

The Influence of Arabic Culture on European Medieval Romance & Poetry

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Abstract:

The present study traces the Arabic influences on the literary development of medieval poetry and romance (originally verse narratives of love and chivalry). It aims to highlight areas of such contributions in some of the greatest European Medieval Romances (E.M.R) and poetry, and link them to their counterparts in Arabic Literary Tradition (A.L.T). It provides an analytical review of Menocal's book and some of the related arguments by western scholars, who support the Arabist theory, and confess the west indebtedness to Arabic culture. Conclusively Translation was the initiative media for such peculiar cultural and literary interchange. It played a tremendous role in the awakening of Medieval Europe, and its later upheaval .

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تتبع تأثير الثقافة العربية في الأدب الأوروبي خلال العصور الوسطى وتحديدًا في الشعر والأدب الرومانتي (قصص الفروسية والحب الشعرية). وتعتمد الدراسة في مجملها على بحوث وشهادات الكتاب الغربيين المنصفين خاصة الباحثة الأمريكية من أصول أسبانية ماريا روزا مينوكال التي تصدت لدحض إدعاءات الدراسات النقدية التي تنكر هذا التأثير. وتوضح أهم ملامح هذا التأثير في شعر التروبادور الذي اشتق اسمه من كلمة "طرب" وتعود أصوله إلى موشحات الحب الأندلسية. وكذلك تأثر قصص الرومانس بالتقليد الشعري العربي للحب العذري. وتحفل هذه الدراسة بالكثير من الأمثلة والمقارنات التي توضح هذا التأثير. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أهمية الترجمة وتعلم لغة " الآخر " في المناقشة والتفاعل بين الحضارات. وهذا ما انتشل أوروبا من ظلام العصور الوسطى إلى عصر النهضة أو الرينيسانس.

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In her book, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, Maria Rosa Menocal argues that non-Arab literary historians were and are so prejudiced against the Arabic influence on the literary development of medieval culture and romance that this influence has been both deliberately and subconsciously ignored. Menocal's book is an important beginning for research into the influence of Arabic culture and literature on the literary development of non-Arabic medieval cultures, particularly on poetry and the "romance" literary tradition. An analysis of Menocal's book and related secondary sources makes clear that European Medieval literature was undeniably influenced by Arabic sources in obvious as well as subtle ways. The present study traces these influences and provides an analytical review of Menocal's book and some of the related arguments by western scholars like Alice E. Laster, Roger Boase, H.A.R Gibb, Katherine Slater, Thomas Warton, who support the Arabist theory, and confess the west indebtedness to Arabic culture. It aims to highlight areas of such influences and the intercultural experience in some of the greatest European Medieval Romances (E.M.R) and poetry, and link them to their counterparts in Arabic Literary Tradition (A.L.T) as follows :

(A.L.T)	→	(E.M.R)
&poetry) 1. Arabic Frame Tradition as exemplified in Kalilah and Dimnah, and Thousand and One Nights.(Arabian nights)	→	Disciplina Clericalis by Petras Alfonsi, Canterbury Tales by Chaucer, and Decameron.
Boccaccio's 2. The Arab poetic tradition of chaste love (al.hub-al-udhri) as		

expressed in:

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| <p>a. Romance of Kais and Lubna,
Qays and Layla, the “Mad one”</p> <p>b. Muwashshahat (the Andalusian
love songs).</p> <p>c. Ibn Hazm’s Tawq Al Hamama
(The Dove’s Necklace or Ring of
the Dove)</p> | <p>“Courtly love” as
manifested in Tristan and
Isolt and many other romances.</p> <p>→ The Troubadour poetry which
inspired most European love
poetry and romance.</p> <p>→ De Amor (the Art of Love) by
Andreas Capellanus.</p> |
| <p>3. Sinbad, and Al Khadir romance</p> | <p>→ Sir Gawain and the Green
Night</p> |
| <p>4. Kitab al Miraj</p> | <p>→ Dante’s Divine Comedy</p> |

Menocal essentially argues that the Arabic influences were planted when the Arabs ruled Spain for about 800 years after the turn of the Eighth Century, a period in which the “Western culture grew in the shadows of Arabic and Arabic-manipulated learning, the ‘European awakening’; with the prince, a speaker of Arabic, bestowing the kiss of delivery from centuries of deep sleep”(Menocal 2)

When Menocal, a graduate student in Romance Philosophy, began to study classical Arabic, she encountered the word taraba, (‘to sing’), in the list of the vocabulary for the course. She was surprised when the “Arabist teacher” mentioned as a matter-of-fact that this taraba was the root of the European word troubadour. This was the accident or coincidence that shaped and directed her interest in “how Western scholarship has structured its view of the Medieval past” (IX). The argument that this word is originally Arabic was not only not favorably received, but worse, it “was not even deemed worthy of heated and acrimonious discussion,” and the Arabic etymon was apparently destined never to figure as one of the OED’s lists of possible solutions of an unresolved etymological mystery (XI). Thus, the problem for Menocal became not the mysterious origin of the word “troubadour” or whether troubadour poetry came from Arabic poetry or not, but why discussion of such possibilities was dismissed, and why

“an Arabic solution was shunned as taboo” (XII).

This book, then, is an exploration of the causes and configurations as well as the inadequacies and shortcomings of the hostile views of the period to the true notion that “Arabs were central to the making of Medieval Europe” (XII). Menocal herself discounts some earlier research on the subject, which she feels overvalued certain evidence, and goes on to say:

I have made no great discoveries of undeniable links, constructed no new “proof,” or found heretofore lost manuscripts showing the West’s indebtedness to medieval Arabic culture... I will attempt merely to show why the texts, facts, and discoveries of others have seemed negligible or ignorable to so many romance literary historians. (XIV-XV)

Although a few literary historians have seriously considered Arabic influences dating from medieval Spain (or Al-Andalus, as the Arabs called Muslim Spain), “remarkably little of the information and few of the hypothesis that has informed these views have passed into the realm of common knowledge” (Menocal 2-3).

This lack of obvious literary evidence of Arabic influence at the popular level is in large part due to the fact that the cultural, literary and religious biases held by Christian European against Arabs prevented them from being honest about Arabic influences on their writing, even if they had desired to be honest. Recognition of Arab influences would have been a “flagrant contradiction of cultural recognition of cultural ideology” which was based on the belief in “cultural supremacy over the Arab world” (Menocal 6).

Menocal notes that when a researcher wrote an article linking Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and “Arabic Frame Tradition,” the hostile attacks on the article did not address the heart of the researcher’s argument, but rather “the accuracy of sources” in ancient Arabic traditions (19), which missed the point entirely, either deliberately or because they were blinded by their hostility to the argument.

What enrages these critics is that a western researcher, Catherine Gittes, dared to relate one of the greatest works of Medieval

Europe to Arabic literary tradition. In her essay, *The Canterbury Tales and the Arabic Frame Tradition*, Gittes argues that the “frame narrative... of which the *Canterbury Tales* is the culmination, incorporates a tradition that originated and developed in Arabia” (237). As such, the structure of the *Canterbury Tales* can be most appropriately compared not with the cathedral but with the mosque” (237).

Gittes discusses the mode of organization in both Arabic literature and art. The main features of this mode are the concepts of boundlessness, infinity and open-endedness. Gittes points out that

Whatever the reasons behind Arabic aesthetic principles, the concept of organization evident in most Arabic literature, beginning with the *qasida*, (earlier ode), emphasizes the individual unit and does not allow the open-ended and inconclusive overall framing of structure to determine the nature or construction of work’s part. This artistic perspective enabled the Arabs to develop the frame structure, to refine it, and to explore possibilities. Ultimately, the Arabic conquest brought the frame narrative model, including the popular *Panchatantra* (renamed *Kalilah and Dimnah* in Arabic), to Europe, where it became a device widely used by medieval storytellers. (244)

The Arabic outer framing story, as exemplified in *Kalilah and Dimnah*(the *Panchatantra*) and *Thousand and One Nights* (*Arabian Nights*), does not interfere with the collection of tales. Each of the books of tales exists as a complete narrative connected together or to the whole outer frame just by an impression or single point of view of the main speaker or the frame narrator. A scrutinizing example is *Shahrazad* in *Thousand and One Nights*; the old man in *Kalilah and Dimnah*; the poet in the *Qasida*; or the biographer and the historian in the medieval Arabic histories and travel books. In all these works, “the experience of a single man, a group of men, or events in one part of the world act as a connective or, in a loose sense, frames” (242).

As for Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Gittes analyzes the frame narrative in some pre-Chaucerian European works that influenced or inspired Chaucer. *Disciplina Clericalis*, written by Petras Alfonsi as an imitation of *Kalilah and Dimnah*, became a “model for

other medieval Spanish writers, including Don Juan Manuel and Juan Ruiz, as well as for Boccaccio and for Chaucer, who refers to Petrus Alfonsi and his work five times in the *Canterbury Tales*” (244). Moreover, Dorothee Metlitzki calls the *Disciplina Clericalis* “the first link in a Western chain that leads to Chaucer’s narrative art (qtd. in Gittes 244). Among the features of earlier Arabic framed material that appear in this great work are the use of a chain of eyewitness reporters, the stress on a “secular earthly wisdom that can help a man to select his friends, to identify his enemies, to outwit roughness”, the encyclopedic variety of material that resembles that in the Arabic book on *adab al-rihlāt* (a travelogue of adventures) and the arbitrary arrangement of stories (Gittes 245).

Boccaccio’s *Decameron* “retains many external organizing forces akin to those used by Petrus Alfonsi and earlier Arabic writers: the authorial voices, the travel theme in the Florentines’ journey, and the wisdom theme, with all the stories teaching secular knowledge” (Scuglione 51, qtd. in Gittes 245).

Chaucer, emphasizes Gittes, adopted and developed these Arabic concepts of open-endedness and balancing of tales and topics, eye-witness narration and the wisdom theme, all of which he found in Alfonsi’s and Boccaccio’s works.

Unaware of the negative effect her research would have on some western scholars, Gittes concludes :

The Arabs invented and developed the frame narrative, but it remained for Chaucer to bring the genre to its fullest flowering. The consideration of the *Canterbury Tales* within the context of an Arabic tradition is not meant to deny Chaucer’s debt to Western culture or to downplay his peculiarly English talent. But the fact remains that the genre in which he was working played a part in the form and design of the *Canterbury Tales*. Seeing this, one will avoid imposing on the *Canterbury Tales* qualities of form and design that are alien to its tradition, a tradition that originated not in European villages but at distant Bedouin composites (250).

Although Menocal mentions Gittes and her research, yet it is worth noting that what concerns Menocal here is not the Arabic influence itself, but rather the negative reaction of some critics to this influence which caused their unjust attack on Gittes. This tendency

towards exploring the western lack of recognition of Arabic influence and hostile reaction to this influence is central to Menocal's book. Instead of analyzing the work as Gittes did with Chaucer's Tales and the Arabic texts, Menocal involves herself mainly with the Western/Christian inimical and powerfully negative relationship with the Arabic intellectual culture and texts. Therefore, in order to recognize this influence, and the hostile negative reaction to it, one may need to read some other related sources, and some works that Menocal frequently refers to or mentions, which focus on the nature of this influence, and analyze it theoretically, as we have done with Gittes.

In *Spain to England: A Comparative Study of Arabic, European, and English Literature of the Middle Ages*, Alice E. Lasater argues for the inevitable interchange between European and Arabic cultures. He traces the Islamic influence upon European arts and cultures since the two reciprocal exchanges of ambassadors between Charlemagne and Haron-al-Rashid in 797, until the 15th century. According to Lasater, a realization of the literacy impact of Arab Spain on European tradition is essential to appreciate the diversity and richness of that heritage :

knowing the source of a piece of literature, approximately when and how it was transmitted and how it was combined with other materials, adapted, and acted upon by different mentalities working with nonnative traditions is important for a true critique of the western European literary heritage. A realization of the literacy impact of Arab Spain on European tradition is, therefore, essential if one is to appreciate the diversity and richness of that heritage within which our early Vernacular poets worked and the extent of their accomplishments in adopting foreign traditions to their own use (12).

One can sense a certain measure of schizophrenia regarding the attitude of Western/Christian culture toward Arabic culture. As noted by Menocal, the West has been judgmental and dismissive of the Arab culture, but also fascinated by it, especially those aspects which appear mysterious or even magical to the Westerner. Although Arabs were seen as heretics and pagans just because they were not Christians (though they believed in God), a "great deal of [Arab culture] was welcomed with open arms and paid

for willingly” by the common people of Europe. It is one of the ironies of history that in Europe, in the Middle Ages, the “foreign devil” was an Arab, an enemy who appears with his “material temptations”, and promises of a better life in this world (Menocal 40).

The “enemy” is often seen as having magical powers which fascinate as well as frighten. One of the major Arabic literary masterpieces is the Arabian Nights, or as it was originally called, The Thousand Nights and A Night (Alf layla wa layla). It is immersed in magic, particularly with respect to the mysterious incidents which regularly serve to save the besieged Sindbad the sailor.

For example, consider Sindbad’s seven sea journeys and his adventures with the roc bird which carries him to the grand Mountains of Diamonds. And consider the slaughtered beast which falls into the hungry sailor’s path, and the diamond and other gems which stick to the beast and later serve Sindbad well (Burton 220). Consider as well the magical lamp of Aladdin (Burton 431), and the mixed blessing which that lamp proves to be. The suggestion in every case of magic in Arabian Nights (The Thousand and One Night) is that one must give up something to get something, and that even that which is given has a contradictory nature, both a blessing and curse.

Contrast this with the case of Sir Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a European medieval masterpiece with hints of Arabic influence suggested by The Arabian Nights. Sir Gawain’s temptation by the wife of his host at the castle and his eventual yielding to the seduction by accepting the magical girdle which will save his life from the Green Knight remind one of a number aspects of the Arabian Nights. Certainly the magical girdle is comparable to the lamp of Aladdin, and the falling beast and diamonds of Sindbad.

A contrast can also be seen in the fact that in Arabic literature there is no sign, certainly nothing comparable to that in Western/Christian literature, that material possessions are necessarily dangerous or corrupting. Sindbad certainly enjoys his diamonds and the wealth he gains after each journey and adventure, and luxuriates happily in his material goods between his crises. But it is clear that in

the case of Sir Gawain, we are meant to look with judgment on him and the way he is enjoying the luxury in the castle while his host is practicing knightly virtues in the woods.

As a response to the “dangerous contact with the seductive culture of the Arab world, that of the Holy Land as well as of Al-Andalus,” one of the fears of the western mind was the sumptuousness of the Arab world and its love of material pleasure (Menocal 40). Sir Gawain is made vulnerable to the temptations of the wife his host as he is luxuriating in the castle. She attempts to seduce him, and tempt him with her sexuality again and again. From the beginning, he is bewildered by her –not “yet capable of comprehending” her “promise”:

Lo! It was the lady, loveliest to behold.....
 ...A bashed was the knight,
 And laid his head low again in likeness of sleep...
 The fair knight lay feigning for a long while,
 conning in his conscience what his case might
 mean or amount...a marvel he thought it (Barroff 25).

Finally, he yields to her temptation, but only, as he tells himself, by having the magical girdle. The courtly love which is a part of Arabic tradition, as manifested in a number of tales from Arabian Nights, and evinced in many Arabic poems, is also reflected in the genteel manner with which Gawain treats the seductress who wants him to betray his host. Gawain’s refusal of Bercilak’ wife’s offer or his host’s seduction is not expected because of his reputation as a courteous lover who would be expected to yield to reveal his love and yield to his and her desires. According to Lasater, Gawain in this scene is caught in a comically impossible predicament because if he yields to her, he will have “certain difficulty in carrying out the exchange of winnings agreed upon with Bercilak [his host].” Yet, adds Lasater, “in analogues of the story in which there is an exchange of winnings between the lover and the husband, one of which appears in the Arabian Nights, the lover is quite willing to deceive the husband and win his wife. Gawain deceives Bercilak with the girdle which he accepts and conceals, but will go no further”(177).

Therefore, Gawain's refusal might be related to the ideal of chastity involved in Arabic love poetry which reflects many pre-Islamic Arabic stories of the unrequited chaste love or "Al.hub.al.uthri", the Arabic conversion of courtly love which was transmitted into the literature of medieval Spain (Al-Andalus), and regenerated into the French troubadours who wrote mainly on the themes of Arabic courtly love. Lasater's speculations about the motivation of Gawain's rejection of the lady's seduction leads him to the conclusion that we, the Arabs, have already sensed from the first reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. He relates Gawain's rejection of the lady's seduction to ideal of chastity involved in the Arabic tradition of "Al.hub.al.uthri" and the Arabic courtly love tradition found in Ibn-Haazm's *Tawq Alhamama* (178)

On the other hand, if we consider the story of Gawain as an early Christian work, could we not consider that perhaps the enemies of Gawain, the Green Knight, his host, wife, and the magic of Morgon Le Fe, symbolize certain aspects of the Arabic culture which the author is warning his reader against?

In this context, Menocal discusses Peter and his venerable translations of the Quran and Arabic literature. She reveals his "hope that the revelation of its true evil would somehow awaken fellow Christians to the dangers lurking in that culture."! Peter saw "an ideological danger clothed in cultural chic and material desirability" (Menocal 41-42).

Menocal notes the negative portrayal of Arabs in *Songs of Ronald*; a portrayal of Arabs as pagans, "which is inaccurate" (52). What is important here is not just such false medieval notions of Islam and the Arabs, but the fact that "the Arabic cultural presence in Europe played the critical formative role of an identity against which many other Europeans might desire themselves" (Menocal, 51). In this sense, the image of the Saracen, as in *Songs of Ronald*, and other medieval texts like Malory's books, is "constructed on the basis of a literary definition of what the Christian is, which [in these texts] is what the Saracen is not" (52). It is also important to note that such negative stereotyping found a ready audience among Christian readers who

wanted to be told that the Arab, the dark, mysterious, Eastern, magical, materialistic Arab, was the enemy of the Christian, his evil opposite. Such portrayal, false and racist, fits right in with the cultural ideology of the West.

Importantly, we must note that the influence of Arabic literature on medieval Europe did not have to be the result of an organized or sustained scholarly effort. To the contrary:

It requires no more than one instance of oral translation- - one singer's rendition in provincial of the gist of a song in Arabic, one retelling in Italian or English of a story from the Thousand and One Nights...to effect the transmission of a bit of literature from one language and culture to another. (60)

However, we must keep in mind that while Western/European Christians were fascinated with Arabic literature and culture, they were also educated to believe it evil and dangerous and corruptive. It is not surprising, then, that when we find aspects of Arabic culture embedded in non-Arabic medieval literature, it is seen as representative of a severe threat to everything cherished in Christian society. Dante's *Commedia* is seen by Menocal as driven by the challenge put forth by Arabic literature and culture in the Medieval era:

Little doubt can exist that there was a serious challenge to Dante's cherished system in his lifetime, a system he defends every step of the way...and he would certainly have identified that challenge...as Arabic in origin. (127)

In any case, Menocal concludes that there is little doubt that Dante was "strongly affected not only by knowledge of- - -specific Arabic texts, but also by the whole Arabic cultural and ideological entity" (Menocal 123). She suggests that Dante, through Brunetto Latini who stayed in Toledo, would have known the Arabic - - Sicilian poem that "certainly contains its fair share of traditional courtly love motifs, which are also characteristic of the earliest examples of Italian vernacular courtly poetry" (117)

Menocal also notes that Dante, like the prominent Italian intellectuals, would have read and used the translations of Averroes

(Ibn Rushd) that Frederick had sent to the university of Bologna in 1227. Menocal then discusses Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and his rationalist challenge to unreasoning faith with horrified Dante, the conservative Christian, who considered Averroism to be an intellectual seduction that would lead to eternal damnation.

Menocal then goes on to analyze and explain what was troubling Dante in the Miraj, the sacred Muslim story of Prophet Muhammad's voyage to the heavens, and other Arabic texts that he knew and used, though "they are unciteable, unacknowledgable par excellence (131). Dante would have known about it in the twelfth century through Peter the Venerable and his "spurious and apocryphal" translations, which include allusions to the general Muslim concepts of heaven and hell as well as specific references to Muhammad's trip to the other world (Menocal 120). Precisely, Dante did not like the luxurious and materialistic tributes of paradise in Muslim's texts, and as a devoted Christian, he had to react against these Muslim notions.

Anyone who reads Kitab al Miraj, the book of Muhammad's ascent to heaven, as related by the Prophet Muhammad the next day after his return from this heavenly trip, and then compare it with Dante's Divine Comedy, written more then 600 years after the incident of Miraj, would immediately recognize the interaction between the two works, and smell a kind of negative reversal and deviation from its visions and religious values, which Dante, the model Christian, rejected totally. According to Menocal, "the Commedia is a challenge, a counter text, an anti-miraj" (131)

With respect to the influence of Arabic poetry on the origins and evolution of courtly love, Menocal identifies the "Vernacular lyric" of Romantic literature as expressed in courtly love as especially influenced by Arabic culture and poetic tradition which the Arabs brought with them to Spain (71). The most influential poetic form is the Muwashsha, a peculiarly Andalusian love song. The theme of the Arabic unhappy, unrequited love of Muwashshahat (plural of Muwashsha) is strictly a classic expression of the sentiment if courtly love. Roger Boase, in his study, Arab influences on European Love-Poetry, traces the main features of courtly love in the Arab poetic

tradition of chase love (al-hub al-udhri) and argues that the provincial troubadours would have known Arabic poetry because of the similarities between their concept of love and ancient Arabic ideologies of love that are still found in the Andalusian poetry. Boase agrees with Menocal's claim of the Arabic origins of the courtly love ideals of European romance and poetry:

On the basis of my own findings and my assessment of evidence, I still believe that courtly love may be defined as 'a comprehensive cultural phenomenon...which arose in an aristocratic Christian environment exposed to Hispano- Arabic influences.' Although the troubadours themselves used other expressions such as "Fin'amors, bon'amors and verai'amors (and similar terms are found in other romance languages), courtly love is a convenient description of a conception of love which informed a tradition of European literature from the 12th century until the Renaissance, so that, by extension the term is applicable to this literature. Whether it is treated seriously or satirically, this literary or poetic convention, which was propagated in Europe by the provincial troubadours, is evident in the work of most of the major medieval poets and writers of fiction, including Bernart de Ventadom, Guillaume de Lorris, Chretien de Troyes, Heinrich Von Morungen, Wolfram Von Eschenbach, Gottfried, Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarch, Ausias March, Chaucer...and Malory (Boase 459).

The highly romantic nature of courtly, "unfulfillable" love as expressed in Muwashshat, and other Arabic classical and medieval literature stands in stark contrast to the "virtues of fulfilling, married love" (Menocal 103) which typify Western/Christian cultural ideology. In order to prove the influence of this particular Arabic view of love on the provincial lyrics (troubadours), Menocal refers to the Swiss writer and cultural theorist Denis de Rougemont and his classical book *L'amour et l'Occident*, translated as "The History of the Rise, Decline, and Fall of the Love Affair" in which he explores the psychology of love, and traces the evolution of Western romantic love from its literary beginnings. De Rougemont, as noted by Menocal, shows clear recognition of "the existence of such a system [perversely bent on perpetual unhappiness] underlying the courtly poetry of Arabic courtly love lyrics" (30). Again, these Arabic works (the Mushshahat and other love poetry) were discussed by Menocal mainly in the context of their

negative effects on Christian culture and conventional love based on marital happiness.

Although the essential unproductiveness and unhappiness of love is a central theme of traditional Arabic poetry romance, yet, the secular depiction of such love or singing of it as in the Muwashshahat, the dialogic love poem, was also condemned by Arabic religious authorities or stricter Muslims who preferred a religious love poetry devoted to God rather than to a lady, especially when this poetry is void of a true painful experience, and becomes a mere imitation of classical themes. In this regard Menocal mentions two representatives of the condemnation of such un-Christian and un-Islamic love: Andreas Capellanus and Ibn Hazm of Cordoba. But, Menocal, endeavoring to prove the impact of the Arabic courtly love on the medieval European mind, forgets Ibn Hazm, and overlooks, for some reason his great guidebook to courtly love. She mentions him incidentally as a poet, unable to transform such love poetry - - though he condemns it, to a poetry of love of God, as Dante succeeded to do when he transformed the features of the Arabic Virtuous love to a religious love in his *Vita nuovo*, the prologue to his *Commedia*.

However, some of the writers who, like Menocal, believe in the Arabic origin of European courtly love, discuss in a more detailed and focused approach Ibn Hazm's *Tawq Al-hamama* (The Dove's necklace) and its courtly elements. Lois Giffen describes the thirty chapters of the book as "covering the essence and nature of love, the possible causes, symptoms, and accompanying phenomena, stages and outcomes illustrating the discussion at every point with brief case studies of lovers and love affairs" (429). Giffen cites a list of some important themes if Ibn Hazm's *Tawq* (similar to those in Capellanus's book) in order to reveal the existence of these ideas in the European poetry and love of courtly love. Among these are the themes of melancholy, madness, secrecy, jealousy, paradoxical feelings, submissiveness to the beloved, etc.

Roger Boase, mentioned earlier as a defender of the Arabic origins of courtly love, also analyzes Ibn Hazm's *Tawq Al-hamama*. Boase discusses in greater detail the influence of Ibn hazm's theories of love, and emphasizes the importance of "chastity" on the Arabic love

tradition as reflected in Arabic poetry and in Ibn Hazm's book, later found in Andreas Capellanus's book:

In biblical terms the courtly lover is necessarily guilty of adultery on account of his immoderate cogitatione, to use a phrase employed by Andreas Capellanus in his *De Amore*. However, his conduct is compatible with chastity (afaf) as understood by those Arab poets who regarded themselves as the spiritual successors of Jamil al-dhri [and the two kaises, Lobna's Kais and Layla's Kais].(472)

Boase's appendix on the influence of Ibn Hazm is indeed sufficient to demonstrate the influence of Arabic poetry and treatises on love. Boase remarks:

Anyone who still entertains doubts should consult my appendix, in which I quote passages on the affinity between love and hate and love's paradoxical effects. Although we do find passages in Ovid on the bittersweet nature of love, we do not find anything comparable to Ibn Hazm's psychological insights. (472).

Regarding the issue of the means of cultural transmission, Boase explains how the "social institution of qiyans,(whose position in society was comparable to that of the geisha girl of Japan) played a role in this process:

If singing- - girls in the 5th/11th Century were still expected to have 'a repertoire of upwards of four thousand songs, each of them two of four verses long', then one can imagine the influence which several hundred of these girls must have exerted on the society of the Languedoc. The talents of these girls were also much appreciated in the courts of Castile, Aragon and Navarre (Boase 466).

One of the most important features of courtly love is the lover's submission to his beloved and humiliation before him. Boase cites poems by Arab poets and by provincial poets to indicate their parallel attitudes of submission and humiliation in love. Menocal, Giffen, and Boase notice the Arabic poet's reference to their beloved ladies with masculine words like sayyidi or mawlaya (my master) and

they compare this with the troubadour's use of the masculine form, maidens in their lyrics. They all seem to ask the same question: "How do we handle somewhat bizarre features, small but...significant...?" (Menocal 77)

For all her evidence of Western/Christian efforts to minimize or entirely negate the influence of Arabic writing in medieval literary history, Menocal is nevertheless hopeful that the literary world is changing in this regard. She suggests that the progress happening in the field of the studies of women's and minority's contribution to literature and culture in recent decades is now extending to Arabic influences as well.

With respect to the influence of Arabic writers on the origins and evolution of courtly love, Menocal strongly suggests that the West is depriving itself of a wealth of literary materials by refusing to recognize that specific influence:

It all seems to boil down to the question of what we have to gain and what we have to lose. An important part of what we have to gain is the addition to the canon of our commonly read secondary text, an extensive body of literature, much of it quite cogent, whose authors have concluded that the role played by the prestige and the songs, the neo-platonism and the music of al-Andalus, were significant inspirations for the creation of what would become Europe's first poetry (Menocal 88)

We can only hope that Menocal will prove accurate in her hopeful assessment that such a change is in the process of evolving in western literary history. However, it is true that, in the West, Arabs and Arabic culture continue to be perceived in negative, stereotypical, and racist terms. It would be unrealistic to assume that such racism, pervading Western cultures, does not also pervade the world of literary history.

Having unveiled such racist ignorance of the Arab Role in western culture, and having revealed all these influences and cultural interactions, it is important to notify that they would not have existed if it was not for the translation centers established at Toledo in Spain and Sicily in Italy, and beforehand the huge translation projects held by the

Abbasids in Baghdad. Translation was the initiative media for such peculiar cultural and literary interchange between the Islamic and Christian cultures. It played a tremendous role in the awakening of Medieval Europe, and its later upheaval, when our culture was a supreme culture. Now, its our turn, as our enchanted glory has become history, and our culture does not play a considerable role in global civilization, to open the doors and windows for new air to renew the blood of our legacy. This will not be achieved until translation is recognized as an important agent, translation from all sources of civilization and supreme cultures (Europe, Japan, China, America) and vice versa in order to nourish our culture and justify our existence to the Other.

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