

My goals while at the NEH Summer Institute in Barcelona were to theoretically and methodologically ground my work on medieval Iberia in the broader context of the Mediterranean. I was particularly interested in learning how scholars in related fields (history, religion, gender studies, race and ethnics studies, etc.) are working with the Mediterranean. Broadly speaking, I was looking to challenge my own ideas and presuppositions about Iberia and the Mediterranean and having my ideas challenged and honed by leading scholars in the field. This was all achieved. More specifically, I continued or began working on two projects: a book chapter and a syllabus for an advanced Mediterranean course.

Project I. Marian Maritime Miracles and Alfonso X's Imagined Mediterranean Empire: Shipwrecks, Storms and Pirates in the *Cantigas de Santa María*

I was at first interested in archival information concerning Catalan merchant ships in the Strait of Gibraltar around the time Alfonso X built El Puerto de Santa María (1264-1284). While I was unable to find the particular sources I hoped to find, informal and formal conversations with colleagues, lectures and workshops gave me a new perspective on the work I was already doing. I began to see the text in new ways. The following were some of my conclusions which I incorporated into my book chapter on Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María*.

The *Cantigas de Santa María* offer a unique and complex perspective of how Alfonso imagined the limits of his empire. Combined with its frankness about territorial claims, persistently echoing the notion of *grande per mar e per terra*, and a willingness to both rescue sinners from, and judge men by, the perils of the sea, the *Cantigas* conveys the image of “a king engaged in the consolidation of his society” and the expansion of his empire, “by using symbolic resources and the language of integration.” The reader is reminded that the *Cantigas* is not a text which simply promotes the importance of praising of the Virgin for her miracles, in the hope that he too, sustained by faith, may obtain similar benefit from them. Though it is not less than this, it is certainly more. And though one may describe as such the broader corpus of medieval Marian miracles, to this, the *Cantigas* adds the importance of geography and empire. The reader perceives a link between the Virgin's intercessory power and the space over which it is made manifest. And once within that space, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jew, all are free to trust in the providence of the divine for their safety and the restoration—or maintaining—of order. That is, by association, Alfonso's reign extends in relation to the reach of the Virgin's intercessory power, and thus the borders of his imagined empire are limited only by the extent to which she has been given authority to govern and protect. In geographic terms, the Marian maritime miracles suggest that no sea (Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Strait) is beyond the limits of either the Virgin's heavenly, or Alfonso's terrestrial, control. The reader is told explicitly that these seas, those surrounding Santa Maria do Porto and the Iberian empire, are *her* domain. Consequently, the *Cantigas* appears to be imagined as part of a larger and more broadly conceived economic and religio-political project of Alfonsine imperial expansion. Moreover, and contrary to critical notions of the shipwreck text as a counter-historical narrative of empire, as articulated by Josiah Blackmore, I suggest that scenes of shipwreck, piracy and stormy seas in the *Cantigas* are in fact carefully constructed narratives used to demonstrate—by way of divine intercession—the authority and influence of Alfonso's empire, in geographic (nautical) and spiritual terms. That is, the authors and illuminators of the *Cantigas de Santa María* of Alfonso X employ the Marian maritime miracle not only to demonstrate the possibility of divine

mediation, but how as royal troubadour and champion of the Queen of Heaven, the King of Castilla y León views himself (is viewed) as an indispensable participant to her intercessory and redemptive activities, and thus shares in her restorative power—at least in geo-political and economic terms. Consequently, I argue that what falls within the reach of the Virgin's miraculous influence emerges as a delimitation of the political authority and geographic (maritime) boundaries of an imagined Alfonsine Empire.

Project II. Tri-Cultural Spain (Syllabus)

From a pedagogical perspective, discussions and sharing of syllabi was one of the most constructive and helpful components of the NEH Summer Institute. Colleagues freely shared ideas and resources, and were instrumental in the creation of the course I am currently teaching. The greatest difficulty, however, was finding primary sources in Spanish translation, given I teach in a Spanish department. My time spent in local Barcelona libraries and scouring the shelves of countless bookstores and museum shops produced a trove of primary sources I would have never been able to find at home or even on the internet. Coupled with the conversations from scholars familiar with the source languages of my research and teaching (Arabic, Hebrew, Castilian and Hebrew), I was able to construct a syllabus that I am sure to be using and editing for years to come. The following is an excerpt from the course description in Spanish.

¿Por qué se considera el periodo andalusí una “época dorada” de la civilización islámica? ¿Cómo fue moldeada la identidad ibérica por este periodo de control musulmán? Y, por consiguiente, ¿cómo medió la manera en la cual los habitantes de la Península enfrentaban e interactuaban con las varias comunidades confesionales, lingüísticas y étnicas? Empezando con el derrocamiento de los Omeya damascos en 750 CE y culminando en la caída de la Granada musulmana en 1492 y sus repercusiones, examinaremos las tres culturas dominantes de la Península ibérica: la musulmana, la cristiana y la judía, para problematizar el concepto crítico de *convivencia*. A través del semestre, consideraremos si el periodo andalusí o fue una época de tolerancia o fue un tiempo de violencia. Mejor, problematizaremos la construcción de ese binario falso, subrayando el concepto de contacto e intercambio. Así entramos en conversación con la crítica más reciente en el campo de estudios hispanomedievales (Nirenberg, Cohen, Catlos, Brann, Decter, Wacks). Para tal investigación, las lecturas incluyen textos históricos (la *Primera Crónica General* de Alfonso X, la *Crónica anónima de los reyes de Taifa*, los *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* de Abraham bar Selomoh de Tortutiel y Ibn Daud, y *Futuh al-Andalus* de Ibn Abd al-Hakm), religiosos (*Qur'an*, *Torah*, *Evangelio*), filosóficos (*Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* por Ibn Tufayl) y literarios de Iberia y el Norte de África medieval y pre-moderno (el Romancero, “Pacto de ‘Umar”, *Collar de la paloma* de Ibn Hazm,, la poesía de Wallāda bent al-Mustakfi e Ibn Zaydun, *Tahkemoni* de Judah al-Harizi, *Calila e Dimna*, las *Cantigas de Santa María*, la novela *Abencerraje* y *Don Quijote de la Mancha* por Miguel de Cervantes). Además, leeremos historiografías, narrativas del viaje, cantos de vino/jardines/amor, documentos inquisicionales, tratados teológicos y poesía épica para contextualizar y matizar la complejidad de al-Andalus, lo que frecuentemente se conoce como la España de las tres culturas. Además, investigaremos la producción cultural ibérica medieval y pre-moderna como *en* y *del* Mediterráneo, considerando la manera en que la Península ibérica como un espacio de multiplicidad cultural, lingüística y confesional es emblemática de la complejidad más amplia del Mediterráneo, un espacio donde la diferencia y el cambio se ponen en constante negociación.