Cultural traffic in the medieval Romance world

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Abstract

This article introduces the issue by discussing ‘Romance Studies’ as an ideological construct and suggesting ways in which this might inform our understanding of cultural exchanges in the parts of medieval Europe where Romance languages were spoken. Through an examination of programmatic inaugural articles in two major academic journals in the field (Romania, established in 1872, and Cultura Neolatina, published in 1941), the authors show that any idea of a ‘Romance world’, of its value and of its boundaries (both internal and external) is contingent on historical and ideological factors, which in turn means that modern ideas about what may have constituted the ‘Romance world’ in the past are often inflected by modern political, cultural and ideological concerns. A further example is the ‘discovery’ of the kharjās of medieval Iberia in 1949.

Keywords: Europe; Culture; Germany and Germanic Studies; kharjās; Romance Philology; Romance Studies

Like so many other modern academic subjects, the discipline to which this journal is dedicated – Romance Studies – has its institutional beginnings in the nineteenth century. Romance Studies as an ideological formation, however, is a more complex historical product, and its roots reach down through many layers of history. Nineteenth-century scholars’ attempts to define what we now call ‘Romance Studies’, and lend it some cultural capital within their new institutional framework of university courses and academic journals, are part of a much longer historical discussion about the relation between culture and power. Their larger project and incidental ideas, which in turn means that modern ideas about what may have constituted the ‘Romance world’ in the past are often inflected by modern political, cultural and ideological concerns. A further example is the ‘discovery’ of the kharjās of medieval Iberia in 1949.

The term ‘Romance Studies’ has never, of course, provided the single dominant mode of organizing and studying a particular literary field. Since its institutional inception, it has coexisted in an uneasy relationship with the study of European national literatures, which have been aligned within the two extended linguistic families of Germanic and Romance. The precise relationship between the national and supranational has not always – indeed seldom? – been subject to scrutiny, which means that Romance Studies has as often as not been a vague set of tacit presuppositions, rather than a coherent project. In some times and places it can be an
administrative flag of convenience; in others, it appears to possess a more explicit rationale. In the United Kingdom, where the study of comparative literature has always come second to that of national literary traditions, there are no university departments of Romance Languages. Even in the United States, where such departments are fairly common, and where comparative literature has a solid institutional base, the constituent literatures of Romance Language departments seldom intersect at a programmatic level, having been brought together in an often tense marriage of convenience largely to satisfy the demands of cash-strapped Deans. In continental Europe, broad expertise in what is often called Romance Philology is still a highly prized commodity, and shapes the institutional structure of various universities. But in spite of the term's obvious lure, it is an open question whether it is more than a nineteenth-century residue, of much practical interest to those working outside Medieval Studies. Indeed, the present volume appears at a time when the institutional sponsor of this journal — the Institute of Romance Studies — is being conflated with the Institute of Germanic Studies, a historical irony that will become more apparent in the pages that follow. So whatever the motives behind this move (brought about by fiscal demands, or in the spirit of the 'new Europe', or as the final nail in the coffin of an archaic discipline), it is worth pausing to reflect upon some of the historical meanings of Romance Studies. And to do this, one turns, inevitably, to the history of the discipline with which it has been inextricably linked: medievalism.

What follows does not claim to be a comprehensive treatment. We have selected a few key moments when the scope and objectives of Romance Studies have been set out in (more or less) explicit fashion, in order to lay bare some of the ideological forces that shaped the field at particular historical junctures, and to show how the meaning and reach of Romance Studies depend heavily upon specific local factors. But the pressure of the contingent does not mean that we cannot trace larger inherited discourses at work, and that the thinking about Romance Studies has been a mere series of fragments, characterized by discontinuity and rupture, in which the discipline is reinvented at every moment. In this regard, lessons could be learned from Edward Said's study of 'Orientalism', which shows how one academic discourse, in spite of its many different emphases and particularities, rationalizes a coherent long-term political project (Said 2003). The discourses entailed in Romance Studies were not, in their primary senses, forged through the colonial engagement with the East (however, nor are they entirely separate, and the ideological connections between Romance Studies and Orientalism have yet to be fully acknowledged, which is a point to which we return briefly below). As a discipline, Romance Studies evolved in a struggle to define the boundaries between two very slippery concepts, 'Europe' and 'Culture'.

To explore these problems, we start with the very first issue of one of the founding academic journals of Romance Studies, Romania, which was inaugurated in 1872, and which to this day remains one of the principle establishment journals within medieval Romance Studies. The first issue opens with an article entitled 'Romani, Romania, lingua romana, romancium' written by one of the dominant figures of nineteenth-century Medieval Studies in France, Gaston Paris. The subtitle to be found on the title page of every issue of Romania states that it is a 'Recueil Trimestriel
consacré à l’étude des langues et des littératures romanes’ [‘Thrice-yearly miscellany devoted to the study of Romance languages and literatures’] (or more recently a ‘Revue trimestrielle consacrée à l’étude des langues et des littératures romanes’ [‘Thrice-yearly journal devoted to the study of Romance languages and literatures’]). However, it in fact focuses exclusively on medieval languages and literatures, which implicitly aligns the very idea of Romania (and by extension what we today call Romance Studies, or in some contexts Romance Philology) first and foremost with Medieval Studies, and then the Middle Ages with the glory of Rome. Paris states on the first page of his article that its purpose is to ‘justifier […] le titre que nous avons donné à ce recueil’ (Paris 1872: 1) [‘justify (…) the title we have given to this miscellany’]. That he should feel the need to do so is in itself revealing; indeed he later concedes, if only by implication, that the term ‘Romania’ was never widely used in the Classical period or indeed in the Middle Ages. Why should Paris be so keen to claim the idea of Romania for his journal? And what was at stake?

Paris’s article opens with a discussion of the use of the term ‘Romani’ in classical sources. Beyond its primary meaning as an adjective used in relation to Rome, it quickly acquires its main value — we learn in a first section — in opposition to ‘Barbari’ and ‘Germani’ (Paris 1872: 3–7). The term was to retain this value well up to — and possibly beyond — the Carolingian period with the consequence that ‘les habitants de l’empire romain, quelle qu’eût été leur nationalité primitive, se désignaient, particulièrement par opposition aux étrangers et surtout aux Allemands, par le nom de Romani’ (12) [‘the inhabitants of the Roman empire, whatever their original nationality, would use the noun Romani to identify themselves, particularly to distinguish themselves from foreigners and above all from Germans’].

A second section of Paris’s article turns to the use of the term ‘Romania’ (12–22). In a move that is all too typical of philologists deprived of evidence from the period in which they hope to find it, Paris confidently locates the origin of the term in oral rather than written culture, revealing thereby that there is no classical evidence for the idea of Romania: ‘Ce nom [Romania] était populaire et n’avait pas droit d’entrée dans le style classique; aussi l’époque où il nous apparaît pour la première fois est-elle évidemment bien postérieure à celle où il dut se former’ (13) [‘This noun (Romania) was popular in origin and therefore had no place in classical Latin; thus the period in which it appears for the first time in the written record is obviously much later than the period in which it must first have been used’]. Tellingly, the term ‘Romania’ is from its earliest usage in the fifth century a ‘réflexion mélancolique’, as Paris puts it, in other words a mark of an attempt to recapture something that has already been lost. Although Paris concludes his article by insisting on the new journal’s complete devotion to science and to the point de vue purement scientifique [a purely scientific point of view], declaring that ‘les faits seuls parleront’ [‘the facts alone will speak’] in its pages (22), we can see here that the very idea of Romania in fact works retroactively from the outset in seeking to impose a myth of origins and of originary unity on a past that might not itself necessarily have identified with such an idea or ideal.

Of course, this is a medieval as much as a nineteenth-century impulse and there are many instances of medieval writers seeking to exploit the motif of translatio studii et
imperii in order to draw on the cultural capital of a (supposed) Latinate-Roman tradition. But Paris is not simply seeking to align his object of study with Romania; increasingly, as his article moves towards its conclusion, his own contemporary culture and scholarship are implicitly subsumed to the idea of Romania. More than this, Romania becomes the terrain on which the very notion of Culture itself is defined and defended. Paris claimed that where a Romance language comes into contact with another language (especially a Germanic language), the Romance language will always get the upper hand (a questionable assertion). Bizarrely giving ‘La France de Louis XIV’ as an example (19), he cites the rational qualities of Romance languages (especially French) and their association with Latinate and Christian culture, musing that Romance languages demand less effort from the speech organs and from the brain than other (i.e. Germanic) languages. At this juncture of his argument, therefore, Romance appears to be the product of Nature and Reason in equal measure. This balance is particularly interesting in view of the evolution of the often conflicting concepts ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’, for at the heart of these terms there was an unresolved tension between Nature and Reason. However, in spite of the appeal to Nature, Paris’s principal emphasis is on Culture as the product of rational will rather than as the reflex of a ‘naturally’ superior language. Reproducing in his ‘scientific, rational’ methods the very idea of Culture itself, he displays his concern for les faits which leads him then to ask:

La Romania forme-t-elle vraiment un domaine intellectuel et moral, ou n’est-elle pas constituée que par l’origine commune des langues romanes? En d’autres termes, existe-t-il entre les peuples qui parlent aujourd’hui des dialectes latins des liens réels, autres que ceux de l’unité de langage, lesquels peuvent en somme être considérés comme purement fortuits et sont actuellement fort relâchés? (20)

[Does Romania constitute a genuine intellectual and cultural unity or does it not rather stem entirely from the common origin of Romance languages? In other words, are there real links between the various peoples who today speak Latinate languages, other than shared linguistic traits, which can in the end be considered purely fortuitous and these days extremely loose?]

In order to answer this question, Paris returns to the opposition on which he had previously insisted between Romania and Barbarians/Germans. Whereas ‘les deux grandes nations des Germains et des Slaves’ ['the two great nations of the Germans and Slavs'] have an identity (Paris asserts) that is grounded exclusively in Nature, namely race and blood ties, Romania, despite the multiplicity of races and peoples it encompasses, is an historical formation, grounded in ‘une sympathie raisonnée’ ['a rational empathy'] and ‘une action commune’ ['common activities'] (21). The value judgement here is quickly spelt out:

Le principe des nationalités fondées sur l’unité de race, trop facilement accepté même chez nous, n’a point eu jusqu’ici de fort heureuses conséquences. À ce principe, qui ne repose que sur une base physiologique, s’oppose heureusement celui qui fonde l’existence et l’indépendence des peuples sur l’histoire, la communauté des intérêts et la participation à une même culture. (21; our emphasis)
In the final lines of this inaugural article, Paris’s vision of Culture as the expression of rational will becomes positively utopian, with distinct echoes of Vico and the Enlightenment. What sets Romania apart is ‘la tendance vers une civilisation commune, équitable et éclairée’ [‘a tendency to create a shared, equitable and enlightened civilization’], while we learn that ‘la fraternité des diverses nations romanes est sensible dans l’histoire de leurs littératures autant que dans celle de leurs langues’ [‘the fraternity of the various nations that make up “Romania” is discernible in their literary history as much as in the history of their languages’]. And if the individuality of each nation (now explicitly designated as Italy, ‘Gaule’ and Spain) is clearly marked, ‘le sentiment de communauté […] doit trouver une réviviscence durable dans l’étude des langues et des littératures romanes à laquelle nous consacrons ce recueil’ [‘the feeling of community (…) must be permanently resuscitated through the type of study of Romance languages and literatures to which we dedicate this miscellany’] (22). Once again, one notes the interconnection between the political and the cultural, as Paris represents his discipline as a dynamic means of recovering and reproducing a sense of community. Medievalists working on Romance languages will thus lead the way in building a new (anti-German) Europe, which will be characterized by its shared, equitable and enlightened culture.

Gaston Paris’s fascinating text is as interesting for what it does not say as for what it says. His implied history of the shared benevolent culture of Romania might have come as some surprise to people living in thirteenth-century Occitania as the region suffered at the hands of the Northern French during and after the Albigensian crusade. And nor was the idea of a common culture probably at the forefront of the minds of the inhabitants of the numerous Italian cities that suffered the murderous consequences of the Franco-Spanish wars in the early sixteenth century. Similarly, speakers of Occitan, Galician and Catalan (to name but a few languages) might have been taken aback at the identification of just three ‘nations’ and national languages within Romania. But most strikingly of all, Paris makes no mention at all of the very recent Franco-Prussian war (1870–71), which had of course come to the very gates of the French capital where he worked and led to France giving up Alsace to the newly unified Germany. Set in this context, the contrast between the purely physiological and racial basis for any idea of ‘Germany’ and the richer, more rational resonance of Culture invoked by the idea of Romania takes on special poignancy, particularly when it is considered that Paris himself had found the Franco-Prussian war so very traumatic, having spent his own formative years learning his Romance philology at the feet of German masters in German universities. It is now well documented and well understood that the development of Medieval and Romance Studies in France was structured by Franco-Prussian relations and sometimes by the hostility towards
Germany of notable individuals (such as Joseph Bédier in the next generation), throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and indeed much of the twentieth. This apparently wilful silence concerning the recent war and his own educational debt to Germany could be explained on various levels: the inability to resolve the contradiction between his intellectual and political circumstances, or perhaps a more blatant – almost Oedipal – desire to suppress his intellectual origins and outdo his masters, in a burst of nationalist pride. But the silence also reminds us of something fundamental about the developing discourse of literary study. Although, as we have seen, his vision of Romance Studies is a political one (in the broadest sense of the term), scholarly argument should never appear to be motivated politically (in the narrow sense): transcendental values and beliefs rather than local or personal agendas should govern literary ‘science’. And there is another, perhaps more intriguing silence. In the table of contents (510) it is specified that Paris’s inaugural article in the first issue of Romania is a ‘1er art.’ and it concludes with the words ‘À suivre’ [‘to be continued’]. However, the promised continuation of this article apparently never appeared (at least not in Romania). This in itself is not particularly unusual: in its early years Romania often reads like the intellectual journal of the editors (Gaston Paris and Paul Meyer) and their close associates and friends. They chart, sometimes in little more than note form, what they had been working on in the preceding months, report on recent visits to libraries in France and abroad, and detail their discoveries. They frequently changed track and unfinished multi-part articles are not unique. In these early issues, the journal evokes the excitement of discovery experienced by the early Renaissance humanists in their quest to recuperate the lost classical legacy, and in the process to create a new age of culture and reason, purged of barbarity. Paris may simply have lost interest, or alternatively, since the journal became so well established so quickly, the need to justify the title may not have seemed so urgent. But the lack of a sequel neatly symbolizes the impossibility of defining Romania and of definitively circumscribing the academic and ideological boundaries of the subject. Paris’s missing sequel evokes the illusory prospect of a coherent cultural identity that can never be fully realized, only postponed.

The ideological underpinning of Romance Studies has been different in different university traditions, but that Romance Studies is an ideological formation remains a constant. One further example from the past will suffice, and again, since the parameters of academic disciplines as defined by journals are often highly significant and influential, we turn to another inaugural article in a new academic journal, in this case Cultura Neolatina, the title page of which identifies it as the Bolletino dell’Istituto di Filologia Romanza della R. Università di Roma, first published in 1941. It is surely no coincidence that, like Romania, this new journal vindicates the legacy of Rome at a time of crisis and confrontation with Germany. However, even though, as we shall see, the introductions to both journals share the same fundamental ideological moves and dilemmas, a comparison of the titles reveals a significant shift in emphasis. For Paris, the term ‘Romania’ evokes a geopolitical space even though in the course of his article these linguistic and territorial boundaries were subordinated to those formed by the shared values of a common culture. The fact that France, of course, should be
at its centre recognizes the fact that there could be different (and unequal) ‘cultures’ within Culture. Place is never entirely divorced from cultural value. A similar tension runs through the first issue of the new journal *Cultura Neolatina*: for although the title suggests that its brief is to study a transnational set of practices and values common to a variety of national cultures, this ‘common pursuit’ is, in the hands of the editor, Giulio Bertoni, harnessed to a distinctly nationalist endeavour and tradition.

The key words in the first two pages of Bertoni’s inaugural article, which is simply entitled ‘L’‘Istituto di Filologia Romanza’ di Roma’ are *latinità*, *Roma* and *civilità neolatina* (Bertoni 1941: 5–6). ‘Romania’ is used only once in Bertoni’s article (6), but to designate the country, not Gaston Paris’s retroactive and prospective ideal. Any idea of an overarching community of speakers of different Romance languages is subordinated to the derivation of all Romance cultures from Latin and from Rome: ‘Fra tutti i miracoli che Roma ha compiuto, questo [la civilità neolatina] è forse il maggiore’ (6) ['among all the miracles Rome produced, perhaps this is the greatest']. As is so very often the case, ‘Roma’ here of course signifies synecdochally the Roman Empire and classical Roman civilization, but it cannot be coincidental that it is also the home of the Institute that was founding the new journal. Without mentioning at this stage any French antecedents (such as Gaston Paris or Paul Meyer, the founding editors of *Romania*), Bertoni attributes the origin of the study of *latino volgare*, o *preromanzo* and of *Filologia romanza o neolatina* to an Italian enlightenment scholar (dal Muratori) and ‘Frederico’ – an Italianized Friedrich – Diez (one of Paris’s German teachers). He goes on to praise in a torrent of military and religious metaphors their eroismo, abnegazione, sacrificio and umiltà [heroism, abnegation, sacrifice and humility] as they experienced ‘gli sconforti delle sconfitte e gli esaltamenti delle vittorie’ (6) ['the discouragement of defeat and the exaltation of victory'], and promising to continue their work in the new Institute.

For Bertoni, ‘la storia di un popolo o della sua civiltà o del suo progresso spirituale, è in realtà la storia della sua lingua’ (7) ['the history of a people or of its civilization or of its spiritual progress is in reality the history of its language'], and this leads him to subordinate other humanistic disciplines (specifically history, literary studies and philosophy) to philology, since ‘l’oggetto della filologia è una realtà che bisogna conquistare come verità ricostruita dalla esperienza’ (13) ['the object of philology is a reality which must be conquered as a truth reconstructed from experience']. Philology is an architectonic science, as it was for the great humanists of the Italian Renaissance, a legacy that is rendered explicit in his claim that this discipline is a ‘concezione essenzialmente e fondamentalmente italiana’ (13) ['an idea that is fundamentally and essentially Italian']. Though it is time-honoured, it is far from being a parochially national or decadent discipline, since it has been revitalized by engagement with other European currents of thought: ‘nutrita e sostanziata del grande contributo del pensiero filologico europeo’ (13) ['nurtured and substantiated by the great contribution of European philological thought']. Bertoni concludes by reasserting Italian intellectual hegemony, saying that the new Institute will ensure that Italy is second to none in the discipline of *Filologia Romanza*. The underlying competitiveness of Bertoni’s approach, together with the language of ascetic heroism, lends an added dimension to his idea.
(quoted above) that the object of philology ‘è una realtà che bisogna conquistare’. He understands philological practice as a form of conquest, just as earlier Renaissance humanists, like Lorenzo Valla and the Spaniard Antonio de Nebrija claimed that the proper study of language was the companion to empire.3

Bertoni’s nationalistic agenda is of course barely concealed. Whereas Paris, writing in a France reeling from German aggression, sought to present Romania as a coalition of allies (for which read France’s putative allies) opposed to German military and cultural might, for Bertoni what is of greater interest is ‘la storia di un popolo’ and the pre-eminence of Rome and neo-Latin (i.e. therefore for Bertoni Italian) culture in the constitution of the discipline of Romance Philology. His words carry particular weight since the unification of Italy as a nation was still viewed as comparatively recent in 1941 and even as controversial: the idea that Italians constituted ‘un popolo’, and that Italian was ‘one language’ was still politically a highly charged one, particularly in the context of Fascist Italy at the beginning of the Second World War (which at no point is mentioned). No hostility to Germany or to German scholarship is articulated here, on the contrary; and it would appear to be French and Spanish scholarship that is sidelined in Bertoni’s account of the discipline.

The examples on which we have chosen to dwell highlight how discussions of Romance Studies are fraught with a tension between local and transcendental values, and between national and transnational identities. This tension comes to the fore, naturally enough, in times of crisis, but it has always underpinned attempts to conceptualize Europe itself.4 Needless to say, many other examples could be adduced and explored. Bertoni’s manifesto could be compared to the brief but profoundly moving preface to Ernst Robert Curtius’s seminal European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, the German original of which was first published in 1948. This book, Curtius writes, ‘is not the product of purely scholarly interests’, but is one which ‘grew out of a concern for the preservation of Western culture’, threatened by the ‘German catastrophe’ of the ‘barbarization of education’, ‘nationalistic frenzy’, the ‘Nazi regime’ and two world wars. Curtius’s hopes for balanced stability at the political and cultural level also find their expression in philological practice: ‘The historical disciplines will progress wherever specialization and contemplation of the whole are combined and interpenetrate. The two require each other and stand in a complementary relation. Specialization without universalism is blind. Universalism without specialization is inane’ (Curtius 1953: vii-ix).

Also from the late 1940s we could have taken another defining moment in the history of Romance Studies: the ‘discovery’ of the Romance kharjas in 1949 by Samuel Stern. These fragments of oral women’s love song, deployed as the concluding refrain to the exquisitely refined muwashshah of the Muslim and Jewish court poets of medieval Al-Andalus, provoked a storm of controversy over the origins of the Romance lyric. In one of the major early interventions in the debate, the great Spanish poet and critic Dámaso Alonso argued that these songs broke inherited models of Romance Studies: first, by proving the historical priority of Iberian over other European lyric traditions, and then by (apparently) shifting Iberian vernacular culture out of the orbit of the Latin Middle Ages. The poetic collaboration of
Christians, Jews and Muslims provoked an impassioned and utopian response: ‘Tres razas, tres literaturas colaboran. Extraña simbiosis […] Cristianos, moros y judíos juntos bajo el sol de Andalucía: ¿Qué lejos estamos de todo “medio-latinismo” o “liturgismo”?’ (Alonso 1949: 346) [‘Three races, three literatures collaborate. A strange symbiosis (…) Christians, Moors and Jews together under the Andalusian sun. How distant we are from all that talk of a “Latinate” or “liturgical” Middle Ages!’]. But Alonso could not in fact break free from inherited models. Though he casts to one side the Latinate Middle Ages, he remains safely ensconced within ‘Western European’ vernacular paradigms. He designates the Hebrew poems which incorporated the women’s love songs allegedly composed in the Romance dialect of mozarabic (and their linguistic status is contentious even today) as little more than ‘frascos de alcohol’ [‘flasks of alcohol’] or as an ‘engaste para una joya’ (346) [‘a setting for a jewel’], of interest only as the inanimate transmitters of the truly vital poetic culture. This move is symptomatic of an approach that would push Muslim and Hebrew culture to the margins of an a priori ‘European’ culture. Within ‘Spanish’ Studies, the kharjas have been read on the vast majority of occasions quite separately from their Arabic and Hebrew context, a practice that prevents us from exploring the real scope and limits of cultural exchange within the Andalusian world, and reinforces rigid notions of European identity. After all, as Anthony Pagden has pointed out in a suggestive gloss on the myth of Europa, the Asian nymph abducted by Zeus, the origins of the term Europe lie in rape and the crossing of borders: ‘Thus an abducted Asian woman gave Europe her name; a vagrant Asian exile [Aeneas] gave Europe its political and finally its cultural identity; and an Asian prophet [Jesus] gave Europe its religion’ (Pagden 2002b: 35).

In short, the present special issue of the Journal of Romance Studies devoted to ‘Cultural traffic in the medieval Romance world’ takes as its starting point that the notions of ‘Romance Studies’ and ‘the Romance world’ are not value-neutral and require in themselves interrogation and exploration. Because modern ideas of ‘Romance Studies’ have their root in Medieval Studies, or in related disciplines such as ‘Romance Philology’ (largely practised by medievalists and possibly something of a mystery to modernist scholars working in Romance languages), the ‘medieval Romance world’ seems like a good place to begin. Language and culture clearly did ideological work in the Middle Ages as they did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as they do today, but not necessarily the same work. Where contingent modern ideologies overlay and underpin modern scholarship in disciplines that themselves are ideological constructs, it is perhaps as well to seek to be aware of this in order better to understand the past.

Gaston Paris paints a picture of a culturally united Romania, and even though he may have been less clear about its precise territorial borders, he defines ‘Romania’ itself first and foremost against a ‘Barbarian’ united Germany, and supposed cultural conflict or relations between Romance and Germanic cultures dominated some branches of Medieval Studies, particularly in France and Germany, from the 1870s through to World War II. However, although this rivalry between French and Germanic culture was undoubtedly important, it should not be overstated, either in terms of philological
practice (Paris himself based his reform of French philology upon German models), or at the political level (one only has to think of the scope and history of the Holy Roman Empire). The articles in this volume show that interactions with other cultural Others – Arabic and Anglo-Saxon, for instance, all only mentioned in passing by Paris – were equally crucial in constituting ‘Romance’ identities and also that Romance languages could play a role in constituting identities outside ‘Romania’.

Giulio Bertoni’s discourse is shot through with the ideology of the mid-twentieth-century nation state and he looks back to the Middle Ages in order to begin la storia di un popolo. But to what extent does mapping modern nation states such as France, Spain and Italy in particular make sense of the complex cultural configurations in and with which people lived at the time? This question is the basic premise of each of the articles collected in this volume, but it is particularly pertinent to Gina Psaki, who explores the border zones between French and Italian literary traditions, and to Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Nicholas Watson who do the same for French and English. Their contributions do not assume that the boundaries around and between cultural identities grounded in Romance languages, boundaries that have been imposed by modern academic discourses, necessarily pertained in the same form, if at all, in the Middle Ages. Indeed, we have proposed and used the notion of ‘cultural traffic’ to underline the dynamic, mobile and fluid nature of cultural exchanges between areas where different Romance languages were spoken in the Middle Ages and also between what we now construct as ‘Romance’ and ‘other’ cultures. The contributions by Sizen Yiacoup and Bill Burgwinkle tackle not only the interpenetration of Muslim and Christian worlds, but also how those exchanges become part of cultural memory, and trouble easy distinctions between East and West. Cultural traffic, therefore, also trades, so to speak, across time. Nonetheless, all contributors argue that these exchanges need to be viewed in the specificity of their historical, ideological and material context. They show that a Romance language does not necessarily have the same value on different borders of Romania, for example in Spain, Sicily or Britain; similarly, the interaction between Anglo-Norman and English does not have the same value as the interaction between French and Italian, or Occitan and Arabic, or Spanish and Arabic.

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Notes
1. On the development of the concept ‘culture’, and its uneasy relationship to the term ‘civilization’, there is an ample bibliography. For a useful synopsis, with special reference to nineteenth-century developments, see Williams (1977: 11–20) and Eagleton (2000).
2. For more details on Paris's nationalism, his professed admiration for German philology, and his respect for dispassionate science, see Nichols (1996), Hult (1996) and Graham (1996).
3. The connection between language and empire was developed by Lorenzo Valla (c. 1407–57) in his influential *De Elegantiis Linguae Latinae*, and then taken up in the first modern grammar of a European language, the *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (1492) which Antonio de Nebrija dedicated to Isabel la Católica. On the origins and dissemination of the idea, see Asensio (1960).

4. The point is a recurring theme in the recent collection of essays edited by Pagden (2002a).

5. Over the past twenty years or so, the most extensive critique of this approach has been the work of Menocal (e.g. 1987; 1994: 106–20), which offers a fascinating reading of Auerbach’s *Mimesis* as a means of deconstructing normative readings of European identity and the homogenizing agenda of Romance philology.

**Works cited**

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Cultural encounter necessarily defines and shapes the romances of medieval England: the fluidity and openness that characterise the romance genre allow it to flourish with particular strength in a world distinguished by its different cultural layers. The essays in this collection consider both the early insular tradition and later Middle English traditions - classical, Anglo-Saxon and Continental, and the intersection of lay and clerical, as well as the meeting of genres themselves, in particular romance and chronicle. Chivalric romance is a type of prose or verse narrative that was popular in the aristocratic circles of High Medieval and Early Modern Europe. They typically describe the adventures of quest-seeking, legendary knights who are portrayed as having heroic qualities. Chivalric romances celebrate an idealized code of civilized behavior that combines loyalty, honor, and courtly love. Knights of the Round Table and Romance. The most famous examples are the Arthurian romances recounting the adventures of Lancelot, Galahad, Gawain, and the other "Knights of the Round Table." The Roman de la Rose is a medieval French poem styled as an allegorical dream vision. It is a notable instance of courtly literature. The work's stated purpose is to entertain and to teach others about the Art of Love. The very word romance comes from the word roman—that is, a narrative written in one of the Romance languages derived from Latin (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian). These tales often followed the adventures of a knight, whose aim was to prove himself in battle and in the bedroom. Over time the French word roman has come to stand for the genre of fiction known in English as the novel. Amorous love, in the Middle Ages and even today, was so bound up in the literature of love that it is difficult to know what came first: Did French medieval stories (romans) create the vision of love characterized by: 1. Medieval romance usually idealizes chivalry 2. Medieval romance idealizes the hero-knight and his noble deeds 3. An important element of the medieval romance is the knight's love for his lady (courtly love). 4. The settings of medieval romance tend to be imaginary and vague. 5. Medieval romance derives mystery and suspense from supernatural elements. 6. Medieval romance often uses concealed or disguised identity. 7. Repetition of the mystical number "3." (Repetitions of the number or multiples of 3) Characteristics of the Hero-Knight 1. Birth of a great hero is s