

~Center for Medieval Studies Presents~

“The Secret Literature of the Last Muslims of Spain”



Luce López-Baralt
Spanish and Comparative Literature
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Thursday, March 1st
4:00pm, 1210 Heller Hall

Abstract: During the turbulent period of the Spanish Inquisition in the sixteenth century, the last Muslims of Spain (or *moriscos*, as they were called with contempt) produced a fascinating clandestine literature we call today *ajamiado* literature. This secret literature was written in Spanish but transliterated with the Arabic script as a sign of loyalty to the sacred language of the Qur'an. The texts provide a first-hand testimony of what it was like for the *moriscos* to experience the decline of their culture and the assault on their religion. They also deal with the most varied subjects: magical and astrological treatises, prayers, books on medicine, prophecies, legends, poems, itineraries that explain how to flee secretly from Spain, personal testimonies regarding the fall of Granada in 1492 and the experience of exile in Tunisia, and even a curious "Spanish Kama Sutra" or nuptial treatise that teaches that sex, in the context of marriage, can lead to the ultimate contemplation of God. Thanks to this clandestine literature we have a chance to understand what it was like to be a cryptomuslim after the fall of Al-Andalus.

Biography: Luce López-Baralt, *Distinguished Professor (Insignis Professor)* of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of Puerto Rico and Harvard PhD, has authored 27 books in Golden Age Spanish Literature, Comparative Spanish and Islamic mysticism and *ajamiado* literature. She is also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Royal Order of Queen Isabel la Católica, the Premio Internacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña (Méjico) and the Ibn 'Arabi Prize (Spain) and several Pen Club International prizes, among other distinctions. Her work has been translated into 11 languages.

A reception will follow, open to faculty, graduate students, and friends of the Center for Medieval Studies.