberian Muslim and Christian courtly culture. The gardens, in which Iberian horticultural and architectural aesthetics, techniques, and technology are knowledgeably portrayed, serve as the settings for representation and transmission

of culture from East to West, and sometimes back again. The Occitanian representation of Muslim Iberian culture serves two purposes; the first is to point to aesthetic debts and similarities that actively locate the developments of the home culture in the Arabic courtly tradition, and the second is to identify this home culture with Iberian Muslim culture over and against the more threatening incursions of Church and State from the Northwest. In *Floire et Blancheflor*, there are very few representations of the natural landscape. The work is set primarily in the manufactured environment, and as such it overtly bears the marks of culture throughout. The primary setting for action in this romance is that of the garden. There are three in all, each reflecting to a varying degree the interplay of Christian and Muslim horticultural aesthetics. The first garden is the garden of childhood, a Biblical garden reflecting mostly Christian traditions. The second garden, which is created around Blancheflor's false tomb, is a more typical Iberian garden. The third garden, belonging to the emir, is based on a distortion of the Islamic conception of paradise (for an extended treatment of the gardens, see Grieve). I discuss here only the first two: each of these gardens sets the conditions for social interaction, and, hybrid structures themselves, celebrates ultimately cultural cross-pollination as ideal.

Iberian garden aesthetics differed sharply from those of their Western neighbors. The plantings often featured a greater variety of stock, including imports from the east like hybrids, bulb flowers, and cultivars, with less grass and more trees. The typical Spanish garden, or patio, very much like those still in existence today, was composed of a water feature among stones, and set itself apart from the landscape as a whole by the presence of trees. More important was the emphasis upon ornamentation. Descriptions of ornamentation figure very little in typical Western European descriptions of gardens -- in those of Iberia and further East "they assume a much greater importance" (Harvey 23). Iberian gardens typically contained ornaments designed to appear as life-like as possible. As expressed in contemporary Iberian poetry, the viewer derived a feeling of pleasure from the blurring of boundaries between nature and artifice. In the texts treated here, the emphasis upon artifice poses crucial questions about relating to culture. The appreciation of a blurring of boundaries between the natural and the artificial self-consciously required the viewer's participation in the act of interpretation. And because gardens are inhabited space, the viewer's presence in them necessitates that she/he become part of the spectacle itself. It is these consciously posed questions of reception that truly distinguish Iberian gardens from those of their Western neighbors, and which furnish the site for an exploration of the genealogy of the "home" culture. The first garden, the Biblical garden of youth, is modeled on the Christian tradition, but serves to demarcate the hybrid, Muslim-influenced nature of the culture of courtly love. It is an Edenic garden "With herbs and flowers of every kind / And every color you could find or think of" // "Toute les herbes et les fleurs / Qui sont de diverses couleurs" (242). The emphasis on the variety of vegetation (herbs and flowers of every kind) echoes the biblical description of its plantings, which included "every herb yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed" (Genesis 1: 29). Because an Edenic garden is necessarily a garden of youth, it also serves educational purposes; it is established as the setting for a sentimental education, grounded in the courtly culture of Iberian society.

Acculturation is mimetic by definition, and this garden is the site of the children's encounter with and reproduction of courtly literature. It is the study of classical literature, transmitted by their Muslim tutor, which is shown to cause their love: "And when they heard what Ovid told / About love's ways and how folk loved / His volume whetted even more / their wish love's country to explore." // "Ovide, ou moult se diltoient / Es ouvres de'amours qu'il oient / Le livres fist plus haster / Ce sachiez bien, / d'euls entramer" (227-30). As Floire and Blancheflor absorb this knowledge, they perform it in the space of the garden: "When they were finished with school, they would kiss each other" // "Quant il rerepent l'escole / Li uns beise l'autre acole" (235-36). This little drama, the application of Ovid's lessons in the garden, enacts privileged access to classical tradition. By placing Ovid in the mouth of the Muslim tutor, it serves to draw attention to the role of Muslim culture in purveying this knowledge, and by enacting it with what is essentially a mixed cast, it portrays literate courtly culture as a synthesis and a product of interactions between Christian and Muslims. Thus, their love itself, a product of culture, is hybridly engendered. In order to

prevent the undesirable union of Muslim and Christian, Floire's Muslim parents sell the Christian Blancheflor as a slave, telling Floire that his beloved is dead. To make their deception credible, they build an elaborate false tomb and an ornate garden around it. The tomb was embellished with statues of Floire and Blancheflor, which were made to kiss one another and to whistle a melody when the wind blew. This garden is important in two ways: the first is that it displays accurate knowledge of Iberian garden aesthetics, and the second is that it draws attention to the ways in which art shapes behavior.

The incredible verisimilitude of the statues muddies divisions between the artificial and the real, the living and the dead. Like luxurious Arabic gardens of the period, this one also contains automata (the last remaining ruins of these automata were destroyed in 1863 for a renovation; the sketches of these automata, completed just prior to their destruction, still exist: for details see Harvey 46-47). The poet expresses marvel at the likeness of the statues to their models, as well as in their ability to dramatize the ideal love they stand for: "One kissed the other and embraced / By magic, seemingly this motion / Expressed their love and their devotion." // "l'un besoit l'autre et acoloit / Si disoient par nigromance / Tretout lor bon et lor enfance" (585-87). The "magic" statues on the tomb so effectively represent the couple and their ideals that they inspire feelings of love in others: "Who heard these sweet airs sung above / And as they listened they'd be stirred / To deepest love by what they heard" ("Ne pucele, pour qu'ele amast / De ce douz chant que il oioient / D'amours si forment esprenoient" [627-29]). This garden attests to the power of representation (I should like to note here that there is evidence of the existence of automata just such as those described here, demonstrating that the poet is expressing cultural knowledge culled either from personal experience or accurate hearsay [see Harvey 45-47]). Harvey notes that "The fourteenth century Navarrese king Carlos III built gardens in the Moorish style by hiring Moorish architects and craftsmen to design and complete the work. One of these well-known gardens, Tafalla, included automata which survived until 1865, when the ruins were destroyed to create a Renaissance style overlay. The ruins were sketched by Pedro de Madrazo just before their destruction in 1865." These sketches include automata and can be found on described in Harvey 's book (45-47; see also Shiloah for a discussion of the aesthetics of automata in gardens). In this way the representation of courtly love to works to shape social behavior, which in a larger sense reflects the educative function of the poem as a whole.

Here, the goal stated in the frame, to teach lovers of love's ways, is enacted through the icon that is Blancheflor's false tomb. The tomb literally causes its viewers to participate in its story by feeling love. If the courtly ethos is shown to be a synthesis of Arabic-mediated classical literature and French culture, as portrayed in the first garden, this piece elaborates that message. In this way, the appreciation of the space in which the plastic fuses with the organic, inherent to an Iberian aesthetic clearly known to the writer, is shown to be both powerful and necessary in the creation of a culture of love. The culture of courtly love is again located in this specifically Iberian aesthetic as it is conveyed homeward, to southern France, and the hybrid nature of the home culture is asserted once again. Not only is courtly love depicted as a product of cultural cross-pollination, but the characters in this work are themselves hybrid. Blancheflor is Christian, but educated as an Iberian Muslim woman of the court, and Floire is Muslim but raised by a Christian slave. Just the same, in his book, *Medieval Romance*, John Stevens describes Floire and Blancheflor as "alike as two peas in a pod" (35). And they are. This cross-racial, cross-cultural identity is one of the main points of the plot. Establishing identity between the two characters is the first step in establishing cultural affinity between Christians and Muslims. Their simultaneous birth, their nearly identical names given in honor of the day of their birth, Pasque Florie, and their shared upbringing demonstrate their identity. The conditions in which they were raised are described as follows: "Save for only suckling they / took food and drink in the same way / They slept together in one bed / together drank, together fed." // "Onques ne lor sevra mengier / Ne Boivre fors seul l'aletier / Ensemble en un lit les couchoit / Andeus pessoit et abevroit" (187-90). Thus, the decisive role of nurture is established.

Interestingly, the writer shows firsthand knowledge of native barriers to joint acculturation in asserting identical upbringing with the exception of nursing. The text notably and accurately ex-

plains that internursing is forbidden by Islam (on this, see Fildes). Slightly later, it is also forbidden by Christianity. An examination of the prohibitions against internursing yields some interesting insights about the construction of racial and religious identity in this time and place. Most importantly, discourse about nursing shows that both medieval Muslims and Christians located kinship in the mother's milk. Children who shared a single woman's milk were understood to be "milk brothers" and sisters, and in this way families were physically created by shared nursing. Because of this, internursing was a particular thorn in the side of the dominant racial group, as it created perceived unwholesome and problematic kinships between otherwise distinct racial groups. In this way, creating characters that overcome racial difference through nurture works to express a strong, anti-essentialist view of the relation between race, character, and culture. This statement is developed as the author explores the role of education in the formation of individual identity. Floire's and Blanchefflor's joint acculturation is sealed by their co-education; Floire assures his father that, "without her I shall master nought / Nor learn the lessons as they're taught." // "Sanz li ne savre ja aprendre / Ne sans livre ma lecon rendre" (207-08). As Floire conceives it, without Blanchefflor he cannot succeed in society, for he defines it as a society of two. As noted above, their education consists of a variety of classical texts making up the early part of the canon; through Ovid, and "authors they read and books of old" they learned "about love's ways and how folks loved." // "Livres lisoient et authors / Et quant parler oient d'amours" (227-28). This education functions to cement their affinity, to assert a similar set of values, and to set the criteria for worldly success according to the values engendered by their education.

Despite the fact that differences between Floire and Blanchefflor are purposefully elided through an emphasis on nurture, shared experience and co-education, their differences are brought to the surface once again in the treatment of Floire's conversion to Christianity. As he converts, he is identified as both different and the same. He is different because his later actions show that his conversion does effect a change. He is the same because he is, after all, exactly like Blanchefflor, and because they, the hybrid couple, are the grandparents of Charlemagne. Thus he is central to the definition of "French" identity. When Floire converts to Christianity, his conversion is both arbitrary and violent -- he "decided for the sake / Of Blanchefflor, his loved one, to take / The Christian way of life..." // "Pour Blanchefflor la soe amie / A pris la chrestienne vie." This depiction of Floire's motivation positions his conversion as a mere prop to prove his courtly devotion to Blanchefflor. However, Floire's imposition of his newfound religion upon his subjects is barbarous and bloody, reproducing both the methodology and the phraseology of Crusade accounts and propaganda. Floire, prince of what appears to be Spain, is appointed emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. As he ascends both the thrones of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, Floire greets his new subjects with the choice of conversion or death, putting to the sword all those who refuse Christianity. In this violence, he becomes 'other' once again, only this time, he is identified with the persecuting Church. Thus, in interrogating the genealogy and the history of the Carolingian dynasty, its hybridity is exposed, and the "monster" revealed. This monster does not lurk in Floire's Islamic origins, which are presented with little prejudice, but in the violence of the past, which uncannily resembles violence being perpetrated against southern French Albigensians at the time of this redaction.

But is the assertion of a hybrid identity restricted to the revelation of monstrosity? One would hope not. The violence of Floire's actions once he becomes a Christian reflects his status as a Christian, not as a Muslim. It would be easy to stop here, but this conclusion would be entirely too neat. When Floire forcibly converts his new subjects and slaughters those who refuse, it appears that this violence occurs a result of his Christianization. Throughout his love quest for Blanchefflor, he risks his own life but harms no one. Because the courtly love quest conventionally involves a contest of arms, Floire's nonviolent pursuit stands out against it. In many ways, Floire's love quest more closely resembles a pilgrimage than a secular quest. Paging back to the beginning of the tale, however, we see that Floire's bloody conversion does not spring from nowhere. Instead, it resembles nothing so closely as his father's campaign against Christian pilgrims to the shrine of Saint James of Compostela. I believe that this comparison is purposeful because the violence of two empires, Muslim and Christian, connected by one person, Floire, frames the romance. It be-

gins with Floire's father's raids upon Christians, and ends with Floire's mass slaughter of Muslims, under the aegis of the Church. This cuts two ways. First, because both campaigns are entirely bereft of ideology it equates the two episodes, thereby undermining any religious justification for conquest. Second, by locating the genealogy of the Holy Roman Empire within Islam it locates the origins of the same within the other, also undermining any arguments for persecution rooted in cultural, racial, or religious difference. This is not an idealization of the other, and neither is it even a glorification of the hybrid. It amounts instead to a recognition of the hybrid state of European culture, and to a statement against cultural hegemony in any form. The hybrid is not monstrous. It is the primary argument against monstrosity.

In *Aucassin et Nicolette*, an early-thirteenth-century romance, another hybrid couple forms the center of inquiry. Aucassin, a young nobleman of Provence, wishes to marry the adopted, converted former slave girl Nicolette. Aucassin loves Nicolette and asserts in the face of parental opposition her absolute suitability both as a beloved and as a member of his social group as defined along class, race, and cultural lines. Aucassin views her as no different from himself, and as such perceives no obstacle to their union. Aucassin's parents, on the other hand, see her position as Saracen, former slave, and convert as an insurmountable obstacle to their union. They and the viscount, Nicolette's adoptive father, express their view of the problem in this almost obsessive refrain: "'Son,' said the father, 'that is impossible. Leave Nicolette be, for she is a slave girl who was brought from a foreign land, and the viscount of this town purchased her from the Saracens, brought her to this town, and raised her at the font, baptized her, and made her his godchild, and one of these days he will give her a young man who will earn bread for her honorably. This is no concern of yours.'" // "'Fix, fait le peres, 'ce ne poroit estre. Nicolette laise ester, que ce est une caitive qui fu amenee d'estrage terre, si l'acata li visquens de ceste vile as Sarasins, si l'amena ceste vile, si l'a levee et bautisie at fat sa fillole, si li donra un de ces jors un baceler qui du pain li gaaignera par honor; de ce n'as tu que faire"' (II 22-26). This refrain is repeated a total of four times (in lines II 25-29; III 9-10; IV 10-14; VI 12-16), almost verbatim, by Aucassin's father, his mother, and the viscount. When Aucassin's parents explain what is wrong with Nicolette, they also delineate the criteria for an acceptable wife -- she must share national, religious, and class affiliations. The repetition of this phrase by various members of the older generation demonstrates their ideological solidarity. All of the members of their parents' generation agree that difference in nation, race, religion, and class decrease suitability, and since Nicolette deviates from Aucassin in each of these she is entirely unsuitable. (for an extended treatment of this generational culture gap see Menocal: "Signs of the Times: Self, Other and History in *Aucassin et Nicolette*"). These two conflicting understandings of Nicolette's identity and social position derive from divergent perceptions of the function of religious conversion. To Aucassin, Nicolette's conversion has effectively eradicated any difference between the two of them. But for their parents, though conversion usually acts as a vehicle of assimilation, Nicolette's conversion can never fulfill this function because of seemingly ineradicable class, racial, and cultural differences from her host community. But to Aucassin, who does not acknowledge any difference between them, Nicolette's conversion may as well never have happened. On both ends, this is problematic.

Not surprisingly, this conflict is not immediately negotiated but temporarily contained in a manner reflecting social anxieties and prejudices. Aucassin and Nicolette are summarily locked up. Aucassin and his cross-cultural desires are quite literally shoved below the surface of his parents' consciousness in a basement dungeon, and Nicolette is shut in a tower seemingly ornamenting the viscount's garden. Nicolette's placement in the garden is significant not only in that the tower motif is believed to be derived from Arabic literary sources, but also because the ornamental garden is a product of cross-cultural exchange. According to John Harvey, the ornamental garden went into decline in Romanized Europe with the departure of the Romans: "The recovery of the pleasure garden, as well as the higher techniques of cultivation, went hand in hand with the general rediscovery of ancient science and technology through the scholars of Islam" (22). The writer demonstrates an awareness of this trend by placing in this garden specifically Spanish roses ("Esguarda par le gaudine / Et vit la rose espanie" [V 11-12]) and a "powdered lawn," comprised of closely kept grass and small daisies (the daisies make their appearance in XII 21, when Nicolette crushes

them with her bare feet as she crosses the lawn to make her escape). Roses, in their doubled form, did not exist in Western Europe until they were brought over from Spain, as their French name indicates. Here, their Iberian origin is marked, and they are presented in concert with the Spanish young woman.

In light of the intense desire of the composer's contemporaries for new cultivars and horticultural technique from the Arabic world, it is perhaps telling that the sole representative of the culture that brought these things is forcibly ensconced, almost among them. Her prison is described as a "vaulted chamber." The vaulted chamber serves to demonstrate the wealth of the viscount and his access to state-of-the-art technology, which is also quite probably Iberian. While the exact impact of this cultural reference remains open, it is clear that the vaulted ceiling showed access to great luxury: "marvelously decorated," and Nicolette set within it like a jewel: "At the marble window / The girl leaned out / Her hair was blond / Her brows well fashioned / Her face fair and slim / You never saw a more beautiful girl" // "A la fenestre marbrine / la s'apoya la mescine / Ele avoit blonde la crigne / Et bien faite la sorcille / la face clere et traitice / Ainc plus bele ne veistes" (V 2-6). Here the prison itself is an ornament, and the girl within it embellishes it. Both the landscape and the girl who adorns it are products of Arabic culture. This set-up belies a desire for the goods of Muslim Iberia combined with fear and aversion for cultural contamination, and thus a drive to contain it. As the story will show, this arrangement is impossible, and it is the strain of this effort toward containment that contributes to the distraught state of the society here described. This pathology is more apparent in the practice of describing Nicolette, revealing a deep-seated perplexity regarding interpretation of her and characters like her. The exploration of Nicolette's character begins with her first formal portrait, and it is elaborated with her escape from prison, both of which reveal a paradoxical imagination of her as both familiar and strange. Her portrait accords with that of the conventional courtly lady, which generally includes blonde hair, clear, fair skin, bright eyes, small firm breasts, and a slender waist, with her beauty emphasized through the inexpressibility topos. But the objects to which Nicolette is compared are hardly conventional to the genre. The images employed communicate the same literal meanings as those used to describe typical French heroines, but with exotic, mundane, or plainly incongruous connotations. Often these incongruous images serve to emphasize the peculiarity of her social situation. Some exoticize Nicolette, and some serve to naturalize and familiarize her character. The first is most curious. Early in the romance, her breasts are compared to "two large walnuts." Walnuts, small and hard but looking very little like breasts, were a recent import to France. According to Harvey, "walnuts were introduced in Roman times, but probably died out" (23). Walnut groves, which are described in Ibn Bassal's 1080 treatise on agriculture, made their first documented appearance in France after the eleventh-century siege of Barbastro, after which Norman agriculture was greatly improved (Harvey 41). Through its very unlikelihood, this comparison points to the new, exotic, and desirable. The fact that this new agricultural technology is essentially a spoil of war supplies a violent context for this new knowledge.

The next set of unlikely images is found as the imprisoned Aucassin mourns their separation. In his laments he compares Nicolette to various foods. The image of the beloved as food works in other romances, such as *Flamenca*, to demonstrate the iconic power of the heroine's beauty and to assert its participation in the miraculous (in *Flamenca*, food imagery works to develop the growing metaphysicality of Flamenca's beauty and character. In this work her words double as food in a manner fairly typical of courtly romance (for more information on the conventions of portraiture see, e.g., Cobby; Colby). This connection serves to illuminate the ways in which the power of the female beloved is modeled on the divine). Here, the opposite is established, as her beauty is assimilated to the mundane: "Nicolette, lily flower, / sweet beloved with countenance so fair / You are sweeter than a grape / Or than a sop dipped in wine" // Nicolette, flors de lis, / Douce amie o le cler vis / Plus es douce que roisins / Ne que soupe en maserin" (XI 12-15). The lily flower, an imported cultivar that quickly naturalizes, models the tension between exoticism and naturalization. The comparison to a grape may be interpreted as lending either a natural or exotic connotation, because their history in Provence is largely unknown. The case is clearer in England and most of Western Europe and England, where vineyards were not native but instead brought in by the Ro-

mans. Archaeological evidence shows quite clearly that the vineyards in England did not long outlast the power of the Roman empire, and were reintroduced with the importation of Arabic agricultural knowledge in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Harvey, p. 41). The case is not so clear for vineyards in Provence, and so it is not certain if this image is exotic or homely. The grape metaphor, exotic/homely, is further developed as its sweetness is applied to sops and wine. This image, a sort of comfort food analogous to the contemporary peanut butter sandwich, is so homely that it is out of context in romance literature, and thereby quite strange. In this way, the images used to portray Nicolette bring out a tension between the native and the foreign, the exotic and the mundane. These tensions are artfully gathered but not resolved on the surface of her body. In these portraits, Nicolette is depicted as a site of intersecting discourses of exotic, homely, sacred, and profane, adhering in denotative meaning to the conventional portrait of the European courtly lady but connotatively adding unanticipated and sometimes unprecedented nuance to the description (see Brownlee). The majority of the agricultural images implemented refer specifically to an active traffic with Muslim Iberia in horticultural knowledge and products, intensely desired and readily absorbed. Some of the unusual descriptions of Nicolette serve to place this knowledge in the forefront, to make strange again what has been taken for granted as familiar. The ambivalence with which her character is treated points to a larger cultural ambivalence -- just as the writer cannot quite come to an assessment of Nicolette, neither can he nor anyone in his story come to a valid assessment of themselves, their culture, and their relation to Nicolette and hers. Thus the adventure begins.

Nicolette's identity is explored against a succession of landscapes. In the course of the work she traverses six different landscapes -- two with Aucassin, and four alone. These landscapes include pre-journey Beaucaire, the countryside, Torelore, Carthage (most likely Cartagena, Spain; for correspondences between the places named and those which actually existed, see Hubert 20-21; Menocal 498), the Spanish countryside, and post-journey Beaucaire. As she traverses each of these, another aspect of her identity is revealed. Most important to our purposes here are the last two stages of her journey. Preceding the last phase of the journey, Nicolette rediscovers her homeland and her royal identity, reuniting with her family who immediately wish to marry her off. In this way, Aucassin's assumptions about her class are substantiated. While she is with her family, though a Saracen, it is revealed that she is a princess as Aucassin claimed, and in this her lover is vindicated. However, it is when she leaves her family that the real problems arise. In escaping from her family in Cartagena to her home in Beaucaire, Nicolette disguises herself as a black, male *jongleur*. Indeed, the disguise is overwhelmingly effective, as neither Aucassin, nor Nicolette's adoptive mother recognizes her. One wonders at the effectiveness of the disguise, especially when it is considered in relation to her nickname, "lily flower," which points specifically to her whiteness. So the text calls into question Nicolette's very nature. Is she a white, noble Christian woman, or a black, Saracen, minstrel man? As a black minstrel, she manifests the polar opposites of the qualities required for integration into nobility -- fairness, social stature, wealth, and shared culture. It is effectively to undo her problematic conversion, to probe it and to expose what lies beneath -- a Saracen "blackness'." Nicolette's blackness is the culmination of a reacclimation to the outsider's view of her native society. However, she assumes this identity only as a means to escape it. As Nicolette's newfound family prepares to marry her off, she plots to escape to Beaucaire, donning this disguise in the process: "She gave some thought to the means by which she could seek out Aucassin. She got hold of a viol and learned to play it." // "Ele se porpensa par quel engien ele porroit Aucassin querre. Ele quiste une viele, s'aprist a vieler" (XXXVII 11-13; 9-10). Thus, as she rejects her native culture she embodies it, mimicking the native culture and the means of its transmission. Minstrels travelled widely in this period, and, along with the Jewish traders, probably played an important role in disseminating Arabic culture. After Nicolette has learned how to be a *jongleur*, she adds to her disguise by turning her skin black: "[she] took a herb and rubbed her head and her face with it until she was completely black and swarthy." // "si prist un herbe, si un oinst son cief et son visage si qu'ele fu tote noire et tainte" (XXXVIII 15-16; 12-13). Now a black minstrel, she completes her disguise by becoming male: "She had a smock, cloak, shirt and breeches made, and disguised herself as a *jongleur*. She took her viol and approached a sailor

whom she managed to persuade to take her on board." // "Et ele fist faire cote et mantel et cemisse et braies, si s'atorna a guise de jogleor, si prist se viele, si vint a un marounier, se fist tant vers luiqu'il le mist en se nef" (XXXVIII 16-18; 13-15). By disguising herself as a jongleur, a well-known purveyor of Arabic culture, she, like it, becomes movable and assimilable in a way that a pretty young princess is not. In becoming so, she reconstructs the transmission of her culture from East to West, and in the process she re-enacts her own history, both by repeating the journey, and by acting out the stereotypes held by the older generation.

Thus, as Nicolette "goes native" her conversion is reversed, the monster revealed. The process of revelation is completed when she returns to her adoptive mother, the viscontess, in disguise, tells her story, and gains recognition as herself. Through this process her blackness is assimilated to her history, completely narrated for the first time in her own voice. When Nicolette is recognized, she is recognized as an historical subject. What is interesting, however, is the terminology used to describe her transformation. Jacqueline de Weever points out that Nicolette's transformation is represented in a way that echoes her initial baptism: "Si prist un herbe, si un oinst son cief et son visage si qu'ele fu tote noire et tainte" (XXXVII 12-13). "Oinst" is traditionally used to describe such rituals as the anointing of kings and the ritual of baptism. (de Weever, "Nicolette's Blackness," p 323) When Nicolette restores her white skin color, the same terms are used: "Si prist un herbe qui avoit non escalire, si s'en oinst, si fu ausi bele qu'ele avoit onques este a nul jor" (XL 27-28). Thus, each of the anointments gains with the terms applied the gravity of baptismal ritual. This final conversion is both easier and more difficult than the first; it is easier because it is a conversion to what she already is, and more difficult, because it occurs with the articulation of knowledge repressed in her first conversion. Her skin color here brings to the surface a jointly manufactured perception of the surface appearance of Nicolette's culture. That Nicolette was as "bele qu'ele avoit onques este a nul jor," as beautiful as she ever was, implies an acceptance of her Saracen origins. In this case, it is clear that Nicolette's hybridity is accepted, and with her marriage to Aucassin, their society is reimagined to include her.

The question remains as to whether these integrations constitute a cosmopolitan outlook. Cautiously, I would answer yes, and with qualifications. Cosmopolitanism is a problematic term. To apply it here would also require importing its problems, which are manifold. On the plus side, Iberian Muslim culture is presented positively in both these works, and in both cases the writers show identity between Christian and Muslim characters at the same time that they portray difference. As often as not, this difference is desirable. There is significant work available that frames cosmopolitanism in ancient, modern, and post-modern terms, but remarkably little that treats it in the medieval world. In the main, this is due to the Christian and European bias of what is usually called medieval studies -- the medieval map is so often centered on Western Europe, and borders are drawn along religious as well as upon linguistic lines. Scholars usually define the Middle Ages by the absence of empire. They begin with the fall of the Roman Empire in 476, and end in 1492, with the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews, and Columbus' journey initiating the Age of Exploration, and with it, the Age of Empire. What are so often ignored are the vast Islamic empires of this period, at times stretching from India in the East, including parts of China and Northern Africa, to Spain as its western frontier. This is significant because cosmopolitanism is quite often defined in relation to the colonial impulse. In his paper, "The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience," Scott L. Malcolmson writes: "Cosmopolitanism has its origins in the Greek words for 'order, world, and citizen'" (232). Here, he defines cosmopolitanism as a belief in universal citizenship, but this ethos is at least in part founded on the perception of universal rule. Malcolmson writes that most of the classical cosmopolitans were influenced by Stoicism, and "took their universal citizenship as license either to withdraw from the world or to master it. Of those who withdrew, not much more can be said. Those who did not tended to use their citizenship toward one of two purposes: to study the world or control it? When the Roman cosmopolitans were patriotic, their patriotism contained multitudes" (233). Thus, classical cosmopolitanism is an attitude opposing insularity, provinciality and xenophobia, but at least in part based on a patriotism invested in shared government. This desire for difference is not passive but active.

The cosmopolitanism that characterized the classical world can also be ascribed to the Islamic empires of the Middle Ages. As in the classical world, Muslim Iberian cosmopolitanism came in part from belonging to a large, far-reaching, and multi-ethnically and religiously constituted empire. Both the rapid success of the Islamic empires and their longevity can be attributed to the cosmopolitan views propagated through dhimmi laws. These laws regulated and protected monotheistic subjects of Muslim rule, allowing them a measure of self-rule and religious freedom in exchange for rather high taxes. This policy went a long way in creating a culture of *Convivencia*, of intellectual, artistic, economic, and social cooperation in Spain, the western frontier of Islam. For a time, the ethos of *Convivencia* informed cultural interactions in Christian Spain as well, and it is in this light that we should examine the depictions of hybrid identity in Provençal literature, and the cosmopolitan ideas communicated thereby. It is clear at this point that the expression of a cosmopolitan ethos acts to associate Provençal culture with Iberian culture, and more broadly, with the Mediterranean region as a whole. Because this reading of *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Aucassin et Nicolette* is predicated on dialogue with history, it is important to consider the state of affairs contemporary to these works. Although there is no consensus upon the precise composition dates of *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Floire et Blancheflor* (Old French *version aristocratique*), most scholars place this date roughly in period of the early thirteenth and late twelfth centuries, respectively. In her article, "Signs of the Times: Self, Other and History in *Aucassin et Nicolette*," Maria Rosa Menocal characterizes this period as "perhaps the moment of the most feverish exchange" between Muslim Iberia and Christian Europe, with the South of France as an active site of these exchanges (498). This was facilitated in part by a rapid acceleration in the Christianization of Northern Spain occurring from the mid-twelfth to the early thirteenth century. The tide turned decisively in 1212, when Alfonso the VIII united with the armies of Leon, Castile, Navarre, and Aragon, to defeat the Almohades in the decisive battle of Navas de Tolosa. In 1236 Cordoba fell, and in 1238, Valencia did as well, leaving only the principality of Granada in Muslim hands. As Christians conquered Almohade territories, they worked to incorporate Muslim culture into their own, just as they incorporated Almohade land into their principalities and Muslim people into their communities. In these Provençal works, this process of cultural integration is enacted in a parallel fashion, forging identity with both the Christian conquerors of Muslim Spain, and its Muslim inhabitants.

The above explication leads us to a rather difficult formulation, in which it appears that conquest is positioned positively as cosmopolitanism. We are forced to ask here: what is the difference between this and raw violence? There is no doubt that the interrogation of conversions in each work lays bare the process of incorporation and the violence behind it. How then is it possible to say, as I do, that this is somehow preferable to other kinds of violence? The Muslim conquest of Spain was one that allowed the structures of identity and community to remain in place. It was, at first, a cosmopolitan-minded conquest. As the Christians reconquered the land, the culture of *Convivencia* is in some sense left intact, and the contributions of all groups valued, even greedily devoured. Diversity is allowed to persist. This kind of incorporation practiced by the Muslim empires, and for a time by the Christians in the north of Spain, is evaluated over and against Crusade, and its accompanying drive toward forced conversion. The doctrine of forced conversion, in long disuse, was dug up and dusted off to support the mobilization for crusade. Its chief accomplishment was population control. Though crusaders managed to hold onto an ailing Jerusalem from 1099 to 1187, the path of destruction they left far overshadows their cultural achievements. The Occitanians were treated to their own crusade, beginning in 1209, which resulted in a war that continued until 1255. Its effect was dual -- it served to stamp out local, heterodox forms of Christianity, and to join Occitania to the northern parts of France (on this, see also Griffin 243-256). The Inquisition following the crusade shows that the insistence upon conformity was total. It is specifically in relation to these events -- trends at the time of the composition of *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Floire et Blancheflor* -- that it is possible to recognize the differences in these sorts of conquest. More pointedly, this literature identifies the monster lurking within those who would like to be called the same -- marauding Christians.

The identification with Mediterranean society, and the aversion toward the Church and its French allies is expressed throughout both these works in the assertion of a hybrid identity and a

cosmopolitan ethos. This identity serves to differentiate the characters in question culturally, regionally, and religiously. In so doing, it expresses a cosmopolitan ethos constructed in direct opposition, and as a form of resistance to the provincial, xenophobic, and proto-nationalistic leanings of both the Normans and the Church. Its purpose is to create distance between the home community and the encroaching powers of Church and monarchy, and to cultivate identity with the communities of the Mediterranean world. This is no less than a cosmopolitan outlook, stained as it is with the concerns of empire. These cosmopolitan models of relating to the other are important because they stand out as exceptions from the provinciality thought to be the norm in this time and place. The fact that this model exists shows that it was an option; the fact that it was an option forces us to reevaluate our understanding of the limits of perception. Xenophobic views of the other may have been common, but they were also a choice. If we look at other works with both options in mind, we may see more of a dialogue between the two relational models, and we may see medieval minds that were open wider than we once thought.

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