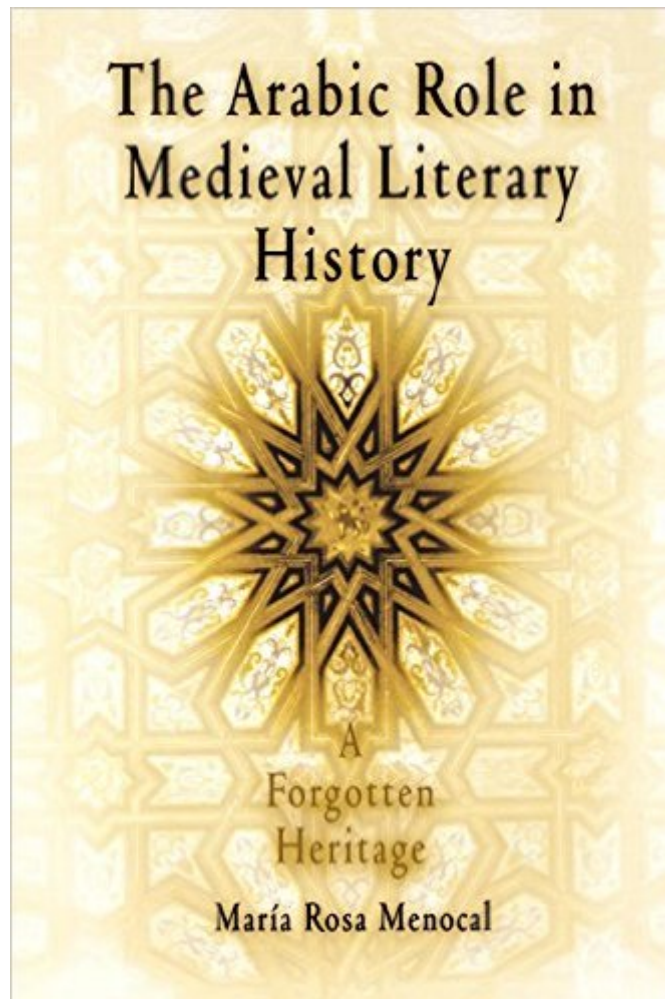


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The Arabic Role In Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage (The Middle Ages Series)



Synopsis

Arabic culture was a central and shaping phenomenon in medieval Europe, yet its influence on medieval literature has been ignored or marginalized for the last two centuries. In this ground-breaking book, now returned to print with a new afterword by the author, María Rosa Menocal argues that major modifications of the medieval canon and its literary history are necessary. Menocal reviews the Arabic cultural presence in a variety of key settings, including the courts of William of Aquitaine and Frederick II, the universities in London, Paris, and Bologna, and Cluny under Peter the Venerable, and she examines how our perception of specific texts including the courtly love lyric and the works of Dante and Boccaccio would be altered by an acknowledgment of the Arabic cultural component.

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Customer Reviews

Meaningful silences punctuate our lives. How silent is a first kiss, yet how potentially significant? In this history of literary histories, Menocal delves deeply into a hush that fell on certain theses -- certain most undesirable theses -- as the 19th century dawned. She deftly traces an intellectual theory of the birth of the poetry of courtly love from Dante's level Latin language defense of the vernacular through Schlegel's mind-numbing dismissal through those enormous silences of the 19th and 20th centuries and on to the more riotous days of her student youth. The theory -- that most undesirable, unimaginable theory -- would potentially root the emergence of European vernacular

poetry of the troubadours not in a moment of proto-French genius summoning rhymes of courtly love from the mists but in a moment of Andalusian (and distinctly Mozarabic) brilliance that recreates and recasts the worlds and sounds before it. Wisely, in this magical tale of literary and linguistic adventures, Menocal does not begin with the theory itself, which has been researched, argued, buttressed, and reinforced from Medieval times to the present, in many languages and many times. Instead, she launches into the poetry of the many cultures of the time, both Romance and Arabic, and then moves on to the history of the silence. We hear Dante struggling in Latin with thoughts on the vernacular and the sources of his inspiration; we hear Arabic and Mozarabic speaking women finding new masters among the Christians as the Reconquista commences, we hear forms emerge from the classical Arabic and in the Mozarabic and Provençal and Sicilian vernaculars, and then, we hear silence.

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