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Consulting the past: a comparison of relations between Abrahamic religions in medieval Spain and its reflection in today's Israel-Palestine relations

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Consulting the Past: A Comparison of Relations Between Abrahamic Religions in Medieval Spain and its Reflection in Today's Israel-Palestine Relations

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Timeline of Events in Medieval Iberia

456: The Visigoths enter medieval Iberia and defeat the Romans

587: Visigoths convert to Christianity

711: Tariq ibn Ziyad leads Muslim invasion of medieval Iberia through Gibraltar

718: Battle of Covadonga, beginning of the Christian Reconquest of medieval Spain

756: Founding of the Emirate of Cordoba by the Umayyad Empire

1002: Beginning of Jewish Golden Age

1031: Umayyad Empire disintegrates to begin Taifa Period

1058: Rodrigo Díaz, also known as El Cid, is born

1065: Establishment of the Kingdom of Castile

1078: Ibn Quzmān is born in Seville

1085: Conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI of Castile

1086: Almoravids from Morocco invade al-Andalus, end of Jewish Golden Age

1091: Al- A'ma al-Tutīlī is born in Tudela

1094-99: El Cid occupies Valencia

1148-1173: Almohads from Morocco invade al-Andalus

1212: Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, a turning point for the Christian Reconquest and the beginning of the end for Muslim forces

1215: Year of the Fourth Lateran Council

1218: Judah al-Harīzī writes the *Tahkemoni*

1248: Fernando III of Castile captures Seville, leaving Granada as the last Muslim kingdom.

1300: Roughly the time *El Cantar de mío Cid* is written by an unknown author.

1348-49: The Black Plague decimates medieval Europe

1391: First wave of attacks against medieval Jews

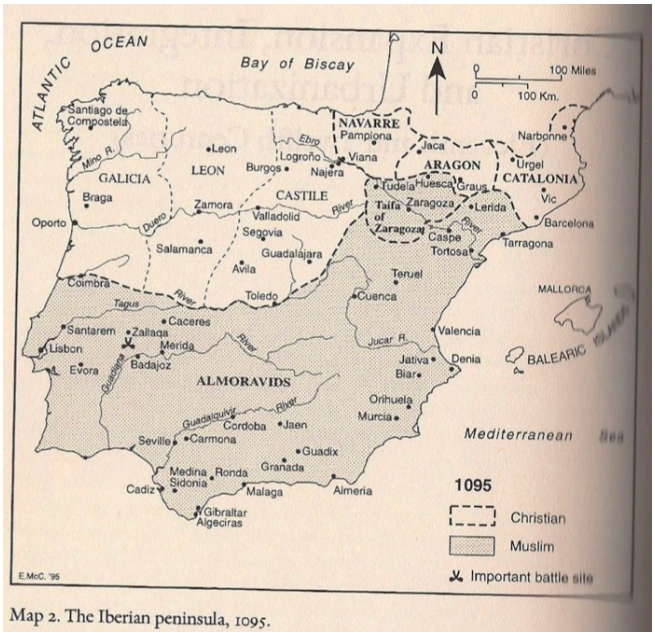
1469: Marriage of Isabel of Castile to Ferdinand II of Aragon, The Catholic Monarchs

1492: Conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs and decree of expulsion of the Jews and Muslims from medieval Spain. Jews and Muslims are given the "choice" to convert or leave Spain.

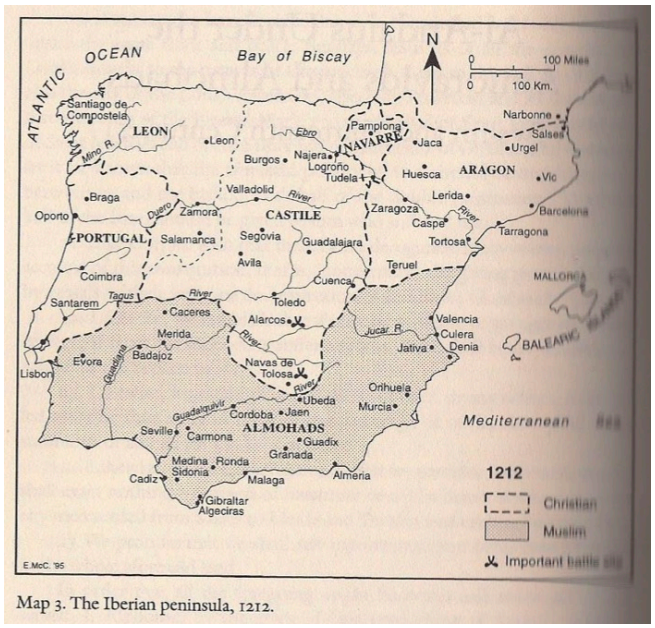
1502 – Islam is banned from Castile, officially forcing all Muslims from Spain.

Maps of Christian Reconquest of Medieval Iberia: 1095-1492

Source: Constable, Olivia Remie. *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012



Map 2. The Iberian peninsula, 1095.



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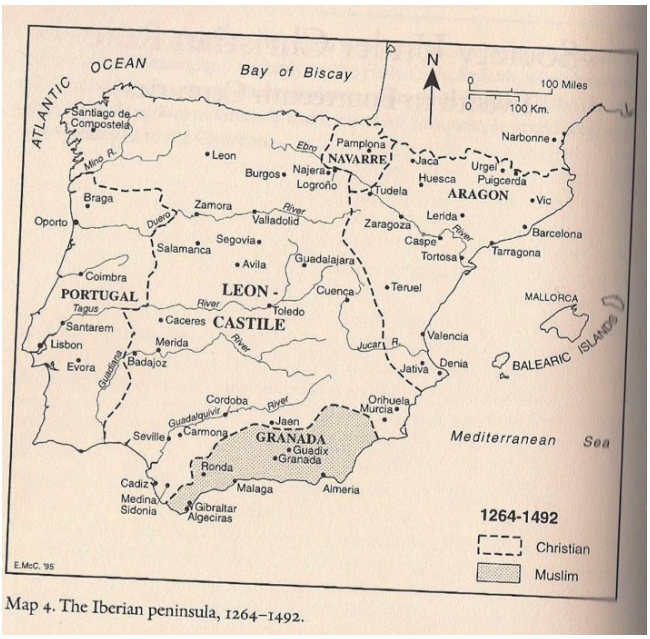

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Middle East is not the only geographical location in which Christians, Muslims and Jews have intertwined their histories, yet many people remain unaware of this important fact. For over seven hundred years, from approximately the year 711 to the year 1492, Spain and Portugal were the stage for violence and unrest between these religious and cultural groups, and perhaps more importantly also for comingling of cultures, languages and lives. This interaction has come to be known as *Convivencia*, or the process of living more or less harmoniously. The term *Convivencia* was famously coined by Américo Castro in his highly controversial thesis regarding Spanish identity, in reference to the coexistence of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in medieval Spain (Wolf).

The theme of religious violence has been recurrent throughout the history of the Middle East, where three major world religions stake claim to their Holy origins. Jerusalem is an especially sacred city to both Israel and Palestine, as it contains various Holy sites for three major world religions: The Western Wall for Judaism, The Dome of the Rock for Islam, and The Church of the Holy Sepulcher for Christianity, to name a few. Historically and in modern times the Middle East is synonymous with religious violence and is generally the geographical location where a person could mentally place the ever-present struggles between Christians, Muslims and Jews. Given recent events, when President Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, all eyes once again turn to Israel-Palestine with the expectation of continued civil unrest and violence.

This work employs literary theory of the *rhizome* and *chronotope* to examine authentic texts written in medieval Spain by members of the three distinct religious and cultural groups in

question: the Christians, the Jews, and the Muslims. In studying the apparent attitudes and portrayals of the other two groups in a given text, it is possible to draw similar conclusions on attitudes pertaining to *Convivencia*. If a Muslim is portrayed poorly in a Christian text, or if a Christian is portrayed favorably in a Jewish text, then these depictions are crucial for the purpose of this thesis to draw its conclusions based on the medieval idea of *Convivencia* in comparison to its modern Middle Eastern concept of discord.

The texts that will be explored are Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni* as representation of medieval Jewish culture, excerpts from *El Cantar de Mío Cid* as representation of medieval Christian culture, and one poem each in the *muwashshaha* and *zajal* style of poetry as representation of medieval Muslim culture. These texts will then be assigned to a spectrum of *Convivencia* to show whether the *Convivencia* experienced in medieval Spain as demonstrated through these texts was more peaceful or violent, and how these lessons can be applied to conflicts between Abrahamic religions seen in Middle Eastern modern times.

Literary Theory: The Rhizome, the Chronotope, and Medieval Spain

In order to begin to delve into the study of the medieval Spain as related to the Middle East, first we must examine the area during the space and time in which it existed. Literary theory is especially helpful in examining medieval Iberia because it gives insight into the culture during this time period. Since it is impossible to conduct an interview with anyone who lived in this era, the best alternative is examining literature through the lens of literary theory because in this manner, literature serves as a glimpse into a group's core beliefs and views regarding their world.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of the *rhizome* is of particular interest for this study because the *rhizome* is a concept that connects the past with the present. Deleuze, a well-known philosopher, and Guattari, a famous psychoanalyst, collaborated on *A Thousand Plateaus,* which is considered to be their masterwork.[i] Their idea of the *rhizome*, as a literary concept in place of a biological one, can be applied to the study of *Convivencia* in medieval Spain by implementing the six principles that constitute a *rhizome* on literary works.[ii]

Deleuze and Guattari stated that Principles 1 and 2 are "Connection and Heterogeneity." That is to say that an integral characteristic of a *rhizome* is the following: "…any point…can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Deleuze 7). The *rhizome* that was created by the coexistence of medieval Spain with Jewish, Christian and Muslim populations is a culmination of each ethnic and religious group's narratives. The *rhizome* of Tariq ibn Ziyad leading his Muslim forces through the Strait of Gibraltar in 711 is connected to the *rhizome* of the Catholic Monarchs expelling all Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, and it is also connected to the struggle faced on either side in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in our times. Through examination of literature produced by the *rhizome* of distinct cultural and ethnic groups from medieval Spain, one can see that the "…*rhizome* ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze 7). Moreover, it is for this reason and in this way that the convergence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims under the concept of the *rhizome* can, and should be examined through authentic literary sources.

The third principle - Principle 3 - outlined by Deleuze and Guattari is the Principle of Multiplicity. They explain that a *rhizome* has no points or positions but instead flows ceaselessly

into other narratives and forms making an infinite number of connections. The *rhizome* created through the convergence of the three Abrahamic religions in medieval Spain is also by definition a multiplicity, which has "…porous boundaries and is defined provisionally by its variations and dimensions" (Tampio). It is impossible for communities in such close contact with others, to keep from mixing and exchanging their cultures. The boundaries are indeed porous, which can be seen in the shared languages that emerged and in creative examples such as *aljamiado* texts.[iii]

Furthermore, the study of Principle 4 teaches us about Signifying Rupture, explaining that "…a *rhizome* may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze 9). *Rhizome*s continually grow and break, only to begin to grow again from their ruptures in new directions. This idea explains the many narratives that became one narrative in medieval Iberia: *Convivencia*. The ruptures that were created in the story of the Christians, Jews and Muslims of the Peninsula once again grew and came together to coexist. The centers of all three religions are not and never were medieval Spain, yet it is a fact that all three religions thrived together in that geographical location. The second rupture of the *rhizome* in medieval Iberia is the expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492 and the Muslims by 1502. Although these two groups were forced to leave the Peninsula, therefore rupturing *Convivencia*, the specific *rhizome*s of each group, enriched by the process of *Convivencia*, followed the Jews and Muslims from medieval Spain to other areas throughout the world, such as Turkey and the Americas.[iv]

In this manner, the fifth and sixth principles from Deleuze and Guattari are the Principles of Cartography and Decalcomania. According to these principles, the *rhizome* is

"…not amenable to any structural or generative model" but instead serves as a map that constructs an idea (Deleuze 12). Deleuze and Guattari further explain that "The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields…" (Deleuze 12). Which brings us to the conclusion that these three religious and cultural groups within medieval Iberia constructed the idea of *Convivencia* unconsciously. This is a point that merits in-depth examination in our thesis because we believe this is also the case in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

The *rhizome* of *Convivencia* – this image of thought that becomes a *modus vivendi* - that grew in medieval Iberia, and that has been ruptured and regrown in a multitude of different directions, is currently being expressed in the Israeli-Palestinian 'conflict.' Since the *rhizome* is a "…map [that is] open and connectable in all of its dimensions," then it is also open to constant modification, which can manifest in works of art or even as political action or mediation (Deleuze 12).

Given the fact that this study is a critical and cultural analysis of literature, in order to move further we will need to refer to M.M. Bakhtin, the famous Russian linguist of the twentieth century, who developed the idea of the *chronotope* in his essay *Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel.* This concept is immensely useful in analyzing literature from medieval Iberia. Bakhtin defines his idea of the *chronotope* as "… (literally 'time-space') …the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Holquist 84). Concerning the study of literature in a historical sense, Bakhtin describes what he calls a historical inversion:

> The essence of this inversion is found in the fact that mythological and artistic thinking locates such categories as

> purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the *past*. Myths about paradise, a Golden Age, a heroic age, an ancient truth, as well as the later concepts of a 'state of nature,' of natural, innate rights and so on, are all expression of this historical inversion. To put it in somewhat simplified terms, we might say that a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of the *past*, a thing that is in no sense part of the past's reality, but a thing that is in its essence a purpose, an obligation. (Holquist 147)

As Bakhtin explains above, the artistic thinking that relates to the past directly impacts the future. *Convivencia* could sometimes end in discord, so *Convivencia,* whether it be producing violent or harmonious living, can only be realized in the future as portrayed through the past. In this sense, as part of the past's reality, the *chronotope* of *Convivencia* in medieval Spain directly relates to the *chronotope* being experienced in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. It is only through examining the past *chronotope* that the "reality" of the future can be realized, as Bakhtin explains.

For these reasons, Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the *rhizome* and Bakhtin's idea of the *chronotope* directly connect the literature of medieval Spain with the Middle East. Through the continuation of the ruptured *rhizome* of *Convivencia* created in medieval Iberia and continued on in Israel-Palestine and through the *chronotope* of historical inversion created in the time-space of medieval Iberia, analysis of medieval Spanish literature will directly touch the narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict of the 21st century. In using the ideas of the *rhizome* and the *chronotope*, this thesis will explore the idea of *Convivencia* as a way to understand the conflicts in Israel-Palestine from historical, cultural and literary perspectives as a model for possible solutions to the struggles faced today.

Convivencia – Peace, Violence, or Somewhere In-Between?

Convivencia, or coexistence, is a concept that appears in each and every textbook which studies medieval Spain. There are many who agree with it, but also there are many more who disagree and doubt that it ever existed, at least in the peaceful sense that the term aims to invoke. *Convivencia*, when applied to medieval Spanish studies, presents the idea that the Christians, Muslims and Jews of the Iberian Peninsula lived together more or less harmoniously between the years 711 and 1492, a period of over seven hundred years.[v]

This study aims to explore the idea of *Convivencia* in the medieval Iberian Peninsula from various viewpoints, using sources both in favor and against this idea. Throughout this thesis, *Convivencia* will be referred to as either *Convivencia pacífica* and *Convivencia discordia,* peaceful and violent interaction, which will help distinguish between the various viewpoints and shed light on the attitudes of coexistence that existed during that time period. There is no denying that no matter the perspective of *Convivencia,* medieval Jews, Muslims and Christians did live together. The question at hand is whether or not this coexistence took a more peaceful or a more violent form. For this reason, it is important to distinguish between the perspectives of *Convivencia* that are taken in current critical academic works in order to later be able to apply them to authentic literary sources. This study aims to categorize literature as either *Convivencia pacífica, Convivencia discordia,* or *Convivencia neutral* and at the end, will aspire to be able to generalize attitudes towards *Convivencia* by the participants of medieval Iberian culture as demonstrated by their literary texts.

Many will argue that the idea of *Convivencia* is a myth, and that instead the medieval Iberian Peninsula was in constant flux of religious and cultural power. As Darío Fernández-Morera states, "The existence of a Muslim kingdom in Medieval Spain where different races and religions lived harmoniously in multicultural tolerance is one of today's most wide-spread myths" (Fernández-Morera 23). One cannot and should not deny the intolerance that was a part of every stage of the story of al-Andalus and the Christian Reconquista. The medieval era, especially in the Iberian Peninsula, was rife with pogroms, murders, bloody wars, and unjust taxes imposed on the religious and cultural proletariat, by whichever ruling class happened to be in power at that time. In fact, Christians and Jews under Muslim rule were considered *dhimmi*, meaning they were recognized to worship the same God even though they pertained to separate religions. *Dhimmi* were protected, unlike pagans, but were subjected to paying a tax to Muslim rulers in exchange for their protection.[vi] Fernández-Morera explains dhimmitude as "…a 'protected' class curtailed from any possibility of sharing political power or compromising the hegemonic position of Islam" (25). The best-known proponent of *Convivencia pacífica* is María Rosa Menocal, whose *Ornament of the World* refers to the *dhimmi* tax as a 'generosity' but in effect can be viewed as another form of oppression. The *dhimmi* tax is often referred to in order to advocate for *Convivencia*, but as one can see, is not exactly a form of tolerance at all but another way to exhibit power by one group over the others. On the other hand, for the purpose of this study, it may be more useful to redefine the word tolerance and give thought to what it meant in the past.

In criticism to Menocal's work *The Ornament of the World*, Anna Akasoy states that "Although in practice religious policies on the Iberian Peninsula may resemble what we

associate with 'tolerance,' the term remains conceptually and historically undefined in Menocal's book, and there is virtually no evidence to support her description of tolerance as a value of Muslim Spain" (Akasoy 490). As a proponent to the idea of *Convivencia*, Menocal provides a history of the Iberian Peninsula and the relations between religions. She paints a rosy image of three distinct religious and cultural groups who all seemingly work and live together harmoniously with one another, among their distinct groups.

In her book, *The Ornament of the World*, María Rosa Menocal argues in favor of *Convivencia pacífica*. She cites various cultural achievements, which are distinct for each religious group, and intertwines their narratives to ultimately paint an almost serene image of the medieval Iberian Peninsula and the relations between religious and cultural groups. She does not omit the violence, which occurred between groups, but instead focuses on artistic achievement, citing different developments in languages, literature, and architecture and how they were passed between groups to form their own purposes and meanings. For example, Menocal explains that in the year 855, Christians began converting to Islam by the thousands and that a passion for the Arabic language was part of this fanaticism (66-67). As a result, languages began mixing in medieval Spain; a dialect (now extinct for the most part) known as Mozarabic or Andalusi was used between Christians, Muslims and Jews living in the Muslim occupied areas of medieval Spain.[vii] She acknowledges the fact that a peaceful coexistence was not always the case in the Iberian Peninsula, but she makes clear in her work that her overall conclusion, through examination of historical events and literature, is that the three groups lived together more or less in harmony.

In contrast to Menocal, David Nirenburg, in his book *Communities of Violence,* famously argues for *Convivencia discordia*. He states that the three dominant groups of the Peninsula did not live harmoniously together due to supposed threatening religious and cultural differences. This stance may seem more realistic than the one proposed by Menocal, as Nirenburg delves into the different violent acts played out by various groups against minorities, such as Jews, lepers, Muslims, etc. Nirenburg focuses on the Reconquista aspect of the medieval Iberian Peninsula. Therefore, there is not much mention of violent acts committed against Christians. Instead, as Christians gained more ground when the years went by, the violent acts against the subjugated group increased. Throughout his book, Nirenburg admits to Menocal's viewpoint, but chooses instead to put faith in the idea of *Convivencia discordia* due to the number of historical accounts of violence.

Between these two extremes, Chris Lowney of *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Medieval Spain* and Michelle M. Hamilton of *Representing Others in Medieval Iberian Literature*, make clear in their works that perhaps the idea of *Convivencia* is not as black and white as it is shown, but instead it consists of many shades of grey. This study agrees with the stance taken by Lowney and Hamilton that medieval Spain was neither an example of the idyllic *Convivencia pacífica* nor *Convivencia discordia*, but rather simply a *Convivencia neutral*, or coexistence between the three major religious and cultural groups with all the problems that such coexistence will have. This combines the stances taken by Menocal and Nirenburg but instead implies that it would be impossible to align oneself with either extreme. The world is never as simple as two choices, and this study aims to show that through literary analysis, it is possible to examine the attitudes and beliefs that each religious and cultural group shared

about the other and how they learned to negotiate their differences. If only the world of Menocal would have truly existed, perhaps Spain would not have decreed the expulsion of their Jews in 1492 and Muslims in 1502, and therefore would not be considered one of the most Catholic countries in Europe. If Nirenburg's scenario existed, then one would be hard-pressed to believe that the three distinct groups lived together in a small geographic area in harmony for over seven hundred years. Therefore, it may be more plausible to delve into literary works which came out of these distinct groups during those seven hundred years in order to examine intergroup relations since artistic expressions are always indicators of the inner cultural and personal sentiments. If Christians, Jews and Muslims were able to simply coexist in medieval Spain, not overly peacefully nor overly violently, then it is worth exploring to be able to possibly extrapolate some lesson that can be brought to the Middle East today.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Due to the events of September 11th, 2001, many throughout the world labeled Islam as a religion of hate and intolerance. Not only did this instill a sense of fear in non-Muslims, but it also reignited study and evolution of the relations between Abrahamic religions. It has become common practice to compare and contrast the story of al-Andalus [viii] and the history of the people of medieval Iberia to the ongoing narrative in the Middle East. Although this study aims to do the same, in order to frame this issue, it is pertinent to remember the adage from philosopher George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." If it is possible to look back and compare relations between religious and cultural groups

from the past, and if it is possible to extrapolate feasible solutions to similar problems, then the effort and framework of this study is validated in its entirety.

Many believe that the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is a dilemma that has been faced by Middle Eastern Jews and Muslims for centuries, when in fact it has only been around for the last hundred years. Many more would be shocked to understand that the conflict is not simply religious but instead political in nature, in which Jews and Palestinians are both fighting for sovereignty and national identity. The *Convivencia* in medieval Spain was not solely religious either, although religion certainly played a vital role during medieval time. In the 21st century, it is important to understand the history of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in order to make educated and rational decisions of how to move forward. By examining the history of both processes of *Convivencia* in the Israeli-Palestinian context and medieval Spain, one will be able to better understand where these narratives intersect and where possible cultural and historical lessons regarding *Convivencia* can be applied. Looking back to medieval Spain may help to understand or even simply add to the discussion of the troubles faced in Israel and Palestine today.

The area of land known today as Israel-Palestine in the early 19th century was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, in which Jews, Christians and Muslims lived together in what has been described as a situation similar to *Convivencia*, because they lived in relative peace (Shaw). The collapse of the Ottoman Empire occurred after World War I, during which ethnic Arabs of Palestine began to identify not only as Arabs but also began to claim a national identity as Palestinians. It is important to note that not all Arabs are Muslims, just as not all Muslims are Arabs, nor are all Palestinians Muslims.[ix] There are a number of Christians who claim Palestine

as their home, who later also became part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (Moist). The creation of Palestine was not religious, but instead political and served as an expression of identity for a group of people (Caplan 84).

The same is the case of the creation of Israel, although Israel's case deals with a group of people who share a common religion. Theodore Herzl, known as the father of Zionism, published his paper *Der Judenstaat* in 1896, urging the Jews of Europe to seek their own national identity (Lehman-Wilzig 56). After centuries of persecution, the Jews believed the Middle East to be their sacred homeland, and by establishing themselves in the region they would finally be afforded the safety they sought. As a result, in the first decade of the 20th century, thousands of Jews emigrated from Europe to the Middle East.[x]

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain seized control of what would be Israel-Palestine, in turn limiting Jewish immigration due to conflict between Jews and Arabs. Years later, as the Holocaust began claiming the lives of many, including much of Europe's Jewish population, more and more fled to British Palestine to seek refuge. In 1941, government officials discussed a "…transfer [of] half a million Arabs out of Palestine, as 'a first installment,' to make room for two million Jews fleeing from Hitler's clutches in Europe" (Morris 68).

In 1947, the newly created United Nations approved a division of British Palestine into two separate states: Israel for Jews and Palestine for Arabs. The city of Jerusalem, which is considered to be Holy to all Abrahamic religions, would become a special international zone. This division was meant as a solution to three main problems in the area: the British would no longer have control over Palestine, the Jews would be given their own state, and Palestine

would gain their independence; but in the eyes of the Arab world, this appeared to be yet another illegal land-grab and example of European colonialism (Caplan 94).

In turn, throughout the 20th century, a number of wars broke out in Israel-Palestine such as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the Six Days War of 1967, the two Intifadas, the first in the 1980s and the second in 2000, where Prime Minister Ariel Sharon led a group of over one thousand armed guards to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which is one of the Holiest sites in the Jewish religion and the third Holiest site for Muslims, mixing in this manner politics and religion (Smith 136). The creation of the terrorist group, Hamas, was also a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and a direct response to undermine the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) by creating an alternative to the secular organization (Rabasa 16). It is apparent that this situation cannot last forever, and perhaps even more drastic situations will arise as a result before peace is reached.

The fight for identity is central to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. For Jews, the primary objective was to establish security for the Jews, and at the same time, Palestinians feared that as their land was lost to the creation of Israel, so would be their identity as a people. The fight for both sides is therefore about "…security, identity, and access to the land" (Mossberg 32).

As one can see, the coexistence of religious and cultural groups in Israel-Palestine is violent due to the imposition of national borders. Although much has happened historically that widens the gap between the situation in Israel-Palestine and medieval Spain, their narratives show similarities in that they are groups of people which are culturally and religiously diverse who are seeking a way to coexist in a small geographic area. Both their stories not only involve differences in religion, as many believe, but differences in ideologies. The situation in Israel-

Palestine is unstable, and perhaps examining the *rhizome* and *chronotope* created by medieval Spain will inform the *rhizome* and *chronotope* that is currently being experienced by Israel-Palestine.

Thus, the study of some of the literary productions by Jews, Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain will constitute the research chapters of this thesis with the aim of finding lessons that can apply to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict today. Texts that will be explored are as follows: Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni* as representation of the Jewish culture, *El Cantar del Mio Cid* as a representation of Christian culture, and one poem each by Ibn Quzmān and Al A'mā al-Tutīlī to showcase the *muwashshaha* and *zajal* style of Muslim poetry and culture. The beginning of each chapter will present a brief historical view of each cultural group to give insight into the political and cultural landscape during which each literary piece was created. Each text will then be introduced as well as analyzed before moving on to the next chapter. After analyzing the three groups, readers will then be asked to reflect on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and the *rhizome* and *chronotope* created in that space in relation to the *rhizome* and *chronotope* of medieval Spain will be analyzed and compared. In this way, the reader will be able to consult the past in order to inform the present and future.

Chapter 2 - Sepharad and Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni*: Jewish Life in Medieval Spain

Relations in the medieval Iberian Peninsula are mainly depicted as the wars and disputes between the Christians and the Muslims, with the Jewish population often overlooked. This is a problem since the Jewish population of medieval Spain may in fact be one of the oldest groups to be a part of the Iberian Peninsula. In accordance with "…medieval Sephardic traditions, Jews reached the Iberian Peninsula in biblical times…. [although these] traditions attesting to the Sephardic community's biblical origins were probably a form of self-defense, for most of them emerged when anti-Semitism was intensified during the Christian reconquest of Muslim Spain" (Gerber 1). Lowney posits that the Jews entered Spain in the 1st century B.C.E. as a way to escape Roman anti-Semitism, one reason being their rejection of Roman polytheism (Lowney 22; 37). Later, during the Visigoth rule of medieval Iberia, they were discriminated against once more. Jews were forbidden from marrying Christians or owning Christian slaves, circumcision was proscribed, and the Visigoths even outlawed observance of Jewish Holy days. Under Visigoth rule, Jews were given dire choices – convert, be exiled, or be sold into slavery (Lowney 29).

In the year 711, with the arrival of the Muslims to the Iberian Peninsula and the seemingly simple defeat of the Visigoths, Muslims, Jews and Christians were forced to live together. This period, from the year 711 to the year 756, is known as the Muslim conquest and consolidation of medieval Iberia, as 90% of Iberia became known as the Emirate of Cordoba within the vast Umayyad Empire.[i] In place of pillaging and destroying Visigoth society, Muslims opted for negotiations (Lowney 36). The Jews welcomed the Muslims as their new rulers; the

Quran, a relatively new Holy book in these times, called for peace between the three Abrahamic religions, but at the same time warned Muslims against Jews and Christians (Lowney 36). Under Muslim rule, Jews and Christians were considered second-class citizens, but Jews had a raised status above their Christian counterparts. After the Muslim conquest of medieval Iberia, Jews were left to govern the towns in which they were recently persecuted. Their statuses were elevated under Muslim rule in comparison to the anti-Semitic laws they experienced under Christian Visigoth rule (Lowney 96). As one can imagine, this did not help to strengthen Jewish-Christian relations. In a case study, María Rosa Menocal describes the life of the famous Jewish scholar, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, who was born near Muslim Cordoba in the year 915. He experienced a world with positive Jewish sentiment as Jews in Muslim Cordoba were raised to the same status held by the Christians in Cordoba. Perhaps this was the reason for the acknowledgement and the status in society that Hasdai ibn Shaprut was able to achieve (Menocal 84; 90).

In Muslim Iberia, cultures, languages and lives mixed among religious and ethnic groups. Samuel ha-Nagid, a Jew and self-proclaimed David of his Age, was appointed by Muslim law as an official civic leader of the Jewish community in Granada (Lowney 95).[ii] His war poetry shows his struggle, or perhaps synthesis, of living in two religious and ethnic worlds – he employs both Arabic form and style while incorporating Biblical imagery and ideas (Lowney 98). Although ha-Nagid appears to be combining his experiences into a written art form, Lowney argues that his use of Biblical imagery may in fact be reflective of the recognition that Jews felt compared to other religious traditions.[iii] Rather than submit to an imposing religion, Lowney explains that Jews preferred to be chastised as outsiders (99).

Nonetheless, the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid, along with his help in constructing the famous Alhambra castle in Granada, is considered part of the Jewish Golden Age. The Jewish Golden Age was a period of around eighty years, from the years 1002 to 1086, in which the Jews of medieval Iberia flourished culturally, even despite the civil wars that ensued under Muslim rule during the Taifa Period (Ayoun 3). Along with Samuel ha-Nagid are famous Jewish poets and philosophers, such as Moises ibn Ezra, who lived his life in Granada from 1055-1135, Jonah ibn Janah, born in Cordoba between 985 and 990, and Salomon ibn Gabirol, born in Malaga between 1020 and 1022 (Ayoun 3).[iv] These famous cultural icons of Jewish medieval Iberia are evidence of a Jewish community that thrived in an environment that was politically unstable. During the Jewish Golden Age more influential Jewish philosophers, such as Moses ben Maimonides, who is considered to be "the most illustrious figure in Judaism in the post-Talmudic era," helped medieval Iberia with contributions to medical sciences, philosophy, and religious studies, flourished (Lowney 145).

The Jews of medieval Iberia are known to be Sephardic, coming from *Sepharad*, the Hebrew translation of al-Andalus (Menocal 79). From an ethnographic and linguistic standpoint, Wexler explains that members of the Sephardic community are descendants of converts of ethnic Palestinian Jews who lived in North Africa in the late 7th century before Spain was invaded by the Muslims. As a result, Berber, Arabic, North African Romance, and non-Jewish Arabized North African cultures were brought into medieval Spain (Wexler xvi). However, with the linguistic and ethnographic data that Wexler draws upon, he still admits that it is difficult to pinpoint any Jewish origins, due to the diaspora of the Jews across Africa, Asia and Europe, along with their heterogeneous racial and cultural makeup (2).

As the Sephardic community became a part of Muslim al-Andalus, Wexler explains that the early adoption of traditionally non-Jewish languages, such as Arabic, is proof that Sephardic community must be converts from non-Jewish populations (3). In favor of *Convivencia pacífica,* Menocal in *The Ornament of the World* often cites the mixture and creation of new languages that arose out of medieval Spain such as *Mozárabe*, *Aljamía* or *Ladino*. Wexler aims to point out that although *Ladino* was created by the Sephardic community as a result of the mixture of languages and cultures in al-Andalus, it may not particularly be an example of *Convivencia pacífica*. Wexler explains that during the Christian reconquest, as the Muslim taifas were gradually lost to the Christians, the shift from Arabic to Castilian was not adopted by everyone.[v] In fact, the Sephardic community adopted the Castilian lexicon but kept the Arabic grammar and phonology, which resulted in what Wexler describes as a 'relexified Arabic (a language with an Arabic grammar and sound system and a predominantly Ibero-Romance vocabulary)" (xvi-xvii). Wexler describes this phenomenon as a "…partial language shift of relexified Judeo-Arabic to Spanish," which occurred during the 11th century (9).

In accordance with Menocal's assumption that the creation of Ladino in the Sephardic population of medieval Spain proves *Convivencia pacífica*, the fact that the language shift experienced by the Jews was only partial may not disprove her idea. By maintaining a semblance of the language spoken previously, perhaps the Sephardic community, in an attempt to assimilate to new reigning political forces, also wished to retain their previous culture. This is not necessarily defiance to new opposing cultures and languages. It was certainly not the wish of Christians that Muslims and Jews assimilate fully to Christian culture.[vi] As an effort of cultural maintenance but also an attempt to adapt to new political and cultural climates, the partial

language shift and creation of Ladino by the Sephardic community may be a positive example of *Convivencia*.

The Jewish community of medieval Spain is not to be confused with the Ashkenazi Jews, who comprise around 80% of the Jews in the world today (10). Ashkenanzi Jews are descendants of Germano-West Slavic Jews who have migrated since the 13th century to monolingual Slavic-speaking lands and as a result spoke a mixture of German and Hebrew – Yiddish (5;8). After the Christian Reconquest of 1492, Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazi Jews had more contact among themselves. For this reason, it is possible for Jews in Israel to trace their lineage back for several centuries as both Ashkenazic and non-Ashkenazic roots (Wexler 8). Therefore, not all Jews in Israel-Palestine today are descendants of Old Palestinian Jews or Ashkenazi Jews. Sephardic Jews as well, made their way to Israel, and descendants today who are directly affected by the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict may also have been affected by their family heritage of medieval Spain's *Convivencia*. The *rhizome* created by the Sephardic community, and the ways of *Convivencia* that their families experienced in medieval Iberia was fractured during the Reconquest of 1492 and regrown in the lives of Sephardic Jews in Israel-Palestine today.

Along with the partial language shift described by Wexler, certain properties of the creation of *The Book of the Tahkemoni* by Judah al-Harīzī are also positive examples of *Convivencia*. The *Tahkemoni* was written in a series of poems known as *maqāmāt* – originally a style created during al-Andalus as a response to *adab* culture. *Adab* is the Arabic concept of social, cultural and academic wisdom, and poetry was central to refined al-Andalusian court life (Hamilton 5). The shift from the Taifa Period to the Almoravid courts also stakes claim to the

creation of *adab* and *maqāmāt* style poetry, as the shift in politics called for a shift in artistic expression.[vii] This resulted in a shift from traditional erotic Arabic poetry to rhymed prose (Hamilton 36). *Maqāmāt* poetry combines prose, poetry and pseudo-autobiographic first-person narration, and was the ideal vehicle, Hamilton explains, for addressing the complexities of the political, social and linguistic realities of the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the 12th century (37).

After the destruction of the first Muslim courts during the Taifa Period, *maqāmāt* style poetry continued to dominate in Judeo-Iberian literature for over three hundred years (Hamilton, 49). As the Sephardic community, who had been raised in socioeconomic status under Muslim rule, began to adopt the *maqāmāt* as their own, new themes began to emerge that were specific to their cultural and religious group. Authors such as Moses ibn Ezra (1055-1146), Ibn Shabbetai (b. 1168) and Judah al-Harīzī (1170-1235) wrote about being exiled in Jewish Iberia (Hamilton 49).[viii] Another common theme was the preservation of Jewish culture in an Arabic world – the Hebrew *maqāmāt* in contrast to the Arabic *maqāmāt* stressed the belief that Arab *adab* culture was threatening to Hebrew language, culture and Jewish identity (Hamilton 50). In response to this belief, authors such as Ibn Shabbetai and al-Harīzī, throughout their works, showed their respect and knowledge of Arabic and Arabized Jewish literature and culture as well as an obvious mistrust of Arabic culture and their relationship to it (Hamilton 51).[ix] From this respect and mistrust, al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni* was born.

The *Tahkemoni* is a collection of Hebrew *maqāmat* written by Judah al-Harīzī around the year 1218 as a direct response to another Jewish author's collection of *maqāmat*, al-Harīrī (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 110). Writing to a Jewish audience, al-Harīzī takes

readers through fifty subsequent episodes which "revolve around the encounters, often humorous, of the narrator and a protagonist rogue…" (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 110).[x] Al-Harīzī wanted to showcase the Hebrew language as "...an eloquent tongue to rival Arabic's claim to unique beauty of expression and holiness" (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 110). During this time period, Arabic had taken center stage as the language of beauty and self-expression (Menocal 66). Christians had even been converting to Islam by the thousands (Menocal 67). In direct response, al-Harīzī, in reflecting the attitudes of his cultural group, wanted to raise Hebrew to the same level as Arabic through mirroring a popular literary style of the time. In fact, the *Tahkemoni* "…is considered by any standard of the comparative literature approach to represent the most salient example of 'Arabic influence' over Hebrew literature in its Andalusian 'golden age'" (Drory 285).

The *Tahkemoni* is important to the discussion of *Convivencia* because it was written by a specific cultural and religious group in response to separate cultural and political events during the same time period. It was written after the Jewish Golden Age and was written specifically for a Jewish audience who would most likely sympathize or relate to the message that the author wished to convey. Throughout the *Tahkemoni*, the protagonists are confronted with a plethora of different characters, who in the case of "The Arab Astrologer," are caricatures of cultural beliefs. Through closed examination in this study of the twenty second *maqāmat* in the *Tahkemoni*, "The Arab Astrologer," the Sephardic *rhizome* will be better understood, as well as its relations with the Arabic *rhizome* and the Christian *rhizome* in medieval Spain.

"The Arab Astrologer" begins with the declaration that Heman, the Ezrahite, is the narrator of the story to come. This is to say that our narrator is Jewish and that the subsequent

events are narrated through Jewish eyes. The text has been written for a Jewish audience and therefore is written from a Jewish perspective.

> Heman, the Ezrahite, speaks:
> In the days of my youth (Job 29:4) when the stars of my dawn shone (Job 3:9) and fortune favored me, (Lit. the wheel of fortune turned at my command) I was delighting myself amidst gardens and pasturing among the lilies by the watering places of streams and under shadowy thickets. I breathed in the zephyrs, scented with the oil of myrrh, bearing tranquility for the soul and joy for the heart. (Psalm 16:11) (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 95)

Throughout "The Arab Astrologer," the reader is shown specific Holy book passages. This again is a reference to the Jewish audience. The audience would most likely be familiar with the specific passages and their relation to the story. The passages are relatable to Christians as well, due to the similarities between the Bible and the Tanakh.[xi] The Qu'ran, on the other hand, would not share this familiarity and therefore one can assume that Muslims are not the intended audience.[xii]

The beginning of "The Arab Astrologer," opens with Heman, the narrator, describing a beautiful day that he experienced in his youth. Signifying that this encounter took place in his youth, one might assume -as youth corresponds to the 'golden age' of men- that this is a comparison to the Jewish Golden Age, where the Sephardic community flourished culturally and artistically under Muslim rule. The nature imagery is perhaps also a demonstration of the beauty that can be created with the Hebrew language, as al-Harīzī uses the five senses, to draw readers in to the story that will ensue. From the beginning the audience is shown the theme of divine intervention with "…when the stars of my dawn shone (Job 3:9) and fortune favored me." Immediately the audience is to understand that the events to follow are to come from

above, and perhaps not from the Muslim version of the Divine that the narrator will encounter. This is Heman's truth, and a personal interpretation of the Divine that he experienced throughout his youth, which is to be challenged by the Arab astrologer's view of the Divine.

Heman goes on to explain that as he was out walking one day, he came upon "…a man standing near the gate of the city, worried and pained," and upon further investigation discovered that it was his friend Heber, the Kenite. Heman instantly sympathizes with Heber because they both share the same religious and ethnic group.[xiii] Heman asks Heber to explain why he is suffering, and the rest of the story is told from the perspective of Heber. The story, although it has now changed narrators, is still being told from a Jewish perspective. In fact, the audience may even relate to the word-of-mouth style that is portrayed (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 95-96).

Heber explains that the other day while he was with other Hebrew men, he "…saw a great crowd gathering. They were coming and running from all directions…. pushing near and jostling with one another…" to be in the presence of an Arab scholar who professed to be an astrologer and to have the power to reveal the future and secrets of the universe (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 96). Upon viewing the Arab astrologer, Heber explains that he "…inspired dread by the glory of wisdom that he possessed. He held in his hands an astrolabe with its 'net-work.' He weighed the sun in its circuits, the course of its path, the breadth of its circuit and the inclination of its shade" (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 96). This is a comment on the scientific achievements of the Arab world, which are vast but some were considered to be controversial at the time. For example, the Taifa of Toledo had "…specialized in the study of the stars, sometimes astronomy, but just as often its inseparable partner,

astrology," and Toledo was known as "…Spain's magical center, the place where the arts of necromancy and divination flourished," and it would not be uncommon for "The same scholar [to] see nothing incongruous in solving a quadratic equation one moment and predicting from the stars whether a man might be killed by falling masonry the next: he might even make a talisman to prevent such a contingency" (Dodds 205).

The awe that is expressed by the narrator is apparent in his description of the Arab astrologer. The narrator admits that the Arab astrologer possesses wisdom that is glorious and terrifying at the same time, which is a comment on the mixture of apparently mystical and scientific achievements of the Arab world, as mentioned above. This is an example of respect for wisdom and power and demonstrates *Convivencia* from the perspective of the Jewish narrator in response to the representation of the Arabic world as seen through the Arab astrologer. The description is not marked with what could be called friendliness, but instead reverence and respect for the knowledge that is possessed.

In accordance with the relationship between astronomy and astrology, the Arab astrologer, who is not given a name, goes on a long tirade of his special knowledge of the universe, with "…the five moving planets, arranged in [his] heart" (Decter, "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English" 97). During his speech he makes numerous claims that the universe lives in his heart, through statements such as

> If in the skies they have their path, their way is in my heart. If their tracks are on high, their circuits are in my thoughts, nor is there hidden from me Saturn (Shabthai) and its evils; Jupiter (Zedek) and its goodness; Mars (Maadim) and its battles; the Sun and its dominions; Venus (Nogah) and its delights; Mercury and its wisdom; the Moon and its generations; and the secret of the Zodiac and its degrees; …. the constellation Aries is hung on the cords of my intellect. I fasten the horns of Taurus without cords. I leave

> Gemini as the life of the mother of orphans. The height of Cancer is small compared to my high degree. The constellation Leo is sick and sighs over awe of me. Virgo is wed to me in the chamber of my heart. I consider Libra as dust for the scales and Scorpion's bite in my tongue is as the bit of a bridle. He who grasps the Bow (Sagittarius) fears to draw near me. I divide the constellation Capricornus as one cleaves a kid. The waters of Aquarius are as a drop of a bucket (Isaiah 40:15) for the waters of my intellect. The constellation Pisces is caught like fishes in my net… (97).

The Arab astrologer likens himself to a prophet, and through his speech on his vast knowledge of the universe and his power over the stars, he claims to be more than a mere man. The crowd does not seem to question the Arab astrologer's claims and gathers around him, each asking their own questions about their futures and desires. Heber listens to his speech and decides that he would like to test the Arab astrologer; he does not blindly follow the astrologer's claims as the rest of the crowd does. Together, he and his friends decide that they will use their culture and religion to trick him. In this manner, they will test the divine claims of the Arab astrologer. They decide to approach him as a group, with their minds in agreement, and without speaking words, but rather communicating telepathically, they would "…ask him about the redemption; when will salvation come to the children of the exile; and whether [they] shall stand again after [their] downfall," (99). Already it is significant that they, the only Jews in the crowd, are suspicious of the supposed Arab prophet. After the astrologer begins his reading of the Jewish men, he "…lifted up his head, and looked wonderingly at [them]. Then he gazed in anger at [them] and said to [them]: I swear by Him who has created the light that shines, the sun and the moon, and every constellation that flourishes, and by Him who caused the planets to revolve like a ball – I swear that you are not Arabs nor Christians, but

that you are from the despised and lowly people – perhaps you are Israelites," to which the men reply that indeed they are (100).

Heber and his friends have not spoken a word of their questions to the Arab astrologer, yet he is able to ascertain that they are Jewish. Is it his divine power, or is it more obvious? During the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, in an attempt to prevent "damnable mixing" between cultures and religions, the Council further prescribed a remedy "That such persons [Jews or Muslims] of either sex, in every Christian province and at all times… are to be distinguished in public from other people by the character of their dress" (Lowney 199-200).[xiv] The notion of "damnable mixing" was that "…by mistake Christians join with Jewish or Saracen women, and Jews or Saracens with Christian women" (199-200). Lowney explains that "coexistence was fragile; members of each faith group preferred to build their own homogeneous society than to forge a mixed one" (208). If this is the case, then one can assume that the Divine powers that the Arab astrologer claims to have are not to be given credit for discovering the Jewish origin of the group of men; instead it is more likely that they are dressed to be distinguished as Jews in public in accordance with the laws of the time.

Upon the discovery that the men before him are "…from a despised and lowly people," the Arab astrologer exclaims with great vehemence that the answers they seek are hard to answer but riddles his response with allusions to Jewish culture and history. He states:

> …I swear that you have inquired about a great secret. You have made it hard to answer, for it is a secret that is as deep as Sheol. Your query concerns the fallen tower (of David), whether it will be built again with turrets. It concerns the scattered sheep (of Israel) – whether they will escape the teeth of lions, whether they will go among the beasts. Your question is about the sunken ship, whether it will come up from the lowest pit, (i.e. deep waters of the sea). It is about the millennium, if it will ever be. Your question is about the

> gathering of the children of exile, about the destruction of the kingdoms, about whether the dead will ever be revived. As the Lord lives, I swear you deserve to die! Your question is about the destruction of the world. You have spoken lêse majesté! You have conspired against the government! (Decter 100-101)

Is the Arab astrologer angered because the question they have asked is difficult, because they have allegedly conspired against the government, or simply because of the ethnicity and culture of the men? The fact that the Arab astrologer mentions Sheol, the Tower of David, and alludes to the Israelites as scattered sheep is proof that he is familiar with Jewish culture and religious tradition. He is perhaps angered because their question, whether or not the Jewish race will rise again with the coming of the Jewish Messiah, is threatening to Islamic power. As a result, the people surrounding the Arab astrologer are in turn angered by the outrage expressed and grab the young Jewish men and begin to beat them. The Jewish audience would have identified with the racism and prejudice that the Jewish men experience. At the time the *Tahkemoni* was written, the anti-semitism that the Jews experienced in Rome as well as under Visigoth rule was not far off (Lowney 32-37).

One might assume that all is lost for the young Jewish men, but upon being taken by the angry mob to the magistrate of the unnamed city, the magistrate takes the Jewish men and pretends to punish them, only to pacify the crowd. Once the angry mob dissipates, the magistrate lets the young men go free without penalty:

> The magistrate took us into his custody. He conveyed us to a secret place. He questioned us about what had happened. We told him everything that had occurred.
>
> He said to us: Peace be unto you. Do not fear, for no harm will come to you. Then he summoned one of his constables and said: Go, and place these men in prison.

> We remained there all night long until the mob had dispersed. When dawn broke, he ordered us with expressions of compassion, to be released. And he sent a messenger and he brought us out.
>
> And now that I am escaped from their fury and from the jaws of their roaring, 'Praised by the Lord who has not given us over as a prey to their teeth.' (101-102)

The magistrate, who represents the government who the Arab astrologer has claimed that the Jewish men have conspired against in their questions, treats the men with kindness and compassion. This is especially significant because the magistrate, faced with the angry mob, chose to instead hide the Jewish men away to let them safely escape in the morning. It is unclear whether the government that is sympathetic to the Jewish men is Christian or Muslim, since the city in which the narrator finds himself is unnamed. This is a theme throughout the *Tahkemoni*, as "The cities described in the *maqāmāt* of Alharizi are Eastern in origin, though they might also be located in Spain, as the Castilians did not change the character of the Moorish cities that they reconquered before 1220" (Dishon 12). If the city described in the Twenty Second Gate of the *Tahkemoni* is part of medieval Spain, then the anger expressed by the Arab astrologer can be understood through political inequality. Jews had an advantage over Muslims in Christian Iberia during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the sense that they were not a conquered people as the Muslims were, except in a theoretical sense that they "…were in perpetual 'servitude' to the [Christian] monarchy" (Nirenburg, *Neighboring Faiths* 39). Jews were even given specific rights over Muslims; they were able to exercise political and financial power over Muslims living in Christian Spain, and even frequently owned Muslim slaves (Nirenburg, *Neighboring Faiths* 39). The rights afforded to the Jews in medieval

Christian Spain may be the source of the compassion shown by the magistrate if the city is in fact a Christian one.

The anger that the Arab astrologer experiences upon discovering that the men he is confronted with are Jewish may be a result of political and socioeconomic struggles in place of religious prejudice. Al-Harīzī chose to depict the Arab astrologer and the reaction of the mob in this way, which reflects attitudes between ethnic and cultural groups during that time period. As shown, the attitudes between Muslims and Jews are not related to religion although this is the factor that divides them. It is perhaps the political and socioeconomic constraints that are imposed upon Muslims by Christian government that causes such strife. Many believe that the *rhizome* of Muslim and Jewish relations seen in the Israel-Palestine Conflict today are rooted in religious differences, but as seen in the depiction of Muslim/Jewish relations in the Twenty Second Gate of the *Tahkemoni*, this *rhizome* is related instead to political and socioeconomic factors that affected relations.[xv] As a result, and as time passed, the *rhizome* of Muslim and Jewish relations that came out of medieval Spain grew and shifted to be the *rhizome* that is seen today in the Israel-Palestine Conflict. Similar to their past, the problems faced in the Israel-Palestine Conflict are also political in nature instead of religious.

What does the story of the Arab astrologer say about medieval *Convivencia*? It is clear that the Jewish men are depicted to be innocent and strong willed while the angry mob, who is presumed to be Arabic and perhaps Muslim as well, is quick to judge and hate. The portrayal of Arabs in this manner is negative and alludes more towards the side of *Convivencia discordia*. On the other hand, the actions of the magistrate, whose ethnicity and religion are unknown, may change the outcome. The origin of the city in which the fictional events take place is unknown,

and therefore it is impossible to say if the government is a representation of Christian or Islamic values. If the magistrate represents Christian values, then again, the story of the Arab astrologer is a representation of *Convivencia discordia*, for the fact that Christians afforded Jews political and socioeconomic power over Muslims. The reaction of the Arab astrologer and the mob would be a response to political and social unrest, between religious and cultural groups that had been created by a Christian government who practiced a political strategy of 'divide and conquer.'

If the magistrate represents Islamic values, then perhaps it is simply a representation of *Convivencia neutral* but not *Convivencia pacífica*. The passage cannot emulate *Convivencia pacífica* because of the presence of the angry mob and the anger expressed by the Arab astrologer over the fact that he is faced with Jews. For this reason, if the magistrate represents Islamic values, then the story would have to represent simple *Convivencia neutral*.

The Qu'ran expresses harmony between the three Abrahamic religions, and if the magistrate is Islamic then perhaps he is showing Islamic religious values through helping the Jewish men escape the mob.[xvi] The magistrate must help himself by appearing to lock the Jewish men in jail, therefore pacifying the angry mob, but also helps the Jews when he sets them free the following day when there is no longer any threat. He helps his soul and conscience when he allows the Jewish men to leave unharmed and is following the Qu'ran by advocating for peace between religions in place of violence.

Chapter 3 – Rodrigo Díaz: The Christians of Medieval Spain as Seen Through *El Cantar de mío Cid*

Children may be familiar with the rhyming verse "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," which is taught in elementary schools around the United States as a way to begin an often-misinformed lesson regarding the "discovery" of the Americas by Christopher Columbus. The year 1492 was momentous for medieval Spain, not only for their accidental "discovery" of the Americas by Columbus' geographical mistake, but the year also marks the end of the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula in the name of Christianity. Medieval Spain is generally considered to be a Christian country as a result of the Reconquest of 1492 carried out by the Catholic Monarchs, King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile which some may considered as a triumph of the Christian faith. The Catholic Reconquest forced virtually all Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, either physically or with threat of death if they did not convert to Christianity.[i] This is known as the end of *Convivencia* in the Iberian Peninsula. The year 1492 was the end of an era as well as the beginning of another one for the medieval Iberian Peninsula. [ii]

Perhaps one of the most prominent literary works to come out of this era is *El Cantar de mío Cid* (CMC), written by an unknown author probably around the late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Constable 111). The *CMC* is not entirely a work of fiction, as it aims to depict the life of a real Spanish nobleman, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, also known as El Cid Rodrigo Díaz, who was exiled from his home by King Alfonso VI. El Cid was a ward to Prince Sancho, the eldest son of Fernando I of Castile-León born in the year 1058. A few years later, King Ferdinand

decided to give his kingdom to his second son, Alfonso, which fiercely angered Prince Sancho. El Cid remained faithful to his ward, which meant that he never gained favor with the new King. After the death of Prince Sancho in the year 1072, El Cid became a vassal to King Alfonso VI. El Cid was well-respected under Prince Sancho and had been trusted to act on his own accord in military affairs. As a result, El Cid launched an attack on Muslim forces without the consent of King Alfonso VI and was subsequently banished from Castile-León. The *CMC* tells the story of how El Cid regained his favor and reputation with King Alfonso VI, becoming a national hero (Constable 111).

The *CMC* begins with El Cid's banishment from Castile-León in the year 1089. The majority of the epic poem recounts the different campaigns that eventually result in the reconciliation with King Alfonso VI, ending around the year 1099. The epic poem consists of 3735 verses generally written with fourteen to sixteen metric syllables and an assonant rhyme scheme.[iii] Although the author of the CMC is anonymous, the only surviving manuscript is believed by Ramon Menéndez Pidal[iv] to have been compiled and copied by Per Abbat in the year 1307. [v]

Curious enough, Rodrigo Díaz is given the name "El Cid" which comes from the Arabic word *sayyid* meaning lord. The name of the Christian protagonist alone alludes to *Convivencia pacífica*. Among El Cid's numerous campaigns throughout medieval Spain, specifically "The Moor Abengalbón Helps Give Security to the Wife and Daughters of El Cid While They Travel to Valencia," and "The Episode of the Jews," are where study needs to be done in order to determine Christian attitudes and beliefs regarding the other ethnic and culture groups of the Peninsula.

We begin with the section “The Moor Abengalbón Helps Give Security to the Wife and Daughters of El Cid While They Travel to Valencia,” which is a positive comment on Muslims in Spain. In the case of poetry, the use of epithets can be a good indicator of the personality of a character, or the attitude that the reader is meant to have towards a particular character. In the case of the Moor Abengalbón, he is referred to, on three separate occasions, as “el buen moro,” which can be seen in the following examples: “El buen moro Abengalbón, cuando supo a lo que van” (1477), “y el buen moro Abengalbón, cuando frente a él está” (1517), “el buen moro Abengalbón los atendía sin falta” (1552). He is even referred to as a good friend and peaceful in nature (1464). Abengalbón is considered to be good because he is a friend of El Cid, which may be in contrast to being considered bad for being Muslim. Their differences in religion do not seem to play a factor in their friendship as much as politics do. Abengalbón is the Muslim governor of the town of Molina, and El Cid is a hero in the Christian military forces. Despite these facts, when El Cid decides that he needs to remain in Valencia during a specific military campaign and that his wife and daughters need to leave, he puts them in the hands of his Christian soldiers to help his family travel to Abengalbón for safety.

Through the lens of *Convivencia discordia*, one wouldn’t assume that taking one’s Christian family to a Muslim governor and household would prove fortuitous, but in the case of El Cid, that is exactly what needs to be done in order to keep his family safe during their travels. With the epithets of Abengalbón consistently reinforcing his characterization as positive in nature, it can be seen that the type of *Convivencia* portrayed in this section cannot be *Convivencia discordia* but instead either *Convivencia pacífica* or *Convivencia neutral*.

What is left to be seen is whether Abengalbón is described in such a positive way due to his conduct towards El Cid and its contrast with being Muslim. Would he be described in such a manner if he were a Christian? Would he act as he does if he were a Christian? It is perhaps this alignment that situates him with Christians while being Muslim that allow him to receive such positive epithets. When Abengalbón first sees El Cid's men and family, he reacts by saying the following:

> El buen moro Abengalbón, cuando supo a lo que van,
> salióles a recibir con un gozo singular:
> «¿Venís aquí los vasallos de mi amigo natural?
> Sabed que vuestra llegada gran alegría me da.»
> (Pidal vv 1477-1480)

After learning that El Cid needs his assistance:

> Dijo Abengalbón: «Lo haré, y de buena voluntad.»
> Esa noche una gran cena a todos les mandó dar,
> y a la mañana siguiente comienzan a cabalgar;
> (Pidal vv 1487-1489)

During their journey to deliver El Cid's family to a Christian friend of El Cid, Minaya:

> y el alcaide Abengalbón con sus fuerzas también va,
> por dar gusto a mío Cid, a quien mucho quiere honrar.
> (Pidal vv 1502-1503)

And upon their arrival to Minaya:

> y el buen moro Abengalbón, cuando frente a él está,
> con la sonrisa en los labios a Minaya fue a abrazar,
> y en el hombre le da un beso, como es costumbre oriental:
> «¡Dichoso día, Minaya, en el que os vengo a encontrar!
> Traéis con vos esas damas que nuevas honras nos dan,
> a las dos hijas del Cid y a su mujer natural;
> con la ventura del Cid todos nos hemos de honrar,

que aunque poco le quisiéramos no se le puede hacer
mal,
ya que ha de tomar lo nuestro, ya sea en guerra o en
paz;
por muy torpe tendré al que no conozca esta verdad.»
(Pidal vv 1517-1526)

It is constantly made apparent that Abengalbón wants to do his part to honor El Cid. When he learns of the arrival of El Cid's men and family, he orders a grand dinner to be served in their honor. He willingly leaves his home to ensure the safety of El Cid's family. He greets Minaya, the Christian friend of El Cid, with a kiss on his shoulder which is explained to be a sign of respect and a custom in Muslim culture, and then even proceeds to give a short speech about how he is grateful to be able to help and honor El Cid in this way by ensuring the safety of his wife and daughters. Is this due to the ongoing Reconquest in the area, or is this due to real friendship?

It must also be stated that this text is written from a Christian point of view presumably for a Christian audience. The behavior of Abengalbón is sharply contrasted later with the scene of "The Demise of King Yúcef," (Pidal vv 1711-1820), which describes a battle scene between the King of Morocco and El Cid as he tries to reconquer Valencia for Morocco. As can be surmised from the title, King Yúcef does not fare well. What is the difference then between the portrayal of Abengalbón and King Yúcef? The answer perhaps lies in their intentions towards Christian Spain.

Abengalbón assumedly governs Molina in a peaceful manner, as Molina is an area of the Iberian Peninsula which El Cid has previously conquered in the name of Christianity. King Yúcef is invading and attempting to claim part of the Peninsula for Muslim Morocco. Since Abengalbón is not causing trouble in his governing of Molina, and King Yúcef is trying to claim El

Cid's town as part of Muslim territory, the Christian audience of this text during that time would understand the difference of portrayals. It would make sense to them that Abengalbón is a friend to Christians as he is a vassal to El Cid, while King Yúcef is instead the enemy.

The second section to be analyzed in the *CMC* is "The Episode of the Jews." This episode takes on a more stereotypical and hurtful depiction when viewed from the side of the Jews, but a triumphant feel from the side of the Christians. The modern reader is made to feel an "us against them" mentality as a result of the story, which may lend insight into actual relations between Christians and Jews at the time in which the text was written.

El Cid and his friend, Martín Antolínez, trick two well-known Jewish men from Burgos, Raquel and Vidas, into accepting two sealed chests, both of which the Jews are told are full of all of El Cid's money, but in reality, are full of nothing but sand. El Cid does this because of his banishment and defacement by King Alfonoso VI, as it is forbidden for El Cid to leave the kingdom with his wealth and riches. In tricking Raquel and Vidas, El Cid and Martín Antolínez receive money from them as insurance that they will hold on to El Cid's supposed money for the duration of one year, without opening the arcs. At the end of the episode, the alleged benevolent Cid and Martín Antolínez laugh as they count the money they were given in exchange for nothing.

Raquel and Vidas are not given as many epithets as Abengalbón is, but the ones they are given are telling of the relations between Christians and Jews if the reader is able to read between the lines. Upon meeting with Raquel and Vidas, Martín Antolínez says "«¿Cómo estáis, Raquel y Vidas, mis buenos amigos caros?»" (Pidal vv 103). The use of the word "caro" in this sense is a synonym of "querido." Antolínez chooses to refer to the Jewish men as his good, dear

friends, right before he is about to trick them. The reader would need to read through the lines in this instance, as this is not something that one would do to a dear friend.

Throughout history, anti-semitism has plagued Jewish communities, and is perpetuated by the reiteration of centuries old stereotypes. The stereotypes that are perpetuated in the episode of Raquel and Vidas are first introduced to the audience in the names of these characters. From a linguistic standpoint, certain words in literature can be used by authors to trigger beliefs or attitudes towards a group of people. This influence on perception is called primary potency, and in choosing two distinctly Hispano-Jewish names, Raquel and Vidas are instantly categorized by their ethnic associations (Aizenberg 482). The Christian audience of the time would automatically respond negatively towards these characters as a result.

Raquel and Vidas are also known moneylenders to El Cid and his men. This was a popular profession for Jews during the Middle Ages, but not by choice. Jews were forced to be usurers in the Middle Ages, which the Christian church considered to be a profession of *turpe lucrum*, or shameful gain. Aizenberg explains that during the time of El Cid and Alfonso VI, Jews were not exclusively moneylenders, instead they were considered to be a distinct economic group in comparison to others (482). This distinction in economic groups led to frustration and anger by other ethnic and religious groups during the Middle Ages. Frustration and anger "…felt by an individual or a community burdened by physical, emotional, or economic problems is displaced onto a scapegoat," which happened to be the Jews (Aizenberg, 482). Interestingly enough, Aizenberg also states that generally "…stereotypes are considered to reveal more about the accusers than about the accused," which is important to keep in mind as part of a critical analysis of cultural relations between ethnic and religious groups (482).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to remember that El Cid's actions towards the Jews were considered, by the Christian audience of the time, to be part of his hero-like qualities. In the mind of the Christians, as reflected in *Las Siete Partidas,*[vi] Jews were considered to be vile. Raquel and Vidas, who are never described separately but instead as one and the same, are supposed to be the epitome of the Jewish stereotypes of the time. Aizenberg even explains that the mentality of Christians during this time was: "Jew = deicide = Judas = usurer = Satan came together" (480).

A great deal of the anger that is depicted throughout Christian literature regarding the Jews can be traced back to the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In Aizenberg's depiction of Christian mentality regarding the Jewish people, Jew equals deicide and Judas, and ultimately leading to being likened to the Devil, which means that the Jews are responsible for killing God's only son, and also, they are equal to Christ's ultimate betrayer, Judas Iscariot. This belief is even shown as part of *Las Siete Partidas*, which states:

> Et la raçon porque la Eglesia et los Emperadores et los Reyes … sufrieron a los judíos vivir entre christianos es esta: porque ellos viviessen el cativerio para siempre, et fuesse remembranza a los omes quellos vienen del linaje de aquellos que cruçificaron a Nuestro Señor Jesucristo.
>
> (Partida VII Título XXIV Ley 1)

Therefore, the Christian trickery that El Cid enacts on Raquel and Vidas (as compared to the deception enacted by the Jews in "The Arab Astrologer") would be justified to the Christian audience, only for the fact that the trickery is on Jews. Aizenberg says that the excerpt of Raquel and Vidas within *CMC* is typically categorized by historians as "literary tastes," "folklore," and "popular conception" (482). The popular conception as outlined by Aizenberg is

a response to the belief that El Cid is the Christian hero of Spain, as *CMC* had many nationalistic ramifications (478).

In summary, there are stark differences in the depictions of Muslims and Jews within *CMC*, which are influenced by each character's relationship with El Cid and the Spanish Crown, which are representations of Christianity. Abengalbón is a vassal to El Cid, meaning he has agreed to obey El Cid and the Spanish Crown. Although he is Muslim, he is obeying the Christian laws, which would make him a "virtuous pagan," a non-Christian who leads a virtuous life, and whom God will ultimately save since he/she has helped the Christians (Vitto 2). He is more than happy to help El Cid and his family and he does so without compensation. In contrast, Raquel and Vidas are Jewish moneylenders by trade, which Aizenberg shows, in the eyes of the Christian audience, is equivalent to being in league with Satan himself. Although they are obeying Christian law in the form of the profession that they have taken, they are seeking something in exchange for helping El Cid, and in this particular case, they are seeking money. Neither passage demonstrates positive feelings towards either group, unless they are viewed as being loyal to Christianity. As a result, neither text can be classified as *Convivencia pacífica* nor *Convivencia discordia*, but perhaps in the more complicated grey area – *Convivencia neutral*, leaning more towards the side of *Convivencia discordia*. The only reason that Abengalbón is considered to be good is for the fact that he is being helpful to Christians despite being Muslim. This is to say that if he was searching compensation for his benevolent acts, he would perhaps be depicted in a similar negative light as Raquel and Vidas. Although Rodrigo Díaz takes his nickname of El Cid (*sayyid*, or "lord") from Arabic origins, the attitudes of medieval Iberian

Christians are far from amenable. David Nirenburg in *Neighboring Faiths* explains Christian identity as:

> Christian identity and Christian privilege were defined by insisting on their distance from the Jew (and the Muslim). The performance of that distance could take place in countless venues: in the taking of vengeance or the paying of taxes, in the choice of foods or sexual partners, in law (as in the preferential treatment of Christian witnesses) and in ritual (as in the enclosure and stoning of Jews during Holy Week), to list but a few. It is through the repeated performance of this essential distance that the symbolic capital of Christian honor and privilege was amassed. (Nirenburg, *Neighboring Faiths* 110)

This viewpoint taken by Nirenburg is validated through El Cid's treatment of his Muslim and Jewish acquaintances. Abengalbón as well as Raquel and Vidas are defined in their distance from Christian identity and are not embraced for their differences in beliefs but rather are judged on their ability or willingness to appear more Christian in nature. As a result, the sections of *CMC* are classified as *Convivencia neutral*, leaning more towards *Convivencia discordia*.

Chapter 4 - A Seemingly Unlikely Union: Hispano-Arabic Poetry from al-Andalus

Arabic poetry will be analyzed as a third and final example of literature of medieval Iberia. During the Muslim reign over the Iberian Peninsula, poetry played a central and crucial role in redefining al-Andalus court life. As examined earlier, *adab* culture was known as the "Arab concept of social, cultural and academic wisdom," and poetry certainly played a part in this performance of culture (Hamilton 5). During the time of the shift from independently ruled *taifas* to the Almoravid courts, Arabic poetry also changed from a more erotic style to rhymed prose. The poetry examined here is a combination of eroticism and rhymed prose, although the translation from the original Arabic to English has taken away from the pure poetic experience.

The most well-known styles of poetry out of al-Andalus and created by Muslim poets are the *muwashshaha* and the *zajal* styles. The *muwashshaha* is defined as "…a certain genre of stanzaic poetry… [with] a particular rhyme scheme and a special final part… The main body of the poem is always composed in Classical Arabic, while the language of the final part is mostly non-Classical" (Schoeler). The "special final part," also known as a *kharja* or the exit, was generally composed in either colloquial Arabic or Romance. The contrast between the elegance of the Classical Arabic with the colloquial and Romance are defining features of this popular style (Constable 180). Sage explains that this contrast was so striking, that it can be compared to juxtaposing Shakespeare's English with the Cockney dialect, or Standardized Spanish with *barrio* Spanish (Sage 28).

Aside from and in contrast to the *muwashshaha*, the *zajal* style was also invented in al-Andalus. Sage explains that along with the *muwashshaha*, the *zajal* is another alteration from

classical Arabic styles of poetry, but the *zajal* differs from the *muwashshaha* style in that the *zajal* exhibits features of troubadour poetry that "…arose organically from a Christian, European context, especially in France," and ultimately represent a "… newly developed western Andalusian style" of poetry (Sage 41;60).

The combination of Arabic and Romance within one literary work could indeed be evidence of *Convivencia pacífica*, as it would be crucial for the audience of said works to be comfortable switching between both Arabic and Castilian. This type of audience generally was accustomed to reading *aljamiado* texts, which were written in *aljamía*, a unique combination of both medieval Spanish and Arabic. *Aljamía* is a "…type of literature written in the Spanish vernacular but using the Arabic alphabet, in which religious terms and concepts were generally expressed in Arabic, [and aljamía] …borrowed syntactic, stylistic, lexical and semantic structures from Arabic" (García-Arenal). *Aljamía* was created for Muslims, Jews and Christians living together in order to communicate. These three religious and ethnic groups living and communicating in such close proximity almost always caused a blurring of religious lines.

Since *aljamiado* texts are in themselves a representation of the mixture of religious and cultural groups within medieval Iberia, the people tended to mix as well. In response to the blurring of religious and cultural lines, categories were created in which people used to identify themselves and others. Since it was very unlikely for Christians to convert to Judaism or to Islam during the Catholic Reconquest, these categories were most often created to describe the individual's previous religious affiliation before converting to Christianity. For example, Jews who converted to Christianity were called *conversos*, and Muslims who converted to Christianity were considered to be *moriscos* (Ingram 1). The creation of these categories was

more to distinguish between the Old Christians and the New Christians, and to discourage mixing of bloodlines as outlined in *Las Siete Partidas.*[i] Even though one had complied and converted to Christianity, the New Christian was still considered to be of a lower status than Old Christians. The *muwashshaha* and *zajal* poems were often *aljamiado*, but not necessarily written specifically for *moriscos*. Nevertheless, they were intended for an audience who was accustomed to switching between languages and cultures, which heavily suggests *Convivencia pacífica* with the ability to be both bilingual and bicultural within medieval Iberia.

The first poem to be analyzed is authored by Ibn Quzmān, who is often credited as being the most famous author of the *zajal* style. Ibn Quzmān's life was not well documented and therefore little is known about him. What is known has been extrapolated from his poetry. The professional life of a poet before Ibn Quzmān's time was to compose panegyric poetry in order to praise contemporary rulers, but in the Iberian Peninsula, with the arrival of the Almoravid court, many professional poets who were employed by the kings of the *taifas* were swiftly put out of a job. The Almoravids spoke Berber instead of Arabic and were uninterested in the classical Arabic poetry that had permeated the land. As a response, poets such as Ibn Quzmān began earning a living by composing more humorous, less formalized poems in the *zajal* style. His poetry centered on the "…lower strata of society… [and can be seen in his] depiction of popular events, such as carnivals, jugglers' entertainment, marketplaces and [cuisine]. Transgressive elements, such as drunkenness, seduction, fornication, adultery, divorce, and slapstick violence are prominent features" in the *zajals* composed by Ibn Quzmān (Meri 365). Needless to say, the subject matter of poetry composed by Ibn Quzmān was far from the classical poetry that came before it.

The *zajals* of Ibn Quzmān were also different in the sense of the treatment of language. The traditional *zajal* differs from the *muwashshaha* in that the *zajal* will utilize "…an introductory strophe rather than a concluding envoi" (Meri 365). The *zajal* also differs from more classical, traditional poetry in that instead of formal speech, the *zajal* will often introduce "…lengthy passages of the written representation of colloquial speech" that can be traced to a specific time and locale (Meri 365). What perhaps is the most important to note of Ibn Quzmān's *zajals* is that they

> …not only constitute an innovation on poetic language but also [Ibn Quzmān's] representations of colloquial speech serve as valuable documentation of Hispano-Arabic, a dialect that often incorporated words and structures from the Romance dialect that coexisted with Arabic in the Iberian Peninsula. (Meri 365)

In this sense, to analyze poetry created by Ibn Quzmān is to gain an insight into speech within mixed Christian and Muslim communities.

The first poem which is untitled, was given the title of the author's name by the translator. Ibn Quzmān begins by describing his love for alcohol and drunkenness, which lead to an adulterous encounter, and ends with a lamentation of lost love after an apparent brawl. The subject matter does not tell much regarding relations between religious and cultural groups, (except for the fact that Ibn Quzmān expresses his love for *vino*, which is forbidden by Islamic Law[ii]). However, the use of Romance, which remains untranslated to show the differences in language use, does show the relationship between Muslims and Christians living together in medieval Iberia. It appears that Ibn Quzmān specifically uses Castilian to describe parts of the culture that he experienced as a Muslim living in medieval Iberia. Examples in which Romance is used instead of Arabic are as follows[iii]:

"*Vino, vino!* And spare me what is said;" (5)
"I would most certainly empty it; if not, fill then the *jarrón*" (10)
"Awaken me before the *volcón!*" (14)
"A Berber girl; what a beauty of a *conejo!*" (37)
"'Whoa!' [Said I, 'she] is not a *sera* of *cardacho*, / But don't pounce [on her] for neither is she a *grañón!*" (38-39)
"'Where are you taking that *pollo*, for an immoral purpose?" (50)
"'You, throw the frying pan for the *tostón!*'" (58)
"I get hit only on the head by the *bastón!*" (62)

As shown in the above examples, the use of Romance is employed to accentuate a unique fusion of cultures that would not be able to be translated into Arabic. The use of Romance mixed with Arabic is representative of a group of people who can only define themselves by the use of both cultures and languages, as the significance of the poem would not translate, if it were produced by an Arabic speaker from any other part of the Arabic world. The employment of Romance in correspondence with Arabic within a poem that is neither a critique of politics nor of cultural practices is important to the study of *Convivencia* because it shows an effortless ebb and flow over presumed cultural boundaries, which may have been more fluid in certain parts of the Iberian Peninsula than in others, specifically speaking in al-Andalus. In this case, the *zajal* poem by Ibn Quzmān is a strong advocate for *Convivencia pacífica*.

The second poem to be analyzed is also untitled by the translator, but instead given the title of the author, Al Aʿmā al-Tutīlī. He was also native to the Iberian Peninsula, born in Tudela but also spent time in Murcia and Seville (Zwartjes, 69). His poem is an example of the *muwashshaha* style of poetry, which "…in many respects [is] a poetic form of the three languages and cultures [of the Iberian Peninsula] …There are more *kharjas* which have been

written by a *musulmán latinado* than those written by a *mozárabe muy arabidazo*," (Zwartjes, 71). This distinction, given to authors of *muwashshaha* poetry is highly significant as it highlights the unique culture that was created between the intermingling of cultures and languages that occurred in the Iberian Peninsula. Zwartjes goes on to explain that "…the *kharjas* are without any doubt Romance or have at least Romance material. They were composed by monolingual, bilingual or trilingual poets and it is not so important to which religious group they belonged, since they all composed the same poems within a single tradition" (71).

As explained above, the *muwashshaha* and the *zajal* style of poetry differ in their use of the *kharja*, which in the *zajal* is generally introduced in the beginning while in the *muwashshaha* is used as an ending. This is the case as well with Al A'mā al-Tutīlī's poem. Al A'mā al-Tutīlī's poem is a love poem directed to an unknown lover. The majority of the poem is composed in Arabic. His use of Romance is reserved for the final few lines, which are in turn mixed with Arabic:

> "Meu l-habīb enfermo de meu amar.
> ¿Que no ha d'estar?
> ¿Non ves a mibe que s'ha de no llegar?" (36-38).

Al A'mā al-Tutīlī artfully ends his poem with a mixture of Arabic and Romance, which is done in a similar fashion to the mixture of languages seen in Ibn Quzmān's *zajal*. The Arabic word "habib" is left in Arabic, while the rest of the lines are constructed in Romance. This implies that the author felt that the meaning of "beloved" would best be translated in Arabic, while the rest of the lines would best be expressed in Romance. This is another example of the unique culture that was created by the close quarters shared by distinct religious and cultural groups in

medieval Iberia. Again, the word choices between languages is paramount in the study of medieval *Convivencia* as the comfort and ease that is expressed within a single literary work directly implies *Convivencia pacífica*.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion: Peace and Violence or Somewhere In-Between

Bakhtin believes that the *chronotope* of the future can only be expressed through the past, and Deleuze and Guattari say that the *rhizome* that was created in the past is fragmented and regrows to create the world as viewed today. This is certainly true in regards to medieval Iberia and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The attitudes and actions taken from the years 711 to 1492 directly impact Christians, Muslims and Jews in Israel-Palestine today, and it is perhaps even more important in the present political climate to reopen this conversation and continue the discussion started in medieval Iberia about the relations between Abrahamic Religions.

By examining medieval literature instead of solely examining historical events, the reader of these pages will be able to peer inside the collective mind of each religious and ethnic group in a way that is generally not afforded through historical analysis alone. The reader can study the *rhizome* and *chronotope* in which each literary text was created. This will provide insight into each distinct group for the reader to be able to compare and contrast relations that are seen today in the Middle East. Combining both historical events and literary works will allow the reader to have a clear image of relations among Abrahamic religions in medieval Spain.

The texts examined can be categorized with the spectrum of *Convivencia* outlined at the beginning of this study. Literary works were analyzed and assigned categories of either *Convivencia discordia*, *Convivencia neutral, and Convivencia pacífica* based on their portrayals of the other ethnic and religious groups that inhabited the medieval Iberian Peninsula. The literary texts chosen were used as representations of each distinct group and based off other

scholars' examinations specifically as examples containing depictions of the other ethnic and religious groups. The Jewish example of "The Arab Astrologer," in the *Tahkemoni* was chosen, because it specifically stated that it was to depict Arabic and Muslim culture viewed from a Jewish perspective. The Christian literary texts were taken from *El Cantar de Mío Cid*, in which depictions of both Muslims and Jews were showcased from a medieval Christian perspective. In the same manner, the *zajal* and *muwashshaha* styles of poetry were chosen as a representation of Muslim culture because both styles are well known for their use of *aljamía*, which is a mixture of both Arabic and Romance dialects that were used frequently in medieval al-Andalus.

"The Arab Astrologer" gave prestige to the Arab world through its depiction of Arab and Muslim culture in medieval Iberia through his immense knowledge, both scientific and mystical. Although it is difficult to say where the story took place, the author was born and raised in al-Andalus and therefore most likely lived his life crossing the boundaries between all three cultures and religions of medieval Iberia. The astrologer himself was all-knowing, almost to the point of being on *par* with the Divine. His *hubris* was not appealing to the Jewish men, who devised a plan to test his abilities.

Relations between the two groups seemed amicable until the Arab astrologer discovered that the men he is talking to were Jewish. As soon as he realized that, he denounced them in front of the crowd who in turn tried to murder the Jewish men, simply due to the fact that they were Jewish. In the end, after being brought to court, the magistrate of the unknown city and unknown government pretended to put the Jewish men in jail, while waiting for their trial in the morning. After the crowd dissipated, the magistrate secretly allowed the Jewish men to escape.

What can be made of the Arab astrologer's reaction on discovering that the men before him were Jewish? In medieval or in modern times it will come as no surprise, especially if we examine the relations between Jews and Muslims in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. In the text examined, the saving grace came in the character of the magistrate. Although in this text it is unclear as which city and/or which group is the ruling government, the reader knows that the government is not Jewish. One can assume that the government was Muslim,[i] and the kindness that the magistrate afforded to the Jewish men saved their lives. If it was not for the role that the magistrate played in the story, "The Arab Astrologer" would perhaps be categorized as *Convivencia discordia*, but instead is more suited for *Convivencia neutral*. Although the actions of the magistrate had to be carried out in secret, it was in stark contrast to the wishes of the mob.

The actions taken by Rodrigo Díaz in the *CMC* are similar to those seen in Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni*. The trick that El Cid played on Raquel and Vidas, although it could have been seen as a positive and heroic trait by the medieval Christian readers, is clearly negative in the eyes of modern readers. The episode of the Jews in *CMC* is considered to be an example of *Convivencia discordia* for the clear anti-Semitic sentiments expressed.

On the other hand, in the episode of "The Moor Abengalbón Helps Give Security to the Wife and Daughters of El Cid While They Travel to Valencia," the portrayal of the Muslim friend of El Cid was extremely positive. This is perhaps due to the fact that Abengalbón was serving as a vassal to El Cid and posed no threat to him and his fellow Christians. He was overly helpful in his actions to deliver El Cid's wife and daughters safely to their destination and was even thankful to be able to serve El Cid. This is in stark contrast to the portrayal of King Yuçef in the

episode “The Demise of King Yuçef.” In this episode, the Muslim king of Morocco was defeated and was portrayed as the enemy of El Cid because of his will to control Valencia. The political standing of the characters in *CMC* in relation to Rodrigo Díaz is important to remember, as their beliefs influenced their depictions and in turn dictated their perceived level of threat to Christianity. As a result, the depictions of both Jews and Muslims of the medieval Iberian Peninsula as seen through the *Cantar de Mío Cid* can only be classified as *Convivencia discordia*.

The last texts to be examined were examples of Muslim poetry and representations of the famous *adab* culture: the *muwashshaha* and the *zajal*. The two authors, Ibn Quzman and Al A’ma al-Tutīlī, employed both Arabic and Romance dialects in their works. The use of the two languages is indicative of the ease that inhabitants of medieval al-Andalus felt stepping over the linguistic boundaries between these cultures. The *aljamiado* texts that were created in medieval al-Andalus are clear indicators of at least some form of peace between religious and cultural groups. If not an indication of peace, then at least their existence is a nod in the direction of other groups, acknowledging their existence and the need to be able to communicate with others. The creation of literary works that employ both Arabic and Romance implies also that the group of people living in medieval Iberia were raised within two worlds – that they validated and embraced all three cultures within their community. Those who would have been brought up in this community felt comfortable moving between cultures and as shown, probably felt more comfortable expressing certain ideas and concepts in one language than in another. These works were examined and given the rating of *Convivencia pacífica* for the lack of evidence of violence, or disrespect expressed in any form regarding other religious and ethnic groups.

In our time, to draw conclusions on how to remedy the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict based on the analysis of three medieval literary texts would be ludicrous, but it is interesting to note that the only example of *Convivencia pacífica* comes from the Muslims, the group who had been categorized as violent extremists following the events of September 11th, 2001. After immersing oneself in the study of medieval Iberian literature, nothing is ever as simple as having one right answer, or even having a right answer at all.

The hostility and anger expressed in both the Jewish and Christian texts studied, reflects the pain expressed by each group and represents a response to wrongs that they believed they had experienced. The lack of expressions of this pain and anger in the Muslim texts, leads one to believe that instead of focusing on the injustices that they experienced while living in close proximity with other dominant religious and ethnic groups, the authors of these texts chose to create works, based on the new identity that emerged as a result of such proximity. It is not to be said that Muslims had not suffered and/or did not suffer, just as it is not to be said that Jews or Christians had not suffered and/or did not suffer. The scholar only wishes to point out that the examples of *Convivencia* expressed in the Muslim texts chose instead to focus on the concept of identity through creative linguistic expressions.

Given the stark differences in the examples of *Convivencia* that have been examined in this study, it is difficult to say what lessons can be learned from medieval Iberian literature to help with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The pain and anger that Israel and Palestine have felt for many years run deep and cannot be solved by lessons learned from this work. All that this scholar asks is that the modern reader keep in mind the examples of *Convivencia* that have been explored and remember the *rhizome* and the *chronotope* that were expressed in medieval

Iberia, and how these concepts still today directly impact relations between Muslims, Jews and Christians. Time will tell how the conflict in the Middle East will unfold, but *Convivencia* in all of its forms will forever be a part of the collective narrative of Abrahamic religions. Given the fact that literature and literary texts have served as inspiration and guidance for political paths and historical resolutions,[ii] it is the hope of this thesis to inspire more scholarly works examining this concept, which we believe can hold the key to fruitful discussions in the future.

Consulted Works

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End Notes

Chapter 1 - Introduction

[i] For more information see: Adkins, Brent. Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
[ii] A *rhizome* is a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It is what Deleuze calls an "image of thought," based on the botanical *rhizome*, that apprehends multiplicities. For more information see: Adkins, Brent. Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
[iii] See Nykl, Alois. Transcription and Commentary Upon Some Aljamiado Texts. University of Chicago (Department of Romance), 1919.
[iv] Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History. William Morrow, 2008.
[v] Mann, Vivian B, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn D. Dodds. Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in medieval Spain. New York: G. Braziller in association with the Jewish Museum, 1992. Print.
[vi] A dhimmi refers to "protected people" living under Muslim rule in medieval Iberia. The dhimmi were granted privileges in exchange for paying specific taxes. For more information see:
Menocal, María Rosa. The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in medieval Spain. New York: Back Bay, 2012. Print. pp. 72.
[vii] As an example, the Spanish word "ojalá" derives from Mozarabic, which in turn has roots in Arabic with the word "inshallah." The modern expression "Ojalá que" is still widely used and signifies "God willing," and is a remnant of shared linguistic and cultural history of medieval Spain. For more info see: Menocal, María Rosa. The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in medieval Spain. New York: Back Bay, 2012. Print. pp. 78.
[viii] Al-Andalus refers to the Islamic state that was part of medieval Iberia for over 700 years, from the years 711 to 1492. The borders of Al-Andalus changed drastically over this time period as eventually the Christian Monarchs, Isabel and Ferdinand, expulsed the Muslim and Jewish populations from the peninsula. It is often thought of as an idyllic and mystical term also referring to the concept of Convivencia. For more information see: Fanjul, Serafín and Margarita, tr Pillado. "Uses of a Myth: Al-Ándalus /." ["Part of a special issue: Identities on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown: The Case of Spain"].
[ix] The term Arab refers to a person who speaks Arabic, but does not necessarily mean they are Muslim, although a majority of Arabs happen to be Muslim. For more information, see: "Arab." Arab - New World Encyclopedia, New World Encyclopedia, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Arab.
[x] For more information see: "Postwar Refugee Crisis and the Establishment of the State of Israel."

Chapter 2 – Sepharad and Al Harīzī's *Tahkemoni*: Jewish Life in Medieval Spain

[i] For more information see: O'Callaghan, Joseph F. A History of Medieval Spain. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975. Print.
[ii] David is known as Israel's second King and is best known for the parable of David and Goliath. For more information see: Halpern, Baruch (2000). "David". In Freedman, David Noel; Allen C., Myers. Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. *Eerdmans.* ISBN 9789053565032
[iii] This sentiment can be seen in one of Samuel ha-Nagid's poems, where he states:
"A monarch will not favor you unless he hopes to be/ at ease while you labor and exert yourself in his service./ You are caught in his tongs: with one hand he brings you into/ The flames, -- while protecting you from the fire which with/ both hands he sets against you." (Lowney, 97).
[iv] Jonah ibn Janah's seminal works are *Kutāb al Mustalhiq*, the *Risalat al-Tagrib*, and the *Kitab al-Taswir*, but he is most known for the *Kitāb al-Tangih*. Seminal works by Moises ibn Ezra include *Shirat Yirael* (poetry of Israel), and his most famous *Kitāb al-Muhâdara wa-l-mudhâkara.* He is well-known for his poetry as well. Finally, according to

Ayoun, the most famous seminal works of Salomon ibn Gabirol is *Source de Vie* as well as *Keter Malkhut*. For more information see Ayoun, Richard. "EN ESPAGNE MÉDIÉVALE: UN AGE D'OR JUIF." *Histoire, Économie Et Société*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1988, pp. 3–17. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23610708.

[v] Lowney explains that taifas are "… 'party' states [of] various factions who seized control across al-Andalus. Some historians estimate that there were as many as forty such states in the most chaotic period of taifa rule," (279).

[vi] For more information see: Harvey, Leonard Patrick. Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500. University of Chicago Press, 2014. Print. See section "Castilian Attitudes Towards Subject Muslims" for explanation on Alfonso X's Siete Partidas.

[vii] The Almoravid dynasty from North Africa were petitioned for support around 1085, after the Christian sack of Toledo. The Almoravids were known as fanatical Muslims who imposed strict laws in Al-Andalus during the 11th century. For more information see Lowney, Chris. A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in medieval Spain. New York: Oxford UP, 2006 pp 104. Print.

[viii] Works cited by Hamilton as examples of the Jewish theme of exile in literature are Ibn Shabbetai's *Offering*, Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni*, and Moses ibn Ezra's poem *The Poem of Two Exiles* (162).

[ix] Again, see Hamilton's explanation of Ibn Shabbetai's *Offering* and Al-Harīzī's *Tahkemoni*.

[x] Decter shows the humor that Al-Harīzī's Tahkemoni invokes in the following passage taken from the Tahkemoni, translated by David Segal:

> "Lo, the cantor entered and took his honoured seat, and in tones dulcet sweet began the daily blessings, as is meet. According to the practice of our nation, he begged God's lumination, thundering, Make the words of Thy Torah pheasant in our mouth, rather than pleasant in our mouth; and May the Lord flavour you and grant you peas, instead of May the Lord favour you and grant you peace. In the next section of the service, his zeal mounting, he made errors beyond counting. For It is our duty to bless and hallow Thy name he said It is our duty to blast and hollow Thy name; for Exalt the Lord our God, he said, Assault the Lord our God; for Praise the Lord O my soul, he said Prize the Lard, O my soul; for Thine, O Lord is the greatness and the power, he said Thine, O Lord, is the gratings and the flour; for Thou rulest over all, he said Thou droolest overall." (Decter, Literature of Medieval Sepharad, 91).

[xi] *Tanakh* is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: Torah, translated as "Teaching," and also known as the Five Books of Moses, Nevi'im ("Prophets") and Ketuvim ("Writings")—hence *TaNaKh*. For more information see: Petri, William. Universal Version Bible The Books of Nevi'im Ð The Nevi'im Rishonim Part 1. N.p.: LuLu.com, 2017. pp xiv. Print.

[xii] The Quran is the Muslim Holy book, and literally is translated to "Recitation," as its opening verse is the angel Gabriel's injunction to Muhammad. For more information see Dodds, Jerrilynn Denise, Maria Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale. The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010 pp. 66. Print.

[xiii] According to the critical interpretation of the Biblical data, the *Kenites* were a clan settled on the southern border of Judah, originally more advanced in arts than the Hebrews, and from whom the latter learned much. In the time of David the *Kenites* were finally incorporated into the tribe of Judah. For more information see: Singer, Isidore, and Cyrus Adler. "Kenites." The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest times to the Present Day. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1925. 466. Print.

[xiv] "In 1215, demonstrating his unrivaled leadership over Western Christendom, Innocent convened the Fourth Lateran Council, assembling over 400 bishops, 900 abbots and priors, and scores of other clerics, along with representatives of secular powers from around Western Europe and crusader-held territories in the Eastern Mediterranean. The council's canons offered a template for an ideal, properly ordered Christian society, enlivened

with apostolic spirit, mobilized against heresy, directed toward the recovery of Jerusalem, operating under the pastoral leadership of the Roman papacy for the salvation of all." (Whalen, 11).

[xv] It is important to note that previously in the text, Al-Harīzī speaks with admiration about the scientific accomplishments of the Arab culture, which is an example of *Convivencia pacífica*.

[xvi] Previously it was mentioned that the during the arrival of the Arabs to the Iberian Peninsula, the Jews were raised in social status as compared to their severe oppression under Christian Visigoth rule.

Chapter 3 – El Ruy Díaz: The Christians in Medieval Spain as Seen Through *El Cantar de mío Cid*

[i] For more information please consult Chapter Five, "Conversion, Sex and Segregation" in David Nirenburg's *Neighboring Faiths*.

[ii] For more information see Soria, José Manuel Nieto. "Columbus's Spain." OAH Magazine of History 5, no. 4 (1991): 18-19. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.depaul.edu/stable/25162775.

[iii] For more information see Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. Poema de mio Cid. Madrid: Ediciones de "La Lectura," 1913. Print.

[iv] Ramón Menéndez Pidal was a famous philologist and researcher recognized by the Real Academia Española. During his lifetime he did extensive work on the Cantar de mío Cid as well as the Cancionero tradition by Sephardic community in medieval Spain. For more information see "Ramón Menéndez Pidal." Real Academia Española, www.rae.es/academicos/ramon-menendez-pidal-0.

[v] See Smith, Colin. "Per Abbat and the 'Poema De Mio Cid.'" Medium Ævum, vol. 42, no. 1, 1973, pp. 1–17. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43627834.

[vi] For more information on *Las Siete Partidas*, please refer to: Harvey, Leonard Patrick. Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500. University of Chicago Press, 2014. Print. See section "Castilian Attitudes Towards Subject Muslims" for explanation on Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas*.

Chapter 4 – A Seemingly Unlikely Union: Hispano-Arabic Poetry from Al-Andalus

[i] For more information please consult Smith, Colin. Christians and Moors in Spain. II, Aris & Phillips, 1989.

[ii] For more information please see 5:90-91 from the Qur'an, which states:

> "Oh ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones,
> and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination, -- of Satan's
> handwork: eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper. Satan's
> plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with
> intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of
> Allah, and from prayer: will ye not then abstain?"

This specific translation was taken from Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, peace and World Affairs website at: "Qur'an 5:90-91." Georgetown University, berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/qur-an-5-90-91.

[iii] The poems analyzed by Ibn Quzmān and Al A'mā al-Tutīlī can be found in: Constable, Olivia Remie. Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, 180-184.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion: Peace and Violence or Somewhere In-between

[i] Al-Harīzī was born in medieval Spain but traveled for much of his life throughout Muslim countries. For this reason, many scholars believe that his stories in the Tahkemoni may take place in Muslim countries. For more information please consult Decter, Jonathan P. "Al-Harizi's Tahkemoni in English." Prooftexts 23.1 (2003): 11018. Print.

[ii] Works by William Shakespeare, Thomas More and Machiavelli to name a few.