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Translated, Edited & Introduced by Peter Cole:

The Dream of the Poem

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✎ INTRODUCTION ✎

1. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1988), 5:425. Goitein, who writes, “then ‘the Spanish miracle’ occurred” puts the phrase between quotation marks but doesn’t cite a source, though he seems to be alluding to R. Kayser’s *The Life and Times of Judah Halevi* (New York, 1949), p. 50. Kayser notes that “it is like a historical miracle that . . . the people of Israel in southern Europe enjoyed a golden age, the like of which they had not known since the days of the Bible,” while “orgies of persecution” were occurring not far to the north. My thanks to Mark Cohen for pointing out the link to Kayser. The varying conclusions drawn from the lesson of Spain are treated in succinct fashion by Cohen in *Under Crescent and Cross* (Princeton, 1994), especially pp. 1–14 and 195–99. The leading modern scholar in the field, and in many respects its founder as a serious academic discipline, the late Haim Schirmann also refers to the miraculous nature of the period (below, n. 44, and *Toldot* [1995], pp. 15–16), as does Shulamit Elitzur in *Shirat HaHol Ha'Ivrit biSefarad HaMuslamit* [Secular Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain] (Ramat Aviv, 2004), p. 45. Likewise Ezra Fleischer, with regard to the poem by Dunash’s wife (“Will Her Love Remember,” below), writes: “For if in Dunash’s generation women were already writing poems of this quality, one has to wonder if the secular Hebrew poetry of Spain wasn’t born in miraculous fashion, at a single stroke, as a mature and fully-formed entity in every respect, a perfect being brought forth from absolute emptiness” (“‘Al Dunash Ben Labrat velshoto,” in *Mehqerei Yerushalayim beSifrut Ivrit* 5 [1984]: 202). Ismar Schorsch notes that the term “Golden Age” was first applied to this period by the Lutheran Hebraicist Franz Delitzsch in Leipzig in 1836. (See Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34: 61.) Schorsch examines what he calls the “Sephardic mystique” that was promulgated by German-Jewish scholars. For more on the question of historical distortion in scholarship, see note 70. The “insular poetry” of the first postbiblical millennium includes epithet-laden talmudic elegies and the enormous corpus of hymns from late antiquity and the middle ages; while these hymns can sometimes be quite forceful, they are also limited in their liturgical range and at times wound down to hyper-mannered, coded concoctions that were mocked by the later Spanish poets. Raymond Scheindlin refers to the diction of that liturgical verse as “a special poetic dialect . . . merely degenerate forms of a classical language” (“The Influence of Muslim Arabic Cultural Elements on the Literature of the Hebrew Golden Age,” *Conservative Judaism*, Summer 1982, p. 64). By contrast, the poetry of Spain has been described by one scholar as “a rich and full expression of the poet’s self” (Elitzur, *Shirat HaHol*, p. 67). See below, on *fasaaha* (note 36).

2. The word—cosmos—in many ways takes us to the core of this poetry, which is often spoken of in terms of its “ornament.” “Cosmos” derives from the Greek *kosmein*, that is, to order, and secondarily, to ornament. It is from this cluster of meanings that we get our “ordered world” (as in the pseudepigraphic *Prayer of Manasseh*: “He who made the heaven and the earth with all their embellishment [*kosmo*] . . .”), as well as our word “cosmetic.” For more on this important nexus, see *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, trans. Peter Cole (Princeton, 2001), pp. 11–13; hereafter Cole, *Selected Ibn Gabirol*.

Historian Yom Tov Assis describes the culture of the Christian period as “a brand of Judaism [italics mine] that emerged as a result of the fusion of Jewish tradition with elements of Greco-Arabic civilizations and elements from Romance culture brought by the *Reconquista*. . . . Sefarad was no less authentic or Jewish than Ashkenazi pietism” (“Sefarad: A Definition in the Context of a Cultural Encounter,” in *Encuentros and Desencuentros: Spanish Jewish Cultural Interaction throughout History*, ed. A. Doron [Tel Aviv, 2000], p. 35). His notion of Andalusian Jewish culture as “a brand of Judaism” applies all the more to the Muslim period. For more on *convivencia*, see note 70, below, and the glossary at the back of this volume.

3. In contrast with, say, nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals of the European Haskala (Enlightenment), the Spanish-Jewish elite did *not* succumb to assimilation in the wake of exposure to the foreign. Conversion among the poets was rare in the Andalusian (Muslim) period and became a problem only in Christian Spain. That said, some scholars feel that the destruction of the Jewish community in Spain was an inevitable, even organic outgrowth of that exposure. Surveying the various “apologetic and ideological tendencies” that have informed readings of this poetry since the nineteenth century, Ross Brann notes that the tide has swung from the early modern understanding of the secular Hebrew poetry of Spain as a “model of enlightened Jewish culture” to more recent, and conservative, perspectives that present “challenging critiques that minimize the historical relevance of the Andalusian school and depreciate the ‘Jewishness’ of its poetry.” “According to this revisionist view,” Brann continues, “secular poetry may be relegated to an isolated corner of Hebrew literary history for two reasons: first, because the poets’ obsession with literary elegance and social manners barely found its way to other strata of Andalusian Jewish society; and second, because Golden Age secular poetry had no lasting impact on the course of Hebrew literature, in contrast, say, to the Andalusian piyyut” (*The Compunctious Poet* [Baltimore and London, 1991], p. 16). While the argument can be made that Spanish-Hebrew secular poetry occupied a marginal position with regard to the mainstream of Hebrew and Jewish culture in post-Spanish-Hebrew history, that detracts only from its *historical* relevance and in no way diminishes its power or its value for the present and future. And here it is also important to recall that Andalusian accomplishments in the secular and devotional spheres were integrally linked.

4. As one writer has remarked, “One wonders what the Visigoths ate!” (Stephen O’Shea, *Sea of Faith* [New York, 2006]), p. 85. O’Shea follows by noting that the seventh-century polymath Isadore of Seville was already singing the praises of Iberia’s fertile lands. Anticipating modern Spain’s enormous fleet, Isadore also singles out the fish. Information for this paragraph comes from the following sources: Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Greco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (London, 1998), pp. 1, 11–12, and 14 (where he notes the possible link to China); Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca and London, 1975), pp. 117, 141; Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 53; and S. M. Imamuddin, *Muslim Spain 711–1492: A Sociological Study* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 75–99. Gutas notes that certain paper was named for the patrons of the translation movement, an indication of that activity’s importance. ‘Abd al-Rahmaan III’s mother was Frankish and his grandmother a Basque princess. He is described in contemporary chronicles as being “handsome . . . and equally at home in Arabic and in the emerging Romance tongue.” He reportedly dyed his hair black to make himself look more Arab.

The new Muslim population was deeply divided along ethnic and tribal lines: the conquering troops from North Africa comprised soldiers from rival Yemeni Arab clans (Beni Qalb and Beni Quraysh), both of which looked down on the soldiers drawn from the crude Berber tribes of the Maghreb. The conquered Iberians were also diverse. While the Mozarabs, or Arabized Christians, adopted Arab customs and the Arabic language, they continued to worship in their churches and for the most part were subject to the rule of their own officials and Church law. Many Christians, however, converted to Islam. These converts (*musaalima*) and their children born into the new faith (*muwalladun*) occupied yet another tier in this ethnically charged society-in-formation. There was also a large population of fair-haired slaves (Slavs), brought from the north, as well as darker servants purchased from Africa. Many of the Slavs were eunuchs and took on a range of domestic, administrative, and military functions in the caliphate.

5. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 1:101ff. He notes that textiles of the day were especially durable, variegated, and expensive, and that “clothing formed part—sometimes a considerable part—of a family’s investment, being transmitted from parents to children.” He also comments on what he calls the “color-intoxication” of the age, quoting from orders for textiles and descriptions of trousseaus: “Five fine covers, one gazelle blood, one pure violet, one musk-colored, one silvery, one intense yellow; two others pure, clean white, inclining to yellow. . . . Eight pairs of small prayer carpets, two white, two indigo blue, two green, two red. . . . Please, my lord, the red should be as red as possible, likewise the white and the yellow should be exquisite. . . . The siglaton [gold brocade] robe is of the utmost beauty, but not exactly what I wanted, for it is white and blue, while I wanted to have . . . onion color, an ‘open’ color. The lead-colored [i.e. bluish gray] robe is superb.” According to the Geniza records, Spain was the leading Mediterranean country in the production of silk.

Paper had been produced in the Islamic world from the eighth century on, at first in Baghdad—with the secrets of production having been taken, it seems, from the Chinese. In al-Andalus, Játiva, near Valencia, was a major center for paper production. See Richard Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation* (New York, 2003), pp. 56–57, who notes that “among the various grades of paper listed by an encyclopedist of technology was a special lightweight type known as ‘birds’ paper’ because it was thin enough to be sent by carrier pigeon: the earliest known airmail paper.” See also Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print* (New Haven and London, 2001), p. 88.

6. Imamuddin, *Muslim Spain*, pp. 130–34; B. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 61–67.

7. Robert Hillenbrand, “Medieval Cordoba as a Cultural Center,” in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden, 1994), p. 117. Fletcher, *Moorish Spain*, pp. 60–61.

8. The Berber chieftain Taariq Ibn Ziyaad led a legion of some 7,000 men (6,000 of them Berbers) across the straits on April 27/28, 711. A second wave of support troops brought the strength of his army to 12,000 men, and on July 19, Taariq’s Muslim army routed the Visigothic king Rodrigo. The mission’s success notwithstanding, Taariq’s Arab commander Muusa Ibn Nusayr was angered by his lieutenant’s insubordination—since the Umayyad caliph in Damascus had cautioned Ibn Nusayr to limit their mission to intensive *explorations* of the area—and the following spring he gathered a mixed Arab, Syrian, Egyptian, and Berber force of 18,000 and crossed the straits as well, occupying towns Taariq had passed by. Within three years the two armies had secured control of most of the peninsula, before both conquerors were recalled to Damascus. Some years later, another 30,000 troops were dispatched from Damascus to help quell civil unrest.

9. In 749, following several military victories over the Umayyad army, Abu-l-‘Abbaas, a descendant of the Prophet’s uncle (who was known as al-Saffaah, “the spiller of blood”), was named the first Abbasid caliph. The following year, the Umayyad caliph, Marwaan II, was murdered, and all members of the royal family—except ‘Abd al-Rahmaan—were hunted down wherever they were and killed. The new Abbasid caliphate was soon moved eastward, and in 762 the city of Baghdad was founded as its capital. ‘Abd al-Rahmaan, whose mother had been a Berber slave, fled to his mother’s homeland, before settling in al-Andalus.

10. In fact, we don’t know why Ziryaab went west, but the story of his falling out at court appears to be a “later invention” (H. Kilpatrick, in *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. J. S. Meisami and P. Starkey [London and New York, 1998], p. 826). For the other information here, see Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, p. 59; María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World* (New York, 2002), pp. 32–33. Some estimate that al-Hakam’s library held 600,000 volumes. By comparison, the library of King Charles the Wise, of France, in the mid-fourteenth century held a mere 900 books, two-thirds of them treating theology (S. M. Imamuddin, *A Political History of Muslim Spain* [Dacca, 1961], p. 97). The Andalusian private libraries also

stood in stark contrast with the situation outside the Arab world. In eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium, “a very modest private library of a few dozen books was beyond the means of most, if not all, rich intellectuals” (Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 176–77). See also Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 38ff.; O’Callaghan, *History*, pp. 107, 158; Hillenbrand, “Medieval Cordoba,” pp. 117–21. On the subject of women’s roles in Andalusia, see Shirley Guthrie, *Arab Women in the Middle Ages* (London, 2001), p. 176. María J. Viguera makes it clear that Andalusian letters and literary culture generally yield a somewhat distorted picture of women’s level of freedom in Muslim Spain, and that the majority of Andalusian women by no means enjoyed “genuine freedom” (“On the Social Status of Andalusian Women,” in Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, pp. 709–24).

11. In an effort to assimilate, some of the new converts faked an Arabic lineage. Alvarus, the ninth-century bishop of Cordoba, complains that Christian youth were “intoxicated with Arab elegance” (*Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, p. 730). The precise linguistic situation in al-Andalus is not known with any certainty and no doubt varied from community to community. “The language of the fields and streets might be that Romance which had devolved from the old late-vulgar Latin,” writes Bernard Reilly, referring to the largely peasant class of Romance speakers (*The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain: 1031–1157* [Cambridge and Oxford, 1992], p. 21). David Wasserstein explains that poetry in particular attracted the youth of the day. And Moshe Ibn Ezra’s twelfth-century book also testifies to the Spanish Jews’ admiration for Arabic verse (*Sefer Ha’Iyyunim ve-HaDiyyunim: al-Kitaab al-Muhaadhara wa-’l-Mudhaakara* [*The Book of Discussion and Remembrance*], trans. and ed. A. S. Halkin [Jerusalem, 1975], p. 57; hereafter *The Book of Discussion*). The Jewish population, Wasserstein adds, would have spoken and written Latin prior to their adoption of Arabic, using Romance as their vernacular; both were probably spoken during an interim period. In time, however, Arabic proved dominant, and spoken Arabic became their only vernacular. Most written expression was in a middle-register Judeo-Arabic, which was written in Hebrew characters. Only poetry and a few other “prestige texts” were composed in Hebrew (David Wasserstein, “The Language Situation,” in *Studies in the Muwashshah and the Kharja* [Oxford, 1991], pp. 3–4 and 15). Some Jews probably also spoke Berber.

12. Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, p. 12. The famous characterization is by the tenth-century writer Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, who had never seen the city. Writing from her home in lower Saxony, she based her account on reports that reached her. Her topic was in fact a Christian martyr, Palagius, who (reportedly) died holding out against the homosexual advances of the caliph of Cordoba, ‘Abd al-Rahmaan III (Katherina Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Work* [Cambridge, 1998], pp. 6,10; also John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago and London, 1980], pp. 198ff). Scholarly estimates of the city’s population vary widely, from 90,000 to 1 million. (See, for example,

O'Callaghan, *History*, p. 155; Haim Schirmann, *HaShira Ha'Ivrit biSefarad HaMuslimit* [Jerusalem, 1995], p. 100; and Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* [London and New York, 1996], p. 107: "Cordoba was vastly more developed than any of the muddy market towns of northern Europe.") Figures offered for the population of tenth-century Spain as a whole are also unreliable. It is often given by scholars as between 6 million and 9 million residents. The Jewish population is estimated to have been some 1 percent of that—though concentrations of Jewish population were generally considered to have been much higher in the major cities (S. D. Goitein, "Jewish Society and Institutions under Islam," in *Jewish Society through the Ages*, ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger [New York, 1971], p. 173; Reilly, *Contest*, pp. 191–92, n. 3). David Wasserstein, however, regards these estimations with considerable skepticism, commenting that "there is no information at all which would make it possible to offer such an exact estimate" ("Jewish Elites in al-Andalus," in *The Jews of Islam: Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. D. Frank [Leiden, 1995], p. 107; also pp. 108–10). He assumes that the number of Jews in eleventh-century Spain was in fact very much smaller than is generally assumed. To the extent that one can get a rough sense of the size of the Jewish population, he concludes, the numbers "show how very much the Jewish people today owes to a very small absolute number of medieval inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula" (p. 110). See also Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* (Philadelphia, 1973/92), 2:190–300.

13. Self-mythologizing Spanish-Jewish tradition traces Jewish settlement in Spain back to the exile of Jewish families from Jerusalem in 586, in the wake of the First Temple's destruction. Scholars assume that the migration of Jews throughout the Roman diaspora (from the second century B.C.E. through the second century C.E.) brought them to Spain as well, as traders, and then as slaves, following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.; additional waves of Jewish immigration came from North Africa, Italy, and Provence.

14. Assis, "Jews of Spain," p. 11; Ross Brann, "The Arabized Jews," in *The Literature of al-Andalus*, ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 435–38. The Arian (non-Trinitarian) Christian and Latin-speaking Visigoths at first treated the Jewish communities they found with relative tolerance, but the situation deteriorated with their conversion to Catholicism in the late sixth century. Harsh legislation was passed, ranging from mandatory observance of Sunday as the day of rest, to the banishment of Jewish children to monasteries (where they were to be raised as Christians), to forced baptism of the entire community, confiscation of Jewish property, and the enslavement of all Jewish wives and children. While this and other legislation wasn't always enforced, conditions in Spain were by no means conducive to communal development, and in fact many Jews fled to areas of Gaul and North Africa that were still controlled by Roman nobility (Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* [New York, 1994], p. 8). See Gerber for the early history of Jewish presence in Iberia (pp. 2–25). For more

on the Visigothic documentation, see *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 12–23.

15. These regulations were known as the Pact of ‘Umar, an English translation of which appears in N. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 157–58. See also *The Jew in the Medieval World*, ed. Jacob R. Marcus (1938; Philadelphia and New York, 1960), pp. 12–15. Marcus notes there that, by and large, “this pact, like much medieval legislation, was honored more in the breach than in the observance.” For a detailed discussion of the pact and its application, see Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 54ff.

Regarding the overall Arabization of the Spanish Jews, Brann notes, “Before the emergence of their literary culture in the mid-tenth century, the Jews of al-Andalus had been speaking Arabic for generations and thereby came to think in and view the world through the medium of that language” (“Arabized Jews,” p. 441). By the time the Hebrew renaissance was underway, in the eleventh century, it could be assumed that the state of Hebrew letters was such that Jews could also converse in Hebrew, though it is not at all clear whether that was ever done. The spoken language of the Jews of Muslim Spain was without doubt a middle register of Arabic (S. Morag, “HaMoreshet HaLeshonit Ha’Ivrit biSefarad,” *Pe’amim* 53 [1992]: 6). See also note 11, above. Wasserstein adds: “In economic life there were scarcely any real restrictions on Jews, or *dhimmi*s. . . . In religious life real constraints on Jewish practice were minimal” (“Jewish Elites,” p. 103). The status of Jewish elites, he adds, was “slightly different” from the status of Arab elites.

16. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 1: 30–35; Schirmann, *Toldot* (1995), pp. 100–101; Brann, “Arabized Jews,” pp. 435–54.

17. Schirmann, *Toldot* (1995), p. 102.

18. The tenth-century Arab geographers and chroniclers Ibn Hawqal and al-Muqaddasi comment on the “remarkable sea ports” of Andalusia and the extensive network of trade routes they serve. See Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 17. The appointment was hardly honorary, and the job brought with it a great deal of responsibility.

19. For more detailed accounts of Hasdai’s life, see Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 1: 155–263; Schirmann, *Toldot* (1995), pp. 102ff.; Haim Beinart, *The Sephardic Legacy* (Jerusalem, 1992), 1: 15; and D. Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002–1086* (Princeton, 1985), p. 196.

20. See also Moshe Ibn Ezra’s *Book of Discussion*, pp. 56–57, where he describes the cultural awakening around Hasdai and his gathering scholars and works from faraway places. Among other things, Hasdai was interested in the Khazars’ conversion and also asked if they had any knowledge about the reckoning of the end of days. See Beinart, *The Sephardic Legacy*, 1: 16.

21. S. M. Stern notes that while the Hebrew poets themselves “had no standing at all in Muslim society [as poets] . . . some of their Jewish patrons did occupy

positions there, though mainly minor ones. Smaller figures in the outer world, they loomed large in Jewish society: like minor planets in the system of some Muslim court, they formed centers around which their Jewish courtiers (among them the Hebrew poets) moved like so many satellites” (“Arabic Poems by Spanish-Hebrew Poets,” in *Romanica et Occidentalia*, ed. M. Lazar [Jerusalem, 1963], p. 254).

22. Schirmann, *Toldot* (1995), p. 101; Fleischer, “LeQadmoni’ut Shirateinu biSefarad,” *Asufot* 2, (1988): 231–33; Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, 1: 244ff.

23. Hasdai’s use of the term is straightforward here. Generally speaking, however, the word “Sefarad” meant much more than just “Spain.” As Yosef Haim Yerushalmi has pointed out, “*Sefarad*, *Tzarfat*, or *Ashkenaz* were not merely fabricated Jewish equivalents for Spain, France, or Germany; they were Hebrew place names lifted out of their biblical contexts and superimposed over the map of contemporary Europe” (“Exile and Expulsion,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World: 1391–1648*, ed. Benjamin R. Gampel [New York, 1997]), p. 13. “Sefarad is not Spain,” declares Yom Tov Assis, who describes the trilateral Jewish–Greco-Arabic–Romance cultural symbiosis, rather than any single geographical entity, as its essence (“Sefarad,” pp. 31 and 35).

The term itself appears in Obadiah 20: “And the exile of Jerusalem that is in Sefarad”—though modern scholars understand the word there to refer to Sardis. It is taken to mean Spain for the first time in the Peshitta—the Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible, which was begun in the first century of the Common Era—and shortly thereafter in Targum Jonathan, one of the Aramaic translations of the Old Testament (made in Babylonia during the early centuries of the Common Era). From the eighth century on Sefarad is generally taken in Hebrew and Jewish literature to mean Spain. Targum Jonathan to Obadiah 20: “‘And the exile of Jerusalem that is in Sefarad’—and the exile of Jerusalem that is in Spain.” See also *Seder ‘Olam Zuta* (a sixth- or seventh-century Babylonian midrash): “Vespasianus came and destroyed the Temple and exiled Israel and many families from the House of David and Yehuda to Espamya [Spain], which is Sefarad” (*Seder ‘Olam Zuta*, ed. A. Neubauer, in *Seder HaHakhamim VeQorot HaYamim*, vol. 1 [Oxford, 1887], p. 71).

24. Hasdai’s letter is curiously reminiscent of Isadore of Seville’s seventh-century description in the prologue to his *History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi* (624 C.E.), wherein he sings the praises of Iberia: “Of all lands from the west to the Indies, you, Spain, O sacred and always fortunate mother of princes and peoples, are the most beautiful. . . . Indulgent nature has deservedly enriched you with an abundance of everything fruitful. You are rich with olives, overflowing with grapes, fertile with harvests. You are dressed in corn, shaded with olive trees, covered with the vine. Your fields are full of flowers, your mountains full of trees, your shores full of fish. You are located in the most favorable region in the world; neither are you parched by the summer heat of the sun, nor do you languish under icy cold, but girded by a temperate band of sky, you are nourished by fertile

west winds. You bring forth the fruits of the fields, the wealth of the mines, and beautiful and useful plants and animals. Nor are you to be held inferior in rivers, which the brilliant fame of your fair flocks ennoble” (translated from Latin by Kenneth B. Wolf, in *Medieval Iberia*, p. 3). Hasdai and Menahem’s letter is quoted in Schirmann *Toldot* (1995), p. 100; the translation is mine. The letter, which begins with the sort of mythologizing referred to above (note 13)—“I, Hasdai, son of Isaac, belonging to the exiled Jews of Jerusalem in Spain”—was written some time between 956 and 961. The full letter, with King Yosef’s answer, can be found in F. Kobler, *Letters of Jews through the Ages* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 100–101.

25. Into the spine of his poem Menahem embeds an acrostic that reads: “I am Hasdai, son of Yitzhaq, son of Ezra, son of Shaprut, Menahem Ben Saruq.” Acrostics of this sort were normally used only in liturgical poems.

26. Based on one of the recently discovered poems by Menahem, Fleischer writes, “it is possible to see what the Hebrew poetry of Spain would have looked like . . . if Dunash’s innovations hadn’t come to pass. The poem is Jewish to its marrow: all the ideas it embodies are originally Jewish” (“LeQadmoni’ut Shirateinu biSefarad,” p. 253). Menahem’s version of that style appears to be influenced by Sa’adia Gaon’s poetry. His work has not been included in this anthology for that reason: in most respects it belongs to the older style of Eastern poetry, though it was composed in the west, and in a very different social context.

27. See Fleischer, “LeQadmoni’ut Shirateinu biSefarad,” pp. 249–69. Apart from the poem to the Khazar king and the prefatory poem to the epistle to Hasdai (see below), three other poems, all panegyrics, are extant. They were published by Ezra Fleischer in 1988. Fleischer characterizes these, too, as impressive examples of a courtly application of the Eastern style exemplified by Sa’adia, and on the whole he considers Menahem “an extremely talented poet.” Examples of Menahem’s cadenced prose in English translation can be found in T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York, 1981), pp. 277–79, and Raymond Scheindlin, “Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia,” in *Convivencia*, ed. V. Mann, T. Glick, and J. Dodds (New York, 1992), p. 45. In addition to the three “new” secular poems, Fleischer has also uncovered evidence for the composition of liturgical poetry in Spain prior to Dunash’s arrival. The two very brief liturgical poems he published alongside the secular finds clearly demonstrate, he says, that liturgical poetry in the Eastern manner was known to Menahem and the Spanish congregations. Beyond that, he notes, it is hard to imagine that for the 250 years of Jewish life in Muslim Spain prior to Dunash’s arrival, the Spanish cantors sang only foreign liturgical poems and never tried their hand at the various liturgical genres. There are, however, no extant *piyyutim* from this period, apart from the eight lines that Fleischer quotes. That said, there were other poets writing during this initial phase, including the students of Menahem and Dunash. In his *Tahkemoni* (ed. Y. Toporowski [Tel Aviv, 1952], p. 43), Yehuda Alharizi also mentions two other poets by name, Avun and Shmu’el, as well as “many others apart from them, of whose work there is no trace—/for their matter was weak and therefore erased.”

For more on the development of Hebrew verse and the other poets who were active at the start of the Spanish period, see Fleischer, “LeToldot Shirat HaHol Ha’Ivrit biSefarad beReshitah,” in *Asufot, Tarbut veHevrah beToldot Yisrael beYamei HaBenayim*, ed. M. Ben-Sasson et al. (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 197–225.

28. In Menahem’s scheme, Hebrew words were composed of one-, two-, or three-letter roots. (The correct understanding of the three-letter root—common to Hebrew and Arabic—would come about only in the next generation, with the work of Yehuda Ibn Hayyuj and, after him, Yona Ibn Janaah.) Menahem does, though, repeatedly demonstrate an appreciation of linguistic elegance and purity. Dunash felt that Menahem wasn’t qualified to undertake a dictionary of this sort as he lacked the tools for systematic analysis—though as Schirmann points out, Dunash too had misconstrued the root system (S. Morag, “Mahloqet Menahem veDunash veTehiyyat Ha’Ivrit,” *Pe’amim* 56 [1993]: 9 and 13–14). See also Schirmann, *Toldot* (1995), p. 129.

29. Accounts of Menahem’s troubles vary from scholar to scholar. Schirmann, for one, casts doubt on the accusation of Karaism; but whatever the charge was, he says, it had to be serious enough to warrant Hasdai’s violation of the Sabbath (*Toldot* [1995], pp. 113–14). Ashtor presents a slightly different version of his catastrophe from the one related here (*Jews of Moslem Spain*, 1: 241ff.).

30. Epistle to Hasdai, in *HaShira Ha’Ivrit biSefarad uveProvans*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 14, lines 81–85.

31. Morag, “Mahloqet Menahem veDunash veTehiyyat Ha’Ivrit,” p. 14. See also E. Rosenthal, *Judaism and Islam* (London and New York, 1961), pp. 73–76.

32. Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven and London, 1998), pp. 37–38, 236–37, 239. For Sa’adia’s poetry, see Brody, pp. 323ff., and Menahem Zulai, *Ha’askula HaPaytanit shel Rav Sa’adia Gaon* (Jerusalem, 1964), pp. 13–40. “Gaon” was the official title of the head of the academy and signified, literally, eminence and great learning.

33. Ezra Fleischer, “Meqomo shel Rav Sa’adia Gaon beToldot HaShira Ha’Ivrit,” *Pe’amim* 54 (1993): 10. His polemical poetry treating religion was notable because it was independent of any liturgical station and as such involved a kind of proto-secular verse.

34. Fleischer, “Meqomo shel Rav Sa’adia Gaon,” p. 7.

35. Nehemia Allony, *Sefer Egron* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 158–59. The extended quotation cited here is from the Hebrew introduction to the first edition. The translation is, for the most part, mine, but see also Brody, *The Geonim*, pp. 247–48. Fleischer comments that Sa’adia’s elevation of poetry to this central role was unheard of in Jewish letters since the age of Scripture (“Meqomo shel Rav Sa’adia Gaon,” pp. 6–8).

36. Fleischer, “Hirhurim beDavar Ofyah shel Shirat Yisrael biSefarad,” *Pe’amim* 2 (1979): 17.

37. Both observations are Fleischer’s, in “LeQadmoni’ut Shirateinu HaSefardit,” pp. 229–30, and “Hirhurim,” p. 18. A simpler, if cruder, way of putting this

is that the Jews of the early to mid-tenth century in Spain were not open to the ideas of the people around them, although they easily mixed with those people and adopted much of their cultural style; the Jews of Babylonia, on the other hand, were very much open to the ideas of the people around them, but did not easily mix with their neighbors or absorb much of their cultural style.

38. The notion of dictional purity, or clarity (*fasaaha*), based in Scripture comes from the Arabic tradition, where the Quran served as the model. (*Fasaaha* derives from the Assyrian and Aramaic words meaning, among other things, “radiant” or “bright.”) Purity here is a relative term. The lexicon of the Spanish-Hebrew poets wasn’t frozen, and they would ring certain changes on it to increase its range and flexibility. But it almost entirely removed the obscurantism and mannerism of the “special dialect” that characterized the Eastern liturgical verse of the preceding five or six centuries. Yerushalmi has commented that it wasn’t just the biblical register that the medieval Hebrew poets adopted but a biblical mindset. This is demonstrated by the biblical typology of HaNagid, for example, who calls his enemy in Almeria by the biblical name “Agag” (1 Samuel 15:8) and refers to his Slavic army as “Amaleq.” See Yerushalmi, “Exile and Expulsion,” pp. 13–14. See HaNagid’s poem “The War with Yaddayir,” and *Selected Poems of Shmuel HaNagid*, trans. Peter Cole (Princeton, 1996), pp. xiii–xiv, 39–47, and 65–68; hereafter, Cole, *Selected HaNagid*. For a detailed discussion of biblical typology in this work, see Brann’s *Compunctious Poet*, pp. 23–58.

39. That is, the monorhymed Arabic ode, or *qasida*, along with the shorter lyric and epigrammatic fragment known as the *qita’*, would determine the contours of the Hebrew poem. Jewish life would flow through their lines, as the poets employed these forms for erotic, elegiac, didactic, epistolary, satirical, gnomic, and panegyric poetry, as well as for their most intimate prayers. In time, other forms (e.g. the *muwashshah* and additional strophic modes) would be added to the repertoire, drawn from the Arabic, Eastern Hebrew, and Romance traditions of Spain and Provence. Likewise, various changes in the meters were introduced, with, in some cases, syllabics, word-count, biblical-style cadenced verse, and other measures replacing the quantitative system. With regard to the relation between the quantitative meters and music, see Amnon Shiloah, “Development of Jewish Liturgical Singing in Spain,” in Beinart, *The Sephardic Legacy*, 2:426–27. For more detailed discussion of all the forms mentioned above, as well as of the genres and the rhetorical figures that the poets employed, see the glossary at the back of this volume.

40. See the introduction to Cole, *Selected Ibn Gabirol*, under the entry “Gentility, the Good, the Good Life,” pp. 26–27, and in particular the reference there to the canonical 1947 essay by Joseph Weiss, which reads in part: “Wherever a ‘court’ exists, there you will find ‘style’ . . . The pleasures of society, such as play, laughter, music, literature and of course the bonds of love and friendship, all pass through the crucible of subtle stylization until the social life of the court becomes entirely a game of art . . . poetry, song, entertaining rhymes and riddles, laughter, and light, cultured conversation.” The problem here is tonal as much as anything else.

In this respect, it is critical in reading medieval Hebrew poetry to have a sense of how the poetry of other courtly traditions has been treated in English translation and in modern scholarship. Shulamit Elitzur offers a balanced assessment of the situation: “Most of the important Hebrew poets active in Spain were financially and spiritually independent, and even if the stamp of court poetry is in various places impressed on their work, *they can by no means be defined as court poets* [italics mine]” (*Shirat HaHol*, p. 50). Moreover, a good deal of the encomia and occasional poetry that precipitated around the court involved poets writing to friends and fellow poets, rather than patrons. In other words, the poetry that evolved from the aristocratic background of Spanish-Muslim and Spanish-Jewish court society involved an elite element of the society, but it is an independent literature which, for the most part, is not dictated by the demands of any court or by financial considerations. (In this respect it is like much of the best medieval poetry from other cultures, including Japan and China.) See also Elitzur, *Shirat HaHol*, pp. 63–64. For more on this topic, see “encomia” in the glossary at the back of this volume.

41. Quoted in Frank Kermode’s introduction to *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. with an introduction by Frank Kermode (New York, 1975), p. 19. In many ways this is akin to poet and artist David Jones’s conception of art as an extra-utile and gratuitous act (*Anathemata* [London and Boston, 1952], pp. 23 and 29).

42. Abraham Ibn Daud, *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah: The Book of Tradition*, translation and notes by Gerson Cohen (Philadelphia, 1967), especially pp. 276–77 and 286–87. The representation of “court poets” as prissy poetasters does, however, have its place in the literature, particularly later on. Qalonymos Ben Qalonymos (1286–after 1328) mocks poets he considered epigones as precisely the embodiment of that sort of effete figure—prancers and dancers on tiptoe and heel. See the biography preceding his poem in this anthology. The main point in Qalonymos’s portrait is that these deluded figures represent a plummet from the grace and sublime stature of the great poets of an earlier age. “The sons of elegance have passed away,” he writes, “the daughters of song are bowed, and only a carcass remains, unfit for an offering of man.” See Schirmann, *Toldot* (1997), pp. 529 and 539. This opposition to poetry was entirely new, and characteristic of later developments in Christian Spain. On the characterization of this period as a “renaissance,” see Joel Kramer, “The Culture Bearers of Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam,” Dr. Irene Halmos Chair of Arabic Literature Annual Lecture, Tel Aviv University, 1984.

43. “The Jews of al-Andalus,” writes Raymond Scheindlin, “adopted the classicizing concept of *‘arabiyya*—the Arabic view of the preeminence of classical Arabic—but . . . made biblical Hebrew the equivalent of classical Arabic and accorded their language a new status as a cultural monument above and beyond its traditional status as the ‘holy tongue’” (“Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia,” pp. 43–45). And Brann comments: “The stimulus for the poets’ linguistic ideology and literary practice came from the dynamic Arabo-Islamic host culture, yet their conscious objective was nationalistic. Golden Age Hebrew poetry . . . must

be seen, therefore, as literary discourse designed to mediate cultural ambiguity” (*Compunctious Poet*, p. 24). Throughout *The Compunctious Poet* Brann is alert to the way in which the often-contradictory concerns of the Jewish poets gave rise to “compunction,” which would manifest itself in a variety of modes. See also *Compunctious Poet*, pp. 69 and 88, and Ibn Ezra on the superiority of Arabic poetry (*The Book of Discussion*, pp. 29ff.), as well as Avraham Ibn Ezra’s “World Poetry,” below. Yehuda Alharizi also makes it clear that he composes his great work, *Tahkemoni*, in order to demonstrate Hebrew’s power (e.g., *Tahkemoni*, pp. 11–12, 22) and redeem the language from its fallen state, in which it had become the object of mockery and scorn. He states that he was driven to write the *Tahkemoni* by the example of that greatest of Arab authors, al-Hariiri, whom he himself had translated—also, in a sense, out of shame—though here he notes that al-Hariiri stole his material from Hebrew sources. The charge of “plagiarism” was of course false, but par for the contemporary course.

In his book on Hebrew poetics and literary history, Moshe Ibn Ezra also laments the fact that the richness of Hebrew had been lost long ago (when it was by no means inferior to Arabic), and that it was being rediscovered only in the new Hebrew poetry of Spain. He explains that the supremacy of the Sephardic poets is due to both their descent from illustrious Jerusalem families and their absorption of the sweetness of the Arabic poetry, which in turn derives from climatic and geographical circumstances (*The Book of Discussion*, pp. 28–31, 35, 43, and 54–55). Accounting for Sephardic supremacy, Alharizi expresses the common medieval belief in favorable geographical influence, which was based on the theories of Hippocrates. See *Tahkemoni*, p. 183, and *Eruvin* 53a, which enumerates the virtues of the Judean Jews as opposed to the Galilean Jews: “The Judeans, who cared for [the beauty of] their language, retained their learning, but the Galileans, who did not care for [the beauty of their language], did not retain their learning.” The passage goes on to mention “precision” as one of the other virtues that preserved the Judean tradition.

María Rosa Menocal describes Cordoba and the culture it stands for as “a first-rate place” in the sense of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s formula: “the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time.” “In its moments of great achievement,” Menocal writes, “medieval culture positively thrived on holding at least two, and often many more, contrary ideas at the same time” (*Ornament of the World*, pp. 10–11).

44. “He destroyed the holy tongue,/which is our remnant,/by casting Hebrew/in foreign meters”; “and he sought . . . to bring down his people with him” (*Teshuvot Talmidei Menahem Ibn Saruq*, facsimile ed. [Vienna, 1870], p. 7, lines 43–44; p. 20, lines 1–3. The response to Dunash was written by a student of Menahem, Yitzhaq Ibn Qapron, who composed his attack in one of the quantitative meters (in imitation of a poem by Dunash) in order to demonstrate that his opposition to them didn’t derive from the difficulty of writing in these new meters. Ibn Qapron added a good deal of fuel to the fire by inserting an ad

hominem dimension to the debate: he said that Dunash had clothed himself in spider webs, appealed to the young and ignorant, made himself a laughingstock every time he opened his mouth, and was driven by a desire for fame. In many ways the debate remains unresolved: to this day there is a good deal of disagreement over how this poetry should be recited, or sung, what much of it means, and—by extension—what the worth of it is.

On HaLevi's return to the debate, see his statements in *The Kuzari*, 2:63ff. and Schirmann's characterization of his position in *Toldot* (1995), pp. 443ff.

45. *Ta'ifa* means "party" or "faction" in Arabic. David Wasserstein comments that the increased opportunities that the rise of the decentralized *Ta'ifa* states brought about for Jews also resulted in increased exposure and risk. He points out that the Jewish cultural renaissance might be looked upon as part of the larger trend toward *shu'ubiyya*, "a form of national self-assertion, in cultural terms, by non-Arabs against Arab domination and Arab claims to superiority" (*The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings*, pp. 169, 181–83, 191–93, and 220). Arabic literature, too, saw something of a renaissance, as new poetic forms and modes were developed, especially the dialect- or vernacular-based *zajal*. Andalusian Arabic poetry experienced its golden age during this time (from the late tenth through the eleventh century). Some of the major poets of that period include Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, Ibn Darraaj al-Qastali, Ibn Shuhayd al-Andalusi, Ibn Hazm, and Ibn Zayduun. That tradition continued on through the period of Muslim presence in Spain and produced other major poets as well, such as the Sufi Muhyaddin Ibn al-'Arabi. For more on this work see Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Andalusian Poetry: The Golden Age," in Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, pp. 316–66. For effective selections of the poems in English translation, see *Andalusian Poems*, trans. Christopher Middleton and Leticia Garza-Falcón (Boston, 1992); also A. R. Nykl, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry* (Baltimore, 1946).

46. The appearance of these four major poets (to be followed by Avraham Ibn Ezra) in rapid succession in the eleventh and twelfth century was also described by Schirmann as partaking of the miraculous.

47. The Almoravids originally came to Spain at the request of the Spanish Muslims, who were unable to ward off the armies of the Christian Reconquest on their own. (Toledo had been retaken by the Christians in 1085). In time they turned against their Andalusian co-religionists, whom they regarded as excessively worldly, weak, and corrupt, and they attempted to spread their reductive doctrine through the region, imposing as well heavy taxation to fund their military efforts. The Jewish community suffered at the hands of both the Christian and the Berber forces. As Yehuda HaLevi wrote, in a poem beginning "Aqonon 'al mar tela'otay": "Between the hosts of Seir [the Christians] and Qedar [the Muslims], my host is lost. . . . They wage their wars and we fall when they fall—thus was it ever in Israel!" (in Yitzhak Baer, *The History of the Jews in Christian Spain* [Philadelphia, 1961/92], p. 70). The Almohads arrived on the scene in order

to reform what they considered to be the corrupt ways of the Almoravid rulers. Eventually the practice of any other religion except Islam was forbidden in Almohad Andalusia. The father of Maimonides, for example, fled Cordoba during the Almohad invasion and, after much wandering, settled his family in Fez in 1160. The family may have converted to Islam for a period of time, though this is by no means clear. See C. Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (New York, 1931), pp. 9–12; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 11:754. “Almoravid” in Arabic is *al-muraabit*, deriving from the word for the fortified monasteries (*ribaati*) where the warrior-monks of this sect were stationed, or with which they identified spiritually; the Almohads were the *al-muwahhidun*, those who profess the unity or Oneness (*wahda*) of God. See in Menocal et al., *The Literature of al-Andalus*, J. Dodds, “Spaces,” p. 9, and P. Heath, “Knowledge,” pp. 112–13, Brann, *Power in the Portrayal*, pp. 17–18; Ronald A. Messier, “North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World,” *Journal of North African Studies* 6/1 (Spring 2001): 65, 67, and 72–74; and *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, under “Almoravid” (P. Chalmers) and “Almohad” (M. Shatzmiller).

48. The dissemination of (and hunger for) Arabic learning went on, Scheindlin notes, even as the creators of that culture were being subjugated (“Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia,” pp. 51–52).

49. One writer has described these events as “the Spanish equivalent of Kristallnacht” (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, commentary in *Covenant and Conversation*, August 26, 2005, reprinted in *Sephardic Heritage Update*, ed. David Shasha no. 175 [September 21, 2005]). For more details of the events of 1391, see the biographical introduction and notes to Shelomo DePiera’s poems.

50. Raymond Scheindlin divides the five centuries of composition into three (rather than two) periods: the period of Arabic ambience (c. 900–c. 1150); a transitional period (c. 1100–c. 1300); and “a period when most Jewish literary figures inhabited a Christian ambience” (c. 1250–1492) (“Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia,” pp. 39–40, 50, and 53). As Hebrew poetry moved into Christian Spain it entered what he calls “a period of literary experimentation stimulated by new cultural circumstances.” Elsewhere Scheindlin notes how the Hebrew writers of the fifteenth century seemed to be working toward a new synthesis of Hebrew and Romance culture, though that synthesis was, for a number of reasons, never fully realized. The characterization of the later poetry as “epigonic” is reflected in remarks by Schirmann (*HaShira*, 4:530) and others. Dan Pagis comments on the way in which scholars and ordinary readers have mistakenly read the period’s poetry as though it were all cut from a single cloth. In doing so, they have failed to appreciate its variety and the essential nature of the change that came with the later work (*Hiddush uMasoret beShirat haHol* [Jerusalem, 1976], pp. 1–2 and 180). See also Scheindlin, “Secular Hebrew Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World: 1391–1648*, p. 34.

51. In this pre-print society, poems were also memorized and disseminated through an oral tradition, albeit to a lesser extent. Numerous texts illustrate the value placed on this poetry and the manner in which it circulated. In a damaged

and not altogether decipherable late eleventh- or early twelfth-century Arabic letter retrieved from the Cairo Geniza, we find a Palestinian Jew named 'Ali writing somewhat frantically to his friend, the cantor of the Egyptian port city of Damietta, quoting Arabic proverbs, passages from the Bible, rabbinic sayings, and contemporary poetry as he asks him to send on a list of items, in particular articles of clothing, which he'd left in Damietta. "I also need," he tells him, "[the collection of] Ibn Khalfoun's poems. Either send it on and I will copy it, or have it copied for me. I beg of you!! For someone borrowed the [. . .] from me . . . and then was embarrassed to return it and took it with him to Yemen. Please do not forget under any circumstances to do this for me" (S. D. Goitein, "LeQorot Shirato shel Yitzhaq Ibn Khalfoun," *Tarbiz* 29 [1960]: 357–58).

Likewise, Ammiel Alcalay in his *After Arabs and Jews*, which extends this poetry's links beyond the medieval world of the Geniza and into the living legacy of a modern and contemporary Levantine sensibility and community, finds in the maze of Goitein's Geniza documents an eleventh- or twelfth-century estate agent's inventory of a Spanish-Jewish coppersmith's belongings, which lists—in addition to the tools of his trade and his clothes—a small chest containing two prayer books (including the one compiled by Sa'adia Gaon), part of the Book of Psalms, and "a book of poetry in Arabic characters." The latter, Goitein comments, reflects "the infatuation of Spanish Jews with Arabic poetry," and the prayer books, as Alcalay puts it, serve "the double function of ritual guide and [liturgical] poetry anthology" (Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 4:338; Alcalay, *After Arabs and Jews: Remaking Levantine Culture* [Minneapolis and London, 1993], pp. 142ff.). Goitein also comments elsewhere on the impressive level of learning displayed by the letters of middle-class Jews in the Geniza documents (in Alcalay, pp. 151–52; Goitein, 2:195).

Finally, Dan Pagis notes that Moshe Ibn Ezra, at the end of his chapter on the Spanish-Hebrew supremacy in poetry (*Book of Discussion*, p. 87), explains that he hasn't quoted from the master poets and their choice pearls because these were already "famous and constantly recited by the *rawis*"—or, "regularly in the mouths of the reciters of poetry" (Pagis, *Hiddush uMasoret*, p. 43). For Ibn Ezra's comments on the dissemination of HaNagid's work from Spain to Babylonia, see the biographical introduction to HaNagid's work in what follows.

See also "diwan" in the glossary.

52. In time some of the poetry would make its way to India, and in one case even to Hong Kong. With regard to the often-astonishing recovery and reconstruction of the poetry from the Cairo Geniza and other sites in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and most recently from the archives of the St. Petersburg Library, see Goitein's *Mediterranean Society*, 1:1–6; Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1–22; Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 3–13; A. M. Habermann, *HaGeniza veHaGenizot* (Jerusalem, 1971); and especially, Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 2d ser. (Philadelphia, 1908), pp. 1–30, which offers a vivid

account of his experience in Cairo and a marvelous description of what he found there:

It is a battlefield of books, and the literary productions of many centuries had their share in the battle, and their *disjecta membra* are now strewn over its area. Some of the belligerents have perished outright, and are literally ground to dust in the terrible struggle for space, whilst others, as if overtaken by a general crush, are squeezed into big unshapely lumps, which even with the aid of chemical appliances can no longer be separated without serious damage to their constituents. In their present condition these lumps sometimes afford curiously suggestive combinations; as, for instance, when you find a piece of some rationalistic work, in which the very existence of either angels or devils is denied, clinging for its very life to an amulet in which these same beings (mostly the latter) are bound over to be on their good behavior and not interfere with Miss Jair's love for somebody. The development of the romance is obscured by the fact that the last lines of the amulet are mounted on some I.O.U., or lease, and this in turn is squeezed between the sheets of an old moralist, who treats all attention to monetary affairs with scorn and indignation. . . . All these contradictory matters cleave tightly to some sheets from a very old Bible. This, indeed, ought to be the last umpire between them, but it is hardly legible without peeling off from its surface the fragments of some printed work, which clings to old nobility with all the obstinacy and obtrusiveness of the *parvenu*. ("A Hoard of Hebrew Manuscripts," in *Studies in Judaism*, pp. 6-7.)

For the story surrounding the recovery of the manuscript that came to be known as "Schocken 37," which was, at the very last moment, saved from the flames and found to contain some four thousand poems by most of the period's major poets along with work by a host of lesser-known writers, see Cole, *Selected Ibn Gabirol*, "Deaths, Diwans, Detectives," pp. 9-11. The tale of HaNagid's retrieval from oblivion is sketched in my *Selected HaNagid*, pp. xiv-xv. In certain instances—HaNagid is one—the twentieth-century discovery brings about an Emily Dickinson-like entry of a poet from an older era into the mix of the evolving modern literature (though in this case the eras are nearly a millennium apart). The late Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, who as an undergraduate studied with Haim Schirmann, often spoke of Shmu'el HaNagid as his favorite poet; and the first great modern Hebrew poet, Haim Nahman Bialik, devoted a good deal of his life to the "ingathering" of the medieval Hebrew poetry. Likewise poet Leah Goldberg's connection to the poetry was strong. The history of the retrieval of this work is, in other words, at times as fascinating as the work itself.

53. While less common, the cases in which poets translated individual poems are also instructive, as the Hebrew writers often transformed them in telling ways. Yehuda HaLevi has two marvelous instances of translation from heteroeroticism to homoeroticism and profane to sacred (in this volume, "That Day while I Had

Him” and “Love’s Dwelling”). Shmu’el HaNagid’s virtuoso improvisation on a bowl of apples begins with an impromptu translation of Arabic lines (see Cole, *Selected HaNagid*, pp. 12–13, and in this anthology, “The Apple”). Meir HaLevi Abulafia, a major religious figure from Toledo, has one of the few Hebrew translations from an Andalusian (rather than Abbasid) Arabic poem—“Fighting Time”—and of course Alharizi’s *Iti’el* (below) involves the translation or adaptation, of numerous individual poems as well as many passages of prose. A number of the later Hebrew poets also wrote in Spanish, with one of them—Shem Tov Arduziel, a.k.a. Santob de Carrión—becoming an important writer in the Spanish literary canon.

All the Hebrew poets of Muslim Spain wrote their prose in Judeo-Arabic or in Arabic proper. Some also wrote poems in Arabic, and at least one—Ibrahim Ibn Sahl (d. 1259/60), who seems to have converted to Islam early in his life—became an important Arab poet. His diwan is “one of the finest specimens of Andalusian poetry” (*Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 3). See also Qasmuna bint Isma’il in the note to The Wife of Dunash’s “Will Her Love Remember?” (below).

54. The family was from Granada and then moved to southern France. According to Assis, this “one Andalusian family . . . changed the outlook and the character of . . . Provence. . . . Four generations of translators and scholars provided Provencal Jewry and in a sense the whole of Europe with [an entire] library of books on Jewish philosophy and books of arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, astronomy, medicine, general philosophy, and other branches of science and thought” (“Sefarad,” p. 33).

55. Schirmann, *Toldot* (1997), pp. 148–53 and 180–84.

56. *Toldot*, (1997), pp. 146–53 and 177–84; and Matti Huss, “HaMagid be-Maqamot HaQlasi’ot—leVeiruro shel Munah,” *Tarbiz* 65/1 (1996): 164–72. Elsewhere in the world of translation at the time, Alharizi’s method was known as *sensus de sensu* (or *ad sensum*, according to sense); Ibn Tibbon’s method was referred to as *verbum et verba* (or *ad verbum*, according to the word, i.e., literally). What is unusual here is that Alharizi chooses a method (*sensus de sensu*) that is usually associated with societies in which the “target language” is dominant. As Huss points out (“HaMagid,” pp. 170–71), Ibn Tibbon saw Hebrew as inferior to Arabic, at least with regard to its capacity to absorb philosophical discourse. Alharizi, on the other hand, made it clear elsewhere in his work (*Tahkemoni*, pp. 12, 21) that he considered Hebrew superior (though it was not culturally dominant at the time).

57. Not unlike the young Nabokov translating *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian and replacing Carroll’s French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror, with one that Napoleon left behind him in Russia. See Wyatt Mason, “Swann’s Ways,” *New Republic*, January 12, 2005.

58. Moshe Ibn Ezra, *The Book of Discussion*, p. 177.

59. Moshe Ibn Ezra, *The Book of Discussion*, p. 143. “For by the ear will the work be tested, and the ears are the gates to the mind.” He also quotes an Arab

poet: “Poetic meter [or cadence] is something natural, found in the senses [in a sense for it]” (p. 137).

60. Weinberger is one of our finest writers on, among other things, the art and importance of translation. His comments appear in “Mislaidd in Translation” (*Written Reaction: Poetics, Politics, Polemics* [New York, 1996], p. 166). An expanded and updated version of that essay appears in *Fascicle 1* (2005), at <http://fascicle.com/issue01>. The best discussion of the problem of employing quantitative meters in English is by John Hollander. See “Observations in the Art of English Quantity,” in *Vision and Romance* (New York, 1975), pp. 59–70. Also Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York, 1965/79), pp. 68–69.

61. Again, medieval Hebrew poetry, as Pagis notes, has long been treated by scholars as “a collective accomplishment rather than a variety of distinctly individual achievements.” While the poets shared, as it were, a single toolbox and set of materials, and while it is critical to become familiar with the tools contained in that box and the materials with which the poets worked, it is just as important to learn to differentiate between their various ways of employing those tools and molding their material. In fact, the work they produced with that equipment is remarkably varied and expressive. Pagis’s revisionist statement is perhaps the most eloquent articulation of the situation: “I now believe,” he writes, with characteristic modesty and reconsidering a long and distinguished career during which he held to a somewhat different view, “that the Hebrew-Spanish school as a whole allowed much more room for individuality than is generally supposed, and that modern scholars have been sometimes more conventional in their views than medieval poets were in their work” (*Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* [Berkeley, 1991], pp. 6–23).

62. For a fuller treatment of the challenges facing the translator of medieval Hebrew Poetry, see Peter Cole, “Real Gazelles in Imaginary Gardens: Art, Scholarship, and the Translation of Medieval Hebrew Poetry from Spain,” *Yale Review*, Winter 2007.

63. *The Ruba‘iyat of Omar Khayyam*, trans. Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs (London, 1979/81), pp. 42–43.

64. T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry/The Use of Criticism* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 24.

65. One could dwell for the length and depth of a long career on this form/content controversy. A person who has done just that is Jaroslav Stetkevych, one of the leading scholars of medieval Arabic literature, who says: “Instead of looking for signs of dichotomy of form and content, one could, with equal ease, reverse the lens and see in Arabic poetry the closest possible—or the will to the closest possible—marriage between form and content, precisely because the poetry is so highly formalistic. . . . Poetic content not only survives [there] but flourishes, albeit in unaccustomed ways, [extracting] out of [its] predicament a strange power and solidity of imaginative impact” (*Zephyrs of Najd* [Chicago and London, 1993], pp. 4–5).

66. In particular, the parallel with the Islamic arts is instructive. The central role of ornament in the visual arts sheds considerable light on the use of the rhetorical figures, or poetic ornaments, taken over to Hebrew verse from Arabic. I have written about this aspect of the poetry in *Selected Ibn Gabirol*, pp. 11–13, and *Selected HaNagid*, pp. xix and xxii. See also Julie Meisami, *Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 315–17, and Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 24–27 and *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven and London, 1973/87), especially “The Idea of the Arabesque,” pp. 178ff.

67. Ezra Pound, *Translations* (New York, 1963), p. 24.

68. See Cole, *Selected HaNagid*, pp. xxi–xxiv and *Selected Ibn Gabirol*, pp. 11–13, 16–18, 22–30, 35 and 37; also Weinberger, *Written Reaction*, pp. 164–65, and *Outside Stories* (New York, 1992), pp. 59–61.

69. This applies both on the level of line-by-line readings and with regard to the poems as a whole. That is, if I have included a poem in this volume, I have generally translated all of it—or at least self-standing sections of a composite work—in order to demonstrate how the parts of the poem come together (or don’t). In a few instances, however—especially where long poems are involved—I have made do with excerpts, in which case the notes explain precisely what has been taken from what. Excerpting of this sort was, as it happens, a common practice in medieval Arabic anthologies. See “epigram” in the glossary.

70. Schorsch (“The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy”) and Jane Gerber (“Towards an Understanding of the Term ‘Golden Age’ as an Historical Reality,” in *The Heritage of the Jews of Spain* [Tel Aviv, 1995]) discuss the ways in which the political motives of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars distorted their portraits of the period. Distortion of another sort is examined by María Rosa Menocal in *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (Philadelphia, 1987). In *Under Crescent and Cross* Mark Cohen discusses the “myth of an interfaith utopia” as well as Muslim outbursts of violence against the Jews (pp. 3–14 and 163ff.). He also places the term “tolerance” in context, noting that “tolerance, at least as we in the West have understood it since John Locke, did not [in the Middle Ages] constitute a virtue. . . . Monotheistic religions in power throughout history have felt it proper, if not obligatory, to persecute nonconforming religions. . . . When all is said and done, however, the historical evidence indicates that the Jews of Islam, especially during the formative and classical centuries (up to the thirteenth century), experienced much less persecution than did the Jews of Christendom” (p. xix). Scheindlin, in “Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Iberia” (pp. 49–50), notes that little mention of Jewish cultural activity is made in Muslim sources. That said, as another writer put it, “the question of cross-fertilization of cultures, of a *convivencia* of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, is not merely a modern-day fashion. It is indeed the central issue in the history of al-Andalus, for its political fortunes rose and fell in relationship to its ability to minimize ethnic factionalism and forge a spirit of common enterprise” (L. Alvarez, “Spain,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, p. 729). A detailed comparative study of the way in

which relations between Jews and Muslims fluctuated between tolerance and hostility—and how that is reflected in the poetry and the literature that surrounds it—is offered by Brann in his *Power in the Portrayal* (Princeton, 2002). See also David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 3–10 and 245–46, and “What Can Medieval Spain Teach Us About Muslim–Jewish Relations?” *CCAR Journal* (Spring/Summer 2002), pp. 17–36; Alex Novikoff, “Between Tolerance and Intolerance in Medieval Spain: An Historiographical Enigma,” *Medieval Encounters* 11/1–2 (2005): 7–36; and “convivencia,” in the glossary.

71. The “neo-lachrymose” school of historians. See Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 9–11. Also Assis, “Sefarad,” p. 34, and N. Stillman, “Myth, Countermyth, and Distortion,” (*Tikkun*, vols. 6:3–4, 1991).

72. Darwish’s comments are from an interview he gave to *Hadarim* (no. 12), a prominent Israeli literary journal in 1996, in Amman. The journal’s editor, Helit Yeshurun, had asked Darwish about the meaning of al-Andalus for him, since the term figures prominently in his work in several places. As for Darwish and his dream, the cultural vision at its heart is—notwithstanding the changes brought about by recent events—shared by at least a few. The Syrian poet Adonis (‘Ali Ahmad Sa‘id) recently wrote: “Andalusia was in human and cultural terms . . . a mosaic of different yet harmonious elements, numerous yet one. It was a sort of hybridization of the world in form as well as in essence. In everything Andalusia produced, whether philosophical, scientific, or artistic, three horizons converged, Jewish, Christian, in addition to the foundational horizon, the Arabic-Islamic constituent. It therefore transcended all that was bounded by a language or by a particular national or cultural affiliation. . . . It was the homeland of the self and the Other. As such, it was the originator of the avant-gardist idea of stripping the concept of the homeland of boundedness and constructing it in the space of freedom. . . . Thus, in the light of the Andalusian nucleus, we can see how a culture with intertwining borders and languages, a culture that transcends politics and geographic-national boundaries, might emerge in today’s world. It is a culture of hybridization, a culture that finds its identity in diversity, a culture in which Otherness is an organic and constituent dimension. Thus Andalusia seems a viable project, not only for the present, but also for the future” (lecture at Dartmouth College, 2002).

73. “It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the Pillars of Hercules. All ages are contemporaneous” (Ezra Pound, “Praefatio Ad Lectorem Electum, 1910,” in *The Spirit of Romance* [New York, 1952], p. 6); “There is no earlier and later in the Torah” (*Pesahim* 6b). This is not to say that one shouldn’t account for the differences between the medieval world and our own; one should. At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the dimensions of experience that are shared across time. The fact is that poets themselves live the contemporaneity of all ages, as do readers who turn to poetry for nourishment, for what poems can tell them about being alive. Yosef Haim Yerushalmi writes at eloquent length about the ways in which this non-chronological dimension finds

expression in the Jewish historical imagination: “Unlike the biblical writers the rabbis seem to play with Time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will. . . . In the world of *aggada* Adam can instruct his son Seth in the Torah, Shem and Eber establish a house of study, the patriarchs institute the three daily prayer-services of the normative Jewish liturgy, Og King of Bashan is present at Isaac’s circumcision, and Noah prophesies the translation of the Bible into Greek. . . . There is something rather compelling about that large portion of the rabbinic universe in which ordinary barriers of time can be ignored and all the ages placed in an ever-fluid dialogue with one another” (*Zakhor* [Seattle and London, 1982], p. 17; see also pp. 31–52).

74. Yom Tov Assis writes that Spanish-Hebrew poetry introduces us to this society. Considering its sexual mores, he notes the gap that existed between reality and theory in Muslim and Christian communities—the influence of which Jews were exposed to: “On both sides of the ever-changing border in the Iberian peninsula, [Spanish Jews] were more deeply involved in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the land than was any other mediaeval Jewish community.” As a result, he says, “[Hispano-Jewish society], torn between extreme and contradictory trends, found itself characterized by sexual laxity to an extent unknown elsewhere in mediaeval Jewry” (“Sexual Behaviour in Mediaeval Hispano-Jewish Society,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein [London, 1988], p. 27).

75. Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, “Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models,” Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture 26 (New York, 1982), p. 8; Daniel Elazar, *The Other Jews: Sephardim Today* (New York, 1989), p. 45. Jane Gerber cites the figure of 90 percent and notes that they were “an absolute majority in medieval times. . . . By the twentieth century, an absolute reversal had occurred: in 1930 Sephardim were less than 10 percent of world Jewry” (*The Jews of Spain*, p. xxiv). At the time of the Expulsion, which was signed on March 31, 1492, and gave Jews until the end of July to convert or leave the kingdom, the Jewish community had been greatly reduced through conversion, emigration, and slaughter. Reliable numbers are, once again, hard to come by, and estimations offered by scholars range from some eighty thousand to triple that (with the former more likely). Many of the remaining Jews—perhaps more than half—chose conversion over emigration. The last Jews left Spanish soil on July 31, or the seventh of the Hebrew month of Av; because it fell so close to the day marking the destruction of the First and Second Temples, the Expulsion itself was added by Jewish tradition to the commemoration of those catastrophic events in Jewish history. For a description and analysis of the Expulsion and the events that led to it, see H. Beinart, “Order of the Expulsion from Spain: Antecedents, Causes, and Textual Analysis,” in *Crisis and Creativity*, pp. 79–94. See also Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, p. 140, and H. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision* (London, 1997), pp. 23–24.