

IMAGINING IBERIA in ENGLISH and CASTILIAN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

EMILY HOULIK-RITCHEY



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Emily Houlik-Ritchey

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For Andy, Henry, and Rose.

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Introduction

In Geoffrey Chaucer's retelling of the *Constance* romance tradition, *The Man of Law's Tale*, the narrator displays a pointed moment of geographic evasion. In all other versions of the story, Constance washes up on what is clearly the Iberian coast, but when the *Tale's* Custance comes to the same point in the story, the narrator claims ignorance: "under an hethen castel ate last, / Of which the name in my text noght I fynde, / Custance and eek hire child the see up caste" (Chaucer, 904–6: finally, under a heathen castle, the name of which I do not find in my text, the sea cast up Custance and also her child).¹ Custance's arrival in this unnamed place begins a short adventure of averted danger, which, at first glance, seems not to matter very much in the larger scope of Custance's journey, that takes her from Rome, to Syria, to England, to this unnamed land, and finally back to Rome. All other versions of the *Constance* romance use various multilingual toponyms for "Spain" to identify the setting of this brief adventure; their use of the toponym accompanies other details to imagine Iberia as a place rife with the potential for both danger and hospitality, faithfulness and betrayal.² Chaucer's explicit elision, in contrast, discourages a reader of his version of the *Constance* romance from focusing on Iberia. The locale recedes into misty abstraction as his protagonist silently skirts its extensive shoreline four times. What are the geopolitical stakes of Chaucer's lone refusal to name (and hence to imagine) Iberia concretely?

1. All quotations from Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* are taken from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor (Toronto: Broadview, 2012).

2. See my extended reading of the *Constance* romance cluster in chapter 3. The other versions of the Constance tale appear in Nicholas Trevet's Anglo-Norman *Les Chronicles*, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Robert Payn's *Livro do amante*, and Juan de Cuenca's *Confesión del amante*.

Reading Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* next to another version of the *Constance* story—one that elides a different toponym—sheds some comparative light on this question. Juan de Cuenca omits England from his Castilian version of the tale, presenting us with an intriguing and opposing symmetry: an English writer elides Iberia from the tale, while an Iberian writer elides England.³ Juan de Cuenca reimagines a concrete English kingdom as a fantastical place with only a nonsense name: “Morchonverlande,” a choice that undercuts the triumphant futures imagined for England in the other versions, where Constance marries an English king and their son becomes emperor of Rome. Comparing these disparate versions of the tale allows for more robust discussion about such imaginative geopolitical transformations.

Geopolitical and cultural multiplicities frequently lurk under what seem to be terminological unities in medieval romance. This insight holds particular implications for how Middle English and medieval Castilian literary texts imagine Iberia, but it also inflects the way these romances imagine other places. “Engelond” (*Man of Law's Tale*, 1130: England) occurs only once in Chaucer's version of the *Constance* narrative and emerges late in the tale, after Custance's son has been named Rome's imperial heir. Custance's adventure, which results in marriage and progeny with the king of Northumberland, sutures the cultural and political futures of Rome and England. In other words, as Chaucer shifts his terminology at the conclusion of the tale, Northumberland retroactively and metonymically comes to signify England entire. The teleological unity implied by this single and strategic use of “Engelond” downplays and perhaps conceals the diversity—of kingdoms, counties, and peoples—that Chaucer's early uses of the regional name invoke. This usage also embeds a progress narrative: the desire to pinpoint a fantastical origin for a politically unified Christian England.⁴ A residue

3. For simplicity's sake, in this opening example, I generalize this geopolity to England. Chaucer specifies that Custance marries into Northumberland's dynasty. Northumberland is a northeastern county of England established by the Normans in the twelfth century. Chaucer might also have had Northumbria in view—the seventh- through tenth-century kingdom that comprised a large region of what is now northern England and southeast Scotland. Chaucer expands and generalizes this regional nomenclature at the end of the *Man of Law's Tale*, asserting the geopolity at stake to be not just the northern county (or kingdom) of Northumberland/Northumbria, but rather England entire. For a more detailed discussion of these choices, see chapter 3.

4. Patricia Clare Ingham's work on medieval forms of nationalism are apropos here: “nations purchase their inclusivity by demanding that some regional and ethnic affections be lost to make way for centralization” (*Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001], 227–28). On the other hand,

of regional English identity lingers in Juan de Cuenca's strange rendering of this place as "Morchonverlande," a toponym that weirdly retains, transforms, and conceals the geopolitical diversity of Northumberland, even as it also eschews Chaucer's larger metonymic shift toward England.

England's own medieval geopolitical multiplicity, covered over by a patina of unity at the end of Chaucer's version, raises the complementary question: how might terminological choices for Iberia, such as Middle English "Spaigne" (Spain) and Castilian "España" (Spain), silently seem to privilege similar teleologies or conceal historical diversity and multiplicity across the *Constance* story cluster, and indeed, across medieval romance more broadly?⁵ The Middle English toponym "Spaigne" consolidates Iberia's individual kingdoms and peoples into a terminological shorthand that conceals their complex histories and their imbrication with other parts of the world—particularly northern Africa. As with the medieval multiplicities that we might or might not recall when we use terms like "England" or "Britain" to describe them, Iberia's complex networks, kingdoms, regions, and peoples, residing under toponyms like "Spaigne" or "España," might be only variably visible to us—or, if we are reading Chaucer's version, visible only in their erasure from the journey that cleaves Northumbrian England's future to Rome's. Across the texts in my archive, the romance imagination ambivalently embraces and elides Iberia's complexity (as well as that of other places), not only through the choice of toponyms, but also through character arcs. Analyzing and understanding this array of depictions, which expand from the panoramic level of geopolitics and down to the granular level of character and identity, constitute the central ambitions of *Imagining Iberia*.

We can see these priorities more clearly in light of comparison—and specifically, in light of neighborly comparison. My opening example attests

Jean Dangler reminds us that place names in the medieval period do not always designate centralizing agendas, nor necessarily refer to stable, consistent, or coherent geographic or political entities. See Dangler, *Edging toward Iberia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 28–33.

5. There is a similar dynamic here to the absent presence and present absences which Miriamne Ara Krummel tracks across *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England: Legally Absent, Virtually Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Her insight that "the crusading efforts, the medieval experience of 'violence and war' in the form of 'cultural genocide,' underwrote the myths of an English/Christian society that ascribed all difference—all things unwanted and impure—to those who would and could be erased, eliminated, expelled" (16) helps to unearth part of what is at stake in erasures of Muslim Iberia under Middle English terminologies like "Spayne" as the *Middle English Dictionary* describes them. For my discussion of these erasures in the *Dictionary*, see chapter 1.

to the core supposition driving this book: that comparative insights can profitably arise outside traditional lines of source study. Many scholars have compared Chaucer's version of the *Constance* narrative to that of John Gower (Chaucer's near contemporary, whose Middle English "Tale of Constance" appears as a part of the *Confessio Amantis*) and of Nicholas Trevet (who wrote the Anglo-Norman version upon which both Chaucer and Gower base theirs). These texts are, in fact, the two included in full in *Sources and Analogues of the "Canterbury Tales"* for Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*.⁶ By the same token, scholars have compared Gower's version to the later Iberian translations of it: Robert Payn's Portuguese *Livro do amante* and Juan de Cuenca's *Confisyón del amante*. A recent edition of Gower's *Confessio* brings these three texts together in that order.⁷ This traditional mode of comparing texts to their direct source tells us important things about influence and transmission across this story cluster.⁸ Multilingual volumes like these remind us that modern national language and literary traditions (which structure departments and influence disciplinary work) did not hold sway in medieval literary culture, and thus did not steer medieval influence and transmission. Medieval literature (romance in particular) nimbly crosses linguistic and geographic lines. Meanwhile, the inclusion of "Analogues" in the title *Sources and Analogues of the "Canterbury Tales"* reminds us that the medieval movement of stories is not limited to demonstrable indebtedness, such as close correspondences in language, narrative

6. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, eds., *Sources and Analogues of the "Canterbury Tales,"* 2 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002).

7. John Gower, *Confessio amantis: Literatura moral y materia amorosa en Inglaterra y la Península Ibérica (siglos XIV–XV)*, ed. Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, Manuela Faccon, and Elena Alvar. Colección Instituto Literatura y Traducción 18 (Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua, 2018).

8. Traditional comparative approaches pair textual archives by the logic of direct influence, with genealogy as its method and origins as its goal. Among studies of romance in particular, scholars have analyzed texts with and against their direct sources, sorting romance traditions by textual isotope, either to establish the genealogical relationship between a wide number of language versions (as Patricia E. Grieve has done in *Floire and Blancheflor* and *the European Romance* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]) or within a select range bounded by language, geography, or nation (as Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes have done for the insular British Carolingian tradition in *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature*, Bristol Studies in Medieval Cultures [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017]). Another example of the latter approach that siloes texts by nation and language, though it is not exclusively focused on the genre of romance, can be found in Matthew Bailey and Ryan D. Giles, eds., *Charlemagne and His Legend in Early Spanish Literature and Historiography* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016).

structure, or plot motif. The narrative affiliations signaled by analogues take the question of literary history into comparative avenues that exceed origin, transmission, and influence.

Sadly, given the way analogues signal important features of literary history, the preface to Correale and Hamel's second edition of *Sources and Analogues of the "Canterbury Tales"* specifies that the volume *reduces* the number of analogues from Bryan and Dempster's first edition, eliminating those works that "are too distant in time or place from Chaucer's work, or are lacking in word-for-word correspondences, or differ substantially in narrative structure."⁹ This more consolidated focus on sources privileges unidirectional relationships of direct influence, giving a rationale that tips the scales of literary history deeply in favor of transmission. Correale, for instance, lists and discusses several analogues to the *Man of Law's Tale* that the volume then does not include (and hence does not disseminate for ease of study). The two texts to which the volume grants access (Trevet's and Gower's) are included by measure of their usefulness to Chaucer's creative/compositional process, rather than on their own terms, or on equal rhetorical footing to Chaucer's work. Chaucer's oeuvre is the teleological and developmental destination of this work, and all comparison with the sources and analogues stand as points on a creative teleology that leads us firmly to the privileged site of Chaucer's literary achievements. This mode of comparison, though convenient and illuminating, writes literary history as the creative process of a single mind (or linear trajectory of minds), rather than, say, as an organic constellation of diverse writers and readers. Nor does this traditional mode of comparative study emphasize parallel or divergent developments in literature in the period, from which, regardless of whether they influenced Chaucer, *we* might yet learn as ongoing readers of medieval literature in its variety of guises.

Other modes of source study look the other way, in a telos grounded in genealogy, honing in on origin as the sacred site of literary genius. Recent work in Chaucer studies, often under the purview of *Global Chaucers*, constructs Chaucer as origin, rather than destination, tracing the many translations and adaptations of his oeuvre into the world's diverse languages, cultures, and regions. This is the rich new textual terrain that Candace Barrington and Jonathan Hsy invite us to explore through the *Global Chaucers* project and a special cluster of essays in "Chaucer's Global Campaigne," special issue, *Literature Compass*.¹⁰ Comparison thus frequently carries linear

9. Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:ix.

10. See, for instance, Candace Barrington and Jonathan Hsy, "Editor's Introduction:

(if not unidirectional) momentum, depending on one's motivation, usually in one of the two modes I outline above. Both of these moves (toward a literary site of creative destination or origin) have been and remain essential to the study of medieval literature. I am not suggesting that we give them up. But I would suggest that they have narrowed our vision of literary history, returning us through familiarity and ease of access to a specific set of relevant texts and rationales for comparison again and again. Literary history written this way constructs linear lines of direct transmission as a primary dimension of canon formation. *Imagining Iberia* attempts to unhook some of these standard and codified modes of comparison among medieval literary studies and show how productive it can be to think and compare differently.

For in contrast to these traditional modes of comparative study, there is value in juxtaposing disparate versions of a romance that are not related to each other in linear fashion. Doing so shows how these versions call each other's representational choices to an accounting that, while it has nothing to do with cultural or historical influence, nonetheless illuminates their representational priorities and those of the larger story cluster. Strategically shifting our interpretive approach away from influence and transmission and toward neighborly modes of comparison, even if provisionally, will reveal a different understanding of the medieval romance imagination. These new comparative insights will not supplant or eclipse our traditional perspectives on literary relations, but rather augment them. In this case, the new constellation of English and Iberian romances that this book assembles reveals the cultural stakes of geopolitical representation and the depiction of Christian/Muslim relations in the western Mediterranean. This book shifts our comparative angle of view to examine neighborly pairings of Middle English and medieval Iberian (Castilian and Portuguese) romances, elucidating the nuanced, ambivalent ways they imagine Iberia and its denizens.

Imagining Iberia in English and Castilian Medieval Romance conjoins an unconventional archive of English and Iberian romances to take up this central project. In so doing, the book argues that medieval romances conceive Iberia as a richly textured imaginative arena for exploring geopolitical, cultural, economic, and religious relations. Scrutinizing the shared narratives of the *Fierabras*, the *Floire and Blancheflor*, and the *Constance* romance traditions, I track how medieval romances center (and sometimes strategically elide) Iberia as a crucial place of Muslim power, Christian ambition,

Chaucer's Global Orbits and Global Communities," in "Chaucer's Global Campaigne," special issue, *Literature Compass* 15 (2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12457>

and relational networks within the larger Mediterranean. Even in the midst of conversion and conquest plots that would seek to marginalize or elide Muslim-ruled Iberia (al-Andalus) in favor of consolidating fantasies of a coherent Latin Christian Europe, the romances I study across this book reveal an Iberia consistently imagined in ways that deterritorialize such fantasies of European Christendom and (surprisingly) foreground modes of relationality other than religious difference. Whether, then, the romances I study throughout this book center or marginalize Iberia, conquer or ignore it, seek its religious conversion or its economic partnership, Iberia's imagined role within literary narrative reveals—sometimes inadvertently and ironically—the value of connection in a dynamic world. All told, these Middle English and Castilian romances imagine Iberia in ways that draw out the profound cultural affinities, diverse allegiances, and pragmatic modes of interaction among the people who live, travel, and trade there.

As this overview of the book's arc illustrates, romance narratives often imagine Iberia as a realm in flux, moving from Muslim rule to Christian rule, though this trajectory is not ubiquitous in my archive. Despite the religious and nationalizing agendas fueling this narrative arc, representations of Iberia often trouble or suspend these implied teleologies and instead constitute a venue for the romance imagination to engage shared cultures and modes of interaction that link Christians and Muslims (even in the midst of religious conflict, territorial conquest, or conversion plots). The texts that I examine across this book make disparate choices in this regard. They variously foreground or background conversion plots at the character level as well as at the level of Iberia entire, and, albeit more rarely, eschew conversion and conquest altogether. Rather than merely a site for fantasies of exotic alterity, then, Iberia represents a complex and hybrid locus in the English and Castilian romance imagination that has not, to date, been noticed or studied in the depth that it deserves.¹¹ As Yuen-Gen Liang, Abigail Krasner Balbale,

11. Dorothee Metlitzki gives some attention to the genre of romance and texts set in Iberia, but does not argue for the complexity and nuance of Iberia's representation in *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). The edited collection, María Bullón-Fernández, ed., *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th–15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Exchanges* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), while a brilliant selection of work on Anglo-Iberian exchanges, is not a sustained inquiry into the representation of Iberia specifically in romance. Sylvia Federico focuses on Chaucer's relation to Iberia, but does not attend specifically to the genre of romance in "Chaucer and the Matter of Spain," *Chaucer Review* 45, no. 3 (2011): 299–320, <https://doi.org/10.5325/chaucerrev.45.3.0299>; the same could be said of my article: Emily Houlik-Ritchey, "Reading the Neighbor in Geoffrey Chaucer and Pero López de Ayala," *Exemplaria* 28, no. 2 (2016):

Andrew Devereux, and Camilo Gómez-Rivas remind us, contact zones such as Iberia lead “to cultures defined by bricolage and adaptation to complex and multivalent identities among the people who traversed them.”¹² I extend these insights, which arise principally in Iberian studies, also to Middle English literary production, to showcase the ways literature arising from and about Iberia in both the Castilian and Middle English romance traditions reveals the influence of its multicultural medieval context.

Trajectories in Romance Scholarship

Long dismissed as lurid and derivative, medieval popular romance (particularly those texts that deal with religious difference) continues to be widely misunderstood as a genre that trades primarily in ethnoreligious stereotypes and the eternal and aggressive opposition of Christianity and Islam. Scholars have critiqued dismissals of the genre as “lowbrow fare” for popular audiences, reductively assumed to be “naïve or unwary, passive consumers” of cultural fantasy.¹³ This disparagement of romance has been repeatedly countered over the years, but it remains surprisingly tenacious. In an analogous move, many scholars have read medieval literature (including, but not limited to romance) through a religiogeographic paradigm that posits a divided world of “Muslim East” and “Christian West.”¹⁴ Both historians and liter-

118–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2016.1151202>. Carol Heffernan, who does focus on romance, does not discriminate Iberia’s particular significance to the genre from the representation of the “Orient” generally, in *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2003); Suzanne Conklin Akbari makes the same move, analyzing the representation of Muslims in texts set in Iberia to showcase the Orientalism-inflected stereotypes she investigates throughout *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

12. Yuen-Gen Liang, Abigail Krasner Balbale, Andrew Devereux, and Camilo Gómez-Rivas, “Unity and Disunity across the Strait of Gibraltar,” *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 1–40, 23, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700674-12342123>

13. Patricia Clare Ingham, “Discipline and Romance,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 278. See also Nicola McDonald, “A Polemical Introduction” to *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 1–21; and Katherine C. Little and Nicola McDonald, eds., *Thinking Medieval Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Analogous critical dismissals of the pleasures and popularity of the genre have arisen among Iberomedievalists and early modernists; see Simone Pinet, “Chivalric Romance,” in Garrido Ardila, *A History of the Spanish Novel*, 79–95.

14. Scholars often complicate or nuance this paradigm even as they use it, and to that extent it has been useful to many illuminating readings of romance. See Akbari, *Idols in the*

any scholars have critiqued this religiogeographic divide as inaccurate to the lived experience of medieval Iberia (and the larger Mediterranean of which Iberia is part), and exposed its limit as a mechanism for understanding the region's literature.¹⁵ Julian Weiss has specifically criticized the way such categories have led to the conflation of Iberian Muslims with Muslims in the East, especially by scholars who do not themselves work on Iberian texts: "la España musulmana suele pasar desapercibida a los que estudian la épica francesa, porque la crítica asimilar el moro «español» a la figura reificada del moro oriental, sin prestar suficiente atención a las implicaciones ideológicas e históricas de su condición hispana" (Muslim Spain tends to pass unnoticed by those who study French epic, because criticism tends to associate the *Spanish* Muslim with the reified figure of the oriental/eastern Muslim, without paying sufficient attention to the ideological and historical implications of its Spanish condition).¹⁶ As Weiss reminds us, Iberia's context gives rise

East; Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, Anna Czarowus, *Fantasies of the Other's Body in Middle English Oriental Romance* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013); and the essays collected in Kathryn L. Lynch, ed., *Chaucer's Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Many of the essays in Lynch's collection are reprintings of seminal articles taking postcolonial approaches to the work of Chaucer.

15. Karla Mallette ironically observes that such bifurcated categories showcase "a notorious lack of geographic precision," but they nonetheless generate wide imaginative currency. Karla Mallette, "Boustrophedon: Towards a Literary Theory of the Mediterranean," in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 254. See also Patricia Clare Ingham, "Contrapuntal Histories," in Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*, 47–70.

16. Julian Weiss, "El Postcolonialismo medieval," in Fernández Rodríguez and Fernández Ferreiro, *Literatura medieval y renacentista en España*, 193. Translation is my own. Literary scholars sometimes conflate Iberian Muslims with Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean and Iberian scenes of religious conflict with crusading impulses regarding the Holy Land. See Robert Allen Rouse, "Crusaders," in Cartlidge, *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, 173–83; Lee Manion, "The Loss of the Holy Land and *Sir Isumbras*: Literary Contributions to Fourteenth-Century Crusade Discourse," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 65–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713409990960>; Barbara Stevenson, "Middle English Ferumbras Romances and the Reign of Richard II," *Studies in Philology* 113, no. 1 (2016), 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sip.2016.0005>; Rosalind Field, "Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations of *de romanz*," in Ashe, Djordjević, and Weiss, *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, 73–89; Ana Grinberg, "Aigues-Mortes and Holy War in the *Historia del emperador Carlo Magno*," *Medieval Perspectives* 33 (2018): 49–58; David A. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction and the Mediterranean World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); and Jace Stuckey, "Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne's Legendary Expedition to Spain," in Gabriele and Stuckey, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, 137–52. Of these, Stuckey's essay is particularly impressive, and remains the best work I have seen in this vein to date.

to a unique (literary) history, one that benefits from critical approaches that carefully attend to hybridity and complexity.¹⁷ Similar calls have been issued for the sometimes surprising complexities of Middle English literature, and the best of such work likewise exposes the ways that texts trouble, disrupt, or complicate representation.¹⁸ A comparative methodology that reads these bodies of literature and scholarship in concert is well-placed to critique these enduring fantasies about genre.

Thus, while acknowledging and attending to discourses of violence and the cultural fantasies they might serve in the romances that I analyze throughout *Imagining Iberia*, I ultimately challenge the view that this genre and this subject matter are inevitably structured according to parameters of conflict and religious opposition. Yet nor do these romances promote the opposite: a simple *convivencia* (living together) of religious tolerance and multiculturalism. Both accounts have been overemphasized at times.¹⁹ This debate pertains to studies of the Mediterranean more broadly, where conceptual rubrics that emphasize either aggressive religious oppositions (the “clash of civilizations” model)²⁰ or simple harmonious multiculturalism (the

17. See also Nadia R. Altschul, “The Future of Postcolonial Approaches to Medieval Iberian Studies,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 5–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17546550802700244>; and Altschul, “Postcolonialism and the Study of the Middle Ages,” *History Compass* 6, no. 2 (2008): 588–606, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00510.x>

18. Postcolonial approaches to medieval literature have powerfully attended to premodern manifestations of alterity and difference, dynamics of conquest and settlement, and modes of ambivalence and resistance. See the overviews of this vast body of work given by Shirin A. Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*; Altschul, “The Future of Postcolonial Approaches”; and Weiss, “El Postcolonialismo medieval,” in Fernández Rodríguez and Fernández Ferreiro, *Literatura medieval y renacentista en España*.

19. For instance, Liang et al. observe that “scholars’ portrayal of the past has oscillated between two extremes: Spain as a unique setting where diverse religious and ethnic communities coexisted and frequently cooperated, and Spain as the locus of conflict among competing faiths” (“Unity and Disunity,” 15). And David Coleman explains that “both of [these] notions of Mediterranean history . . . have at times been simultaneously accurate—connectivity and continuity in the midst of endemic conflict.” David Coleman, “Of Corsairs, Converts and Renegades: Forms and Functions of Coastal Raiding on Both Sides of the Far Western Mediterranean, 1490–1540,” *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 167–92, 192, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700674-12342128>

20. See, for example, Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

convivencia model)²¹ fall far short of the picture that has emerged through the scholarship of historians, art historians, and, increasingly, literary historians.²² Taking inspiration from all this work, I show how both Middle English and Castilian romances imaginatively emphasize the diversity and complexity of interactions.²³

Iberia lies in the far western Mediterranean, and when we attend carefully to romances set in Iberia—even those composed in Middle English—we find that they frequently focus on Iberia's link to the North African Maghreb. Liang et al. observe that dominant trends in historiography (to which I would add, literary historiography) have “obscured the level of unity and interconnectivity between Iberian and North African societies by positing an essential difference” centered on “the Strait of Gibraltar as a chasm forming a natural barrier between two fundamentally different worlds, a divide of greater symbolic significance than the English Channel.”²⁴ Yet myriad features of the region, from shared cultures to linked economies, connect Iberia to the Maghreb. In the Iberian and Middle English medieval romance imagination, in fact, Iberia is seldom depicted as isolated or insular. Suzanne

21. Américo Castro originated such arguments in favor of an Iberian culture of tolerance in *España en su historia: Cristianos, moros y judíos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1948). See also María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002).

22. For an overview of critiques of the “clash of civilizations” model, see John Tolan, “Forging New Paradigms: Towards a History of Islamo-Christian Civilization,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 62–70; and Mallette, “Boustrophedon,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 254–66. For recent evaluations and critiques of *convivencia*, as well as alternative perspectives, see Simon Gaunt, *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 8–12; Maya Soifer, “Beyond *Convivencia*: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain,” *JMIS* 1 (2009): 19–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17546550802700335>; Brian A. Catlos, “Contexto y conveniencia en la corona de Aragón: Propuesta de un modelo de interacción entre grupos etno-religiosos minoritarios y mayoritarios,” *Revista d'Història Medieval* 12 (2001–2): 259–68; and Connie L. Scarborough, ed., *Revisiting Convivencia in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2014).

23. “This is not to idealize,” Heather Blurton insists, for Mediterranean Studies approaches recognize the violence that appends relational dynamics as well as the cooperation: “It explores maritime cultures of war, to be sure, but also of trade and exchange . . . [where] the commodities traded could just as easily be slaves as silk”; it reads “the interconfessional violence of the crusade” as well as “the intraconfessional violence of the pirate.” Heather Blurton, “‘Jeo ai esté a Nubie’: *Boeve de Haumtone* in the Medieval Mediterranean,” *Neophilologus* 103 (2019): 465–77, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11061-019-09608-7>

24. Liang et al., “Unity and Disunity,” 17, 18.

Conklin Akbari describes Iberia as “a Mediterranean in microcosm”—its cultural and literary contexts “unimaginable without the broader backdrop of Mediterranean history.”²⁵ This view of Iberia as deeply embedded in systems of trade and cultural affiliations that transcend its purely geographic boundaries permeates not only Iberian literary production, but also (and perhaps surprisingly) Middle English literary production.

Romance traditions such as *Fierabras*, *Floire and Blanchefor*, and *Constance* affirm this vision of Iberia as a hybrid locus even in the midst of narrative arcs that may seek to diminish or sever those connections. Reading these romances comparatively across their Middle English and Castilian adaptations—two literary and language traditions that have seldom been read together—this book responds to recent calls by scholars of romance for more work attuned to the genre’s intense “international” appeal in the medieval world. Medieval romance, after all, is a diverse and vibrant genre that traverses languages, cultures, kingdoms, and geographic regions with dexterity and ingenuity and, in so doing, gives the lie to the modern logic of scholarly disciplines that has shaped traditional academic fields.²⁶ Patricia Clare Ingham, noting how international a genre romance really is, argues that “a strong assessment of medieval romance requires that we move beyond the limitations imposed by the particular disciplinary locations (in departments of national languages and literatures) or the publishing markets linked to some university curricula.”²⁷ The genre is “best considered alongside its textual siblings and neighbors,” or, put another way, in terms of what Simon Gaunt has called its “international currency.”²⁸ In a similar vein, Katherine

25. Akbari, introduction to Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 3–22, 10. Michelle M. Hamilton and Núria Silleras-Fernández echo this position, arguing that medieval Iberia includes “cultural entities that were manifest on a regional scale, and that transcend the geographic and national boundaries normally thought to contain them.” Michelle M. Hamilton and Núria Silleras-Fernández, “Iberia and the Mediterranean: An Introduction,” in Hamilton and Silleras-Fernández, *In and of the Mediterranean*, xii. See also Dangler, *Edging toward Iberia*.

26. Romance’s mobility among versions, languages, and cultures in the Middle Ages exhibits qualities of transmission and circulation that scholars have associated with the Mediterranean. See Sharon Kinoshita, “Negotiating the Corrupting Sea,” in Catlos and Kinoshita, *Can We Talk Mediterranean?*, 43.

27. Ingham, “Discipline and Romance,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 277.

28. Ingham, “Discipline and Romance,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 277; Simon Gaunt, “Linguistic Difference, the Philology of Romance, and the Romance of Philology,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 58. Simon Gaunt critiques the ways that “romance has traditionally been used by literary historians—whether consciously or

C. Little and Nicola McDonald, the editors of *Thinking Medieval Romance*, imagine how “future conversations about romance thinking might push at the boundaries of culture and nation.”²⁹ Romance is therefore an ideal genre to study through an innovative comparative lens.

This shift toward a robust consideration of romance’s internationalism derives from scholars’ assessment of institutional and disciplinary pressures and privileges: “Middle English specialists and students, located as so many of us are in nationally based English departments, may have read plenty of French sources and analogues, but what of German, Spanish, Persian, or Arabic texts? And how might we facilitate the scholarly and institutional work of our colleagues located in these departments?”³⁰ One answer to this dilemma might lie in Karla Mallette’s suggestion that scholars cultivate a robust and “quasi-medieval” plurilingualism that would prioritize linguistic breadth in place of depth, encouraging “adequate knowledge of lingua franca/vernacular constellations of languages” over deep fluency in only one or two.³¹ Such plurilingualism would facilitate increased comparative work that focuses on new areas, languages, and kinds of textual relationships, such as those I undertake here in *Imagining Iberia*.³² We can also pursue texts outside of those that traditional source study has made most readily available to

unconsciously—to demonstrate the centrality and primacy of French literature and culture to European vernacular literary culture more generally,” which has “led to the occlusion of a lot of evidence—and a good few texts—that might encourage us to tell the story differently” (“Linguistic Difference,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 43).

29. Little and McDonald, introduction to *Thinking Medieval Romance*, 7.

30. Ingham, “Discipline and Romance,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 279–80. Among Iberomedievalists a similar point has been made by Dangler: “few of us become proficient in all the languages of non-modern Iberia, including Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and the romance languages, nor would any scholar have sufficient time and knowledge to conduct research about all of the Iberian manuscript communities in such a vast space and time” (*Edging Toward Iberia*, 28). The push for students to make better time to degree in many Humanities graduate programs across the US often translates into less time and support for the study of languages; such policies particularly affect medievalists whose ambition is to do comparative work. This offers one more reason (if we needed one) to resist the institutional streamlining of Humanities graduate programs and to heavily advocate for, promote, and support the study of languages at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

31. Mallette, “Boustrophedon,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 264, 264–65.

32. Another answer would be to forge collaborative relationships across disciplines and languages with our colleagues, either through organizations such as the Mediterranean Seminar, the establishment of new journals, book series, or conferences, or at the local level of our home institutions.

us. Several recent editions aim to make such work easier.³³ This book's ambition is to open up further cross-disciplinary conversations on romance in order to advance emergent dialogues across literary traditions and languages.

Not only are scholars of romance expanding their scope of (inter)textual inquiry, but also, Medieval Studies at large has recognized the need for newly invigorated comparative work across its diverse and expanding archives. Giving explicit attention to method, these calls have propounded a variety of comparative strategies as alternatives to traditional source studies of literature. New comparative methodologies have been proposed under the purview of regionally focused and historicized approaches (such as Mediterranean Studies advocated by Sharon Kinoshita and others), philological reconfigurations (such as those proposed by Michelle Warren or Karla Mallette), and various suggestions clustered around the emergent concept of the Global Middle Ages (as articulated by such scholars as Geraldine Heng, Akbari, Lynn Ramey, Sahar Amer, and Barrington and Hsy).³⁴ In short, the

33. For instance, within Mediterranean Studies, we find a new textbook and reader: Thomas E. Burman, Brian A. Catlos, and Mark D. Meyerson, *The Sea in the Middle: The Mediterranean World, 650–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022); and Thomas E. Burman, Brian A. Catlos, and Mark D. Meyerson, eds., *Texts from the Middle: Documents from the Mediterranean World, 650–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022). See also Olivia Remie Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

34. The following constitutes only a partial bibliography of this interesting and important work: Michelle R. Warren, "‘The Last Syllable of Modernity’: Chaucer in the Caribbean," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 6 (2015): 79–93, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pmed.2015.4>; Michelle R. Warren, "How the Indian Ocean Made Medieval France," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 46, no. 3 (2009): 249–65, <https://doi.org/10.3828/AJFS.46.3.249>; Geraldine Heng and Lynn Ramey, "Early Globalities, Global Literatures: Introducing a Special Issue on the Global Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 11, no. 7 (2014): 389–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12156>; Geraldine Heng, "Early Globalities, and Its Questions, Objectives, and Methods: An Inquiry into the State of Theory and Critique," *Exemplaria* 26, nos. 2–3 (2014): 234–53, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1041257314Z.000000000052>; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "Modeling Medieval World Literature," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 1 (2017): 2–17; Karla Mallette, "Beyond Mimesis: Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Medieval Mediterranean," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 583–91, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2009.124.2.583>; Mallette, "Boustrophedon," in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*; Sharon Kinoshita, "Medieval Mediterranean Literature," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 600–608, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2009.124.2.600>; Sharon Kinoshita, "Worlding Medieval French," in McDonald and Suleiman, *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History*, 3–20; Kinoshita, "Negotiating the Corrupting Sea," in Catlos and Kinoshita, *Can We Talk Mediterranean?*; Altschul, "The Future of Postcolonial Approaches"; Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013); Gaunt,

comparative task before literary scholars at present seems to be to strategically and experimentally relinquish our traditional view of literary history, if only provisionally, suspending its lines of transmission and influence to look across traditions, languages, and cultures that we have not typically studied together. By disrupting insulated disciplinary and national perspectives that have long shaped and dominated our view of literary histories, this move clears conceptual room for new configurations and constellations of literary relations to emerge.

Iberian literature constitutes an exciting archive to pull into comparison with Middle English romance at precisely this moment, when Medieval Studies is seeking to expand its focus beyond traditional disciplinary, national, and linguistic divides.³⁵ Despite this rich literary terrain, Iberian literature has long been marginalized within Anglophone medieval literary studies, though Iberian versions of the most popular European romance traditions have long been known to exist.³⁶ Over thirty years ago, María Rosa

"Linguistic Difference," in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*; Christine Chism, "Arabic in the Medieval World," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 624–31, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2009.124.2.624>; and Christine Chism, "The Medieval Mediterranean," in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 254–65; Erin Sweany, "Unsettling Comparisons: Ethical Considerations of Comparative Approaches to the Old English Medical Corpus," *English Language Notes* 58, no. 2 (2020): 83–100; Barrington and Hsy, "Chaucer's Global Orbits," in "Chaucer's Global Campaigne," special issue, *Literature Compass* 15 (2018); Sahar Amer, Hélène Sirantoine, and Esther S. Klein, "Translating Medieval Cultures Across Time and Place: A Global Perspective," *Parergon* 35, no. 2 (2018): 1–5; Sahar Amer, "Reading Medieval French Literature from a Global Perspective," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 367–74.

35. Altschul, "The Future of Postcolonial Approaches." For a history of this conservative and nationalistic scholarship and its ongoing resonance within contemporary Spanish politics, see Alejandro García-Sanjuán, "Rejecting al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 127–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2016.1268263>; and María Rosa Menocal, "Why Iberia?," *Diacritics* 36, nos. 3–4 (2006): 7–11, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.0.0011>. For a more optimistic view of the state of the field, see S. J. Pearce, "The Problem of Terminology in Medieval Iberian Studies," *MLN* 134, no. 2 (2019): 461–72, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2019.0027>; Hamilton and Silleras-Fernández give an extremely useful overview of the amount of scholarship that has been done on the Arabic and Hebrew cultural production of al-Andalus in "Iberia and the Mediterranean," in their edited volume *In and of the Mediterranean*.

36. On romance as an understudied genre within Iberian studies itself, see A. D. Deyerdmond's still classic essay, "The Lost Genre of Medieval Spanish Literature," *Hispanic Review* 43, no. 3 (1975): 231–59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/472251>. More recently, Barbara F. Weissberger has insightfully recounted much of the same literary history Deyerdmond traces (including the place of his study within it) but with particular attention to the gendering of these

Menocal offered a seminal critique of the persistent neglect of the literatures of medieval Iberia and the scholarship written about them by “mainstream” Medieval Studies. Her groundbreaking study, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, not only surveyed this persistent neglect of the field but also demonstrated the value of giving it a more privileged place in the conversation, arguing that Iberian medieval literatures, in fact, played a formative role in the development of what were then seen as more “canonical” medieval literary fields and scholarly discourses.³⁷ Though the dominance of English and French literatures within Medieval Studies’ larger critical conversations remains an active subject of Iberomedievalist critique,³⁸ the field at large is now more aware of these tendencies and interested in redressing them.³⁹ The attention *Imagining Iberia* gives to the genre of romance par-

discourses. See Weissberger, “The Gendered Taxonomy of Spanish Romance,” *La corónica* 29, no. 1 (2000): 205–29, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cor.2000.0014>. Though more work has been done on the genre in the intervening years, the obstacles that both Weissberger and Deyerdmond track continue to exert pressure.

37. María Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

38. Altschul notes that “both the medieval period and the Spanish and Portuguese empires occupied disciplinary fringes in a field dominated by English studies” (“The Future of Postcolonial Approaches,” 11). Simone Pinet critiques not only the neglect of Iberia in a classic study of the figure of the wild man in the Middle Ages, but also the offhand dismissal of any “native” Iberian intentionality or design in scholarly readings of the depiction of a wild man in the painted ceilings of the Alhambra. Simone Pinet, “Walk on the Wild Side,” *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008): 372–74, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006708X366308>. In a review article, S. J. Pearce draws attention to bibliographic lacunae that “bear[] out the common complaint of our Spanish colleagues that Anglophone scholars do not adequately cite their work” (“The Problem of Terminology,” 465n1). This neglect of Iberia and Iberian scholarship occurs also in theoretical discourses. Julian Weiss, for instance, critiques the detrimental ramifications of the absence of any consideration of Spain in Edward Said’s “análisis de la construcción ideológica del binario Oriente/Occidente” (Weiss, “El Postcolonialismo medieval,” in Fernández Rodríguez and Fernández Ferreiro, *Literatura medieval y renacentista en España*, 178; analysis of the ideological construction of the Orient/Occident binary). Translation is my own. See also Nabil I. Matar for an overview of critiques of Said among Arab critics: “The Question of Occidentalism,” in Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*, 153–70.

39. Consider, for instance, Jerold C. Frakes, ed., *Contextualizing the Muslim Other in Medieval Christian Discourse* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Not a study of romance as a genre, but rather a thematic assessment of the representation of Muslims in Christian-authored texts of medieval Europe, this volume nevertheless addresses the same problem of medieval literature’s neglected international qualities. Frakes has gone out of his way to include essays on German, Spanish, Welsh, Irish, Armenian, and Serbo-Croatian texts and traditions. In his foreword to the volume, he writes, “There is obviously no pretense of providing comprehensive ‘coverage’ . . . but rather simply an attempt to indicate the range of

ticipates in this work and contributes to Iberomedievalists' ongoing efforts to redress the genre's long critical neglect within Iberian Medieval Studies.⁴⁰

Formulations of Comparative Literature

Like Medieval Studies, the discipline of Comparative Literature has been compelled to develop and debate new modes of comparative work in recent years.⁴¹ As comparative practice has become “an ever-expanding necessity in

neighboring fields of inquiry—neither all that distant nor without relevance for work in the conventionally core subfields of medieval studies” (foreword to Frakes, *Contextualizing the Muslim Other*, xiv).

40. See Deyermund, “The Lost Genre”; Pinet, “Chivalric Romance,” in Garrido Ardila, *A History of the Spanish Novel*; and Weissberger, “Gendered Taxonomy.” Deyermund attributes critical neglect of the genre of romance among Hispanomedievalists, in part, to the curious circumstance that Spanish lacks a clear term for it. “Romance” in Spanish, orthographically identical to the English word though pronounced differently, refers to the medieval ballad tradition. I am aware that there could be argument about whether the Castilian texts I include here are in fact part of the genre of medieval romance. My own position on where the boundaries of the genre fall is much akin to one articulated by Weissberger, which she, in turn, draws from Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee: that “romance has no meaningful existence as a static category, and must instead be conceived of as a dynamic, transformative process” that embraces “generic instability and hybridization” (Weissberger, “Gendered Taxonomy,” 222). It is in the spirit of this conception of romance's generic flexibility and capaciousness that I refer to the Iberian texts I analyze as romances. However, I acknowledge that a more appropriate description might be to say that they are “romance-inflected texts”—that is, (1) they are preoccupied with typical concerns of romance, such as chivalry, adventure, love, and violence among the cultural elite; and (2) they share plotlines with texts from other language traditions that are considered romances. I will continue to refer to these texts as “romances,” both for ease of discussion and to signal my own conviction that the Castilian texts I study can be so designated.

41. The literature on comparative literature and its associated fields (area studies, translation studies, anthropology, etc.) is vast. Therefore, in what follows I offer targeted references to the work that has most informed my own thinking and methodology on comparison and provide strategic overviews as well as starting places for readers who wish to pursue other arenas of the discipline. For illuminating histories of the discipline and its debates, I have relied predominantly on Natalie Mela's chapter “Grounds for Comparison,” in her book *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1–43; Ursula K. Heise et al., eds., *Futures of Comparative Literature: ACLA State of the Discipline Report* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Rey Chow, “The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective” *ELH* 71, no. 2 (2004): 289–311, <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2004.0022>; David Damrosch, *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); David

many fields, including literary studies,”⁴² it becomes ever more important for scholars to attune their insights to “the risks and pleasures, the dangers and necessities, the methodologies, complexities, and pitfalls of comparative thinking.”⁴³ Across the past fifteen to twenty years, comparative literary studies has engaged in precisely this analytical self-reflection about the scope and methodology of its discipline, resulting in the “lively spectrum of possibilities that comparative literature encompasses today”—that is, a “diverse constellation of theoretical and analytical approaches to questions of language, literatures, and media.”⁴⁴ Trenchant critiques of the Eurocentrism, racism, and colonialist projects underpinning the field in its historical dimensions have spurred comparatists to embrace a global and postcolonial perspective,⁴⁵ reenergizing theorization and debate around such topics as world literature and translation studies.⁴⁶ At the same time, comparatists have devised innovative methodologies for their work, seeking ethical ways to negotiate the epistemology and politics of comparison.⁴⁷

Damrosch, “Rebirth of a Discipline: The Global Origins of Comparative Studies,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 3, nos. 1–2 (2006): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2006.3.1-2.99>

42. Susan Stanford Friedman, “Why Not Compare?,” *PMLA* 126, no. 3 (2011): 753, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.3.753>. On the one hand, comparison today seems rather ubiquitous: many practitioners in many fields now regularly engage in comparative and interdisciplinary work—my own project on English and Castilian medieval romance is one example of the proliferation of comparative practice beyond the discipline of comparative literature. For reflections on how comparison is now widespread among scholars rather than exclusive to comparative literature programs and departments, see Jonathan D. Culler, “Whither Comparative Literature?,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 3, nos. 1–2 (2006): 85–97, <https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2006.3.1-2.85>; and Melas, *All the Difference in the World*, 33–35.

43. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, eds., introduction to *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 1–12, 2.

44. Ursula K. Heise, “Introduction: Comparative Literature and the New Humanities,” in Heise et al., *Futures of Comparative Literature*, 2.

45. For an overview of the way comparison “develops within a history of hierarchical relations,” see Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, “Introduction,” in “Comparison,” ed. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, special issue, *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): v–ix, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0099>. For two different arguments that, given this history, comparatist work is most productively pursued these days via postcolonialist attention to power dynamics, ambivalence, and hybridity, see Melas, *All the Difference in the World*, 1–43; and Chow, “The Old/New Question of Comparison.”

46. A discussion of these arenas of comparatist work lies beyond the scope of this project. For entry into the debates on world literature, see David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); on translation studies, see Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

47. The work of these expansive ambitions is ongoing. On the shift from Eurocentric

As the above summary makes clear, a joint ethical and political impetus drives these reconsiderations of comparative literature's practice and methodology.⁴⁸ My "neighboring" comparative approach addresses the problems of comparison as charted by these scholars, and is thus part of this larger methodological turn in the field of comparative literature.⁴⁹ The challenge

to more global visions of comparative literature, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes, "We have not moved too far from the regionalist impulse of the initial vision of European Comparative Literature. We have simply announced a worldly future. It is our hope that, in this process, the performativity of comparativism will face the task of undoing historical injustice" Spivak, "Rethinking Comparativism," *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 609–26, 613, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0095>. For an overview of the field's "sustained reflection on the vicissitudes and complexities of comparison" as a creative and critical mode of human understanding, cognition, and knowledge-creation, see Felski and Friedman, introduction to *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 11.

48. In its traditional mode, comparison was temporal and teleological in its methodological grounding. That is, comparative method and rationale were based on shared assumptions by its practitioners about the development of literature. Comparatists studied sources, influence, and transmission, as well as literature's "universal" development across time, space, and culture, centering European literature and its dominant languages as their standard of measure. As Natalie Melas explains, "the evolutionary scale allowed . . . comparison to discriminate; it welcomed all the difference in the world, so long as all those differences could occupy fixed places on a hierarchical scale" (Melas, *All the Difference in the World*, 29). In contrast, comparatists today work under "the horizon of a differently shared past" and "cannot afford to believe in the reality of a legitimate value system that makes the comparison possible." R. Radhakrishnan, *Theory in an Uneven World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 78. As Melas reflects, "the grounds of comparison today, thus, are in a first moment, literally *ground*—that is, in a rather bewildering way, potentially the entire globe itself" (*All the Difference in the World*, 29). In a similar vein, Friedman notes that "the intensification of globalization has encouraged comparative analysis of literature and culture on a transnational, indeed planetary, scale" ("Why Not Compare?," 753); Jonathan Culler reflects that comparative literature is now "a discipline of such overwhelming scope that it no longer sounds like an academic field at all: the study of discourses and cultural productions of all sorts throughout the entire world" (Culler, "Whither Comparative Literature?," 87); and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wryly observes that "it is absurd to expect a humanities discipline to bring about" the kinds of progressive changes that have motivated the discipline's global expansion ("Rethinking Comparativism," 610). This state of affairs induces a "perplexing problem of method" (Melas, *All the Difference in the World*, 30). See also Haun Saussy, "Comparative Literature?," *PMLA* 118, no. 2 (2003): 336–41, <https://doi.org/10.1632/003081203X67730>; and R. Radhakrishnan, "Why Compare?," *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 453–71, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0100>

49. Methodologically, my project might be read as analogous in some ways to Erich Auerbach's project in *Mimesis*, bringing together nominally unrelated texts and inviting them to speak to one another. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Culler muses on Auerbach's methodology, pinpointing Auerbach's conception of the *Ansatzpunkt*: "a specific

of methodology arises because comparison tends to induce judgment that values one side of any comparison over the other.⁵⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes the problem that “comparison assumes a level playing field and the field is never level, if only in terms of the interest implicit in the perspective.”⁵¹ Radhakrishnan echoes this stance on comparative knowledge production: “the epistemology of comparison is willed into existence by a certain will to power/knowledge. Such a will is never innocent of history and its burden.”⁵² Hence, he argues, “comparisons are never neutral: they

point of departure, conceived not as an external position of mastery but as a ‘handle’ or partial vantage point that enables the critic to bring together a variety of cultural objects” (“Whither Comparative Literature?,” 93). Culler reflects that, inspired by Auerbach’s approach, “one could imagine basing cross-cultural comparison on linking principles whose very arbitrariness or contingency will prevent them from giving rise to a standard or ideal type” (“Whither Comparative Literature?,” 93). Despite the promise that might be found in this approach, Auerbach’s project displays similar problems to much foundational comparative work of the twentieth century. In *Crafting Jewishness*, for instance, Krummel asks, “Does believing that the Jew figured only typologically, as Erich Auerbach so famously insists in *Mimesis*, underwrite the script of an entirely and always only Christian Europe?” (*Crafting Jewishness*, 8). On its own, Auerbach’s does not amount to a compelling methodology in view of current critiques, which is why I turn instead to Kenneth Reinhard’s theory of neighborly methodology.

50. For instance, see Radhakrishnan, “Why Compare?”; Friedman, “Why Not Compare?”; and Bruce Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges: Explorations in, on, and with Comparison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). As Friedman explains, comparison “runs the risk of ethnocentrism, the presumption of one culture’s frame of reference as universal and known, the other’s as different, unknown, and thus inferior. . . . In a world structured in dominance, why should one thing exist to explain another instead of being seen as a thing in itself?” (“Why Not Compare?,” 754).

51. Spivak, “Rethinking Comparativism,” 609.

52. Radhakrishnan, “Why Compare?,” 454. Radhakrishnan emphasizes the conceptual difficulty facing comparatists when they embark on their work: “Am I capable of the hermeneutic task of thinking through and beyond the circularity of my own frame of reference?,” “Is it possible to start provisionally from one’s given position and yet not consecrate that position as a center?” (Radhakrishnan, “Why Compare?,” 461, 463). Though these are important questions, it is not inevitably unethical to build comparative knowledge under the circumstances and difficulties he describes. In fact, a clear and explicit recognition of the historical burden attending efforts of knowledge production informs and drives much of the recent anti-racist comparative work by medievalists. This kind of deliberate, self-reflexive work corresponds precisely to the demand that anti-racist and inclusive praxis makes upon us, whether we are teaching or researching. One hopes, certainly, that we are up to the challenge. I limit my citations of scholarship on medieval race-making to a few of the most recent monographs: Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from*

are inevitably tendentious, didactic, competitive, and prescriptive. Behind the seeming generosity of comparison, there always lurks the aggression of a thesis.”⁵³

Medieval Race-Thinking (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Jonathan Hsy, *Anti-Racist Medievalisms: From “Yellow Peril” to Black Lives Matter* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021); M. Lindsay Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Matthew X. Vernon, *The Black Middle Ages: Race and the Construction of the Middle Ages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Lynn Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014).

53. Radhakrishnan, “Why Compare?,” 454. Several scholars view comparative literary practice today as fundamentally tied to modernity’s epistemologies; it becomes easy to see why such scholars advocate a specifically postcolonialist methodology (attuned to power dynamics, cultural hybridity, and ambivalence) for comparative literature in the twenty-first century. For arguments and overviews of scholarship to this effect, see especially Chow, “The Old/New Question of Comparison,” and Mary N. Layoun, “Endings and Beginnings: Reimagining the Tasks and Spaces of Comparison” *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 583–607, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0098>. However, tying comparative methodology and practice to modernity ignores the important critique of temporal hierarchies embedded within medieval/modern divisions—a critique that medievalists have been making for decades now. See, for instance, Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Gover the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Margreta de Grazia, “The Modern Divide: From Either Side,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 453–67; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Ingham and Warren, eds., *Postcolonial Moves*; Cohen, ed., *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000); Warren, “The Last Syllable of Modernity”; and Altschul, “The Future of Postcolonial Approaches.” The comparative methodologies of the past that reified European literatures as their universal standard likewise constructed a vision of the medieval as temporal other alongside their vision of non-European literatures as cultural other, relegating both to a deviancy jointly defined against European modernity. The medieval continues to be constructed as other in precisely the manner that older modes of comparison othered non-European literatures. While recent comparatist critiques of such modes of othering acknowledge the latter, they rarely consider the former. This situation reveals, for medievalists like myself, that our need for new comparative methodologies that can attend to medieval literature and the medieval/modern divide itself, is as urgent a matter as our need for such methodologies for studying modern literatures. For additional cross-temporal comparative arguments on this point, see the abundant recent work on the construction of premodern race by medievalists, especially Heng, *The Invention of Race*, Whitaker, *Black Metaphors*, and Ania Loomba, “Race and the Possibilities of Comparative Critique,” *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 501–22, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0103>

My Neighborly Comparative Methodology

This overview of current debates within the field of comparative literature brings me to my own comparative methodology throughout this book, which directly responds to these ethical urgencies by conjoining literary texts through a nonhierarchical, neighborly approach to comparison. My analysis of these clustered Middle English and Castilian romances takes inspiration, first, from Mediterranean Studies, and particularly from the growing body of scholarship by literary studies scholars employing this optic. Mediterranean Studies approaches are inherently comparative in nonhierarchical ways that disrupt national, disciplinary, or linguistic master narratives. These scholars propose comparison as a way of asserting a transient “legibility” across the region’s disparate texts, objects, and cultures.⁵⁴ We can productively situate texts “not in [the] vertical connections of a subsequently constructed national or linguistic tradition but in the horizontal web of political and cultural as well as strictly literary relations.”⁵⁵ This approach traverses artificially siloed literary histories of nation, language, and genre to compare disparate texts and traditions, especially in terms of linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary divides. The optic’s provisional assertion of legibility and comparability across difference promotes a better understanding of “how questions of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and cultural contact might play out,” both in violent and cooperative contexts and resists grand narratives of history.⁵⁶ Such insights emerge precisely from the nontraditional comparative framework that a Mediterranean Studies approach advocates. Medieval Iberia is increasingly considered in this Mediterranean context because of its geographic location on the sea’s northwest littoral. The move to read English romances through such a Mediterranean optic remains relatively uncommon.⁵⁷ The shared representation of Iberia in the romances that I treat here draws Middle English literary history also into this ambit.

54. For instance, as Mallette explains, “to think the Mediterranean as a literary category means to propose a unity that transcends—for however brief a moment—the cultural differences that fragment the Mediterranean region.” Mallette, “Boustrophedon,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 254.

55. Sharon Kinoshita, “Locating the Medieval Mediterranean,” in Weiss and Salih, *Locating the Middle Ages*, 48.

56. Sharon Kinoshita, “Beyond Philology: Cross-Cultural Engagement,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 28.

57. The exceptions include Blurton, “‘Jeo ai esté a Nubie’”; Chism, “The Medieval Mediterranean,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*; Steven Kruger, “Gower’s Mediterranean,” in Yeager, *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, 3–19; and Frank Grady, “‘Machomet’ and Mandeville’s Travels,” in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 266–75.

In Mediterranean Studies optics, the sea or its basin provides the common denominator that enables comparison.⁵⁸ The rigorous historicization of Mediterranean Studies approaches shows how authentic engagements with the histories of the region—both those legible within medieval texts and those taken by the scholar who analyzes them—illuminate cultural production. This painstaking and insightful work undergirds the way I read my comparative romance archive. Nonetheless, I take the view that fantasies of the past, whether authentic to Mediterranean realities or veiled by fictions, are equally illuminating of literary and cultural history, if in different ways.⁵⁹ Therefore, the common denominator enabling the comparisons I undertake throughout this book is not the Mediterranean and its histories, but rather imaginations of Iberia within romance. My approach might best be characterized as a comparative reading of romance that enacts Mediterranean Studies' practice of reading across disparate languages and traditions and that analyzes literary representation in light of a larger vision of legibility, interactivity, and complexity that the field has crystalized for us.

I supplement this approach with a comparative methodology developed in theories of neighborly textuality and ethics. *Imagining Iberia's* core methodology conjoins these distantly related romances in order to draw out the "hidden truths and limitations" they reveal in each other, "precisely in the non-reciprocity of their relationship."⁶⁰ This last formulation I borrow from the work of Kenneth Reinhard, a thinker who has been central in articulat-

58. Adapting the optic's influential distinction, developed by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), between texts fundamentally *of* the Mediterranean versus texts only nominally set *in* the Mediterranean, Kinoshita argues that a Mediterranean setting alone is "a necessary but not sufficient condition for distinguishing a medieval 'Mediterranean' romance from the 'antique' or 'Breton' kind" ("Negotiating the Corrupting Sea," in Catlos and Kinoshita, *Can We Talk Mediterranean?*, 35). In their original formulation, history *in* the Mediterranean (where a Mediterranean geographic and environmental context is largely incidental to the history of human activity, rather than formative) is to be distinguished from history *of* the Mediterranean (where that precise environment can be shown to have exerted particular formative pressures upon the history of human activity). A strict appraisal of my archive according to this framework might determine that the Iberian texts constitute romances *of* the Mediterranean while the Middle English romances only nominally set their action *in* the Mediterranean. However, reading for and with this distinction cannot fully illuminate the comparative scene my chapters invoke, or the insights that arise from juxtaposing Middle English and medieval Castilian romance.

59. On this point, see Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*.

60. Kenneth Reinhard, "Kant with Sade, Lacan with Levinas," *MLN* 110, no. 4 (1995): 785–808, 786, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.1995.0077>

ing the theoretical approach of “Neighbor Theory.”⁶¹ Reinhard is a comparatist, and offers his model of neighborly textuality as one solution to the methodological problems facing comparative literature that I outline above. In doing so, he joins those scholars who advocate incommensurability over comparability when bringing texts together.⁶² As Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman explain, such approaches strategically evade methods that “authorize the perspective of those doing the comparing,” serving instead as “a jolt to consciousness, initiating a destabilizing, even humbling, awareness of the limitedness and contingency of one’s own perspective.”⁶³ Such scholars advocate a critical self-reflexivity about comparison as a mode of inquiry

61. For overviews of Neighbor Theory, see Kenneth Reinhard, “Neighbor,” in Cassin et al., *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 706–12. For discussions of its utility to the interpretation of medieval literature, see George Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); Heather Blurton and Emily Houlik-Ritchey, “Introduction: Neighbors, Neighborhoods, Neighboring,” *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 32, no. 3 (2020): 177–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2020.1855000>; Emily Houlik-Ritchey, “Dwelling with Humans and Nonhumans: Neighboring Ethics in *The Franklin’s Tale*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 41 (2019): 107–39, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2019.0003>; and my analysis in chapter 1 of the present study.

62. For instance, Melas describes her comparative approach via an “incommensurability in which there is ground for comparison but no basis for equivalence” between texts (*All the Difference in the World*, xiii), and Radhakrishnan advocates for comparative methods that seek the reciprocal transformation or defamiliarization of texts “in coeval response to the presence of the other” (Radhakrishnan, “Why Compare?,” 463). Friedman describes comparative juxtaposition in terms of several different methodologies, the most apropos of which, for my present purposes, is her notion of “collage”—that is, placing texts “side by side, each in its own distinctive context, but read together for their in/commensurability”; this method allows new insights about each text to arise (Friedman, “Why Not Compare?,” 759).

63. Felski and Friedman, introduction to *New Literary History*, vi. Rhetorically framing a similar point more positively, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat argue that in such new modes, comparison “can serve as a trampoline for epistemological leaps and dialogical interventions”: Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, “Transnationalizing Comparison: The Uses and Abuses of Cross-Cultural Analogy,” *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (2009): 473–99, 489, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.0.0104>. Sheldon Pollock’s term for such an approach is “off-center comparison”: “This is something that emerges from the reciprocal illumination of objects of analysis that can now be seen to be equally different, and neither deficient nor deviant; and more important, often radically different the one from the other. Comparison unencumbered by delusions about the essential nature of things (what an epic or history or a nation really is) allows you to better capture the particularity, and peculiarity, of a given case. Better put: the true specificity of any given case emerges only against the backdrop of some other.” Sheldon Pollock, “Conundrums of Comparison,” *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 1, no. 2 (2017): 273–94, 286, <https://doi.org/10.1086/693381>

grounded as much in disaffinities as in affinities—one that can bring each side of the comparative archive into fresh focus.⁶⁴

I turn to Reinhard's theory of neighborly textuality because his remains one of the most fully fleshed out methodologies for evading the assumption of "illusory coherence" among texts to ground the comparison.⁶⁵ Reinhard proposes instead "a comparative literature otherwise than comparison, . . . a [mode of] reading in which texts are not so much grouped into 'families' defined by similarity and difference, as into 'neighborhoods' determined by accidental contiguity, genealogical isolation, and ethical encounter."⁶⁶ In such a neighborly mode of reading, one does not "project a common framework that would explain [the conjoined texts'] resonances, but rather demonstrates points of contact that occur precisely in and as the absence of such a framework."⁶⁷ This methodology advocates for the clustering of texts outside the traditional rationales of source study in order to examine the conceptual constellations that might emerge when we do not predetermine the grounds for comparison in advance. Obviously, we must have some sort of rationale for comparing texts—Reinhard does not deny this fact. But he stresses that when we eschew textual genealogy as a guiding method and rationale, we unmoor the kinds of textual relationships we will discover from a close alignment with our method. That is, the comparative method itself will no longer concretely delineate or prefigure textual relationships and the kinds of analytical insights at which we will arrive. With influence and transmission off the table, the scope, dimensions, and tenor of the particular

64. Felski and Friedman, introduction to *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 3, 4. These perspectives are shared by Ming Xie, *Conditions of Comparison: Reflections on Comparative Intercultural Inquiry* (New York: Continuum International, 2011); and by Linda Gordon, "A Meditation on Comparison in Historical Scholarship" in Felski and Friedman, *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 315–35.

65. The point is made by Stam and Shohat, "Transnationalizing Comparison," 475.

66. Reinhard, "Kant with Sade," 785.

67. Reinhard, "Kant with Sade," 804. As Saussy observes, "the model texts of comparative literature link together sets of examples whose mutual coherence is not obvious in advance of their combination" ("Comparative Literature?," 339). Saussy doubts this kind of approach, even as he recognizes its utility: "Metalepsis (the positing as accomplished of something yet to occur) is the structuring trope of these speculative investigations, which spin the rope before them as they walk on it. The willingness to tolerate readings that produce, rather than discover, meanings brings a risky, experimental quality to comparative literature and shows why its virtues are inseparable from its questionable legitimacy" ("Comparative Literature?," 339). I find myself more persuaded by the arguments that Reinhard and Friedman make on comparative methodology.

comparative relationship for a given set of texts arises precisely from the act of comparison.

The parameters I have put in place for my own neighborly comparison of romance across *Imagining Iberia* are (1) linguistic (comparing Middle English and medieval Castilian texts); (2) thematic (choosing romances that are set in Iberia); and (3) topical (selecting romances that share the same core narrative, if not the same source). My focus on such shared narratives takes a cue from George Edmondson's approach in *The Neighboring Text*, where neighborly textuality arises precisely via "competing claims" that play out "through the writing and rewriting . . . of certain shared narratives."⁶⁸ In contrast to Edmondson's neighborly study of texts that stand in close linear relation, however, the English and Iberian romances I trace throughout chapters 1 and 2 of *Imagining Iberia* neighbor each other in what we might call a geographic sense, rather than in the sharp textual scene of reading and (re)writing that Edmondson invokes, though I do explore some aspects of this mode of neighborly (re)writing in chapter 3.⁶⁹

"Neighborly comparison," or "neighborly textuality," shares with Mediterranean Studies a mode of comparison that analyzes textual relations laterally, rather than hierarchically, in order to draw out unexpected particularities and contingencies of textual representation outside of traditional narratives of influence and transmission. They complement each other nicely in that respect. There are also some key differences in these two sources of inspiration for my methodology. Neighborly textuality differs from Mediterranean

68. Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text*, 3. In Edmondson's model, the act of reading itself can be seen as neighborly, traces of which are legible in the rewriting of that narrative. Neighboring reading emerges, for Edmondson, in Henryson's rewriting of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in the *Testament of Cresseid*, and through Chaucer's rewriting of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. The relationship among the works Edmondson studies remains linear, as does my own approach to neighboring texts in chapter 3. My reading of the *Constance* story cluster follows Edmondson's lead in demonstrating how complex, ambivalent, and aggressive the issues of textual influence, (in)fidelity, and transmission can grow.

69. For example, Edmondson makes much of the continuity of Henryson's and Chaucer's poems of *Troilus* in Thynne's 1532 textual imprint. Edmondson argues that their literal neighborliness in Thynne's edition "grants Henryson's and Chaucer's texts "interdependent equipoise" in an "act of reciprocal negation" (*The Neighboring Text*, 44). As I have argued elsewhere, we can take neighboring textuality a step further than Edmondson does, reading Middle English and medieval Castilian narratives, which generally do not enjoy direct lines of influence, as neighborly. See Houlik-Ritchey, "Reading the Neighbor"; and the journal issue edited by Blurton and Houlik-Ritchey, "Neighbors, Neighborhoods, Neighboring," special issue, *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 32, no. 3 (2020).

Studies in terms of the latter's reliance on historicization. Neighbor Theory's wariness of narratives of causality, lineage, or historical influence derives from the concept's development in psychoanalytic theory. As Reinhard explains, "in the psychoanalytical theory of retroactive causality of 'deferred action,' historical origins are not merely understood later, but are only produced as causes after the fact, in the aftermath of their own effects."⁷⁰ From a psychoanalytic perspective, any such explanation, however compelling it may also be, "always leaves a residue, a trace that exceeds the very history it is meant to explain."⁷¹

According to such scholars, we should not exclusively look to history to explain textual relationships because narratives of historical continuity and explanation have also, at times, radically failed us. This critique extends beyond psychoanalytic approaches to the past. For instance, Bruce Lincoln condemns the fascist sympathies of many early comparatist scholars that problematically inflected their reification of certain cultural and linguistic traditions over others. This grievous bias in the twentieth-century canon of comparatist scholarship leads Lincoln to a structural conclusion beyond historical and political critique, arguing that "the attempt to show transmission . . . always advances—if only subtextually—a tendentious ranking of the [texts and cultures] involved, constituting temporal primacy ('originality,' 'invention,' 'authenticity') as the sign of superior status, while conversely treating reception as a mark of relative backwardness, need, and submission."⁷² Reinhard likewise looks to the political traumas of the twentieth century, such as the Holocaust, to identify catastrophic historical occurrences that "rupture . . . the very narratives on which historical continuity

70. Reinhard, "Kant with Sade," 802.

71. Reinhard, "Kant with Sade," 802. As Radhakrishnan explains, "no direct access to the other [or to history] is possible; but what is indeed eminently possible is rigorous autocritique and autodefamiliarization in coeval response to the presence of the other" (Radhakrishnan, "Why Compare?," 463). Friedman concurs: reciprocal transformation and defamiliarization "unravels the self-other opposition that reproduces systems of epistemological dominance" (Friedman, "Why Not Compare?," 759).

72. Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges*, 26. As an alternative and restorative approach, Lincoln advocates a practice of "weak" comparison. As Erin Sweany explains, "this terminology . . . is not meant to characterize the strength of the arguments made . . . but to refer to the breadth of the claims made" (Sweany, "Unsettling Comparisons," 91). Weak comparison strives to be "modest in scope, but intensive in scrutiny, treating a small number of examples in depth and detail," while being "equally attentive to relations of similarity and those of difference" (Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges*, 11, 26).

and ethical certainty are based.”⁷³ Such rupture leads him to ask, “how can we bring [texts] together without in turn ‘thematizing’ them, reducing them to a set of parallel significations?”⁷⁴ Coming to the ethical and philosophical conclusion that “there is no ground that can guarantee the transactions of a comparative literature, no third term that can fully adjudicate between the incommensurabilities that haunt every textual pairing,”⁷⁵ Reinhard thus proposes strategic decontextualization in order to enable comparison that might start to redress the kinds of abuses that Lincoln and other comparatists identify.⁷⁶ Sometimes the stakes of reading are indeed this high.

I therefore find Reinhard’s articulation of the comparative potential of decontextualization, and its ethics, essential to my project. Reinhard develops a neighborly mode of conjoining texts, which provisionally establishes “a relationship of asymmetrical substitution between texts or discourses, prior to one of structural or conceptual similitude.”⁷⁷ Reinhard draws his articulation of the importance of decontextualization to this endeavor from the ethical reading practice of Emmanuel Levinas: “For Levinas, responsibility requires an act not of recontextualization but of decontextualization, in which another person or another idea [or another text] is stripped bare of the historical processes that seem to have determined its origination and is confronted as a material singularity urgently appealing to a subject here and now.”⁷⁸ I therefore ultimately look for explanations other than strict historical causality or direct genealogical influence to authorize my comparative project and analyses, though the ethical stakes of the project certainly pertain to anti-Muslim racism past and present.

Neighborly comparison helpfully supplements the intensively historical focus of Mediterranean Studies as applied to the literary realm. His-

73. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 802.

74. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 795. Reinhard draws “thematization” from Emmanuel Levinas. The concept refers to a refusal to recognize otherness in another—a propensity to read for similitude and reduce otherness to sameness. See also chapter 1. Though, in Reinhard’s reading, traumatic historical events can provide the raw material from which we might reconstruct new textual conjunctions based precisely upon calamity and upheaval, he hesitates to rely upon this process absolutely, either.

75. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 795.

76. Reinhard concludes that “there is no original common ground for textual comparison, but only the trauma of originary non-relationship, of a gap between the theory and practice of reading that is only retroactively visible” (“Kant with Sade,” 803).

77. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 795.

78. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 802. For another argument on the utility of strategic decontextualization, see Friedman, “Why Not Compare?”

toricization locates texts in time, space, and culture in illuminating ways even as it cannot, in my view, fully account for imaginative representation. We should not ignore or dismiss history—on the contrary, Mediterranean Studies has shown us the immense value of reading literary texts through a robust understanding of the particular histories of their production and representation. My point is that literary representation exceeds historicizing explanations. Neighborly textuality positions itself differently from the historicizing aims of Mediterranean Studies, even as it complements its comparative priorities. But, of course, Mediterranean Studies also supplements neighborly textuality by reminding us that history does not exclusively fall into a strict either/or dichotomy. That is, we are not inherently limited to reading texts through either extreme: the “linear temporality of historical causality,” on the one hand, or “the strange light of historical catastrophe,” on the other.⁷⁹ I therefore argue that we can strategically decontextualize texts, when we need to, not only from traditional narratives of historical causality and transmission, but also from the traumas that Reinhard construes in place of causality.⁸⁰ Textual proximity need not arise from catastrophe or traumatic rupture in order to activate “an assumption of critical obligation [and] indebtedness . . . that has nothing to do with influence, *Zeitgeist*, or cultural context.”⁸¹ In short, I build a comparative practice outside transmission and influence that relies on neither extreme of rigorous historicization or traumatic nonrelation among texts, but rather feels its way provisionally toward textual conjunctions that might illuminate literary study in new ways while remaining flexible enough to partake, strategically and provisionally, of both modes: historicization and decontextualization. In this way, these two approaches to comparison—Mediterranean Studies and neighborly textuality—themselves neighbor each other, each revealing and supplementing the “break, limit, or blind spot” in the other’s approach.⁸²

In sum, my approach to neighborly textuality, built for the texts I analyze throughout *Imagining Iberia*, clusters disparate texts to foreground attention to the contrapuntal or uneven dimensions of their relationality, analyz-

79. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 796.

80. Neighbor theory purists might argue that by suggesting we can evacuate the trauma of nonrelationship from neighborly comparison, I am blunting neighbor theory’s incisive edge and ignoring the radical potential and problematic of its ethics. I want to develop a mode of comparative reading that stands outside source rewriting but does not require us to consider the nonrelation of texts as inherently traumatic.

81. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 796.

82. Reinhard, “Kant with Sade,” 785.

ing the dissonance that emerges within their affinities. This nonhierarchical approach grants each text an equal capacity to elucidate the choices of the other—not because one was composed in light of or with knowledge of the other, but precisely in the space created by the absence of such awareness. Neighborly texts call each other to an accounting; a responsibility to and for the scene of representation that arises from their strategic proximity in the interpretive context *Imagining Iberia* builds. The critical obligation or indebtedness at play arises from the critical juxtaposition of the texts themselves—the critic themselves imposes, and is answerable for, this relationality by “bringing two seemingly unrelated texts into a neighborly relation.”⁸³ Neighborly textuality places texts in apposition to elucidate, through the act of conjunction, the interpretive ground for comparison. In contrast to a method that “read[s] in the light of its own legislation,” neighborly comparison “believes before it knows and commits before it chooses.”⁸⁴

This process aptly describes my own reading practice over the years I have worked on this book. Trying to put into practice a comparative mode that

83. Blurton and Houlik-Ritchey, “Introduction: Neighbors, Neighborhoods, Neighbor-ing,” 183.

84. Valerie Allen, “Difficult Reading,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 26. I take these quotations from Allen’s formulation of Levinasian ethical reading. Ethics, for Levinas, disrupts teleology and etiology within the interpretive scene to forge a new narrative about how interpretation arises and what it tells us about a text or texts. Allen cogently notes that such a reading practice “find[s] itself in contradiction with itself, at one and the same time thinking itself free to make up its own mind while believing that its judgment is determined” (Allen, “Difficult Reading,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 26). Neighborly comparison bears great affinity with Levinas’s practice because Reinhard develops his theory of neighborly textuality out of his apposition of Lacan and Levinas’s theories of ethics. Levinas’s notion of ethical reading, for its part, evolves specifically from Talmudic exegesis. Though Levinas’s practice does not necessarily entail comparison of multiple texts (while Reinhard’s does), it nonetheless suspends comparative hierarchies inherent to interpretive practice in analogous ways to Reinhard’s theory of neighborly textuality. For example, by resisting “a certain (Christian) impatience to turn systematically Old Testament events into prefigurements of the New,” Levinas “keeps open the perspective of the ethical from which the hierarchical divisions between spirit and letter . . . lose their force and effect” (Allen, “Difficult Reading,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 22, 24, 29). In doing so, Levinas articulates an ethical reading practice that “forges a connection between the present and the past that evades etiological hierarchies of cause and effect in favor of a direct begetting of one ethical encounter by another” (Allen, “Difficult Reading,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 29). For a further reading of Levinas’s take on the difference between Jewish and Christian scriptural exegesis, see Sandor Goodhart, “A Land That Devours Its Inhabitants,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 227–53.

believes and commits before it knows, throughout the individual chapters of this book, I bring a range of theoretical and conceptual approaches to bear upon the texts I study. For instance, chapter 1 employs dual modes of neighboring, invoking theories of the neighbor not just as comparative practice but also as mode of theorizing the violence inherent to ethical relations among the characters of the *Fierabras* story cluster.⁸⁵ But chapter 2 diverts from this path. Though I use the same overarching neighborly comparative approach to the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster, for this romance tradition I employ Sara Ahmed's concept of "affective economies" and Mediterranean Studies insights about the close affiliations of al-Andalus and the Maghreb in the western Mediterranean. Finally, I turn toward a reassessment of genealogical textual relations within the *Constance* story cluster in chapter 3, reappraising, from a neighborly comparative perspective, the insights that we can glean from texts that stand in linear relation to each other as well as reading across the disparate neighbors of this tradition that are not so closely linked. Key textual details and assumptions spring more easily to view through neighborly comparison, enabling us to disclose the complexity of Iberian networks, relations, and alliances in all these romance story clusters of late medieval England and Castile.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter 1, "Conversion Hurts: Gentrification and Christian Violence in the *Fierabras* Story Cluster," compares the anonymous Middle English *Sowdone of Babylone* (early fifteenth century) and Book 2 of Nicolás de Piemonte's Castilian *Hystoria del emperador Carlomagno* (first printed in Seville, 1521). Across its plot, this *Fierabras* story cluster pivots the story's violence between the granular and geopolitical scales; in this way, *Fierabras*'s conversion to Christianity within the narrative becomes metonymic for Christian territorial conquest and Iberia's supplanted Muslim rule. Yet I argue that *Fierabras*'s conversion arc encapsulates a violence that inheres within Christian community and identity more broadly in these texts. Charlemagne's Christian community eagerly disavows instances of internal violence, except in the sanctified and bloody symbolic realm of *Fierabras*'s conversion. I propose, therefore, that the poet of *Sowdone* and the author of *Hystoria* rehabilitate

85. Edmondson employs such dual modes of neighboring throughout *The Neighboring Text*.

the violence that undergirds Christian identity at the precise site of Fierabras's conversion. Mimicking the example of Christ's crucifixion, these two versions of the *Fierabras* story cluster mold both the wounded Fierabras and his opponent Oliver in the image of the suffering Christ who, according to Christian thought, accepts upon his body the very violence he rebukes and transcends. This creative literary move ameliorates the violence Christians leverage against themselves, their enemies, and Muslim-ruled Iberia by reinscribing acts of warfare through the rose-colored lens of ethical sacrifice.

Chapter 2, "Floris and Flores in Circulation: Affective Economies in the *Floire and Blancheflor* Story Cluster," compares the Middle English *Floris and Blanchefleur* (thirteenth century) with the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* (fourteenth century). I elucidate the complexity of each text's imaginative views of the Mediterranean as a place that the hero navigates with ease, masterfully circulating and cultivating his own commodified emotion (in the Middle English) or social renown and prestige (in the Castilian). Throughout this comparison, I analyze the "affective economies" that these two literary texts differently conceive for Iberia and the Mediterranean, arguing that the heroes Floris and Flores are able to successfully negotiate obstacles precisely through their divergent means of circulating, and thus increasing, their own economic and cultural capital. In making this argument I deploy Sara Ahmed's concept of "affective economies," wherein emotions are produced, and accrue increased potency and value, as an effect of their circulation. In the Middle English *Floris and Blanchefleur*, Floris circulates emotion and devotion as legal tender for information and goods—a literalization of Ahmed's concept that tethers heterosexual desire to trade, wealth, and financial security. In the literary imagination of the Middle English version, this affective economy operates as a monetized economy where emotion circulates as tender in commodified transactions. In the Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, in contrast, Islamicate sociopolitical prestige culture creates a metaphoric affective economy in which Flores's circulation increases his own renown and social credit, not only among the king and denizens of Babylon, but also among illustrious rulers throughout the wider Islamicate Mediterranean. The Castilian *Crónica* thus severs the genre's common figuration of prosperity through love.

Chapter 3, "De-Networking Iberia and England in the *Constance* Story Cluster," compares the five versions of the medieval *Constance* story cluster by Nicholas Trevet (in *Les Chronicles*, early to mid-fourteenth century), John Gower ("The Tale of Constance," in the *Confessio Amantis*, late fourteenth century), Geoffrey Chaucer (*The Man of Law's Tale*, in *The Canterbury Tales*, late fourteenth century), Robert Payn (in *Livro do amante*, early fifteenth

century), and Juan de Cuenca (in *Confesión del amante*, mid- to late fifteenth century). I show that while Iberia is persistently present across all versions of the *Constance* tradition, the story nonetheless marginalizes or excludes Iberia as a significant geopolitical player in the world, ultimately imagining Northumberland England—rather than Iberia—through geopolitical alliance in the Mediterranean. Although Iberia has been persistently overlooked in scholarship that tracks the tale's privileging of England's fate vis-à-vis Rome over the tale's other locations, Iberia is, in fact, crucial to this agenda. I argue that Iberia's geopolitical significance in this story tradition emerges through its narrative resemblance to Northumberland England—a resemblance created by the repetition of linguistic and narrative details across the scenes where Constance arrives in Northumberland and Iberia. These details press against the trajectory of isolation and independence that the tale otherwise conceives for Iberia, revealing that when Constance draws England and Rome into alliance, the decision to forge that connection to the exclusion of Iberia is neither arbitrary nor inevitable, but a deliberate closing off of Iberia's narrative futures. The chapter investigates these resemblances in the insular British versions of the tale (the three versions in Anglo-Norman and Middle English) and then turns to the two lesser-known Iberian versions (in Portuguese and Castilian), analyzing their reimagination of Muslim rule in Iberia, and tracing the complementary process by which these Iberian versions de-network England from Mediterranean alliance.

In conclusion, putting the disparate romance traditions of Middle English and medieval Castilian into conversation reenvisions how we might undertake comparative work on romance. Like my colleagues working in Mediterranean Studies and the Global Middle Ages, who also advocate working across nontraditional pairings, I attend to the networks traversing languages, religions, political borders, and intellectual and cultural traditions. Working across such divides has a profound effect on our literary histories and global narratives, with particular consequences for the two fields I engage. Apposing Middle English and medieval Castilian romances reveals that Iberia's textured cultural bricolage permeates literary representations. In this sense, the book's methodology constitutes a fundamental part of its argument, demonstrating the utility of juxtaposing versions of medieval romances that did not directly influence one another but rather diverged from a common ancestor in culturally, historically, and narratively significant ways. Charting this comparative territory, *Imagining Iberia* tracks the conceptual constellations that emerge across English and Iberian romances when they are read in concert.

Conversion Hurts

Gentrification and Christian Violence in the Fierabras Story Cluster

In the medieval *Fierabras* romance cluster, conversion hurts. This popular Carolingian story charts, as twinned themes, Fierabras's conversion to Christianity and Charlemagne's conquest of Iberia. Both are violent. The Muslim knight Fierabras changes faith on the battlefield, where conversion literally inscribes new belief upon his body. His opponent's blade carves Christian belief into his very flesh, causing wounds and pain that transform Fierabras's spiritual state in a variation on fantasies of erasure in medieval conversion narratives. These signs of violence (wounds, blood, and sword) operate very much like a sacrament, tracking and confirming Fierabras's spiritual change in the physical realm. In fact, in one version of this story, the sword that injures Fierabras and so induces his change of faith is actually named *bautizo* (Baptism). By method, instrument, and injury, violence adjudicates the entire conversion process. The *Fierabras* story cluster thus paints a sinister picture, where fighting the Muslim enemy at once hurts and converts him; moreover, the Christian knight who wounds Fierabras—Oliver—suffers major injuries himself. In this story cluster's estimation, injuries on both the giving and receiving ends of violent conversion appear to be mutually constitutive of Fierabras's successful transformation. That is, violence in all its forms and signs enables Christian life, practice, and identity, not only for the new convert, but for the established Christian community.

Across its plot, the *Fierabras* story cluster pivots the story's violence between the granular and geopolitical scales; in this way, Fierabras's conversion story becomes metonymic for Christian territorial conquest and Iberia's

supplanted Muslim rule. For all these reasons, Fierabras's violent conversion arc has long intrigued me, from the scene's rich, if dire, impetus in combat, to its triumphant, if ambiguous, finale, which shackles Fierabras (more or less willingly, depending on which version we read) to the conquered and cowed land of Iberia. In this chapter I explore this linkage, analyzing two writers' fertile imagination of Iberia through Fierabras's trajectory. Comparing the anonymous Middle English *Sowdone of Babylone* (c. 1400) and Book 2 of Nicolás de Piemonte's Castilian *Hystoria del emperador Carlo Magno* (first printed in Seville, 1521), I argue that Fierabras's conversion arc encapsulates a violence that inheres within Christian community and identity more broadly in these texts.¹ Charlemagne's Christian community eagerly disavows instances of internal violence (for instance, a betrayal from within that takes down Rome, Roland's surprise attack upon his uncle Charlemagne, Ganelon's treachery toward the king), except in the sanctified and bloody symbolic realm of Fierabras's conversion. I propose, therefore, that the poet of *Sowdone* and the author of *Hystoria* rehabilitate the violence that undergirds Christian identity at the precise site of Fierabras's conversion. Mimicking the example of Christ's crucifixion, these two versions of the *Fierabras* story cluster mold both the wounded Fierabras and his opponent Oliver in the image of the suffering Christ who, according to Christian thought, accepts upon his body the very violence he rebukes and transcends. This creative literary move ameliorates the violence Christians leverage against themselves, their enemies, and Muslim-ruled Iberia by reinscribing acts of warfare through the rose-colored lens of ethical sacrifice.

Using medieval and modern theories of neighbor-love, I argue that Fierabras's Christlike injuries, as both sign and catalyst of violent transformation, become a means of what Slavoj Žižek calls "gentrification" (a palliative process that renders a strange or ambiguous figure more like the self, covering over their unsavory features). This "gentrified" Muslim knight becomes ethically legible as Christian precisely through his Christlike suffering; yet the gentrification of Fierabras as Christlike, though it enables his transformation from enemy to comrade, cannot dispel the

1. Alan Lupack, ed., *The Sultan [Sowdone] of Babylon*, in *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Press, 1990), 1–40. Citations are to line numbers. Nicolás de Piemonte, *Hystoria del emperador Carlo Magno y delos doze pares de Francia & dela cruda batalla que ouo Oliveros con Fierabrás, Rey de Alexandria, hijo del grande almirante Balán*. Seville: Jacob Cromberger, April 24, 1521. Pierpont Morgan Library, PML # 31538, Microfilm. Citations are to folio. Textual abbreviations have been silently expanded; translations are my own.

inherent problem that relations between Christians are as violent as relations against enemies on a battlefield. Disquiet lingers in the converted and gentrified neighbor Fierabras because it lingers in the community he joins. Though “gentrification” carries particular valences within the theoretical discourse of neighboring, which I explore in detail below, an analogy with the term’s common meaning in urban development and planning contexts remains instructive: gentrification refers to “upgrades” that, by design, conceal, banish, or displace the aspects that developers deem undesirable within a neighborhood (which includes, unhappily, displacing its current residents), precisely so that someone else can move in instead and feel at home. As this example suggests, gentrification has as much to do with what one prefers to believe about one’s own identity as it does with rendering someone else’s more palatable in those terms. Gentrification thus becomes a means to advance the fantasies of Christian conversion and territorial conquest as synonymous with Muslim erasure.

At the level of a literary character, gentrification remakes a strange, different, or dangerous figure (such as an enemy Muslim knight), in the idealized image of the self (such as a self-sacrificing and suffering Christian knight like Oliver), rendering both of them safely recognizable and relatable in this context. Oliver’s injuries thus fundamentally participate in this system of semblance and exchange, inasmuch as both men come to resemble the crucified Christ. Injuring Fierabras to the point of near death, Oliver gentrifies this Muslim knight into someone who suffers like Christ and so can enter into Christian identity and community. Both knights’ affinity with Christ during the contest of single combat justifies Oliver’s use of violence as a conversionary mode, and displaces the ugliest, most disturbing aspects of the way Christians in the *Fierabras* story cluster harangue each other with violence. Gentrifying Fierabras becomes a means of gentrifying the Christian self who is all too capable of violence, shifting that proclivity into a productive mode: converting the Muslim knight. If suffering bodies are idealized Christian bodies, as the drama of Fierabras’s conversion seems to suggest, then composing a three-way constellation of resemblance among Oliver, Fierabras, and Christ provides an appropriate arena to indulge in violence that might otherwise feel incompatible with Christian identity. These displacements, in other words, gentrify violence itself, construing its use as ethical. In short, Fierabras’s story arc (and through him, Iberia’s) encapsulates the problems and potential of community in a time of war, when the violence that kills enemy or friend (breaking community apart) and the violence that converts (building community up) are indistinguishable.

Fierabras's trajectory parallels Iberia's trajectory in the small scale. My two-pronged argument thus weaves together insights from two texts at two different representational scales: portrait and panorama. Christianity seizes both knight and kingdom for itself—but only on its own terms, violently remaking them into mirroring images of self and homeland. This impulse to gentrify Fierabras and Iberia by erasing all sign of their Muslim legacies percolates throughout *Sowdone* and *Hystoria's* conversionary and geopolitical representations. At the granular level of the individual Muslim knight, conversion's literal violence invokes and replicates Christianity's foundational violence—an insight that this story cluster at once radically embraces and critiques. Pain and wounds align Fierabras with Christ and with his Christian opponent. The gentrification of violence as a means of conversion disguises the violence that lurks within the Christian community as ethical. The fact that in both texts Oliver articulates the desire to kill Fierabras in the same breath as the desire to convert him unearths the fault line in this logic. The poet of *Sowdone*, in particular, glosses this violence in a symbolic register as the ethical means to a desirable end. Piemonte's *Hystoria*, on the other hand, intensifies the critique. Piemonte literalizes Christianity's violence, transfixing the gore and torment appending Fierabras's conversion scene with a keen narrative eye; by relentlessly pushing Christianity's conceptual violence to its brink through literal representation, Piemonte rebukes the system that appears to justify Muslim erasure.

At the geopolitical level, meanwhile, Charlemagne draws Iberia into Christendom's fold through a process of reimagining Iberia's identity, past and present, in the image of Christendom itself. This move, which takes different forms in the Middle English and Castilian contexts, erases Iberia's long histories of Muslim rule that link Iberia to the larger *dar al-Islam* (realm of Islam) throughout the Mediterranean. At the beginning of the story, the poet of *Sowdone* strategically deploys toponyms to give a panoramic view of "Spayne's" (Spain's) integration into networks and alliances of Muslim power that extend not only from Asia to Africa, but throughout Europe as well. At the text's outset, that is, we have no coherent normative fantasy of Western Latin Christendom. However, the poet of *Sowdone* reduces the heterogeneity of this geopolitical worldview across the narrative, such that the end of the story focuses laser-like attention only upon "Spayne" and its Christian future. If we attend to the toponyms, we can trace *Sowdone's* fantasy of gentrification in the making, stripping and sanding away this early geopolitical complexity in favor of a simpler, smoother narrative. *Sowdone* quietly refigures "Spayne" from an intensely networked Muslim polity in a global system

to an isolated and abandoned entity—the last Muslim polity in Europe—that seems to exist only to enable European Christendom’s coherence and integrity. The poet of *Sowdone* thus implicitly frames Charlemagne’s victory as another fantasy: the consolidation of Europe as Christendom.

Piemonte, meanwhile, suspends the kind of specific geopolitical register through which *Sowdone* imagines these issues by eschewing toponyms for Iberia. Specifically, Piemonte cuts all references to “Espagne” (Spain) that his immediate French source employs and replaces them with an abstract descriptive phrase: “tierras del almirante” (the emir’s lands). Opposing these otherwise unspecified “tierras del almirante” to “tierra de cristianos” (Christian lands), Piemonte constructs Muslim rule as Iberia’s receding and forgotten past. In a strangely analogous way to *Sowdone*’s hyperintensive closing scrutiny on “Spayne,” Piemonte’s lack of geopolitical specificity in the Castilian *Hystoria* likewise occludes Muslim-ruled Iberia from view, presenting it indirectly as the hollow core around which he weaves the *Fierabras* material into a narrative of insecure conversion and conquest. The absent presence of Muslim Iberia and its legacies lingering in Piemonte’s account deterritorializes this fantasy of a perfect, coherent European Christendom.

Textual History

These specific versions of the *Fierabras* romance tradition (the Middle English *Sowdone* and Piemonte’s Castilian *Hystoria*), though telling the same basic plot, could not be more different. Therefore, taken together, *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* illuminate conversion’s violence, its purpose, and its effect across a spectrum of representational choices. Marianne Ailes, Phillipa Hardman, and Francisco Márquez Villanueva have laid a robust groundwork for subsequent study by elucidating the *Fierabras* story cluster’s textual relationships and the trajectories for each language tradition.² Subsequent scholar-

2. For these textual histories, see Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017); Marianne Ailes, “A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the *Fierabras* Legend” (PhD diss., University of Reading, 1989); Marianne Ailes, “Comprehension Problems and Their Resolution in the Middle English Verse Translations of *Fierabras*,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 35, no. 4 (1999): 396–407; Marianne Ailes, “Anglo-Norman Developments of the Chanson de Geste,” *Olifant* 25, nos. 1–2 (2006): 97–109; Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes, “Crusading, Chivalry, and the Saracen World in Insular Romance,” in Field, Hardman, and

ship on the Middle English and Castilian versions has proceeded in three main directions: ongoing comparative work (using both traditional source study and alternative approaches), historicist studies, and literary investigations into the tales' representations of religious difference, conversion, and violence.³ Both *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* are redactions of an originally Old French *chanson de geste*: the twelfth-century *Le Roman de Fierabras*, though they sprout from two distant limbs of the *geste*'s genealogical tree. The Old French *geste* is known in its surviving manuscripts as the "Vulgate" *Fierabras*. From this Old French beginning, the story moves, on the one hand, into Anglo-Norman and then into Middle English, and on the other hand, into a French prose version and then into Castilian.

Let us begin with *Sowdone*'s trajectory: one of the Old French *geste*'s

Sweeney, *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England*, 45–68; and Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *Relecciones de literatura medieval* (Seville: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 1977).

3. For additional comparative work that pertains to the study of the Middle English and Castilian versions of the *Fierabras* story cluster, see Jennifer R. Goodman, "A Saracen Princess in Three Translations," *The Medieval Translator*, vol. 5, *Proceedings of the International Conference of Conques (26–29 July 1993)*, ed. Roger Ellis and Renão Tixier (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1996), 432–37; Ana Grinberg, "Aigues-Mortes and Holy War in the *Historia del emperador Carlo Magno*," *Medieval Perspectives* 33 (2018): 49–58; Ana Grinberg, "(Un)stable Identities: Impersonation, Conversion, and Relocation in *Historia del emperador Carlo Magno y los doce pares*" (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2013); Ana Grinberg, "The Lady, the Giant, and the Land: The Monstrous in *Fierabras*," *eHumanista* 18 (2011): 186–92; and Ana Grinberg, "Concerning the 'Probable Mystery' of Nicolás de Piemonte: Returning to Francisco Márquez Villanueva's *Relecciones de literatura medieval*," *eHumanista/Conversos* 2 (2014): 133–41. For historicist studies, see Ryan D. Giles, "Converting the Saracen: The *Historia del emperador Carlomagno* and the Christianization of Granada," in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*, 123–48; and Barbara Stevenson, "Middle English Ferumbras Romances and the Reign of Richard II," *Studies in Philology* 113, no. 1 (2016): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sip.2016.0005>. For studies on religious difference, violence, and conversion see, in addition to the above studies, Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Debra E. Best, "Monstrous Alterity and Christian Conversion in the Middle English *The Sowdone of Babylone*," *Medieval Perspectives* 19 (2004): 42–63; Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Calkin, "Romance Baptisms," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 105–19; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 113–46, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-31-1-113>; and Emily Houlik-Ritchey, "Troubled Conversions: The Difference Gender Makes in *The Sultan of Babylon*," *Literature Compass* 5, no. 3 (2008): 493–504, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2008.00537.x>

more abbreviated Anglo-Norman adaptations—titled *Fierenbras*—unites two separate stories, turning a separate textual tradition, the *Destruction of Rome*, into the backstory of the *Fierabras* material. This thirteenth-century streamlined Anglo-Norman *Fierenbras* is then adapted into the early fifteenth-century Middle English *Sowdone*, which retains the rapid pacing and singular opening of its exemplar, narrating in full Fierabras's destruction of Rome, which is only alluded to in other versions. As several scholars observe, this legacy makes *Sowdone* the most distinctive of the Middle English *Fierabras* adaptations.⁴ We now pivot to *Hystoria*'s trajectory: in the late fifteenth century, Jean Bagnyon composes an extensive French prose compilation of the life and deeds of Charlemagne, *La Conquête du grand roy Charlemagne* (c. 1478), drawing upon the *Fierabras* material from the *geste* and the twelfth-century Pseudo-Turpin chronicle of Charlemagne, the *Historia Caroli Magni*. In the early sixteenth century, Nicolás de Piemonte translates Bagnyon's vast heroic history of Charlemagne into Castilian, positioning the *Fierabras* material at the heart of the narrative, as Book 2.⁵ Distinct timelines, motivations, and pressures thus govern the creation of *Sowdone* and *Hystoria*; their comparison in a neighborly frame, while it tells us nothing about influence and transmission, mutually elucidates their disparate interpretive choices as they imagine Iberia and its Muslim legacies through Fierabras. That is, certain choices (how to name or not name Iberia; whether religious allegory appends Fierabras's wounds or Oliver's sword) only emerge in the full force of their significance through the pressure of a comparative frame. Divorcing issues of influence and transmission from our comparative frame frees us to analyze the deep impact of disparate representations, using the light they shed on each other to interpret each choice in its own right. A neighborly approach thus grants more equitable agency to each author and more equitable weight to each choice. Perceived relationships between stars (the constellations) shift depending on our point of view. We do not have to conceive their relation purely from the vantage offered by Earth. We learn new things about those stars' relationality (and about our own normative

4. See Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*; Best, "Monstrous Alterity and Christian Conversion"; Grinberg, "The Lady, the Giant, and the Land"; Goodman, "A Saracen Princess."

5. Bagnyon also divides his *Le Conquête du grand roy Charlemagne* into three segments and places the *Fierabras* material in the middle. For more detailed discussions of the textual history of the *Fierabras* romance tradition, see especially Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*; Ailes, "A Comparative Study"; and Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *Relecciones de literatura medieval* (Seville: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 1977).

viewpoints) when we adopt, even if only provisionally and contingently, a different point of reference.

Comparative Overview of *Sowdone* and *Hystoria*

My comparative approach to *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* captures the distinct rhetorical attitude each writer adopts toward Fierabras's violent conversion arc, which is where the chapter's analysis will begin. Broadly speaking, Piemonte embellishes and amplifies the battle scene, its violence, and its aftermaths, while the poet of *Sowdone* streamlines them. Throughout the following overview of the ways *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* compare, I use the form of character and place names as they appear in each language version; the particularity of the names helps to distinguish which text I hold up to view at any given moment.

Sowdone's story opens as Laban, the eponymous sultan of Babylon, enjoys a hunting party with his vassals in a pastoral springtime setting. Relaxing near the coastline somewhere in Iberia, he spies one of his merchant vessels at sea and, upon inquiring into its history, learns that Romans have plundered its payload and murdered its crew. In *Sowdone's* earliest moments, then, its poet envisions Iberia as part of a Mediterranean mercantile economy where Muslim ships call at Christian ports with the expectation of peaceful transactions (though the outcome might, in fact, be violent) and where Muslim leadership peacefully engages in the leisure pursuits of the chivalric elite. The opportunistic Roman attack on Muslim merchants instigates a military conflict that snowballs to subsume the rest of the romance's plot. In retaliation for this attack on his ships, the sultan leads a geopolitically diverse force of Muslims to attack Rome; the city ultimately falls through betrayal from within. Christians strike the first blow in this tale, and such opportunistic violence, whether deployed against Muslims or fellow Christians, recurs throughout the *Fierabras* plotline—violence is thus a constitutive feature of Christian identity and practice in *Sowdone's* imagination.⁶ Before their

6. This point has been made also by Best, who attends to Christian transgressions of chivalric norms and bounds throughout *Sowdone of Babylone* (Best, "Monstrous Alterity and Christian Conversion"). In Best's view, though the Middle English Charlemagne romances present the Muslims as monstrous enemies, these texts simultaneously make the case that "the real enemy lies within the Christians themselves and their failures to recognize and atone for their own sins" (Best 42). Best argues that "successful conversion" in *Sowdone* "requires a model of Christian behavior, which is difficult to maintain in the unrestrained violence of

city is destroyed, Romans request urgent assistance from Charlemagne, who rides to the rescue, but too late to stop the destruction. Laban and his son Ferumbras (Fierabras's name in the Middle English *Sowdone*) sack Rome and steal its Christian relics.⁷

While *Sowdone* covers these opening events in significant detail, the Muslim attack on Rome and its rationale are only ever alluded to in most other versions of the *Fierabras* narrative, including Piemonte's *Hystoria* (see fol. 6r–v). Piemonte opens Book 2 of the *Hystoria* by launching into the *Fierabras* story *in medias res*, at the point that Carlomagno (as Charlemagne's name appears in the Castilian) wages war upon Fierabras and his father, the emir Balán (Laban's Castilian counterpart) in revenge for their attack on Rome. That is, Piemonte does not narrate the attack itself but instead jumps straight to Fierabras's conversion plotline, while *Sowdone* first proceeds through indecisive skirmishes between the armies of Charlemagne and Laban in Iberia. In *Sowdone*, Ferumbras appears at Charlemagne's encampment and challenges Charlemagne's elite circle of knights, the Twelve Peers, to single combat. In the midst of full-scale war between their opposing armies, Ferumbras's request for this ritual contest, following all the chivalric protocols of making such a challenge, trumpets a narrative change in priority and singles him out as a candidate for conversion (the corresponding scene in *Hystoria* does the same for Fierabras).⁸ Charlemagne asks Roland to meet Ferumbras in battle, but Roland, angry with Charlemagne about a perceived slight on his prowess, belligerently refuses to fight. Escalating matters, Charlemagne chastises him with a punch to the nose, at which point Roland

war" (42). Though I agree with Best in most respects, I take a slightly different view of the work that Ferumbras's conversion performs; in light of precisely the problems with Christian identity that Best identifies, I argue that conversion becomes a means of gentrification of themselves and of Ferumbras that enables them to evade the recognition that Christian identity coheres through violence.

7. The theme in the *Fierabras* romances of Muslim theft and Carolingian recovery of Christian relics is far less developed and emphasized in *Sowdone of Babylone* than in the other versions, suggesting that the poet of *Sowdone* was interested in foregrounding other concerns. See Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, 156–220 and 264–345.

8. The scene has several parallels in medieval romance, both within the Carolingian tradition and outside it. For instance, the sudden appearance of Priamus and his single combat with Gawain in the midst of war in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* initiates Priamus's conversion to Christianity and shift in loyalty from the emperor Lucius to King Arthur. In the Carolingian tradition, Roland's single combats with Otuel and with Vernagu follow this pattern, as well, though Vernagu provides a negative example by refusing, in the end, to convert; Roland kills him instead.

draws his sword and rushes Charlemagne. Roland's fellow knights restrain him, and the poet of *Sowdone* leaps forward in time, hurriedly assuring us that Charlemagne and Roland are eventually reconciled. Where *Sowdone* rushes past this instance of internal Christian violence, Piemonte lingers over the crisis in *Hystoria*, providing a detailed account of what every character says and feels. Piemonte's narrator even intervenes directly into the story, lecturing both Roldán (as Roland's name appears in Castilian) and Carlomagno on their faults, duties, and responsibilities. Howsoever managed by each author, this crisis rouses the wounded Oliver—another of Charlemagne's Twelve Peers—who abandons his sickbed to accept Ferumbras's challenge. Resolving the dilemma of Roland's feudal disobedience, the least hale of Charlemagne's elite cohort takes to the battlefield against this formidable Muslim opponent and compels him, through violence, to convert to Christianity. Audiences may recognize the signs of an impending conversion plot and have no doubt as to the battle's outcome, but Charlemagne, watching from afar, has no such confidence. In Piemonte's Castilian version, the odds are so stacked against the visibly bleeding Oliveros (as Oliver's name appears in the Castilian) that Roldán begs Carlomagno to allow him to ride out to help. To make matter worse, in Piemonte's version Fierabrás is not man but giant, leaving Oliveros doubly disadvantaged. Carlomagno refuses Roldán's request on the grounds that it would violate the ritualized codes of honorable single combat, adding, "mas si muere enesta batalla jamas oludare tu ingratitud" (fol. 10: also, if he dies in this battle, I will never forget your ingratitude). And to this ominous chastising statement, "ninguna cosa respondio Roldan" (fol. 10: Roldán did not respond a single thing).

The most significant difference between *Sowdone's* and *Hystoria's* representations of this battle, for our purposes, resides in Piemonte's focus upon a miraculous healing balm, used to anoint Christ's body after the crucifixion, that Fierabrás has acquired and offers to Oliveros. Oliveros at first refuses to use it, but both men eventually partake of its healing properties. After using the balm himself, Oliveros comes to believe it is inappropriate for an honorable Christian knight to rely on miraculous healing, and he throws the balm into the river. Both men suffer from its disposal as the battle continues and they accrue further injuries. Oliveros delivers the conversionary blow to Fierabrás, using a sword named *bautizo* (Baptism) that he seizes from Fierabrás's saddle at an opportune moment. Through these details of sword and balm, Piemonte immerses us far more deeply than the poet of *Sowdone* into the physical experience of injury, pain, debilitation, and healing in order to distill their symbolic role in Christian life and practice. Bleeding and overcome,

Ferumbras/Fierabrás renounces his prior faith, commits himself to Christianity, and fearfully demands baptism before death takes him. But the culmination of Ferumbras's/Fierabrás's conversionary process is interrupted. In both texts, a Muslim army, which has been hiding nearby, captures Oliver/Oliveros as well as Roland/Roldán (who rides out to help when this army appears). Everyone overlooks the injured Ferumbras/Fierabrás, who languishes overnight before the Christians stumble upon him the following day. In the Middle English *Sowdone*, Charlemagne interrogates Ferumbras before believing his story, despite the fact that Ferumbras bears "bloody woundes fyve" (1450: five bloody wounds)—a stigmata of sorts reminiscent of Christ's crucifixion wounds, and the only time that the poet of *Sowdone* describes Ferumbras's body. Eventually convinced of Ferumbras's sincerity, Charlemagne tends the new convert's injuries and has him baptized. Neither the poet of *Sowdone* nor Piemonte narrates Fierabras's official baptism—each merely asserts that it happens. The significant action and transformation occur during the battle rather than during the sacrament of baptism itself, which is somewhat unusual for conversion scenes in medieval romance.⁹

After his conversion, Ferumbras joins Charlemagne's forces in the war against his father. The plot abounds with further adventures (Laban captures the rest of Charlemagne's Twelve Peers; Ferumbras's sister, Floripas, falls in love with Sir Guy and rescues him along with the rest of the Peers; Ferumbras foils a couple of betrayal plots by the Christian knight Ganelon; Charlemagne tries, unsuccessfully, to adopt two baby giants). Finally, Charlemagne defeats the sultan and conquers his Iberian kingdom of "Spayne." Piemonte, mas-

9. The *Fierabras* story cluster, in its Middle English and Castilian versions, shifts the climax of conversion away from sacrament (the ritual of baptism) to the site of wounding that impels Fierabras to declare his change of faith. The moment he discovers and declares his own desire to become Christian constitutes the crucial transformational moment, as the *Fierabras* story cluster imagines it, rather than the official sanctioning and authorizing of that desire by church officials. This decision *not* to emphasize the moment and ritual of baptism differentiates Fierabras's conversion narrative from many others in medieval romance, which *do* center baptism. Baptism in such narratives often accompanies miraculous signs and wonders; together they signal the sacrament as the crux and climax of conversion. For instance, symbolic trappings frequently embellish literary scenes of baptism, from doves descending (Carlomagno's conversion to Christianity in Book I of Piemonte's *Hystoria*) to miraculous healing (Constantine's leprosy vanishes at baptism in Gower's "Tale of Constantine and Sylvestre"), from ascension to heaven (the pagan judge's long-preserved body crumbles as his soul visibly ascends in *Saint Erkenwald*) to embodied transformations (the sultan of Damascus's skin changes color from black to white upon baptism, and his infant son's unformed body transmutes into perfectly formed limbs and features upon baptism in *The King of Tars*).

ter amplifier, augments the conclusion with details of Fierabrás and Balán's mutual anguish that they are now enemies and weaves a poignant scene where the two meet and converse amid the final pitched battle. But in both versions, the romance concludes when Charlemagne returns to France, dividing the rule of his newly conquered territory between Ferumbras/Fierabrás and one of his own knights, Sir Guy, who marries the newly baptized Floripas. In Piemonte's *Hystoria*, before Carlomagno leaves for "tierra de cristianos," he first embarks upon a violent campaign to convert and subdue the populace of the "tierras del almirante." Concerned that peace will not hold, he leaves behind a standing army and a long list of instructions against apostasy, rebellion, and invasion for Fierabrás and Guy. Conquest and conversion of the emir's unnamed lands remains tenuous in the view that Piemonte puts forward. Piemonte also invents the detail that Fierabrás does not want to stay and rule these lands, but rather begs to accompany Carlomagno to "Christian lands" when he leaves. While both versions link Fierabras to Iberia in this way (he stays behind to rule his father's former kingdom while Charlemagne returns to France), Piemonte alone shifts Fierabrás's willingness to do so, and so influences our assessment of the violent ending of Fierabrás's conversion arc, as well as its violent commencement.

As this broad comparative overview of the two texts makes clear, the *Fierabras* story cluster describes, with great enthusiasm and energy, the aggressions of war, conquest, and conversion across religious and geopolitical lines. Christian violence spills out in all directions through *Fierabras*'s shared plotline, yet many of *Sowdone*'s and *Hystoria*'s most memorable scenes detail complex attempts at neighbor-love, wrestling with the problems of putting the ethical injunction into practice. I thus turn to theories of the neighbor by modern theorists and medieval writers to elucidate these scenes. Discourses of the neighbor, both medieval and modern, because they conjoin a theoretical consideration of the anxiety arising from the neighbor's category crisis to the enduring ethical charge and violence of that relation, are uniquely suited to helping us unpack the vexed ways *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* grapple with the conversion, conquest, and erasure of Christianity's Iberian neighbors and their Muslim legacies.

The Neighbor and Its Ethics of Love

In medieval romances where religion is the sole legible difference between Christian and Muslim characters, conversion provokes what Sharon

Kinoshita has described as an “impending crisis of nondifferentiation.”¹⁰ In such contexts, such as Ferumbras’s/Fierabrás’s precise echoes of Christian chivalric ethos, “any sense of identity which depends upon the opposition of self and other is intrinsically unstable.”¹¹ Kinoshita traces the impulse to disambiguate self from other that arises in the wake of such critical instability, and building upon her insights, I have argued elsewhere that Ferumbras’s conversion in *Sowdone* exhibits signs of precisely this response.¹² Theorists of the neighbor share my and Kinoshita’s conviction that instability across the self/other divide provokes anxiety; indeed such instability often prompts a recoil that reifies discrete identity categories and fantasies of erasure. The neighbor, who falls neither squarely into categories of identification (self/family/friend) nor into those of alterity (other/stranger/enemy), figures the anxieties that arise from a position of indeterminacy. Theories of the neighbor thus compose an apt tool for analyses of romance conversion scenes such as Ferumbras’s/Fierabrás’s. As Kenneth Reinhard puts it, “neighbors constitute a zone of indistinction between friends and enemies, the familiar and the strange, where alliances are contingent and hospitality easily slips into hostility.”¹³ When Ferumbras arrives to request single combat, mimicking Christian chivalric comportment and its martial rituals, he activates such a zone of indistinction, blurring the categories of familiar and strange that generally distinguish self from other. Traversing these boundaries, the neighbor conjoins proximity and distance, familiarity and strangeness, aligning fully neither with one side nor the other. Confronting the neighbor becomes an uncomfortable experience, to say the least. Indeed, Žižek describes it as a

10. Sharon Kinoshita, “Pagans Are Wrong and Christians Are Right,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-31-1-79>. See also Margaret A. Jubb, “Enemies in the Holy War, but Brothers in Chivalry: The Crusaders’ View of Their Saracen Opponents,” in van Dijk and Noomen, *Aspects de l’épopée romane*, 251–59. Like Kinoshita, Jubb analyzes “certain of the religious enemy [who are] described in the same terms as the Christians,” concluding that “the notion of a knightly ethic . . . is open to noble representatives of different races and religions” (Jubb, “Enemies in the Holy War,” in van Dijk and Noomen, *Aspects de l’épopée romane*, 251, 253).

11. Kinoshita, “Pagans Are Wrong,” 86.

12. See Houlik-Ritchey, “Troubled Conversions.” Ferumbras’s conversion provokes anxiety that ripples throughout the rest of the text, legible in small poetic details that undermine his full integration into Christian community. This anxiety arises, in my view, from his cultural proximity to Christian chivalric identity. For an alternate assessment, see Grinberg, “The Lady, the Giant, and the Land.”

13. Kenneth Reinhard, “Neighbor,” in Cassin et al., *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 707.

“stressful ‘impossible’ relationship” that “hystericizes [us].”¹⁴ And yet we are called, by religioethical commandments of Judaism and Christianity, to love this stressful, indeterminate neighbor as ourselves.

The scriptural commandment to love the neighbor appears first in Leviticus in both the Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Bible and is repeated in the Christian Bible in the Gospels of Matthew and of Mark and in 1 John, among other places. The commandment instantiates a radical ethical call in its insistence that we love someone we cannot securely account for within our normal categories and modes of relation, and that we love them as we love ourselves. What, precisely, loving the neighbor means, in theory or in practice, has been much debated throughout the centuries in theological, philosophical, and literary discourses. For instance, Sigmund Freud famously unpacks the counterintuitive logic of this ethical charge in *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

If I love someone, he must deserve it in some way. . . . He deserves it if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him; and he deserves it if he is so much more perfect than myself that I can love my ideal of my own self in him. . . . But if he is a stranger to me and if he cannot attract me by any worth of his own or any significance that he may already have acquired for my emotional life, it will be hard for me to love him.¹⁵

Freud admits the possibility that the neighbor might deserve our love, but only if they meet certain qualifications that are all focused, crucially, upon the self: the neighbor deserves love if one can see oneself in them: “if he is so like me in important ways that *I can love myself in him*” or “if he is so much more perfect than myself that *I can love my ideal of my own self in him*” (my emphasis). But the problem, as Freud himself concludes, resides in the fact that the neighbor defies such modes of recognition based on shared positive features with the self. The neighbor will not mirror our idealized selves back to us—they are more akin to a stranger or enemy. And we are thus likely to conclude that the neighbor, like an enemy, deserves our hatred rather than our love. Aligning neighbor with enemy is a reactionary rhetorical position,

14. Slavoj Žižek, “Neighbors and Other Monsters,” in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 140, 141.

15. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 56–57.

and a common one. For instance, though Laban's chivalric leisure pursuits at *Sowdone's* outset may blur initial distinctions between Christian and Muslim cultures, subsequent details within the romance work hard to exoticize these Muslims and so shore up their status as enemies. The Muslims' ruthless sack of Rome, their exotic feast of beast's blood and fried serpents, their parodic worship of a trinity of "pagan" gods, can all be read as ways the romance rejects neighborly ambiguity and reinstates the Muslims as enemy other.¹⁶ Tracking this impulse to align neighbor with enemy, Freud thus emphasizes the logical absurdity of privileging love for someone who may in fact wish us harm.

In doubting the benevolence or even neutrality of the figure of the neighbor vis-à-vis the self, Freud thus reasons that the ethics of neighbor-love is antithetical to a self-serving calculation of future or reciprocal benefit to the self (which would restrict love only to those deserving of love—i.e., to those like the self). Freud's vision of neighbor-love hence cannot be justified by any affinity the neighbor shares with the self, nor by their emotional significance for the self, because no such point of sympathetic identification exists. What good would it do, after all, for the Christians to try to love the sultan Laban as themselves—to draw him into their community? As Ferumbras so devastatingly observes after his father spits in the font and punches Bishop Turpin, "Sir, ye see it wole not be; / Lete him take his endynge / For he loveth not Cristyanté" (lines 3180–82: Sir, you see it will not be; let him take his ending [i.e., death], for he does not love Christianity). Loving Laban without any expectation of return could indeed constitute a potential context of neighbor-love, were the Christians able to countenance it, but instead, they resort to treating him like an enemy, attempting to forcibly convert him and then executing him. As negative exemplum, this moment elucidates how the commandment to love the neighbor envisions a radical responsibility of love—one enabled precisely by its refusal of any expectation of deserving, benefit, or reciprocity. This ethical edge simultaneously makes the injunction so difficult to fulfill—loving the neighbor is *like* loving an enemy in this regard. But the neighbor is not, in fact, synonymous with the enemy. Rather, the position of the neighbor disrupts not only definitive positive gestures of affinity, but also definitive negative gestures of alterity. As Kenneth Reinhard explains, "the call to neighbor-love enjoins us to love

16. On this point, see also Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment." We should note, of course, that Cohen's argument traces the ways *Sowdone* undermines this fantasy of Muslim alterity even as it constructs it.

that which is both closest to and least affiliated with us.”¹⁷ Though we are always seeking to try to reconcile those we encounter into familiar and stable categories of familiarity or difference, in order to determine and justify how to treat them, we in fact are called to resist that impulse and love our fellows in all their disturbing ambiguity. That is, to love them as neighbors: precisely in the absence of being able to determine who they are or whether or not they deserve it.

This ethical responsibility to the neighbor, as theorized by Reinhard and Žižek, arises precisely from the neighbor’s position of uncertainty; in this respect an ethics of neighbor-love bears some affinity with Emmanuel Levinas’s concept of ethical responsibility.¹⁸ Responsibility, for Levinas, inheres in a particular kind of ethical communication in response to the call of the other. Ethical communication accepts uncertainty and commits to dialogue with the other (via listening) rather than jumping to conclusions about the “truth” of who the other is. As Susan Yager explains, Levinasian ethical communication is “discursive, a saying [*dire*] and not the totalizing said [*dit*]. Like the *me voici* (‘Here I am,’ 1 Sam. 3) which Levinas describes as the ethical response to the call of the Other, such communication is *prior to knowledge*.”¹⁹ In such asymmetrical communication, as Levinas puts it, “there is proximity and not truth about proximity, not certainty about the presence of the other, but responsibility for [them] without deliberation, and without the compulsion of truths in which commitments arise, without certainty. This responsibility commits me, and does so before any truth and any certainty.”²⁰ In sum, all these theorists share a conviction that only such a commitment to uncertainty and proximity enables an ethical response to the neighbor/other.²¹ And as theorists from Levinas to Reinhard and Žižek

17. Kenneth Reinhard, “Freud, My Neighbor,” *American Imago* 54, no. 2 (1997): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aim.1997.0010>

18. Though Levinas does not theorize ethics so centrally around the particular scriptural figure of the neighbor in its psychoanalytic instantiations, his work dovetails in several respects with the ethics of the neighbor as theorized by Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard. Indeed, Levinas is one of these theorists’ principal interlocutors in their coauthored *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), alongside such thinkers as Freud, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Franz Rosenzweig, and Alain Badiou.

19. Susan Yager, “Levinas, Allegory, and Chaucer’s *Clerk’s Tale*,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 39, my emphasis.

20. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 120.

21. Levinas describes this ethical scene in terms of the self/other dichotomy rather than

also admit, resisting the impulse to clarify the neighbor's indeterminacy (to suspend our desire for certainty) remains quite difficult.

This difficulty arises, in part, because the neighbor's indeterminacy poses a corresponding problem for our own sense of identity. The neighbor troubles us because of our inability to account for them and their desire. But the problem goes deeper still: the neighbor cannot account for themselves or their desire, either. The neighbor is enigmatic, impenetrable, even to themselves. Like Charlemagne, we may well ask "who are you?" when confronted by a wounded Ferumbras who suddenly looks like Christ (that is, a figure conjoining affinity and difference: an enemy knight who suddenly seems to align with Charlemagne's own faith). But while we may learn nominal information from such exchanges, they will not get us to the real issue behind our impulse to ask the question.²² As Žižek explains, "I will never be able to account for myself in front of [the neighbor], because I am already non-transparent to myself, and I will never get from [the neighbor] a full answer to 'who are you?' because [the neighbor] is a mystery also for [themselves]."²³ The real question we need answered, Žižek suggests, but which the neighbor can never account for, is, "What is it in you that makes you so unbearable, not only for us but also for yourself, that you yourself obviously do not master?"²⁴ To give another example, when Ferumbras challenges the Christians to single combat, his ultimate desire in issuing this challenge remains opaque. Is he motivated by an aggressive desire to fight and kill the Christians (extending his actions earlier in the romance when he sacks Rome), this time in the ritualized chivalric venue of single combat? Does he want to convert them to Islam (as he later suggests to Oliver)? Ferumbras seems eager to showcase that he, too, can perform forms of elite chivalry and courtesy, but why—because he wants to join this community or because he wants to prove himself superior to this community? The neighbor forces us

using the category of "neighbor." Nonetheless, the scene of uncertainty he describes resonates with the indeterminacy Reinhard and Žižek associate with the neighbor.

22. See my analysis of a similar dynamic at the outset of John Gower's "The Tale of the Jew and the Pagan" in Emily Houlik-Ritchey, "Fellows in the Wilderness: Neighborly Ethics in 'The Tale of the Jew and the Pagan,'" *South Atlantic Review* 79, nos. 3–4 (2015): 65–75.

23. Žižek, "Neighbors and Other Monsters," in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 138. Žižek uses "Other" throughout this passage, which I have replaced with "the neighbor" for clarity's sake. For Žižek, any figure can assume the place/role of the neighbor. I have also replaced "him/herself" with "themselves," in recognition of the wide array of gendered positions that exist.

24. Žižek, "Neighbors and Other Monsters," in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 141.

to confront not only our inability to answer such questions, but the neighbor's own inability to do so, as well.

Moreover, and this is the final wrinkle, the neighbor's self-opacity forces upon us the concurrent recognition that we have unplumbable depths that we cannot master, either. As we may recall, confronted with all that is uncertain about Ferumbras, the Christians suddenly have to reckon with themselves, as well. Charged with meeting this neighborly Ferumbras in single combat, Roland instead draws his sword against Charlemagne. Ferumbras gives the Christians someone to fight, even as his presence seems to instigate infighting among themselves. As George Edmondson has observed, the neighbor "rattles us even as he ratifies us."²⁵ The neighbor is thus someone with whom we cannot securely identify, cannot find good reason to love, not because we do not yet know them well enough to figure out who they are and what they want, but because those questions are fundamentally unanswerable; the neighbor thus shakes our conviction that we can account for ourselves as knowable and worthy of love. Only from this point of troubling recognition, theorists of the neighbor suggest, can a truly ethical response to another arise.

Dependent as it is upon this troubling and mutual recognition, the relationship with the neighbor—the very condition of ethical relations—is a hard state of relational affairs to maintain. Our difficulty fulfilling the terms of the commandment often leads us to evade the encounter with the neighbor. That is, we tend to disambiguate the neighbor into either a friend or an enemy, and so maintain a fiction of relational clarity. This choice, however, evades ethics. If Freud concentrates predominantly upon the ways we react to neighbors as enemies, Žižek pivots the other direction, focusing on our concurrent proclivity for "gentrifying" the neighbor into someone with

25. George Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 10. Edmondson traces the neighbor through another vein of Freud's psychoanalytic thought—one also picked up and elaborated by Reinhard—in which Freud theorizes how humans learn to cognize in relation to the *Nebenmensch* ("next man"). It lies beyond the scope of the present chapter to elucidate this framework. It is worth noting, however, that the religioethical trajectory of neighboring I have been tracing here represents but one line of thought among several, even within the work of the same group of theorists. I focus throughout this chapter on the religioethical trajectory of neighboring, largely to the exclusion of the others, because it constitutes the most useful frame for unpacking the particular scenes of religious conversion, violent love, and conquest in the *Fierabras* story cluster. For a detailed overview of the various ways theorists have approached the figure of the neighbor, see Reinhard, "Neighbor," in Cassin et al., *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, 706–12.

whom we can safely identify (someone remade and reconceived as being like an ideal version of ourself). Gentrification reduces “the terrifying . . . ultimate reality of our neighbor” into something benign and knowable, giving us a rationale for fulfilling the commandment and loving them as ourselves.²⁶ We thus reinstate or remake the neighbor in the positive image of the self (rendering the neighbor, to repeat the way Freud puts it, “so like me in important ways that I can love myself [or my ideal of my own self] in him”).²⁷ Levinas describes a similar evasive process: “suppressing ‘the other,’ in making the other agree with the same.”²⁸ Misrecognizing the neighbor through a process of gentrification “serve[s] as a kind of protective wall” against the troubling realizations which arise within any true encounter with the neighbor, evading what Žižek calls, “the abyssal point from which the call to ethical responsibility emanates.”²⁹ He therefore concludes that, from an ethical perspective, “the temptation to be resisted here is the ethical ‘gentrification’ of the neighbor, the reduction of the radically ambiguous monstrosity” that pertains to the neighboring relation.³⁰ We are called to dwell with the enigmatic strangeness and uncertainty that we cannot account for, either in our neighbor or in ourselves.

Gentrifying the neighbor (and more particularly, gentrifying those frightening aspects of the neighbor that we do not wish to confront) is, in this sense, always a way of gentrifying the self, as well. Gentrification covers over or repurposes those frightening aspects of ourselves that we do not wish to confront (such as a proclivity for violence). In the case of the *Fierabras* story cluster, when the Christians confront the neighboring Ferumbras, gentrifica-

26. Žižek, “Neighbors and Other Monsters,” in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 146.

27. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 56–57.

28. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 73, 96. Levinas calls this process “thematization.” In his view, thematization rejects ethics by subordinating open-ended discourse with the other to a coherent “disclosure” or assessment of the other. Ethical discourse, in contrast, ought to “call one to presence and to relationship (as opposed to objective knowledge, to history and fact),” for “anything concretely known or understood places ontology over ethics and partakes in the process by which the other is always reduced to or subsumed by the same” (Yager, “Levinas, Allegory, and Chaucer’s *Clerk’s Tale*,” in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 39, 37).

29. Žižek, “Neighbors and Other Monsters,” in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 163.

30. Žižek, “Neighbors and Other Monsters,” in Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*, 163, emphasis in original.

tion repurposes the violence of relations among themselves into a Christlike context of ethical self-sacrifice. Oliver becomes the exemplar par excellence of gentrified Christian identity—a knight who sacrifices himself and is thus able to rechannel Roland’s treasonous violence against Charlemagne into an appropriate external context for an appropriate purpose. Oliver wields a gentrified violence in order to discipline Ferumbras’s body and turn him into someone the Christians can recognize (a wounded body that visually mimics the Christlike self-sacrifice that Oliver exhibits). Gentrification thus powerfully compensates, not only for the “impending crisis of nondifferentiation” that Ferumbras represents, but also for the unplumbed depths of Christian proclivities to wield violence against each other.

The ethical terrain I have just charted—these modern theories regarding the difficulty and complexity of loving the neighbor—has an even longer history. I turn now to a premodern literary articulation of loving one’s neighbors to interrogate medieval conceptualizations of the conversionary violence that loving the neighbor can activate. Taken together, medieval articulations of neighbor-love as a violent conversionary mode of relationality and Žižek’s modern theoretical account of gentrifying the neighbor’s troubling indeterminacy help to elucidate the complex and vital place of violence in late medieval romance conversion narratives.

A passage from passus 13 of the B text of William Langland’s *The Vision of Piers Plowman* articulates a logic that love of one’s enemies, neighbors, strangers, and even oneself is aggressive, if not outright violent. The allegorical figure of Patience narrates the relevant excerpt from *Piers Plowman*, explaining how the allegorical figure of Love tutored him in the art of ethical loving. Specifically, Love instructs Patience to use self-love as a means to learn how to love his enemies:

“With words and with werkes,” quod she [Love], “and wil of thyn
 herte
 Thow love lelly thi soule al thi lif tyme.
 And so thow lere the to lovye, for the Lordes love of hevene,
 Thyn enemy in alle wise eveneforth with thiselve.”
 (13.140–43)³¹

31. William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (New York: J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton, 1978), in *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, University of Michigan Library, <http://name.umd.umich.edu/PPII/Lan>

("With words and with works," said Love, "and will of your heart, love your soul faithfully for all the time of your life. And so learn/teach yourself to love your enemy in all ways equal to yourself, for the Lord's love of heaven.")

The commandment to love one's enemies appears in the Christian Gospels of Luke and Matthew, and it is not terribly surprising to find it here in Langland's allegorical dream vision. In its iteration here, Love suggests that it is precisely by loving one's own soul "al thi lif tyme" (all the time of your life) that one will learn also to love one's enemies as oneself. A multifaceted love of self (via words, works, and will) thus becomes the pedagogical route or template by which one then can achieve the presumably harder task of loving one's enemies. The ethical and pedagogical process that Love describes here antedates the similar point famously articulated by Freud many centuries later that neighbor-love makes no rational sense. The alignment of neighbor with enemy thus conceptually links premodern to modern understandings of the counterintuitive nature of neighbor-love. By aligning the indeterminacy of the neighbor's desire toward the self with the enemy's confirmed hostile intentions, the *Piers Plowman* passage anticipates Freud's assessment of the truly radical ethics that the commandment proposes.

From this point of radical ethical insight, *Piers Plowman* proposes a violent, forceful mode of loving the enemy, surprisingly epitomized through the use of "kynde speche" (13.144: kind/loving/natural speech).³² Love's tutelage enfoldes the unexpected violence of *kynde* speech within the religioethical register of ethical love to transform the enemy into someone like the self.

32. Middle English "kynde" has a diverse semantic range. On the one hand, it can mean kind, affectionate, pleasing, generous, noble, or courageous; on the other hand, it means nature or the natural, and so carries valences of normativity: what is appropriate, genuine, or native. As Daniel T. Kline notes in a reading of the Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac*, "the fecund Middle English term 'kynde' indicates the broad sweep of ethical relation envisioned by Levinas—with kin, as kindred, by kindness, according to nature" ("Doing Justice to Isaac: Levinas, the *Akedah*, and the Brome Play of *Abraham and Isaac*," in Astell and Jackson, *Levinas and Medieval Literature*, 129). Langland's usage of *kynde* in *Piers Plowman* is particularly fraught and has drawn several analyses. For instance, see Rebecca Davis, "*Piers Plowman*" and the Books of Nature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Nicolette Zeeman, "The Condition of Kynde," in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. David Aers (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 1–30; Mary Clemente Davlin, "Kynde Knowyng as a Middle English Equivalent for 'Wisdom' in *Piers Plowman* B," *Medium Ævum* 50, no. 1 (1981): 5–17; Mary Clemente Davlin, "Kynde Knowyng as a Major Theme in *Piers Plowman* B," *Review of English Studies* 22, no. 85 (1971): 1–19.

Love exhorts her pupil Patience to

Cast coles on his [the enemy's] heed of alle kynde speche;
 Both with werkes and with wordes fonde his love to wynne,
 And leye on him thus with love til he laughe on the;
 And but he bowe for this betyng, blynd mote he worthe!
 (13.144–47)

(Cast coals of completely kind speech on his [the enemy's] head; both with works and with words, subject his love to trial or hardship to win [it],³³ and thus inflict blows on him with love until he smiles upon you; and if he does not bow for this beating, may he go blind!)

Love of enemies is not only active in Love's tutelage, it is violent, deploying speech relentlessly to strike the enemy with hardship, blows, and burning embers, until, as Love anticipates, this enemy looks with favor upon the self. This love-assault of mingled "werkes and wordes" threatens one's enemy with blindness unless they submit to this conversionary battering. Love thus describes a program of right loving that at once constitutes the self as a proper religioethical subject (following God's familiar, if radical, commandment) and eradicates its enemies, transforming them through a violent, insistent love into a person who recognizes the value of the self ("til he laughe on the" [until he smiles upon you]), becoming recognizable themselves in turn. In short, we might say, Love describes gentrification that erases the enemy/other.

According to Langland's literary expression of neighbor-love, this violent process enables one to become an ethical subject and bring one's enemies likewise into ethical subjecthood (or at least into the recognition of ethical subjecthood). When Langland conceives of love as a transformative process with a violent method (putting the enemy's love through a trial of hardship

33. The Middle English phrase "fonde his love to wynne" could be rendered either as "subject his love to trial or hardship to win it" or "strive to win his love." The overlapping sense from the semantic range of *fōnden*, *-ien v.* in the *Middle English Dictionary* drives home the poem's assertion that the way to win the enemy's love is precisely to subject it to trial or hardship. And it is precisely "kynde" speech and works that will achieve this reciprocal outcome of love. (See *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis et al. [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001]; online edition in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. Frances McSparran et al. [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000–2018], <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary>).

in order to win it over), he makes explicit a link between the desire to hurt or even kill one's enemies and the desire to convert them. And here is where medieval conceptualizations of loving the neighbor productively dovetail with the modern theorizations by Freud, Levinas, Reinhard, and Žižek. The conversion Love describes in *Piers Plowman* constitutes a process that strongly resonates both with Freud's acumen about why the neighbor is so difficult to love (calling up hostility instead of love) and Žižek's insight into our proclivity to gentrify the neighbor. Whereas Žižek conjures gentrification as a process that works counter to ethical relations,³⁴ Langland proposes in this *Piers Plowman* passage that forcefully converting the neighbor/enemy into a figure that aligns with the self constitutes an appropriate mode of ethical love (one that would, in fact, fulfill the terms of the commandment). The medieval articulation of neighbor-love I have been parsing, in other words, deems "gentrification" a desirable mode of *enacting* ethics (via conversion) rather than its evasion. But it also envisions this process as violent, taking seriously the neighbor's opaque or troubling desire vis-à-vis the self. Such medieval conceptualizations thus register the same challenges in the neighboring relation as do modern theorists. *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* both emphasize the entwined desires to eradicate one's enemies and to transform them in the self's own image—entwined desires that drive the twinned arcs of Fierabras's conversion and Iberia's conquest. We will see how, though these two texts of the *Fierabras* story cluster invest in this system of violent conversion and gentrification, both texts also critique the erasures of this ethical project. We now turn to a detailed analysis of the ways these texts gentrify self and neighbor through Fierabras's violent conversion.

A Bleeding Body Is a Christian Body

Fierabras converts to Christianity by suffering violence sufficient to kill him. Both literary texts, *Sowdone* and *Hystoria*, conceive the Christian desire for converts as an intensively violent desire, spoken in the same breath as the desire to kill. As Reinhard has observed of the neighboring relation: hospitality and hostility toward Fierabras become virtually indistinguishable. In the Middle English *Sowdone*, for instance, Oliver initiates single combat with Ferumbras with a dual threat: whether "qwikke or dede" (1252: alive or dead), Oliver swears he will send Ferumbras to Charlemagne. Oliver

34. Levinas likewise notes that thematization closes down ethical relations.

couches the threat to convert Ferumbras in rhetorically and conceptually synonymous terms with the threat to kill him:

To [Charlemagne] I shalle the sende
 Qwikke or dede this same daye,
 By conqueste here in this feelde,
 And make the to renye thy laye.
 (1251–54)

(Through victory here on this field, I shall send you to Charlemagne this very day alive or dead and make you renounce your faith.)

The violence legible here in Oliver's expectation that Ferumbras will convert—reminiscent of the violence inherent to *Piers Plowman's* theory of neighbor-love—foreshadows *Sowdone's* subsequent events. Ferumbras will indeed ultimately convert through violence that, by the measure both of Oliver's intent and Ferumbras's experience, could easily kill him. Hostility aligns with hospitality, and violence issues the invitation to join Oliver's community. These entwined threats distinguish Oliver's desire to convert Ferumbras to Christianity from Ferumbras's endeavor to convert Oliver to Islam. Oliver, as we have seen, offers Ferumbras no inducements to convert, while Ferumbras, in stark contrast, tries to lure Oliver to change faith with promises of safety, wealth, and grandeur: "thy life I salle the ensure. / Thou shalt be a duke in my contré, / And men have at thyn owen wille. / To my sustir shaltowe wedded be" (1222–25; I shall ensure you your life. You shall be a duke in my country and have men at your own command. You shall be wed to my sister). As we can see, Oliver frames his hope that Ferumbras will convert in altogether more aggressive terms than does Ferumbras. Christianity promises neither wealth, nor marriage, nor status, nor health to its potential converts; rather it threatens and then delivers injury and death. At the outset of single combat between Ferumbras and Oliver, then, the poet of *Sowdone* highlights the degree of violence intrinsic to an emergent late-medieval Christian literary paradigm for conversion.

Christian violence is a recurrent problem in this story. Specifically, the violence Oliver offers Ferumbras matches the violence Roland has just tried to wield against his uncle Charlemagne. In an important sense, then, Oliver's furious aggression toward Ferumbras—enemy Muslin knight and potential new convert—manages and redirects the violence that has just erupted among the elite inner cohort of Charlemagne's entourage. When

Ferumbras appears without warning to request single combat against Charlemagne's Twelve Peers, the poet of *Sowdone* takes this opportunity to juxtapose Ferumbras's civility as he requests this violent chivalric ritual with Roland's incivility and disobedience when he refuses to take on the fight. Ferumbras knows the forms that pertain to this honor society: "If thou be curteis, as I wene, / Thou wolte graunte a bone to me" (1061–62: If you are courteous/gracious, as I suppose, [then] you will grant me a boon; see also 1068–70). Ferumbras's compliments assume Charlemagne's acquiescence on the basis of the courtesy he attributes to him, deploying the king's own standards of conduct in his favor. Such courteous chivalric style from an enemy Muslim knight emphasizes the degree to which Ferumbras indeed resembles the Christians in elite chivalric cultural identity.³⁵ This chivalric resemblance between Ferumbras and the Christians performs the important conceptual work of marking him out as a viable candidate for conversion within this narrative. As the *Fierabras* story cluster sees the occasion of single combat as concurrent with the occasion of conversion, Ferumbras demonstrates here in *Sowdone* that he is qualified to join the Christian community by instigating his own process of transformation. Ferumbras's embodiment of an idealized version of chivalric comportment perches on the cusp of Roland's breach of those same ideals. This juxtaposition nonetheless reveals that Christians, current and future, share one consistent feature: whether in courteous or belligerent tones, they threaten each other.

Roland directs his belligerence at Charlemagne, refusing to answer Ferumbras's challenge when Charlemagne asks it of him. The argument that ensues between Roland and Charlemagne quickly, and surprisingly easily, devolves into violence that breaches bonds of religion, fealty, and kinship—a rupture that demonstrates the tension buzzing along the fractures that run through, as well as between, communities. Roland, stewing in silent discontent, was apparently waiting for an opportunity to complain about a lack of recognition he received from Charlemagne for his performance in the previous day's battle. Charlemagne took the occasion to praise the bravery and skill of his oldest knights, neglecting to recognize the valor of younger knights like Roland. Roland uses Ferumbras's challenge as a means to articulate his affront at Charlemagne's favoritism: "The laste day ye preised faste / The oolde knightes of here worthynes. / Let him goon forth—I have no haste; / Thai may goo shewen here prowes" (1087–90: Yesterday, you were

35. In a similar vein, we might recall the opening scene of the romance, where Muslim leadership peacefully engages in the leisure pursuits of the chivalric elite.

quick to praise the old knights for their worthiness. Let them go forth—I have no hurry; they may go show their prowess). Roland's disobedience and insolence prompts Charlemagne to lash out in turn: "For that worde the Kinge was wrothe / And smote him on the mouthe on hye, / The bloode at his nose oute-goth, / And saide, 'Traitor, thou shalte aby.' " (1091–94: The king was angered by that speech and immediately struck him on the mouth; the blood poured from his nose, and [the king] said, "Traitor, you shall obey/ pay the penalty."). Incivility and disciplinary shaming for it are merely the beginning. Striking Roland for insolence escalates the conflict. The enraged Roland draws his sword and rushes at the king: "He wolde have smyten the Kinge there / Ne hadde the barons ronne bytwene; / The Kinge withdrowe him for fere" (1099–1101: He would have slashed the king with his sword there had the barons not run between [them]; the king removed himself out of fear). This instance of barely averted regicide reveals a propensity for violence even among members of the same community. Slightings, jealousies, and rancor within this chivalric Christian community can apparently translate very easily into a violent situation that no one seems to originally intend. Violence, whether sanctioned and ritualized through single combat or illicit and haphazard as tempers run high, appears to be an integral component of the elite chivalric Christian community.

If enemies are designated by their violent desires vis-à-vis the self or one's community, then Roland has clearly crossed that line, refusing the sanctioned scene of violence against an enemy that is on offer to instead wield his sword against his king in an attack barely averted by the other knights standing by. Roland's attack confounds Charlemagne's expectations, but so too does Ferumbras's behavior. As I have explained, the desire of the neighbor is enigmatic—to the neighbor as well as to the self—and any confrontation with the neighbor's unpredictable desire prompts a troubling realization that the self's desires are likewise unfathomable. What is the status of Ferumbras's desire when he arrives to request single combat? The text implicitly raises the question of his motivation without answering it, and, as theories of the neighbor would suggest, such illegibility is as urgent as it is problematic. Ferumbras's proximity is thus at once flattering and worrisome: he represents everything that the Christians admire and wish to believe about themselves, and perhaps everything they most wish to *deny* about themselves—most crucially in this case, a capacity for aggression against their community. Confronted with Ferumbras's unexpected request and its unresolvable questions, Roland reveals the state of his own desire to be troublingly contradictory: he wants recognition and validation from Charlemagne, even as he seems also to desire to strike a savage blow against him.

That Roland's actions pose such a dire conceptual problem is revealed in the way the Middle English narrative abruptly shifts its ground, jumping forward to the moment of Roland and Charlemagne's reconciliation. Even as Charlemagne withdraws from the scene of Roland's violence, so too does the narrator—evading a direct confrontation with the implications of this intrafaith violence and refusing to chart the process of the community coming to terms with what has happened. Though it takes “grete prayere and instaunce” (1104: great prayer and urging) from the other knights, the narrational trajectory of smoothing the breach happens nearly instantaneously: “Every wrath moste over-gone, / Of the more myschiefe to make voydaunce” (1105–6: Every instance of anger must pass, to avoid greater misfortune/wrongs). In short, the romance stipulates reconciliation without demonstrating it or meaningfully confronting its implications, hastily covering over the awkward moment. The text indicates the extent of the problem Roland's action creates by speaking around it, failing to address it directly. Overall, then, this sequence showcases the way that Ferumbras's appearance to request single combat not only raises anxieties by initiating the extended process of his own conversion, but also and crucially forces the Christians into a confrontation with the fact that they do not actually know what they are capable of doing to each other.

Piemonte paints a similar conceptual scene in *Hystoria*: internal Christian violence arises in the wake of Fierabrás's request for single combat. The violent confrontation between Carlomagno and Roldán reaches the same problematic point as in the comparable scene in the Middle English *Sowdowe*, where a loyal retainer attacks his king over what amounts to a petty slight, however blown out of proportion by both men's tempers (fol. 7). However, *Hystoria* reveals Roldán's near-regicide as an enduring neighborly problem that places Carlomagno's life at further risk, for in the wake of Roldán's refusal, Carlomagno resolves to fight Fierabrás himself. The king's body should not be at risk in this way, and it is Roldán's fault that things have deteriorated to this point. At the same time, the threat to Carlomagno's life that Fierabrás represents, as “el mas feroz pagano que en aquel tiempo enel mundo se fallaua” (fol. 7v: the fiercest pagan that could be found in the world at that time), displaces the fact that the threat arose first within the Christian community. This displacement is the first step of the text's gentrification of the uses of Christian violence. *Hystoria* then recuperates Roldán's broken example of Christian knighthood (failing to protect the king's body) through Oliveros, who unequivocally directs violence back into its appropriate feudal and crusading channels: “mouido de grande magnanimidad y muy leal coraçon de seruir a su sennor: y por de desseo que siempre tuuo de

emplear sus fuerças contra infieles por la fe de cristo, [Oliveros] salto dela cama estirando los braços y miembros por ver si comportaria el trabajo delas armas” (fol. 7v: moved by great magnanimity and a very loyal heart to serve his lord, and by the desire he always had to employ his force against infidels for the faith of Christ, [Oliveros] leapt from the bed stretching his arms and limbs to see whether he could perform the work of battle/arms). Oliveros’s battle with Fierabrás renders Christian violence ethical because Oliveros showcases the loyalty Roldán manifestly lacks. Both *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* do this work, recuperating Christian knighthood’s failures and gentrifying the use of Christian violence through Oliver/Oliveros. Injured previously in the service of noble aims, Oliver/Oliveros reasserts and restores the relation of knight to king as one defined by fealty, service, obedience, and self-sacrificing risk-taking. The true knight, Oliveros’s actions suggest, risks his own body precisely in place of the king’s. Oliveros’s injured body is thus ethically exemplary in *Hystoria* much as Oliver’s is in *Sowdone*.

The elite medieval knight represents ethical exemplarity precisely through his capacity to rescue others, according to Aranye Fradenburg Joy’s analysis in *Sacrifice Your Love*. In her view, medieval Christian ethical subjectivity centers on the figure of the elite masculine knight and his capacity for self-rescue through sacrificial acts on behalf of others. Ethical subjectivity of this kind requires the presence of a proximate other: someone worthy of rescue who cannot (yet) rescue themselves. Medieval Christian literature finds such a figure “of flawed but evident similarity” in the theoretical figure of the neighbor—an “intimate or proximate other, a distanced but still recognizable (self-)image and imaginary support for the perfect ethical subject.”³⁶ Ferumbras/Fierabrás, the “noble” Muslim knight that the romance has marked out for conversion, serves as just such a neighborly and imaginary support for Oliver’s/Oliveros’s enactment of self-sacrificing Christian identity. From the perspective of the Christians, Ferumbras/Fierabrás (a “noble” Muslim knight who shares the chivalric ethos of Charlemagne’s/Carlomagno’s peerage) issues an invitation to the Christians to demonstrate, and so recreate and confirm, their own noble ethical subjectivity by rescuing him. And in so doing, Oliver/Oliveros sacrifices himself in the place of, and for

36. L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 177. Fradenburg makes these remarks with reference to women as proximate other, but the insight holds true for the figure of near difference constituted by the noble Muslim knight. She makes her argument about medieval chivalric ethical subjectivity in light of Thomas Aquinas’s *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*.

the sake of, his community. This process reaffirms the principle of rescue and assures them that they are indeed ethical subjects; rescuing others therefore constitutes a form of self-rescue, as well.

Yet self-sacrifice in this instance means, strangely, fighting; rescuing Fierabras means hurting him. And so, in line with theories of the neighbor, this situation allows Oliver/Oliveros to indulge aggression against Ferumbras/Fierabrás (which encounters with the neighbor provoke) precisely through a violence that the texts position as a self-sacrificial act of rescue. The self-sacrificial aspect resolves the contradictions of this system in large part through Oliver's/Oliveros's acceptance of his own injured state.

Sowdone and *Hystoria* each claim that exemplary Christian identity coheres around such a Christlike acceptance of injury and suffering, but only Piemonte's version takes seriously the physical, embodied reality of that claim. In *Hystoria*, Oliveros models an extreme acceptance of physical suffering as exemplary of Christian life, knighthood, and ethical practice. His injuries exude concrete weight, in contrast to Oliver's injuries in *Sowdone*. That is, the physical experience of injury in *Hystoria* far exceeds that in *Sowdone*, where injuries operate as symbols that largely divorce wounds from their material consequences. For instance, the poet of *Sowdone* claims that Oliver is wounded, but his injuries do not noticeably impede his fighting ability. Likewise, when the Middle English poem later emphasizes Ferumbras's five Christlike wounds, their impact remains heavily allegorical, even though Ferumbras claims to be "so hurte I may not stonde" (1355: so hurt that I cannot stand). The two men's injuries carry a different weight in *Hystoria*. Consequently, Piemonte's version of the *Fierabras* narrative instigates a pedagogic process, using single combat as the site where Oliveros teaches Fierabrás how to suffer. Teaching Fierabrás how to suffer, by example and by force, becomes synonymous with his rescue and conversion.

Leading by example, Oliveros demonstrates, quite literally, that pain and injury debilitate the body even as they elevate the spirit. Piemonte thus renders physical suffering a concrete and desirable state of being. In the passage from *Hystoria* I quoted above, we watch Oliveros assess his own strength and agility to determine whether he can take up the battle with Fierabrás. From here forward, *Hystoria* relentlessly emphasizes the severity of Oliveros's wounds and their debilitating physical effect upon his speed, strength, and agility: "armado oliueros salto de vn salto xxv pies: y del salto se le abrieron las sus frescas llagas y dellas salio abundancia de sangre: mas ni por esso ni por ruegos: ni por lagrimas del escudero no quiso desarmarse ni dexar de yr ala batalla" (fol. 7v: armed, Oliveros leapt in one leap twenty-five feet,

and with that leap his fresh wounds opened and from them an abundance of blood came out. But not for this, nor for prayers, nor for tears from his squire did he want to disarm himself nor give up going to battle). *Hystoria* fixates on these wounds and the toll they take upon Oliveros's strength and stamina. He may be able to leap twenty-five feet in a single bound, but not without strewing blood all about him. This truly horrifying image of a copiously bleeding Oliveros affects everyone around him. A long list of characters, including Guerin (Oliveros's squire), Carlomagno, Count Renger (Oliveros's father), Roldán, and even Fierabrás himself, apprehend the deep disadvantage that Oliveros's injured state creates, and everyone tries to talk him out of fighting. But Oliveros's persistent and patient willingness to suffer in this battle makes its own radical argument, to readers and to Fierabrás, about the role that violence, and its embodied effects of pain and debilitation, plays in Christian spiritual and chivalric life.

Writing specifically about the Middle English tradition, Siobhain Bly Calkin has argued that the *Fierabras* story's "emphasis upon wounded Christian bodies . . . foregrounds the wounded nature of Christ's body."³⁷ Bodies capable of being wounded, of suffering physical injuries, demonstrate a "corporeal vulnerability" akin to the physical suffering endured by Christ at the crucifixion in Christian thought.³⁸ Corporeal vulnerability thus "makes a body Christian."³⁹ Calkin is thinking of Ferumbras in particular, who suf-

37. Calkin, "Romance Baptisms," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 114. Calkin arrives at this reading of the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* through that text's attention to Oliver's healing and bandaging of Ferumbras's wounds in that version of the text. *Sowdone* gives very little attention to the healing or bandaging of Ferumbras's wounds; Charlemagne's attention to healing Ferumbras is phrased so generally as to dodge the wounds' specific physical impact: "He sende to him his surgyne / To hele his woundes wyde. / He ordeyned to him such medycyn, / That sone myght he go and ryde" (*Sowdone of Babyllone*, 1471–74: He sent his surgeon to him to heal his gaping wounds. He prepared/prescribed such medicine for him that he would soon be able to go and ride). In my view, the attention that *Sowdone* gives to the wounds' *symbolic* register ("bloody woundes fyve": five bloody wounds) ties Ferumbras more explicitly to Christ than does his side wound in the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*. My thinking here has also benefited from rich exchanges with Rachel Levinson-Emley.

38. Calkin, "Romance Baptisms," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 112.

39. Calkin, "Romance Baptisms," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 112. Calkin analyzes the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*—one of the other three Middle English *Fierabras* narratives. This version differs in a few crucial ways from *Sowdone of Babyllone*. For instance, Ferumbras in the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* suffers a serious gash in his torso rather than a rhetorical set of stigmata, as he does in *Sowdone*. Ferumbras has been disemboweled in this version, and Oliver acts as field medic, packing his guts back into his torso and

fers wounds that place him in a Christlike position. I agree with Calkin, and build my own analysis of Ferumbras's/Fierabrás's violent conversion on her insight, but I am cognizant also of Oliver's wounded Christian body and the ethical apparatus that his suffering wrenches into gear within this scenario. In both *Sowdone* and *Hystoria*, I argue that Oliver's/Oliveros's wounded body performs key ethical work akin to Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of humanity; he suffers and sacrifices himself precisely in place of Roland/Roldán (and, in the case of *Hystoria*, in place of Carlomagno as well). Oliver/Oliveros thus reaffirms the particular medieval mode of ethical subjectivity based upon sacrifice and rescue that Fradenburg Joy outlines. Oliver's/Oliveros's actions gentrify and so justify Christian violence by repositioning it as self-sacrifice. And this makes it possible for the Christians to use violence to convert Ferumbras/Fierabrás without having to question what the practice reveals about their desires, motives, and faith. The gentrification of bleeding bodies as Christian bodies (and therefore the gentrification of bodies that make others bleed as Christian bodies) performs a breathtaking and ominous conceptual sleight of hand.

In the wake of the neighboring Muslim knight's challenge and a fellow Christian knight's violent attack on his king, Oliver/Oliveros rises up, performing the "informed capacity to choose right action and thus to recreate and rescue [him]self."⁴⁰ In this medieval ethical logic, "the help the subject can give, to himself or to others, desperately affirms the very principle of rescue"—the absolute rescue of humanity from sin, for instance, that Christ undertakes via the crucifixion in Christian thought.⁴¹ The *Fierabras* story cluster thus invokes and reaffirms Christian ethics through Oliver/Oliveros, who displaces the troubling implications of internal Christian violence by exhibiting a body that accepts (as well as wields) violence and who is willing to suffer for his community. Oliver/Oliveros, significantly, has not been wounded by fellow Christians (as Charlemagne/Carlomagno so nearly was), and thus his exemplary wounded body constitutes an evasion of the radical encounter with the opacity of the neighbor's and the self's desire that Roland's/Roldán's attack on Charlemagne/Carlomagno makes legible. The wounded Oliver/Oliveros replaces the almost disastrously injured body of the king with his own body, wounded in the king's service. Oliver/Oliveros

roughly bandaging him. Calkin reads this moment as Oliver remaking Ferumbras as Christian from the inside out. These details are absent from *Sowdone*. Nonetheless, Calkin's insights have deeply informed my reading of *Sowdone*.

40. Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love*, 177.

41. Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love*, 179.

is, therefore, the only knight among Charlemagne's/Carlomagno's company who can perform the reparative action required of this moment.

Oliver's/Oliveros's injuries are thus not incidental to the scene of single combat where Ferumbras/Fierabrás converts to Christianity, but rather essential to the gentrifying work the scene undertakes. Oliver's/Oliveros's injured body redeems Christian violence by modeling radical acceptance of pain, loss of strength, and loss of agility. This is what Ferumbras/Fierabrás must apparently learn in order to be rescued and make the transition into Christian life, belief, and ethical subjectivity. I argue that Oliver/Oliveros thus gentrifies internal Christian violence by transforming violence (and the injuries violence inflicts) into a pedagogical agenda. He actively teaches Ferumbras/Fierabrás how to enact Christian ethics, and in the process, redeems and reaffirms Christian ethics—violent as it is—as exemplary and desirable. In the process, gentrification advances a fantasy of conversion as the erasure of prior religious and cultural identity. In the Middle English *Sowdone*, this process and its pedagogical implications remain implicit and largely symbolic (*Sowdone* forces us to draw out these interpretive conclusions for ourselves), while in the Castilian *Hystoria*, Piemonte lays out these parameters more directly, concretizing not only the physical suffering Oliveros and Fierabrás undergo, but also its pedagogical application. Christians must accept violence to their bodies, sacrificing physical wellbeing for the sake of their community; they are therefore (so runs the logic) justified in wielding ethically transformative violence against others. Oliveros first exemplifies, and then inflicts, such debilitating pain and injury upon Fierabrás.

Let us look in detail at this pedagogic process as it unfolds. Oliveros's willingness to fight in his debilitated state demonstrates the primacy of embodied suffering to Christian belief and practice, as well as to elite forms of chivalric masculinity that similarly endorse an honorable endurance of ill-fated circumstance. Oliveros's example in both respects gradually brings Fierabrás into an ennobling ethical subjectivity, recreating him in Oliveros's own (injured) image. Suffering is the key to this joint chivalric and religious ethical subjectivity. One of the first signs that Fierabrás is learning from Oliveros's example comes when he affectively registers Oliveros's injured state. Fierabrás's empathy construes Oliveros's injuries as worthy of attention and care: "Quando Fierabras le vido tan demudado assi enla fabla como en la color de gesto dixo, Oliueros noble cauallero como me pesa detu mal" (fol. xi: When Fierabrás saw him so distraught both in speech as in the color of his visage, he said, "Oliveros, noble knight, how your distress weighs on me!"). Fierabrás begins here to carry the affective burden of Oliveros's suffering

body; this is the first psychological step to literally taking such injuries upon himself. As the battle continues, Fierabrás increasingly admires Oliveros's tenacity in the face of his injuries and the disadvantages they lead to. Fierabrás's recognition of Oliveros's suffering provides the Muslim knight with opportunities to demonstrate his own nobility and fairmindedness (offering thoughtful chivalric accommodations that Oliveros mostly refuses), even as it schools him in Christian endurance and submission to physical misfortune.⁴² Oliveros's determination not to accept aid from his opponent when it is freely offered exhibits an extreme form of chivalric pride and honor that makes his victory that much sweeter, but it is also, and more crucially, pedagogical. In this model, Christians accept what the world throws at them, and they endure. By example, Oliveros instructs Fierabrás in a radical mode of this Christian philosophy.

To suffer without seeking remedy is, in fact, the most important Christian lesson that Oliveros models and then inflicts upon Fierabrás. Piemonte makes this lesson most explicit through the miraculous healing balm that Fierabrás carries with him. Fierabrás repeatedly emphasizes the value of a whole body and physical safety, entreating Oliveros to use the healing balm before their combat even begins so that Oliveros should not be disadvantaged by his injuries from the outset of the battle.⁴³ Fierabrás notices the "sangre que de vuestro cuerpo sale" (fol. 9v: blood that flows from your [Oliver's] body) and offers the balm, which Oliveros refuses. Fierabrás offers it a second time in the midst of their combat because he sees that Oliver is "tan demudado assi en la fabla como en la color del gesto" (fol. 11r: as faint in speech as in complexion). But Oliveros refuses again, even though the balm is associated with Christ (and thus its use by Christians ostensibly endorsed by association).⁴⁴ *Hystoria* emphasizes the view that Christian mentality does

42. For instance, Oliveros's manifest pain moves Fierabrás to give Oliveros the opportunity to retrieve his sword when he has dropped it, and to fight on foot when Oliveros is unhorsed because he is impressed with Oliveros's determination and valor through adversity. Oliveros repeatedly refuses to accept most of these accommodations, determined only to take advantage of opportunities that he engineers for himself. For instance, after dropping his sword Oliveros rearms himself only when he manages to distract Fierabrás and steal an extra sword from the giant's horse (the sword *bautizo*).

43. Another example of Fierabrás's emphasis on safety comes when he promises to save Oliveros's life if he converts to Islam (a direct contrast to Christianity's emphasis on suffering and sacrifice).

44. This healing balm is said to be the balm with which Christ's body was anointed after his crucifixion, and therefore its miraculous healing properties testify to the divinity of Christ and the salvific implications of his sacrifice.

not promise physical wholeness or continued life; rather, Christian chivalry emphasizes the extreme acceptance of corporeal vulnerability—not just opening oneself up to the mortal consequences of a mortal body, but suffering the wounds accrued in the chivalric life of service and sacrifice without seeking remedy. When Oliveros initially rejects the offer of the balm he declares: “No quiero Fierabras vencer te por virtud de balsamo sino con tajante espada e armas luzidas como cauallero” (fol. 9v: Fierabrás, I don’t want to defeat you by virtue of balm but rather with a fine sword⁴⁵ and shining arms like a knight). Oliveros understands Christo-chivalric practice to require that he accept and endure rather than seeking to alleviate suffering. *Hystoria*’s narrative emphasis on the balm thus holds out miraculous healing precisely in order to reject it.

Christ’s suffering and sacrificial body ironically creates a healing balm that Christians are precisely called upon *not* to use. It takes Fierabrás some time to learn this lesson. Fierabrás himself turns immediately to the balm at the first moment that he is seriously wounded by Oliveros. After Fierabrás has healed himself, Oliveros finds an opportunity to detach the bottles of balm from Fierabrás’s saddle. Upon drinking it, he, too, immediately experiences its restorative effects: “se sintio sano, ligero, y dispuesto como si nunca vuiera sido ferido” (fol. 11v: he felt healthy, light, and valorous⁴⁶ as though he had never been injured). While Oliveros rejoices at this result, he also experiences a deep and immediate concern: “E desto dio infinitas gracias a dios: y dixo entresi: ningun buen cauallero no deue pelear con esperança de tales breuajes” (fol. 11v: For this [i.e., being healed] he gave infinite thanks to God. And he said to himself: “No good knight ought to fight with hope in [or the expectation of] such concoctions”⁴⁷). Suffering and endurance

45. “Tajante espada” indicates a particularly fine, well-made and strong blade. De Covarrubias glosses it as, “la que tiene perfetos filos y fuertes aceros” (one that has perfect sharp edges and strong steel). See Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco, “Tajar,” in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica 21, edited by Ignacio Arellano and Rafael Zafrá (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2006). Covarrubias’s *Tesoro* was first published in 1458.

46. “Dispuesto” can refer to determination, a good mood, or, as I have glossed it here, valor. In short, Oliveros feels once again ready and disposed to fight upon drinking the balm. Though de Covarrubias does not gloss “dispuesto” as pertaining directly to health, it may also carry this valence inasmuch as its opposite, “indispuesto,” specifically refers to infirmity and illness. See de Covarrubias Horozco, “Disponer,” in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, 720.

47. “Breuaje,” according to de Covarrubias, is a corruption of “bebraje,” which he explains is “la bebida que dan a las bestias, o para curarlas o para engordarlas, con harina, aceite y otras cosas” (the drink that they give to beasts, either in order to cure them or in order to

ground Christian belief and practice. Oliveros throws the bottles of balm into the river so that neither he nor Fierabrás may partake of their healing properties again, which creates the opportunity (and necessity) for Fierabrás to endure significant suffering when next he is wounded by Oliveros.

In *Sowdone's* Middle English version, in contrast, no such miraculous healing takes place. Wounds are primarily ethical-conceptual touchstones in *Sowdone*, rather than injuries that exert debilitating physical effects upon strength or agility. Consequently, the Middle English poet emphasizes the injuries in a more purely symbolic register rather than in their capacity to diminish the functioning of the body and cause extensive physical suffering.⁴⁸ Ferumbras offers no recognition that Oliver is injured in *Sowdone*, and the poet only obliquely reminds us of the fact once during the battle, when the balm fleetingly appears. As in *Hystoria's* scene of combat, in *Sowdone* Oliver dislodges “the botelles of bawme” (1185: bottles of balm) from Ferumbras’s saddle and throws them into the river (1191), at which Ferumbras hints at their great worth “to a man that were wounded sore” (1194: to a man that was sorely wounded). Careful readers might recall Oliver’s injuries and notice that “wounded sore” is, in fact, precisely how Charlemagne describes Oliver earlier: “Thou arte seke and woundede sore” (1116: You are sick and sorely wounded). *Sowdone* only ever alludes to the possibility of healing once it is out of reach, and very obliquely at that. It is, in fact, precisely this neighborly comparison with *Hystoria* that unearths the significance of these various choices. *Sowdone* presents Oliver’s wounds as bearing allegorical value rather than exerting debilitating physical effects. In contrast, *Hystoria* takes physical suffering and injury

fatten them, with flour, oil and other things). In this particular context, Oliveros seems to be expanding the use of the word beyond animal husbandry to a tonic, potion, or draught with special properties. See de Covarrubias Horozco, “Brebaje,” in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, 353.

48. The allegorical level of wounds’ significance in *Sowdone* creates little need for the men to make use of healing balm to restore them to fighting fitness partway through their single combat and thus gives us a compelling way to explain the very cursory treatment of the balm in this version of the story. This is one of the significant differences between *Sowdone* and *Sir Ferumbras*. Calkin shows how *Sir Ferumbras* frequently and repeatedly brings Oliver’s wounds (and their physical effects) into narrative view, contrasting them with the “overwhelmingly . . . healthy and whole” body of Ferumbras (“Romance Baptisms,” in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 112). *Sowdone* treats Oliver’s injured state as largely symbolic by mentioning it only once, alluding to it here only through the repetition of the language “wounded sore” that Charlemagne earlier used to describe Oliver. Ferumbras uses that same phrase, but in a general sense rather than in specific reference to Oliver.

seriously in its material effects, driving the point home by contrasting suffering and debilitation with its alternative: the miraculously whole and healed body. Oliveros must eliminate the balm as an option so that Fierabrás can learn to endure suffering and enter into Christian ethical and chivalric subjectivity. This pedagogical process Oliveros forces Fierabrás to undergo culminates in the sword blows from the sword *bautizo* that bring Fierabrás into the physical experience of pain and injury so fundamental to Christian life and practice as Oliveros has modeled it.

My argument about Piemonte's *Hystoria* thus far expounds the spiritual significance appending the concrete physical suffering endured by Oliveros, and then taken on by Fierabrás in the moment of his conversion. Pain and injury are exemplary of Christian life and practice. This exemplary suffering draws upon the model of Christ's passion, as does the comparable scene in *Sowdone*. Ferumbras's five bloody wounds in *Sowdone* allegorically render Ferumbras as Christ by imitating his exact wounds. In *Hystoria* Fierabrás's wounds do not so precisely imitate Christ's wounds in their number and shape. That is, in Piemonte's Castilian *Hystoria*, the expression that suffering takes does not need to precisely imitate Christ's wounds, for the point is the concrete experience of pain itself. It is worth noting, however, that other scholars have attributed a specific, imitative Christlike symbolism to the wounds that Oliveros and Fierabrás receive in Piemonte's *Hystoria*. For instance, Ryan D. Giles opines that a crucifixion analogy appends the scene of Fierabrás's conversion, where Fierabrás allegorically plays the blind Roman soldier Longinus to Oliveros's Christ.⁴⁹ Simultaneously healed of blindness and convinced of Christ's divinity after wounding his side at the crucifixion, Longinus's conversion, as exemplum, renders literal a spiritual blindness of erroneous belief that conversion remedies—a powerful conversionary metaphor throughout medieval European Christendom that, in Giles's view, Piemonte here brings to bear upon Fierabrás's change of faith.⁵⁰

49. Giles, "Converting the Saracen," in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*, 130. As Giles points out, Longinus is explicitly invoked in one of Oliveros's prayers during his battle with Fierabrás, which can be read as a conversionary sermon or catechism that, in indirectly instructing Fierabrás in orthodox Christian belief, helps to convert him. Though I do not deny that the extended scene has paved the way for Fierabrás's conversion in multiple respects, several of which Giles articulates (for instance, Oliveros's repeated prayers take the form of creed and catechism, and Piemonte tells us that Fierabrás is listening closely to what he says), I would reassert that the emphasis falls most heavily upon suffering and endurance as models of a joint Christian and chivalric ethical practice that must accompany professions of creed.

50. In turn, Giles reads the blow Oliveros gives Fierabrás with the sword *bautizo* (Baptism)

Longinus's example provides a metaphor of healing as the outward conversionary sign of an inward spiritual transformation. But, as I have shown, Piemonte explicitly raises and then rejects miraculous healing as a means and measure of Christian faith and practice in Fierabrás's conversion scene. As I have argued, Piemonte's overriding emphasis in fact falls upon physical suffering as a spiritual and chivalric ideal that Fierabrás must himself experience, learning it from Oliveros's example and at his hands when he delivers the final "baptismal" blow. That is, the crucial moment of conversionary transformation for Fierabrás seems not to be the moment when he wounds Oliveros in the side, but rather the moment when Oliveros uses the sword *bautizo* to wound Fierabrás, forcing him into the experience of Christianity—the experience of suffering.

One of the most remarkable facets of Piemonte's *Hystoria* lies in the fact that Fierabrás carries a sword named *bautizo* to the battle with Oliveros. Fierabrás apparently collects blades; *bautizo* is not his primary weapon, but rather one of three extra blades tied to his saddle. If audiences had not already marked Fierabrás's looming conversion plot for themselves from other details, the presence of a sword with such an allegorical name would drive the insight home. The name of the blade impels Christian violence into a context that gentrifies and justifies its use, construing violence as ethical. In other words, in this radical Christian worldview where pain and injury exhibit one's faith and ethical subjectivity, the sword *bautizo* ups the ante and gentrifies the instrument of martial combat as itself the sacrament of conversion. Oliveros seizes *bautizo* in the fight's culminating moment and uses it to inflict the wounds that defeat Fierabrás and instigate his conversion: "tomo la espada llamada bautizo . . . y Oliveros dio tal golpe a Fierabrás que le fizo fincar las rodillas enel suelo y conosco Oliveros que aquella espada era mejor que la suya . . . y firio reziamente enla yjada" (fol. 12r–v: [Oliveros] took the sword named Baptism . . . and Oliveros gave such a blow to Fierabrás that he made him sink to his knees on the ground and Oliveros knew that this sword was better than his own . . . and he wounded him strongly in the abdomen). A sword blow inflicts the sacrament as damage to Fierabrás's body. This symbolic and violent "baptism" inducts Fierabrás into a Christian mode of physicality: the suffering and endurance first

as "mak[ing] visible a 'mortal herida' [mortal wound] meant to signify Original Sin" (Giles, "Converting the Saracen," in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*, 131). Giles's ultimately historicist argument posits that Piemonte's literary representation of conversion reflects the policies and politics of the early sixteenth-century Christianization of the conquered Muslim kingdom of Granada.

exemplified by Oliveros. Just as Piemonte concretizes the expectation that Christians should model their lives upon Christ's by insisting that exemplary Christians actively suffer and bleed, Piemonte here literalizes conversion as a weapon of war. To hurt Fierabrás is to baptize him. This allegorical wounding, crucially, comes without the possibility of immediate healing. Oliveros therefore forces Fierabrás to experience, and thus to convert to, Christian life as suffering.

Once symbolically baptized through wounding, and experiencing the suffering that comes with it, Fierabrás expresses his cognizance of "pagan" religious error.⁵¹ As soon as Fierabrás experiences pain and defeat on the battlefield, he effectively experiences Christian belief and practice. In other words, in the *Fierabras* story cluster, to suffer is to become Christian: "Quando el pagano vido su mortal ferida y que no podria resistir a Oliueros illuminado dela gracia del espiritu sancto conosco el error delos paganos: y puesta la mano yzquierda ala ferida dixo a Oliueros. O noble Oliueros caualero de gran valor en honrra de tu dios. El qual confesso ser dios verdadero y omnipotente suplicote que no me dexes morir fasta que aya recebido baptism" (fol. 12v: When the pagan saw his mortal wound and that he would not be able to resist Oliveros, illuminated with the grace of the Holy Spirit he realized/knew the error of the pagans. And pressing his left hand to his wound, he said to Oliveros: "O noble Oliveros, knight of great valor in honor of your God—who I confess to be the true and omnipotent God—I entreat you that you don't let me die until I should have received baptism"). Fierabrás has learned the Christian lesson Oliveros modeled with the balm (not to try to alleviate his own suffering). Throughout this proclamation, Fierabrás ignores the question of healing and instead asks that Oliveros pre-

51. Both *Sowdone of Babylone* and Piemonte's *Hystoria del emperador Carlomagno* repeatedly (and mistakenly) code Muslim identity as pagan. This conflation, though common in medieval romance texts, radically and dangerously misrepresents Islam. These texts participate in several such stereotypical and inaccurate representations that are common to medieval Christian discourse about its neighboring religion. The most important of these, for the purposes of my analysis in this chapter, are the poet of *Sowdone's* conflation of terms such as "pagan," "heathen," and "Saracen" to represent Ferumbras's Muslim faith and identity, and his renunciation of multiple gods when he converts to Christianity (Islam is, of course, monotheistic). Piemonte similarly conflates various geopolitical and descriptive terms to refer generally to Muslims: "paganos" (pagans), "moros" (Moors), and "turcos" (Turks). For a description and analysis of some of the more prevalent among European Christian stereotypes for Islam, see Akbari, *Idols in the East*; Ross Brann, "The Moors?," *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 307–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006709X458864>; Kathleen Kennedy, "Moors and Moorishness in Late Medieval England," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 42 (2020): 213–51.

serve his life only for the sake of receiving baptism. Symbolically, however, baptism is precisely what he has already received, in the allegorical form of sword and the suffering it has caused. Piemonte posits that a bleeding body believes rightly. Allegorical baptism uses violence to induct Fierabrás into Christian life and practice, anticipating and paving the way for his (at this point rather anticlimactic) official baptism.

Piemonte has literalized Christian violence to the extreme brink, and Fierabrás, at least, draws back slightly in horror at the experience. At this point in the story, therefore, Piemonte begins to interrogate the extremity and force of Oliveros's conversionary method, and by extension, critiques the gentrification of Christian violence wholesale. Like the poet of *Sowdone*, Piemonte has gentrified the violence used against members of one's own community (or future members of one's own community) as precisely the feature that permits Christian ethical life of self-sacrifice and suffering to emerge and erasing Fierabrás's Muslim identity. Yet simultaneously, at this most extreme concrete example of gentrified Christian violence (the conversionary blow from the sword *bautizo*), Piemonte tips the scales into critique. Oliveros's radical acceptance of physical suffering as a Christian virtue (and therefore as a legitimate mode of conversion) abuts Fierabrás's startled fear about the severity of his injuries. That is, Fierabrás's radical acceptance of violent "baptism" does not preclude his cognizance of its dire consequences. When baptism is a sword, there is very real danger that the new convert might die in the process of conversion. Piemonte's allegorical sword, then, reminds us of how the desire to kill one's enemies nestles against to the desire to convert them in the *Fierabras* story cluster, such that the two become often indistinguishable. Oliveros has desired Fierabrás's death as much as he has desired his conversion: "[Carlomagno] me embio aqui para que diesse fin a tus dias: o alo menos dexando tus ydolos . . . creyesses enla sanctissima trinidad padre fijo y espiritu sancto" (fol. 8v: Carlomagno sent me here so that I might end your days: or at least so that, renouncing your idols, you might believe in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Note the affinity here to Oliver's diction in the Middle English *Sowdone*. Conversion or death: these two things are perennially linked in both the Middle English and Castilian accounts, a fact that is especially legible here in Piemonte's version, where conversionary "love" and obliterating violence take the same shape: that of a sword.

Fierabrás fears that his baptism, begun by sword, will culminate not with water but with death. And as he clasps his hand to his injured side, Fierabrás critiques the precarious state of his life: "si por tu falta o negligencia

yo muero pagano sera te demandado delante dios todo poderoso: y pues mostrauas que mucho desseauas verme xristiano: pon pues cobro en mi vida sino morire delante tus ojos y sera mi anima perdida” (fol. 12v: if by your fault or negligence I die pagan, it will be demanded of you before God, the all-powerful; and as you showed that you greatly desired to see me a Christian, take charge of my life so that I will not die before your eyes, and my soul will not be lost).⁵² Through Fierabrás’s physical distress, this scene culminates Piemonte’s project of concretizing the experience of physical suffering as the horrifying site and impetus of the baptismal sacrament, instituting a critique of gentrified Christian violence as an ethical mode of conversion.

Professing and Suffering Faith

The ironies of gentrifying Christian violence as a mode of conversion abound, not only in terms of the way Oliver’s/Oliveros’s wounded use of violence displaces and thus manages Roland’s/Roldán’s attack on his king, but in terms of the way Ferumbras’s/Fierabrás’s wounded body justifies the violence that harms him. We turn now to the Middle English *Sowdone’s* vision of the wounded Ferumbras, who explicitly looks Christlike in the wake of his conversion. Throughout this entire section of *Sowdone* the poet spins Christian violence into orbit around the gravity well of Christ’s sacrifice. You can justify extreme violence as ethical, the poet seems to suggest, by presenting it and its effects with reference to Christ, which curves every violent gesture in toward itself. Harnessing acts of violence to Christ’s sacrifice, the poet of *Sowdone* tames them into a predictable trajectory, and the whole violent sequence coalesces into a coherent, balanced orbit. From this cosmic view, so to speak, this system seems to function smoothly. But just as centripetal and centrifugal force are distinguished merely by the frame of reference you use to measure them, each instance of violence, analyzed from

52. Fierabrás repeats his fears of premature death to the rest of the Christian community the next day, directing his words this time to divine authority: “Jesus consuelo delos affligidos: no dexes perescer al conuertido moro” (fol. 13v; Jesus, comfort of the afflicted: do not let this converted Moor perish). Fierabrás has at this point languished all night, alone and suffering the conjoined effects of exposure on top of severe injury, for Oliveros has been captured and carried off by a Muslim army that has suddenly appeared on the scene. When Carlomagno’s knights find Fierabrás the next day, he is nearly dead: “por la frialdad dela noche y por la mucha sangre que auia perdido estaua para espirar” (fol. 13v: for the coldness of the night and for the great amount of blood that he had lost, was on the point of expiring/dying).

another angle of view, exerts a contrary force that pushes characters and their actions away from the divine context that rationalizes violence. These contrary impulses allow us to track the hitches and hesitations within *Sowdone's* system of gentrification.

The poet of the Middle English *Sowdone* allegorizes not the sword that wounds, but rather the wounds it inflicts on the body. *Sowdone* displays Ferumbras's bleeding body for the first and only time in the romance when Charlemagne discovers him in the wake of single combat; in this scene, the poet situates Ferumbras visually as the crucified Christ. The poet then deploys Charlemagne's initial resistance to Ferumbras's conversion to emphasize what we can and cannot learn about the state of a person's soul based upon the visual and visceral state of their body and upon their own capacity to account for themselves. *Sowdone* thus embeds its own critique of Christian violence, in this case by showing that gentrified violence cannot fully solve the problem of neighborliness that emerges through Roland's violence and Ferumbras's conversion.

By *Sowdone's* reckoning as well as *Hystoria's*, single combat between Oliver and Ferumbras culminates when the wounded Oliver delivers a devastating final blow, instigating Ferumbras's transformation from a Muslim enemy to a professed Christian convert. Oliver's blow disembowels Ferumbras: the stroke "carfe hym througheoute his syde. / His bare guttis men myght see; / The blode faste down ranne" (1350–52: carved him throughout his side. Men could see his bared guts; the blood ran down fast). At this point of defeat and near death, Ferumbras urgently cries mercy from Oliver, declares that his "pagan" gods are false, expresses a conviction in Christianity, and requests baptism (1353–62). Ferumbras's association with the wounded, crucified Christ begins here, where Ferumbras insists upon the legibility of his conversion in terms of Christ:

Baptised nowe wole I be.
To Jhesu Crist I wole me take—
That Charles the Kinge shal sene—
And alle my goddes forsake.
(1353–62)

(I wish to be baptized now. I will join myself to Jesus Christ and forsake all my gods—so that Charles, the king, shall see.)

Ferumbras, “so hurte [he] may not stonde” (1355: so hurt that he cannot stand), insists that violence has utterly transformed him: Charlemagne “shal sene” (shall see) that he will devote himself to “Jhesu Crist.” These lines forecast the way that the poet will encourage Charlemagne as well as the audience to “see” Ferumbras literally as Christlike. But Ferumbras’s confidence in the future legibility of his conversion ironically anticipates the difficulty Charlemagne will actually have with interpreting Ferumbras’s identity. The poet lays out the visual scene with several cues reminiscent of Christ’s sacrifice:

[King Charles] saugh under an holme tre
Where a knight him semed lay slayn.
Thederward he rode with swerde in honde.
Tho he saugh he was alyve;
He lay walowyng upon the sonde
With bloody woundes fyve.
(1445–50)

(King Charles saw a knight lying under a holly tree as though he had been slain. He rode that direction with sword in hand. Then he saw that he [the knight] was alive; he lay wallowing upon the ground with five bloody wounds.)

In Charlemagne’s reckoning, this unknown knight’s state oscillates between death and life; coupled with his position beneath a tree (a common metonym for Christ’s crucifixion cross),⁵³ the associations linking this knight with Christ mount across the passage, culminating in the stigmata-like “bloody woundes fyve” (five bloody wounds). This knight, of course, is Ferumbras. Without naming either directly, the poet frames our visual encounter with Ferumbras as a metonymic encounter with Christ. The poet thus encourages us and Charlemagne to draw the conclusion that Ferumbras has entered into Christian life and practice as centered on suffering. But more profoundly,

53. References to Christ’s crucifixion cross as simply a “tree” occur several times in the Christian Bible, including Acts 5:30, 10:39, and 13:29; Galatians 3:13; and 1 Peter 2:24. In addition to these scriptural passages, a sixth- or seventh-century Roman named Venantius Honorius Fortunatus composed the words to what later become several different hymns for the occasion of Holy Week (variously set to plainsong in the tenth and twelfth centuries) that refer to the cross as tree. See the attributions to Hymns 161, 162, and 165 in *The Hymnal 1982, according to the use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Church Publishing, 1985).

by positioning the wounds Ferumbras received while fighting Oliver as the wounds of Christ, the poet reimagines Ferumbras's suffering in the vein of ethical self-sacrifice. That is, the reference to Ferumbras's five injuries encodes the violence Oliver wrought upon Ferumbras's body during battle as analogous to the violence done to Christ. Ferumbras transmutes into a sacrificial Christian ethical subject—one who, like Oliver, now occupies the symbolic position of Christ's willingness to suffer for the sake of the salvation of the community that harms his body.

The poet asserts that Ferumbras has now entered elite Christian ethical subjectivity by parading his body before Charlemagne. Charlemagne, however, reserves judgment on that score. Reading against the grain of the poet's pregnant descriptions, Charlemagne instead interrogates Ferumbras, demanding that Ferumbras account both for himself and for the violence his body exhibits: "'What arte thou' quod Charlemayne, / 'Who hath the hurte so sore?'" (1451–52: "What are you?" asked Charlemagne, "Who has hurt you so severely?"). These abrupt questions suspend the symbolic thrust of the passage. The blunt juxtaposition of allegory with investigation transfixes Ferumbras, and the violence that put him in this position, in the glare of interpretive uncertainty. What is Ferumbras? Who has hurt him? These questions unravel the ethical alignment and gentrification that the poet has worked so hard to calibrate. And the sudden contrast reveals a calculated and violent engineering behind the shiny architectural façade.

In theoretical terms, Charlemagne's questions epitomize what Žižek, centuries later, describes as our impulse to stabilize the neighbor's ambiguous subject position vis-à-vis the self. But this impulse only reveals the murkiness of our own desires and motivations, as well. Charlemagne's desires and motivations in asking these questions are ultimately opaque, and so he, like Ferumbras, is here subject to possible (mis)interpretation. Charlemagne does not explain himself, nor does the poet step in to clarify the point of confusion. Does Charlemagne simply not recognize Ferumbras without his hauberk, which he pressed upon Oliver when the Muslim army appeared? Or does Charlemagne in fact recognize the potential significance of the five wounds and yet resist the conclusion they imply? Is his question—"Who hath the hurte so sore?"—a request for confirmation that Christian violence has indeed worked conversionary force? Or, inasmuch as Ferumbras is Christlike here, is the question a denial that Oliver could bear any resemblance to the Romans that crucified Christ or the crowds that cheered them on? Žižek argues that uncertainty and misinterpretation are inherent features of neighborly encounters; inevitably, despite our impulse to interrogate

and so clarify matters, we will never discover what we are really after by asking the question, “Who are you?” Žižek thus offers us a way to understand the myriad ways to unpack Charlemagne’s questions and the quandaries of miscommunication between Charlemagne and Ferumbras that ensue once he asks them.

Žižek suggests that the neighbor cannot satisfy our desire for a full accounting of themselves and their desire, and Ferumbras’s answer to Charlemagne’s questions is indeed ambiguous: “‘I am Ferumbras,’ he saide certayne, / ‘That am of hethen lore’” (1453–54: “I am Ferumbras,” he said certainly, “Who is of pagan belief/learning”). This response does not address either of Charlemagne’s questions directly, disregarding one and interpreting the other as an inquiry about his religious and cultural heritage. Ferumbras’s response, as confident and “certain” as he and the poet seem to find it, only tentatively and ambivalently claims the transformation that the audience knows has occurred. That is, Ferumbras’s answer rather haphazardly shores up the symbolic visual register of his body and his earlier profession of a change of faith. At best he gives only a very partial, incomplete answer, and at worst he undermines his own prior claims. In short, his statement muddles, rather than clarifies, his identity, not only in terms of its temporal register (is this a claim about past or present identity?), but also in terms of what element of identity it claims (is this a statement of heritage and upbringing or a statement about religious affiliation?). *Lore* can be an ambiguous term itself. It can refer to the process of education and instruction; to the knowledge and information thus imparted; to spiritual and religious teachings (as well as to heretical teachings); to religious faith or theological doctrine; to a rule of living or code of conduct; to the language of a people or land; or, in a more general way, to conduct, behavior, habit, practices, or customs. The interpretive flexibility of Ferumbras’s response foregrounds the knotty problem of giving a full account of oneself—particularly one that can span the gulf of an identity in transition. This ambiguous response also disrupts this poem’s fantasy of conversion as erasure—Ferumbras’s Muslim identity and heritage have not disappeared through Christian violence and gentrification. If conversion achieves a transformation that reinscribes one’s identity through violence, it does not, in fact, do so by erasing one’s prior identity.

As a result of all these pressures, the two men effectively talk past one another. Semantic range and the interpretive ambiguity it grants inhere in the juxtaposition between the way Charlemagne interprets Ferumbras’s response and the way the narration of the larger sequence might encourage the audience to interpret it. Charlemagne interprets Ferumbras’s answer as

claiming to still be a Muslim: “Fals Saresyn” (1455: False Muslim), Charlemagne exclaims, “By the I have lost my two cosynes, / Thyn hede shalle I of-smyte” (1457–58: I have lost my two relatives by you; I shall smite off your head). Blaming Ferumbras for the capture of Oliver and Roland by the sultan’s army, Charlemagne treats Ferumbras as an enemy whose body merits further violence, as opposed to an incipient member of the Christian community whose body has already suffered transformative Christian violence. The ambiguities and ironies of Charlemagne’s response grow as we recall how closely the poet of *Sowdone* aligns Christian hospitality and hostility. The audience may not read Ferumbras’s claim to be of “hethen lore” the same way that Charlemagne does. In light of his prior profession of newfound faith in Christianity, Ferumbras’s words could be read as claiming an identity in transition. The fact that he does not profess, in this moment, to be a Christian could be a nod to his future baptism. From this perspective, his claim to be of “hethen lore” could register his rejection of Islam as a prior state of belief, even as it acknowledges that his history will always include this heritage. But even so, it remains an oddly truncated profession of an identity in transition. Inasmuch as Ferumbras’s response partially confounds the promise legible in the picture of his five bloody wounds, he renders those wounds’ Christian ethical or spiritual significance momentarily uncertain, subject to the very misinterpretations that Charlemagne makes.

These points of friction hinder Ferumbras’s smooth trajectory toward Christianity and give us instead this strange, fractious moment where the two men talk past, rather than with, each other. Oliver’s work and example have gentrified Christian violence and remade the neighborly Ferumbras into the image of the idealized, suffering Christian ethical subject. Ferumbras’s resemblance with Christ, we might think, ought to showcase the success of the strategy. But disquiet always lingers in the gentrified neighbor. Though the process aims to evade the troubling facets of self and neighbor, it cannot evacuate the tensions entirely, as we see here. Charlemagne’s persistent questions, his misreading of Ferumbras’s body and identity, reveals the complexities of this process. Ferumbras hastily assures Charlemagne that Oliver has already defeated him and promised him baptism. Ferumbras declares his newfound Christian faith once again, and he requests mercy once again before the king “hade pité of him” and “toke him to his grace” (1467–68: had pity on him, and took him into his grace). In sum, the scene ambiguously details a Ferumbras made submissive to Christian violence in a process that I have read, in the spirit of medieval and modern theories of neighbor-love, as a reflexive ethics of violent love that carries the capacity to

remake both the self and the enemy as gentrified ethical subjects. Such is, I argue, the particular conversionary ethics to which these two texts of the *Fierabras* story cluster seem to subscribe, managing the threat of nondifferentiation that Ferumbras/Fierabrás initially represent vis-à-vis the Christian community through a process of gentrification that makes him recognizable to the Christians and that simultaneously makes the Christians legible once again to themselves. But the final moves of the scene in *Sowdone*, where Charlemagne interrogates Ferumbras and the violence that has made him look so Christlike, unveils and critiques the workings of this system, reinstating the problems of erasure that gentrification has tried to disguise and dispel.

New Convert in a New Conquered Land

In its concluding moments, the *Fierabras* story cluster hinges the geopolitical stakes of conquest and conversion to the granular scale of interpersonal relations that I have been analyzing thus far in this chapter. In this section of my argument, then, I follow the romance's cue and pivot my attention to the ways Fierabras's fate signals the geopolitical stakes of Iberia's conquest and its own gentrified fantasy of Muslim erasure.

After his violent conversion, Fierabras joins the Christian army in the fight against his father over the fate of Iberia. The story ends with this Muslim lord's defeat (the sultan Laban in *Sowdone*; the emir Balán in *Hystoria*) and Iberia's conquest. Post victory, Charlemagne makes provision for the proxy rule of Iberia, conferring its governance jointly upon Fierabras and Sir Guy (who has married Fierabras's sister, Floripas). Fierabras's violent conversion arc thus links him to the newly conquered land of Iberia, which he comes to rule and where he stays when Charlemagne departs for France. Transporting the lens of gentrified violence from the level of individual Muslim conversion, I now analyze the distinct ways *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* each imagine violence to scale up to the conquest of Iberia. Piemonte rivets our attention on Carlomagno's doubts about conversion's efficacy and his fears regarding the sheer difficulty of Iberia's integration into Christendom. Piemonte eschews toponyms for Iberia: he prefers instead the descriptive phrase "tierras del almirante" (the emir's lands). This decision regarding nomenclature relegates Fierabrás and Iberia firmly to the past, revealing how stubbornly past associations and identities plague conversion and conquest. Meanwhile, the poet of *Sowdone* brushes off all hints of difficulty

regarding either conversion or conquest through Charlemagne's nonchalant confidence in Ferumbras's and "Spayne's" (Spain's) future. Comparing these different tonal approaches to the ending of the *Fierabras* plot, I argue that these two texts' geopolitical visions quietly gentrify Muslim-ruled Iberia (al-Andalus) out of the realm of possibility.

My neighborly comparative analysis thus traces the ways that each text, in its different way, constructs a gentrified fantasy of Iberia around the absent presence of al-Andalus. These fantasies emerge to view precisely through the act of neighborly comparison. For instance, each of these *Fierabras* romances names Iberia differently, and it turns out that toponyms (or their absence) carry particular weight regarding each text's construction of a geopolitical fantasy that gentrifies Iberia into a Christian land, disavowing its Muslim legacies and past. *Sowdone's* fantasy quietly posits that the conquest of Spayne consolidates Europe as a Christian realm and therefore outfits Charlemagne as a paragon of European Christendom. *Sowdone's* poet handles this gentrification work gingerly, gradually winnowing down the tale's geographic complexity across the plot until we are left solely with a view of Christian "Spayne." Piemonte's *Hystoria*, meanwhile, crafts a different gentrified fantasy: his geopolitical vision implies that the dangers of apostasy, revolt, and renewed military incursions against this emir's newly conquered land (all of which threaten Fierabrás's proxy rule of the "tierras del almirante") do not trouble "tierra de cristianos" (Christian lands) but are, rather, firmly lodged in an abstract and nameless Muslim world that recedes into the past. In Piemonte's vision, inasmuch as he cannot name Iberia directly, he likewise denies Iberia a present and future. In contrast to *Sowdone's* fantasy that conversion and conquest cause no problems, Piemonte takes a gloomier and more historical view: the very real challenges of conquest and conversion that Piemonte gives voice to aptly describe his own sixteenth-century Iberian present, as Giles has detailed.⁵⁴ Piemonte does not deny or gentrify the difficulties out of sight, as *Sowdone* does. Rather, Piemonte relegates the trouble to a nameless past. His vision thus coheres around absence, gentrifying violent conquest and conversion by displacing Iberia's discontents from his own present into a hollow core that swallows all particulars.

54. Giles, "Converting the Saracen," in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*. On the relation of Piemonte's *Hystoria* to its historical context, see also Grinberg, "(Un)stable Identities," and Grinberg, "Aigues-Mortes and Holy War." There have not been comparable studies on the historical context of *Sowdone* (relative to England's relation to Iberia around the turn of the fifteenth century).

Proxy Rule

Each version tethers the *Fierabras* story cluster's geopolitical stakes to Fierabras's reaction to his fate (i.e., to stay behind and rule Iberia when Charlemagne leaves). That is, all versions of the *Fierabras* story cluster assign Fierabras to Iberia, and all versions narrate a tearful parting between Fierabras and Charlemagne. Yet Piemonte exacerbates Fierabras's sorrow beyond its nod to feudal convention. In the Middle English *Sowdone*, to take the more conventional example first, when Charlemagne bids Ferumbras a fond farewell he anticipates that their parting will not be permanent: "He saide, 'Farewell, Sir Ferumbras, / Ye and Gye, my dere frende, . . . Vysityth me whan ye have space; / Into Fraunce makith your disport'" (3211–20: He said, "Farewell, Sir Ferumbras, you and Guy, my dear friend, . . . Visit me when you have space; entertain yourselves in France"). In response to this cheerful goodbye, both Ferumbras and Guy weep:

Thai toke leve of the Kinge
 With ful hevy chere
 And turned agayn both mornynge
 With wepynge water clere.
 (3223–26)

(They took leave of the king with very heavy expressions and, both mourning, turned [away] again, weeping clear water.)

Although Ferumbras and Guy mourn Charlemagne's departure, the romance encodes the separation as a reward for good service, as well as a temporary expedient. The tears that accompany this parting demonstrate, then, Ferumbras's and Guy's feudal affection for Charlemagne and their shared nobility of spirit. *Sowdone* imagines conversion and victory as secure achievements and does not encourage us to criticize the fact that Charlemagne leaves Ferumbras (the new convert) behind to rule "Spayne."

Piemonte's account paints an entirely different affective picture. In *Hystoria's* unique rendition of this moment, Fierabras objects to enforced separation from Carlomagno in strong terms:

Peso tanto a Fierabrás que puesto de rodillas delante del emperador le suplico que no le apartasse de su compañía: diziendo que estimaua mas su compañía que ser señor de gran parte del mundo: mas no

consintio Carlo magno que se hiziesse otra cosa sino como el lo auia ordenado. (fol. 36v)

(It [the news that Fierabrás would stay behind and rule his father's lands] weighed on Fierabrás so much that, fallen to his knees before the emperor, he begged him that he should not be parted from his company, saying that he esteemed his company more than being lord of a great part of the world. But Carlomagno did not consent that Fierabrás should do anything other than what he had ordered.)

Piemonte's emphasis on the extent of Fierabrás's new sovereignty ("a great part of the world") indicates that Charlemagne's land-grant to Fierabrás in recognition for his service is no pittance. But the glitter of political and territorial sovereignty cannot sway Fierabrás, who would rather stay with Charlemagne, holding all the privileges of community that a place by his side entails. Beyond matters of personal preference, why, precisely, does Fierabrás object so strenuously? What problem does his resistance signal? We can explore these questions by pivoting to the setting of *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* to analyze the geopolitical implications of each text's quite different imagination of Iberia.

Gentrifying Iberia

Let us begin with *Sowdone* and its vision of "Spayne" as the setting for most of the story's action. I argue that in parallel fashion to the poet's gentrification of Ferumbras from enemy to convert by remaking his body in the image of the ultimate self-sacrificing Christian exemplar, the poet of *Sowdone* likewise gentrifies "Spayne's" opening context of variegated Muslim rule (but one piece of the larger *dar al-Islam* [realm of Islam]), incrementally reimagining it in the image of a Christian teleology. That is, *Sowdone* hones in on "Spayne" across the narrative in increasingly narrow ways, until, by the time Charlemagne assigns its rule to the newly converted Ferumbras, "Spayne" implicitly stands as the final, harmonious geopolitical puzzle piece that assembles a coherent picture of Christian Europe.

Here is how the process unfolds. Though *Sowdone* focuses on the importance of "Spayne" from its opening scene, the poet takes initial pains to integrate "Spayne" within the wider *dar al-Islam*. When the romance opens, the eponymous sultan of Babylon is peacefully residing in his Iberian terri-

tory: “in the cité of Agremare / Uppon the rivere of Flagote/ At that tyme he sojourned there / Fulle roially” (33–36: in the city of Agremare upon the river of Flagote, he traveled there fully royally at that time).⁵⁵ We subsequently learn that this city of Agremare is the sultan’s “chief cité” (719: chief city) and that it lies in “Spayne” (717: Spain). This sultan, then, “syre and Sowdon of hie Babilon” (30: sire and sultan of great/high Babylon), controls a larger territory than his Babylonian title at first implies, and Iberia constitutes a particularly important part of it.⁵⁶ We further learn that the sultan of Babylon “was born in Askalon” (32; was born in Ashqelon); as the textual note to this line explains, Ashqelon is “a city in Palestine, north of Gaza, on the Mediterranean.”⁵⁷ The sultan, then, has a personal history that stretches back to the eastern Mediterranean, though he now resides in power in its south-central and western reaches. The poet of *Sowdone* thus imagines Iberia as one node of a constellated Muslim Mediterranean.

As *Sowdone*’s geopolitical vision of the world unfolds, its poet presents “Spayne” as part of a wide, complex network of Muslim rule throughout the known world. *Sowdone*’s conception of the extensive reach of the *dar al-Islam* extends, crucially, into Europe as well as Africa and Asia. For instance, when Laban calls for allies, first against Rome, and subsequently against Charlemagne, his anticipation of aid situates him as an active political player in a web of Muslim allegiances throughout the greater Mediterranean and, indeed, the world.

He sente oute his bassatoures

 To Inde Major and to Assye,
 To Ascoloyne, Venys, Frige and Ethiope,
 To Nubye, Turkye and Barbarye,
 To Macedoine, Bulgare and to Europe.
 All these people was gadred to Agremore.
 (995–1003)

55. Lupack, *The Sultan* [Sowdone] of *Babylon*.

56. In such romance contexts, Babylon is most traditionally taken to be a reference to Cairo, but can also be a reference to Baghdad or to the biblical Babylon, a city of ancient Mesopotamia, whose ruins lie in modern Iraq, fifty-nine miles southwest of Baghdad. On the multiple understandings of Babylon, see Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, 336–40.

57. This note to line 32 appears on page 96 of the TEAMS edition. See also Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, 336–37. There is no entry for “Ascalon” in the *Middle English Dictionary*.

(He sent out his ambassadors . . . To India Major and to Asia, to Ashqelon/Cologne, Venice, Frisia/Phrygia, and Ethiopia, to Nubia, Turkey, and Barbary, to Macedonia, Bulgaria, and to Europe. All these people were gathered together in Agremare.)

This amazing list of toponyms attributes worldwide scope to Muslim power, including, significantly, various places in Europe. The romance's view of Muslim rule throughout parts of Europe disrupts religiogeographic binaries that scholars of romance have sometimes posited between a "Christian West" and "Muslim East."⁵⁸ When we look at the passage's specific toponyms, we can identify many recognizable places: India, Asia, Venice, Ethiopia, Nubia, Turkey, Barbary, Macedonia, and Europe. A few of the toponyms are puzzling—where is "Ascoloyne," for instance? Is it a variation on Middle English "Coloine," which would make it a reference to the German city of Cologne? Or is it a variant spelling of the earlier "Askalon" (Ashqelon)? And the geographic indeterminacy of "Frige"—probably a variation of Middle English "Frise"—gestures both toward Europe and toward Asia Minor, as it could reference Frisia, a historical coastal region of the North Sea in what today is part of the Netherlands, or Phrygia, an ancient kingdom of Anatolia in the greater Mediterranean Basin.⁵⁹ The contest between Charlemagne and the sultan Laban that occupies the majority of the narrative's attention, then, situates "Spayne" as the site of a war that ultimately pits this global scope of Muslim geopolitical power against Charlemagne's forces. This contest does not, at its outset, pit a "Christian West" against a "Muslim East," in any simple way.

It behooves us to pay close attention to these initial complexities within *Sowdone*, precisely because of the way the romance narrows them later on to something that looks, by the end of the romance, like it might reify a simple religiogeographic fantasy. Iberomedievalist Julian Weiss has criticized the too-easy conflation of Iberian Muslims with Muslims in the East among scholars of medieval literature, particularly by those who do not themselves work on Iberian texts: "la España musulmana suele pasar desapercibida a los que estudian la épica francesa, porque la crítica asimilar el moro «spa-

58. For instance, see Akbari's analysis of the construction of medieval orientalism in *Idols in the East*; Hardman and Ailes's claim that insular British romances of Charlemagne present him as a "European hero defeating the opposed powers of Eastern rulers," in part through his campaign into Spain (*The Legend of Charlemagne*, 7); and Frank Grady, "'Machomete' and Mandeville's Travels," in Crocker and Smith, *Medieval Literature*, 266–75.

59. The entry for **Frīse** n.(1) in the *Middle English Dictionary* indicates that Frisia and Phrygia are sometimes confused in Middle English usage (Lewis et al., *Middle English Dictionary*).

ñol» a la figura reificada del moro oriental, sin prestar suficiente atención a las implicaciones ideológicas e históricas de su condición hispana” (Muslim Spain tends to pass unnoticed by those who study French epic, because criticism tends to associate the *Spanish* Muslim with the reified figure of the oriental/eastern Muslim, without paying sufficient attention to the ideological and historical implications of its Spanish condition).⁶⁰ Though Weiss identifies scholars of French epic as particularly susceptible to the temptation to conflate Iberian Muslims with Eastern Muslims, the temptation is legible among scholars of Middle English romance, as well.⁶¹ My point is not to dispute that *Sowdone* ultimately generates a similar kind of fantasy; the closing impression it gives does indeed seem to reify alliances between Muslims in Iberia and Muslims in the Mediterranean’s East and South. Rather, I wish to nuance the position in crucial ways by taking Weiss’s cue to interrogate the ease with which we tend to accept simplistic religiogeographic frameworks over evidence of greater complexity. If *Sowdone* takes us down a road that seems to allow us to oppose Christian Europe to a concerted Muslim East and South, its poet paves the way deliberately, actively constructing such a geopolitical fantasy after first positing a much more nuanced picture.

Despite the initial capaciousness of its geopolitical vision, *Sowdone* does end up constructing a fantasy whereby the conquest of “Spayne” seems by default to consolidate a united Western Latin Christian Europe. *Sowdone* achieves this fantasy by gentrifying “Spayne”: reducing the scope of the

60. Julian Weiss, “El Postcolonialismo medieval,” in Fernández Rodríguez and Fernández Ferreiro, *Literatura medieval y renacentista*, 193. Translation is my own.

61. Scholarly claims that the Muslim forces of the *Fierabras* romance narrative tradition represent crusading conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean have been made for both its Middle English and Castilian versions. For such claims with regard to Middle English *Fierabras* romances, see Robert Allen Rouse, “Crusaders,” in Cartlidge, *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, 173–83; Lee Manion, “The Loss of the Holy Land and *Sir Isumbras*: Literary Contributions to Fourteenth-Century Crusade Discourse,” *Speculum* 85 (2010): 65–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713409990960>; Stevenson, “Middle English Ferumbras Romances”; and Rosalind Field, “Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations *de romançz*,” in Ashe, Djordjević, and Weiss, *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, 73–89. For such claims with regard to the Castilian *Fierabras* romance, see Grinberg, “Aigues-Mortes and Holy War.” The exception in this body of work is Jace Stuckey, who analyzes the Iberian historical context to substantively and cogently argue the case that French narratives of Charlemagne’s incursion into Spain “transform his legend into the image of a crusader” (“Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne’s Legendary Expedition to Spain,” in Gabriele and Stuckey, *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages*, 137).

geographies that seem actually to be at stake in the narrative, diminishing our sense that Iberia is part of an extensive network of Muslim rule that extends into Europe as well as throughout the Mediterranean. In the final battle between Charlemagne and Laban, the Muslim forces Laban commands consist of “Turkes, Indens and Arabye, / Ye, and of the Ethiopes like the develes of helle” (3097–98: Turks, Indians, and Arabs, indeed, and Ethiopians, [who are] like the devils of hell). Compare this brief list of four toponyms to the earlier passage that contained twelve. If we extrapolate from the numbers alone, *Sowdone*’s geographic imagination has diminished significantly in scope from the early passages of the romance to its closing battle—a 75 percent reduction. And we can also see how the tenor of the places *Sowdone* remains willing to imagine as part of the *dar al-Islam* have conceptually narrowed into a more traditional and stereotypical vision of the Muslim world, where Muslims can be found in India, Arabia, and Ethiopia—in other words, in Africa and Asia. Europe, in this closing geopolitical conception, is apparently (and suddenly) Muslim free, with the exception of “Spayne,” which Charlemagne is about to conquer. It would be much easier, in other words, to construct an argument that *Sowdone* reifies the conflict between a “Muslim East/South” and “Christian West” based upon this latter passage of Muslim alliance than upon the first.⁶² This imaginative progression simplifies the romance’s conception of “Spayne” by reducing the extent and number of its networks with other parts of the world.

In another significant move, by the end of the romance, though Charlemagne defeats the sultan of Babylon, it is “Spayne” alone that Charlemagne adds to his territorial empire. Though Babylon has lost its ruler as surely as “Spayne” has, the sultan’s African territory drops entirely out of view. “Spayne,” then, though connected to worldwide Muslim power in the beginning of the text, progressively becomes the sole and specific site that *Sowdone* is most anxious to see fall into Charlemagne’s hands. The text thus invokes the extensive scope of Muslim presence and sovereignty in the medieval world seemingly in order to chart its erasure. Though initially calling such expansive geographies into view, its geographic outlook gradually narrows in a representational arc that diminishes the force of what we ini-

62. It is beyond the scope of this chapter’s argument to attend to the religiously inflected and derogatory stereotypes of Muslims that emerge throughout this text (including in the quotation I have just given). I take up this topic in chapter 2 of this book.

tially knew: that the sultan was a confident, powerful force in the western Mediterranean who, at the asking, once controlled the combined armies of a worldwide *dar al-Islam*.

The *Middle English Dictionary* entry for “Spayne” inadvertently reinforces the teleological textual fantasy that emerges across *Sowdone*, eliding nearly eight centuries of Muslim rule in Iberia from its definitions for the term. That is, the *Middle English Dictionary* gentrifies “Spayne” in analogous ways to *Sowdone*, a fact that illustrates the care that students and scholars of Middle English romance must use when turning to the *Dictionary*. According to the *Dictionary*, the toponym “Spayne” can refer either to the discrete Iberian kingdom of Castile (a meaning current to the late Middle Ages) or to the ancient Roman province “Hispania” in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶³ Castile eventually becomes politically hegemonic in the peninsula (hence medieval Castilian’s tie to modern Spanish), but in the early fifteenth century, when *Sowdone* is composed, multiple kingdoms still compete for territory and political dominance throughout Iberia, including Portugal, Castile (politically united at this point with León), Navarre, Aragón, and Granada (the sole remaining kingdom in the peninsula under Muslim rule after the mid-thirteenth century until its conquest in 1492). Roman Hispania, for its part, subsequently comes under the control of the Visigoths, who lose control of the territory to Arab-led Berber armies of the central and western Maghreb that successfully invade Iberia from northern Africa in the early eighth century.⁶⁴ Over the course of the next nearly eight centuries, nascent Christian kingdoms that emerge in Iberia (Castile, Portugal, Aragón, etc.) eventually expand their territorial control southward throughout the peninsula, vying for control with Iberian Muslims and further waves of Muslim immigrants and armies coming to Iberia from the Maghreb.⁶⁵

Significantly and conspicuously absent from the range of meaning

63. Entry “**Spain(e) n.**” in Lewis et al., *Middle English Dictionary*. Middle English “Spayne” derives from Old French “Espaigne” with etymological ties also to the Latin “Hispania.” See Kennedy’s argument for an analogous discussion of lacunae in the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definitions and attestations for “*Moresque*” (Kennedy, “Moors and Moorishness,” 224–25).

64. The Maghreb is traditionally considered to be the area of North Africa lying west of Egypt (roughly comprising the territories of modern-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya).

65. Medieval Iberia is quite complex. For useful introductions to its histories and complexities, see Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002); and Brian A. Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

that the *Middle English Dictionary* tracks for “Spayne” is this history of al-Andalus: Muslim-ruled Iberia—all nearly eight centuries of it—that makes up Iberian history, culture, and politics between the two geopolitical and temporal points of Roman Hispania and late-medieval Castile. The definitional range of “Spayne” in the *Dictionary* leaps hundreds of years, a temporal abyss into which all memory of Muslim rule in Iberia silently falls. If we are to believe the *Middle English Dictionary*, only certain histories can be spoken and remembered using this toponym; others are ignored, lingering only on the edges of semantic vision as an absent presence. The usage data that the *Dictionary* distills into definition makes an implicit temporal and spatial argument that Middle English had no name by which to call Muslim-ruled Iberia (or at least that “Spayne” was not it). By restricting our vision of “Spayne” solely to Christian rule and Christian history, the *Dictionary* implicitly and insidiously argues that Muslim rule is an aberration to the history of Spain (the modern toponym and nation that the Middle English term becomes) rather than intrinsic to the region’s medieval identity, culture, and ongoing legacy. This definitional work construes “Spayne” in dangerous ways, principally because of the anti-Muslim politics embedded here, but not least because the exclusions within this definition are not, in fact, accurate to medieval usage, as *Sowdone* demonstrates.

Sowdone, at least initially, remembers that Muslims ruled Iberia. *Sowdone* imagines the sultan Laban’s rule in Iberia specifically under the toponym “Spayne.” That is, the toponym can and does conceptually encompass Muslim Iberia in this romance, and, as this book, *Imagining Iberia*, argues in subsequent chapters, elsewhere in Middle English romance usage, as well. *Sowdone*’s narrative thus complicates the implicit argument the *Dictionary*’s definitions for “Spayne” make. I would even go so far as to propose that the appearances of Middle English “Spayne” throughout *Sowdone* showcase the ways the *Middle English Dictionary*’s definitions are incomplete. Nonetheless, as I have argued, *Sowdone* charts precisely the temporal verge where Muslim rule in Iberia comes to its violent end and erasure. “Spayne’s” geopolitical trajectory throughout *Sowdone*—the poet’s construction of a gentrified fantasy that erases Muslim rule from “Spayne’s” history and destiny—parallels the erasure of al-Andalus that the *Dictionary* charts. To put it another way, the poet’s adroit maneuvers to erase “Spayne’s” Muslim past, present, and future from *Sowdone*’s geopolitics gentrifies “Spayne’s” semantic reach into the shape that the *Middle English Dictionary* presents. *Sowdone*’s gentrification of “Spayne” covers over the region’s Muslim past and severs its Muslim alliances with the rest of the world in order to posit it as always already

Christian, a geopolitical entity that becomes easy to fold into Charlemagne's Christian empire under the rule of the converted and gentrified Ferumbras.

Piemonte, on the other hand, writing in a context where Christian conquest of the last Muslim polity in the Iberian Peninsula was no longer fantasy but fact, obsesses over the flies in the ointment, showing us the problems plaguing assimilation, integration, and fears of apostasy. *Imagining Iberia* is not a historicist study, so I will comment only briefly on Piemonte's historical context. Piemonte first published the *Hystoria* in 1521. It remains useful to recall that the kingdom of Granada had fallen to Christian forces some thirty years earlier, in 1492. From 1500 to 1502, Queen Isabel of Castile issued a series of edicts forcing Muslims in the former emirate of Granada and the crown of Castile to either convert to Christianity or leave those lands. As David Coleman points out, "As was the case with the formerly Jewish converts to Christianity who remained in Spain following the 1492 expulsions, the question of the religious loyalties of the old emirate's roughly three hundred thousand remaining *moriscos* persisted as a vexing issue within Spanish society for most of the sixteenth century."⁶⁶ Isabel's edicts against Muslims were echoed by Navarre and Aragón in 1515 and 1525, respectively.⁶⁷ Because the conversions that these edicts sparked occurred under duress, many church and lay folk "suspected that many of their *morisco* neighbors remained 'crypto-Muslims.'"⁶⁸ Consequently, throughout the later sixteenth century, the Inquisition began to patrol these populations. The looming Ottoman Empire, gaining in strength across the century, drove increasing fears that a "fifth column" of such secret Muslims within Iberia would revolt in support of an Ottoman conquest of Iberia. This history brackets not only the initial publication date of the *Hystoria* (1521), but also its several sixteenth-century reprintings.

Despite this Iberian history of religious suspicion and conflict, Piemonte remains unable or unwilling to attribute these problems to Iberia by name.

66. David Coleman, "Of Corsairs, Converts and Renegades: Forms and Functions of Coastal Raiding on Both Sides of the Far Western Mediterranean, 1490–1540," *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700674-12342128>

67. Similar conversion-expulsion edicts were issued for the Iberian kingdoms of Navarre in 1515 and for Aragón in 1525. Fernando II of Aragón began the process of annexing Navarre in 1512. The annexation was completed by Fernando's grandson and successor, Carlos V. It was also Carlos V who finally issued the convert or leave edict to Muslims in Aragón in 1525, after successfully petitioning Pope Clement VII to release him from his oath to ensure the religious freedom of Muslims in Aragón (a longstanding oath to which kings of Aragón had been bound).

68. Coleman, "Of Corsairs, Converts and Renegades," 176.

That is, though the final section of Book 2 of *Hystoria* aptly reflects historical tensions of violent conquest and conversion,⁶⁹ Piemonte divorces these issues from Iberia by refusing to name the land plagued with such enduring problems. And this geopolitical reticence in the face of such obvious historical relevance intrigues me. In this chapter's final section, I argue that Piemonte's eschewal of Iberian toponyms performs a different kind of gentrification: one that relegates the legacies of conflict following violent conquest and conversion to a fantastic and nameless Muslim past that is only tenuously and implicitly associated with Iberia.

Piemonte replaces historical and geographic place names with descriptive terms that are religiously evocative. In a surprising twist of literary history, then, the Iberian version of the *Fierabras* story cluster becomes the one to elide the Iberian toponyms. Piemonte refuses to specify precisely where his narrative is set, describing it only as pertaining to the "tierras del almirante" (fol. 36r: emir's lands). In so doing, Piemonte cuts all the references to Iberia that he finds in his immediate source. Having thus culled the toponyms that would set the action specifically and unequivocally in Iberia, Piemonte offers no clear alternative. Piemonte's evocative description of the "tierras del almirante" (emir's lands) refuses to name al-Andalus, España (Spain), or any other toponym in conjunction with Muslim rule in Iberia. But nor does he name Iberia under Christian rule (the gentrification *Sowdone* and the *Middle English Dictionary* enact). Instead, Piemonte restricts the geopolitical significance of his narrative to the scope of its plot, quietly suggesting, via descriptive nomenclature, that the newly conquered territory remains perpetually the emir's lands, even after his death. The descriptive designation receives significance in part through an analogous term Piemonte opposes to it: "tierra de cristianos" (fol. 36r; Christian lands),⁷⁰ a term likewise imprecise in geographic scope. The "tierras del almirante" accrue non-Christian resonance by virtue of their juxtaposition with specifically Christian lands. In addition to implicit religious identity, the "tierras del almirante" likewise amass temporal resonances. As a Muslim who categorically refuses to convert to Christianity, the emir after whom these lands are perpetually named represents intractable Muslim rule.⁷¹ The implication arises: just as

69. Indeed, Giles has compellingly shown the relevance of conversionary policies in Granada during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to Book 2 of Piemonte's *Hystoria*. See "Converting the Saracen," in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*.

70. For ease of discussion I have, in this instance, silently converted Piemonte's text to its modern Spanish equivalent; the original text has "tierra de xripianos" (fol. 36r).

71. The emir is also the only character in Piemonte's *Hystoria* who speaks out, eloquently

Carlomagno cannot successfully force Balán to convert, so too Carlomagno cannot successfully force Christianity upon his lands, despite his attempts. The choice to use “tierras del almirante” thus relegates Muslims and Muslim-ruled Iberia firmly to an abstract past, rather than positioning them as an ongoing and integral component of Iberia’s present and future. Al-Andalus becomes the absent center around which these “tierras del almirante” conceptually cohere.

Piemonte’s distinction between these “tierras del almirante” and the “tierra de cristianos” is unstable from the start, both in terms of creed and temporality. “Tierra de cristianos” and “tierras del almirante,” are not parallel terms, and at the end of the *Fierabras* narrative, where they come into focus, the Muslim/Christian religiogeographic binary that they might be taken to imply has, in fact, broken down through conquest and conversion. If one’s past is one’s enduring destiny, as naming these lands after the emir seems to imply, it does not bode well for the new convert Fierabrás who comes to rule them. That is, Piemonte’s displacement of Muslim rule and Muslim converts onto the past comes to encompass Fierabrás, as well, and may help to explain why Fierabrás objects so strenuously to being left behind in these lands when Carlomagno leaves. Piemonte showcases the real ethical quandaries and costs of the religious suspicion and tensions that arise in the wake of violent conversion. If, that is, Piemonte has successfully managed to convince us that Fierabrás converted voluntarily (that Oliveros gentrified him by instructing him in a Christian life and practice of suffering and self-sacrifice), our author can offer no such guarantees for the emir’s lands *writ large*. That is, at the granular level, conversion through violence and enforced suffering (a forced conversion of sorts) might come to look like an ethical pedagogical process. But scaled up, violent conquest and forced conversion unequivocally causes problems. This geographic level helps to uncover and critique, at a different scale, the disguises of gentrification for what they are: efforts of erasure that avoid confronting the difficult realities of neighbor, self, and the challenge of ethical relationality between them.

When Carlomagno decides to leave Fierabrás behind to rule these “tier-

and forcefully, against forced conversion. Balán chastises Charlemagne, “Emperador no manda esso la ley de Jesu Cristo tu dios que a nadie hiziesses fuerça en tal caso: que la verdadera creencia del coraçon ha de proceder” (fol. 35v: Emperor, the law of your god Jesus Christ does not call for this; no one should use force in such a case, but it [conversion] must proceed from the true belief of the heart). On the theological, political, and legal implications of Balán’s critique of forced conversion in Piemonte’s sixteenth-century Iberia, see Giles, “Converting the Saracen,” in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*, 140–44.

ras del almirante” and Fierabrás objects, Piemonte presents a complex scenario that blends discrimination with reward. Fierabrás’s poignant resistance calls into question the status of that reward and depicts Carlomagno’s community as exclusionary, or at least as employing an extreme form of social distancing, denying its new convert the integrated place within the larger Christian fellowship of Carlomagno’s knights that he desires. Yet in the process of resisting, and thus exposing, Carlomagno’s creedal and geographic hierarchy, Fierabrás also reinforces it. He, too, prefers to be in “Francia” with Carlomagno. Fierabrás prefers to be among “old” Christians rather than among the forcefully converted inhabitants of the lands his father once ruled. Piemonte’s geographic indeterminacy instigates an unstable binary, where to be newly converted to Christianity seems not to count as being Christian at all. Piemonte thus distinguishes the lands of Carlomagno’s central empire and homeland, the “tierra de cristianos,” from the “tierras del almirante.” This distinction, and Fierabrás’s reaction to it, is the rhetorical site where Piemonte simultaneously asserts and challenges communal, individual, and geographic identity.

Carlomagno has in fact already embarked upon a conversion campaign of everyone in the emir Balán’s lands. After defeating the emir, Carlomagno sends a warning throughout the land that all folk must destroy their idols and renounce their non-Christian faith. Carlomagno’s is an aggressive, violent pacification of this land, reminiscent of the harshest conversionary policies of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Castile and Aragón:

E embio Carlomagno en todas las prouincias del almirante amonestar las gentes que dexassen los ydolos y creyessen en la fe de Jesu Christo y que rescibiesen el sancto baptismo: y que les haria mercedes: y sino que los haria morir mala muerte o los catiuaria: y en poco tiempo fueron todos baptizados . . . y estuuu Carlo magno en aquella tierra dos meses en gran plazer: hasta que vido toda la tierra pacifica. (fol. 15v–fol. 16r)

(And Carlomagno sent to all the provinces of the emir, admonishing the people that they should give up their idols and believe in the faith of Jesus Christ, and that they should receive holy baptism, and that he would grant them mercy,⁷² and otherwise he would make them

72. Clara Pascual-Argente, who consulted with me on this translation, pointed out, following Covarrubias, that this “mercy” seems to have the quality of a bribe.

die a bad death or imprison them. And in a short time all were baptized . . . and Carlomagno stayed in that land two months in great enjoyment until he saw all the land pacified.)

The forcible conversion of the people throughout Fierabrás's new realm contrasts sharply with Carlomagno's "great enjoyment" in this coercive process. Forced conversion is not only unethical and contrary to Christian law, but also ineffective. Such a policy heightens both the likelihood and the fear of apostasy.

Indeed, despite Carlomagno's conquest of this land and conversion of its populace, it appears not to be included in the narrator's conception of Christendom. Carlomagno sees these lands, only tenuously pacified and forcibly Christianized, as vulnerable to renewed Muslim rule in a variety of ways. These lands' vulnerability distinguishes them from the "tierra de cristianos." Before he leaves for France, Carlomagno describes the challenges he foresees for Fierabrás in these lands, warning Fierabrás to guard the lands against both internal restlessness as well as incursions from without:

Tengays vuestras fortalezas bastecidas de pertrechos porque os podays tener algunos días si los turcos viniessen sobre ellas: y no fatigues ni mal trateys vuestros vassallos: antes procured de ser bien quistos dellos: y seran las principales fuerças de vuestras tierras. . . . E mandareys guardar vuestras fronteras porque si alguna mudança ouiere en vuestros vezinos que seays apercebidos para guardar vuestras tierras. Aueys assi mesmo de fazer istruyr vuestros vassallos en la fe de cristo: y tendreys buenos predicadores y hombres de buena vida para que los enseñen. Produrad asi mesmo de desechar toda la heregia: y castigad por justicia alos que erraren. E porque tengan temor vuestros vassallos y los tengays mas subjectos vos quiero dexar quinze mill hombres de pelea: (fol. 36r)

(You should keep your fortresses supplied with gear/munitions so that you might resist for a few days if the Turks⁷³ come against them;

73. "Turcos" in this passage might register the Ottoman Turks specifically, but I would not want to restrict its semantic range to that precise geopolitical identity. Piemonte interchangeably refers to the Muslims in *Hystoria* as "moros," "turcos," and "paganos." Grinberg and Giles both point out, registering slight disagreement with each other, that "moro" and "turco" may carry specific geographic attachment (to Berber Moors and to Ottoman Turks). Each of these scholars rightly points out that these were places of significance to sixteenth-century Iberia.

and do not trouble or mistreat your vassals, but rather make sure to be loved by them, and they will be the principal/main forces of your lands. . . . And order that your borders be guarded so that if any change occurs in your neighbors you will be warned to guard your lands. In addition, you have to arrange [that there be] instruction for your vassals in the faith of Christ, and you will have good preachers and men of upstanding lives so that they may instruct them. And endeavor as well to do away with all heresy, and punish with justice those who err. And in order that your vassals have fear and are more subject to you, I want to leave with you fifteen thousand fighting men.)

The land and its population remain, in Carlomagno's assessment, only insecurely conquered and converted. He anxiously anticipates the day that the land will suffer attack from without, as well as the day that its inhabitants will revert to their former religious identity and rebel. The critical difference between the "tierra de cristianos" and the "tierras del almirante" is visible in the manifold threats, both internal and external, which Carlomagno anticipates that Fierabrás will face. Baptismal water dispensed liberally and forcefully around the demesne has nevertheless not rid this land of its capacity to rise against the Christian rule that has just politically and militarily triumphed here. In Carlomagno's assessment, the "tierras del almirante" continue to carry a religiogeographic charge that conquest and conversion cannot, apparently, nullify.

Described in terms that relegate the lands' identity firmly to the past—described, that is, in reference to a now defunct sovereign power—the lands cannot escape the valences of Muslim rule that they signaled when the emir was alive to administer them. This implication emerges grammatically in the fact that they are only and continually attributed to his possession, even after the emir's defeat and death. Piemonte's tactic of naming the land after the

However, the terms' very interchangeability in Piemonte's usage troubles such precise designations. Moreover, across the Middle Ages, many such terms in medieval Castilian come to register Muslims in a general sense rather than solely and specifically referencing place of origin. See also Kennedy, "Moors and Moorishness"; Ross Brann, "The Moors?," *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 307–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006709X458864>; Nevill Barbour, "The Significance of the Word *Maurus*, with Its Derivatives *Moro* and *Moor*, and of Other Terms Used by Medieval Writers in Latin to Describe the Inhabitants of Muslim Spain," *Biblos* 46 (1970): 253–66; and Josiah Blackmore, "Imagining the Moor in Medieval Portugal," *Diacritics* 36, nos. 3–4 (2006): 27–45, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.0.0004>

emir reveals the enduring power of past associations. In his treatment of Carlomagno's reactions to the "tierras del almirante" in these scenes, Piemonte signals Carlomagno's deep anxieties (manifest in aggressive policies) toward new converts and territory, and interrogates his policies of casting divisions between new converts to Christianity and those who can claim a longer Christian heritage. Piemonte erases al-Andalus by relegating even the new convert and newly conquered territory firmly to an unnamed past. Iberia's Muslim past and awkward present constitutes a geopolitical neighbor that Piemonte cannot quite countenance and yet cannot quite exorcise from his narrative. Piemonte thus simultaneously conjures and banishes al-Andalus, cohering the "tierras del almirante" around Iberia's absence.

In Conclusion

Both the poet of *Sowdone* and Piemonte in *Hystoria*, in their different ways, construct fantasies that gentrify and elide Muslim-ruled Iberia. Piemonte creates his geopolitical fantasy by eschewing toponyms for Iberia. By the end of his *Fierabras* narrative, where Carlomagno gives the reluctant Fierabrás charge of the "tierras del almirante" and returns to France, Piemonte relegates both the new convert and the newly conquered land to an unnamed past. Piemonte can not or will not name this space Iberia, will not invoke its present or its histories explicitly. Piemonte's descriptive choices, only ever referring to Iberia via a now-defunct Muslim rule, allows him to attribute anxieties about instability that arise in the wake of violent conquest and conversion (including apostasy, future conflict, and uprising), to an abstract setting perpetually in the past. Even though these are precisely the challenges that occupy late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Spain, all of this happens, Piemonte seems to suggest, in some other place and time. His geographic reticence constitutes a refusal of Iberia's past, a rhetorical erasure, even as it clearly signals the ways that the past is never fully past: the histories and challenges Piemonte charts in the "tierras del Almirante" are the histories and challenges of his present. Because we can easily see the relevance of Piemonte's story to Iberia's present and its past (including its complex histories and many legacies of Muslim rule), Piemonte's refusal to name the space imagines Iberia precisely as a site of denial and erasure, but also of persistence: the simultaneous erasure and persistence of al-Andalus and its legacies in Piemonte's fraught sixteenth-century Spanish present.

Sowdone's erasure of Muslim-ruled Iberia happens, in contrast, through

the gradual reduction of the narrative's geographic scope. Along with al-Andalus, the poet of *Sowdone* erases much of the rest of the scope of the *dar al-Islam* as well, eliding all toponyms but "Spayne" by the end of the narrative, until we are left with an implicit fantasy: that Charlemagne's conquest of "Spayne" consolidates a coherent Western Latin Christian Europe. *Sowdone's* geopolitical attention to toponyms throughout the narrative permits us to track this erasure, and makes the desires/assumptions behind it legible (unlike the *Middle English Dictionary*, whose similar erasures of Muslim "Spayne" remain silent). *Sowdone's* poet in fact shows us a fantasy often imputed to Carolingian romance in the making: the consolidation of Western Latin European Christendom through the conquest of Iberia. Even as it seems to endorse this trajectory, the romance simultaneously renders the process visible and so enables us to critique it.

In both texts, these large-scale geopolitical erasures of Iberia's Muslim past coincide narratively with Ferumbras's/Fierabrás's fate as a new convert to Christianity. The linked fantasies of both conquest and conversion reveal that gentrification pertains not only to the granular level of Ferumbras's/Fierabrás's arc, but also to the panoramic scale of Iberia's erasures. Both texts marshal gentrified fantasies of Iberia in tandem with conversion fantasies that gentrify not only the Muslim knight Ferumbras/Fierabrás, but also the Christian use of violence against him. That is, just as gentrification renders violence more acceptable as a means to make Ferumbras/Fierabrás recognizable as Christian in both texts, the same process remakes Iberia in the image of Christian Europe in *Sowdone's* narrative. Piemonte's geopolitical tactics, however, are different. While such gentrified violence may succeed at the individual level in remaking Fierabrás in the idealized image of a suffering and self-sacrificing Christian, Piemonte's gentrification of Iberia, which banishes the land as well as Muslim rule to an abstract past, reveals the problem with violent conversion and conquest. Violence causes problems that gentrification cannot resolve. Piemonte's recourse to link the lands with the defeated emir quietly posits that the only way to gentrify this complex Iberia is to write Iberia out of the fantasy. I have endeavored to show that although both *Sowdone* and *Hystoria* endorse, to a certain extent, the perfect European fantasy that conversion and conquest are synonymous with erasure, both romances yet complicate this fantasy through the dramas of violent conversion that they narrate.

Floris and Flores in Circulation

Affective Economies in the Floire and Blancheflor Story Cluster

The *Floire and Blancheflor*¹ story cluster of medieval Europe, across its many language versions, celebrates the story of a Muslim prince of Iberia who falls in love with the daughter of a Christian slave of his parents' household. The story cluster thus presents a "fantasy in which a spiritual (not military) conquest of al-Andalus is brokered by an interreligious love story."² The Middle English version of the story, *Floris and Blancheflour*, casts youthful love as the solution to an older generation's cross-confessional antagonism, imagining a multicultural world in which devotion overcomes religious differences, encoding "[Christian] Europe's fervent wish for the mutual enchantment of Christian and Muslim as a catalyst to significant accomplishments."³ The eponymous heroes of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* are raised together from birth, mirror each other perfectly in appearance and devotion, and overcome all obstacles to their romantic union. In the Middle Eng-

1. I use the title *Floire and Blancheflor* to refer to the story tradition collectively across all its language versions. I use *Floire et Blancheflor* to refer specifically to the Old French "aristocratic" version. In all other instances I use specific titles and versions of the characters' names to refer to particular language versions.

2. David A. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction and the Mediterranean World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 112. Wacks is speaking particularly of the medieval Castilian version, the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, but this description holds true of the story cluster *writ large*.

3. Patricia Clare Ingham, *The Medieval New: Ambivalence in the Age of Innovation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 110.

lish version of this “charming” tale, love literally conquers all: the profound power of their mutual devotion sways even recalcitrant enemies into sympathy with the young lovers.⁴ Thus, the primary adventure of the romance—when Floris’s parents sell Blanchefflor into slavery and he successfully infiltrates a Babylonian harem in pursuit of her—lauds performances of devotion rather than feats of martial prowess as the height of chivalric comportment. The lovers’ mode of engaging the world creates the impression of the efficacy and hope attending youthful love that nearly all scholarship remarks upon.⁵ For instance, self-sacrificing pathos wins the day when the lovers, discovered together in the harem, display such anguished vulnerability that they defuse the emir’s desire for retribution.

In comparison, it comes as quite a surprise when the medieval Castilian version, the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, includes a brief instance

4. For an overview of the scholarship of the tale that has found it “charming,” see Ingham’s chapter on the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster in *The Medieval New*.

5. The thirteenth-century Middle English and twelfth-century Old French “aristocratic” versions of the *Floire and Blancheflor* romance tradition have received by far the majority of the tale’s scholarly attention. Most scholarship emphasizes the tale’s multiculturalism and youthful love. Ingham offers a compelling analysis of such cross-confessional love in the context of the medieval Islamic world’s extraordinary facilitation of the transfer of knowledge to Christendom (*The Medieval New*). Siobhain Bly Calkin argues that the Middle English version of the romance presents a fantasy of “harmonious integration” (*Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* [New York: Routledge, 2005], 128). Sharon Kinoshita argues that the Old French “aristocratic” *Floire et Blancheflor* presents a vision of “Christianity and Islam not in conflict but in contact” within a Mediterranean “commercial world of long-distance trade routes plied by Genoese ships and traversed by merchants of all confessions” (Kinoshita, “In the Beginning Was the Road: *Floire et Blancheflor* and the Politics of *Translatio*,” *Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Age* 8 [2003], 224). Marla Segol posits that the Old French aristocratic version “value[s] cultural exchange” and creates “hybrid communal identity” (“Medieval Cosmopolitanism and the Saracen-Christian Ethos,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 6, no. 2 [2004], <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1230>). There are also important exceptions to this trend that the tale celebrates multiculturalism. For work emphasizing a range of other priorities in the Middle English version, see Kathleen Kelly, “The Bartering of Blaunchefflor in the Middle English *Floris and Blaunchefflor*,” *Studies in Philology* 91, no. 2 (1994): 101–10; Geraldine Barnes, “Cunning and Ingenuity in the Middle English *Floris and Blaunchefflor*,” *Medium Ævum* 53 (1984): 10–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/43628783>; and Lillian Horstein, “Romances,” in *Manual of Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, vol. 1 (Hamden: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967). Finally, John A. Geck observes the way that the Middle English version, due in part to the incomplete state of its manuscripts, deemphasizes interreligious difference and conversion (“‘For Goddes Loue, Sir, Mercy!’: Recontextualizing the Modern Critical Text of *Floris and Blancheflor*,” in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 77–89).

where Flores considers abandoning his beloved Blancaflor to her enslavement in Babylon and returning home to Iberia alone. The *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*,⁶ referred to also in scholarship as one of three literary texts composing the *Crónica carolingia*,⁷ is not so well known as the other vernacular versions of *Floire and Blancheflor* and contains several distinctive plot features.⁸ To my knowledge, the moment when Flores considers abandoning Blancaflor is unique to the *Crónica*, and, I am tempted to add, nearly sacrilegious in an elite medieval lover.⁹ At this point in the story, Flores occupies a high position of honor in the Babylonian court where Blancaflor is enslaved, a position which he has earned on his own merits, having cultivated the friendship and gratitude not only of its king, but also of the king's overlord, the caliph of Egypt. In short, Flores's thoughts of leaving Blancaflor to her enslaved fate in Babylon arise at the height of his social capital in the Islamicate Mediterranean.¹⁰ Flores has cultivated his own reputation and renown

6. The "*Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*" is the title that Grieve gives this version (see Patricia E. Grieve, "*Floire and Blancheflor*" and the European Romance, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 32 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]), a choice that derives from its interpolation within the *Estoria de España* and usefully differentiates it from a sixteenth-century Castilian version of the romance tradition, which hews more closely to the Old French "aristocratic" *Floire et Blancheflor* plotline. David Arbesú uses this title in his edition of the text: David Arbesú, ed., *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 374 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011). Arbesú's introduction contains a useful overview of the *Crónica* and its critical history, though Francisco Bautista's edition is considered more reliable. See Francisco Bautista Pérez, *La materia de Francia en la literatura medieval española: La "crónica carolingia"; Flores y Blancaflor, Berta y Carlomagno*, Instituto Biblioteca Hispánica 1 (San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua, 2008).

7. The title *Crónica carolingia* is given by Bautista to refer to three interpolated stories (*Flores y Blancaflor*, *Berta*, and *Mainete*) that appear within a unique manuscript of the Alfonsine chronicle the *Estoria de España* (MS Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 7583). Collectively, these texts trace three generations of the same family: Flores and Blancaflor, their daughter Berta, and their grandson Charlemagne. Though I work from Bautista's edition of the text, I nonetheless use the title Grieve suggests for the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*.

8. For an overview and detailed study of these unique features, see Grieve, "*Floire et Blancheflor*" and the European Romance.

9. The closest comparable scene occurs in the Old French version, which contains a debate between love and wisdom, in which wisdom advises Floire not to attempt the rescue.

10. Cultural production may be Islamicate without being Islamic. "Islamicate," as S. J. Pearce glosses, is cultural production that "is done by and for Muslims in a non-religious setting and by and for non-Muslims integrated into societies in which the dominant religion is Islam" (Pearce, "The Problem of Terminology in Medieval Iberian Studies," *MLN* 134, no. 2 [2019]: 466, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2019.0027>). Marshall G. S. Hodgson pioneered

among these powerful rulers, moving in what could be described as a prestige economy based upon elite chivalric masculinity. Across this medieval Castilian version of the story, the more Flores circulates in such an “affective economy”—a term I draw from Sara Ahmed—the more prestige value he accrues, to the point that he momentarily wonders whether all that might not in fact be worth more to him than his beloved. This moment encapsulates Flores’s circulation in a geopolitical system of merit, service, and reward in the Islamicate Mediterranean.

In stark contrast, Floris in the Middle English version of this tale never contemplates the possibility of abandoning Blancheflour to the Babylonian emir’s harem. A move so antithetical to his entire ethos would disrupt the emotional engine that drives the Middle English version of the story. Nonetheless, comparison with the medieval Castilian version showcases how the Middle English Floris circulates in another sort of “affective economy” by virtue of his mercantile disguise. Weaving emotional expression into trade negotiations, Floris uses love to manipulate the Mediterranean’s economies of trade and exchange. Just as capital accrues value precisely by circulating within financial markets, so Floris generates increased emotional and social value by constantly introducing love into his financial transactions with hosts and innkeepers. By virtue of Floris’s “affective economy,” the romance thus calculates an exchange rate between Blancheflour’s value on the slave market and Floris’s love for her. At the end of the romance, Floris and Blancheflour essentially use love to “purchase” their own lives from the emir who owns Blancheflour. In short, Floris’s commodified love circulates on the trade markets of the Middle English version of this romance as effectively as any other currency or commodity.

Across the present chapter, then, I engage in a neighborly comparison of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* and the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* to elucidate the complexity of each text’s imaginative views of the Mediterranean as a place that Floris/Flores navigates with ease, masterfully circulating and cultivating his own commodified emotion (Floris) or social renown and prestige (Flores). Throughout this comparison, I excavate and analyze the affective economies that these two literary texts differently conceive for Iberia and the Mediterranean, arguing that Floris

the use of the term as a supplement to “Islam” and “Islamic,” which were commonly used far too casually to indicate both “what we may call religion and for the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion . . . the society and culture called ‘Islamic’ in the second sense are not necessarily ‘Islamic’ in the first” (Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974], 1:57).

and Flores are able to successfully negotiate obstacles precisely through their divergent means of circulating, and thus increasing, their own literal and cultural capital. In making this argument I deploy Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies, wherein emotions are produced, and accrue increased potency and value, as an effect of their circulation.¹¹ Ahmed's analogy of

11. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117–39, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79. Ahmed's notion of "affective economies" forms part of a larger so-called "affective turn" among theorists and historians of affect and emotion in recent years—work that has been variously taken up by medievalists to shed light on the study of early literature. In most modern conceptualizations of emotion and affect, the terms "affect" and "emotion" describe distinct states of embodied being or experience, on the one hand, and ways of understanding, naming, and expressing emotion, on the other. Though Ahmed's work on affect does not follow this bifurcation (see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004]), scholars such as Brian Massumi, Patricia Clough, Mark Hansen, and Teresa Brennen, despite important distinctions among their work, all share the conviction that affect is experienced in and on the body, and is thus distinct from emotional explanation or cognitive processing of the experience of affect through language into a definable feeling. For useful overviews and applications of this arena of affect theory, see Hannah M. Christensen, "Affect and the Limits of Form in *Sir Amadace*," *Exemplaria* 29, no. 2 (2017): 99–117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2017.1305597>; and Stephanie Trigg, "Introduction: Emotional Histories—beyond the Personalization of the Past and the Abstraction of Affect Theory," *Exemplaria* 26, no. 1 (2014): 3–15, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1041257313Z.00000000043>. One prominent thread of such affect theory is informed by the neuroscience of sensory identification, whereby sensory input and its chemical and physiological effects upon the body precede, if only by fractions of a second, the brain's interpretation of that input as "a comprehensible social event" (Christensen, "Affect and the Limits of Form," 105). Christensen writes, "Theorists conceptualize affect, then, as potentiality, the conjecture of the swirling atmosphere around a body alongside that body's response. Affect comes poised for coding into comprehensibility" (106). Within this approach, Trigg explains, "'affect' can signify an unconscious pre-discursive bodily response in quite precise terms: the beat of the heart; the rush of blood to the face; the flow of tears from the eyes. The consciousness of emotion, so often mediated by language, is seen as secondary" (Trigg, "Introduction: Emotional Histories," 5–6). Medieval notions of emotion and affect are not so discrete as they appear in modern theories, as Glenn D. Burger and Holly A. Crocker argue. In their view, "premodern writings theorize affect and emotion in ways that show their inherent intersectionality," such that medievalists must assume a methodological approach that can "foreground the necessary intersectionality of contemporary affect studies, histories of emotion, and medievalist historicization" (Glenn D. Burger and Holly A. Crocker, introduction to *Medieval Affect, Feeling, and Emotion* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 1–31, 2, 3). Elsewhere, Crocker has argued that in medieval contexts "emotions stir bodies, bringing them together in affective affiliations that surpass explicit [social] prescriptions," while affects "colo[r] experiences in ways that imbue them with shaping significance" (Crocker, "Medieval Affects Now," *Exemplaria* 29, no. 1 (2017): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2017.1284364>). On the history of emotions, especially in a medieval context, see

emotion to capital suggests an affinity between monetized and credit economies to the systems of emotional exchange and circulation that she describes as “affective economies.” Though the analogy is quite deliberate, the financial aspect of the “economies” she describes operates at a metaphorical level; in fascinating detail, the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* conjoins the circulation and transmission of emotion to the circulation and exchange of money, literalizing the analogy. Floris circulates emotion and devotion as legal tender for information and goods, tethering heterosexual desire to trade, wealth, and financial security. In short, I analyze how the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* anticipates Ahmed’s metaphor (emotion as economy) and renders it literal, commodifying love itself. In the literary imagination of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, this affective economy thus operates as a monetized economy where emotion circulates as tender in commodified transactions. In the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, in contrast, Islamicate sociopolitical prestige culture creates a metaphoric affective economy in which Flores’s circulation increases his own renown and social credit, not only among the king and denizens of Babylon, but also among illustrious rulers throughout the wider Islamicate Mediterranean.

I argue that the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* literalizes the association between love and wealth, while the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* unhooks the genre’s common figuration of prosperity through love. In making this argument, I weave Madeleine Brainerd’s analysis of the cultural capital generated by conventionalized expressions of superlative pain and loss within the genre of medieval romance into my analysis. In Brainerd’s view, early romances figure wealth precisely through heterosexual desire and possession of the beloved, so that love’s pain and loss latently express financial anxiety.¹² When Flores momentarily contemplates abandoning Blancaflor, the loss does not veil a financial blow. Flores cultivates his own value, security, and independence from Blancaflor precisely by cultivating relationships with other elite Muslim men. In this segment of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, homosocial alliance and comradery figure wealth and security. As this overview makes clear, Ahmed’s theory of the different ways that emotion might function in social contexts analogously to the circulation of capital in a monetized trade economy helpfully elucidates

Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821–45, <https://doi.org/10.1086/532498>

12. Madeleine Brainerd, “Stolen Pain: Romance and the Redistribution of Suffering,” in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 71–90.

my comparative analysis of these paired texts from the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster.

Neighborly comparison between the Middle English and medieval Castilian versions of the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster elucidates the distinct geopolitical and economic contexts in which characters and their qualities circulate in different ways and to different ends within the affective economies of an imagined Mediterranean. The distinctive features of the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* and the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* emerge most clearly when read in concert. This method of neighborly comparison eschews hierarchical textual frameworks where one text's choices take precedence over, or derive from, the other's; neither does neighborly comparison seek to trace and explain a line of influence between them. Rather, neighborly comparison exploits the nonlinearity of these textual relations for their purchase upon difference via a contingent proximity. That is, I am bringing these texts into conversation with each other provisionally, for strategic reasons—so that they can cast light on each other's representational choices. This mode of comparison seeks the interpretive meaning that can emerge precisely in the absence of nationalistic, disciplinary, and hierarchical frames. In such new textual constellations, the basis for comparison arises from the texts' conjunction rather than from pre-determined genealogical, linguistic, or generic lines of origin and influence.

As in chapter 1, we will here toggle between the granular and panoramic scales: analyzing the individual level of each hero's circulation in Mediterranean-based affective economies to give us purchase upon the larger geopolitical view of Iberia and its imbrication in the greater Mediterranean that each text imagines. While both romances emphasize Blancheflour's/Blancaflor's circulation in the market economy of the slave trade, they each present very different social and economic contexts for the affective economies in which Floris/Flores circulates. Hence, each differently imagines Iberia vis-à-vis the Mediterranean, whether figured as an active trade economy or a fractious Islamicate prestige culture.

Textual History

The thirteenth-century Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, as it has survived, lacks the opening scene-setting gestures typical to this story cluster: specifically, the sequence from its Old French source that situates Floris's family as the rulers of Iberia and explains Blancheflour's status as the daugh-

ter of a French noblewoman enslaved through interreligious violence. The Middle English poem derives from the Old French “aristocratic” *Floire et Blancheflor* and is extant in four incomplete manuscripts, all of which have missing or damaged foliation at the outset of the tale.¹³ The story opens as the eponymous heroes, childhood companions lovingly fed and raised by a “Cristen woman” (3, E: Christian woman), turn seven years old and Floris must begin his formal education. We must extrapolate not only where Floris’s family lives from subsequent clues (over five hundred lines into the tale we finally learn that Floris is a prince of “Spayn” (541, E: Spain)),¹⁴ but also why his parents are so opposed to his love for Blancheflour (something the Middle English text never fully or clearly explains).¹⁵ Scholars often supplement the missing front matter of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* from the Old French version, assuming that the original Middle English opening would have contained similar details.¹⁶ Reasonable as this impulse

13. See *Floris and Blancheflour: A Middle English Romance*, ed. with introduction, notes, and glossary by Franciscus Catharina de Vries (Groningen: VRB, 1966) for a detailed description, study, and edition of the four extant manuscripts. There has, to my knowledge, been no analysis of the timing of these losses.

14. All citations of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* are taken from *Floris and Blancheflour*, ed. de Vries. Citations are to line number and manuscript. I have followed de Vries’s designations when citing particular manuscripts (see below). I follow the precedent set by the TEAMS Middle English Text Series teaching edition of *Floris and Blancheflour* by citing the Auchinleck manuscript (manuscript A) throughout the main text of my chapter, except for the earliest passages, which are solely contained in the Egerton (manuscript E). I offer the comparable passages in the other manuscripts, when present, in the notes. The four manuscripts of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* are MS. Advocates 19.2.1, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (also known as the Auchinleck MS), which de Vries designates “A”; Cambridge University Library MS. Gg. iv.27.2, which de Vries designates “C”; British Museum MS. Egerton 2862, which de Vries designates “E”; British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius D iii, which de Vries designates “V.”

15. We might extrapolate that Blancheflour must be a subservient member of their household or Floris’s parents would never sell her into slavery. They desire Floris to “wyfe after þe lawe” (40, E: marry according to the law/custom), which implies that Blancheflour is not an appropriate candidate for marriage to their son, either because of differences in social class or religion. Religious difference between Floris and Blancheflour is never clearly established in the Middle English versions, though interreligious violence and religious conversion frame the tale in its Old French and medieval Castilian versions. On this point, see Geck, “For Goddes Loue, Sir, Mercy!,” in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 77–89.

16. For instance, the TEAMS Middle English Text Series edition of *Floris and Blancheflour* gives a prose summary of the opening lines of the Old French text at the outset of the Middle English romance.

feels, I suspend it for the duration of the present analysis. For in the absence of the original front matter to *Floris and Blancheflour*, recourse to the Old French may, in fact, obscure the Middle English text's particular priorities.

The *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, while derived from the same Old French antecedent, takes perhaps the most unique approach to the story—due at least in part to its manuscript context. This version survives, so far as we are aware, in only a single manuscript witness, integrated among the chapters of a Castilian royal chronicle, the *Estoria de España*.¹⁷ The romance's title reflects this chronicle context, differentiating it from a sixteenth-century Castilian version of *Flores y Blancaflor*. The manuscript containing the medieval Castilian *Crónica* is itself a compilation dating to the late fourteenth century that is generally assumed to be a copy of a late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century text of the *Estoria de España*. The compiler of the *Crónica* integrates the story of Flores and Blancaflor into the larger history that the *Estoria* charts, which results in a unique initial sequence for the *Crónica*'s plot.¹⁸ In fact, the opening sequence of each of these two ver-

17. The *Crónica* appears in MS Biblioteca Nacional Madrid 7583. The *Estoria de España* (known within older scholarship as the *Primera crónica general*) was begun and directed by Alfonso X of Castile, “el Sabio” (the Learned) and completed under his son, Sancho IV. Alfonso X instigated several ambitious history projects in the second half of the thirteenth century. The *Estoria de España* is a massive compilation of previous chronicles, prosified epics, and other sources, all woven together, that purports to offer a “definitive” royal account of the history of “España” (Spain). The archive of surviving manuscripts, of which there are at least forty, is complex. While it is now possible to say—thanks to Fernández-Ordóñez, Mariano de la Campa, Juan Bautista Crespo, and others—that the single manuscript of the *Estoria de España* that contains the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* (MS Biblioteca Nacional 7583) is one of a very few extant versions that combines the *Versión amplificada de 1289* (*Amplified Version of 1289*, also known as the *Amplified Chronicle of 1289*), and the *Crónica fragmentaria* (*Fragmentary Chronicle*), drawing further literary or historical inferences from this information is beyond the scope of the present project. For more information on the *Estoria de España*, see Inés Fernández-Ordóñez, ed., *Alfonso X el Sabio y las crónicas de España* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid Centro para la Edición de los Clásicos Españoles, 1997); Aengus Ward, “Iberian Historiography and the Alfonsine Legacy,” *Hispanic Research Journal* 4, no. 3 (2003): 195–205, <https://doi.org/10.1179/hrj.2003.4.3.195>; Charles F. Fraker, *The Scope of History: Studies in the Historiography of Alfonso el Sabio* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

18. On the significance of the story's placement within the *Estoria*, see Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*; and Wacks, “*Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*: Romance, Conversion, and Internal Orientalism,” *Narrative Culture* 2, no. 2 (2015): 270–88, <https://doi.org/10.13110/narrcult.2.2.0270>. I consider the story of Flores and Blancaflor separately from the interspersed historical chapters of the *Estoria de España* and also separately from its manuscript companions, *Berta* and *Mainete*. These approaches have been taken up by Wacks and Bautista

sions of the story cluster, the Middle English and the medieval Castilian, direct us away from the interreligious violence that opens their Old French antecedent.

Neighborly comparison thus highlights how each version frames the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster differently, developing distinct imaginations of Iberia's and the Mediterranean's affective economies. As I have indicated, the earliest surviving moments of the Middle English version display the profound attachment between Floris and Blancheflour; and by default, as none of the surviving manuscripts of the Middle English version chart the interreligious violence that in the Old French version give rise to the heroes' love, *Floris and Blancheflour* directs us away from creedal conflict. The medieval Castilian version, meanwhile, foregrounds Muslim geopolitics and the family networks that link al-Andalus and the North African Maghreb rather than interfaith violence.

Comparative Overview

The Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* provides a genealogical prologue to the story unique to this version of the romance, explaining how Flores's grandfather, Isca miramomelín (who is a caliph in the North African Maghreb), grants Flores's father, Fines, a kingdom in Muslim-controlled Iberia (or al-Andalus). Fines's kingdom lies adjacent to the emirate of Córdoba, where his uncle rules. The early gestures of the narrative thus contextualize Fines's genealogy and kingdom within the larger geopolitical scene and historical trajectory that the *Estoria de España* constructs. This backdrop established, the *Crónica* then runs in familiar narrative tracks for a while, describing how Blancaflor is the daughter of an enslaved French noblewoman in Fines's household who is highly valued by his queen. Children of monarch and slave, respectively, Flores and Blancaflor are born on the same day, raised together, and fall in love.

The truncated Middle English version begins at this point in the narrative. Floris's/Flores's parents oppose the relationship and eventually sell Blancheflour/Blancaflor into the Iberian wing of the Mediterranean slave trade, and she is eventually purchased by the emir/king of Babylon. The

(Bautista Pérez, *La materia de Francia*), respectively. My own study takes a different approach and thus offers different insights. Rather than superseding these prior readings, I hope to augment them in productive ways through neighborly comparison.

Middle English Floris disguises himself as a merchant to pursue her, negotiating and trading for aid with sympathetic innkeepers and hosts along the way to trace her route to Babylon. In a distinct departure from the Middle English and the rest of the *Floire and Blancheflor* tradition, the Castilian Flores assumes no disguise, but travels openly to rescue Blancaflor, first visiting his grandfather in the African Maghreb, who gives him an army for the task. Flores then proceeds to Babylon and introduces himself to the king, presenting himself as an up-and-coming young Muslim prince eager to gain experience of the world (which he legitimately is) and offering the king of Babylon his services. As David Wacks aptly puts it, Flores “earn[s] his bona fides as an adventure hero and knight errant at the court of . . . Babilonia (Egypt)”; Babylon thus serves “as a place of both fostering and mettle-testing . . . the stage upon which greatness unfolds.”¹⁹ It so happens, as Flores well knows, that the king of Babylon is engaged in a complex set of disputes with his Muslim neighbors, and he accepts Flores’s offer with alacrity. Flores then proceeds to do exactly what he has promised the king he will do—he puts his army at the king’s disposal and patrols the borders of Babylon, winning every skirmish. The culmination of the service Flores performs comes when he rescues the king of Babylon from capture by one set of enemies and facilitates the reconciliation of a long-term dispute between the king of Babylon and his overlord, the caliph of Egypt. Only once all of this has been accomplished, and Flores has earned not only the high regard of, but also a deep debt of gratitude from, the king of Babylon, does he take concrete steps to rescue Blancaflor.

Here the *Crónica*’s narrative again returns to plot lines consistent with the Middle English version: Floris/Flores suborns the porter of the tower of maidens where Blancheflor/Blancaflor is captive. The porter smuggles Floris/Flores into the tower in a basket of flowers, and the hero reunites blissfully with his beloved. The emir/king of Babylon, who has at this point decided to marry Blancheflor/Blancaflor, discovers them in bed together and is understandably incensed. The lovers awake to discover his sword drawn and hovering over them. The infuriated emir/king of Babylon condemns them to death, but his court sways him to pardon the lovers. In the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflor*, the emir and his court fall into sympathy with the performative power of Floris and Blancheflor’s love; in the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, the public reiteration and recognition of the great service Flores has repeatedly done for the king of Babylon turns

19. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 125.

the tide of the court's opinion, alongside their mutual demonstrations of love. In the Middle English version, the lovers return to Iberia, where they marry and live happily ever after (they perhaps convert to Christianity—the language is ambiguous).²⁰ In the medieval Castilian version, the story again departs from the rest of the tradition. Flores and Blancaflor leave Babylon to return to Iberia because political turmoil has ensued: Flores's grandfather, uncle, and mother have died, and his father is at war in al-Andalus. On the way home, the lovers shipwreck on an island whose resident monks assist them; Flores converts to Christianity, along with the majority of his companions. Once they reach Iberia, Flores helps his father to restore political stability and expand the territorial extent of their Iberian kingdom. At this point Flores reveals his conversion to Christianity and insists upon a massive conversion of his kingdom (which at this point comprises the entire Iberian Peninsula). He and Blancaflor rule a Christianized Iberia for eighteen years before Muslims from the Northern African Maghreb retake the peninsula (this move restores the political status of Iberia to the circumstances as recorded in the *Estoria de España* as that chronicle picks up the historical thread at the conclusion of the literary narrative). Meanwhile, we hear that Flores and Blancaflor's daughter, Berta, marries Pepin the Short of France to become the mother of Charlemagne.

As this comparative plot overview makes clear, the dramatic differences of the medieval Castilian *Flores y Blancaflor*'s choices from those of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* elucidate the distinct ways that Flores and Floris generate value for themselves by circulating in the affective economy that each text imagines to circumscribe the Mediterranean. The Castilian Flores's value in this prestige economy depends upon his circulation in service to powerful men; his movement and actions precipitate and cultivate his own renown. Floris's intense emotional energies reveal the affective economy that governs this fictional version of an actual Mediterranean trade economy, treating emotion itself as akin to currency.

20. Of the four manuscripts of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, E contains no mention of conversion or Christianity at the conclusion of the narrative, and V breaks off before narrating the final scene. C contains only the line, "He [Floris] bitayte hem alle God Almiȝte" (815: he commended them all to God Almighty), as Floris and Blancheflour depart Babylon, suggesting, perhaps, that Floris is already a Christian. Manuscript A has the most elaborate of the references, which are still oblique: as Floris and Blancheflour leave Babylon, "þai bitauȝt þe Amerail our Driȝt" (848: they commended the emir to our God), and upon arriving home, they "vnderfeng Cristendom of prestes honde" (852: took on/took command of Christendom at a priest's hand). On Floris's ambiguous religious identity in the Middle English, see Geck, "For Goddes Loue, Sir, Mercy!," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 77–89.

While it may initially seem odd to suggest that the “sentimental” Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* does something so apparently cynical as to commodify emotional expression, a few scholars have reminded us, in various ways, of the ethically suspect routes by which the romance achieves its oft-touted “charm.”²¹ Kathleen Coyne Kelly, for instance, attends to the ways the romance cloaks the dire (and historical) medieval realities of the slave trade under cover of a sentimental love story.²² No one, however, has yet noticed the degree to which Floris’s love itself moves into circulation and exchange of goods and services in the trade economies that link Iberia and Babylon in the Middle English version of the romance. The tale in fact performs a rather stunning (and disturbing) allocation of Floris’s emotional energies as a resource that can be commodified on a trade market with as much apparent ease (and sinister implications) as Blancheflour’s person can. Floris pursues her disguised as a merchant, and as he plays this part, the romance gradually renders Floris’s love for Blancheflour equivalent to Blancheflour’s monetized exchange value on the slave market. In what follows, then, I analyze the function, commodification, and circulation of emotion in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, examining the surprising ways the romance assigns Floris’s unfaltering and devoted love for Blancheflour a monetary exchange value. As Kelly argues, the Middle English poet’s “many references and allusions to literal and metaphorical trades, gifts, rewards, thefts, and merchandise” reiterate Blancheflour’s status and value as a commodity and reveal this romance’s troubling investment in mercantilism.²³ But the case becomes yet more sinister: I show how commodified emotion starts to behave like a currency in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, imaginatively transmuting the Mediterranean’s historical trade economy into a fictional affective economy. I investigate the repercussions arising from such emotional commodification for the way this text imagines Iberia (and, indeed, the world)

21. See, for instance, Ingham’s insights that cultural production aimed at or depicting children can serve as a means of disseminating society’s dangerous prejudices, such as anti-Semitism, in *The Medieval New*.

22. Kelly, “The Bartering of Blaunchefflur.”

23. Kelly positions her argument as a “darker” reading of the tale’s much-celebrated “charm” in “The Bartering of Blaunchefflur,” 102. See also Anna Czarnewus’s attention to Blancheflour’s slavery in her analysis of the tale in *Fantasies of the Other’s Body in Middle English Oriental Romance* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013), 95–121; and Megan Moore’s analysis of the movement of women and exotic goods in the Old French version’s construction of a particularly Mediterranean nobility in *Exchanges in Exoticism: Cross-Cultural Marriage and the Making of the Mediterranean in Old French Romance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

as a market governed by the location of one major commodity and its physical proximity to Floris: Blancheflour.

Without Blancheflour

The early section of the romance sets up the components of emotion that the text later commodifies. The Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* threatens and then afflicts Floris with the loss of Blancheflour, triggering passionate, and at times incoherent, outbursts. These outbursts emerge in obsessive repetition of sound and diction at the level of the poem's form. Such emotional repetitions embed, as well as exceed, medieval narratives/scripts of *fin'amor*, presenting a stunning example of the tension that can inhere in literary accounts of love-longing. In my reading of the intensities and incoherence of emotional content and poetic form that Floris experiences in Blancheflour's absence, I draw upon Glenn D. Burger and Holly A. Crocker's analysis of the Black Knight's incapacities of expression in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*. They read the Black Knight's "self-identification as one overcome by loss" to elucidate the tensions between "scripted norms of feeling for a community-produced identity" and a character's (in)ability to coherently express them.²⁴ As I will show, *Floris and Blancheflour's* commentary on Floris's experience of loss takes an analogous incoherent form, though, in the case of Floris, loss registers through intense replication at the level of the verse rather than, as with the Black Knight, an inability to articulate what he has lost.

The comparison is useful in terms of understanding the tensions at work across these various incoherencies. Chaucer's representation of the Black Knight, Burger and Crocker argue, registers something beyond a simple correspondence with an "account of elite masculinity scripted by medieval narratives of *fin'amor*," and demonstrates instead that "affective intensity takes on a power of its own, one that exhausts the Knight's rational and somatic resources."²⁵ The example thus helps us to unpack the complex ways that *fin'amor* expectations inform literary representation to multiple effect. While such emotional scripts contribute to our understanding of the emotional content of medieval romances, literary representation simultaneously demonstrates the ways such norms can be insufficient to the need and

24. Burger and Crocker, introduction to *Medieval Affect*, 2.

25. Burger and Crocker, introduction to *Medieval Affect*, 2.

experience of a particular character or emotional context. The insufficiency of conventional love scripts to Floris's need registers in his and the poet's incessant duplication of language, as though one utterance will never be enough. Poetic reprise, as a feature of the early part of the romance, helps us to understand the ease with which Floris's emotional energies commodify in the context of trade economies throughout Iberia and Babylon. When emotion is a commodity, obsessive reiteration and circulation across verses increases its value. The gravity of Blancheflour's enslavement pulls Floris's love for her into circulation as well. Her commodification on the Mediterranean slave trade market becomes the event horizon, past which love cannot escape from monetized circulation. My analysis opens, therefore, by closely interrogating the romance's early scenes of youthful love, which begin literally *in medias res*.

Floris's ardor registers through consistent repetition, a fact that informs how we evaluate and analyze the poem's formal features. The earliest surviving lines of the Middle English version contain an intense display of emotion that emerges through replication of diction and sound. In an emotional outburst, Floris registers his objection to his father's intention to separate Floris and Blancheflour so that Floris can begin his formal education. In other words, in its incomplete state, the romance opens with the threatened separation of the lovers. Floris's father declares: "Feire sone . . . þow shalt lerne, / Lo, þat þow do ful 3erne" (13–14, E: Fair son . . . you shall learn, see that you do [so] quite diligently), to which Floris replies with memorable distress, couched as it is through significant repetition and pathos:

Florys answerd with wepyng,
As he stood byfore þe Kyng;
Al wepyng seide he:
"Ne shal not Blancheflour lerne with me?
Ne can y noȝt to scole goon
Without Blaunchefloure," he saide þan.
"Ne can y in no scole syng ne rede
Without Blauncheflour," he seide.
(15–22, E)

(With weeping, Floris answered as he stood before the king; utterly weeping, he said: "Shall Blancheflour not learn with me? I cannot go to school without Blancheflour," he then said. "I cannot sing or read in any school without Blancheflour," he said.)

The romance captures Floris's intense feelings not only, I suggest, from the emotional content of the lines, but also from their formal repetition: "wepying" (15, 17: weeping); "ne can y" (19, 21: I cannot); "without Blaunche-floure" (20, 22: without Blanche flour). Content and form heavily reinforce each other as the formal features of metrical romance become a vehicle for the expression of anguish. Replication of diction, syntax, and sound conveys and creates Floris's feelings. Harping on the horror of separation, Floris registers the intensity of his passion for Blanche flour, which he cannot clearly express any other way than to repeat himself.

Along with the poetics of many popular romances, *Floris and Blanche-flour*'s versification was long disparaged in comparison to such romances as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer.²⁶ But more recent reassessments have begun to recognize the ways that popular romance's poetic tactics, such as the inclusion of predictable and recurrent elements, can be emotionally efficacious—a site wherein the pleasures that the genre affords arise.²⁷ This certainly seems true of *Floris and Blanche flour*; its poet clearly revels in close echoes of diction, syntax, and sound. Seldom content to tell us something only one time, or in only one way, this poet

26. The poem employs (irregular) octosyllabic tail-rhymed couplets—the metrical choice of many popular romances. The charge of unsophisticated or mediocre poetic technique used to be standard for this text. For a survey of such scholarship on *Floris and Blanche flour*, see Barnes, "Cunning and Ingenuity." For general description and disparagement of popular romance's stylistic, metrical, and other formal features, see Derek Pearsall's classic essay, "The Development of Middle English Romance," *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965): 91–116. Pearsall has recently revised this assessment in "The Pleasure of Popular Romance," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 9–18.

27. See Pearsall, "The Pleasure of Popular Romance," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*. His assessment still ranks popular romance as less sophisticated than romances that regularly feature "digressions, reflections, elaborate descriptions, stylistic self-awareness, depth and density of reference" (11). Nonetheless, Pearsall shows how popular romance's typical features—"repetition of motifs, a common stock of language and metaphor and incident, fast pace, predictable outcome"—cue audiences into emotional responses to the material, creating community and a sense of shared values through the "bond of emotional engagement" (Pearsall, "The Pleasure of Popular Romance," in Purdie and Cichon, *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, 11, 17). Pearsall restricts his attention largely to poetic formulas and stock phrases. As a further example of the ways that other forms of repetition can enhance engagement and pleasure, we might look to the period musical presentation of *Floris and Blanche flour* performed by the Pneuma Ensemble as part of the Mostly Medieval Theatre Festival at the International Congress of Medieval Studies in 2017. This performance playfully marshaled the text's many linguistic echoes and duplications to entertain audiences, demonstrating the emotional power and potential inherent in formal and structural repetition.

trades in abundance, redundancy, and reprise—the principal poetic agents of emotional expression, persuasion, and transaction throughout the narrative. *Floris and Blancheflour* effectively creates and conveys the passionate feelings of its lovers through repetition, particularly with regard to Floris, who receives the majority of narrative focus.

These displays of feeling arise within the romance whenever the lovers' separation is threatened, revealing that the physical proximity of Blancheflour to Floris structures the romance's entire plot.²⁸ Floris's repeated expressions of love and loss emerge from the idea of separation from Blancheflour, whether that separation is actually achieved or is only, as in this early passage, threatened. Two of Floris's utterances, quoted above, encapsulate this point: "Without Blauncheffloure," he saide than" (20, E: "Without Blancheflour," he then said), "'Without Blaunchefflour,' he seide" (22, E: "Without Blancheflour," he said). Replication here captures in microcosm the core structural problem that this romance explores. The intolerable condition of being "without Blancheflour" intersperses Floris's assertions of its material effect: his incapacity to function without her (in his own estimation, he is unable to go to school, to sing, or to read if she does not learn alongside him). The romance itself describes Floris and Blancheflour's love and fervent need to be together always as a thing to wonder at: "Wonder it was of hur lore, / And of her loue wel þe more. / Þe children louyd togeder soo, / Þey myȝt neuer parte atwoo" (27–30, E: Their learning was a wonder, and their love much more. The children loved one another so much that they might never be parted.). The Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* thus establishes, in its earliest surviving scene, the "wonderful" nature of the love between Floris and Blancheflour and the capacity of emotional expression to effect change in the world (convincing Floris's father to let the two children learn together). More importantly, however, the scene confirms this plot's central structuring principle: Floris and Blancheflour's physical separation and reunion.

This principle defines the rest of the romance. Floris conceives the world itself as a function of Blancheflour's location. When Floris learns that his parents have sold Blancheflour into slavery, he declares his intention of rescuing her:

28. In another example, Floris declares: "For my harme out ȝe me sende, / Now she ne myȝt with me wende. / Now we ne mot togeder goo, / Al my wele is turned to woo" (85–88, E: You send me out for my harm, now she may not dwell with me. Now [that] we may not go together, all my joy is turned to woe).

Ne shul y rest nyȝt ne day
 Nyȝt ne day ne no stounde,
 Tyl y haue my lemmon founde.
 Hur to seken y woll wende,
 Þauȝ it were to þe worldes ende (326–30, E)

(I shall not rest night or day, not an instant night or day, until I have found my beloved. I will go to seek her, even if it were to the world's end)

This passage, full of conventional-sounding tropes of a chivalric love quest, confirms that in Floris's estimation, Blanchefflour's movement defines the extent of the world. That is, the "world's end" will turn out to be wherever Blanchefflour turns out to be. The romance bears out his point of view: everywhere that the story wends, from Iberia to Babylon (both of which are only mentioned much later in the tale), is given shape and coherence based on Blanchefflour's presence in, or absence from, those spaces. When, later in the romance, Floris finally arrives in Babylon (where Blanchefflour has been sold to an emir) his reaction is telling: "Florice com to londe, . . . To þe londe þer his lemman is; / Him þouȝte he was in paradis" (77–80, A: Floris came to [the] land . . . to the land where his beloved is; it seemed to him he was in paradise).²⁹ The Middle English Floris follows exactly in Blanchefflour's footsteps, exploring the world, without deviation, to the precise extent that she has traveled it—no further, no wider. In this way, the romance imagines the world solely with reference to Blanchefflour: at every stop Floris makes, someone recognizes and comments upon his resemblance to Blanchefflour, and tells him where the merchants who purchased her are headed next. As Floris pursues her, the world, from Iberia to Babylon, emerges as a series of places where Blanchefflour used to be: her passage through these spaces gives them their only coherence and meaning for Floris. The Middle English *Floris and Blanchefflour* thus imagines the world to have only one road and one destination. And the world, in turn, begins to have only one mode of interaction: commodified exchange (of the kind Blanchefflour's commodified circulation on the slave market initiates and exemplifies). Mimicking this mode of circulation precisely, Floris's emotional expressions of love begin behaving like a commodity or currency themselves. It is to this explicit commodification of emotion that we now turn.

29. See also lines 429–32, E; 71–76, C.

Floris's Affective Economy

Floris's declaration to his parents that he intends to rescue Blanchefflor from the slave trade initiates a crucial shift in the romance's priorities and strategies. Once Floris sets out after the enslaved Blanchefflor, the romance takes what may initially seem to be a strange left turn into mercantilism and market economies. Trade economies are designed to calculate value and assign exchange rates, and they are extraordinarily efficient at it, as this romance playfully and troublingly demonstrates. Once Blanchefflor has been commodified, the market energies unleashed within the narrative cannot stop calculating her value, as well as the value of anything associated with her, up to and including Floris's love.

Floris decides to travel in disguise: "As marchaundes we shull us lede" (354, E: We shall conduct ourselves as merchants), assembling a list of commodities that signals the importance not only of the endeavor, but also of the mercantile mode of its pursuit. Like arming scenes in medieval romance in general, this list of commodities signals that although Floris nominally assumes it as a convenient and temporary disguise, it bears much more weight. That is, engaging in mercantile endeavor itself becomes the means of pursuing Floris's quest.³⁰ Floris's father, finally reconciled to the idea that Floris will not give up Blanchefflor, promises his son, "Al þat þee nedeþ we shul þe fynde" (337, E: All that you need we shall provide for you). Instead of arming himself in traditional chivalric fashion, with sword and baldric, Floris dictates a list of supplies to shore up his disguise: a string of pack horses loaded with gold, silver, currency, and fine fabrics:

Pow mast me fynde, at my deuyse,
 Seuen horses al of prys:
 And twoo ycharged, vppon the molde,
 Boþ with seluer and wyþ golde;

30. The turn to mercantilism in most versions of this romance has received the most critical attention from scholars of Old French romance. Sharon Kinoshita has repeatedly argued for the Mediterranean Studies implications of the Old French *Floire et Blancheflor*'s fluid sea-based mercantilism, which in her view disrupts Western-oriented linear trajectories of nationalist or divine teleology. See Kinoshita, "In the Beginning Was the Road"; and Kinoshita, "Negotiating the Corrupting Sea," in Catlos and Kinoshita, *Can We Talk Mediterranean?*, 33–47. For another take on the Old French "aristocratic" text's mercantile themes, see Jane E. Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

And twoo ycharged with moonay
 For to spenden by þe way;
 And þree with clothes ryche,
 Þe best of al þe kyngryche.
 (341–48, E)

(You may supply me, for my disguise, seven horses all of great value: and two loaded, in this world, both with silver and with gold; and two loaded with money in order to spend along the way; and three [loaded] with fine clothes, the best in the entire kingdom.)

Conspicuously absent from this extraordinary list are such chivalric accoutrements as armor and weapons, and the absence is telling, for this passage in fact forms the mercantile equivalent of a chivalric arming scene. Floris's disguise is neither random nor merely convenient. Floris will not cast off the disguise in favor of trial by sword at the apropos moment. Most tellingly, perhaps, Floris takes along the precious cup that the merchants paid his parents for Blancheffleur. In sum, when Floris's parents sell Blancheffleur into slavery, that act calculates human value into commodified terms, and from this point forward, the romance imbricates emotional value with commodified value, throwing the earlier emotional investments of this text into mercantile tracks.

Subsequent transactions reveal Floris's keen foresight—his awareness of the mercantile design of the world he is about to enter and the venture he is about to undertake. Floris's proficiency in two modes of calculating exchange value—emotional and financial—becomes immediately apparent in the first inn he arrives at. The first night of his quest Floris arrives at a “hauyn” (386, E: haven, inn), where he stands out for his inability to participate in the “glade chere” of the rest of the company (30, A: hospitality, friendliness). In *fin'amor* style, “Ete ne drinke miȝte he nouȝt; / On Blancheffleur was al his þouȝt” (33–34, A: He could not eat or drink; his mind was/thoughts were entirely [concentrated] on Blancheffleur).³¹ His social performance of misery through these conventional scripts of love-longing gives him away, and perhaps this legibility is intentional—though not, I would stress, the less legitimate for that. Medieval *fin'amor* scripts, because they are a means of demonstrating one's nobility through suffering and devotion, depend upon their social legibility. The innkeeper discerns Floris's dejected emotional state

31. See also lines 393–94, E; lines 33–34, C.

and correctly associates him with Blanchefflour, whom she has recently witnessed in an equal state of misery: “Childe, ful of mourning I þe se. / Þous sat herinne þis ender dai / Blanchefflour” (44–46, A; Child, I see you full of mourning. Blanchefflour sat in here in such a way the other day). The intensity of the lovers’ emotional resemblance is here matched and symptomatized by Floris and Blanchefflour’s physical resemblance to each other: “Þou art ilich here of alle þinge, / Of semblant and of mourning, / But þou art a man and 3he is a maide” (53–55, A; You are here entirely alike, of appearance and mourning, except you are a man and she is a maid). The highly perceptible emotional and physical resemblance of Floris to Blanchefflour initiates the conversation and exchanges that will follow, opening the door to a shared valuation of this kind of emotional expression between the innkeeper and Floris and prompting her to give Floris exactly what he wants and needs: news of Blanchefflour and information about where to follow her next.

The innkeeper extends the romance’s earlier pattern of imagining the world precisely in terms of Blanchefflour. The innkeeper confirms that Floris is tracing Blanchefflour’s exact route and offers guidance for the journey ahead:

Hereinne was þat maiden bow3t,
And ouer þe se 3he was ibrow3t.
Herinne þai bou3te þat maden swete.
And wille here eft selle to bi3ete.
To Babiloyne þai wille hire bring,
And selle hire to kaiser oþer to king.
(47–52, A)³²

(Here that maiden was bought and she was taken over the sea. Here they bought that sweet maiden. And there they will afterwards sell her for profit. They will bring her to Babylon, and sell her to emperor or to king).

As Blanchefflour circulates on the slave market in a wider geography, the romance expands its view of the world to track her beyond the shores of Iberia and across the sea to Babylon, as the innkeeper’s speech here demonstrates. The romance traces Blanchefflour’s movement precisely as Floris fol-

32. De Vries’s edition reproduces the manuscript abbreviation for “and” in lines 48, 50, and 52 of this passage. I have chosen to expand the abbreviation rather than reproducing it.

lows her path, and Floris never deviates, never strays. He is helped along by a process of exchange: Floris offers the various precious objects that he carries with him to those figures who give him information and assistance in pursuing her. By effectively purchasing Blancheffleur's itinerary (enabling him to trace her exact route), Floris experiences his quest according to the logic of exchange and circulation. And the key to navigating this context, it turns out, is the performance of emotion, mirroring Blancheffleur's misery as she circulates in this market. The fact that the innkeeper encloses her assessment of Blancheffleur's itinerary and commodification within two iterations of the lovers' intense and mirroring sorrow suggests that these two ways of understanding her value (emotional and financial) are comparable. The romance will increasingly blur these two modes of valuation across later scenes. This first one, however, sets the ground for the later calculation of exchange rates among emotional and commodified value.

Floris's interactions with this innkeeper reveal that "emotional communities" can bring divergent sets of people (innkeepers and princes of Iberia traveling in disguise) together into shared sympathy through the mutual recognition and valuation of certain modes of emotional expression. Barbara H. Rosenwein defines "emotional communities" as systems of feeling among communities (and the individuals within them) that collaboratively negotiate normative expectations for their expression.³³ Every society, in Rosenwein's assessment, consists of divergent and sometimes overlapping emotional communities that privilege, "call forth, shape, constrain, and express" different emotional configurations.³⁴ Applying Rosenwein's conclusions to literary analysis, we might say that medieval narratives of *fin'amor* constitute one set of privileged norms of feeling and expression for an emotional community of the elite. The process of conversation and transaction that Floris undertakes with this innkeeper (and with subsequent hosts) creates a small-scale emotional community among Floris and these characters. This activity in itself becomes a means by which the romance pulls emotional expression into circulation in a market economy. For the emotional community *Floris and Blancheffleur* establishes between Floris and his series of hosts is based, on the one hand, on their shared ability to recognize and value the social scripts of love-longing, and on the other hand, on their mutual recognition of commodity exchange value: of Blancheffleur's exchange value on the slave market and of the exchange value of information that enables Floris to pursue her.

33. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 842.

34. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 842.

The innkeeper's recognition of Floris via his emotional and physical resemblance to Blancheflour, and the news she gives him of the merchants' route, provokes Floris's intense emotional response, which includes, crucially, commodity transaction. Floris is so "bliþe" (58, A: joyful) that he "herde his lemman neuene" (57, A: heard his beloved mentioned), that he fills a "coupe of gold" (60, A: gold cup) with wine and toasts the woman, bestows the cup upon her in a fever of profuse thanks full of repeated language: "þis hail is þin, / Boþe þe gold and þe win, / Boþe þe gold and þe win eke" (61–63, A: this toast [to your health/good fortune] is yours, both the gold and the wine, both the gold and the wine also).³⁵ Replication of diction marks this exchange of cup and wine as emotionally charged. Floris's next words clearly explain the rationale behind the transaction: "For þou of mi lemman speke. / On hir I þout, for here I siȝt, / And wist ich wher hire finde miȝt," (64–66, A: For you speak of my beloved. I was thinking of her, for her I sighed/sorrowed, and you knew where I might find her). Floris, in effect, purchases the information he wishes to know with an emotional performance and a golden cup. Floris has not directly asked for this information, but he "pays" for the information of Blancheflour's whereabouts with the reward of cup and wine in a transactional manner, as though he has in fact solicited the information. His sorrowful love-longing, which so perfectly mirrors Blancheflour's, can, in fact, be read as a nonverbal, affective means of soliciting news of Blancheflour. The cup Floris exchanges for news of Blancheflour invokes the splendid Trojan cup the merchants paid for her (which Floris has also brought with him on his journey and will use at a crucial point in the plot later on). The poet uses the exchange of this cup to mark Floris's actions here as analogous to those of the merchant enslavers, as Kelly has argued.³⁶ Floris's actions mimic the terms of Blancheflour's commodification and her value on the slave market: the gold cup confirms that information about Blancheflour's emotional state and her whereabouts signal her value on the slave market. Floris thus undertakes a transaction with this lady which belies her earlier assertion to her husband that Floris is not a trader in commodities: "He nis no marchaunt, as me þinkeȝ" (42,

35. Manuscript E contains a similar pattern of close repetition: "þe fessel is þyn, / Boþ þe coupe and þe wyn, / Þe wyn and þe gold eke" (417–19, E: the vessel is yours, both the cup and the wine, the wine and the gold also). See also manuscript C, lines 53–60. Manuscript V is missing foliation.

36. Kelly, "The Bartering of Blauncheflur," 107. Kelly has noted but not analyzed the way each interaction Floris has with these innkeepers and other figures along the route is initiated by, or coincides with, emotion, yet her focus remains the economic factors of the transactions, rather than the way the two are increasingly implicated.

A: It seems to me that he is not a merchant).³⁷ Through the association with Blancheffour's commodification that precious cups now hold, Floris's behavior belies this implicit assertion that his "disguise" as a merchant and his "true" identity as a mournful lover can be clearly distinguished.

This transaction of emotional recognition and commodity exchange, in short, begins the romance's process of conflating Floris's emotions with economics. Floris effectively pays this innkeeper for the news she gives him of Blancheffour with treasure he has brought for this purpose—"to spenden by þe way," as he explains earlier to his father (346, E: to spend along the way). His bestowal of the cup sounds spontaneous—the emotional impulse of the moment—but it is in fact part of a deliberate, advance plan. Across this scene, we see the lucrative power of Floris's emotional displays to compel and purchase assistance. As his love-longing and sorrow transmute into joy at news of Blancheffour, so he finds concrete means of translating his joy into commodities: money and precious goods. The success of the transaction financially incentivizes emotional expression. The attention that every host pays to Floris's emotional state can be read as a process whereby emotional expression not only facilitates the commodified exchanges that follow, but begins to function within them as a kind of currency itself.

The romance intensifies its weave of emotional expression and commodity exchange in subsequent emotio-economic transactions between Floris and his hosts. For instance, upon arriving in Babylon, Floris displays both his effusive spending power: "Florice ne sparede for no fe," (101, A: Floris spared no expense), and his intensive love-longing: "Florice et an drank riȝt nowt, / On Blauncheffour was al hi[s] þouȝt" (109–10, A: Floris ate and drank absolutely nothing, for his mind was entirely concentrated on Blancheffour).³⁸ But rather than taking this love-longing and misery as cause to doubt Floris's status as merchant (as the innkeeper did), Floris's present host, a Babylonian lord, instead attributes Floris's emotional preoccupation to troubling financial matters: "Child, me þinkkeȝ swithe wel, / Þi þout is mochel on þi catel" (113–14, A: Child, it is exceedingly clear to me that your mind is greatly concerned with your property/goods).³⁹ This divergence in

37. See also line 402, E; line 42, C.

38. See the near identical passage in the other manuscripts: lines 455–56, E and lines 95–96, C.

39. Manuscript E has very similar wording: "Ow, child, me þynkeþ welle / Þat muche þow þynkest on þy catelle" (459–60, E: Oh child, it clearly seems to me that you think much about your property). C does not use the mercantile metaphor, and the innkeeper seems to already know Floris's name: "‘Floriz,’ he sede, ‘what mai þe beo / [Þ]us murninge þat ihc þe seo?’"

how the two hosts interpret Floris's emotional performance constructs the equivalence between love and money that commodifies Floris's emotional expressions. The romance actually presents Floris's misery in near-identical terms both times. I have quoted them each above, but let me bring them together here to illustrate their remarkable similarity. Both instances are preceded by lines detailing the feasting, merriment, or fine food available in each place. And then, in each iteration, the romance singles out Floris's contrary behavior in passages that could easily be interchanged across the two scenes. In the inn, we learn "Ac Florice þouȝte al an oþer. / Ete ne drinke miȝte he nouȝt; / On Blaunche flour was al his þouȝt" (32–34, A: But Floris's thought was entirely concerned with another. He could not eat or drink; his mind was concentrated entirely on Blancheflour). In the lord's house the poet nearly duplicates the earlier passage: "Ac Florice et an drank riȝt nowt / On Blaunche flour was al hi[s] þouȝt" (109–110, A: But Floris ate and drank absolutely nothing; his mind was entirely concentrated on Blancheflour).⁴⁰ Through this replication of syntax and diction, the romance signals an impending exchange of information and commodities running parallel to the first scene. As before, Floris's display of misery in the face of loss successfully initiates a conversation with his host that advances his quest for Blancheflour. When the lord interprets Floris's misery as evidence of pressing financial matters rather than love-longing, the romance toggles fluidly between the two modes of interaction and of calculating human value.

Floris maintains his disguise as he responds to the lord's query, replying as though his troubles are indeed mercantile. This reply initiates a process of calculating Floris's love in terms of Blancheflour's commodified value. This economic valuation of love starts life as a metaphor:

Nai, on mi catel is hit nowt,
 On oþe[r] þing is al mi þouȝt.
 Mi þouȝt is on alle wise
 Mochel on mi marchaundise;
 And ȝit þat is mi meste wo,
 Ȝif ich hit finde and schal forgo.
 (115–20, A).⁴¹

(99–100, C: "Floris," he said, "what makes you be so sorrowful as I see you?").

40. See also lines 393–94 and 454–56, E; and lines 32–34 and 95–96, C.

41. See the very similar thrust of lines 461–66, E.

(No, it is not on my property/goods, but my mind is entirely on another thing. My mind is in every respect very much on my merchandise; and yet that is my greatest woe, that I should find it and lose it.)

On the one hand, this conversation plays with dramatic irony. Floris and the audience know that he veils his beloved Blanchefflor under mercantile language to mislead his host and maintain his disguise. Floris's choice of metaphor at once denies the equivalence of Blanchefflor to a piece of merchandise even as it acknowledges the fact that the slave market conceives her person and value in precisely these terms. By asserting that Blanchefflor, even metaphorically, is a luxury commodity of exchange that Floris fears he may not be able to purchase, Floris participates in the logic of that market economy. Despite the fact that Floris dissembles as he speaks, his rhetoric reveals the ease of valuing Blanchefflor via money. Blanchefflor as "marchaundise" both symptomizes and reveals that once merchants commodify her, no one can cease calculating Blanchefflor's value. Even her emotional value to Floris registers in the financial terms of her enslavement. As Kelly has argued, given Blanchefflor's very real slavery, speaking of Blanchefflor in terms of merchandise and purchasing power can never be reduced to mere metaphor.⁴² But even more importantly, I would observe that once it obtains in this romance, Blanchefflor's commodified value persistently appears in association with Floris's emotional state, particularly across these two iterations of the metaphor that she is his "marchaundise" (118, 198, A: merchandise). This metaphor, in other words, completes the process of commodifying Floris's emotions.

Even as the romance rhetorically plays with such associations, it deals in actual exchanges between Floris and the lord that render information about Blanchefflor, and Floris's gratitude for the receipt of it, equivalent to money. The exchange of information and assistance from the Babylonian lord for a cup of silver, a scarlet mantel, and "an hondred schillinge" undercuts the romance's playful ridicule of the equivalence of Blanchefflor to money and of Floris's love to mercantile endeavor (129, 130, 152, A: one hundred shillings).⁴³ These associations are not metaphorical but transactional. And they introduce exchanges into this romance (between Floris and this series of innkeepers and hosts), over and above the larger Mediterranean

42. Kelly, "The Bartering of Blaunchefflor."

43. See lines 475–76, E and 492, E; and 109–10, C and 126, C. V is missing foliation.

mercantile economy where Blanchefflor circulates on the slave trade and in which Floris pretends to take part.

Inasmuch, then, as the Babylonian lord misinterprets Floris's love-longing for Blanchefflor as worry over mercantile troubles, that metaphor mediates (and hence closes) the presumed gap between emotion and money. Floris's reference to Blanchefflor as merchandise effectively resolves the tension by establishing a commodified exchange rate, as it were, for Floris's love. This, strangely and tellingly, leads his host back to love-longing. In response to Floris's claim that he's worried about his "marchaundise," the Babylonian lord finds occasion to mention Blanchefflor, reporting on her "mourning chere" (125, A: sorrowful countenance/bearing) when she passed through his house, and even identifying the source of her misery: "Ioie ne blisse ne hadde 3he none, / Ac on Florice was al here mone" (127–28, A: She had neither joy nor bliss, for her mind was focused entirely on Floris).⁴⁴ The very incoherencies that might trouble this series of events (in terms of a realistic course of conversation) reveal an equivalence between emotion, its expression, and financial calculation/exchange. Floris and his host can move abruptly, but apparently effortlessly and without other contextual clues, between these two modes of calculating human value because the romance is in the process of establishing their equivalence. Conversational incoherence, then, suggests a market context coming quickly to terms with the sudden influx of a new commodity: emotion. Or, contrariwise, a romance governed by *fin'amor* love scripts coming quickly to terms with the sudden influx of commodification in a trade market context.

In short, an affective economy emerges across these scenes, in which superlative loss (so common to medieval romance) "gives early romances their emotional currency."⁴⁵ In Madeline Brainerd's analysis, the pain of loss within medieval romance functions as "cultural capital that can be accumulated."⁴⁶ Her use of the phrases "emotional currency" and "cultural capital" are not solely metaphoric—material economic conditions transmute into figurative expressions of misery and loss in romance settings. In other words, early romance forges an intrinsic connection between wealth and heterosexual love, such that characters experience "loss of wealth as the loss of love."⁴⁷ In Brainerd's analysis, this association is latent, whereby love

44. See lines 471–76, E and 103–6, C. Manuscript V is missing foliation.

45. Brainerd, "Stolen Pain," in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 88.

46. Brainerd, "Stolen Pain," in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 76.

47. Brainerd, "Stolen Pain," in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 79.

of a woman stands in for desires for wealth and financial security for the male hero, without the plot having to descend into the specific language of those financial undercurrents. The Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, in contrast, literally conflates amatory with economic status. That is, *Floris and Blancheflour* engages specific language of wealth, commodification, and exchange to delve into the question of precisely what financial value Blancheflour's person carries—to Floris's parents, to the merchants, to the emir of Babylon, and to Floris himself, as he engages this language of merchandise to speak about her. In the affective trade economy that Floris's transactions with his hosts set up, expressions of loss carry commodified value that effectively allow him to engage in transactions across these various "currencies." For Floris, emotion operates like money or a commodity. The romance assigns value to love in a market context of exchange; yet love appears not to lose any value by being "spent" or expressed. Emotion, in its expression and commodified value, appears instead to operate like an infinitely renewable resource or a savings account that accrues infinite interest.

Theorizing the behavior of emotion via a similar analogy with the movement of capital in a monied economy, Sara Ahmed offers a theory of "affective economies" that can explain how the circulation of emotion, like the circulation of capital, generates an increase in value and effect. In Ahmed's conception, emotion functions like an "economy," in the sense that she imagines a system of circulation and valuation to structure emotional expression. Via such circulation, emotion accrues social, cultural, political, and relational value. In Ahmed's view, then, "emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation."⁴⁸ That is, movement or circulation within this system of social valuation (what other theorists might call the expression and transmission of affect/emotion) generates emotion: "some signs, that is, increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more they circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to 'contain' affect."⁴⁹ In Ahmed's view, emotion is precisely "that which is accumulated over time" through the circulation of the signs that appear to stand for it.⁵⁰ Ahmed's insight that circulation produces

48. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 120. It is important to note here that Ahmed does not distinguish between terms such as "emotion," "affect," "feeling," or "passion," though many affect theorists and historians of emotion would, in fact, insist upon the necessity of clarifying such terminology and reserving its use for specific contexts.

49. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 120.

50. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 120.

and increases the social value of emotional expression elucidates literary representation throughout this central section of *Floris and Blanchefflour*. As with Brainerd's use of the phrase, "emotional currency," Ahmed's "affective economy" is only by analogy a financial or market economy. Yet the analogy she draws between emotion and capital, paired with Brainerd's observations about the latent association with heterosexual love and wealth in medieval romance, augment our understanding of love's commodification in *Floris and Blanchefflour*.

If, as Ahmed suggests, we consider the expression of emotion to be analogous to the circulation and production of capital, we can explain why, even though this romance seems to calculate the commodified value of Floris's love over and over again with successive hosts, its deployment and expression only increases its potency and abundance. Floris's love, we might say, behaves like capital, accruing value as an effect of its expression and recognition by various hosts (i.e., its circulation). Love thus behaves like an economic resource Floris can never exhaust—just as he pulls quantities of gold, silver, wine, coins, and precious cups out of his saddlebags in apparently unlimited quantities. The romance presents no doubt or anxiety that his supplies are sufficient to need or will impoverish his future Iberian rule. In fact, to extend Brainerd's observations, this romance appears to condone effusive spending of emotion and other commodities in order to recover the most precious of all—Blanchefflour—as a means of securing wealth rather than depleting it. Blanchefflour's commodified person encapsulates financial and emotional well-being, so that rescuing her ensures Floris of both. In sum, once the romance has introduced the idea—even playfully and deceptively—that Blanchefflour is Floris's merchandise, an unavoidable implication arises: namely, that Floris's love for her equals her purchasing price. The romance cannot decouple emotion from market contexts of currency and commodity exchange once it has associated them, trading as intensely on the circulation of emotion as it does on human commodities.⁵¹

51. The romance records the emir's valuation of Blanchefflour in terms of both the heart and the purse, revealing that her exchangeability on the slave market, where she is translatable into gold or treasure, can be expressed hand in glove with her value as a desirable paramour circulating now in the affections of two men: "And [he] gafe for hur, as she stood upryzt / Seuyn sythes of gold her wyzt, / For he pouzt, without weene, / Bat faire mayde haue to Queene." (195–98, E: And he gave for her, as she stood upright, seven times her weight in gold, for he thought, without doubt, to have that fair maiden as queen.) Both Floris and the emir of Babylon, in other words, claim Blanchefflour as their beloved in a sexual rivalry that bears emotional as well as economic valences.

Dismantling Affective Economics

At the point that Floris sneaks into the tower to rescue Blanchefflor, the poet abruptly eschews its affective economy's commodified language and transactions and attempts to reestablish the story according to genre conventions as a *fin'amor* romance. But it cannot at this point escape the implications of love's commodification—the event horizon of this affective economy. When Floris hides in a basket of flowers destined for the tower of maidens, the poet abruptly rejects the bidding war over Blanchefflor that might have ensued between Floris and the emir of Babylon, should the text have sustained its literalized affective economy to its logical conclusion. Floris, whose name, of course, means “flower,” hides among flowers that metaphorically reveal while they physically conceal him. Floris thus figuratively sheds the associations of his previous disguise to become a flower and hence, once again, himself. He emerges from the basket devoid, the romance appears to suggest, of economic valences. The romance thus reorients its relation to wealth and financial security, now figuring them latently through heterosexual love. Nevertheless, the apparent transition away from monetized economics is not as easy as the romance makes it seem, for a tearful reunion scene and a new Iberian-Babylonian emotional community of self-sacrifice cannot dispel the text's earlier financial calculus that commodifies Floris's love and Blanchefflor's person. Love for Blanchefflor remains equal to her purchasing price, able to extract her from the Mediterranean slave trade when expressed in front of the man who bought her with legal tender.

The final scenes of the romance reorient its affective economy away from explicitly commodified value toward a system of cultural capital, in which the lovers win over their enemies through the pathos of their mutual devotion. For instance, when the lovers are reunited, the romance resumes an early preference for the metaphors of *fin'amor* over its more recent penchant for those of mercantilism. Floris declares: “Nou al mi care ich haue ouercome. / And nou ich haue mi lef ifounde, / Of al mi kare ich am vnbounde” (535–37, A: Now, I have overcome all my cares. And now [that] I have found my life, I am unbound from all my cares).⁵² This passage echoes the earlier metaphor Floris uses for Blanchefflor before his parents sell her to merchants. Worried, as ever, about their separation, Floris expresses that nothing “ne my3t him glade . . . / For he my3t not his lyf see” (107–8, E: [nothing] could make

52. See the remarkably similar passages: 830–32, E; and 542–44, C. The passage appears also in V, though the lines are partially illegible: 304–6, V.

him glad . . . for he was not able to see his life). Thus, in the tower reunion scene, Blancheflour becomes, once again, Floris's "life" that frees him from his "cares," rather than the "merchandise" or "catel" that binds him to them. Once the emir discovers the reunited Floris and Blancheflour, their demonstrations of self-sacrificing love foster a nascent emotional community at the court of Babylon that draws the emir and his lords into a shared recognition of the pathos and beauty that append suffering. This sequence of events collectively attempts to evacuate Blancheflour's commodified value and the economic valences that have accrued to emotional expression from the text's final assessments of their love. As Brainerd argues, medieval romance envisions a world in which social compensations derive from intense suffering, and one of these compensations is suffering's capacity to "set in motion an assortment of emotional energies, interpersonal rearrangements and cultural adjustments."⁵³ Floris and Blancheflour's suffering achieves precisely this: it releases emotional energies that rearrange the interpersonal dynamics of the emir's court, adjusting relations such that condemned prisoners may become valued allies.

At first, the power of pathos itself sways the court, along with the beauty inherent in Floris and Blancheflour's suffering. For example, when Floris and Blancheflour are brought weeping before the assembled Babylonian lords, "aiþer biwepeþ oþeres wo" (697, A: each weeps for the other's woe),⁵⁴ their beautiful distress and pathetic sadness overcome even the sternest of the witnesses. The immediate effect demonstrates the cultural power and attractiveness of the lovers' intense dreariness (its exchange rate, so to speak), which inspires each observer to privately withdraw any condemnation:

Dreri was hire boþer þouȝt.
 Þer nas non so sterne man
 Þat þise children loken vpan,
 Þat þai ne wolde alle ful fawe
 Here iugement haue wiȝdrawe,

 Beþ non so fair in hire gladnesse,
 Als þai [the lovers] ware in hire sorewenesse.
 (723–35, A)⁵⁵

53. Brainerd, "Stolen Pain," in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 75.

54. See line 957, E; and 442, V (partially illegible). C does not have this line.

55. See also lines 983–93, E; and 701–10, C. V ends before this point.

(Both of their thoughts were sorrowful/full of dread. There was not a single man that these children looked upon so stern that they would not have very eagerly withdrawn their judgment . . . None exists who is so fair in their gladness as they [the lovers] were in their sorrowfulness.)

This passage, which twice emphasizes Floris and Blancheffleur's attractive physical appearance and three times invokes their countenances, deploys the display of intense feeling as a kind of currency that seeks to purchase, so to speak, their pardon. Floris and Blancheffleur's woe transmutes into beauty that helps to signal its superlative value. Suffering, in other words, makes beauty manifest and exerts a powerful empathic sway to convince the court to an emotional and legal exchange (i.e., a pardon). As earlier in the romance, where Floris and Blancheffleur's mirroring mournful countenances inspired sympathy, comment, and aid from a series of innkeepers and hosts (albeit in exchange for precious cups and coins), here their countenances, which are stunningly beautiful in their distress in the face of each other's death, inspire universal recognition and a mirroring valuation of their love and suffering. Floris and Blancheffleur evince a beauty and a nobility in their despair that elicits/negotiates similar feelings in their audience and holds out the option that Babylon could be like Iberia in its susceptibility to fine feeling and its willingness to sacrifice some of its own priorities to an appreciation of fair, devoted youth. This is the exchange on offer, and Babylon takes it.

The court thus joins the elite emotional community of competitive self-sacrificial devotion that Floris and Blancheffleur represent. Floris and Blancheffleur's displays of sacrificial love, in which each of them struggles to die in place of the other,⁵⁶ achieve the desired emotional transaction: they move everyone in the room to a sorrow and dread equal to the lovers' own:

Al that iseȝen þis
 Perfore sori weren iwis,
 And saide, "Dreri mai we be
 Bi swiche children swich rewþe se."
 (770–73, A)⁵⁷

56. The lovers each ask for the other one to be spared (752–57, A), following this verbal demonstration of self-sacrificial devotion with a physical one. Blancheffleur thrusts her neck forward under the emir's unsheathed blade before Floris pulls her back and takes her place. Blancheffleur then pulls him back (764–69, A). See also lines 1006–11, 1016–21, E; and 721–27, 733–38, C. V ends before this point.

57. See also lines 1022–23, E. C does not have these lines. V ends before this point.

(All who saw this were therefore sorrowful indeed, and said, “May we be sorrowful/full of dread, seeing such sorrow in such children.”)

The repetition of “dreri” (sorrow, dread), formerly attributed to the lovers and appended now to the court, makes legible the successful transmission and exchange of emotion, and the social/cultural value it carries, from the condemned lovers to the Babylonian lords. These lords have been brought not only into sympathy with the lovers, but also into the precise mimicry of their feelings. They have bought into this system of emotional valuation and exchange.

If beauty initially sways the emir’s men to secretly take the lovers’ part, their self-sacrifice finally wins over the emir (if almost in spite of himself):

Pameral, wroþ þai he were,
Boþe him chaungede mod and chere
For aither for other wolde die,
And he segh so mani a weping ege.
And for he hadde so mochel loued þe mai,
Weping he turned his heued awai,
And his swerd, hit fil to grounde;
He ne miȝte hit h[o]lde in þat stounde.
(774–81, A)⁵⁸

(The emir himself, though he was angry, changed in both mind and mood, because each desired to die for the other and he saw so many weeping eyes. And because he had loved the maiden so much, he turned his head away weeping, and his sword, it fell to the ground; he could not hold it in that moment.)

The emir’s mental and emotional state—his “mod and chere”—transforms to accord with that of the lovers and his court. The scope of this change is quite profound. Middle English “mod” can convey the mind, heart, soul, intention, or purpose, and “chere” can convey the countenance, bearing, and behavior. In all imaginable respects, then, the emir recognizes and endorses the love that Floris and Blancheffleur share. He internalizes each lover’s willingness to die for the other and the doleful mood of his court; finally, his own love for Blancheffleur elicits from him the same embodied emotional response. This sequence reproduces in miniature the ripple effect of Floris

58. See also lines 739–46, C. E does not have these lines. V ends before this point.

and Blancheflour's love, from their own feelings and actions to their effect on the court, to the emir's own emotive reaction. The emir gives them what they want (legal pardon) in exchange for entrance into this self-sacrificing emotional community in which elite chivalric noblemen determine their actions by love.

Sacrificing what he has most desired ("for he hadde so mochel loued þe mai": because he had loved the maiden so much), the emir ends the conflict and propels the romance toward its "happily ever after" conclusion. The poet here figures the emir's desire for Blancheflour in emotional rather than economic terms, though he has in fact purchased her on the commodity market. Though the equivalence of love to money runs now as an undercurrent of the romance rather than its explicit mode of representation, we nonetheless take the point. Floris's love for Blancheflour (and hers for him) has succeeded in purchasing her person (and their pardon) from her enslaver. The text eschews, throughout this entire sequence (and especially in this final transformative moment), the explicit language of monetized exchange. Here at the conclusion of the story, the poem tries to recuperate Floris from the troubling associations of commodification and mercantile exchange that have accrued to Blancheflour by means of recuperating the emir. Drawing him into what seems to be purely an emotional community of elite nobility that extends from Babylon to Iberia, the poet tries to evacuate commodification and monetized exchange from emotional expression and exchange. Yet as the scene demonstrates, emotion continues to carry, if now latently, the superlative exchange value that it has accrued from Floris's transactions in a literalized affective economy.

Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor

Whereas the circulation of money and emotion drives the Middle English version of the *Floire and Blancheflor* story, the circulation of Flores drives the medieval Castilian version. The medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* unsettles simplistic and monolithic conceptualizations of religion and geopolitics, foregrounding illustrious lineage and excellence on both the personal and geographic scales. I argue that Flores deploys his illustrious familial connections, his elite social class, his chivalric comportment, and his political savvy to circulate in an affective economy of prestige and renown throughout a dynamic Islamicate Mediterranean. My argument derives from the unique approach, from a neighborly comparative perspective, that

the medieval Castilian version of the *Floire and Blancheflor* romance takes to the tradition's plot. In this version, Flores is a Muslim prince of high lineage and great natural ability, whose grandfather is a caliph in the North African Maghreb, whose uncle is emir of Córdoba, and whose father is king of Almería in al-Andalus. Flores is not just an Iberian Muslim prince on a quest to rescue his Christian beloved (as he is in the Middle English version of this story). Rather, in the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, Flores is aware of his embeddedness in the larger confessional and geopolitical network of the *dar al-Islam* (realm of Islam) throughout not only this far western Mediterranean context where his family holds power, but also in the larger Mediterranean. The romance sets up these concerns through its initial attention to Flores's father, Fines, and how he comes to rule a kingdom in al-Andalus.

Flores's masterful navigation of complex geopolitics to cultivate his own renown among the powerful rulers of the Islamicate Mediterranean has not received sufficient critical attention. Partly due to the relatively recent discovery of the medieval Castilian version of the legend within its sole manuscript and even more recent availability of the text in critical editions, work on this version has emerged gradually, and has largely focused on its place within, and deviations from, the rest of the *Floire and Blancheflor* romance's extensive tradition.⁵⁹ The medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* has been interspersed within the chapters of a single manuscript version of a Castilian chronicle: the *Estoria de España*. While most scholarship on the Middle English and Old French versions of this story cluster index the tale's multiculturalism or cultural hybridity, prevailing scholarly opinion on the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* emphasizes its "relentless drive

59. The necessary groundwork of placing the *Crónica* within its manuscript context, on the one hand, and within the larger *Floire and Blancheflor* story tradition, on the other, has simultaneously resulted, in my view, in an overemphasis on the text's depictions of religious violence and cross-cultural aggression and an inflation of the *Crónica's* participation in medieval Castilian commemoration of its mythic past and supposed Christian destiny. Tracking its closest relatives within this network of texts, and distinguishing lines of influence among them, has generated critical urgency around specific kinds of interpretive inquiry. For instance, critical debate has ensued on the compositional timing of the *Crónica*. Grieve is an advocate for an early dating of the *Crónica*; see her impressive comparative study "*Floire and Blancheflor*" and the *European Romance*. Francisco Bautista advocates for a later dating. See Bautista, "*Floire et Blancheflor* en España e Italia," *Cultura Neolatina* 67 (2007): 139–57. For a general overview of the debate, see Arbesú, introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*. On the relation of the *Crónica* to the rest of the *Floire and Blancheflor* tradition, see Grieve, "*Floire and Blancheflor*" and the *European Romance*. Arbesú offers a useful bibliography of Grieve's and subsequent scholarship in his introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*.

toward Christianity,”⁶⁰ wherein the “successful romance [of Flores and Blancaflor] against all odds *proves*—through fiction—the legitimacy of Iberian crusade.”⁶¹ I wish to nuance this interpretive trend. Although the outcome of the Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* does indeed laud conversion and Christian rule in Iberia, its path first wanders through extensive and complex Muslim geopolitics in the south and west Mediterranean. If, as Wacks has recently shown, the interspersed chronicle chapters and the tale’s ending orient us in one interpretive direction (toward Flores’s conversion and an expanding Christendom), I offer a reminder that the bulk of the romance narrative, specifically its opening and central chapters, pulls our attention away from religious conflict and engages in a profoundly enthusiastic examination of *intrareligious* dynamics. Flores circulates within a Muslim prestige culture that extends from al-Andalus across to the North African Maghreb and eastward into Egypt, with little regard for its own eventual conversion plot until its final chapters.

When we attend to the ways the *Crónica* suspends its own teleological trajectory throughout much of the narrative, we can better understand

60. Grieve, “*Floire and Blancheflor*” and the *European Romance*, 168. Most recently, Wacks has argued that “the romance is a fictional allegory for the Castilian military and spiritual designs on al-Andalus. The Muslim Flores embodies the dream of the conquest and conversion of al-Andalus; Blancaflor the recuperation [of] Christian Hispania lost in the Muslim invasion of 711. The union of the two allegorizes Castile’s dual claim to the Umayyad (Flores) and Carolingian (Blancaflor) political legacies” (*Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 112). See also Marla Segol, who focuses upon the manuscript context of the *Crónica* to argue that it “is heavily invested in justifying and celebrating the Christian rule of Spain” (“*Floire and Blancheflor*: Courtly Hagiography or Radical Romance?” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23 [2003]: 237, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1350082>). Likewise, David Arbesú opines that the “ultimate goal” of the story is “the Christianization of Spain” (introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, 30).

61. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 107. Wacks has analyzed *Flores y Blancaflor*’s manuscript and historical context, close reading the imbrication of its chapters among chapters from the *Estoria de España*. The *Estoria de España* has sometimes been taken as Castilian royal propaganda—a project designed to promote and justify Castile’s territorial ambitions within and beyond the peninsula through its articulation of the kingdom’s mythic and victorious Christian past: particularly its assumption of the mantle of the Visigoths and the Asturians and successful recovery of some peninsular territory from the Muslims in the first half of the thirteenth century. On the *Estoria de España*, see Ward, “Iberian Historiography.” The *Crónica*’s manuscript context has therefore led scholars to speculate that the *Crónica* itself may be committed to the same ideological fantasies that the *Estoria* has been taken to promote. This line of analysis has been most thoroughly and persuasively explored by Wacks in *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, but see also Grieve, “*Floire and Blancheflor*” and the *European Romance*; and Arbesú, introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*.

its agenda in that conversionary ending. The ultimate narrative picture the compiler gives us thus registers the complexities and ambivalence of the historical moment it charts. In the analysis that follows, I emphasize the *Crónica's* presentation of Muslim lineage and personal excellence, not because I believe this feature of the romance should supersede other scholars' assessments of its violence and Christianizing agendas, but to augment that view with a better understanding of the *Crónica's* serious investment in Muslim prestige culture. In this way, the *Crónica's* rich texture complicates the simplistic teleology through which its Christianizing trajectory has been read. Ambivalence in the text's representation of its conversionary arc should not surprise us. As Ingham reminds us, romances which show evidence of "substantial interlinguistic, cultural, and historical complexity" often demonstrate "the absence of [either cultural hegemony or] resistance as a 'pure' process or event."⁶² Texts like the *Crónica* can, and often do, serve a multiplicity of interests in complex and even contradictory ways. The representational route a story travels matters, just as its destination does. By charting Flores's extensive circulation through an affective prestige economy in the Islamicate Mediterranean, the medieval Castilian *Flores y Blancaflor* meanders, rather than drives, toward Christianity.

The compiler of the *Estoria de España* manuscript containing the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* inserts the romance's events early within Muslim rule in Iberia, a few decades after the 711 conquest of the peninsula by Northern African Berbers and Arabs.⁶³ The compiler of the *Crónica* takes noteworthy pains to make the story fit seamlessly into a temporal pocket within the *Estoria's* historical presentation of Muslim rule in the region, integrating

62. Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 38. Ingham focuses here on resistance to dominant discourses, arguing that resistance always engages, and consequently is bound up in, the structural powers and injustices it opposes. I have extended her insight to include the reciprocal point that dominant discourses are likewise not "pure" or free from resistance, hybridity, and ambivalence—a view that Ingham's overall argument endorses.

63. At the end of my work on this project, as the manuscript went to press, I became aware of Ramzi Rouighi's study *Inventing the Berbers: History and Ideology in the Maghrib* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019). Rouighi shows that "Berber" is also an invented, fantasy identity: "In fact, before Berber and Maghrib, no one thought that the inhabitants of northwest Africa belonged together or that the entire landmass represented a single unit. The first time anyone thought that was in Arabic" (*Inventing the Berbers*, 1). I regret that I am unable to integrate his argument into my thinking in the present study. That work remains a project for the future.

the story among touchstone events.⁶⁴ Rather than being merely and simply “of Speyne a kinges sone” (207, A: a king’s son from Spain) with no further political or historical contextualization, as in the Middle English version of this story, Flores in the Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* is part of a powerful Muslim family in the western Mediterranean, embedded amid a complex network of geopolitical relationships, alliances, and tensions. The complexity and scope of this geopolitical context continually unfold as the story proceeds.

Though Flores is a Muslim prince of Iberia, the medieval Castilian romance directs our initial attention to the close familial and political ties between al-Andalus and the North African Maghreb. The story commences with Isca miramomelín, one of “*los reyes moros que ovo en África que aseñoraron a España*” (49; the Muslim kings who were in Africa who conquered Spain).⁶⁵ The compiler inserts Flores into this illustrious line of rulers in the North African Maghreb and al-Andalus, making him Isca’s grandson. The story proceeds as Isca’s beloved son, Fines, seeks a kingdom for himself in “España” (Spain), one of the exceptional places of the world, and Isca grants him a kingdom based around the port city of Almería.⁶⁶ Fines requests this kingdom for himself because he will not inherit his father’s rule.⁶⁷ Fines’s fictional Iberian kingdom sits side by side with the historical

64. Arbesú writes: “In the case of the *Chronicle*, the compiler has taken so much trouble to intertwine reality with legend that, at least in the case of MS. 7583, one cannot do without the other” (introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, 30).

65. The italics signal that the compiler is here citing the title of his supposed source for the tale of *Flores y Blancaflor*.

66. Almería is a historically important port city in medieval Iberia, though it was not yet established in the eighth century, when this fictional tale is set. As Kinoshita has argued in another context, Almería itself carries particular resonances for the North African Maghreb, particularly under the Almoravids and Almohads. See Sharon Kinoshita, “Beyond Philology: Cross-Cultural Engagement,” in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 25–42.

67. Rule will instead pass from Isca miramomelín to Fines’s cousin, and such a detail is consistent with historical Berber and Arab practices of inheritance and succession, in which “rule was not necessarily passed from father to son, [but] was closely guarded within a pool of eligible [family or] clan members” (Brian A. Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain* [New York: Basic Books, 2018], 40). Catlos observes that in these societies, “the extended family or clan was the political unit of prime importance. . . . Within the family, authority resided with a senior clan member; power and title were not transmitted father to son, but laterally among uncles” (Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 40). Fines’s status as Isca’s son, but not heir, therefore stands in contrast to the typical Norman-style practice of primogeniture or other hereditary systems in which children automatically succeed their parents that frequently dominate the representation of inheritance in European romances (barring interventions such as King Evan’s decree against heiresses in the *Roman de Silence*, for example).

emirate of Córdoba as recorded in the chapters of the *Estoria de España*. Fines will rule alongside, but not in competition with, the sitting emir, who this text likewise imagines to be one of his relatives. The compiler carefully nestles the fictional story among particularities of Muslim history and practice (for instance, historical political structures like the emirate of Córdoba and cultural matters of succession). Foregrounding politics and lineage, the *Crónica*'s opening attention to Flores's father, Fines, and grandfather, Isca, celebrates early Muslim history in the western Mediterranean.

Isca miramomelín is most likely an eighth-century Berber king, or perhaps a man of Arab descent ruling over Northern Africa's majority Berber populace.⁶⁸ Later iterations of Muslim rule in the western Mediterranean likely also inflected the *Crónica*'s fourteenth-century presentation of its eighth-century setting. I would argue, in fact, that Isca miramomelín's dynasty invokes the Almohad empire that rose to power in the North African Maghreb during the twelfth century and subsequently took over political and spiritual control of al-Andalus.⁶⁹ Though the Almohad empire had waned by the *Crónica*'s fourteenth-century compositional context, the Almohads exerted a profound and long-lived influence upon medieval Christian perceptions of Islam, as Fromherz has demonstrated.⁷⁰ Though

68. Scholars have debated the precise historical identification of Isca miramomelín. Wacks follows Arbesú and Pedro Correa Rodríguez in identifying him as the historical Umayyad caliph of Damascus Hisham I (Hisham ibn Abd-al-Malik [r. 724–43]); this identification would mean that the compiler of the *Crónica* has inserted Flores into the dynastic line of the powerful family that exercised authority as the spiritual head of Islam in the eastern Mediterranean at the time this tale is set. This identification of Isca as an Umayyad caliph disputes Grieve's assessment (which accords with my own) that the character is a Northern African king or emir. Grieve identifies the caliph of Egypt, mentioned later in the tale, as the Umayyad caliph of Damascus, though I would suggest that the caliph of Egypt is more likely a nod to the caliphs of the Fatimid empire (Grieve, "Floire and Blancheflor" and the European Romance, 24). Bautista, meanwhile, does not offer a historical identification for Isca miramomelín in his edition. See Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*; Arbesú, introduction to *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*; Pedro Correa Rodríguez, *Flores y Blancaflor: Una novela del siglo XIII* (Granada: University of Granada Press, 2007).

69. I am not suggesting that the compiler mistakenly locates the Almohads in the eighth century, but rather that the enduring medieval legacy of the Almohads may have informed the compiler's presentation of Isca miramomelín. Allen James Fromherz notes that the rulers of the Almohad empire often used the title "Amir al Mu'min," which was transformed by Christian polemicists into "Miramolin" (suggestively similar to Isca's title of "miramomelín") (Allen James Fromherz, *The Near West: Medieval North Africa, Latin Europe and the Mediterranean in the Second Axial Age* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016], 18).

70. Fromherz, *The Near West*. As Fromherz explains, the Almohads "dominated the twelfth-century Western Mediterranean all the way from Marrakech to Seville to Libya" and "had a major impact on even hostile European views of Islam" (*The Near West*, 19). Though Chris-

the *Crónica* describes a literary scene set centuries before the rise of the North African Almohad empire, its presentation of Muslim geopolitics in the western Mediterranean could have been inspired by their later legacy in the Mahgreb and al-Andalus. In these and other ways, the *Crónica*'s opening moves direct us away from interfaith violence on a northern Iberian pilgrimage road that opens the Old French *Floire et Blancheflor*, setting the stage for Flores and Blancaflor's love story instead through the political and familial networks that tightly link al-Andalus and the Maghreb.

Fines's newly endowed kingdom registers the glory and importance of al-Andalus under Muslim rule, resonating with medieval intellectual and artistic discourses of acclaim. Fines requested a kingdom in "España" (Spain) because it is reputedly a fabulous place: "dixóle que le diese un reino en España. . . . E por qué él demandó en España e non en otro lugar fue por que oíé dezir a los que de allá vinién que era España abondada de todas las cosas del mundo" (140: He [Fines] told him [his father] to give him a kingdom in Iberia. . . . And the reason he asked for [a kingdom] in Iberia and not in another place, was because he heard tell from those who came from there that Iberia was rich with all the things of the world). Fines's praise for "España" invokes typical accolades of Iberia, from Isidore of Seville's description in praise of Spain in the *Historiae Gothorum Vandalorum et Sueborum* (he describes it as "the pride and the ornament of the world"), through various encyclopedists, chroniclers, and geographers after him, both Christian and Muslim.⁷¹ This intellectual discourse, which the *Crónica* here channels,

tian representations of them could be quite derogatory, their influence was profound: "the Almohads were effectively promoted on par with the Prophet Muhammad in the worldview of Christians in the Mediterranean" (Fromherz, *The Near West*, 18). See also Ramzi Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate: Ifriqiya and Its Andalus, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). It might also be helpful to recall that the Almohads and Almoravids wished to connect themselves to Umayyad power. That is, any slippage in the text between North African Almohad power and centralized Umayyad power may derive from these intrafaith politics of prestige and lineage. My thanks to Paula Sanders for making me aware of Almohad and Almoravid interest in tracing their lineage to the Umayyads. See also Amira Bennison's *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

71. Isidore of Seville, *History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi*, trans. Kenneth B. Wolf, in "In Praise of Spain," in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, 2nd. ed., ed. Olivia Remie Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3. María Rosa Menocal picks up Isidore's language for the title of her book *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002). Akbari, in her chapter on medieval geographic conceptions of the world, showcases Isidore's assessment that Iberia is not only a favorable place to live but

hails Iberia as an ideal location both climatologically and ecologically: it is a land that is fertile, lush, and rich in providing the necessities of life.

Iberia's excellence emerges not only as a matter of geography, but also of culture, given the *Crónica's* eighth-century setting in al-Andalus. That is, Fines's articulation of the region's excellence effectively celebrates an Iberia under Muslim political and cultural leadership. Discourses of al-Andalus's fame specifically link its excellence to the Islamicate culture that emerges there in the early medieval period. This paradigm becomes an "elegiac-nostalgic" trope in Muslim writing in the eleventh century and continues in both Sephardic and Muslim discourses through later centuries.⁷² This elegiac tradition imbues a retrospective cast on Iberia, celebrating al-Andalus's excellence in the wake of its "loss": "both the Arabo-Muslim world and the Jewish diaspora have looked upon al-Andalus with nostalgia, setting Iberia apart as a golden past that has been lost."⁷³ The discourse therefore mingles sorrow and acclaim, drawing upon the land's lushness and fertility, on the one hand (as we see in Fines's imagination of Iberia, above), and upon its powerful legacy as a site of "cutting edge Arabo-Islamic (and Judeo-Arabic) cultural production."⁷⁴ Thus the particular features of the trope serve as sub-

also a microcosm of the larger world (see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 20–66. For an overview of the early Muslim and Sephardic texts celebrating the greatness of al-Andalus, see Ross Brann, "Andalusi 'Exceptionalism,'" in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 119–34; and Robert Edwards, "Exile, Self and Society," in Lagos-Pope, *Exile in Literature*, 15–31.

72. Brann, "Andalusi 'Exceptionalism,'" in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 123. For Brann's assessment of the influence of this trope upon historians and other scholars, see especially 119–23.

73. Yuen-Gen Liang et al., "Unity and Disunity across the Strait of Gibraltar," *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700674-12342123>. For Liang, Balbale, Devereux, and Gómez-Rivas's survey of scholarship on this trope, see "Unity and Disunity," nn15, 16. Political fragmentation of various sorts (starting in the eleventh century and recurring in later centuries), territorial losses to Christian forces, and the eventual exile of Muslim and Jewish communities from Iberia inspires, as Ross Brann explains, "the ritualized remembrance of experienced and imagined loss" as a "palpably wrenching yearning" ("Andalusi 'Exceptionalism,'" in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 124). The trope derives its persuasive power from "the community's recollection of *exactly what was lost*," constructing "an idealized and transcendent Andalusi identity in relation to its own storied past" (124, 131, emphasis in original).

74. Brann, "Andalusi 'Exceptionalism,'" in Akbari and Mallette, *A Sea of Languages*, 124. As Brann sums up, "the richness of the land, the community's love of learning, and its erudition, cultural sophistication and noble lineage, all inscribed in the social, intellectual and literary history of al-Andalus" ("Andalusi 'Exceptionalism,'" 131).

text for the *Crónica's* presentation of “España” and the personal excellence of the Muslim princes who rule there. The *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* perpetuates such fantasies of a glorious Andalusian past, projecting them through Fines’s fictional eighth-century anticipatory desire for a kingdom in this excellent place.

Simultaneously, however, Fines’s use of the name “España” reminds audiences what the lost excellence of al-Andalus was lost *to*. Invoking the trope of Andalusian excellence also means invoking the Christian rule that replaced it. “España” thus carries complex semantic and cultural registers. On the one hand, it can chart mythic and teleological Christian fantasies that look back to the peninsula’s early Christians, specifically the Romans, followed by the Visigoths who fell to Berber and Arab Muslims in 711, and the Asturians who in legendary histories “are credited with the first significant Christian military incursions against the Umayyad caliphate [in Córdoba].”⁷⁵ This mythic view of history charts “España” as a once and future Christian expansionist nation. As Wacks, who adopts this interpretive view of the *Crónica*, points out, this view of history would allow Castile to assume its own political continuity with Asturias and “connect the earliest campaigns of the Asturian kings against Umayyad Cordova to their contemporary struggles with Nasrid Granada.”⁷⁶ Francisco Bautista similarly hints that we might understand Fines’s take on the greatness of España through a temporal Christian arc stretching from the Visigoths to late-medieval Castile.⁷⁷ Such readings posit that the *Estoria de España*, within which the *Crónica* appears, understands and presents al-Andalus (nearly eight centuries of varied Muslim rule in Iberia) as a temporary aberration of its Christian destiny.⁷⁸ Yet I would

75. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 107. The historical truth is more complex: “the northern Iberians who opposed the Muslims in the eighth and ninth century were composed of the same tribes of Vasooni, Cantabri, and Asturi who had battled against the Romans and the Visigoths in previous times” (Dangler, *Edging toward Iberia*, 94). See also Eduardo Manzano Moreno, “Christian-Muslim Frontier in Al-Andalus: Idea and Reality,” in *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe*, ed. Dionisius A. Agius and Richard Hitchcock (Reading: Ithaca, 1994), 83–99, and Matthew Bailey’s discussions of the complex historical context behind heroic tales of the Asturian hero Bernardo del Carpio: Matthew Bailey, “The Heroic Stand of Bernardo (Fierabras and Rodrigo),” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 96, no. 10 (2019): 1017–29, <https://doi.org/10.3828/bhs.2019.61>; and Matthew Bailey, “Charlemagne as a Creative Force in the Spanish Epic,” in Bailey and Giles, *Charlemagne and His Legend*, 13–43.

76. Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 107.

77. Bautista, *La materia de Francia*, 140n3.

78. It is beyond the scope of this project to comment on how well such a line of interpretation speaks to the overall trajectory and content of the *Estoria de España*, either within the

caution against taking such a categorical interpretive line. España's greatness pulls multiple ways, not to mention that the "crusading" ambitions of Alfonso X (and by extension those of the *Estoria*) have been called into question by scholars.⁷⁹

Fines's fictional eighth-century Iberian kingdom consists of approximately the same territory as the Nasrid kingdom of Granada as it stood in the fourteenth century. Matching Granada's extent if not its temporality, Fines's fictional kingdom prefigures the state of Iberian Muslim rule in the compiler's contemporary moment: territorially diminished from its former scope and glory days, but a persistent presence in the southern region of the peninsula nonetheless. Fines's forward look toward the excellence that forms a retrospective trope in the compiler's day, supposedly lost except to the nostalgic imagination, simultaneously activates Andalusia's retroactive sense of loss, as well as lauds its fabulous culture. Within the trope, España's fertility and abundance, combined with the particular cultural, intellectual, and social achievements that Muslim rule made possible, are present only in remembrance, yet Fines and his kingdom embody this richness and cultural acclaim as a present and lived experience of Muslim communities within the tale's eighth-century setting. And yet, this celebrated Islamicate culture arguably describes Alfonso X's own contemporary cultural context, as well. Building on the work of Maribel Fierro, Jean Dangler argues that al-Andalus should be considered "Alfonso's own cultural referent in the Ibe-

particular manuscript that contains the *Crónica* or across the *Estoria*'s extensive extant manuscript tradition. But see Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*. My own argument focuses, not upon the *Estoria de España* manuscript context or an analysis of that work, but rather upon the complex ways that the *Crónica* itself signals the extent of its possible engagement with Christianizing agendas and the celebration of Muslim rule and culture in al-Andalus.

79. Dangler argues that "expansion [of the Christian-ruled Iberian kingdoms] was one factor in a gradual process of regional political and economic adjustment over many centuries, and was not caused by binary religious antagonism between kingdoms of different faiths" (*Edging toward Iberia*, 93–94). She continues: "Several examples from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries contrast the conventional idea of Christian/Islamic rivalry and show Hispanicate sovereigns routinely viewed other Hispanicate kingdoms and Christian dioceses as greater threats to their power than Muslim rulers" (95). This situation holds particularly true for Alfonso X: "The rule of King Alfonso X from 1253–1284 is emblematic, since his political goals mainly consisted of administrative and political centralization, rather than comprehensive initiatives to diminish or eliminate Islamicate power. . . . Alfonso's wish to extend Castile's renown within the peninsula and throughout Europe did not constitute a marauding, crusading military enterprise against Islam" (95). See also Leonardo Funes, *El modelo historiográfico alfonsí: una caracterización* (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1997).

rian cultural system, and not . . . ‘foreign’ to Alfonso’s supposedly different, Castilian culture.”⁸⁰ In addition, Dangler points out that “Alfonso X’s idea of *Espanna* was not limited to Christianate realms, but also included the peninsula’s Islamicate kingdom.”⁸¹ Fines’s assessment of “España” thus toggles between these various temporalities and perspectives (simultaneously current, forward-looking, and retrospective; fundamentally Islamicate in nature, whatever the particular religious affiliation of those in leadership). The *Crónica*’s presentation of Fines’s anticipation, desire, and celebration of Iberia, then, ultimately suggests that the excellence Christian-ruled “España” might claim for itself is an excellence born of Muslim instigation, presence, culture, and rule. We are sitting, at this point in this tale, on the cusp of the glory days of Iberia; and as the narrative progresses, Fines’s son, Flores, will bear out the promise of al-Andalus’s fame and excellence in his personal qualities/attributes and achievements. Though Christianity will subsequently flourish within this narrative, Iberia’s Islamicate excellence in fact reflects cultural values that held sway in Iberia throughout much of the medieval period, regardless of what faith its peoples practiced. The *Crónica*’s narrative movement toward Christian conversion does not erase or deny that simple fact of shared Islamicate culture.

Moreover, the compiler’s descriptions of Fines participate (as later descriptions of his son Flores likewise will) in a shared culture of chivalry that historically extends throughout Muslim- and Christian-ruled medieval spheres. Specifically, Fines and Flores epitomize an “emerging Arabo-Islamic masculine ideal” of prestige that draws upon a cultural discourse of elite masculinity that existed in the period on its own terms.⁸² Flores’s participation in

80. Dangler, *Edging toward Iberia*, 111. Dangler elaborates the point: “Far from an indication of mere ‘influence’ of Islamicate culture on the Hispanicate king, Fierro suggests that Andalusí cultural models continued as the standard for Hispanicate rulers such as Alfonso X, at the same time that al-Andalus no longer wielded the same political power as before” (*Edging toward Iberia*, 111). See also Maribel Fierro, “Alfonso X ‘The Wise’: The Last Almohad Caliph?” *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 175–98, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006709X458819>

81. Dangler, *Edging toward Iberia*, 96. See also her opening discussion of the term “España” (*Edging toward Iberia*, 32).

82. Brian A. Catlos describes this historical “Arabo-Islamic masculine ideal,” as “chivalry on steroids,” and attributes its formation and dissemination to the reign of the Abbasids in Baghdad: “Ascendant on the world stage [by 800], [Baghdad’s] formal primacy and prestige within the Islamic world went unchallenged. Not only was Islam coalescing as a religious and legal culture in the Abbasid lands, but the caliphate was creating an institutional framework for empire. Meanwhile, Arabo-Islamic culture, heavily infused with Persian, Byzantine,

an Islamicate culture of chivalry is eminently legible within the expectations for chivalric comportment and identity as they typically appear for Christian heroes in the genre of romance: “E quando este Fines fue grand mançoço, era muy feroso e mucho apuesto, e el padre amávale mucho a demás. . . . Era este Fines omne mucho esforçado en fecho de armas e muy franco a su gente” (140: And when this Fines was a large young man, he was very beautiful and handsome, and, further, his father loved him very much. . . . This Fines was a very brave man in battle, and very generous with his people). This excellent Muslim prince is himself well suited to the task of carrying on the illustrious ruling legacy of his family. Fines’s chivalric excellence derives, on the one hand, from his noble lineage and, on the other, from the individual talents and virtues that his lineage allows him to cultivate.

Fines’s participation in elite chivalric masculinity is not simply an imaginative projection of Christian values for the purposes of reifying them, as some scholars have argued;⁸³ on the contrary, his chivalric identity at once

Syriac, Hebrew, and South Asian influences, was reaching new heights of sophistication and innovation in virtually every field of science and art, not to mention philosophy and theology. . . . The essence of the cosmopolitan turn in Islam is epitomized by the upper-class emphasis on sophistication and refinement (referred to generically as *adab*) as a measure of prestige” (Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*, 90, 89).

83. For instance, Wacks argues that Flores represents a case of “internal Orientalism,” which he follows Carl Jubran in defining as “the exoticization and objectification of one’s own cultural history” (Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*, 115): “The Muslim protagonist is the mirror of Christian chivalry, and distinct from the Christians only by religion and perhaps outward appearance. As in modern orientalist narratives, the Muslim Other is the object of conversion and conquest. However, this orientaling narrative is different because the Other is not simply to be dominated through conquest and conversion, but ultimately becomes assimilated to the self” (115). Geraldine Heng has similarly argued that “under particular, narrowly defined conditions, Saracens can be allowed to resemble—and are praised for resembling—Christian Europeans, into whose company they might be imagined as inducted” (Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018], 56). In Heng’s view, such figures participate in the dominant and hegemonic cultural logic of race-making via “meaningful play” that ends up reinforcing “hierarchical alignments of . . . race” (44). Narratives assimilate such figures into the dominant cultural norms, often represented by adherence to Christian faith and chivalric values. While many medieval romances bear out Wacks’s and Heng’s insights, *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* offers a more nuanced picture through Fines and Flores. Their characterization more profoundly disrupts racial systems of religious difference and religious conflict than is typical in medieval romance. Though meaningful play with hierarchical systems may serve the purpose of reifying such systems, and though racial systems need not be either simple or consistent to hold powerful sway (Heng has powerfully demonstrated both points), moments such as this

exemplifies and embodies historically shared values that not only permeate Islamicate culture in Iberia, but also cross the Christian/Muslim religious divide more broadly. The compiler's representation of Fines and his son Flores, then, fits a mold familiar to Christian audiences and is thus easily assimilable to Christian ends; at the same time, their greatness stands on its own terms, conforming to Muslim frameworks of chivalry comparable to elite Christian codes of masculinity. A cultural network, in other words, affiliates elite men across and around the Mediterranean (and beyond). These historical shared cultural mores of chivalric masculinity permeate literature and traverse religious divisions within the genre of romance.

The medieval Castilian *Crónica*, then, ultimately presents a complex series of opening moves that trouble any simplistic conclusions about characterization and religious affiliation. The tale initiates, not with a moment of violence, but with paternal love, in which a powerful ruler endows his ambitious and gifted son (who exhibits all of the qualities most prized by Muslim traditions of chivalry) with his own kingdom in one of the excellent places of the world. The Christian future awaiting Flores and Iberia does not eclipse the *Crónica's* celebratory portrait of their Muslim present—rather, the compiler endorses both visions simultaneously, creating a richly textured and nuanced Iberian imaginary. As interreligious violence ensues, the *Crónica's* characterization of Fines continues to resist black-and-white assessments, acknowledging the violence and struggle across religious lines that attends early medieval Iberia as well as Fines's skill as a leader. Once this excellent epitome of young manhood, Fines, is established in his equally excellent Iberian kingdom, he decides to go warring in Galicia, a Christian-ruled region in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. This campaign brings Blancaflor into Fines's household. This turn of the plot also invokes Iberia's medieval histories of confessional conflict. The fictional route by which Blancaflor's mother, Berta, is enslaved by Fines and his family (and the route by which Blancaflor is later sold onward into the Mediterranean slave market) accords with historical realities of the period. Simon Barton explains that “the capture and onward sale of Christian women in the slave markets of al-Andalus is well enough documented to suggest that there was a considerable demand for such human merchandise,” primarily as a result of confessional or interreligious violence that cuts both ways.⁸⁴

text's celebrations of Fines and Flores simultaneously reveal that alternative narratives can be surprisingly resilient in the medieval archive, perhaps especially among Iberian texts like the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*.

84. Simon Barton, *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 34.

This detail of cross-cultural antagonism and enslavement in the *Crónica* likewise accords with the familiar opening gestures of many other versions of the *Floire and Blancheflor* romance, and paves the way for us to understand Fines within a context of interreligious violence, as well as within intra-religious accolades of personal excellence. Yet even this instance, wherein Christians fall victim to aggressive Muslim violence, includes the positive perspective of Almerian Muslim society regarding Fines's military accomplishments. When Fines returns to Almería after his Galician campaign, his subjects welcome him home with great joy, reminding us once again that our compiler enthusiastically and consistently celebrates Fines's excellence, despite the damage he has just inflicted upon Christian bodies and families: "E el rey fue reçevido con muy grande alegría. . . . E el rey quanto ganara de los cristianos partiolo a su gente muy bien e muy francamente" (142: And the king was received with very great happiness. . . . And the king distributed everything that he had gained from the Christians among his people very well and very generously). Fines is beloved by his people for his generosity and for bringing their loved ones (as well as slaves and treasure) safely home. Though it charts the cross-confessional violence with open eyes, the opening segment of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* ultimately emphasizes a nuanced picture of illustrious Muslim identity in its political, genealogical, and chivalric iterations, and this complex picture needs to be acknowledged in our assessments of this tale's agendas.

Flores's Affective Prestige Economy

Fines's excellence within this shared culture of elite masculinity transfers to his son, our eponymous hero Flores. As Flores grows to manhood and demonstrates similar qualities of chivalric excellence, his lineage and participation in Muslim prestige culture rise to narrative prominence. Despite his parents' initial objections, Flores refuses to relinquish his love for Blancaflor, and sets out to rescue her from the king of Babylon, to whom she is enslaved. Flores's chivalric excellence and illustrious family connections grant him real advantages as he travels the Mediterranean. As he travels, he cultivates his own reputation and renown in the Islamicate Mediterranean, which functions as an affective prestige economy of masculine relations based upon merit, service, and reward.

As in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, the outset of Flores's quest in the medieval Castilian *Crónica* sets the parameters for the affective economy that will later emerge. For instance, in the Middle English text,

Floris travels in disguise, as a merchant, and his mercantile arming scene foreshadows the commodification of love that subsequently takes place. In different, though complementary fashion, Flores's first stop along his journey foreshadows the social prestige that will govern his circulation in the Islamicate Mediterranean's affective economy in the Castilian *Crónica*, and the fact that Flores does *not* travel in disguise plays into this context. Flores and his companions make a strategic detour early in their journey to visit Flores's grandfather, Isca miramomelín, in Northern Africa. Flores, heartsick and impatient, wants to pursue Blancaflor directly, but his advisers persuade him to respect his father's wishes and visit Isca first: "E enderesço para tierra de Berbería, que era y estonçes el miramomelín" (167; And he headed for the land of Barbary, since the miramomelín was there at that time).⁸⁵ This stop-over in "Berberia" (Barbary—i.e., Berber territory in Northern Africa) to see Flores's grandfather highlights Flores's illustrious Muslim genealogy and the material and immaterial advantages for his quest that derive from such a lineage. This voyage to meet his grandfather initiates the narrator's celebration of Flores's virtues, which model the masculine chivalric ideals of the Islamicate Mediterranean. Nowhere does Flores's Muslim heritage appear as a deficit; rather, he derives profound advantages from his heritage, as the *Crónica* once again celebrates familial love and showcases the privileges arising from cultivating strong relationships in the Islamicate Mediterranean.

By suspending his quest temporarily to see his grandfather, Flores actively cultivates this important family connection and creates an opportunity for his grandfather to appreciate and celebrate Flores's personal qualities. This episode signifies the beginning of Flores's circulation among an affective prestige economy of powerful men of the Islamicate Mediterranean, giving them respect and service and receiving, in turn, their respect and honors:

E quando Isca sopo que vinié su nieto manço bo ya, criado e feroso, ovo tan grand plazer que era maravilla. E quien vos quisiese contar el feroso resço bimiento que le mandó fazer e la muy grande alegría que con él fizo, esto serié mucho de retraer. Mas quando le dixerón cómo iba buscar a Blancaflor e cómo nascieran él e ella en un día,

85. "Gaidón su maestro e Gandifer su ayo consejéronle que se fuese ante a ver con su ahuelo, Isca el miramomelín, así como gelo mandara el rey Fines su padre. Estonçe, como quier que pesasse al infante Flores, ovo a fazer lo que le consejavan." (167: Gaidón his teacher and Gandifer his tutor advised him to go first to see his grandfather, Isca the miramomelín, as King Fines his father had ordered him to do. Therefore, however much it saddened/weighed on Prince Flores, he had to do what they advised him).

e cómo se criaran en uno e el muy grande amor que le avía, tovo que serié omne de grand coraçón, pues que tan mançebo se metía en aventura por una muger. Mas quando sopo que Blancaflor non era en el su señorío, mas que los mercadores la levaran a la partida de Asia, mandó dar al infante Flores su nieto tres mil cavalleros e muy grande aver a demás, e muchas joyas e muy nobles. E quando se ovo a quitar d'él, abraçole e besole acomendole a Dios. (167)

(And when Isca knew that his grandson had arrived, a grown and beautiful young man, he had such great pleasure that it was a marvel. And the beautiful reception that he ordered made and the great happiness with which he did it would deserve a long retelling for anyone who wanted to tell you about it. But when they told him [Isca] how he [Flores] was searching for Blancaflor, and how they were born on the same day, and how they were raised together, and the very great love that he had for her, he [Isca] held that he [Flores] would be a man of great heart, since being so young he was taking on risk/adventure for a woman. But when he [Isca] found out that Blancaflor was not in his realm, but that the merchants were taking her to the territory of Asia,⁸⁶ he ordered given to Prince Flores, his grandson, three thousand knights and a large sum of money as well, and many jewels, very fine. And when he had to leave him, he embraced him and kissed him and commended him to God.)

The pragmatic advice that Flores receives to visit his grandfather results in numerous material advantages, which all derive from Isca's conviction in Flores's potential, sitting, as he is, on the cusp of full manhood. Isca interprets Flores's devotion to Blancaflor to signify something greater than a personal romantic relationship with a woman—Isca takes it to be sign and surety of Flores's chivalric greatness. Love for Blancaflor, then, which Flores seems to conceive of as a personal relationship with no larger relevance or scope, registers socially as a means of generating prestige. Such devotion to a woman and the assumption of adventure and risk for her sake is an impor-

86. This reference to Asia initiates one of the geographic inconsistencies that appears in the *Crónica*. It initially seems that the merchants sell Blancaflor to the king of Babylon in the far eastern Mediterranean (suggesting that "Babylon" may be a reference to Baghdad or to the biblical Babylon, both of which lie in modern-day Iraq). It becomes clear later in the *Crónica* that the king of Babylon holds territory in Egypt, and this inconsistency is never directly addressed or explained by the chronicler.

tant component, we learn from Isca, of this Muslim culture of chivalric comportment and identity.⁸⁷ The primacy Isca places upon Flores's love for Blancaflor accords with romance genre values *writ large*, which recognize the social and cultural value of heterosexual love.

By way of his quest to rescue Blancaflor, then, Flores begins to achieve something beyond the personal and intimate level of his relationship with her—he achieves a kind of masculine “coming out”—various powerful Muslim men (Isca miramomelín is merely the first) encounter Flores during the adventures that follow and acknowledge Flores as an excellent young man. He is an up-and-coming player among the powerful in the vast regions of the world controlled by his family and his current coreligionists. The *Crónica*, that is, cultivates a vision of Iberia as part of an Islamicate Mediterranean affective economy that celebrates elite chivalric excellence. This affective prestige economy increasingly draws Flores out of the insular context of his love for Blancaflor by broadening its scope and importance within a larger system of social capital in the western and southcentral Mediterranean. The potential rewards, as Flores learns, are extraordinary, extending beyond reunion with Blancaflor. The tale's later conversionary ending and its return to insular Iberian conflicts cannot dispel the extent and depth of Flores's celebratory voyage into and circulation within these Muslim cultures of chivalry and prestige that occupy the *Crónica*'s substantial central chapters.

Islamicate geopolitics, including this culture of prestige, increasingly influence and contextualize Flores's quest to rescue Blancaflor. Upon leaving his grandfather, Flores travels fifteen days by sea until he reaches “la partida de Asia, en el señorío del galifa de Egipto” (167; the territory/border of Asia in the realm of the caliph of Egypt).⁸⁸ When Flores learns that the

87. On this point, see Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith*.

88. The compiler occasionally conflates or confuses where events in the narrative are happening. For instance, this reference to Asia, combined with an earlier moment of the story, where the merchants selling Blancaflor were showing her off around the part of “Asia” that was said to be “contra el señorío del grand soldán de Persia” (155; adjacent to the realm of the great sultan of Persia) suggests that Babylon refers to Baghdad. There are two medieval Babylons: the biblical Babylon in the Middle East and the Babylon of Egypt typically identified with Cairo (the Hereford *mappamundi*, for instance, identifies *both* places under the name of Babylon). Correa Rodríguez reflects: “It is obvious that at the beginning the compiler refers to the Asian Babylon, closer to Persia, and makes a clear distinction between this city and its king, and the caliph residing in Egypt and his *alcazar* of Cairo. However, as the narrative evolves, confusion springs, and the compiler claims that in the court of the king of Babylon all the great men of Egypt are present, placing the city in a region where certain traditions set

merchants sold Blancaflor to the king of Babylon, his reaction demonstrates that he knows the geopolitics of the region and can navigate them to his own advantage. The king of Babylon has an ongoing dispute with the caliph of Egypt; Flores sees the political opportunity here that he can exploit, and takes initiative:

E quando el infante Flores e su conpañia fueron çiertos d'esto plógoles mucho, ca tovieron que el infante llegava a tienpo que podrié recabdar por lo que venié. Ca ayudando ellos al rey de Babilonia contra el galifa, podrié venir el pleito a abenencia a que podrié cobrar la gracia de su señor, e quiçá que por esto que le darié a Blancaflor. (76)

(And when Prince Flores and his company were certain of this [state of affairs], it pleased them a great deal, because they thought that Prince Flores was arriving at a time in which he would be able to recover what he had come for. Because in helping the king of Babylon against the caliph, he would be able to bring the dispute to a compromise, so that he would be able to earn the thanks of his lord, and, perhaps, because of this, he would give him Blancaflor.)

Flores understands the larger political situation of the region—that the king of Babylon has antagonized his overlord, the caliph of Egypt, and might look with favor upon anyone who could facilitate their reconciliation. He thus creates a plan to capitalize upon this situation in order to advance his rescue of Blancaflor.

As the first step in Flores's plan, he presents himself to the king of Babylon, revealing exactly who and what he, in fact, is: a young prince, not yet established in his own right as an actor in the western Mediterranean, but with good family connections, an army under his authority, and a will to learn, serve, and prove himself:

E el ynfante enbiole su carta en que le fizo saber en que él era fijo de rey Fines, señor de Almería la de España, e nieto de Isca miramomelín de África, e que porque no avié guerra en toda su comarca en que él usase de fecho de armas, que moviera dende con çinco mil cavalleros muy bien guisados por ir buscar do oviesse guerra do pudiese usar de fecho de armas; e que andando en esta demanda que sopiera cómo

the city of Babylon, identified with Cairo" (Correa Rodríguez, *Flores y Blancaflor*, 110n44).

él avía su contienda e su desabenençia con el galifa de Egipto, e que venía para él allí a la su corte señaladamente por aprender maneras e buenas constumbres e saber lidiar; e si le plazié con el que le auydarié de grado. (168)

(And the prince sent him [the king of Babylon] his letter, in which he informed him that he was the son of King Fines, lord of Almeria in España, and grandson of Isca miramomelín of Africa, and that because there was no war in all his [own] region in which he could in join battle, he had moved hence with five thousand knights very well equipped to go looking for where there was war where they would be able to use force of arms. And that embarking in this request, he knew about his [the king of Babylon's] contention and his disagreement with the caliph of Egypt, and that he [Flores] came for this reason there to his court especially to learn manners and good customs and to fight, and if he [the king of Babylon] was pleased with him, that he [Flores] would help with pleasure.)

The king of Babylon's reaction verifies Flores's diplomacy and political savvy. The timing is good, and the king, grateful for Flores's offer of support, invites Flores to appear before him, where he treats him as a social equal.⁸⁹ The king of Babylon enacts his own participation in the shared Islamicate masculine culture of chivalry by welcoming Flores with such honors. The king of Babylon thus affirms the affective prestige economy that dominates his court (and indeed the region).

Flores capitalizes upon his status, his lineage, and his gentle upbringing to cultivate an advantageous relationship with his sexual rival for Blancaflor. In echo of his interactions with his grandfather Isca miramomelín, Flores's ample social graces impress the powerful king of Babylon: "E a todas las preguntas que él fazié, el infante respondíale mansamente e muy bien, de guisa que el rey fue muy pagado d'él e entendió en él que podrié ser omne bueno" (169; And to all the questions that the king put to him, the prince responded meekly/gently and very well, in such a way that the king was very satisfied with him and understood that he would be a good

89. "E quando llegó el infante al rey, quisiera besar la mano, e el rey era omne entendido e mesurado e non quiso que gela besase, e abraçole, e todas las compañías del infante besaron la mano al rey" (169; And when the prince arrived at the king, he [the prince] wanted to kiss his hand, and the king was a wise man and prudent, and he did not want him [the prince] to kiss it and embraced him, and all the companions of the prince kissed the hand of the king).

man).⁹⁰ The opinion seems universal: Flores shows every sign and promise at this point in his youth of greatness in his maturity. Because Flores is who he is (grandson of a caliph in the Maghreb, son of a king in Iberia, and nephew of the emir of Córdoba), and because he travels openly as himself, he is able to immediately claim the attention of the king of Babylon. Flores earns the king's gratitude and obligation precisely as he has predicted he would: by entering the king's service and intervening in the king's dispute with the caliph of Egypt. Though Flores has an ulterior motive that he is not sharing with the king of Babylon, he is true to his pledge to assist him and does, in fact, render aid in vital material ways.

Flores thus accrues social capital in this Muslim prestige culture by way of his love quest. His pursuit of Blancaflor becomes a means of circulating in the region's affective prestige economy, participating in, and therefore advancing, his public reputation within the Babylonian geopolitical scene. And this reputation does not operate at the level of pretense. In contrast to the approach Floris takes in the Middle English version of this tale, Flores in the Castilian *Crónica* disguises his love, but not his identity, from the man who has bought Blancaflor. In the Middle English romance, Floris's attention, as we have seen, centers obsessively on Blanchefflor and his love for her. We never forget why he is in Babylon, despite the disturbing economic cast of his transactions. But in the medieval Castilian, Flores's attention does not similarly center on Blancaflor. For throughout the extensive Babylonian section of this plot, Blancaflor drops out of sight as Flores focuses on what he can accomplish for the king of Babylon. As this section of the plot advances, the compiler focuses on Flores himself, his extraordinary qualities, and the growing gratitude of the king. Though Flores ostensibly uses this service as a means of pursuing his rescue mission, none of the concrete outcomes pertain directly to Blancaflor. Rather, the relationships and identity that Flores cultivates within this Islamicate prestige economy sideline his relationship with Blancaflor. In other words, though pursuit of Blancaflor may be the catalyzing factor for its initiation, Flores's quest becomes, in a very real sense, the growth of his own reputation. He maintains his love for Blancaflor and does rescue her in the end, but first he gains renown for himself outside the terms of this relationship.

90. "Omne bueno" (good man) sometimes carries the social implication of a respected individual within a given community who can give testimony. The narrative may thus be signaling, obliquely, the respected personage that the king's court eventually judges him to be. My thanks to Clara Pascual-Argente, who drew my attention to this valence of "omne bueno."

The height of Flores's achievement in this regard arises when Flores rescues the king from capture and resolves his dispute with the caliph of Egypt. Flores has been guarding Babylon's borders from the king's enemies with such panache that they forge a letter to entrap the king. Purporting to be from the caliph of Egypt to the king, the letter feigns reconciliation (172–73). As a result of the letter, the king's enemies capture him in ambush (173). Flores rescues the king single-handedly, at which point the compiler interjects to explain this rescue is the signature reason the king pardons Flores later on once he's caught him with Blancaflor in the tower. In other words, the *Crónica* pauses its narration and gestures momentarily to future events, explaining that the relationship of gratitude and admiration that Flores develops with the king of Babylon, and particularly his rescue of the king, plays an instrumental role in making it possible for the king to pardon his later betrayal of that trust:

D'esta guisa que avedes oido libró el infante al rey de Babilonia de mano de sus enemigos, de que fue bien andante, ca después a poco tiempo lo falló el rey en la su cámara de la su torre con Blancaflor, que lo oviera a matar si non por los de su corte que le rogaron por él. E señaladamente la razón porque lo más perdonó fue por este acaesçimiento que vos avemos dicho. (173)

(In this way as you have heard the prince freed the king of Babylon from the hands of his enemies, which was fortunate, for soon after the king found him in the chamber of his tower with Blancaflor, and he would have killed him if not for those in his court that pleaded on his behalf. And especially/significantly, the reason why he most pardoned him was because of this event that we have just told you about.)

The romance thus encourages in us a utilitarian view of the public reputation and personal gratitude of the king of Babylon that Flores gains through these actions. They lead directly, the text suggests, to the success of the final part of his quest to rescue Blancaflor, convincing the king to relinquish his desire for vengeance and let the lovers go free. By looking forward to the outcome of events it has not yet charted, the romance implicitly renders the events in between these two events ancillary to that trajectory. In other words, if at this point Flores has succeeded in earning enough gratitude from the king to ensure his later pardon, then his subsequent actions to facilitate a reconciliation between the king and the caliph

appear redundant to need.⁹¹ Flores does not stop here, but continues to circulate in this Muslim prestige culture, cultivating a relationship with the caliph of Egypt. The narrative interjection, revealing that he has now done enough to be pardoned, broadcasts the fact that Flores now pursues a level of cultural capital for some other purpose or goal. In other words, Flores definitively gains something above and beyond a means to rescue Blancaflor as he participates in social dynamics whose importance extends beyond any accounting of her.

After the caliph receives the king of Babylon back into his grace, he spends three days in conversation with Flores. The caliph is so impressed with him that he attempts to arrange a marriage alliance between Flores and his daughter. Diplomatic as ever, Flores bows out of this offer.⁹² The compiler's attention to the relationship Flores develops with the caliph signals unmistakably that Flores possesses every virtue and social grace he needs in order to move with ease among the powerful men of this politically fractious Islamicate Mediterranean. Flores and the caliph's conversation extends beyond mere politeness; they legitimately value each other. By elaborating the relationship, the romance underscores its true weight in this Islamicate prestige culture. Flores's renown in the caliph's eyes delivers advantages beyond pragmatic assessments of its worth. Flores has spent time cultivating various relationships with various powerful Muslim men around the Mediterranean, but while he has a clear stake in developing ties with Isca miramomelín and the king of Babylon, the same does not hold true for the caliph of Egypt. The caliph possesses nothing obvious that Flores directly needs or wants, except yet another confirmation of Flores's excellence at the ever-expanding horizon of approbation that this affective prestige economy generates. Flores now enjoys a public identity that has nothing to do with Blancaflor, his love for her, or his quest to rescue her. Flores is independent and admired on his own terms; the attention of the caliph drives this point home, both to us and to Flores himself.

91. The caliph reinstates him as king of Egypt (a status the king of Babylon had lost during the dispute); and he gives him a gold ring in token that he will not "le tollese el señorío de Egipto" (175: take away from him the sovereignty of Egypt).

92. "El galifa començó de falar con el infante Flores, e tan pagado fue d'él que tres días que y moró, cada día mandó que estudiase ante él, a tanto que le prometió que le daría su fija por muger. Mas el infante escusose diziendo que prometiera a su padre que non casase sin su mandado" (176: the caliph began to speak with Prince Flores, and he was so impressed with him that during the three days he dwelled there, each day he ordered that he appear before him, to the point that he promised him that he would give him his daughter as a wife. But the prince excused himself, saying that he had promised his father that he would not marry without his consent/permission/order).

As the caliph shows Flores a glimpse of possible futures that do not involve Blancaflor (such as marriage to an illustrious and powerful man's daughter), Flores actually entertains the notion of abandoning his quest and leaving Blancaflor in Babylon to continue his travels alone. In comparison to Floris's unswerving devotion to Blanchefflower in the Middle English version, Flores's serious (if brief) consideration of the futures that might await him minus Blancaflor threatens, for a moment, to transcend his own narrative. Uniquely to this version of the story, Flores starts to think, "maybe I do not need Blancaflor," and he is right—in terms of his own prestige and circulation in this affective economy, he does not. But the problem grows more complex when we take into account that when Flores muses, "maybe I do not need her," it comes out as "maybe she is unfaithful." Flores's reasoning, that is, as he momentarily contemplates this unexpected option, taps medieval antifeminist discourses on women's fickleness. He analogizes Blancaflor to women in general, all of whom, in his iteration, are inconstant: "de uno fazen senblante e tienen ál en el corazón" (176–77; they make one outward semblance and have another in the heart), such that "non ha en ellas verdat" (176; there is no truth in them). Laden with an irony noted neither by Flores nor the compiler, Flores attributes inconstancy to *her*, associating Blancaflor with all other dissembling and changeable women, a move that makes it possible for Flores to momentarily contemplate leaving her to her fate as the newest slave in Babylon. Thus, although Blancaflor catalyzes Flores's circulation in this Mediterranean affective prestige economy, she quickly becomes ancillary to the quest. She may have provided the initial push that set him moving in pursuit of her, but he subsequently navigates the geopolitical circuits of the Muslim Mediterranean on his own merits as an up-and-coming, highly eligible young man of impressive lineage.

Perhaps the medieval Castilian romance of *Flores y Blancaflor* is misnamed in this respect, for its story here transcends the titular love plot. The *Crónica's* opening and central chapters (the bulk of its narration) fundamentally engage the greater Islamicate Mediterranean world in which Flores circulates and the self-efficacy he finds there, above and beyond the impetus for, and completion of, his quest. That leaving Blancaflor behind in Babylon would leave her in the peril of sexual slavery does not enter Flores's calculations. Though the Middle English version also ignores the dire realities of Blanchefflower's enslaved position, Floris's determination to rescue her never falters. Problematic as the oversight remains in both versions, the Middle English *Floris and Blanchefflower* appears to operate according to the optimistic, if unrealistic, genre-based conviction that all will turn out well. But in the

Castilian *Crónica* Flores sees and takes seriously attractive vistas and futures for himself beyond reunion with Blancaflor. When he entertains these possibilities without the least consideration of what that would mean for her, and moreover justifies his abandonment by accusing her of fickleness, Flores reveals a misogyny much more chilling. If we needed a reminder that medieval discourses of love and praise for women structurally depend upon their vilification and dismissal, this moment loudly broadcasts that toxic interdependence. Flores quickly backtracks on fickleness and takes active steps to rescue Blancaflor (the plot, that is, ultimately reifies his devotion to her as in the other versions of this story), but the momentary inclusion of this train of thought reveals the extent to which Flores values his circulation in a Mediterranean Muslim prestige culture and his efficacious participation in the geopolitics of the region.

This sequence of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* unhooks heterosexual desire from wealth and status. Many romances figure financial anxiety and security through the ups and downs of their love plots, such that, in Brainerd's apt phrase, protagonists experience the "loss of wealth as the loss of love."⁹³ In concurrent fashion, reunion with the beloved signals the satisfactory resolution of financial affairs—so closely linked to status in the medieval romance mindset. If the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* literalizes this perspective through its commodified affective economy, the affective prestige economy of the medieval Castilian *Crónica* severs the connection between wealth/status and love. Flores may have embarked on this path to his own prestige and renown because of love for Blancaflor, but he does not need her to ensure his reputation and independence. She was a catalyst for his circulation in a masculine-oriented affective prestige economy, and he can now choose to discard her in favor of continuing to pursue prestige. All he needs to do to continue up this ever-escalating spiral of renown is to keep circulating. Movement ensures the continuous growth of honor and prestige. The analogy of emotion to capital that grounds Ahmed's concept of affective economies emphasizes this continuous growth model. The circulation of emotion in social systems functions to increase its value, as does the circulation of capital in a monetized economy. In the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, courteous exchanges of compliment, deference, respect, and reward augment the illustrious status of the participants. We have seen this through Flores's interactions with his grandfather, Isca miramomelín, the king of Babylon, and finally, the caliph of Egypt. And this process continues

93. Brainerd, "Stolen Pain," in Finke and Niekerk, *One Hundred Years of Masochism*, 79.

in the court scenes once Flores and Blancaflor are discovered together in the king's tower. In my view, then, it is no accident that the romance takes us past the limit of Blancaflor's utility to Flores's renown before he curtails his circulation and decides to take concrete steps to rescue her.

To choose Blancaflor over his own prestige means choosing in favor of romance genre conventions. Romance structurally depends on circulation and movement, but generally returns its hero to a point of stasis at the conclusion. In the *Crónica*, Flores has the chance to simply keep circulating, which threatens to transcend the genre as well as his own plotline. Flores's love for Blancaflor originally inspires Flores's grandfather Isca miramomelín to endorse Flores; the love plot proves Flores's worthiness to take up the mantle of this powerful family's prestige in the region. Blancaflor thus catalyzes the initial male relationship that matters to Flores's circulation and that facilitates all the important masculine relationships that follow. That is, the praise and material support (i.e., an army) that Flores receives from his grandfather in the North African Maghreb enable Flores to offer his service to the king of Babylon, to rescue the king, and to reconcile the king to the caliph of Egypt. And at this point Flores debates whether to continue circulating in this masculine realm alone or to step out of circulation, rescue Blancaflor, and head back to Iberia and to generic denouement.

In the recoil of genre conventions stretched past their limit point, Flores aborts the thought of abandoning Blancaflor, snaps back into rescue mode, and starts plotting how to infiltrate the tower where the king of Babylon is holding her. His scheme depends upon the good will and public honor he has accrued among the king of Babylon's subjects: "E desdeque todo el pueblo sopo que el infante librara al rey de mano de sus enemigos, començaronle a fazer mucha onra e mucho plazer a él e a su conpañia. E el rey enbiávale cada día muchos presentes e nobles" (174: And since all the people knew that the prince had freed the king from the hands of his enemies, they began to do much honor and much pleasure to him and his companions. And the king sent him each day many noble presents). The whole population of the city of Babylon and its king shower Flores with gratitude, praise, and honor—not just because of whom he is related to and what social status he occupies, but because he has been of instrumental service to the king and the populace. Flores knows he will need assistance to sneak into the king's tower, so he uses his reputation to coerce three of the king's subjects into making blanket pledges of loyalty and assistance to Flores. A couple named Daites and Licores are the first to make such good-faith vows (before realizing what Flores will ask of them): "Ellos, teniéndose ya por muy encargados del grand

algo que les avié fecho e con esto que les prometié, gradesçierongelo e prometieronle que le serien mandados en todas las cosas del mundo que él mandase, así como a su señor el rey” (179: they, being still very [much] in debt because of the great thing that he had done for them and with this that he promised them, thanked him for it and promised him that they would obey him in all things of the world that he commanded, just as they did their lord the king). Their vow is comprehensive, made possible precisely by the trust that Flores has earned from the king and his denizens. Daites and Licores, in turn, help Flores suborn the porter of the tower where Blancaflor resides. Daites knows that the porter will willingly converse with Flores, due to his service to the king:

Él quando vos viere, preguntarvos ha qué catades, o quién sodes, e vós dezilde que sodes el infante que libró al rey de mano de sus enemigos e que venides catar aquella torre para fazer otra tal quando fuéredes en vuestra tierra. E él quando esto oyere, fazervos ha mucha honra, e vós conbidaldo muy afincadamente que venga a yantar convusco, e él fazerlo ha. (185)

(He [the porter], when he sees you, will ask you what it is you came to see, or who you are, and you will say that you are the prince who freed the king from the hands of his enemies, and that you come to survey this tower to build another such when you are back in your land. And he, when he hears this, will do you much honor, and you invite him very insistently to come and eat with you, and he will do it.)

The porter unhesitatingly accepts an invitation to dinner from Babylon’s popular young champion; these are honors due to Flores, and they mitigate any suspicion that may arise from his interest in the king’s tower.

The contrast with the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* on this point is telling. Floris must adopt a second disguise and alleviate the porter’s intense suspicion by playing to his equally intense greed. Were the man not venal, the ploy would never work. Floris’s stratagem takes “cunning and ingenuity,” not to mention a full purse.⁹⁴ But in the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, Flores merely introduces himself to these people, and that is enough: they are delighted to meet him. He requests their help, and

94. I take the apt phrase directly from the title of Barnes’s classic essay: “Cunning and Ingenuity.”

they are delighted to promise it. By serving their king so faithfully, Flores has set the stage to ease his own path to Blancaflor. He is, in his own person, due all welcome and consideration, not only from the ruling elite of the region, but from their subjects as well. Cultivating these relationships has created a public reputation that facilitates Flores's rescue of Blancaflor, just as it will later facilitate his pardon after the king discovers the lovers together.

Flores draws upon, but also betrays, the trust he has earned in Babylon when he sneaks into the tower and reunites with Blancaflor. The porter is the first man to express this reality.⁹⁵ Flores's actions would betray the king's trust no matter the particular woman he pursued, but it also transpires that the king of Babylon has decided to marry Blancaflor, and his lords and fellow rulers have assembled for the ceremony. When he discovers Flores and Blancaflor together, the king's first thought recalls the service Flores performed for him and the great esteem in which he held Flores: "E vínole emiente de cuánto serviço le avié fecho e cómo era omne de grand logar" (193; And it came to his mind how much service he had done for him and how he was a man of great stature/status). The very depth of the obligation the king feels to Flores—the great honor the king has shown him and the according depth of the betrayal that the king feels—makes the trespass impossible for the king to forgive. In the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, the betrayal has a different cast: the emir of Babylon and Floris have never before encountered each other, let alone established a relationship of mutual regard and indebtedness for significant service. Floris's actions thus do not constitute a personal betrayal of trust. In the case of the Castilian *Crónica*, however, Floris's behavior violates the deep and mutual regard that he and the king have established.

And yet, emphasizing Flores's betrayal serves as yet another means of recalling the extent of his profound service to the king. The king's first words to Flores emphasize his violation of this culture of prestige; in doing so,

95. Once the porter has pledged his fidelity and Flores has revealed the rescue mission, "fue tan espantado que perdió la color, ca sabié que se metié a cosa que podrié por ende tomar muerte si el rey lo sopiese" (186: he was so surprised/frightened that he lost all color [in his face], because he knew that he was starting something that would result in death if the king knew of it). When the porter conceives of the idea of smuggling Flores into the tower in a basket of flowers, he cannot help adding, "E si non fuesse por lo que vos he prometido e vos fize yo omenaje, cosa es en que me non trabajaria" (187: And if it were not that I have promised you and become your vassal, this is a thing that I would not do). In such contexts, the Castilian expression "fize yo omenaje" means that a vassalic tie has been established; my rendering of it as "become your vassal," though not a literal translation, best captures this sense.

they likewise reveal the extent of the trust he has earned: “Don Flores, bien sabedes vós que después que a la mi tierra venistes, que partí convusco lo que avía, e fiava de vós mucho e non fazié en ello sin guisa, ca de tal omne como vós non devié omne sospechar si non bien. . . . Mas ya que vós tan desmesurado fuestes, e vos atrevistes a entrar en la mi torre e a fazerme tamaña desonra, yo tomaré de vós tamaña vengança que todo el mundo ende fable” (193: Sir Flores, you know well that after you came to my land that I divided with you what I had and trusted much in you, and I did not do that unreasonably, because a man ought not to suspect anything but good of such a man as you. . . . But now that you were so insolent, and you dared to enter my tower and do to me such a dishonorable deed, I will take such revenge on you that everyone will speak about it). Flores’s actions dishonorably rupture the honor system of prestige and comportment that both men value. “Desmesurado” (insolent) in this context carries the specific resonance of uncourtly behavior, especially toward someone of higher rank. To accuse Flores of being “desmesurado” attacks not only Flores’s behavior, but also the high reputation and social status he has been so carefully cultivating throughout the Muslim Mediterranean. By the king’s measure, Flores has sacrificed his place in Muslim prestige culture for the sake of Blancaflor. And yet, the very extent of Flores’s violation becomes, in a sense, his defense. And as the revelation and dénouement continue, the obsessive rearticulation of Flores’s service among the lords of Babylon and its surrounding environs mimics the circulation effect of the affective prestige economy in which Flores has participated throughout his quest. That is, his honorable actions continue to accrue increased value with every repetition, until they surmount the offense and result in his pardon.

Flores claims mitigating circumstances for his betrayal and requests a hearing and judgment from the king’s court. This context, which includes Mediterranean lords and kings who have not been privy to recent events, gives Flores the opportunity to tell his story. This circulation of Flores’s adventures builds his reputation back up and thus convinces everyone to pardon the lovers. The story of Flores’s illustrious lineage, great and long-standing love for Blancaflor, and service to the king of Babylon passes from lord to lord in almost obsessive articulation and rearticulation and restores Flores’s prestige and renown. The story of Flores’s service to the king is told five times across this sequence: twice we simply hear the fact that it is related; the other three times take us through a narration of the events again, though in compressed version. All the high-status men of the area, vassals and fellows of the caliph of Egypt and of the king of Babylon, have come to do

honor to the king on the occasion of his marriage and now form the court of judgment upon Flores. These lords at first unite in their opinion that Flores has committed treason (not just against the king of Babylon, but “a ellos todos” [199: against all of us]) and that he deserves death. They disagree only on the manner in which this capital sentence should be carried out. However, their curiosity is piqued by allusions to Flores’s service to the king. Tençer (the emir of Etiopía) turns to “un omne bueno” (199: a good man)—that is, a respected personage in the community whose testimony can be trusted⁹⁶—and asks for the full history of Flores’s service to the king: “Como morava lenxos en tierra de Etiopía non sabié todo lo que él pasara con el galifa nin el serviçio que el infante Flores fiziera al rey” (199: as he lived far off in the land of Ethiopia, he [Tençer] did not know what had passed with the caliph, nor the service that Prince Flores had done for the king). This telling begins the story’s circulation in the court. Having heard the history from this “omne bueno,” Tençer “ovo piadat del infante” (200: took pity on the prince) and turned to his companion, Alfanges (the emir of Oliferna), telling him the story in turn. Already Flores and his service to the king have accrued greater weight, for Tençer adds, “Bien vos digo que me semeja que erramos todos muy mal en ser en acuerdo d’esta justiçia” (200: I truly tell you that it seems to me that we all err very badly in agreeing with this sentence). Alfanges, once he has heard the history, agrees that the service Flores has done for the king of Babylon merits a full reassessment of his case.

The affective prestige economy does its work: Flores’s reputation and renown continue to circulate, as Alfanges and Tençer insist that Flores be allowed to speak on his own behalf. Flores makes his case, and then Alfanges asks the king of Babylon to relate the complete story of Flores’s service to the assembled court, because “quicá aquí ay algunos que lo non saben. E por aventura puede ser tal el serviçio que vos fizo, que estarié bien que le ayades merçed, e los que lo non saben serién más çiertos en aquello que ovieren a dezir” (209: perhaps there are some here that do not know it. And perhaps the service that he did for you may be such that it would be good for you to have mercy on him, and those that do not know would be more certain of whatever they have to say). This final public rearticulation augments Flores’s reputation and prestige over the tipping point: “todos quantos estavam en

96. The use of “omne bueno” (cf. n. 90) in this context specifically means a person with social credentials—someone who is recognized by the community as being able to give such testimony. The use of the term here recalls the king’s anticipation, when first meeting Flores, that he will become “omne bueno.”

la corte que lo non sabién, quando esto oyeron dezir al rey, ovieron piadat del infante” (209: all those who were there in the court who did not know it, when they heard the king say this, had pity on the prince). The more the court talks out Flores’s service to the king, the more weight it holds. The trial scene aptly captures the premise of affective economies: their function to increase value through circulation.

At every point of the process, from discovery to pardon, the compiler rehearses again Flores’s service to the king of Babylon, and the triumphant final scene of this sequence restores Flores’s personal prestige, status, and public honor in Babylon. When Flores makes his formal entrance into the king’s court after being pardoned, the display cements in everyone’s minds his greatness:

E el terçero día que sopo el infante que se llegavan todos los de la corte en el alcázar del rey, cavalgó muy noblemente vestido, e ivan con él sus cavalleros todos tan bien vestidos e tan bien encavalgados que paresçié muy bien a demás. E ivan cabo del infante de la una parte Gaidón, su maestro, e de la otra parte Gandifer, su ayo. E tan bien e tan honradamente ivan que todos los que y ivan se pagavan muy mucho d’ello. E dizién que muy grand avoleza fuera si el rey mandara matar tan noble omne como era aquel infante, e que le diese Dios buena ventura a quien consejara al rey que le peronase. E desque llegaraon al alcázar entraron por el palacio e levantáronse a él los almirales, e acogióronle muy bien e besáronle en los ombros, segunt su costumbre de los moros. E el rey asentole a par de sí entre los otros almirales. (211)

(And the third day, when the prince knew that everyone from the court had arrived in the castle of the king, he mounted very nobly dressed and went with all his knights, so well dressed and so well mounted that they appeared very well in addition. And mounted with the prince, on one side, went Gaidón his teacher and on the other side, Gandifer his tutor. And so well and so honorably they went that all those who were there enjoyed the sight of them thoroughly. And they said that it would have been a very base deed if the king had ordered killed such a noble man as this prince was, and that God should give good fortune to whoever had advised the king to pardon him. And when they arrived at the castle, they entered the palace, and the emirs stood for him and they received him very well

and kissed him on the shoulders according to the custom of the Muslims. And the king seated him near him among the other emirs.)⁹⁷

This celebration recognizes and reaffirms Flores's value throughout the Islamicate Mediterranean. Flores's presence has made a positive material difference to the geopolitical scene in Babylon and Egypt—this pardon is not a merciful gesture, but rather a recognition of what the king of Babylon owes him. Though Flores has deprived the king of Babylon of his prospective bride, the king has benefited from Flores's presence in his court. The Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* presents, as we have seen, a contrasting context in which pathos alone is sufficient to sway the emir and his court from their desire for vengeance to mercy. In this version, pardon does derive from merciful recognition of the value of suffering and self-sacrifice, and the compensations the emir of Babylon receives are intangible: participation in an emotional community of noble self-sacrifice. The *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*, in contrast, holds up the very material advantages Flores brings to Babylon. Flores has brought, in his own person, legitimate clout—his capacity to offer service to a Muslim king during a period of conflict and dispute makes a material and lasting difference in Babylon for the better. Flores's success in navigating the region's affective prestige economy not only establishes him and his reputation among these men, but also enables him to advocate and act on the king of Babylon's behalf.

This romance landscape presents a complex geopolitical system of networked alliances and oppositions that tests Flores's social, cultural, and political training through his capacity to instigate and maintain good relations with powerful men; in other words, the romance presents a prestige economy, in which affective transactions between Flores and other powerful men (exchanges of compliments, mutual respect, service, praise, and recognition) affirm and increase Flores's social clout. Flores's love quest and rescue mission, ostensibly the primary purpose of his journey, fades into almost an auxiliary agenda as the romance unveils social capital as the real enterprise of the moment. This affective prestige economy tests and rewards Flores's navigation and cultivation of relationships with the ruling elite of the Islamicate Mediterranean. In this sense, it is a quest to prepare and showcase Flores as a future king, when he comes into his own full authority in Almería; reunion with Blancaflor forms part of this preparation (the *Crónica* takes interest in matters of succession and lineage in both directions: attending

97. "Almirales" is a military title of high rank; hence, another possible translation would be "admirals."

both to Flores's antecedents as well as his heirs), but just as important, the romance suggests, is building a groundwork of relations and alliances that will support and shape Flores's own future as a powerful ruler in the western Mediterranean.

In Conclusion

Flores's masculine "coming out" among the elite of the Islamicate Mediterranean now draws to a close. His circulation in the region's affective prestige economy has served its purpose: having generated his own renown and cultural clout, independent from that of his family—though his illustrious lineage clearly set him up to excel in this system—he returns home, recovers his birthright, and defends his Iberian kingdom. Flores is called home by upheaval among his family and in the western Mediterranean: his mother, uncle, and grandfather (Isca miramomelín) have all died, and his father is at war in Iberia. Flores further learns that "el señorío del inperio de África era en poder de omnes estraños, e el miramomelín que non era de su linaje" (213: the lordship of the empire of Africa was in the power of strange/foreign men and a miramomelín who was not of his lineage). This detail, that the governance of the Northern African empire has now passed out of the control of Flores's family, drives home the importance of the good relations among powerful ruling men in Egypt that Flores has established by way of this quest. He is poised now to take up a position of political leadership, and has the reputation and alliances throughout the region to succeed. Flores's alliances rise in importance at this point, when his own family support networks (which were so instrumental at the outset of his quest) disintegrate.

On the way home to support his father in defending his future crown, Flores undertakes a new ambition, as well: the Christianization of Iberia. This agenda, which other scholars have made much of, indeed marks a shift in the narrative's priorities in its concluding chapters toward a Christianizing agenda articulated through Flores's personal religious trajectory, kingship (under which he Christianizes Iberia), and the genealogical link the narrative foreshadows between him and Charlemagne (his grandson).⁹⁸ This shift, however, cannot erase the romance's earlier priorities, which, as I have

98. Flores's connection to Charlemagne has received significant critical attention from Grieve, "*Floire and Blancheflor*" and *the European Romance*; Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction*; and, for Floire in the Old French aristocratic version, from Kinoshita, "In the Beginning Was the Road."

shown, deal entirely and extensively with intrareligious geopolitics in the prestige economy of the Muslim Mediterranean.

I argue, then, that the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* ultimately showcases cultural hybridity and ambivalence. This is true despite the reconquest valences of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*'s ending, because of the amount and quality of narrative space the *Crónica* first gives to Muslim genealogy, power, and excellence. Teleological agendas cannot escape the hybridity and ambivalence arising from prolonged cultural encounter. The message may be that Christianity triumphs at Islam's expense, all the while incorporating what is magnificent about Islam and Islamicate heroes; my point is that the *Crónica* remains ultimately more ambivalent on Flores's identity, heritage, and legacy than a simple and stark opposition between Christendom and the *dar al-Islam* centered on Iberia. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the *Crónica*'s attention to the particularities of Muslim rule throughout the western Mediterranean and Egypt showcases its political and social complexity; Muslim rule is neither monolithic nor without internal conflicts in the *Crónica*'s estimation. This text emphasizes the challenge Flores faces to successfully navigate Muslim geopolitics, and charts his resounding success circulating in its affective prestige economy to cultivate his own renown. Flores's experience navigating and circulating within this Islamicate prestige culture suggests that illustrious lineage, political savvy, military prowess, and public reputation are the ways and means by which Muslim men are measured here. The *Crónica* registers not only the legibility of Muslim chivalric codes to medieval Castilian audiences, but their appreciation and valorization of such Muslim prestige culture.

Overall, the Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* defers the violent and conversionary potential of its narrative, acknowledging the operation of a powerful network of genealogical and geopolitical ties throughout the western and southcentral Mediterranean that effectively resist reductive negative judgments of Islam and simplistic accounts of religious strife. The *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* invests as heavily in the legacy and influence of Muslim genealogy, geopolitics, and chivalry as in Flores's and Iberia's conversions to Christianity. This tale's patient and detailed scenes of Flores's skilled mobility within this Islamicate prestige economy are not eclipsed by the story's more religiously essentialist ending. Rather than driving relentlessly toward Christianity, the narrative meanders toward it. Conjoining extensive celebrations of Muslim culture to its vision of religious strife, this text ultimately emphasizes the rich complexity of its hero Flores's place (genealogical, geopoliti-

cal, cultural, and religious) among the affective prestige economy that links Iberia to the greater Islamicate Mediterranean.

In sum, circulation drives both the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* and the medieval Castilian *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor*. Floris and Flores both circulate in affective economies, but the purpose, context, and performance of their circulation varies wildly. In the Middle English version, Floris participates in a literalized affective economy, displaying heightened emotion as legal tender to recover Blancheflour—the “marchaundise” whose commodification initiates and facilitates an exchange rate between love and money. The Middle English text thus literalizes the common romance genre association of heterosexual love with wealth and financial security. In contrast, the medieval Castilian *Crónica* severs the link between love and prosperity, turning Blancaflor into the catalyst for Flores’s circulation in an affective economy of masculine prestige from which she then silently drops away. Both romances, in different ways, push our genre expectations past the brink of convention before swerving back into recognizable paths, affirming heterosexual love and what Kinoshita calls “the feudal politics of lineage”⁹⁹—that is, marrying the girl and inheriting the kingdom. Having come from the same romance cluster, these two texts take radically different approaches to the material. In the light shed by neighborly comparison, their differences stand out. Each text, in fact, points out the intensity of the other’s convictions, highlighting where each version invests its energy. It would not have been possible for me to see the affective prestige economy in which Flores circulates in the medieval Castilian *Crónica* had I not set it next to the overtly financial and emotional priorities of the Middle English version. And I would not have wondered at how intensely the Middle English invests in the financial overtones of Blancheflour’s commodification and Floris’s love for her had I not been reading it in light of the medieval Castilian text, which eschews the mercantile disguise entirely. Such insights are the gift of neighborly comparison.

99. See specifically Sharon Kinoshita, “Heldris de Cornuälle’s *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage,” *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (1995): 397–409, <https://doi.org/10.2307/462935>. The phrase comes up elsewhere in her work as well.

De-Networking Iberia and England in the *Constance* Story Cluster

The texts I have examined across the earlier chapters of this book present Iberia as a region deeply at stake in the romance imagination: as a nexus point in the western Mediterranean with deep connections to the North African Maghreb and Egypt; a land vibrant with transactions and relations of all sorts, brimming with intercultural excellence; and a desirable site of conquest, conversion, and erasure. In contrast, the medieval *Constance* romances attempt neither to convert Iberia, nor conquer it, nor acknowledge its vibrancy and intricate web of Mediterranean networks. While Iberia is persistently present across the *Constance* story cluster, the romance marginalizes Iberia, excluding it as either desirable locale, rich cultural entity, or significant geopolitical player in the world and instead converting and drawing Northumbrian England into alliance in the Mediterranean in Iberia's place. This chapter investigates what it means for this tale to thus imagine Iberia as marginal, isolated, and politically independent in an otherwise connected world.

The *Constance* narrative follows the virtuous and devout daughter of the emperor of Christian Rome as she travels the Mediterranean and North Atlantic in a boat with no rudder; her adventures on foreign shores inspire devotion, catalyze religious conversion, and prompt violence. The story ends with her safely restored to Rome, the homeland that she provides with an English heir; this genealogical and dynastic feat draws England and Rome into alliance. Escaping the tale's recurring pattern of alliance and annexation that brings all other foreign lands under the sway of Christian Rome, Iberia remains unchanged by Constance's sojourn there—a stark and surprising contrast to the transformations of religious and political power that her pres-

ence catalyzes everywhere else she lands.¹ Politically isolated and independent through the tale's conclusion, Iberia stands apart not only from the geopolitical alliance that Constance establishes between England and Rome, but also from Rome's conquest and consolidation of the Muslim land of Constance's aborted first marriage. As this overview makes clear, England figures as one of the tale's favored polities, and scholars of the Middle English versions of the story have long analyzed the tale's privileging of England's fate vis-à-vis Rome over the tale's other locations.² Although it has been persistently overlooked in such arguments, Iberia is, in fact, crucial to the fantasies at work in this agenda.³

Iberia's geopolitical significance in this story tradition emerges through its subtle resemblances to Northumbrian England—resemblances created by the repetition of linguistic and narrative details across the scenes where Constance arrives in Northumberland and Iberia.⁴ These details press against

1. Winthrop Wetherbee comments on the “threat or promise of radical transformation” that Constance carries “wherever she goes,” proving indestructible herself while exerting the pressure of change on everyone else (Winthrop Wetherbee, “Constance and the World in Chaucer and Gower,” in Yeager, *John Gower, Recent Readings*, 70).

2. This argumentative trend is particularly visible in scholarship on Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*. See especially Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000–1534* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Susan Schibanoff, “Worlds Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*,” *Exemplaria* 8, no. 1 (1996): 59–96, <https://doi.org/10.1179/exm.1996.8.1.59>; Kathryn L. Lynch, “Storytelling, Exchange, and Constancy: East and West in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*,” *Chaucer Review* 33, no. 4 (1999): 409–22; Carol F. Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2003); and Carolyn Dinshaw, “Pale Faces: Race, Religion, and Affect in Chaucer's Texts and Their Readers,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001): 19–41, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2001.0013>

3. The few exceptions to this lack of attention to Iberia focus on the late fourteenth-century historical scene, rather than the literary significance of the Iberian episode within the tale's plot. See Roland M. Smith, “Chaucer's ‘Man of Law's Tale’ and Constance of Castile,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 47, no. 4 (1948): 343–51; and A. C. Edwards, “Knaresborough Castle and ‘The Kynges Moodres Court,’” *Philological Quarterly* 19 (1940): 306–9.

4. Nicholas Trevet, John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Robert Payn all specify the English region within the *Constance* narrative as Northumberland. Northumberland is a northeastern county of England established by the Normans in the twelfth century. This regional terminology for the county would have been current for all these authors. However, these writers likely also had Northumbria in view: a seventh- through tenth-century Anglo-Saxon kingdom that consisted of a larger region of what is now northern England and southeast Scotland. The allusion to Northumbria under the name Northumberland emerges most clearly, perhaps, in John Gower's version of the story, in which he references Saxon identity and language. For a

the trajectory of isolation and erasure that the tale otherwise conceives for Iberia, revealing that when Constance draws England and Rome into alliance, the tale forges that connection precisely by excluding Iberia and severing its narrative futures. This chapter investigates the resemblances between Iberia and Northumbria in three insular British versions of the tale (one in Anglo-Norman and two in Middle English) and then turns to the two lesser-known Iberian versions (in Portuguese and Castilian), analyzing their transformation of the way the British writers imagine Muslim rule in Iberia, and tracing the process by which these Iberian versions progressively de-network England from Mediterranean alliance, in complementary fashion to the overall tradition's ostracization of Iberia.

The story of Constance is probably best known today in Geoffrey Chaucer's version, *The Man of Law's Tale*, but there are at least six medieval versions of this romance in four languages. It first appears in Nicholas Trevet's Anglo-Norman universal history, *Les Cronicles*, in the early to mid-fourteenth century. In the late fourteenth century, both Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower adapt Trevet's story of Constance into Middle English, as *The Man of Law's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales*, and as the "Tale of Constance" in the *Confessio Amantis*, respectively. An anonymous Middle English translation of the entirety of Trevet's *Les Cronicles* appears in the fifteenth century. Gower's *Confessio*, meanwhile, travels to Iberia in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, where it is adapted into Portuguese by Robert Payn as the *Livro do amante* and subsequently into Castilian by Juan de Cuenca as the *Confesión del amante*. Of the various British insular versions of the tale (those in Anglo-Norman and Middle English), Gower's version is the most illuminating in terms of Iberia's comparability with Northumbrian England. His version also constitutes the point of connection between the British and Iberian iterations of this tale. This chapter, therefore, centers on Gower's version, with only brief forays into Trevet's and Chaucer's neighboring versions, and then turns to the Iberian translations. Because of the close and direct relationships between these texts, this chapter adopts George Edmondson's model of neighborly textuality, attending to the "competing claims" that play out "through the writing and rewriting . . . of certain shared narratives."⁵ I thus reassess this romance cluster's linear

reading of these references to Saxon language, see Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 58–89. I discuss these issues in detail below.

5. George Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 3. As in Edmondson's study, this approach dem-

textual relationships from a neighboring comparative perspective, granting all these versions of the *Constance* narrative, regardless of the direction of transmission, “interdependent equipoise.”⁶ That is, in the interpretive scene I build in this final chapter of *Imagining Iberia*, my reading of each text assumes the responsibility to draw any of the others to an accounting for their representational choices.

Constance’s Mediterranean Itinerary

An itinerary of Constance’s travels and adventures in Gower’s version of the tale is necessary before we assess Iberia’s role in the narrative.⁷ I go through this in some detail because repetitions across the tale’s various episodes will be key to my analysis. Constance, daughter of the emperor of Rome, inspires merchants from Barbary to convert to Christianity (in Chaucer’s version these are merchants from Syria; Trevet leaves this Muslim land unnamed, but it includes Jerusalem).⁸ Upon their return to Barbary, these converted merchants convey her excellence to their sultan, who promises to convert to Christianity in order to marry her. Constance travels to Barbary, but the marriage plans are disrupted by the sultan’s mother, who fears that she will lose her place and influence in the Barbary court (in Chaucer’s and Trevet’s versions she is motivated by faithfulness to Islam). This violent matriarch slaughters everyone at the celebratory welcome feast in Barbary (including her own son), sparing only Constance, whom she places in a rudderless, if well-provisioned, boat. Constance wanders the seas for several years until landing on the shore of Northumbrian England. She’s welcomed ashore by the king’s castellan Elda and his wife Hermyngheld, and begins to spread her Christian faith to Northumbria’s pagan populace. Her first convert is Hermyngheld, whom she is then falsely accused of murdering by a young

onstrates how complex, ambivalent, and aggressive the issues of textual influence, (in)fidelity, and transmission can grow.

6. Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text*, 44.

7. I note the differences between Gower’s, Chaucer’s, and Trevet’s versions in this summary, but will attend to Payn’s and Cuenca’s innovations separately, when I turn to the Iberian versions of the tale in the second half of this chapter.

8. Trevet’s version implies that the sultan’s territorial extent includes Jerusalem and at least some of the surrounding territory of the Holy Land because he agrees to allow Romans free passage for trade and pilgrimage to holy sites throughout his land, as well as leave to live, build churches, and proselytize in Jerusalem. See Robert M. Correale, “The Man of Law’s Prologue and Tale,” in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:298–99.

knight whose romantic advances Constance rejects. Once cleared of suspicion, Constance marries Northumbria's King Allee, who has also converted to Christianity. Their son, Moris, is born while Allee is away, which gives Constance's Northumbrian mother-in-law the opportunity to forge a letter that results in Constance and Moris's banishment from Northumbria in the same rudderless boat. When Allee returns from war and discovers these machinations, he executes his mother.

Constance and her son, repeating her earlier oceanic wanderings, drift for over a year before she "estward was into Spaigne drive" (1088: driven eastward into Spain).⁹ In this, the Iberian episode, Constance fetches up near a castle whose steward tries to rape her. After escaping this rape attempt (by various combinations of divine intervention and her own resistance, depending on the version), she wanders the seas for a third time, until the boat carries her back into the Mediterranean, where she encounters a fleet of Roman ships returning from a victorious war against Barbary. This fleet of ships takes Constance back to Rome, where she and her son live incognito until Allee's arrival there on pilgrimage, which facilitates the reunion of Moris and Constance with Allee and, subsequently, with Constance's father. Moris becomes the heir of Rome while Constance and Allee travel back to Northumbria. Allee dies and Constance returns for the final time to Rome. Gower's and Chaucer's versions each switch, here at the end of the narrative, from designating Allee's kingdom "Northumberlond" (Northumbria) to calling it "Engelond" (England).¹⁰ Constance's adventures, marriage, and

9. All quotations from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* are taken from John Gower, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, extra series 81 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1900–1901). "The Tale of Constance" can be found in 1:587–1612. Trevel specifies that Constance floats into "la mere d'Espaigne" (the sea of Spain) and washes up on Iberia's "terre de l'orient" (eastern shore). I cite Nicholas Trevel's edition from Correale, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:317, 316. Citations are to page number. The Modern English translations of Trevel are Correale's. Chaucer does not name Iberia directly in his version of the episode: "Under an hethen castel atte laste, / Of which the name in my text noght I fynde, / Custance and eek hire child the see up caste" (904–6: under a heathen castle at last, the name of which I do not find in my text, the sea cast up Custance and also her child). All quotations from Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* are taken from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor (Toronto: Broadview, 2012). This edition is based upon the Ellesmere manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*. There is general scholarly consensus that Chaucer wrote *The Man of Law's Tale* with knowledge of Gower's version of "The Tale of Constance." The Iberian translations of Gower's *Confessio* also specify that Costança (as her name appears in those versions) arrives specifically in Spain.

10. The shift to "Engelond" occurs in Gower's text at line 1581. It occurs in Chaucer's

progeny, which suture the futures of Rome and Northumbria, result also in a metonymic shift in the two Middle English versions, whereby Northumbria retroactively comes to signify England entire. This move sacrifices regional specificity and diversity to a national fantasy of wholeness and inclusivity.¹¹

As this plot overview shows, the Iberian episode is Constance's third and final foreign adventure, occurring after she first leaves Northumbria and before she first returns to live incognito in Rome until her family reunites and the narrative culminates. This culmination, whereby Rome conquers Barbary and appropriates Northumbria's heir, gives England official genealogical ties to the empire that this narrative imagines as the Mediterranean's greatest powerhouse. The three British insular versions of the *Constance* romance thus imagine Iberia as a space oddly cordoned off from the tale's oceanic waterways and imperial alliances, and as they do so, they network a very different geographic locale with the Mediterranean instead—Northumbrian England. The Iberian episode differs in important ways from the earlier episodes in Barbary and Northumbria, yet despite the distinctions, there are striking parallels across all three that have, as yet, gone unnoticed. The Iberian episode, in fact, repeats the key structural dynamics of the other two in a starkly pared-down iteration: it gives us a foreign land, a non-Christian populace, a moment of violence, and a man who desires Constance. These four elements form the core of all three adventures that Constance has abroad. In addition to these basic core similarities, more detailed repetitions of language and circumstance across the Northumbrian and Iberian episodes reveal that the overall structure of the narrative is not a dyad of foreign places (Barbary and Northumbria) hinging upon Rome, but, rather, it is a triad (Barbary, Northumbria, and Iberia).¹² Repetitions

text at line 1130. Trevet refers to the land interchangeably as both Northumbria and England throughout the entire narrative.

11. For an account of the way fantasies of the nation perform such an illusion of wholeness and inclusivity, see Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). Miriamne Ara Krummel includes a useful overview of such arguments in *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England: Legally Absent, Virtually Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 14–17.

12. Scholars have established that the way the Northumbrian episode repeats distinct facets of Constance's experiences in Barbary (or in Syria) at once distinguishes their respective futures with regard to Rome while at the same time troubling those very differences. On this point, see especially Patricia Clare Ingham, "Contrapuntal Histories," in Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*, 47–70. See also Schibanoff, "Worlds Apart"; Lynch, "Storytelling"; Nicholas Birns, "Christian-Islamic Relations in Dante and Chaucer: Reflections on Recent Criticism," in *Proceedings: Northeast Regional Meeting of the Conference on Christian-*

among the episodes link them like a chain, each adventure repeating a different variation on core common features to connect it to the others, and each exemplifying a different geopolitical outcome with regard to Roman imperialism. The narrative chain comes full circle in Rome and then spirals out again to link back to both Barbary (through Rome's military revenge) and Northumbria (when Constance and Allee return there following their Roman reunion). This second narrative loop cuts Iberia out of any participation in a growing empire. This deliberate geopolitical and narrational evasion helps to cement England's importance to Rome's Mediterranean empire at Iberia's expense.

Anglo-Iberian Narrative Resemblances in "The Tale of Constance"

The Iberian episode in Gower's "Tale of Constance" closely replicates language and narrative details of Constance's arrival and sojourn in Northumbria in an effort to differentiate and justify Iberia's lack of a narrative future with regard to Rome. In this way, Northumbrian England takes over Iberia's typical role in the romance imagination as the main cultural and political player of the Mediterranean northwest—as the foreign land with the richest and most generative connections and futures. Yet the profound cultural and linguistic resemblances among the Northumbrian and Iberian episodes quietly insist upon a strange and enduring resonance between the two places, as I analyze throughout this section of the chapter.¹³ The repeated features I will highlight across the episodes emphasize Northumbria's incommensurabilities with Iberia as well as their mutual resonance, resulting in a series of strange resemblances that undermine any stark distinction between the

ity and Literature, October 10–12, 1996 (Weston, MA: Regis College, 1996), 19–24; Kathleen Davis, "Time behind the Veil: The Media, the Middle Ages, and Orientalism Now," in Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, 105–22; Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*; and Kathy Cawsey, "Disorienting Orientalism: Finding Saracens in Strange Places in Late Medieval English Manuscripts," *Exemplaria* 21, no. 4 (2009): 380–97, <https://doi.org/10.1179/175330709X449116>

13. Ingham has argued that we should beware overemphasizing the alterity between Syria and Northumbria in the *Man of Law's Tale*, attuning our analyses instead to the ways that "narrative and linguistic resemblances" across episodes "destabilize the ascriptions of cultural difference" between Northumbria and Syria, engaging instead "historical and cultural mobilities" ("Contrapuntal Histories," in Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*, 60, 61). I take inspiration from Ingham's essay, particularly her focus on narrative and linguistic resemblances, for my own analysis of Iberia and Northumbria in Gower's version.

two places that Gower might strive to create. In short, the two lands neighbor one another. Comparative juxtaposition throws narrational and formal choices into relief that might not read as significant on their own terms. In the section that follows, therefore, I move rather quickly through the Northumbrian examples, saving most of the close reading and analysis of those details until I have given the comparable passages in the Iberia episode, where the significance of those details more clearly emerges.

Cultural and linguistic repetitions across the circumstances of Constance's arrival and reception on the respective coasts of Northumbria and Iberia associate these regions with each other. We learn two crucial things in each arrival scene: first, that Constance's rudderless boat is driven to the shore under the walls of a castle and second, that this castle is ruled by a non-Christian. Here is Constance's arrival in Northumbria:

And happeth thanne that sche dryveth
 Under a Castel with the flod,
 Which upon Humber banke stod
 And was the kynges oghne also,
 The which Allee was cleped tho,
 A Saxon and a worthi knyht,
 Bot he believeth noght ariht.
 (Gower, 718–24)

(And it came about then that she was driven by the tide below a castle, which stood on the bank of the Humber and was the king's own [castle] as well, who was then called Allee, a Saxon and a worthy knight, but he believes not rightly.)

Because the narrative will recuperate Allee through conversion, marriage, and his illustrious progeny who will inherit the empire of Rome, we learn immediately that Allee is “a worthi knyht,” despite the initial “error” of his faith. We also learn that he is a Saxon and that his castle stands upon the bank of the Humber river.

Turning now to the Iberian episode of Gower's narrative, we see that Constance's arrival there repeats these key details of her arrival in Northumbria. Constance's ship,

Thurgh strengthe of wynd which god hath yive,
 Estward was into Spaigne drive

Riht faste under a Castell wall,
Wher that an hethen Amirall
Was lord,
(Gower, 1087–91)

(By the strength of the wind, which God has given, was driven eastward into Spain very quickly below a castle wall, where a heathen emir was lord.)

The wind drives Constance “under a Castell wall” (below a castle wall)—a close resemblance to the language of her arrival in Northumbria, where the tide drives her “under a Castel with the flod” (below a castle with the tide). And as in Northumbria, this Iberian castle is ruled by a non-Christian: the unnamed “hethen Amirall” (heathen emir). The repetition of such details about Constance’s arrival and local leadership provides common grounds for the narrative and its audiences to measure Iberia and Northumbria against each other. By giving us such sharp affinities of language and structure in these passages, Gower conceptually entwines the two regions, even as he differentiates them. Allee is a candidate for conversion that the tale will draw into Rome’s political orbit and genealogical line. We are therefore given more details about him than we are about the Iberian emir. This emir will not be converted, nor will he have any share in the extensive geopolitical Christian network the tale will establish by its close. The very paucity of detail that Gower gives us about the emir makes an implicit argument about the limited extent of Iberia’s participation in the tale’s developing plot. But most importantly, the affinities that Gower offers us in these opening details of each scene begin to reveal that there is no inherent or logical reason for the narrative to deprive and isolate Iberia.

Iberia’s role within the tale’s geopolitical and narrational agendas becomes increasingly clear as the episodes of Constance’s shoreline arrival in Northumbria and Iberia progress. In these scenes we are next introduced, in each case, to a man who works in the castle, serving his lord in an official capacity. In Northumbria, we learn that “Of this Castell was Chastellein / Elda the kinges Chamberlein, / A knyhtly man after his lawe” (Gower, 725–27: Elda, the king’s chamberlain, was castellan of this castle; [he was] a knightly man according to his law). In Iberia, the Muslim emir has “a Stieward . . . / Oon Theloüs, which al was badde, / A fals knyht and a renegat” (Gower, 1091–93: a steward . . . one Theloüs, who was completely wicked, a false knight and an apostate). Both the false Iberian steward and the noble Northum-

brian castellan are knights. The parallels in the kinds of details we are told about them (their positions of authority, their knightly status, their moral fiber) once again serve to emphasize resemblances between these two men; through such affinities, the romance asks us to think of them in tandem, even as we know to trust one and not the other.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, Gower presents Northumbria as a place of fellowship from the moment of Constance's arrival. The knightly castellan Elda observes her boat on the shore and sends men to investigate before going down himself, along with his wife:

Bot sche hire wolde noght confesse,
 Whan thei hire axen what sche was.
 And natheles upon the cas
 Out of the Schip with gret worschipe
Thei toke hire into felaschipe,
 As thei that were of hir glade.
 (Gower, 738–43; my emphasis)

(But she would not reveal her identity when they asked her who she was. And nonetheless, given the situation, out of the ship with great honor/affection *they took her into fellowship*, as those that were glad of her would do.)

The Northumbrians welcome Constance into their own community, despite the fact that she herself is wary and cautious. With these actions, Elda and his companions signal the narrative future Gower holds for Northumbria. This moment, that is, which the tale specifically marks as “felaschipe” (fellowship), asserts Northumbria as a place that fosters community and connection among resident and stranger: they love their neighbors.

Theloüs's welcome of Constance in Iberia is opposite in nearly every respect to Elda's in Northumbria, and, crucially, specifically lacking in “felaschipe.” Again, parallels in the kinds of language and details that we receive across both episodes reveal that we are meant to read them in tandem. Instead of involving others in investigating the ship and making Constance's arrival official and public, Theloüs conceals the fact of Constance's arrival in Iberia from everyone else. Theloüs finds Constance attractive: “He tok good hiede of the persone, / And sih sche was a worthi wiht” (1098–99: He took good heed of the person, and saw that she was a noble creature), yet instead of welcoming her ashore, Theloüs leaves her stranded secretly in her boat

offshore—“And let hire be therinne stille, / That mo men sih sche noght that dai” (1102–03: And secretly/securely left her therein, that she might not see more men that day)—and makes plans to rape her in the night: “And thoghte he wolde upon the nyht / Demene hire at his oghne wille,” (1100–1101: And he thought at night he would possess her according to his desire). He therefore returns to her ship later in stealth:

And fell so that be nyhtes tide
This knyht *without felaschipe*
Hath take a bot and cam to Schipe,
And thoghte of hire his lust to take,
And swor, if sche him daunger make,
That certainly sche scholde deie.
(Gower, 1106–11, my emphasis)

(And so it happened that by nighttime this knight *without fellowship* has taken a boat and come to [Constance’s] ship, and planned to satisfy his lust with her, and swore that she would certainly die if she resisted him.)

The repetition of the term and concept of “felaschipe,” withheld in Iberia and extended in Northumbria, drives home the key difference that Gower constructs between the two places. Elda’s actions hinge upon affirmations of fellowship and care at every turn, respecting Constance’s autonomy in withholding her identity. Theloüs rejects fellowship at every turn, actively making community impossible, for himself as much as for the woman whose consent he ignores while focusing entirely on his own desire. By this logic, Northumbria remains a key part of the geopolitical networks that the tale sets up precisely because Gower constructs it as fundamentally a place of community. Iberia’s isolation from those same networks, this scene implies, arises from its own inherent qualities of solitary, self-serving interest, taken at the expense of others—its explicit lack of fellowship as manifested in Theloüs. This is the argument that these parallel scenes of Constance’s arrival in Northumbria and Iberia implicitly make, apparently justifying Iberia’s exclusion from the emergent Roman empire in which Northumbria is invited to participate. Fellowship’s success or failure, on the small scale, becomes symptomatic of large-scale geopolitics.

And yet, as the promise and perils of fellowship distinguish these politics and appear to explain their divergent narrative futures, the affinities that

emerge amid these differences complicate and undermine that logic. Denials of fellowship pervade Constance's adventures in Northumbria as well as in Iberia, despite the initial promise of Elda's welcome. The young Northumbrian knight whose advances Constance rejects takes violent vengeance, murdering Hermyngheld and framing Constance for the deed. He parallels Theloüs of the Iberian episode in his willingness to resort to violence in his attraction to Constance. The conniving Northumbrian mother-in-law, Domilde, who banishes Constance and her son, likewise highlights the perils, rather than the promise, of community. Northumbria, that is, showcases stark failures of fellowship, revealing that, in some respects, it, too, is a stranger to the concept. The parallels of circumstance and description between the Northumbrian and Iberian episodes thus suggest a kind of figurative exchangeability that the differences between them simultaneously deny: they neighbor each other in that they are both, to borrow Julia Kristeva's memorable phrase, strangers to themselves.¹⁴ Through comparative juxtaposition, we see that each highlights in the other some facet that Gower seeks to efface: for Northumbria, this effaced quality is the peril that threads its sinister way through the fabric of this otherwise welcoming society; in Iberia, the effaced aspect is Gower's suppression of all possibility of fellowship in his revision of Trevet's version of the episode. In the end it therefore becomes impossible, based on a conceptual framework such as "felaschipe" (the one the tale itself holds out to us) to sharply distinguish the realms from each other. Gower's apparent justification of the fates of these two areas by means of such details is therefore suspect. The details in fact make possible a rigorous interrogation of the religious and geopolitical logic that ushers in both English-Roman alliance and Christian hegemony throughout the Mediterranean and North Atlantic.

The sheer brevity of the Iberian episode cuts off any further geopolitical possibilities for the Muslim emir or for Iberia. And in this, Gower's version departs significantly from Trevet's. Both Gower's and Chaucer's adaptations of Trevet's Iberian episode reduce its scope; their abbreviations of the episode in fact narrow the kind of fellowship that Trevet imagines Iberia capable of fostering. Gower and Chaucer thus imagine an Iberia that is less community-minded and more reductively "other" than Trevet does, foreclosing Iberia's narrative futures as ruthlessly as any vindictive matriarch they could imagine. It is therefore worth taking a moment to analyze these changes, highlighting the choices Gower and Chaucer had to make to imagine an Iberia that appears to authorize its own subsequent exclusion and erasure.

14. I borrow and modify the phrase from Kristeva's title: Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

Trevet's Iberian steward, Telous, is not fundamentally evil, nor is Trevet's Iberia inherently a place devoid of fellowship. Telous is, in contrast, initially struck with pity when he sees Constance,¹⁵ and he behaves courteously to her as she comes ashore and is received by Iberia's Muslim emir: "Cist Telous, quant il vist la dame de sa nef amenee ove son fitz devaunt l'admirail grant pité en avoit et par lui [fust] mult gracieusement recewe" (This Telous, when he saw the lady with her son brought from her ship before the emir, had great pity on her, and by him she was most graciously received).¹⁶ In Trevet's version, the Iberian emir welcomes Constance ashore and offers her food, drink, and shelter. But Constance prefers solitude and her rudderless boat, citing her reluctance to remain among what she considers to be "les enemis Dieux" (the enemies of God).¹⁷ Despite Constance's refusal of any further hospitality from an emir who appears quite willing to foster cross-creedal fellowship, the emir nevertheless makes provision for Constance to be protected for as long as she is in his realm: "Comanda a lui avantdit Telous, son seneschal, q'il en eust cure, qe mal ne moleste par nulli avenist a la dame" ([He] ordered the aforesaid Telous, his seneschal, to take care of her so that no evil or ill-treatment should come to the lady from anyone).¹⁸ The emir of Trevet's version is a sympathetic figure who behaves honorably toward Constance throughout the episode, doing everything he can to support Constance and accede to her wishes. In this respect, he very much resembles Gower's version of Elda, who does not penalize Constance for her initial standoffishness.

Trevet offers us, in short, a vision of Iberia as a place of fellowship, a place tolerant of religious difference, the promise of which fails largely because Constance herself denies its overture. In these ways, Trevet's Iberian emir is much more closely akin to the Muslim sultan of Barbary and to the Northumbrian king Allee and his castellan Elda than Gower's version allows. Iberia, as Trevet presents it, parallels Northumbria more deeply than in the Middle English texts, and, as such, Trevet conceives narrative futures for

15. This departure from Trevet accrues in significance when we consider the importance of pity and charity across Gower's tale. See, for instance, Carol Jamison, "John Gower's Shaping of 'The Tale of Constance,'" in Newhauser and Ridyard, *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 239–59.

16. Correale, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:317, 316.

17. Correale, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:317, 316.

18. Correale, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:317, 316.

Iberia, even though they ultimately fail to come to fruition. Neither Gower nor Chaucer imagines any such futures for Iberia in their reframing of the episode. Gower has deliberately reduced the Iberian emir in feeling and scope to an amoral non-Christian ruler who apparently matters so little to the plot that he is not even aware that Constance has arrived on his shores. These changes are a fundamental part of Gower's marginalization of Iberia to a place utterly devoid of fellowship so that the distinctions he chooses to draw between Iberia and Northumbria gain in prominence.

Gower's transformations of the Iberian episode thus foreclose Iberia's narrative futures. Iberia as figured in Gower's Theloüs, offers absolutely no political, genealogical, or religious future to Constance (and therefore none to Rome). In its lack of a procreative, conversionary, or political future, Iberia's fate thus resembles Barbary's. But Barbary does have a narrative future, albeit a dire one, as a violently conquered land. Iberian sovereignty, in contrast, remains intact. The price of that independence is isolation and erasure as the tale loops around a subsequent time to Barbary, Northumbria, and Rome, skirting and ignoring Iberia in the process.¹⁹ Iberia, in Gower's hands, is an undesirable place that ultimately inspires Roman noninterference rather than either alliance, annexation, or annihilation. Landing Constance in Iberia, in other words, becomes for Gower a mechanism of excluding Iberia from the Mediterranean, from Christendom, and from empire, even as it makes that exclusion legible in the ways that Iberia neighbors Northumbria.

The Man of Law's Tale and Iberian Political History

Chaucer's choice to elide the toponym used by his sources—"Espaine" (Spain) in Trevet²⁰ and "Spaigne" in Gower (1088: Spain)—from the Iberian episode in *The Man of Law's Tale* calls attention to itself, raising the unknown location of this episode as a persistent problem and signals the very instabilities of narrational authority for which Chaucer's Man of Law is infamous.²¹

19. This subsequent narrative loop encompasses the news of the fate of Barbary that Constance hears on her way back to Rome, Allee and Constance's return to Northumbria, and Constance's final return to Rome after Allee's death.

20. Corrales, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in Corrales and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:317.

21. On the Man of Law's instability and unreliability as a narrator in various respects, see especially Elizabeth Scala, "Canacee and the Chaucer Canon: Incest and Other Unnarratables," *Chaucer Review* 30, no. 1 (1995): 15–39; and Lynch, "Storytelling," 413.

Chaucer in fact reveals an oblique interest in Iberia at the close of Custance's brief adventure there. Tellingly, Chaucer names a specific Iberian toponym only when leaving Iberia. Custance passes Gibraltar on her way back to Rome:

Forth goth hir shipe thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltare and Septe, dryvyng alway
Sometyme west and somtyme north and south
And somtyme est ful many a wery day
(Chaucer, 946–49)

(Her ship goes forth through the narrow mouth of Gibraltar and Morocco, driving always sometimes west, sometimes north and south, and sometimes east a great many weary days.)

This reference to Gibraltar and Morocco makes clear that Iberia, as *The Man of Law's Tale* conceives it, is not a stopping point for Custance, but a passageway. As Custance zigzags with only seeming randomness among the cardinal directions, the tale's geopolitics in fact drive her with precision to bring her son, the Northumbrian heir, to his future Roman throne. Chaucer thus relegates the link between Iberia and the Maghreb (which is so fundamental to tales like the *Floire and Blancheflor* story cluster) to a literal and symbolic passageway by which the political futures of Northumbrian England and Rome unite. I read Chaucer's treatment of Iberia and the Maghreb as an implicit claim—that it is only by way of Iberia and specifically, of its erasure, that such geopolitical networks linking England to Rome come into being. Miriamne Ara Krummel describes a process of national consolidation in medieval literature that “underwr[ites] the myths of an English/Christian society” by “ascrib[ing] all difference—all things unwanted or impure—to those who would and could be erased, eliminated, expelled.”²² Though Krummel's project attends to the way medieval English texts craft Jewishness as absent presence and present absence, her point applies also to Gower's and Chaucer's erasure of Iberia's narrative futures and its close ties with the North African Maghreb in order to consolidate a fantastical unified Anglo-Roman Christian identity.

Chaucer's version of the *Constance* romance shows him, also, to be a careful reader. He picks up on Gower's representational cues that Northumbria

22. Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness*, 16.

and Iberia are inherently comparable, and imagines his own way of signaling a relationship between the two. In Chaucer's hands, Northumbria and Iberia are inherently linked by his unwillingness to securely locate the two castles under which Custance washes up. When Custance first arrives in Northumbria, the Man of Law reports: "Under an hoold that nempnen I ne kan, / Fer in Northhumberlond the wawe hire caste" (Chaucer, 507–8: Below a keep that I am not able to name, the waves cast her far into Northumbria). This strange geographic reticence links Northumbria with Iberia, for the Man of Law likewise cannot name it: "under an hethen castel ate last, / Of which the name in my text noght I fynde, / Custance and eek hire child the see up caste" (Chaucer, 904–6: finally, under a heathen castle, the name of which I do not find in my text, the sea cast up Custance and also her child). Why does Chaucer have his Man of Law profess such ignorance of the names of these two particular strongholds? What links them that Chaucer might be simultaneously erasing and obliquely alluding to? I suggest that Iberia's desirability—so traditional to the romance imagination—is precisely what is at stake here. This desirability emerges not only as a literary component of the way romances typically imagine Iberia—here transferred to Northumbria instead—but also in the historical and political realities of the late fourteenth century, when a Duke of Lancaster (possessing ancestral properties in Northumbria) married an Iberian princess and tried to claim an Iberian throne.

Let us turn to this history first. As Roland M. Smith has suggested, an episode of late fourteenth-century Anglo-Castilian politics hinging on John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, seems to undergird Chaucer's representational choices in *The Man of Law's Tale*.²³ John of Gaunt's second wife was Constance of Castile, whose claim to her father's disputed throne led them to declare themselves king and queen of Castile for well over a decade in the 1370s and 1380s. This history associates Northumbrian England with Castile as two places to which John of Gaunt laid claim through his wives. John of Gaunt became Duke of Lancaster during his first marriage to Blanche of Lancaster. The title was her father's, and when he died without male heir, it was bestowed upon John of Gaunt. The ancestral home of the Dukes of Lancaster for most of the fourteenth century was Pontefract, a castle in Northumberland near the Humber River.²⁴ As Smith observes, Chaucer suppresses the detail, given in both Trevet and Gower, that the Northumbrian

23. In Smith, "Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Tale' and Constance of Castile."

24. Smith, "Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Tale' and Constance of Castile."

castle under which Constance washes up lies near the Humber (in Gower, for instance, Constance arrives “Under a Castel . . . / Which upon Humber banke stod” [Gower, 719–20: Below a castle . . . which stood on the bank of the Humber]).²⁵ The *Constance* romance tradition, in which the exiled daughter of a foreign ruler washes up in distress in such a specific Northumbrian location and then marries the lord of the castle in question, would, then, have invited comparison with John of Gaunt and Constance of Castile.²⁶ Smith argues that by eliding the detail of the Humber river, Chaucer downplays that association.²⁷

John of Gaunt and Constance of Castile’s ambitions arise in the wake of the Castilian dynastic crisis that ended the reign and life of Constance’s father, Pedro I of Castile. Edward the Black Prince and John of Gaunt

25. In Trevet, Constance arrives “en Engleterre desouz une chastel en le roialme de Northumbreland, pres Hombre” (Correale, “The Man of Law’s Prologue and Tale,” in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:303, to England, beneath a castle in the kingdom of Northumberland, near Humber, [302]).

26. Smith asks, “Could Trivet’s ‘castle near the Humber’ have meant to John of Gaunt’s friends, or to his many enemies, anything but Pontefract?” (Smith, “Chaucer’s ‘Man of Law’s Tale’ and Constance of Castile,” 347). Chaucer also suppresses the name of another of Gaunt’s Northumbrian properties from his version of the tale—that of the castle Knaresborough. In the *Constance* legend as both Trevet and Gower tell it, Knaresborough is the castle where King Allee’s conniving mother, Domilde, lives—the mother who engineers Constance’s exile from Northumbria. These events happen while Allee is at war in Scotland. During the so-called Peasant’s Revolt of 1381, the historical Constance of Castile fled to the castle of Pontefract, where the porter, for some reason, did not admit her. She took refuge instead in Knaresborough. At the time, Gaunt himself was in Scotland. These historical Northumbrian places and events, and the ways the *Constance* legend engages and invokes them, lead us to a consideration of John of Gaunt and Constance of Castile not only as figures of prominence in late fourteenth-century Northumbria but also as dynastic hopefuls in Castile.

27. For an overview of English and Iberian history in the late fourteenth century, see P. E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). For discussions of English ambitions with regard to Castile in relation to Chaucer’s work, see Houlik-Ritchey, “Reading the Neighbor in Geoffrey Chaucer and Pero López de Ayala,” *Exemplaria* 28, no. 2 (2016): 118–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2016.1151202>; Sylvia Federico, “Chaucer and the Matter of Spain,” *Chaucer Review* 45, no. 3 (2011): 299–320, <https://doi.org/10.5325/chaucerrev.45.3.0299>; Jesus Luis Serrano Reyes, “John of Gaunt’s Intervention in Spain: Possible Repercussions for Chaucer’s Life and Poetry,” *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 6 (1996): 117–45. For more general studies on Chaucer and Spain, see Laurence Besserman, “Chaucer, Spain, and the Prioress’s Antisemitism,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 35 (2004): 329–53; and Miriamne Ara Krummel, “Globalizing Jewish Communities: Mapping a Jewish Geography in Fragment VII of *The Canterbury Tales*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 50, no. 2 (2008): 121–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tsl.0.0000>

embarked on a Castilian campaign in 1366–67 to restore the deposed Pedro (who was England's ally) to his throne. While that campaign was successful, the Anglo-Castilian allies quarreled soon after the victory and English forces withdrew from the Iberian Peninsula. Pedro was deposed for a second time in 1369 and this time assassinated by his half-brother Enrique de Trastámara, who assumed the throne as Enrique II. Constance of Castile, who was Pedro's favored heir, had fled the kingdom during these crises, and in 1371 she married John of Gaunt. Though living in England, Gaunt incorporated the royal heraldry of Castile into his own coat of arms and was treated as a fellow reigning monarch by Richard II.²⁸ In 1386–87, having finally won the approval of Parliament for the endeavor, Gaunt raised an army and invaded Castile (then ruled by Enrique II's son, Juan I of Castile) in an effort to secure militarily their Iberian dynastic aspirations.

As part of their strategy, Gaunt sought an alliance with the new king of Portugal, João I, who had come to power in Portugal in opposition to the rival claim of Juan I of Castile.²⁹ There was ample reason, therefore, for England and Portugal to be pleased with each other's assistance against Castile at this juncture. Philippa Lancaster (daughter of John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster) married João as part of what turned out to be a long-term English alliance with Portugal (the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance of 1386 remains in effect to this day).³⁰ The military campaign into Castile, despite support from Portugal and the substantial number of English forces it boasted, devolved into disaster.³¹ But Constance of Castile and John of Gaunt's pursuit of the Castilian throne, though unsuccessful in itself, had a number

28. On these points, see R. F. Yeager, "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity: The Iberian Connection," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 35 (2004): 483–515, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.300207>; Russell, *English Intervention*; Federico, "Chaucer and the Matter of Spain."

29. Juan I's claim to the throne of Portugal came through his wife, Beatriz, daughter of King Fernando of Portugal, who had died in 1383. João was Fernando's illegitimate half-brother. João became regent of Portugal after killing the Galician lover of Fernando's widow, and under pressure of Castilian invasion of Portugal by Juan I, João was elected as king by the Portuguese parliament, the Cortes, in 1385. For more on this history, see Joyce Coleman, "Philippa of Lancaster, Queen of Portugal—and Patron of the Gower Translations?," in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*, 135–65.

30. On this treaty's effect upon Anglo-Portuguese trade, and the sometimes tense and rocky state of relations between the countries, see Jennifer C. Geouge, "Anglo-Portuguese Trade," in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*, 119–33.

31. Russell attributes this to John of Gaunt's ineptitude as a military commander. See Russell, *English Intervention*.

of dynastic and even literary consequences. Almost certainly as a result of Philippa's marriage to João, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (including the "Tale of Constance") was translated into Portuguese by Englishman Robert Payn as the *Livro do amante*.³² Constance of Castile and John of Gaunt's daughter Katherine (or Catalina) Lancaster married the future Enrique III of Castile (Juan I's son) in 1388 as part of the negotiated settlement when her parents finally renounced their claim to the Castilian throne. It is generally assumed, though the evidence is sparse, that Catalina Lancaster's marriage into the Trastámaran dynasty of Castile resulted in the translation of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* from Portuguese into Castilian by Juan de Cuenca in the *Confisyon del amante*.³³

History and literature conjoin and influence each other in a number of ways here. John of Gaunt and Constance of Castile's ultimately failed attempt to establish themselves as king and queen of Castile gives us a compelling historical reason to connect the Man of Law's geographic reticence concerning Northumbria with his reticence concerning Iberia. When Chaucer adapted the *Constance* legend as *The Man of Law's Tale*, he changed the name of his protagonist from Constance (the name of Gaunt's Castilian bride) to its variant form Custance, and he refused to locate specifically the geographies in Northumbria and Iberia that might signal Gaunt's Lancastrian English properties, on the one hand, and his Castilian ambitions, on the other. In addition to the possibility that they influenced Chaucer's literary decisions, the historical events form a striking parallel to the literary trajectory in the *Constance* narrative. The political realities of dynastic aspirations envision Castile as a desirable place; in its imaginative framing of Iberia, the medieval romance tradition often manifests such desire (we have seen various ways Iberia has been imagined as desirable in the *Fierabras* and *Floire and Blancheflor* romances that I analyze across the book's earlier chapters). The *Constance* romance is willing to relinquish Iberia and its narrative futures, transferring its Mediterranean networks and fantasies of Christian conversion all to Northumbria. In ironically similar fashion, it was John of Gaunt's Castilian claim—not his Northumbrian land and Lancastrian title—that he had to relinquish. The fantasies Iberia inspires (historically as well as in the literary imagination) emerge in the *Constance* narrative only circuitously, in

32. See Coleman, "Philippa of Lancaster," in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*; and Yeager, "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity," for detailed arguments to this effect.

33. We have much less information and evidence about the circumstances of the Castilian translation of Gower's *Confessio* than we do of the Portuguese. Scholars continue to search for the missing links in that chain.

the histories we can uncover behind Chaucer's pointed elisions and in the close connections Chaucer and Gower construct between Northumbria and Iberia. The representational parallels in these places ostensibly elucidate their divergent geopolitical fates; yet the resonances across them simultaneously deconstruct the logic of Iberia's erasure from a dynamic geopolitical world.

The global reach of the *Constance* narrative's oceanic circuits, linking the North Atlantic to the Mediterranean, has been increasingly remarked upon.³⁴ The role that the legend's marginalization of Iberia plays in these dynamics, however, has gone unnoticed.³⁵ The resemblances and divergences among Gower's and Chaucer's Northumbrian and Iberian episodes, and the changes they both make to Trever's Iberian episode, collectively signal how intimately connected Iberia's marginalization is to Northumbrian England's prominence in the geopolitical and confessional networks that dominate the Mediterranean by the tale's conclusion. By touching up so briefly against Iberia's coast, the narrative paves the way for England to assume the kind of Mediterranean future that the *Fierabras* and *Floire and Blancheflour* romances associate with Iberia. Gower's and Chaucer's presentations of Iberia suggest that the *Constance* tale's imaginative and cultural work has everything to do with revising the typical romance imagination of Iberia.

Although these versions may deny Iberia a narrative future by refusing to

34. Jonathan Hsy has been one of the recent scholars to emphasize the "wide geographical sweep (Rome, Syria, Greece, Morocco, Northumberland)" of the *Man of Law's Tale* (Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, 69). Jamie Taylor argues for the *Man of Law's Tale's* aquatic globality: "The Constance exemplum, found throughout Western Europe . . . is clearly global in its geographical reach, moving across Rome, Syria, Spain, and Northumberland (Heng, *Empire*, 184–5). But its globalism, I argue here, emerges most pointedly in its watery spaces rather than in its landed places" (Jamie Taylor, "Toward Premodern Globalism: Oceanic Exemplarity in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," *PMLA* 135, no. 2 [2020]: 254–71, <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2020.135.2.254>). My thanks to Taylor for providing me with an advance copy of this essay. See also Steven Kruger, "Gower's Mediterranean," in Yeager, *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, 3–19.

35. Indeed, even scholars who consider the episode exhibit a tendency to ignore the relevance of its Iberian setting. Jamison, for instance, in her analysis of Gower's "Tale of Constance," discusses the events of the Iberian episode in detail without mentioning their setting or its relevance (Jamison, "John Gower's Shaping of 'The Tale of Constance,'" in Newhauser and Ridyard, *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*). See also Wetherbee ("Constance and the World," in Yeager, *John Gower, Recent Readings*), for whom the Iberian episode in Chaucer and Gower is important to his argument about the relative passivity/agency of Custance and Constance, but who does not consider the implications of the geographic setting in his discussion.

envision one, rudderless boats nonetheless persistently find their way to Iberia's shores. In the final analysis, then, the persistent inclusion of the Iberian episode across the Middle English *Constance* narratives imagines a world, and an accompanying geopolitics, that is connected to Iberia almost in spite of itself. Iberia's very marginalization facilitates the *Constance* legend's imagination of Northumbrian England as heir to Iberia's typical role in medieval romance—England becomes the desirable sovereignty and geography linking Northern Europe to Mediterranean empire.

Costança in Iberia: The *Livro do Amante* and *Confisyon del Amante*

In delightful irony, though Constance's rudderless voyages repeatedly skirt (and thus evade) Iberia on three of her four voyages around the peninsula, Iberia actually figures prominently in the transmission history of the tale. *Constance's* transmission history in Iberia has profound consequences within the story, not only for the narrative fate of Iberia, but also for the narrative fate of Northumbrian England. The final section of this chapter turns to the two Iberian versions, one in Portuguese by Robert Payn and one in Castilian by Juan de Cuenca. I assess the religioethical transformations that Payn and Cuenca introduce into Gower's representation of Iberia as a place devoid of fellowship; specifically, Payn and Cuenca eliminate stereotypes of Muslim rule and imagine Iberia's emir instead as a man of faith, reinstating the potential for an Iberian narrative future, however underdeveloped it remains. At the same time, Payn and Cuenca reduce England's prominence in the narrative by eliding Gower's single use of the toponym "Engelond" at the tale's close. This change, in Payn's Portuguese *Livro*, results in a much more tightly conceived regional focus on Northumbria's fate and future. The illustrious legacy that the tale conceives for Northumbria's legendary past can be passed on to Portugal in the present—transmitted to the Portuguese royal line through the marriage of Philippa Lancaster. While Payn thus maintains a geographic and genealogical connection to English locales, Cuenca's Castilian *Confisyon* cuts all such ties, eliminating English geography, language, and identity from Constance's itinerary entirely. By the end of the *Constance* romance's transmission history, then, the tale denies Northumbrian England any narrative presence, past or future.

John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* has the distinction of being the earliest literary text in English that is translated into Iberian languages. As I

indicated above, the *Confessio* was probably brought to Iberia as a result of Philippa Lancaster's marriage to João I of Portugal in 1386;³⁶ it survives, so far as we are currently aware, in a single manuscript copy.³⁷ Though the translation is Robert Payn's, an Englishman and canon of Lisbon, the extant witness of the Portuguese *Livro* is a copy made in 1430 by the scribe João Barroso.³⁸ Barroso's copy of the *Livro* made its way into Castile where it, or another copy of Payn's text was translated into Castilian by Juan de Cuenca as the *Confysión del amante*. We cannot currently narrow the dating of Cuenca's translation beyond the early to mid-fifteenth century, and we know very little about the circumstances of its production.³⁹ Like the *Livro*, the Castil-

36. See Pascual-Argente's assessment of this matter in Clara Pascual-Argente, "Iberian Gower," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, 210–22; Yeager's discussion in "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity"; and Coleman's argument in "Philippa of Lancaster," in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*.

37. The extant copy of the *Livro* is held by the Biblioteca de Palacio: Madrid MS Palacio II-3088. There has been much debate about the dating of the Portuguese translation, especially preceding the identification of the sole extant copy as Payn's *Livro*. Though some had put the date of likely translation no earlier than 1433, 1430 is the date of completion given by João Barroso in his colophon in the manuscript itself. For an overview of scholarship on these issues, see Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, "Iberian Manuscripts of Gower's Work," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, 110–16; and Pascual-Argente, "Iberian Gower," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, 210–21.

38. Payn's name does not appear in the manuscript of the Portuguese translation. This information comes from the headnote to the Castilian translation in the sole surviving manuscript of that text. Scholars have identified several Robert Payns in the historical record, one of whom was a figure in Philippa's household in Portugal. For useful overviews of the various possibilities and gaps in the identification of this translator, see Coleman, "Philippa of Lancaster," in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*; John Matthews Manly, "On the Question of the Portuguese Translation of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis,'" *Modern Philology* 27, no. 4 (1930): 467–72, <https://doi.org/10.1086/387860>; and Yeager, "Gower's Lancastrian Affinity."

39. Sáez-Hidalgo notes that though the evidence for a tie between the Castilian monarchy and the Castilian translation of the *Confessio* is much thinner than for the Portuguese translation, scholars have continued to make the association. In particular, scholars have found Anglo-Castilian political significance in Huete (where the translation was done). Huete is a city of Castile that was given to Constance of Castile as part of the settlement by which she, along with her husband, John of Gaunt, gave up her claim to the Castilian throne in the late fourteenth century. Upon Constance's death, the city passed to her daughter Catalina, queen of Castile. In light of such associations, scholars frequently speculate that either Catalina or her son Juan II were in some way involved with the translation of the *Confessio* from Portuguese into Castilian; however, specific links between Catalina or the court of Juan II and the *Confysión* "are considerably more tenuous than those of Philippa [and Duarte] to the

ian *Confisyón del amante* survives, so far as we know, in a single manuscript witness.⁴⁰ Ongoing work by Iberomedievalists on the manuscript provenance and transmission history of the *Constance* romance in Iberia may well yield a fuller picture in time. Meanwhile, scholars continue the extensive and exciting process of comparative work across these versions. This chapter thus contributes to a growing body of scholarship on the Iberian translations of the *Confessio* and on late medieval Anglo-Iberian literary relations in general.⁴¹ Specifically, my analysis of the transformations Payn and Cuenca

Livro" (Pascual-Argente, "Iberian Gower," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, 212). For further discussion of these details, see Ana Sáez-Hidalgo, "Gower in Early Modern Spanish Libraries," in Peck and Yeager, *John Gower: Others and the Self*, 329–44.

40. The surviving witness of the *Confisyón del amante* is held by the Real Biblioteca El Escorial: MS g.II.19. The manuscript has been part of that library's collection since its foundation in the sixteenth century; we have not been able to trace its history prior to that. For more information on the provenance of this manuscript, see Sáez-Hidalgo, "Gower in Early Modern Spanish Libraries," in Peck and Yeager, *John Gower: Others and the Self*, 329–44.

41. Scholarship across these Iberian versions of the *Confessio* has been a burgeoning area of Gower studies for the last decade or so, as has the study of Anglo-Iberian literary relations. For work on this subject published within the rubric of Gower studies, see especially the collection Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and Robert F. Yeager, eds., *John Gower in England and Iberia: Manuscripts, Influences, Reception* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2014); Sáez-Hidalgo, "Iberian Manuscripts of Gower's Work," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*; Pascual-Argente, "Iberian Gower," in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*; the several articles on the subject in Laura Filardo-Llamas, Brian Gastle, and Marta Gutiérrez Rodríguez, eds., "Gower in Context(s): Scribal, Linguistic, Literary and Socio-Historical Readings," special issue, *ES: Revista de filología inglesa* 33, no. 1 (2012); and Manuela Faccon, *Fortuna de la Confessio Amantis en la península ibérica: El testimonio portugués* (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2010). There is much work among Hispanists on these translations and their manuscript witnesses that has less to do specifically with Gower studies or with Anglo-Iberian studies, such as the body of work done by Antonio Cortijo Ocaña to identify the manuscript as the *Livro* and make its text available to scholars, including "La traducción portuguesa de la *Confessio Amantis* de John Gower," *Euphrosyne* 23 (1995): 457–66; and Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, "O *Livro do amante*: The Lost Portuguese Translation of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Madrid, Biblioteca de Palacio, MS II-3088)," *Portuguese Studies* 13 (1997): 1–6; Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, "El libro VI de la *Confessio Amantis*," *Revista de literatura medieval* 22 (2010): 11–74; Antonio Cortijo Ocaña and Maria do Carmo Correia de Oliveira, "O 'rregimento dos homees': El libro VII de la *Confessio Amantis* portuguesa," *Revista de literatura medieval* 19 (2007): 7–124; Antonio Cortijo Ocaña and Maria do Carmo Correia de Oliveira, "El libro VIII de la *Confessio Amantis* portuguesa," *Revista de lenguas y literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca* 11 (2005): 181–239. On the way the Castilian *Confisyón* speaks to and was influenced by contemporary Castilian literary culture, see Clara Pascual-Argente, "La huella de las *Sumas de historia*

introduce into the Portuguese and Castilian versions of “The Tale of Constance” advances our ongoing efforts to understand how Payn and Cuenca have each reimagined, in subtle but significant ways, the story as Gower tells it.⁴² As is the case with scholarship on the English versions of the Constance story, no one who has looked comparatively across the Iberian versions has yet analyzed Payn’s and Cuenca’s religioethical and geographic transformations of Iberia and Northumbrian England from a neighborly comparative perspective. Let us begin with Payn’s amelioration of Iberia’s Muslim rule, a consistent tactic across the Iberian and Barbary episodes of the tale that demonstrates Payn’s reluctance to assign negative descriptors or attribute violence to differences of religious belief.

troyana en la *Confessio Amantis* castellana,” *Revista de Filología Española* 95, no. 1 (2015): 127–52, <https://doi.org/10.3989/rfe.2015.06>; and Francisco Javier Grande Quejigo and Bernardo Santano Moreno, “The Love Debate Tradition in the Reception of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* in the Iberian Peninsula,” *Disputatio: An International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Late Middle Ages* 5 (2002): 103–26. On the more general field of Anglo-Iberian relations, see Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*. Cortijo Ocaña published his identification of this Portuguese version of the *Confessio* in “La traducción portuguesa de la *Confessio Amantis* de John Gower,” *Euphrosyne* 23 (1995): 457–66; and “O Livro do amante: The Lost Portuguese Translation of John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (Madrid, Biblioteca de Palacio, MS II-3088),” *Portuguese Studies* 13 (1997): 1–6.

42. As Cortijo Ocaña notes, as yet there has been no comprehensive comparative study of the entire *Confessio* across these Iberian translations. His own initial analysis of Juan de Cuenca’s proclivities as a translator provisionally concludes that the similarity between medieval Castilian and Portuguese allows Juan de Cuenca to be quite a faithful translator, whose minimal changes rarely affect the sense of the passages. Other scholars, however, have imputed more significance to transformations Juan de Cuenca introduces into his translations. See Cortijo Ocaña, “La traducción de Juan de Cuenca: El minúsculo oficio del traductor,” in Recio, *Traducción y humanismo*; María Bullón-Fernández, “Translating Women, Translating Texts: Gower’s ‘Tale of Tereus’ and the Castilian and Portuguese Translations of the *Confessio Amantis*,” in Urban, *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, 109–32; Clara Pascual-Argente, “Remembering Antiquity in the Castilian *Confessio Amantis*,” in Sáez-Hidalgo and Yeager, *John Gower in England and Iberia*; Pascual-Argente, “La huella de las *Sumas de historia troyana*”; and Tamara Pérez-Fernández, “The Margins in the Iberian Manuscripts,” in Filardo-Llamas, Gastle, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez, “Gower in Context(s),” 29–44. Earlier work that looked comparatively across the Castilian and English versions of the *Confessio* now needs to be updated to include the Portuguese text; such studies include Bernardo Santano Moreno, *Estudio sobre “Confessio amantis” de John Gower y su versión castellana, “Confisyón del amante” de Juan de Cuenca* (Cáceres, Spain: Universidad de Extremadura, 1990); Santano Moreno, “The Fifteenth-Century Portuguese and Castilian Translations of John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*,” *Manuscripta: A Journal for Manuscript Research* 35, no. 1 (1991): 23–34, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.MSS.3.1352>; and R. Wayne Hamm, “A Critical Evaluation of the *Confisyón del amante*, the Castilian Translation of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*,” *Medium Ævum* 47, no. 1 (1978): 91–106, <https://doi.org/10.2307/43628325>

The first example of this amelioration that I will analyze lies in the religioethical terms in which Payn describes the emir when Costança (as her name appears in Payn's and Cuenca's versions) lands in Iberia. Payn rewrites Gower's choices to present this ruler as a man of faith: "O seu navio tanto foi levado com tormenta aa parte do ouriente, que chegou junto com o muro dhũu castello na terra d'Espanha, onde hũu fiel era entom almirante" (Payn, *Livro do amante*, 299: Her boat was so carried by the storm in the direction of the east, that it arrived next to a wall of a castle in the land of Spain, where a faithful/loyal [man] was at that time commander/emir).⁴³ Gower's "hethen Amirall" (heathen emir) becomes, in Payn's Portuguese version, a "fiel" commander/emir. "Fiel" is an adjective meaning "loyal," "true," "faithful"; used as a noun (as here), it can indicate a person in a public position of trust and authority; it can indicate religious devotion; finally, it can be used metonymically to refer to a Christian via the attribute of faithfulness.⁴⁴ I will explore the implications of these valences momentarily, but I want first to note that Cuenca's Castilian *Confisyón del amante* follows Payn exactly, preserving this vision of a "fiel" (faithful) ruler.⁴⁵ The Iberian versions of the

43. Citations of Payn's *Livro do amante* and Cuenca's *Confisyón del amante* are from vol. 1 of Cortijo Ocaña, Faccon, and Alvar, *Confessio amantis*. Citations are to page number. Translations are my own.

44. Entry "fiel," in *Dicionario de dicionarios do galego medieval*, *Corpus lexicográfico medieval da lingua galega*, Ernesto González Seoane (coord.), María Álvarez de la Granja, and Ana Isabel Boullón Agrelo (Seminario de Lingüística Informática, Grupo TALG, Instituto da Lingua Galega, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2006–2018), sil.uvigo.es, November 9, 2018, http://sli.uvigo.es/DDGM/ddd_pescuda.php?pescuda=fiel&tipo_busca=lema

45. Castilian "fiel" is quite similar to the Portuguese "fiel": "el que guarda fe y lealtad, el que trata verdad y no engaña a otro" (that which demonstrates/keeps faith and loyalty, that which exhibits or deals with truth and does not engage in anything else). See entry "fiel," in Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica 21, edited by Ignacio Arellano and Rafael Zafra (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2006). The early editors of Cuenca's text emended "fiel" to its opposite term, "infel" (unfaithful, infidel). "Infel" is commonly used to refer to non-Christians (as it does elsewhere in the Iberian *Confessio*, for instance). The emendation was introduced in the 1909 German edition of the Castilian text by Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld and Hermann Knust, specifically so that the sense of the passage would accord more closely with Gower's "hethen." See their textual note to "infel" (page 87, note to line 32). Elena Alvar preserves the emendation in her 1990 edition, offering in her note that she takes the emendation from Knust and Birch-Hirschfeld: "K–B, de acuerdo con el original inglés, *infel*" (note 100, page 256). Though the choice of "fiel" in place of "hethen" was, as we now know, Payn's, this emendation of Cuenca's text has been maintained in turn by Alvar, Cortijo Ocaña, and Faccon in their 2018 trilingual edition, from which I am working, so that Cuenca's text there reads, "El navío fue llevado con fortuna contra la parte de oriente, tanto que llegó junto con el muro de un castillo en la tierra de España donde un [in]fiel era entonces almirante" (Cuenca, *Confisyón del amante*, 298,

legend of Constance collectively and strikingly depart from Gower on what they choose to emphasize about the quality of this ruler. Whether we choose to read the possible religious valences into the reference or not, the representation of Iberian rule that “fiel” evokes is a positive and trustworthy one.⁴⁶

We do not have to read “fiel” as saying anything at all about religious identity, but if we choose to lean into that range of meaning, the religious valences that can accrue to “fiel” raise the question of whether Payn intended to present this Iberian leader as Christian or Muslim. What is perhaps most telling here is that because of the semantic range of “almirante” (commander/emir) we can interpret the religious identity of this leader either way. As I have indicated in my translations, the term can signify, in fairly generic fashion, the commander of a castle or keep (without religious connotations), but can also mean, more specifically, an emir, or regional Muslim governor within the *dar al-Islam*.⁴⁷ It seems equally possible, then, to interpret Payn’s assertion that a “fiel” man is “almirante” of the castle in Iberia where Costança washes up to mean either that this castle is under the governance of a trustworthy and faithful Muslim leader or a trustworthy and faithful Christian one.

This valence of faithfulness—to whatever religion—in the Iberian versions of the Iberian episode matters to our understanding of what Payn’s rewriting of “hethen” (heathen) achieves, because the Middle English term, used in the context of Iberia, would have invoked not only non-Christian faith in general, but Islam specifically. Gower includes, furthermore, a Latin gloss at the beginning of the Iberian episode, which identifies Iberia as a

emendation in original: the boat was carried by fortune in the direction of the East, such that it arrived alongside the wall of a castle in the land of Spain where an [un]faithful [man] was at that time commander/emir). This trilingual edition does not similarly emend Payn’s Portuguese “fiel.” See Adolf Birch-Hirschfeld, ed., *Confision del Amante por Joan Goer: Spanische Übersetzung von John Gowers Confessio Amantis aus dem Vermachtnis von Hermann Knust nach der Handschrift im Escorial* (Leipzig: Dr. Seele, 1909); John Gower, *La Confesión del Amante*, ed. Elena Alvar, trans. Juan de Cuenca (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1990); and Cortijo Ocaña, Faccon, and Alvar, *Confessio amantis*.

46. We might, with good reason, dispute the implication arising from the metonymic significance of “fiel” that all Christians are trustworthy and faithful, and analyze the Christian hegemonic mindset underlying that logic.

47. “Almirante” in medieval Castilian and Portuguese can also be a military title with naval connotations. I have chosen to translate it to emphasize political leadership instead, which seems to be the context in Payn’s text. Entry, “almirante,” in *Dicionario de dicionarios do galego medieval*, accessed July 3, 2020, http://sli.uvigo.gal/DDGM/ddd_pescuda.php?pescuda=almirante&tipo_busca=lema

land inhabited by Muslims—but Muslims as reductively and inaccurately imagined under the fantasy of the “Saracen”: “Qualiter Nauis Constancie post biennium in partes Hispanie superioris inter Sarazenos iactabatur, a quorum manibus deus ipsam conseruans graciousissime liberauit” (How Constance’s ship was tossed after two years into the regions of upper Spain among the Saracens, from whose hands God, preserving her, liberated her by His grace).⁴⁸ Gower’s Latin identification of Iberia as a land of “Saracens,” in conjunction with his Middle English representation of its leader as a “hethen Amirall,” invokes a reductive vision of Muslim identity by non-Muslims to which stereotypes of Islam easily accrue. Gower has marked Iberia, in multiple ways, as a place that is controlled by Muslims, but has used terminology which collectively makes Muslim-ruled Iberia easy to dismiss.⁴⁹ Payn eliminates or transforms all of these vocabularies in his rewriting of Costança’s Iberian adventure, refusing to indulge in the religious stereotyping that interested Gower in this section.

In this instance, Payn eliminates Gower’s reference to “Saracens,” condensing the rest of the gloss, and translating what little he retains of it into Castilian and incorporating it into his prose translation of the main text. Throughout his entire translation of the *Confessio*, Payn is selective regarding what he accepts from Gower’s Latin apparatus of glosses and summaries (which is not surprising, as Gower’s Latin apparatus is famously incongruous with his Middle English poetic text in many instances).⁵⁰ The emir’s

48. The Latin gloss can be found in both McCaulay’s and Peck’s editions, but only Peck’s offers an English translation (*Explanatory Notes to Book 2*, 338, note to line 1084ff.). Peck’s edition relegates both the Latin glosses and English translations to the *Explanatory Notes*. McCaulay’s edition positions the Latin prose summaries/glosses in the margins of the Middle English text. This gloss initiates alongside line 1086 of “The Tale of Constance,” in *The English Works of John Gower*, 1:159. The manuscripts of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* themselves vary in their treatment and placement of the Latin apparatus. See Siân Echard, “With Carmen’s Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*,” *Studies in Philology* 95, no.1 (1998), on the range of such variations and their implications.

49. Chaucer’s use of “hethen” would likely resonate similarly, even without the Iberian toponym, invoking Islam in a hazy, indefinite geography apparently somewhere near the Strait of Gibraltar (which Custance immediately after passes through). It is worth noting that Chaucer’s more accurate presentation of some of the details of Islam in *The Man of Law’s Tale* (such as identifying Mohammed as a prophet) would resist, in some measure, the fantasy and stereotypes of Islam that Gower’s invocation of “Saracens” sets in play.

50. For analyses of Gower’s Latin apparatus and its relation to his Middle English poetic text, see Siân Echard, “With Carmen’s Help”; Joyce Coleman, “Lay Readers and Hard Latin: How Gower May Have Intended the *Confessio Amantis* to Be Read,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 24 (2002): 209–35, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2002.0037>; Richard K. Emmerson,

steward—the man who tries to rape Costança and a “maa cavalleiro” (bad knight)—stands in sharp opposition to the faithful emir he serves in Payn’s version. In fact, in the Iberian versions we must imagine the steward’s secrecy when he approaches Costança to be necessary precisely because his actions would not accord with those of his morally upstanding superior. Payn’s treatment of the Iberian episode does not allow one rapist knight’s actions to symptomatize or ignite stereotypes of Islam that extend to the rulers of al-Andalus or the representation of the entire region.

These changes to the tenor of the Iberian leader in the Portuguese *Livro do amante* (and the faithful preservation of that change in the Castilian *Confesión del amante*) accords with other changes that Robert Payn makes to Gower’s presentation of religious identity. That is, Payn eliminates both of Gower’s references to “Saracens” in this tale, not only in the Iberian episode, but also in the earlier description of the sultaness of Barbary who first launches Constance into the Mediterranean Sea in a rudderless boat.⁵¹ Gower describes the sultaness as “this olde fend, this Sarazine” (Gower, 705: this old fiend/devil, this Saracen); Payn converts this into “a velha, como diaboo que era” (287: the old woman, like the devil she was). The figure retains her viciousness and violent actions in Payn’s version (slaughtering her son among multitudes of other victims and setting Costança adrift); but these actions are not, in Payn’s version, linked to Islam through dangerous fantasies of religious depravity and difference. Payn does condemn her actions in religiously inflected terms (she’s a devil, closely analogous to being a fiend, as Gower names her), but Payn does not frame his condemnation explicitly as being an indictment of Islam or as being motivated because

“Reading Gower in a Manuscript Culture: Latin and English in Illustrated Manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999), 143–86; and Derek Pearsall, “Gower’s Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*,” in Minnis, *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, 13–25. For an analysis of the way that the near total absence of the Latin apparatus of Gower’s poem in the Iberian versions fundamentally restructures/reshapes the Iberian texts, see Pérez-Fernández, “The Margins in the Iberian Manuscripts,” in Filardo-Llamas, Gastle, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez, “Gower in Context(s).”

51. My early work on this and other differences between Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* and the Iberian translations misrepresented the relationship between the extant manuscripts of Payn’s and Cuenca’s translations. My thanks to Clara Pascual-Argente for pointing out my error, which I have corrected here. See Pascual-Argente, “La huella de las *Sumas de historia troyana*,” 128n3; Pascual-Argente, “Iberian Gower,” in Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager, *The Routledge Research Companion to John Gower*, 214; and Emily Houlik-Ritchey, “Rewriting Difference: ‘Saracens’ in John Gower and Juan de Cuenca,” in Filardo-Llamas, Gastle, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez, “Gower in Context(s),” 171–89.

she is a Muslim. “Sarazine,” and the fantasies that the term shorthands, is simply cut entirely. Payn makes no attempt to translate the term at all, letting gender take the fall instead through alternative medieval stereotypes of depraved, aged women. When Cuenca, in turn, translates Payn’s text into Castilian, he makes his own modification, eliding the detail likening the sultan’s mother to a devil and converting it into a negative adjective without any religious inflection. In Cuenca’s version, she is simply “la mala vieja” (Cuenca, *Confesión del amante*, 287: the bad old woman). Consistently across the two Iberian versions, then, Payn and Cuenca exhibit their reluctance to attribute violent behavior to differences of religious affiliation—whether that affiliation is understood to be specifically Muslim or not. Payn’s *Livro do amante* tempers Gower’s implicit argument that Muslim failures are failures of fellowship in the tale’s two Muslim polities, Iberia and Barbary. Without substantially altering the course of the plot in either place, Payn nonetheless suggests that violence in these locales is not, in fact, endemic to religious conviction. Cuenca, for his part, either reproduces Payn’s choices precisely or furthers the course of modification that Payn initiates.

Payn and Cuenca not only reenvision Gower’s construction of Iberia; they simultaneously reimagine Northumbrian England. In Cuenca’s case, this reimagination is so complete that both Northumbria and England effectively vanish from the tale entirely. As the fate of these locales are undeniably central to the British versions of the story, the changes Payn and Cuenca make serve to illuminate the pressure that a little distance (this change of culture, and language) puts upon geopolitical literary representation and recognition. Payn’s version eliminates Gower’s closing gesture of the tale that dilates the frame of reference from Northumbria to England, keeping the tight regional focus. This change makes possible the transference of Northumbria’s legendary fate (as this tale imagines it) to Portugal.

Northumbria has legendary historical significance for fourteenth-century writers such as Trevelyan, Chaucer, and Gower, playing a crucial role in fantasies of the (re)Christianization of England and its establishment as a major geopolitical player in the world, at least in the British literary imagination. Northumbria is a seventh- through tenth-century kingdom that comprised a large region north of the river Humber that is now northern England and southeast Scotland. It was one of the five kingdoms of the “Heptarchy” of early medieval England.⁵² The fantasy Gower seems to be invoking with his assertion

52. These five kingdoms were inhabited by Christianized descendants of Germanic tribes that overwhelmed, militarily, linguistically, and culturally, the Britons inhabiting most of

that Allee is a Saxon is a later medieval narrative about the pagan Germanic tribal origins of English identity.⁵³ By the late Middle Ages, the dominant received medieval narrative about this history has shorthanded the various Germanic cultural groups inhabiting early medieval England under the term “Saxons.”⁵⁴ Thus, when Gower attributes to this flattened, imaginary cultural

England after the withdrawal of Roman legions in the fifth century. These kingdoms were long described as “Anglo-Saxon” by scholars, a descriptor that was not much used in the early Middle Ages but has been a convenient general term as it derived from the cultural groups of two (Angles and Saxons) of the three Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) mentioned by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastic Gēntis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), in which he casts the tribes as invading pagans doing the will of God to punish the Britons for their lapsed Christian faith and behavior. However, the term “Anglo-Saxon” has also been part of racist, white-supremacist national mythologies, an issue that is beyond the scope of this project to discuss. See the extensive and growing body of excellent work on race-making in the Middle Ages that the publication of Heng’s book, *The Invention of Race*, heralded. For the purposes of this chapter, it is notable that Gower generalizes the inhabitants of early medieval Northumbria descended from Germanic tribes as “Saxon.” Gower seems to be using a term that readers in the fourteenth century will recognize as pagan/Germanic, even though Bede, a Northumbrian himself, distinguishes between Northumbrians, Mercians, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. See notes 53 and 54.

53. Trevel identifies the Northumbrians as Saxons throughout his version of the tale. Gower minimizes this usage but still follows Trevel’s lead, while Chaucer writes “Saxon” out of his version entirely. See, for instance, Trevel’s opening summary of the tale, which focuses on Constance’s son, Maurice: “En le temps cist emperour Tyberie [Constantin], come dient les auciens croniques des Sessouns, estoit un juvencele apelé Moriz, qi n’estoit mes de disoit anz [quant] il fu ordiné par Tyberie a l’empire, trop gracieuse et mervaillousement vigerous de son age et de sen sages et agu. Cist Morice, solonc l’estoire de Sessouns avantdite, estoit le fitz Constaunce, la fille Tyberie, de un roi de Sessouns, Alla avauntedit, qi estoit le second roi de Northumbre” (Correale, “The Man of Law’s Prologue and Tale,” in Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues*, 2:297; In the time of this Emperor Tiberius [Constantine] as the old Saxon chronicles relate, there was a youth named Maurice, who was not more than eighteen years old when he was appointed by Tiberius to the empire, a very handsome youth, exceedingly strong for his age, and wise and keen of mind. This Maurice, according to the aforementioned history of the Saxons, was the son of Constance, the daughter of Tiberius, by a king of the Saxons—the aforesaid Alla, who was the second king of Northumbria [296]).

54. Furthermore, a snapshot of Middle English usage provided by the *Middle English Dictionary* indicates the disproportionate appearance of “Saxon” in Middle English texts to the names of all the other tribes: a quick MED search turns up 40 quotations for the entry “**Saxon**” n., 3 quotations for the entry “**Jūtes**” n. plural, 1 quotation for the entry “**?Engle(s)**” n. Tracing the origins of this medieval narrative shorthand lies beyond the scope of this project, but I can gesture here to a few significant benchmarks: for instance, we might look to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s influential twelfth century *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) and its disproportionate emphasis on the Saxons relative to the other Germanic set-

group the honor of re-establishing Christianity in Northumbria/England, he follows a pattern he has inherited that emphasizes the Saxons much more predominantly than any of the others, so that even when those other tribes are mentioned, the Saxon invasion and settlement looms largest in literary and cultural memory. Chaucer does not mention the Saxons in his version, but identifies the legacies of Christianity that Custance coaxes into renewed bloom in Northumbria with similar received medieval legends of the ancient Britons, pushed to the fringes of the island (to Wales, in Chaucer's tale) by these pagan Germanic settlers. In both versions, constructing the ancient origins of English identity, its lapsed Christianity, and its renewed participation in the community of the faithful *writ large* (centered on Rome), is precisely one of the things at stake in the Northumbrian plotline.

In Gower's text, Constance's return to Rome after Allee's death occasions his single telling reference to "Engelond"—a move that seems to equate Northumbria, and the medieval mythic narratives I have just charted, with England entire:

der tribes; Geoffrey only very occasionally mentions the Angles. Looking farther back, the "Venerable" Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, completed in 731, presents a more complex picture, perhaps because Bede himself was born in Northumbria. In Bede's telling, the Germanic tribes remain more distinct, settling in different parts of the island: "Those who came over were from three powerful tribes in Germany—the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent and of the Isle of Wight . . . From the country of the Saxons, that is, the region which is now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. From the country of the Angles . . . came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is, those people that dwell north of the river Humber), and the other Anglian tribes" (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in "Bede," in *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, Concise Edition, Volume A, 2nd ed., eds. Joseph Black, et. al. [Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2011], 40). Though Bede distinguishes among these tribes and their discrete geographical settlements (singling out Northumbria as he does so), he, too, sometimes lumps the Germanic settler tribes together, as in his account of Vortigern's invitation to the "Angles or Saxons" to come over and help the Britons combat "frequent attacks of the northern nations" (i.e. the Irish and the Picts) (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 40). Also relevant to the present discussion is how throughout his narrative, Bede establishes Northumbria as particularly receptive to Christianity; Bede's famous account of the conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria to Christianity, for instance, constitutes a prime example of this trend. Though Trevet, Gower, and Chaucer do not recall Bede's specificity that Northumbrians are descendants of the Angles, they do perpetuate the tradition that Christianity has a particular proclivity to flourish there.

And therupon hire herte drowh
 To leven Engelond for evere
 And go wher that sche hadde levere,
 To Rome,
 (Gower, 1580–83)

(And at this, her heart drew her to leave England forever and to go where she preferred, to Rome)

Though there is some irony in the fact that Gower's metonymic shift to England occurs when Constance chooses to leave Northumbria forever, the move does make a joint geographic and temporal claim that Northumbria is both heart and origin of England's medieval Christian past.

But much, if not all, of this temporal and historical claim is lost when Payn's translation cuts the reference to England. In his version, Costança wished "em seu coração deixar pera senpre aquela terra e hirese pera Roma donde se mais contentava" (314: in her heart to depart that land for always and go to Rome where she was happier). In place of the very specific "Engelond" (England) of Gower we get the very general "aquela terra" (that land). The *Constance* legend has been shown to carry particular resonances for England and its place in the world, especially vis-à-vis Rome, empire, and the Mediterranean. In Payn's Portuguese version, this can no longer be so, or at least not so strongly, because Payn does not signal the way Northumbria becomes metonymic for England through the transition of vocabulary that both Gower and Chaucer offer. If audiences are to interpret the significance of Northumbria and its fate as extending to England as a whole, they must make that connection for themselves: Payn does not help them to it.⁵⁵

This significant change puts additional pressure on the toponym each Iberian version gives for Northumbria, for on that regional toponym alone (rather than its metonymic expansion to England entire) hangs the scope

55. Nor does Cuenca. At the end of Costança's adventures, in Cuenca's version, "se partió de su muger, quedando ella asaz enojosa e triste, la qual propuso en su corazón de por sienpre dexar *aquella tierra* en que tanta desaventura le viniera, e se tornar para Roma donde más se contentava" (312, my emphasis: he [Aleo] parted from his lady, leaving her very angry and sad, and she proposed in her heart to leave for ever *that land* in which such misadventures had come to her, and to return to Rome where she was happier). Amplifying Costança's motivation to leave "aquella tierra" (that land) by reminding readers/audiences of the misadventures she has suffered away from Rome, Cuenca otherwise faithfully follows Payn's lead in refusing to specify what land, exactly, she is leaving.

of the geopolitical networks that the Iberian versions imagine for Costança and for Rome. Payn does not translate “Northumberland” into Portuguese; rather he includes the Middle English toponym in his Portuguese text: so where Gower writes that God “Hire Schip to stiere hath take in honde, / And in Northumberlond aryveth” (Gower, 716–17: has taken her ship in hand in order to steer [it], and [her ship] arrives in Northumbria), Payn writes, “Proue a Deus de o aportar em Northomberland” (288: it pleases God that it [the boat] makes port in Northomberland). Medieval Portuguese does not seem to have had a multilingual place name equivalent for Northumbria; if such a term existed, it was presumably not so widely used as multilingual place names designating England as a whole, such as “Bretanha” (Britain) or “Engraterra” (England).⁵⁶ What, then, would contemporary Portuguese audiences have made of the Middle English toponym “Northomberland” (Northumbria/Northumberland) appearing in the tale of Costança in the *Livro*? Would it have been legible to them as an ancient medieval kingdom and contemporary medieval county of northeastern England? Perhaps so, to the extent that Queen Felipa (as Philippa Lancaster was known in Portugal) was both an Englishwoman and a Lancastrian. In the royal court context of Queen Felipa and her immediate descendants, “Northomberland” could have evoked, not just a particular part of ancient England, but also the northeastern county of England established by the Normans in the twelfth century, and the site of the ancestral home of the Dukes of Lancaster, as I discuss above. Northumberland is thus a place directly significant to the Portuguese ruling family. It does not seem particularly farfetched to suggest that a Portuguese-speaking noble audience connected to the royal court would have been able to parse “Northomberland” as referencing a British locale that had significance in Portugal’s present, particularly via its royal family and the ongoing treaty between England and Portugal.⁵⁷ In this speculative reception scenario, Northumbria’s legendary past becomes Portugal’s, as well.

56. I have not been able to find an entry for “Northumbria” or “Northumberlond” in the *Dicionário de dicionários do galego medieval*. While such negative evidence remains inconclusive, it does suggest that if such a term was available, it was not in wide use. As a point of comparison, the same reference source offers several multilingual place names for England, including “Bretanha” (Britain) and “Ingraterra” (England). The latter appears in several orthographic variations: “Inglaterra,” “Ynglaterra,” “Jnglaterra,” “Englaterra,” “Engraterra.”

57. As Jennifer C. Geouge surveys in some detail, King João I imposed favorable terms for English merchants in Portugal that brought them to Portuguese ports in swarms. See Geouge, “Anglo-Portuguese Trade,” in Bullón-Fernández, *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*.

In short, Payn, an Englishman in the Portuguese royal court where Philippa Lancaster was queen, envisions the significance of Northumbria in the Costança tale through unvarying regionalism that opens space for creative temporal play across the ancient kingdom and contemporary county. I suggest that this choice opens the door to a reading of the tale and of contemporary dynastic history in celebratory tandem, whereby Portugal's court and ruling family can conceive Portugal as heir to Northumbria's illustrious and privileged narrative fate of empire and Mediterranean hegemony via Rome. Rome's consolidation of Barbary in the tale dovetails with such a reading and likely also resonated with the Portuguese ruling class. João I had imperial ambitions in North Africa—he conquered Ceuta in 1415 and held it for its strategic use as a staging ground for further campaigns. In another strange twist of fate, the extant manuscript of the *Livro* was copied by Barroso in Ceuta in 1430.⁵⁸ One can see how the Portuguese ruling class might have looked to their queen as a source of connection to the legendary Northumbrian past that the tale of Costança envisions—made easier by the fact that Robert Payn refused Gower's move to “Engelond” and kept the focus upon a regional area with a close and traceable tie to Portugal.

The further the *Livro do amante* gets from that Portuguese courtly context, where “Northomberland” has the capacity to directly reference the place where the maternal grandparents of Portugal's crown prince held important properties related to their duchy, the less firmly such a toponym references a specific region of England. Cuenca's choices in his Castilian translation dramatically illustrate this risk, for he takes the geographic significance of Northumbria even farther afield from Payn's Portuguese version. Cuenca apparently does not recognize Payn's toponym “Northomberland,” for when he translates it into Castilian, the result is decidedly odd: “Ovo Dios por bien de lo aportar en Morchonverlande e açertó <açerto> a salir” (288: it was pleasing to God that it [the boat] made port in Morchonverlande and refused to leave). “Morchonverlande” is not in early Castilian dictionaries,

58. Barroso reports that he copied Payn's *Livro* at the request of a Portuguese nobleman, Dom Fernando de Castro o Moço (“the younger”). As Ana Sáez-Hidalgo has observed, Fernando de Castro o Moço was “a nobleman, the son of Ceuta's royal governor, as well as the ‘veedor’—supervisor, or tutor—of the Portuguese prince, Fernando”; this information “indicate[s] a certain provenance for the *Confessio Amantis* in Portuguese court circles” (“Gower in Early Modern Spanish Libraries,” in Peck and Yeager, *John Gower: Others and the Self*, 340). See also Yeager, “Gower's Lancastrian Affinity,” for a detailed discussion of this transcription and its implications.

so far as I have been able to ascertain,⁵⁹ and it most likely represents a misreading or mistranscription of Payn's "Northomberland."⁶⁰ It seems most plausible to conclude, then, that for a Castilian audience, "Morchonverlande" would figure an indeterminate or fantastical place rather than a particular region, and ancient kingdom, of northeastern England.⁶¹

In addition to transforming "Northomberland" into a name that is much more difficult to parse as a regional part of England, Cuenca furthermore, and crucially, eliminates two references to Saxon identity and language that Payn retains from Gower's version.⁶² These eliminations work to dissociate all English valences, past and present, from Cuenca's version of Constance's adventures—a profound achievement of the *Confisyón* in comparison to the other four versions of the Constance romance tradition. Gower's two uses of "Saxon" come in the initial description of King Allee of Northumbria as a Saxon (quoted earlier in this chapter), and in Allee's recognition that "Couste" (the pseudonym Constance gives when she returns to Rome) is the Saxon form of "Constance" (Gower 723, 1405). Payn retains the references, describing Allee as "hũu vallente cavallerio saxom, do linhagem e creença dos gentios" (Payn, 288: a valiant Saxon knight, of the lineage and faith of the gentiles/pagans).⁶³ Likewise Payn writes that when Allee learns of the

59. If this is an error, it could have happened either at the time of translation or transcription. As in Portuguese, several Castilian multilingual place names exist for England as a whole, including, in Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, "Ingalaterra" (England), "Britania" (Britain), "Albiõn" (Albion), and "Anglia" (Anglia).

60. My thanks to Ana Sáez-Hidalgo for consulting with me on this question.

61. Robert Payn was an Englishman, and so he was presumably familiar with English toponyms, especially if he was connected in some measure (as the current hypotheses go) with the Lancastrian family and the Portuguese court. It is still only speculation that Cuenca's production of the *Confisyón* might have been connected to the Castilian monarchy, and Clara Pascual-Argente has shown the influence of other Castilian literary contexts upon the *Confisyón*, which raises the possibility that Cuenca's choices may have had as much to do with literary culture in fifteenth-century Castile as with dynastic politics. See Pascual-Argente, "La huella de las *Sumas de historia troyana*."

62. I am not the first to notice the de-emphasis of the English setting in the Iberian versions of the *Constance* narrative. R. Wayne Hamm, writing before the rediscovery of a manuscript of the Portuguese *Livro*, notes the elimination of "Engelond" and that "the term 'Saxon,' twice used in the English story, does not appear in the Castilian" (Hamm, "Critical Evaluation," 93). Though Hamm notes these changes, he makes no attempt to analyze or explain their significance. We also now know that the impetus behind some of these changes was Payn's, while others were, indeed, introduced by Cuenca.

63. An examination and discussion of the extent to which "Saxon" would have registered with Portuguese audiences as the name of an ancient people who invaded and settled

presence of a woman named “Conste” residing in Rome, “Sorrio-se entom hũu pouco el-rei Allee, por bem sabia que Conste em saxom quer dizer Costança em lingoagem romãao” (Payn, 308: Then the king Allee smiled a little to himself, because he knew that Conste in Saxon means Costança in the Roman language). Payn retains Gower’s sense of Northumbria’s language difference and legendary cultural identity. But when Juan de Cuenca translates these two passages, he cuts “saxom,” so that Allee is “un valiente cavallero de creença de los gentiles” (Cuenca, 288: a valiant knight of the faith of the gentiles/pagans). In the later scene, when Allee recognizes “Coste,” he is able to do so “porque bien sabía que Coste enseñava Costança en lenguaje romano” (Cuenca, 308: because he knew well that Coste means Costança in the Roman language). Cuenca performs a linguistic about-face in his translation, insisting—somewhat illogically, upon examination—that Costança’s pseudonym while in her home city of Rome is in fact the Roman version of her name. One would think that a pseudonym conceived along these lines would be next to useless in her home city of Rome. What interests me here, however, is not Cuenca’s narrative illogic, but rather his complete evasion of the insistence, in his immediate sources, that Constance chooses a pseudonym derived from her husband’s native language. Cuenca offers no replacement for “saxom”—he invents no alternative language or identity to assign to Morchonverlande and its king; he simply evades the entire issue of language difference that the text originally sets up. Whether these decisions derive from ignorance or intention, the elisions he introduces have specific and significant consequences, dissociating England entirely from its traditional role in Costança’s story. The adventures she has in Morchonverlande seem not to be associated with England at all in Cuenca’s transformations.

It is possible, in fact, for audiences of Cuenca’s text to assume that Costança never leaves the Mediterranean at all. Without a specific, locatable destination beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, there is no reason for audiences to assume that she travels beyond it. All the tale’s specific and locatable places—

the northern part of Britain, and later became a kind of touchstone in legendary history of “native” English identity (in contrast to the Britons, Normans, etc.), lies beyond my current ability to comment. I therefore register it here as an important question for future investigation. What does strike me, however, is the way that the British insular versions seem to hedge their bets a bit on this question of English identity by using a term that signals a Norman-established county that also registers an ancient Anglo-Saxon kingdom. One could argue that the interchangeability of Northumbria and England throughout Trevel’s version, and metonymic shift to England at the end of Chaucer’s and Gower’s, all signal in various ways the multiplicities making up English identity.

Rome, Barbary, and Iberia—are located along the Mediterranean littoral. In a neighborly comparative act of “reciprocal negation,” and in ironically complementary fashion to the Middle English texts’ marginalization of Iberia, the Iberian texts—most dramatically Cuenca’s—erase England from the political, religious, and geographic structures of the tale’s consolidating conclusion.⁶⁴ To an even greater degree than in Payn’s text, the lack of a closing reference to England in the Castilian *Confisyón del amante*, together with the elision of both references to Saxon identity, impedes the capacity of a toponym like “Morchonverlande” to register as a specific historical place in the Northern Atlantic. Costança’s son, Maurício, has still unified the sovereignty of this strange-sounding Morchonverlande with that of Rome, but the tale ultimately does not point securely (or perhaps at all) to England. Cuenca’s *Confisyón*, therefore, does not invoke the far-reaching North Atlantic and Mediterranean network that the Middle English and Anglo-Norman versions emphasize. All the toponyms that specifically and pointedly register seas and lands beyond the Strait of Gibraltar have been either quietly eliminated or transformed beyond easy recognition in the course of the *Confessio Amantis*’s own geographic and linguistic travels through Iberia and North Africa. And along the way, as Northumbria loses its narrative significance, Barbary takes on increased significance instead, both with regard to Costança’s Iberian adventure and to the tale’s own journeys of transmission, translation, and transcription.

The Middle English word “Barbarie” (Barbary) is wrapped up in complex ways with fantasies about non-Christians, such as the “Saracen,” and so Gower’s use of it partakes of those implications. We recall that in contrast to Chaucer and Trevet, Gower identifies the Muslim land whose sultan seeks marriage with Constance at the tale’s beginning as “Barbarie,” which can specify the northwest Barbary coast of Africa. The precise location of this sultan’s realm, however, is complicated in Gower’s version in two respects. On the one hand, Gower’s Latin gloss at the outset of this episode gives a different toponym.⁶⁵ On the other hand, “Barbarie” can refer, quite generally,

64. Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text*, 44.

65. Gower’s Latin prose summary for the Barbary episode identifies the sultan as the ruler of Persia. The Latin caption reads, in part, “Et narrat exemplum de Constancia Tiberii Rome Imperatoris filia, omnium virtutum famosissima, ob cuius amorem Soldanus tunc Persie, vt eam in vxorem ducere posset, Cristianum se fieri promisit” (*Explanatory Notes to Book 2*, 334–35, note to lines 587ff; And he [the Confessor] narrates an instructive example about Constance, daughter of Tiberius the emperor of Rome, a woman most famous for every virtue, on account of whose love the one who was then sultan of Persia promised to make himself Chris-

to any foreign land, or, giving the term a religious valence, to any Muslim land. That is, it is a particularly unstable toponym, which at once references a single and specific geographic locale and, more nebulously, signals a symbolic or fantasy space grounded solely on difference; in other words, “Barbarie” in this second valence cannot be precisely located on a map: it just lies firmly “elsewhere.” As I argue in chapter 1 via my analysis of Middle English “Spayne” (Spain), one of our field’s primary reference sources for such definitions—the *Middle English Dictionary*—compiles and distills definitions from medieval usage, and thus, with regard to toponyms, implicitly (re)constructs medieval arguments about the world. In this instance, “Barbarie” elucidates both the entangling of historical and fantastic geographies and the entangling of place and identity; Gower’s own usage capitalizes on both entanglements.

For example, if we focus on definition three of the dictionary’s entry for “**barbarie** n.,” we can see that it makes manifest the dual entanglements of place and identity, on the one hand, and of historical and fantastical geographies, on the other: “(a) Barbary, the Saracen north coast of Africa; (b) the Saracen world; Moslem heathendom; (c) a Saracen, perh. specif. a Berber.”⁶⁶ Perhaps the first and simplest point to make is that “Barbarie” refers to a place, as well as naming the people who live there.⁶⁷ This is not terribly

tian). As I mentioned above, it is not unusual to encounter an “apparent mismatch” between Gower’s Middle English poetry and his Latin glosses and summaries, which can introduce dilemmas of interpretation. It is not always obvious, in such situations, which text—Middle English or Latin, poetry or prose, narrative or gloss—ought to be granted interpretive authority. Siân Echard, for instance, has compellingly argued that divergence between Latin prose summary and Middle English narrative undermines the authority of discourse itself. With regard to the question of the sultan’s geographic location and political authority, then, the unreliability of language authority furthers geographic imprecision. Persia pulls the far eastern Mediterranean (which we find in Trevelyan’s and Chaucer’s versions) into play in Gower’s text, as well, just as Barbary, in one of its meanings, pulls us toward the Maghreb in the west. And given Barbary’s geographic indeterminacy in its other meaning, the sultan’s location, finally, hovers ambivalently within the medieval *dar al-Islam* (the realm of Islam), implying, finally and problematically, that all these various specific kingdoms and regions of Muslim rule can be rendered imaginatively equivalent.

66. See entry, “**barbarie** n.,” in *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001); online edition in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. Frances McSparran et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000–2018), accessed April 5, 2021, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>

67. Definition one of “barbarie” encapsulates this confluence of place and people (as well as their language): “(a) A foreign country; **folk of** ~, a foreign nation; (b) foreign speech.” We likewise see the confluence of location and person across definitions one and two; definition

surprising, but the point gains greater significance from the ways that the term also tangles historical and fantastical geographies. Across definition three (a) and (c), the dictionary identifies “barbarie” as the particular and historical part of Africa’s northwestern coastline inhabited by Berbers; yet it simultaneously and dangerously equivalates Barbary to “Saracen” territory and Berbers to “Saracens.” That is, the dictionary can seemingly only make sense of Barbary as a historical place *by means of* the fantasy of the “Saracen.” The tendency of this dictionary entry to understand the historical medieval Muslim world by means of a fantastical “Saracen” identity is not a value-neutral phenomenon; rather it is a cultural rewriting of the medieval historical world, its geography, and its variety of religions and religious adherents, with reductive and harmful fantasies.⁶⁸ Furthermore, these kinds of definitions often toggle, silently and unmarked, between Middle and Modern English vocabularies, depending upon our ability to navigate a transtemporal convergence of language and concept that goes unremarked in the definition itself. We must be aware of the fact that transtemporalities of language are nestled alongside conceptual blurrings that, for the sake of capturing the valences of a medieval term, often reproduce its worldview as definition.⁶⁹

two reads: “A foreigner; a heathen or pagan.” See entry, “**barbarie** n.” *Middle English Dictionary*, accessed June 22, 2020, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>

68. On the politics of using the term “Saracen” in our scholarship, see Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, “The Depoliticized Saracen and Muslim Erasure,” *Literature Compass* 16 (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12548>; on medieval Christian stereotypes and fantasies about Muslims, see especially Akbari, *Idols in the East*. As I note in chapter 2, I became aware of Ramzi Rouighi’s study *Inventing the Berbers: History and Ideology in the Maghrib* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019) as the manuscript of this book went to press. I look forward to integrating his argument that “Berber” is also an invented, fantasy identity into my future work.

69. For instance, with regard to definition three (b) of “barbarie”—“the Saracen world; Moslem heathendom”—though “heathendom” is a Middle English term with an entry of its own in the *MED*, “Moslem” is not; in interesting corollary, “Moslem” has an entry in Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, while “heathendom” does not. There are, of course, all kinds of unspoken assumptions embedded behind the particular phrasing, “Moslem heathendom” that require unpacking, as well. Most urgent among these assumptions is the fact that “Moslem” is not an equivalent term for “Muslim.” Merriam-Webster’s entry, for instance, opines that “Moslem” is a “formerly common but now old-fashioned, increasingly rare, and sometimes offensive variant of Muslim.” With regard to “heathendom,” I would point out that only from an inherently Christian perspective do non-Christians qualify as heathens, and even then, that perspective requires and therefore implies a very particular kind of non-ecumenical Christocentric worldview that cannot be taken to represent standard or orthodox Christian thought of today. “Heathen,” that is, is not simply a descriptor of a difference of religious belief, but contains a value judgment: it is a derogatory term for such a designation,

The inclusion of definition three (b) in the *MED*'s entry for "barbarie"—"the Saracen world; Moslem heathendom"—entangles a precise region of the northwest African coast with Muslim rule throughout the world in general. All Muslim rule, homogeneously and problematically encapsulated by both "Saracen world" and "Moslem heathendom," can apparently be invoked by referring to one specific and concrete part of it, effectively making Barbarie metonymic for the *dar al-Islam* in an interesting parallel to Gower and Chaucer's move with Northumbria and England at the end of their versions. Therefore, when Gower identifies the sultan who wishes to marry Constance as the sultan of "Barbarie," he could mean a single specific Berber kingdom, however fantastically imagined, and he could be signaling a much less concrete religiogeography, whereby "Barbarie" is any Muslim land and all Muslim lands, simultaneously.

Payn takes Gower's indeterminate fantasy space of "Barbarie" and concretizes it in favor of the Northwest African coast. "Berberia" (Barbary), the multilingual place name Payn gives, refers specifically and exclusively to this locale.⁷⁰ "Berberia" in Payn's *Livro* and Cuenca's *Confysión* therefore stabilizes the geographic ambiguities and dispels some of the imaginative fantasies that attend Gower's depiction of the Muslim kingdom.⁷¹ The precision of this reference in the Iberian versions is hardly surprising, given that the nearly eight centuries of Muslim rule in medieval Iberia, across its various permutations, began with an invasion of Berbers and Arabs from the Maghreb in 711. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was also from this region of Northern Africa that subsequent waves of Berber sects of Islam, the Almoravids and the Almohads, entered Iberia and took over political control. The North African Barbary coast therefore represents a particularly potent site of Muslim spiritual and political power in the history of medieval Iberia. By disambiguating "Berberia" in favor of this precise region, Payn and Cuenca effectively situate the narrative's most significant site of Muslim power with a historically significant site of Muslim power with deep con-

implying that all non-Christian believers believe in error. See entry, "Moslem," in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Moslem>

70. Payn cuts the reference to Persia when he adapts the Latin gloss that Gower gives at the outset of the Barbary episode into his Portuguese translation, thereby eliminating that element of geographic instability from the Castilian text as well.

71. Toponyms are often similar across medieval Portuguese and Castilian; Cuenca, translating from Payn's text, also offers "Berberia" (Barbary), which refers to the northwest African coast in medieval Castilian as well.

nections to Iberia. Our manuscript of the *Livro*, as I have mentioned before, was produced in the Northern African fortress city of Ceuta. From there, the manuscript eventually traveled back into Iberia; its circuitous route mimics, though it does not exactly reproduce, Costança's circuitous journey as she, too, navigates the cultural and linguistic borders that she crosses. Transmission and translation history of this romance tradition demonstrates the ongoing importance of geopolitical forces that link Northumberland, England, Iberia, and the Northwestern African coast in the fifteenth century, as well as farther back into the medieval past.

In Conclusion

When Cuenca's *Confysyón* cuts or modifies the English toponyms, "Engelond" and "Northomberland," and eliminates "Saxon" identity and language from Costança's story, England no longer securely lies within the tale's frame of reference; analogously, when Chaucer cuts the toponym "Spaigne" from Gower's and Trevet's versions of Constance's story, he downplays Iberia within his tale's frame of reference. In each case, it is only through neighborly comparative work that we bring these geographic choices to bear upon each other, allowing the pressure of their conjunction to elicit interpretive accountings of geopolitical vision and scope beyond claims of transmission and influence. Much critical ink has been devoted to the drama of religious conversion and its fantasies of erasure across the various versions of this story cluster. Yet there are other fantasies of erasure within Constance's story, as well, which have been largely left unattended. Cuenca's elision and transformation of English references helps to highlight and demand a reciprocal accounting of why the *Constance* story cluster persistently includes the Iberian episode on the fringes of its plot while cutting off its narrative futures. Such comparative work uncovers other kinds of questions and shifts, as well: the wide semantic range and religiocultural stereotypes that Gower's references to "Saracen" and to "Barbarie" invoke, and the ways Payn and Cuenca stabilize the geography and diffuse the one cultural fantasy when they reinterpret and rewrite Gower's narrative, even as others may remain intact. Harkening back to Trevet's vision of Iberian hospitality that Constance herself rejects, Payn and Cuenca insist upon the faithfulness of Iberia in the face of Gower's and Chaucer's claims to the contrary, and reveal that the stereotyping of Iberia as a "heathen" place of pure danger forwards dangerous fantasies. Gower (and to some extent Chaucer) imagines Iberia as a region easy to

dismiss—one whose lack of fellowship appears to justify its exclusion from the world and the rest of the narrative. In other words, the Iberian versions' choices signal the current geopolitics, historical realities, and legendary pasts of Muslim presence in Iberia and North Africa in a way that none of the British versions do. Payn's version is perhaps the most remarkable in this respect, for as he makes visible the links between North Africa and Iberia, he manages also to open the door to the ways that current geopolitics, historical realities, and legendary pasts might be seen to link ancient Northumbria to contemporary Portugal. The circulation and transmission of the tale itself across geographies, languages, and cultures reveals historical and contemporary geopolitical networks that the fictional circulation of Constance around the Mediterranean and North Atlantic imaginatively mimics, but from which it also diverges.

Across this analysis of the *Constance* romance tradition, the attention I have given to Iberia and Iberian texts reveals cunning linguistic repetitions, particularly in Gower's version, that tie Iberia to Northumbria, which itself mimics features of Barbary. The tale, in short, imagines a global network where kingdoms are intimately connected and interactive, even if not always in positive ways. Even when those interactions are violent, brief, or downplayed, their inclusion within the plot emphasizes a Mediterranean networked almost in spite of itself. That is, despite the seemingly preferential treatment that Northumbria receives in the tale's conclusion, the world as these writers imagine it cannot evade the constellations and associations that even a rudderless boat can track.

Whether we are thinking about the internal narrative logic of the tale across its varied versions or the external circulation and transmission of the tale across languages, geographies, and cultural contexts, Iberia equally and crucially signifies the geopolitical networks that Constance and her tale, catalyst for change and adaptation though they have proven to be, have *not* been able to forge. In spite, then, of the tale's resounding resolution of alliance and empire, Iberia elucidates what routes and alliances do not result, precisely because others were being forged instead. Iberia, lying at the geographic site where the North Atlantic and Mediterranean seas are themselves linked, gently reminds us of the routes (symbolic and geographic) by which such alliances have come to be; the politics and geographies that such alliances privilege; and the other possible futures they sacrifice along the way.

Conclusion

In the *Constance* story cluster that I analyzed across chapter 3, Constance's evasions of Iberia on three out of four voyages helps to reveal the politics of choice that pertain to *Imagining Iberia's* larger project. Constance's repeated silent skirting of Iberia and one brief adventure there could be read as analogous to the persistent marginalization of Iberian literary studies within Medieval Studies generally. As I hope I have shown throughout this book, we need the broader networked view that Iberian texts and scholars provide, and *Imagining Iberia's* comparative study of romance helps to show the kinds of insights that can arise from this work. Across the Middle English, Castilian, and Portuguese versions of the *Fierabras*, *Floire and Blancheflor*, and *Constance* romances, we learn that Iberia is unrelentingly a place where the relational, geographic, and ethical stakes of the romance imagination, and of our scholarship about that imagination, become legible.

The critical juxtaposition of disparate texts demands an accounting of each text in light of the other(s)—in light, that is, of the difference that a strategic and deliberate conjunction makes legible. Like neighboring as an ethical relation, neighboring texts issue a call for responsibility to and for representational choices that comparative juxtaposition reveals. *Imagining Iberia* has shown how neighborly comparison of Middle English and medieval Castilian romance unearths the ways that the *Fierabras*, *Floire and Blancheflor*, and *Constance* story clusters leverage Iberia as a rich nexus of interactivity, exchange, and change. Collectively, the romances powerfully reveal Iberia's desirable status as Mediterranean nexus and help to elucidate why Middle English romance returns consistently to Iberia across its various story traditions. All the romances show us, in varied ways, a fantasy of Iberia in the making. Whether they tell violent narratives of conquest and conversion that threaten to erase Iberia's Muslim past in favor of a Christian pres-

ent and future, or whether they center Iberia's Muslim culture and legacy as excellent on its own terms, complicating the fantasy of united and triumphant Christendom, these story clusters collectively emphasize the deep cultural affinities that connect Iberia not only to the larger Mediterranean basin (particularly the Maghreb and Egypt), but also to Europe (particularly Rome, France, and Northumbrian England). Ultimately a contact zone, where complex cultural and geopolitical transactions at once divide and link Christians and Muslims, Europe and Africa, the peninsula and the larger Mediterranean, Iberia signals an intense hybridity that percolates through the romance imagination in various (sometimes ciphered) ways. Romance authors, poets, and compilers position Iberia as a key site to wrestle with the question of Christian or European hegemony; these writers morph the region's significance as narrative and need demands—from war zone to trade nexus, from cultural enclave to seat of geopolitical power, from insular border to wide-reaching network. That is, even romances that seem to carry a unifying or teleological agenda often, in fact, highlight Iberia's ambivalence and complexity in spite of those narrative trajectories.

Imagining Iberia has also revealed the prevalence of a representational strategy whereby the romances present or conceal (historical) geopolitical multiplicities under terminological unities. The Middle English versions of the story clusters I analyze throughout this book, with the sole exception of Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, imagine Iberia under the toponym "Spayne." The various configurations of history, culture, and creed that are possible via this single toponym attest to the fact that the medieval romance imagination of Iberia cannot be encapsulated as any one monolithic unity. Iberia's diversity springs to view precisely through the collective view of these Middle English romances that this book provides. Middle English romance collectively charts a complicated view of Iberia, but at the same time, the unifying impulse behind this single and consistent toponym also carries weight, as the *Middle English Dictionary* definitions problematically exemplify. Meanwhile, the Iberian texts in my study (Castilian and Portuguese) likewise chart myriad geopolitical diversities and complications under a range of unifying descriptive choices. "España," a Castilian counterpart to Middle English "Spayne," dominates these representations, and similarly invokes a variety of geopolitical and cultural circumstances and agendas under a deceptively simple toponym.

The Iberian texts in *Imagining Iberia's* archive are, broadly speaking, more nuanced, more detailed, more permeated by the region's historical realities (and hence complexities) in their conceptualizations of Iberia than their

Middle English neighboring versions, which tend toward simpler fantasies. That said, the neighborly comparative slant I have taken in *Imagining Iberia* reveals how much more complex and nuanced the Middle English representations of Iberia are than we might have guessed, in spite of their distance from the peninsular scene of contact and interactivity. What emerges most clearly within the Middle English romance imagination, perhaps, is the way elite masculine identity—usually chivalric—cuts across creedal and geopolitical markers of identity; affiliation within class-based and cultural mores appears to matter more to interaction and exchange (even when violent) than any other facet of identity in this archive of texts, at least within this genre.

In short, Iberian settings clearly matter to medieval romance, as the complexity of Iberia's history percolates through the genre's imaginative filters. We should take the specificity of this locale seriously by reading for the ways romances conceive Iberia through its specific histories. We will find this rich and varied terrain refracted throughout romance conceptions of Iberia in diverse and significant ways. Across this book, neighborly textual pairings help us to understand Middle English representations of Iberia as more than mere fantasy or displacement for an English imagination that knew nothing of Muslims or Iberia or the Mediterranean, but rather as an imaginative acknowledgment of, and investment in, Iberia as the locus of rich and textured cultural, geopolitical, and economic interactions, as its own romances aptly attest.

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