

Corruption at the Crossing Places: Collaborative translation as Mediterranean Institution

Chris Chism: Roundtable 3

Absract:

The short position paper builds from the work of Belen Bistué's *Collaborative Translation and Multi-version Texts* and from Abdessalam Benabdelali's treatise *Fī l-tarjama* (On Translation), to explore the Mediterranean institution of multi-language translation teams collaborating sequentially or simultaneously between multiple languages (for example, from Persian to Arabic to Hebrew and thence to Castilian and finally to Latin) and sometimes also from oral forms in one language into written forms of another. Such translational collaborations developed the hands-on technés to move texts quickly across linguistic borders during both the C8-11 Abbasid and the C12-13 Mediterranean-Latin translation movements. Such multiply translated texts modeled the hybridities of their transculturations even when they bore a single end-translator's name (such as Gerald of Cremona or Peter the Venerable). As Middle Period texts were carried across medieval borders, they resulted in multiple working translations side by side. Bistué argues that the "corruptingly" intransigent hybridities – cultural and confessional as well as dialectical resulting from such pragmatic collaborations, were rejected by early modern translation theorists that placed a single, bilingual master-translator at the crossing place, intensifying the translation/betrayal, original/copy model for translation that was to bedevil translation theory and practice for the next five centuries. Case instance will explore one multiply translated text: "The Story of the Scholarly Maiden, Tawaddud/Tudur/Teodor" as represented by a copy of a C13 Arabic Iberian manuscript in Gayangos 71 c75, and the more recent scholarly collaborations that have been striving to unpack it. The argument is that translation theory and practice is in need of learning to "talk Mediterranean" once more.

Bio/Intro:

Chris Chism was trained as a medievalist within an English department and has since converted to Mediterranean studies, Arabic literature, and the writings of larger Islamicate worlds. Teaching at UCLA since 2009, after holding jobs at Rutgers and Allegheny College, she is perpetually learning and relearning Arabic, while exploring the contact zones between medieval European and Islamicate cultures. Her second book, *Mortal Friends*, on the social politics of friendship in late medieval romance, is forthcoming from University of Pennsylvania press. She is revising her third book: *Romancing Islam: The Lives and Afterlives of Saladin*, which was fostered by the Mediterranean Seminar, for which she is forever grateful. She publishes and teaches Arabic and European travel narratives, frame tale narratives, and contemporary Islamic spoken-word poetry.