Erschienen in: FABRIS, Angela, ed., Albert GÖSCHL, ed., Steffen SCHNEIDER, ed.. Sea of Literatures : Towards a Theory of Mediterranean Literature. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023, pp. 123-144. Alpe Adria e dintorni, itinerari mediterranei. 3. ISBN 9783110757637 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110775136-008

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Latin-Arabic Literary Entanglement and the Concept of "Mediterranean Literature"

Abstract: Latin and Arabic as linguistic systems look back on a centuries-old history of entanglement, with periods of strong and intensive literary production coinciding in the medieval and the early modern period. However, the history of their literary entanglement is restricted to the exchange of a few literary works, narratives, and motifs. Even if we employ a wide definition of literature that includes holy scriptures such as the Bible and the Qur'ān as well as scholarly, theological, and pragmatic texts, the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement cannot compare in quantity and quality to the entanglement of modern European and Arabic literatures from the nineteenth and twentieth century onwards. In view of this, the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement rather seems to present a counter-example to the concept of "Mediterranean literature." In terms of theory, however, this history raises a number of important issues. It highlights that our definition of "Mediterranean literature" significantly depends on what we define as "literature," and that we must consider many factors if we wish to understand why certain literary spheres interacted more intensively with each other than others. Moreover, the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement illustrates that literary exchanges dating back centuries leave behind a complex legacy. Thanks to complex processes of transmission, readers from Iceland to Iran are acquainted with the feats of Aristotle and Alexander already since the medieval period. The first Latin translation of the Qur'ān stood at the beginning of a long polemical engagement with Islam in Christian Europe. From the nineteenth century onwards, Arab authors have described the massive Latin reception of Arabic scholarly texts between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries as a process that eventually facilitated the modern rise of Europe, thus inscribing the Mediterranean south into the success story of modernity usually claimed exclusively by the Mediterranean north. All this shows that Latin-Arabic entanglement has a role to play in a theory of Mediterranean literature.

1 Introduction

"Mediterranean literature" can be understood in different ways: it can denote a restricted corpus of texts that deal with the Mediterranean explicitly from a thematic and conceptual point of view, such as in the works of the French writer

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110775136-008

and poet Gabriel Audisio (1900–1978) who redefined the Mediterranean as a "liquid continent" (*continent liquide*) and a "fatherland" (*patrie*) (Audisio 1935, 15). Alternatively, we can choose an extremely wide definition that regards every piece of text written within the geographical orbit of the Mediterranean as "Mediterranean literature." Finally, we can also define "Mediterranean literature" as the sum of literary themes and concrete works shared between different linguistic orbits that form part of the historical and contemporary literary landscapes of the geographical Mediterranean.

This article takes the third definition as its starting point. It investigates to what extent forms of "Mediterranean literature" have emanated from the entanglement of different literary spheres, each characterized by a particular language. In view of the many languages spoken in and around the Mediterranean since prehistorical times (Grévin 2012), it is impossible to trace the history of literary entanglement both in the *longue durée* and by considering more than two linguistic systems. By focusing on the literary entanglement of Latin and Arabic, this article—written by a historian, not a specialist in literary studies—contributes to this volume as a kind of "pre-history" and "collateral history" to the role played by Romance languages in the formation of Mediterranean literature(s).

2 Latin-Arabic Literary Entanglement: A Restricted View

Latin and Arabic were important languages of literary expression in and around the Mediterranean for several centuries—Latin from classical Antiquity to the early modern period, Arabic from the early medieval period until today. Periods of strong and intensive literary production in both languages coincided in the medieval and the early modern period. The spheres of both linguistic systems, and the literary production in each of these spheres, overlapped in various times and places.

A short history of Latin-Arabic entanglement identifies a period of preliminary entanglement in the ancient Roman Middle East and the creation of a linguistic contact zone in the western Mediterranean in the course of the Arabic-Islamic expansion of the seventh to ninth centuries. Circumscribed by Northwestern Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, southern France, Sicily, and parts of southern Italy, this linguistic contact zone witnessed various processes of linguistic exchange and even hybridization. From the eleventh century onwards, various manifestations of European-Christian expansionism into the Mediterranean—i. e. the Norman conquest of Sicily, the so-called *Reconquista*, the crusades, and the commercial expan-

sionism of the maritime powers of Italy and the Crown of Aragon—introduced new actors to the existing linguistic contact zones, expanded these contact zones into the eastern Mediterranean, and produced additional forms of linguistic encounter, among others a massive translation movement of Arabic works into Latin. At the latest from the early modern period onwards, Latin-Arabic encounters retreated increasingly into the scholarly and academic sphere, not least because Latin was superseded by various Romance languages and the so-called *Lingua franca* in transmediterranean communication. In Europe, the academic study of Arabic produced new forms of Latin-Arabic entanglement, mainly in the form of translations and Arabic textbooks with Latin paratexts. In the Arabic-Islamic sphere, in turn, Latin was not studied systematically before the beginning of the twentieth century: the medieval period witnessed a short period of Arabophone Christian and Muslim engagement with Latin texts in al-Andalus of the ninth to eleventh century. In the early modern period, Arabophone interest in Latin writings was largely restricted to Oriental, specifically Maronite Christians, and a relatively small circle of scientifically interested intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire. Only within the emerging secular universities of the Arab world at the beginning of the twentieth century have Muslim Arab scholars begun to systematically study the Greek and Latin "classics" as well as a few medieval Latin historiographical texts (König 2016, 419–493).

Latin and Arabic as linguistic systems look back on a centuries-old history of interpenetration in various milieus and forms. To which degree we can speak of a history of "literary" interpenetration, depends on our definition of "literature." We can define the entire textual production of a human community as literature. But we can also opt for an "aesthetic" definition of literature that restricts the latter to texts associated with particular genres (e. g. drama, lyric poetry, epic, the novel) which place value on the use of refined language, often admit fictional elements, pursue the aim of (intellectual) entertainment and refinement, but refuse to be reduced to their—e. g. scholarly, persuasive, or morally improving—function (Robson 1984, 1–19). If we resort to this restricted definition, then the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement is limited to the exchange and/or shared possession of a rather small number of literary works. This exchange manifested itself in different forms ranging from literal translations, via *traductions-réécritures*, to quasi-rhizomatic textual manifestations of shared literary themes. This can be illustrated in an exemplary manner with the help of two texts, i. e. *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the *Sirr al-asrār.* Due to their many complex ramifications, these texts' histories of transmission can only be traced here in their broadest outlines.

Kalīla wa-Dimna, a mirror for princes couched in animal fables, constitutes an originally Sanskrit text, possibly written around 300 CE in Kashmir. Its Pahlavi translation, produced at the order of the Sasanian king Ḫusraw Anūširwān (r.

531–579) by his physician Burzōe, was enlarged by adding fables from other Indian sources. From it derived not only the earliest Syriac, but also the earliest Arabic version written by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 139/756). This became the source text for various later versions in many different languages, including Syriac, Persian, different variants of Turkish, Ethiopian, Hebrew, Greek, Malay, and also Latin, all of which display particular variants, including omissions and additions. Variants of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic text reached Latin via two channels: produced at the beginning of the twelfth century, Rabbi Jōʾēl's Hebrew translation of the Arabic text was rendered into Latin by the baptized Jew John of Capua (d. 1310) between 1263 and 1278. A second Latin version was made at a later time on the basis of a Greek translation of the Arabic text produced by a certain Symeon in the eleventh century. Apart from an independent Old Castilian version of Rabbi Jōʾēl's Hebrew text, all late medieval and early modern versions in Romance, Germanic, and Slavonic languages are based on these two Latin translations (Brockelmann 1997, 503–506; Riedel 2010). Since all versions mentioned derive from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic text, but never reproduce it faithfully, it would be both imprecise to speak of "translations," or to claim that the Arabic original and its derivates were only connected by a "shared literary theme." Textual connections between the Arabic "original" and a Latin derivate were only significantly reduced to shared themes in the case of Petrus Alfonsi's (d. after 1130) *Disciplina clericalis:* this work merely integrates narrative elements of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* into a collection of novellae infused with Christian piety that witnessed an enormous diffusion throughout medieval Christian Europe (Alfonsi 1911; Reyna 2012; Leone 2010).

A similar history of transmission can be traced in connection with the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Sirr al-asrār* or *Secretum secretorum.* This text purports to transmit Aristotle's admonitions to Alexander the Great on a large variety of topics which were deemed of use to a ruler, including a discussion of vices and virtues, the issue of justice, as well as administrative, military, medical, and scientific matters. While the literary theme obviously takes up motifs that reach back into Greek antiquity, the text as such made its first appearance around the tenth century in an Arabic-Islamic sphere already influenced by the reception of Greek texts (via Syriac) in Arabic (Gutas 1998). Boasting around fifty extant Arabic manuscripts, the *Sirr al-asrār* was translated into several Oriental and European languages. Two Latin versions were copied more than five hundred times and served as source texts for later translations into various European vernaculars. The earlier version was produced on the Iberian Peninsula by a certain John of Seville and has been assigned to the 1120s. The later version was authored in crusader Antioch by a certain Philip of Tripoli in the early 1230s (Forster 2006, 1, 19, 114–130). As in the case of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, the many versions of this text differ with regards to

particular contents and their length, thus making it difficult to decide whether we are dealing with a "translation" or a "shared literary theme."

Kalīla wa-Dimna and the *Sirr al-asrār* can be regarded as representative of the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement in the medieval and early modern period because they stand for literary traditions of Indian and Greek origin that found their way into Arabic and Latin literature. An additional example of the reception of originally Indian texts or motifs in both Arabic and Latin is found in the many *traductions-réécritures* of the originally Buddhist legend of *Barlaam and Josaphat* and its impressively ramified history of diffusion, translation, and adaptation to new cultural and religious contexts (Forster 2012, 180–191). We can add the story of the Seven Sages, which specialized research has regarded as being either of Indian or Persian origin, and which received a wide western Asian, eastern Mediterranean, and western European reception, including Arabic and Latin versions (Steinmetz 2000, 8–18). An additional example of the reception of originally Greek texts is found in the legend of the Seven Sleepers, a story about Christian youths from the city of Ephesus fleeing persecution under the Roman emperor Decius (r. 249–251). Although the earliest written documentation of this legend is in Syriac, some scholars believe that it was originally put to writing in Greek by bishop Stephen of Ephesus between 448 and 450. In pre-Islamic times, the legend witnessed a very wide diffusion, both in Syriac and in Latin writings. It was taken up in *sūra* 18 of the Qurʾān, which figures under the title "The People of the Cave" (*Ahl al-kahf*). Subsequently, it was commented upon more than once in works of Qurʾānic exegesis (Griffith 2007, 109–138; Koloska 2015).

In addition to all this, the widespread diffusion of stories about Alexander the Great—whose feats inspired epic traditions both in Latin and Arabic and, in particular, in Western European vernaculars as well as in Persian (Wesche et al. 1977–1999, 355–365; Watt 1978, 127; Stock 2016)—suggests the following conclusion: in the medieval period, shared literary texts and literary motifs that formed part of both Latin and Arabic literatures were generally, maybe even without exception, of eastern Mediterranean, western Asian, or even Indian origin. This statement is also valid for the early modern period: the earliest generations of Western European Arabists made available in Latin pre-Islamic and Arabic-Islamic poetry, proverbs, and tales of western Asian origin, in the form of excerpts produced for the purpose of academic and linguistic study (Toomer 1996, 46; Loop 2017). Examples are Thomas Erpenius's (d. 1624) parallel Arabic-Latin editions of Arabic proverbs and the quasi-Aesopian fables of the legendary Luqmān (Erpenius 1636), or Albert Schultens's (d. 1750) parallel Arabic-Latin edition of al-Ḥarīrī's (d. 516/1122) *Maqāmāt* (Schultens 1740). In all these cases, the direction of transmission moved from the southeast to the northwest, where texts or textual elements of eastern origin eventually found a Latin form.

To my knowledge, there exists no comparable Arabic reception of Latin literary motifs or literature (in the "strict" sense defined above) of western Mediterranean or European origin in the medieval and early modern period. One of the very few examples of the Arabic reception of a literary motif of Latin origin concerns the story of Aeneas's flight to Italy in the wake of the fall of Troy. A short comparison of its Latin and Arabic history of reception illustrates how differently this literary theme was received and adapted in the Latin-Christian and the Arabic-Islamic spheres: in the very strong Latin tradition, the story of Aeneas fleeing Troy, founding Alba longa, and thus laying the foundations of Roman history, was treated in the works of Roman historiographers such as Quintus Fabius Pictor (d. *c.* 201 BCE) and Titus Livius (d. 17 CE), and eventually found poetic elaboration in the work of Virgil (d. 19 BCE) (Heckel 2002, 219–221). In post-Roman times, the myth of Trojan origins was taken up by the Franks and other collectives of the post-Roman Latin West. In this way, the reference to Trojan origins became one of the most popular foundation myths in Latin-Christian Europe (Ewig 1998, 1–17; Wolf 2008). In medieval Arabic historiography and literature, in turn, the story of Aeneas played no role whatsoever as a founding myth and is mentioned for the first time and with only few details in the late medieval universal history of Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 808/1406). The latter did not have access to the epic tradition of Virgil's *Aeneid*, but received information about Aeneas's role in Roman history via the Arabic version of a Latin work of historiography originally written by the late antique historiographer Orosius (d. *c.* 417). Its Arabic equivalent, the so-called *Kitāb Hurūšiyūš* ("The Book of Orosius"), had been produced between the late ninth and the early tenth century in Umayyad al-Andalus and represents a restructured and enlarged version of the Latin original (Ibn Ḫaldūn 2000–2001, 232; Orosius 1990, lib. I,18,1, 68; Penelas 2001, 80–82; König 2015a, 84–85, 103–104). Whereas the learned both in the Latin-Christian and the Arabic-Islamic spheres regarded the story of Aeneas as "history," not as "literature," the narrative of Aeneas's feats fulfilled a completely different function in both literary orbits with regard to the formulation of collective identities.

It is only from the twentieth century onwards that we can discern a substantial reception of Latin literary works in the Arab world. Largely confined to academia, this reception resulted in the translation of many texts pertaining to the Latin classics written by playwrights and poets such as Plautus, Catull, and Horace. This reception is related to the emergence of a system of secular academic education in the Arab world at the beginning of the twentieth century, which entailed the foundation of university departments for Greek and Roman classics (Pormann 2011, 123–141; König 2016, 471–473; 2019a, 107–118). The resulting engagement with the history of ancient Greek and Roman literature has been partly extended to medieval Latin texts (König 2016, 472–473).

If we stick to an "aesthetic" definition that associates the term "literature" with particular genres, refined language, etc., we must conclude that, in the medieval and early modern period, the shared literary heritage of the Latin and the Arabic linguistic spheres was largely confined to texts and motifs of eastern Mediterranean, western Asian, and Indian origin, which then found diverse forms of diffusion and reception in both literary spheres. Only from the twentieth century onwards did parts of classical Roman, i. e., western Mediterranean, literature also become part of this shared literary heritage. In view of all this, Latin and Arabic literary entanglement cannot compare in quantity and qualitative intensity to the later entanglement of modern European and Arabic literatures. The latter is represented by the many translations of both European (including Romance) works of literature into Arabic and vice versa, from the eighteenth and particularly from the nineteenth century onwards (Khoury 2004; Faiq 2004; Allen 2003; Shamma 2016; Hanna et al. 2019) as well as by Francophone literature in the Maghreb (Déjeux and Mitsch 1992, 5–6).

3 Latin-Arabic Literary Entanglement: An Extended View

Only by employing a much wider definition of the term "literature" are we able to significantly enlarge the corpus of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement. This wider definition allows us to include sacred texts such as the Bible and the Qur'ān, treatises pertaining to the field of Graeco-Arabic sciences and philosophy, Arabic and Latin translations of medieval historiography, and—by stretching the definition of literature to the utmost—bilingual political and commercial treaties as well as related correspondence (König 2015b, 478–483).

From the medieval period onwards, Arabic and Latin readerships shared a corpus of sacred texts and related textual material. The Bible was fully available in Latin from the late fourth century onwards thanks to Jerome's (d. 420) translation efforts, which drew on earlier (partial) Latin translations which dated back to the second century (Brunhölzl 1999, 88–93). In line with the increasing linguistic Arabicization of non-Muslim populations under Muslim rule in the wake of the Arabic-Islamic expansion, Arabic translations of biblical texts began to be produced by Jews and Christians from the middle of the ninth century at the latest (Griffith 2013, 97–126). Only in Muslim al-Andalus, however, do we find evidence for Arabic translations of Latin versions of the gospels, the Pauline epistles, and the Psalter (Roisse 1999, 147–164; Urvoy 1994; Potthast 2011, 65–108). The Qur'ān, in turn, only became available to a Latin readership in the twelfth century (Bobzin

1993), when the abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), commissioned its Latin translation as well as that of corollary texts on the life and deeds of Muḥammad (Kritzeck 1964, 10–14, 36). The availability of the Bible and the Qurʾān in both Arabic and Latin served various Muslim and Christian scholars in their polemics against the respective other religion (Fritsch 1930; Thomas 1996, 29–38; Burman 2007).

From the late twelfth century onwards, Arabic and Latin readers also began to share an extremely large corpus of what we may term *Graeco-Arabica.* A large number of originally Greek works dealing with philosophy and various sciences had been rendered into Arabic (often via a Syriac intermediate) in western Asia between the eighth and the tenth centuries. Writing in Arabic, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars commented and enlarged upon these texts in the following centuries. Although some of the original Greek works had already been translated into Latin in the late sixth century (Strohmaier 1997), many of them only found a Latin form when Latin-Christian intellectuals and their local aids began perusing Arabic libraries in regions conquered from the Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula, in Sicily, and the Syrian Levant from the twelfth century onwards (Burnett 2007; König 2019a, 88–92). A list of Latin translations included in the obituary of Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187), one of the most prolific Arabic-Latin translators, who was active in Toledo, gives an impression of the quantity and thematic range of the textual corpus that was now potentially available to both Arabic and Latin readers: the list features seventy-one Arabic works translated by Gerard and his aid into Latin. These include thirty-six Arabicized works by ancient Greek authors in addition to twenty-five Arabic works by medieval Muslim authors, four by Jewish, four by Sabean, and two by Christian authors, all of them commenting on and developing ancient Greek thought in the fields of logic and dialectics, philosophy, medicine, geometry, astronomy, and geomancy (Sudhoff 1914, 77–79). Dag Nikolaus Hasse's thorough study of Latin *Renaissance* editions lists several hundred translated Arabic works by forty-four Muslim, Jewish, and Christian authors, printed in Latin between the late fifteenth and the late seventeenth century. Thus, by the end of the medieval period, these works had become part of a transmediterranean literary heritage shared by readers of Arabic and Latin (Hasse 2016, 317–408). The earliest generations of European-Christian Arabists then began adding to these works a number of translations of medieval Arabic texts, including historiography and poetry, from the seventeenth century onwards (Pococke 1658; Pococke 1663; Fleischer 1831; Bevilacqua 2018, 136–166). These translations promised to provide solutions for issues of chronology and problems with Old Testament Hebrew, and—as only one manifestation of a wider engagement with the Arabic language—to facilitate access to Eurasian trade (König 2019a, 98–100).

An important corpus of Latin texts, which slowly became available to Arabic readers in the course of the early modern period, consisted of specifically Christian texts. From the late fifteenth century onwards, but especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Catholic missionaries and Oriental Christian, in particular Maronite, groups attached to the Roman church translated a huge number of Latin-Christian texts to Arabic. Thanks to their efforts, Latin works relating to the Christian faith from the period of the church fathers of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (e. g., Augustine, Thomas Aquinas) to Christian literature of the sixteenth to nineteenth century (e. g., Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Ávila, Johann Hermann Janssens) were made available in Arabic (König 2016, 449–455). Since the readership of such works consisted mainly of Arabic-speaking Christians, not Muslims, these translations represent a special facet of the shared Latin-Arabic literary heritage: they were mostly of interest to an educated Arabophone Christian elite until at least some of these works also began to be studied within the academic framework of secular Arab universities in the twentieth century (Issa 2017).

The previous deliberations show that the shared corpus of Latin-Arabic literature is rather small, if we choose to restrict our corpus to fully transmitted works and to opt for a purely "aesthetic" definition of literature. However, if we add *traductions-réécritures* and literary motifs to our corpus and admit sacred, scientific, philosophical, historiographical, and theological texts to our definition of literature, we are then faced with an enormous shared literary heritage of *Arabo-Latina* known both to Arabic and Latin readerships around the Mediterranean. By regarding the movements of transfer in chronological order, we can discern that, in the medieval and early modern period, most shared motifs and works were ultimately of eastern (Indian, western Asian, and eastern Mediterranean) origin. This applies to the mutual Arabic-Latin reception of the Bible, the epic feats of Alexander the Great, the Qurʾān, the philosophical and scientific enquiries of Aristotle and other ancient Greek scholars, and finally their medieval Muslim, Jewish, and Christian elaborations, many of which were written in Muslim al-Andalus. The non-Muslim Mediterranean north was clearly on the receiving side. Its reception of Arabic texts continued in later periods. Proponents of the emerging Arabic studies in Europe began engaging with Arabic poetry and historiography in Latin, until European scholars gave up Latin as a means of academic expression in the nineteenth century. From the early modern period onwards, however, Arabic-speakers also began to engage increasingly with Latin texts. Oriental Christians received increasing access to Latin-Christian theological and edifying literature in Arabic translation, whereas specialists in the emerging secular universities of the twentieth-century Arab world began engaging with the Latin classics and a few medieval Latin texts as part of their academic study of past societies and literatures.

4 Explaining the Dearth of Latin-Arabic Literary Entanglement

Although the history of Latin-Arabic entanglement reveals a relatively large array of shared texts and textual interpenetrations, the mutual reception of both Latin and Arabic literature in the restricted "aesthetic" sense, as defined above, remains comparatively meagre throughout the ages. We should consider, for example, that the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, one of the most well-known works of Arabic literature in Europe, was translated first into French, and then into other modern European languages, but never into Latin (Littmann 1986, 358–364). Conversely, no work of ancient, medieval, or early modern Latin literature ever became famous enough to become an integral part of Arabic literary culture—as opposed to modern European literature, which became highly popular in the Arab world from the nineteenth century onwards, as Philip C. Sadgrove explains:

> From the late 1840s, imported literary forms captured the public's imagination. The first wave of new fictional writing involved a process of translation, adaptation, or imitation of mainly French novels, short stories and drama. [...] The plays of Molière, Corneille, Racine, and the Italian Goldoni were an early source of inspiration. Works of questionable literary value, sentimental stories, historical romances, science fiction, crime and detective stories were popular; Alexandre Dumas père, Jules Verne, Ponson du Terrail, Leblanc (his Arsène Lupin detective novels), and Eugène Sue were amongst the favourite authors. Later translators were to adapt Walter Scott, Conan Doyle, Wilkie Collins, Disraeli, Dickens and Thackeray. Translations ranged from Aesop's *Fables*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Wyss' *The Swiss Family Robinson*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* and the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, to the edifying literature of the Catholic priest and writer Christoph von Schmid and the Belgian Jesuit Henri Lammens. With the rise of journalism in the 1860s and 70s, newspapers and magazines in Beirut, Alexandria and Cairo, heavily dependent on translated material to fill their columns, regularly published translated western fiction (Sadgrove 2000, 233; Hill 2015, 177–212).

In comparison, the shared textual heritage of Arabic and Latin literature seems comparatively "functional." Since we can largely reduce it to texts that serve(d) the purpose of enlarging scientific, linguistic, philosophical, theological, or spiritual horizons, this heritage lacks an element of pure aesthetic enjoyment that reaches beyond the restricted milieu of specialists. The reasons for this can be summarized as follows.

First, it is necessary to consider the historical relationship between Latin and Arabic. As a written language, Arabic emerged in a late antique western Asian context influenced by Aramaic, Persian, and Greek. Roman imperialism also left its lexical mark on Arabic in Antiquity (König 2016, 423–427). However, the expanding

literary sphere of Arabic had already developed its own corpus of archaic literature in the form of pre-Islamic poetry and stories about pre-Islamic inner-Arab feuds (*ayyām al-ʿArab*), and had additionally absorbed Greek and Persian motifs and texts, before it began to textually interact with Latin in the Muslim West from the late ninth century onwards (Kontzi 1982; Ineichen 22–42; König 2019a, 51–62). Latin literature failed to influence Arabic literary production in the latter's formative phase. Moreover, the impact of Greek and Persian texts also deserves some qualification: Arabic-Islamic intellectual culture of the medieval period received access to a large number of originally Greek as well as a handful of Middle Persian works during the great translation movement of the eighth to tenth centuries that took place in Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid Syria and Iraq. However, it largely ignored ancient Greek "aesthetic" literature (Gutas 1998, 193–196; Pormann 2006, 2–20), as is illustrated by the Arabic reception of Homer (Kraemer 1956; Kreutz 2004) and Menander (Ullmann 1961; Führer 1993), while assimilating Persian influences through persons rather than texts (Pellat 1989; Cereti 2009; Harb 2019).

Second, we must take into account that the literary spheres of both Arabic and Latin had to offer a very different range of texts to each other from the early medieval period onwards. Although Arabic literary culture had produced important specimens even prior to the late eighth century, literary production expanded significantly in the ʿAbbāsid sphere of the ninth and the tenth century. Digesting the abovementioned Greek and Persian influences, Arabic-Islamic intellectuals of this period developed a scholarly tradition building on Arabicized Greek texts and an ideal of behavioral and literary refinement in the concept of *adab* (Gabrieli 1986; Hämeen-Anttila 2014). Both were emulated in the Muslim West (specifically in al-Andalus) from the tenth century onwards (Beeston et al. 1993; Ashtiyani et al. 1990; Menocal et al. 2000). In this period, we can trace the earliest impact of Arabic on Latin texts in the Iberian Peninsula: what began with the transmission of a few mathematical and astronomical ideas in the tenth century, grew into a torrent of Arabic-Latin translations of mainly *Graeco-Arabica* pertaining to manifold fields of knowledge in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Burnett 2007, 1231). Up to this point, Latin literature as available in the Arabic-Latin contact zones in the western Mediterranean had been largely ecclesiastical in nature. In the entire corpus of Latin literature produced under Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula, we only find a handful of non-Christian authors, including Hippocrates, Cato, Virgil, as well as Persius and Lucanus, the latter only in excerpts (Gil 1973, index). Although Arabic-Islamic intellectuals were undoubtedly interested in Christianity (and the specifics of its Latin variant) as well as in collecting information on the non-Muslim peoples of Europe (König 2015a), highly specific Latin-Christian texts were of limited interest to them. Given the easier availability of Latin ecclesiastical than of "secular" Latin texts, we must ask ourselves to which extent Arabic-speakers

would have had access to, say, the idiosyncratic poems of the bishop Theodulf of Orléans (d. 821) or the *Carmina burana* (eleventh–twelfth centuries). As manifestations of a particular regional culture and world-view, these texts were probably as irrelevant to Arabic-Islamic intellectuals in Kairouan or Mosul as the poems of Imru l-Qays (d. *c.* 550) or al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/964) were to Benedictine monks in Magdeburg or Canterbury, had they been available to them. Throughout the medieval and early modern period, the corpus of Greek (and associated Graeco-Arabic) scholarly literature offered a range of topics of much larger—of transcultural and even universal—interest. These topics, including philosophy, the natural sciences, mathematics, astronomy, logic, medicine, etc., were relevant to all humankind, not only to the adherents of a particular interpretation of monotheism or a particular regional culture. This probably accounts for the fact that such texts were much more widely translated, first from Greek to Syriac and Arabic, then later from Arabic (occasionally via Hebrew) to Latin (König 2016, 480–486).

Third, the particular balance between oral and written forms of Latin in their respective relationship to Arabic also plays an important role. We must not only acknowledge that, in spite of the enormous amount of extant Latin texts, Latin-writing authors from Antiquity to the early modern period probably produced a smaller number of texts pertaining to genres classified as "aesthetic literature" than modern authors writing in a Romance vernacular, although we should not underestimate the amount of Latin "aesthetic literature" produced since ancient times and, in particular, in the modern era (Leonhardt 2009, 186–220). We must also take into account that oral regiolects of Latin, which would become full-fledged Romance languages in the course of the medieval period, dominated communication between Latin and Arabic speakers from the early medieval period onwards (Wright 1982; Ernst et al. 2003, 504–667). We may note, for example, that Arabic *Muwaššāḥ*-poetry on the Iberian Peninsula of the tenth to fourteenth centuries contains Romance, not Latin verses written in Arabic letters (König 2019a, 57–59). Thus, while many Muslims in the western Mediterranean could probably understand and speak a form of Romance (König 2019c, 651–667), Muslim access to written Latin was barred by a kind of "ecclesiastical threshold," which made it necessary to enter milieus strongly impregnated with the Christian faith to acquire Latin skills. At the latest from the high Middle Ages onwards, we find documentary proof of the increasing use of Romance vernaculars in the written sphere; for instance, in dozens of bilingual Arabic-Latin treaties, which were often negotiated and written down in a Romance dialect and then transferred to Latin by a professional scribe (König 2015b, 478–483). From the late medieval period onwards, these Romance vernaculars increasingly sidelined Latin as the preferred means of literary expression (see the entries "Frankoprovenzalisch", "Französisch", "Galicisch",

"Italienisch", "Katalanisch", "Lateinisch", "Lingua Franca", "Okzitanisch", "Portugiesisch", "Spanisch" in Ammon and Haarmann 2008).

5 Latin-Arabic Entanglement and the Concept of Mediterranean Literature

Regardless of all the possible reasons for a dearth of "aesthetic" literary entanglement between the spheres of Latin and Arabic, it should remain clear that we can only register such a "dearth" of literary entanglement as long as we employ a very restricted definition of literature; one that excludes sacred, scientific, philosophical, historiographical, and theological texts. It is against this backdrop that we should discuss whether the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement should be regarded as a counter-example, or rather as one among several instructive examples enabling to develop a concept of "Mediterranean literature."

We could choose to restrict our definition of literature to "aesthetic literature", in line with the working definition applied above, and consequently highlight the dearth of the shared Latin-Arabic literary heritage, while emphasizing the role played by the boundaries of time, space, culture, religious ideology, and particular sociolinguistic milieus in limiting the exchange of texts to writings of largely functional value. In this case, we would be faced with two autonomous literary spheres whose "aesthetic" literary production rarely interacted or merged. Consequently, and in spite of their geographical inclusion in the Mediterranean sphere, these literatures could not count as "Mediterranean literature" proper, because they ultimately "failed" to transgress linguistic, religious, and cultural boundaries characteristic of the Mediterranean, thus also "failing" to become a shared space of intensive (trans-)cultural interaction and exchange.

By contrast, we could also choose to recall the array of Latinized Arabic works (mirrors for princes, scientific and philosophical *Graeco-Arabica*, the Qurʾān, historiography, proverbs, poetry), the range of Arabicized Latin works (works of medieval historiography, a large range of Latin-Christian theological treatises, classical poetry and plays), in addition to both Latin and Arabic versions of the Bible and elaborations on the Alexander-theme. Taking this view, it certainly seems possible to speak of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement as one particular facet of "Mediterranean literature" relevant in the medieval, early modern, modern, and even contemporary periods.

In view of these possibilities, the answer to the question of whether we are dealing with "Mediterranean literature" largely depends on what we define as "literature" and whether we prefer the geographical attributes "transmediterranean"

or "western Eurasian" to the term "Mediterranean." Much more interesting, however, is what the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement teaches us about the parameters that can serve to comprehend a plethora of highly diverse phenomena of textual entanglement in the wider Mediterranean sphere.

The example of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement shows clearly that—in the process of theorizing about "Mediterranean literature(s)"—the deliberate choice of using particular languages, genres, regions, or periods as evidence also serves to bring about particular results. The analysis of Latin-Arabic textual entanglement produces insights that clearly differ from those obtained in an analysis focusing on the Mediterranean literary impact of one single language—e. g. Latin (Leonhardt 2009), Maltese (Kontzi 2005; Friggieri 1994, 59–69; 2007, 247–254), Judeo-Spanish (Altabev 2003), or the so-called *Lingua franca* (Dakhlia 2008)—or in an analysis of the literary entanglement of another pair of languages—e. g. Latin and Ottoman, or French and Ottoman. Regarding the latter, the highly stylized Ottoman literary language only remained in use approximately between the thirteenth century and the Turkish language reform in 1928 (Köprülu 1995). Consequently, the histories of Latin-Ottoman and French-Ottoman literary entanglement were much shorter than their Latin-Arabic equivalent. The very short history of Latin-Ottoman entanglement witnessed the translation of some scholarly texts from Latin to Ottoman in the seventeenth century (Brentjes 2005, 126–132; Bachour 2012; Emiralioğlu 2014, 149–151), but ended when French supplanted Latin as the main reference language for European scholarship in the Ottoman Empire. French had risen to a written language in the course of the late medieval period and had already had an impact on the eastern Mediterranean during the crusading period (Aslanov 2006). When French became increasingly important both as a language of European scholarship and of early modern Levant trade in the seventeenth century, Ottoman elites began to draw more and more on French texts and French expertise to acquaint themselves with the latest developments in European scholarship, medicine, and technology. Consequently, the number and diffusion of Ottoman translations of French texts rapidly eclipsed the number and diffusion of Ottoman translations of Latin texts (Strauss 2007; Meral 2013; Krstić 2012). Vice versa, however, French translations of Ottoman texts were and remain of interest only to a limited number of Francophone specialists (Timur 1998; Demircioğlu 2005). Juxtaposing the different trajectories of Latin-Arabic, Latin-Ottoman, and French-Ottoman entanglement, we cannot fail to notice that—in terms of translations from one language to the other—each language pair features a different balance: in the case of Latin and Arabic, the balance tipped in favor of the more eastern language, among other reasons, due to the enormous transmediterranean prestige of Arabic scholarship in the medieval period; in the case of Latin and Ottoman as well as French and Ottoman, the balance tipped in favor of the more western languages,

given the rising prestige of European science in the early modern period. This shows, once again, that our choice of languages determines to a high degree which theories we are able to develop about "Mediterranean literature(s)" in terms of impact, power asymmetries, and so on.

By highlighting that Latin-Arabic literary entanglement was, on the one hand, particularly meagre in the sphere of what this article has defined as "aesthetic literature," but on the other hand, particularly rich in the sphere of scientific, philosophical, and historiographical treatises, the previous deliberations in this article have shown that different genres permeated Mediterranean literary landscapes in a different manner and under highly variant conditions. In the case study at hand, functional texts that provided access to a particular kind of coveted knowledge, were of much higher popularity than texts projecting the aestheticized worldviews of particular groups. "Disinterested," "non-functional" knowledge of world literatures in an idealized modern sense does not seem to have been the driving force of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement. However, we may arrive at other results by looking at other languages, times, and genres; for instance, the novel (Allen 1993, 180–192) certainly catered to other needs and experienced a different diffusion than the formulaic structure of chancery texts (Wansbrough 1996).

Regarding the orientation of textual flows, the example of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement shows that, in the medieval period, Christian societies on the northern shores of the Mediterranean were rather on the receiving end—in particular with regard to scientific texts. However, at the latest from the eighteenth, and particularly from the nineteenth century onwards, when European societies had embarked upon a course of scientific innovation, the Arab and Ottoman spheres began importing corresponding texts and terminology from European countries, thus re-orienting the direction of textual flows (Emiralioğlu 2014, 143–156; Matar 2009, 237–241). That Latin only came into play here to a limited degree has to do with the fact that, by this time, Latin had already begun to succumb to the pressure of the European vernaculars even in the scientific and technical spheres (Issawi 1967, 110–133; Strauss 2007, 1247). This shows that it is necessary to consider the chronological dimension of literary phenomena in the Mediterranean. Centers and languages of literary production, textual flows, and entire literary landscapes shifted over the centuries.

Adding to this, the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement also shows that literary exchanges dating back centuries and even millennia can leave behind a rather long and complex legacy. Not only did the first Latin translation of the Qurʾān and related texts on Muḥammad in the twelfth century stand at the beginning of a centuries-long polemical engagement with Islam in Christian Europe that drew on literary motifs first formulated in Arabic (Kritzeck 1964, 193–206; Daniel 1960). Arabic-Islamic authors from highly different ideological backgrounds—rang-

ing from reformers such as Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (d. 1290/1873), Ḫayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (d. 1307/1889) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1391/1973) to early ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism such as Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1386/1966)—have claimed from the nineteenth century onwards that the Arabic-Latin translation movement of the twelfth to sixteenth century contributed to European intellectual history to such an extent that it actually facilitated the rise of modern Europe to global power. According to their perspective, the medieval transmediterranean Greek-Syriac-Arabic-Hebrew-Latin joint venture of preserving ancient Greek texts for posterity inscribed the societies of the Mediterranean south into the success story of modernity, usually claimed exclusively by the societies of the Mediterranean north (König 2018, 50–51; König 2019a, 118–119).

In view of all this, we could claim that the history of Latin-Arabic literary entanglement may have produced only few concrete works that can be classified as "Mediterranean literature"—in the sense of literary works shared by two or more linguistic spheres in the Mediterranean. However, regarding the mobility of literary themes and entire texts, the history of Latin-Arabic entanglement has had lasting effects. Consequently, this entangled history constitutes an important part of the much wider history of Mediterranean literature(s) and should be considered when reflecting upon the building blocks needed to formulate a theory of Mediterranean literature.

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