



La-Net

ARA 321

COMPARATIVE ARABIC LITERATURE



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Course code: ARA 321

Course title: Comparative Arabic Literature

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: Foundations of Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies

1.1 Concept and Scope of Comparative Literature

- 1.1.1 Definition of Comparative Literature
- 1.1.2 Historical Development of Comparative Literature
- 1.1.3 Establishment of Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies

1.2 Theoretical Foundations of Comparative Literature

- 1.2.1 Basic Ideas and Principles in Comparative Literature
- 1.2.2 Key Approaches: Thematology, Translation Theory, and Literary Influence
- 1.2.3 Comparative Literature in Relation to Religion and the Arts

1.3 Significance of Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies

- 1.3.1 Role in Understanding Arabic-Western Literary Relations
- 1.3.2 Contribution to Analysing Cross-Cultural Influences
- 1.3.3 Importance for Nigerian Literary Traditions in Local Languages

Introduction

Comparative literature provides us with a lens through which we can view the connections between different literary traditions. For students of Arabic studies, it is especially important to understand how Arabic literature has developed in dialogue with other cultures and intellectual movements. This Series



sets the foundation by introducing the concept, scope, and significance of comparative literature, preparing you to engage critically with the rest of the course.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with a clear understanding of the origins, theoretical bases, and importance of comparative literature within Arabic studies. It intends to help you define the field, trace its development, and appreciate its role in shaping literary analysis.

We shall commence this Series by examining the concept and scope of comparative literature, including its definition, historical development, and establishment in Arabic studies. Next, we will move on to the theoretical foundations, where we will explore basic ideas and principles, as well as approaches such as thematology, translation theory, and the relationship between literature, religion, and the arts. Finally, we will conclude by considering the significance of comparative literature in Arabic studies, focusing on its role in understanding Arabic-Western literary relations, analysing cross-cultural influences, and recognising its importance for Nigerian literary traditions in local languages.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define comparative literature and explain its scope within Arabic studies.
- **SLO 1.2** trace the historical development of comparative literature and describe its establishment in Arabic scholarship.
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the basic ideas and principles that underpin comparative literature.
- **SLO 1.4** evaluate theoretical approaches such as thematology, translation theory, and literary influence in comparative studies.
- **SLO 1.5** explain the relationship between comparative literature, religion, and the arts.
- **SLO 1.6** assess the significance of comparative literature in understanding Arabic-Western literary relations.
- **SLO 1.7** demonstrate how comparative literature contributes to the analysis of cross-cultural influences.
- **SLO 1.8** appraise the importance of comparative literature for Nigerian literary traditions in local languages.



1.1 Concept And Scope Of Comparative Literature

1.1.1 Definition of comparative literature

Comparative literature is the systematic study of literature across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries. It seeks to identify connections, contrasts, and influences between texts from different traditions. In Arabic, the term is expressed as **الأدب المقارن (al-adab al-muqāran)**, meaning "comparative literature". This discipline encourages learners to view literature as part of a wider global dialogue rather than as isolated works.

Comparative literature does not only compare themes or styles, but also considers historical contexts, translation practices, and cultural exchanges. For example, Arabic poetry can be studied alongside English Romantic poetry to reveal shared themes of nature and spirituality, though expressed through different cultural lenses.

Fill in the blank: Comparative literature in Arabic is called _____.

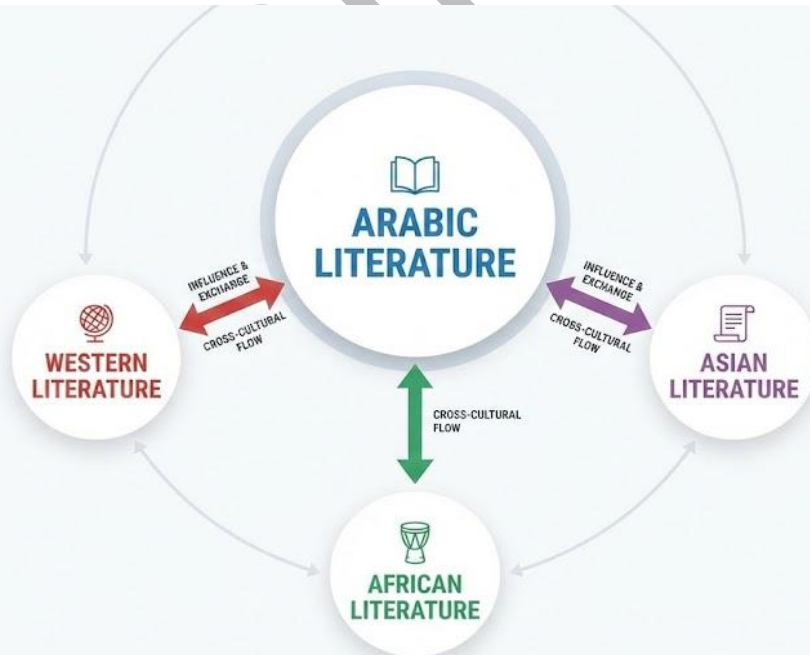


Figure 1.1 Relationship of Arabic literature with global traditions



1.1.2 Historical development of comparative literature

The origins of comparative literature can be traced to nineteenth-century Europe, where scholars began to study literature across national boundaries. In Arabic studies, comparative literature gained prominence in the twentieth century, particularly with the rise of modern universities and translation movements.

Arabic scholars recognised that their literary heritage had long interacted with other traditions. During the Abbasid era, for instance, translations of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic influenced literary and intellectual production. Similarly, Arabic literature shaped European medieval thought through translations in Spain.

Fill in the blank: The Abbasid era was significant for comparative literature because of _____.



Plate 1.1 Arabic manuscripts influenced by Greek philosophy



1.1.3 Establishment of comparative literature in Arabic studies

The establishment of comparative literature in Arabic studies reflects both academic and cultural needs. Scholars sought to situate Arabic literature within the broader global context, while also highlighting its unique contributions. In Nigeria, for example, comparative literature has been used to trace the influence of Arabic traditions on Hausa and Yoruba literary forms.

Scope in this context refers to the range of areas comparative literature covers, including thematic studies, translation theory, and cross-cultural analysis. By defining its scope, learners can appreciate how comparative literature helps bridge Arabic and Western traditions, as well as local African literatures.

Fill in the blank: Comparative literature in Nigeria highlights the influence of Arabic traditions on _____ and _____ literary forms.

Key areas of scope in comparative literature
Thematology (study of themes across literatures)
Translation theory (study of how texts move across languages)
Literature and religion (examining sacred and secular texts)
Literature and the arts (connections with music, painting, and performance)

Box 1.1 Key areas of scope in comparative literature

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Which Arabic term is used to describe comparative literature?
2. During which European century did comparative literature emerge as a discipline?
3. What was the role of the Abbasid era in the development of comparative literature?
4. Name two Nigerian literary traditions influenced by Arabic literature.
5. List two areas covered under the scope of comparative literature.



1.2 Theoretical Foundations Of Comparative Literature

1.2.1 Basic ideas and principles in comparative literature

Comparative literature is built upon certain **principles** that guide its study. These include the recognition that literature is interconnected, the belief that texts can be enriched by cross-cultural readings, and the idea that translation and adaptation are central to literary exchange. In Arabic, the concept of النقد المقارن (**al-naqd al-muqāran**) refers to comparative criticism, which highlights how literary works are evaluated across traditions.

One of the basic ideas is that literature reflects both universal human experiences and unique cultural identities. For example, themes of love and loss appear in both Arabic poetry and Shakespearean drama, yet they are expressed differently according to cultural contexts.

Fill in the blank: Comparative criticism in Arabic is referred to as _____.



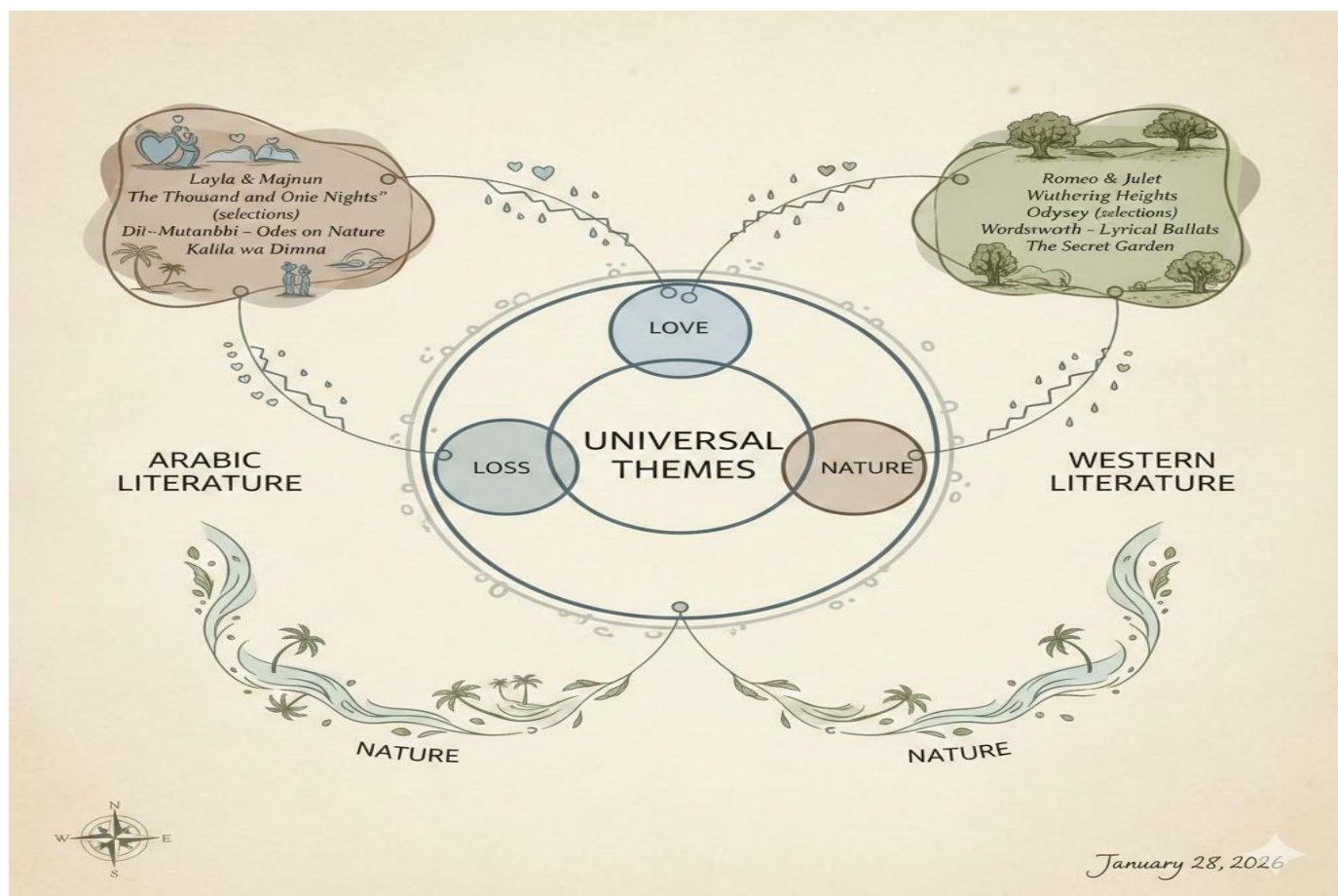


Figure 1.2 Universal themes in comparative literature

1.2.2 Key approaches: thematology, translation theory, and literary influence

Thematology is the study of themes across different literatures. It examines how similar ideas, such as heroism or spirituality, are expressed in diverse cultural contexts. In Arabic, thematology is often applied to poetry, where recurring motifs like desert imagery or divine love are compared with Western traditions.

Translation theory explores how texts move across languages and cultures. The Arabic tradition of translation, known as **الترجمة (al-tarjama)**, has historically played a vital role in transmitting knowledge from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources into Arabic, and later into European languages. Translation is not merely linguistic transfer, but also cultural adaptation.



Literary influence refers to the impact of one tradition upon another. For instance, Arabic philosophical writings influenced medieval European thought, while Western modernist literature later shaped Arabic prose and poetry.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for translation is _____.

Key approaches in comparative literature
Thematology: study of themes across literatures
Translation theory: study of how texts move across languages and cultures
Literary influence: study of how one tradition impacts another

Box 1.2 Key approaches in comparative literature

1.2.3 Comparative literature in relation to religion and the arts

Comparative literature also examines the relationship between **literature and religion**, as well as **literature and the arts**. In Arabic studies, religious texts such as the **Qur'an** (القرآن) have influenced poetry, prose, and philosophical writings. Scholars often compare the stylistic and thematic features of sacred texts with those of secular literature.

Similarly, literature interacts with other arts, including music, painting, and performance. For example, Arabic poetry has historically been recited with musical accompaniment, while Western traditions often link literature with visual art forms.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'an has influenced Arabic _____, _____, and _____.





Plate 1.2 Influence of Qur'anic style on Arabic literature

Pilot questions 1.2

1. What Arabic term refers to comparative criticism?
2. Define thematology and explain its role in comparative literature.
3. What is the Arabic word for translation?
4. How did Arabic translations influence European medieval thought?
5. Name two ways in which the Qur'an has influenced Arabic literature.



1.3 Significance Of Comparative Literature In Arabic Studies

1.3.1 Role in understanding Arabic-Western literary relations

Arabic-Western literary relations refer to the historical and cultural exchanges between Arabic literature and Western traditions. Comparative literature helps us to analyse how Arabic texts influenced Western thought, and how Western literary movements later shaped Arabic writing. For example, medieval European scholars translated Arabic philosophical and scientific works, which contributed to the Renaissance. In turn, Arabic writers in the modern era engaged with Western literary forms such as the novel and drama.

This reciprocal relationship demonstrates that literature is not confined to one culture, but is enriched through dialogue. By studying these relations, learners can appreciate how Arabic literature has contributed to global intellectual history.

Fill in the blank: Medieval European scholars translated Arabic _____ and _____ works, which contributed to the Renaissance.



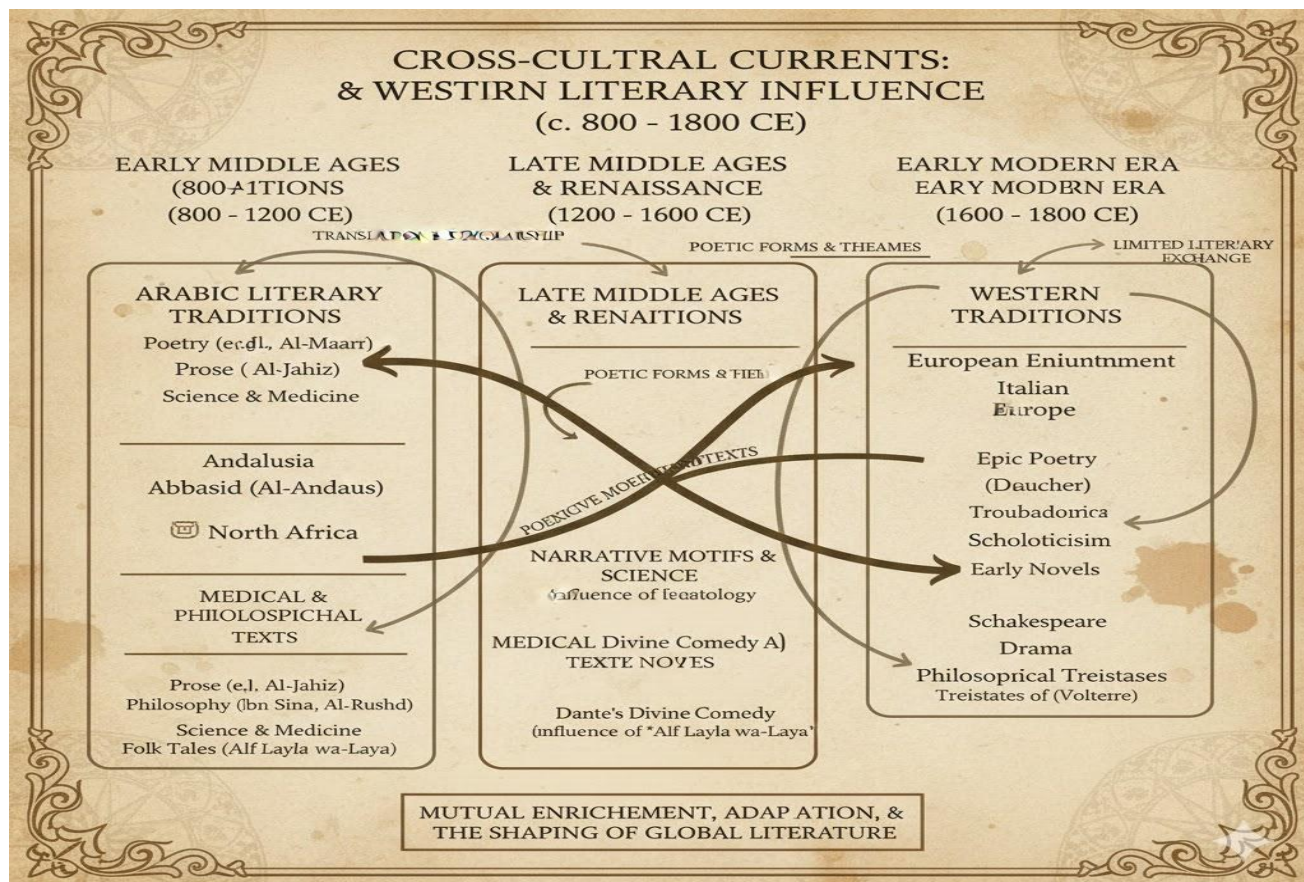


Figure 1.3 Arabic-Western literary exchanges

1.3.2 Contribution to analysing cross-cultural influences

Cross-cultural influences occur when literary traditions borrow, adapt, or respond to elements from other cultures. In Arabic studies, this includes the adoption of narrative techniques, poetic forms, and philosophical ideas from other traditions. For instance, Arabic literature absorbed motifs from Persian and Indian sources, while also influencing African oral traditions.

Comparative literature provides the tools to trace these influences systematically. It allows learners to identify how themes, styles, and genres travel across cultures, and how they are reshaped in new contexts.

Fill in the blank: Arabic literature absorbed motifs from _____ and _____ sources.



Examples of cross-cultural influences in Arabic literature

Persian motifs in Arabic poetry

Indian fables adapted into Arabic prose

Greek philosophy translated into Arabic texts

African oral traditions influenced by Arabic storytelling

Box 1.3 Examples of cross-cultural influences in Arabic literature

1.3.3 Importance for Nigerian literary traditions in local languages

Comparative literature is particularly significant in Nigeria, where Arabic has influenced local literary traditions in languages such as Hausa and Yoruba. The introduction of Arabic script, known as **Ajami**, allowed local writers to record poetry, religious texts, and historical accounts in their own languages using Arabic letters. This created a unique fusion of Arabic and African literary practices.

Through comparative literature, learners can evaluate how Arabic traditions shaped Nigerian literature, and how Nigerian writers adapted these influences to reflect their cultural realities. This demonstrates the relevance of comparative literature not only globally, but also locally.

Fill in the blank: The use of Arabic script in Hausa and Yoruba is known as _____.





Plate 1.3 Hausa Ajami manuscripts influenced by Arabic script

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What role did comparative literature play in understanding Arabic-Western literary relations?
2. Which Arabic works were translated by medieval European scholars to influence the Renaissance?
3. Define cross-cultural influences in the context of Arabic literature.
4. Name two sources from which Arabic literature absorbed motifs.
5. What is the Arabic script used in Hausa and Yoruba literary traditions called?

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the foundations of comparative literature within Arabic studies, highlighting its purpose and relevance as a discipline that connects Arabic texts with wider global traditions. We began by exploring the concept and scope of comparative literature,



defining its meaning in both English and Arabic, tracing its historical development, and noting its establishment in Arabic scholarship. We then examined the theoretical foundations, including basic principles, key approaches such as thematology, translation theory, and literary influence, as well as the relationship between literature, religion, and the arts. Finally, we considered the significance of comparative literature in Arabic studies, focusing on Arabic-Western literary relations, cross-cultural influences, and its importance for Nigerian literary traditions in local languages.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define comparative literature and explain its scope (SLO 2.1), trace its historical development (SLO 2.2), analyse its principles (SLO 2.3), evaluate theoretical approaches (SLO 2.4), explain its relation to religion and the arts (SLO 2.5), assess its role in Arabic-Western literary relations (SLO 2.6), demonstrate its contribution to cross-cultural analysis (SLO 2.7), and appraise its importance for Nigerian literary traditions (SLO 2.8). These outcomes provide you with a strong foundation for engaging with comparative Arabic literature in subsequent Series.

Glossary of Terms

Ajami: The use of Arabic script to write African languages such as Hausa and Yoruba, allowing local literary traditions to be recorded in Arabic letters.

الأدب المقارن (al-adab al-muqāran): The Arabic term for comparative literature, referring to the study of literature across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries.

الترجمة (al-tarjama): The Arabic word for translation, highlighting the process of transferring texts across languages and cultures, often involving adaptation as well as linguistic conversion.

النقد المقارن (al-naqd al-muqāran): The Arabic term for comparative criticism, which evaluates and analyses literary works across different traditions.

Comparative literature: A discipline that studies literature across cultures, languages, and nations, focusing on connections, contrasts, and influences between texts.



Cross-cultural influences: The borrowing, adaptation, or exchange of literary themes, styles, and ideas between different cultural traditions.

Literary influence: The impact of one literary tradition on another, such as Arabic philosophical writings shaping medieval European thought.

Scope: The range of areas covered by comparative literature, including thematology, translation theory, literature and religion, and literature and the arts.

Thematology: The study of themes across different literatures, examining how similar ideas are expressed in diverse cultural contexts.

Translation theory: The study of how texts are transferred across languages and cultures, considering both linguistic and cultural adaptation.



Objective questions

1. Define comparative literature in Arabic studies. *(Linked to SLO 1.1)*
2. Identify the century in which comparative literature first emerged as a discipline in Europe. *(Linked to SLO 1.2)*
3. State the Arabic word for translation. *(Linked to SLO 1.4)*
4. Mention two Nigerian literary traditions influenced by Arabic literature. *(Linked to SLO 1.8)*
5. List two areas covered under the scope of comparative literature. *(Linked to SLO 1.3)*

Short-answer questions

6. Explain the role of the Abbasid era in the development of comparative literature. *(Linked to SLO 1.2)*
7. Describe the concept of thematology and give one example from Arabic literature. *(Linked to SLO 1.4)*
8. How has the Qur'an influenced Arabic literary traditions? *(Linked to SLO 1.5)*
9. Analyse how Arabic philosophical writings shaped medieval European thought. *(Linked to SLO 1.6)*
10. Demonstrate how comparative literature contributes to the study of cross-cultural influences. *(Linked to SLO 1.7)*

Long-answer questions

11. Evaluate the importance of comparative literature in understanding Arabic-Western literary relations, providing examples of reciprocal influences. *(Linked to SLO 1.6)*
12. Discuss the significance of Ajami in Nigerian literary traditions and its role in linking Arabic and African cultures. *(Linked to SLO 1.8)*
13. Analyse the theoretical foundations of comparative literature, focusing on thematology, translation theory, and literary influence. *(Linked to SLO 1.4)*



Objective questions

1. Comparative literature is the study of literature across cultures, languages, and nations, focusing on connections, contrasts, and influences.
2. Comparative literature first emerged in nineteenth-century Europe.
3. The Arabic word for translation is الترجمة (al-tarjama).
4. Hausa and Yoruba literary traditions.
5. Thematology and translation theory.

Short-answer questions

6. The Abbasid era was significant because translations of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic enriched Arabic intellectual and literary traditions, which later influenced Europe.
7. Thematology is the study of themes across literatures. In Arabic poetry, desert imagery is a recurring motif compared with nature themes in Western traditions.
8. The Qur'an influenced Arabic poetry, prose, and philosophical writings through its stylistic features and thematic depth.
9. Arabic philosophical writings, particularly those translated into Latin in Spain, shaped medieval European thought and contributed to the Renaissance.
10. Comparative literature traces how themes, styles, and genres travel across cultures, showing how Arabic literature absorbed motifs from Persian and Indian sources while influencing African oral traditions.

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Comparative literature helps us understand Arabic-Western relations by showing how Arabic texts influenced Europe and how Western forms later shaped Arabic literature.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add examples such as the translation of



Arabic scientific works into Latin during the Middle Ages, and the adoption of Western literary genres like the novel and drama by modern Arabic writers, demonstrating reciprocal influence across centuries.

12. *Basic response:* Ajami allowed Hausa and Yoruba writers to record poetry, religious texts, and historical accounts using Arabic script.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may expand by noting that Ajami created a fusion of Arabic and African literary practices, strengthening cultural identity and enabling cross-cultural dialogue between Islamic and indigenous traditions.

13. *Basic response:* Thematology studies themes across literatures, translation theory examines how texts move across languages, and literary influence analyses how one tradition impacts another.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that thematology reveals universal human concerns, translation theory highlights cultural adaptation beyond language, and literary influence demonstrates historical interconnectedness, such as Arabic philosophy shaping European medieval thought and Western modernism influencing Arabic prose.



Part 1.1 Concept and Scope of Comparative Literature

1. الأدب المقارن (al-adab al-muqāran)
2. Nineteenth-century Europe
3. Translations of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic
4. Hausa and Yoruba
5. Thematology, translation theory, literature and religion, literature and the arts

Part 1.2 Theoretical Foundations of Comparative Literature

1. النقد المقارن (al-naqd al-muqāran)
2. Thematology studies themes across literatures
3. الترجمة (al-tarjama)
4. Arabic philosophical writings influenced medieval European thought
5. Poetry, prose, and philosophical writings

Part 1.3 Significance of Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies

1. Comparative literature highlighted reciprocal exchanges between Arabic and Western traditions
2. Scientific and philosophical works
3. Cross-cultural influences are the borrowing and adaptation of literary elements across traditions
4. Persian and Indian sources
5. Ajami

References and Attributions [Series 1]

General References



- Bassnett, S. (2006). *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Damrosch, D. (2003). *What is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Al-Sharafi, A. (2015). *Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies*. Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr.
- Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature (Open Educational Resource). Retrieved from <https://archive.org>

Illustrations

Figure 1.1 Relationship of Arabic literature with global traditions

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a simple diagram showing Arabic literature at the centre connected to Western, African, and Asian literatures.”
- Suggested OER source: “comparative literature diagram OER” (search string).

Plate 1.1 Arabic manuscripts influenced by Greek philosophy

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of Arabic manuscripts with Greek texts side by side.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic manuscripts Greek philosophy OER image” (search string).

Box 1.1 Key areas of scope in comparative literature

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “comparative literature scope OER” (search string).

Figure 1.2 Universal themes in comparative literature

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing universal themes like love, loss, and nature connected to Arabic and Western literature.”
- Suggested OER source: “comparative literature universal themes diagram OER” (search string).



Box 1.2 Key approaches in comparative literature

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “comparative literature approaches OER” (search string).

Plate 1.2 Influence of Qur’anic style on Arabic literature

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image showing Arabic calligraphy of Qur’anic verses alongside poetry manuscripts.”
- Suggested OER source: “Qur’an influence Arabic literature OER image” (search string).

Figure 1.3 Arabic-Western literary exchanges

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing arrows of influence between Arabic literature and Western traditions across centuries.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic Western literary relations diagram OER” (search string).

Box 1.3 Examples of cross-cultural influences in Arabic literature

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “cross-cultural influences Arabic literature OER” (search string).

Plate 1.3 Hausa Ajami manuscripts influenced by Arabic script

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image showing Hausa Ajami manuscripts alongside Arabic texts.”
- Suggested OER source: “Hausa Ajami manuscripts Arabic influence OER image” (search string).



Series 2: Arabic-Western Literary Relations

2.1 Historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations

- 2.1.1 Early contacts through translation movements (Greek into Arabic, Arabic into Latin)
- 2.1.2 Influence of Arabic literature on medieval Europe (Spain, Sicily, Crusades)
- 2.1.3 Western rediscovery of Arabic texts during the Renaissance

2.2 Thematic and stylistic exchanges between Arabic and Western literatures

- 2.2.1 Shared themes: love, mysticism, heroism, nature
- 2.2.2 Stylistic borrowings: poetic forms, narrative structures
- 2.2.3 Case studies: Arabic poetry and Western Romanticism

2.3 Modern and contemporary interactions

- 2.3.1 Western literary influence on modern Arabic prose and drama
- 2.3.2 Arabic writers in dialogue with Western modernism and postmodernism
- 2.3.3 Reciprocal influences in translation, comparative criticism, and global literary networks

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the foundations of comparative literature in Arabic studies, focusing on its concept, scope, and theoretical underpinnings. Building on that knowledge, we now turn to a more specific and dynamic area: the relationship between Arabic and Western literatures. This Series is particularly relevant because it highlights how literary traditions do not exist in isolation but are shaped through centuries of dialogue, translation, and cultural exchange. Understanding these connections will help you appreciate the global significance of Arabic literature and its enduring impact on Western thought, while also recognising how Western traditions have influenced modern Arabic writing.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to analyse and evaluate the historical, thematic, and contemporary interactions between Arabic and Western literatures. By the end of the Series, you should



be able to trace key moments of influence, identify shared themes and stylistic borrowings, and assess the ongoing dialogue between these traditions in modern contexts.

We shall commence this Series by examining the historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations, beginning with translation movements and the influence of Arabic texts on medieval Europe. Next, we will explore thematic and stylistic exchanges, considering shared motifs such as love, mysticism, and heroism, alongside case studies that compare Arabic poetry with Western Romanticism. Finally, we will wrap up by analysing modern and contemporary interactions, focusing on how Western literary movements shaped Arabic prose and drama, and how reciprocal influences continue through translation, comparative criticism, and global literary networks.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 2: Relations Between Arabic and Western Literatures

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** analyse the historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations, with emphasis on translation movements and medieval exchanges.
- **SLO 2.2** explain how Arabic literature influenced Western thought during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.
- **SLO 2.3** identify and describe shared themes such as love, mysticism, heroism, and nature across Arabic and Western literatures.
- **SLO 2.4** evaluate stylistic borrowings and narrative structures between Arabic poetry and Western traditions, including Romanticism.
- **SLO 2.5** assess the impact of Western literary movements on modern Arabic prose and drama.
- **SLO 2.6** demonstrate how reciprocal influences continue in contemporary contexts through translation, comparative criticism, and global literary networks.



2.1 Historical Foundations Of Arabic-Western Literary Relations

2.1.1 Early contacts through translation movements

One of the most significant foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations lies in the **translation movements** of the medieval period. **Translation movements** refer to organised efforts to transfer knowledge from one language and culture into another. In Arabic, the term الترجمة (**al-tarjama**) means translation, and it was central to the intellectual exchanges of the Abbasid era.

During the eighth and ninth centuries, scholars in Baghdad translated Greek philosophical and scientific texts into Arabic. These works were not only preserved but also expanded upon by Arabic thinkers. Later, many of these Arabic texts were translated into Latin in centres such as Toledo and Sicily, making them accessible to European scholars. This chain of translation created a bridge between ancient Greek knowledge, Arabic scholarship, and European intellectual development.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for translation is _____.



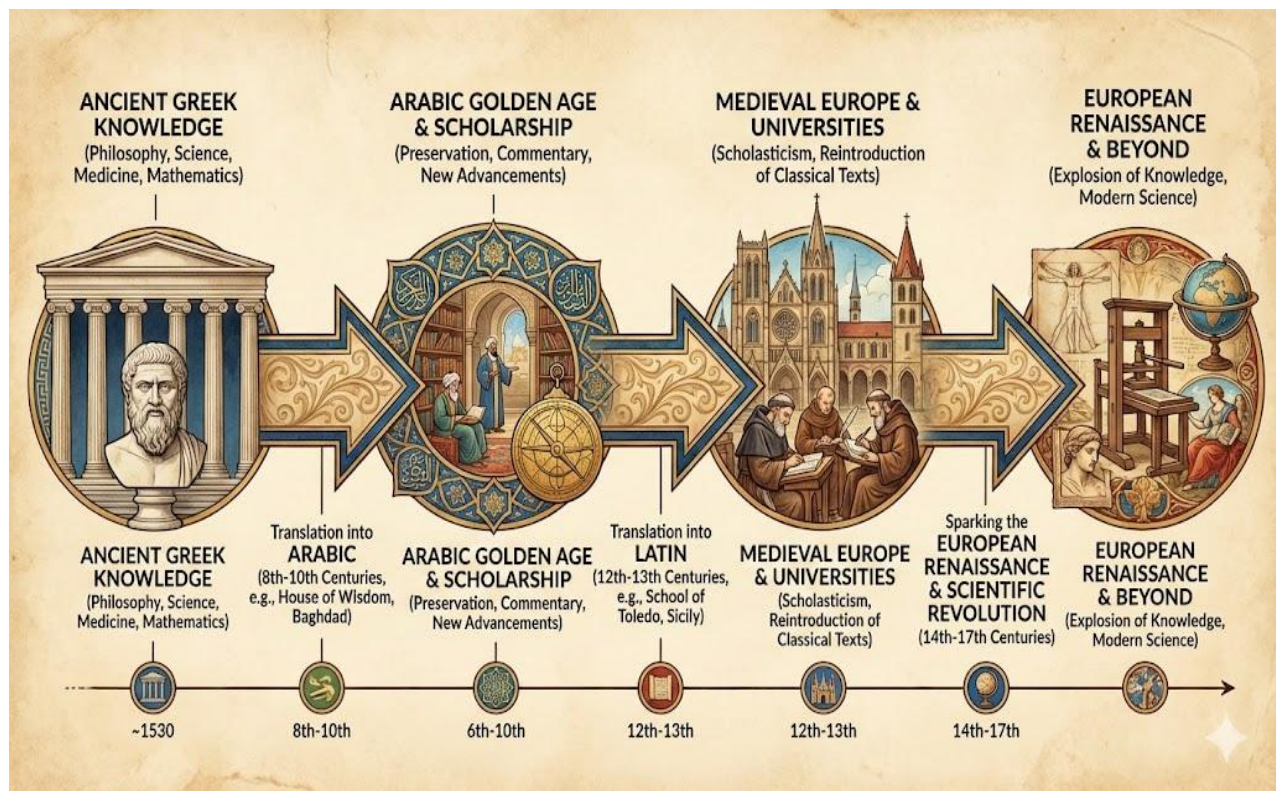


Figure 2.1 Transmission of knowledge through translation movements

2.1.2 Influence of Arabic literature on medieval Europe

Arabic literature and scholarship had a profound impact on medieval Europe. Works of philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and poetry were transmitted through translations and cultural contact. For example, the Arabic philosophical writings of **ابن رشد (Ibn Rushd, known in Latin as Averroes)** influenced European scholasticism, particularly the works of Thomas Aquinas.

In addition, Arabic poetic forms such as the **موشحات (muwashshah)**, a strophic form of poetry originating in Andalusia, inspired European troubadour poetry. This demonstrates how Arabic literary creativity shaped Western traditions during the Middle Ages.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic poetic form that influenced European troubadour poetry is called _____.





Plate 2.1 Andalusian muwashshah manuscript

2.1.3 Western rediscovery of Arabic texts during the Renaissance

The **Renaissance** in Europe was marked by a rediscovery of classical knowledge, much of which had been preserved and transmitted through Arabic scholarship. During this period, European scholars revisited Arabic translations and commentaries on Greek texts, as well as original Arabic contributions in science and literature.

Arabic texts on medicine, mathematics, and philosophy were studied in European universities, shaping the intellectual climate of the Renaissance. For example, the works of **الخوارزمي (al-Khwarizmi)** on algebra influenced European mathematics, while Arabic medical texts guided European physicians.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic scholar whose works on algebra influenced European mathematics is _____.

Selected Arabic contributions rediscovered during the Renaissance

Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle



Al-Khwarizmi's works on algebra
Ibn Sina's medical texts (<i>Canon of Medicine</i>)
Andalusian poetry and philosophical writings

Box 2.1 Selected Arabic contributions rediscovered during the Renaissance

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What is the Arabic word for translation?
2. Which Arabic philosopher, known in Latin as Averroes, influenced European scholasticism?
3. Name the Arabic poetic form that inspired European troubadour poetry.
4. Which Arabic scholar's works on algebra influenced European mathematics?
5. List two Arabic contributions rediscovered during the Renaissance.

2.2 Thematic And Stylistic Exchanges Between Arabic And Western Literatures

2.2.1 Shared themes: love, mysticism, heroism, and nature

One of the most striking aspects of comparative literature is the presence of **shared themes** across cultures. **Themes** are recurring ideas or motifs that appear in literary works. In Arabic literature, themes such as الحب (**al-hubb, love**), التصوف (**al-tasawwuf, mysticism**), البطولة (**al-butūla, heroism**), and الطبيعة (**al-tabi'a, nature**) are central. These themes also appear prominently in Western traditions, though expressed differently.

For instance, Arabic poetry often portrays love as both earthly and divine, while Western Romantic poetry emphasises emotional intensity and personal experience. Mysticism in Arabic literature, particularly in Sufi poetry, resonates with Western mystical traditions such as those found in Christian contemplative writings. Heroism is celebrated in Arabic epics like سيرة عنترة



(*Sirat ‘Antara*), just as it is in Western epics like *Beowulf*. Nature, too, is a shared theme, with desert imagery in Arabic poetry contrasting with pastoral landscapes in Western literature.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for mysticism is _____.

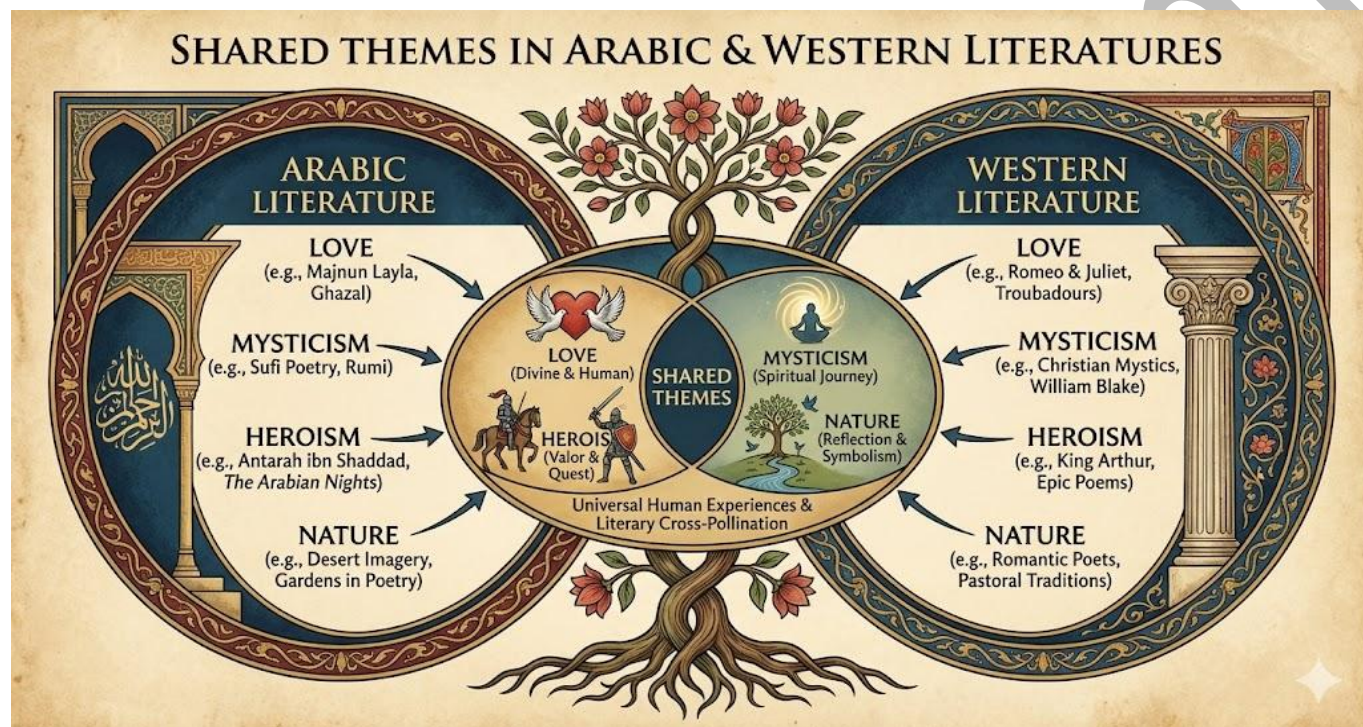


Figure 2.2 Shared themes in Arabic and Western literatures

2.2.2 Stylistic borrowings: poetic forms and narrative structures

Stylistic borrowings occur when one literary tradition adopts or adapts the stylistic features of another. **Style** refers to the distinctive way in which language, form, and structure are used in literature. Arabic and Western literatures have influenced each other stylistically over centuries.

For example, the Arabic **موشحات (muwashshah)**, a strophic poetic form developed in Andalusia, influenced European troubadour poetry. Similarly, Western narrative structures such as the novel were adopted into Arabic literature during the modern period, reshaping prose traditions. These stylistic borrowings demonstrate the fluidity of literary forms and the creative dialogue between cultures.



Fill in the blank: The Arabic poetic form that influenced European troubadour poetry is called _____.



Plate 2.2 Andalusian muwashshah manuscript influencing European poetry

2.2.3 Case studies: Arabic poetry and Western Romanticism

Case studies provide concrete examples of thematic and stylistic exchanges. Arabic poetry, particularly Sufi poetry, often explores themes of divine love and longing. For instance, the works of **جلال الدين الرومي (Jalal al-Din Rumi)** express mystical love that transcends the material world. Western Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley similarly emphasised emotional depth, spirituality, and the sublime in nature.

By comparing these traditions, learners can see how Arabic and Western literatures converge on universal human experiences while maintaining cultural distinctiveness. This comparative approach highlights the richness of literary dialogue across traditions.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic poet whose works of mystical love are often compared with Western Romanticism is _____.



Comparative case studies: Arabic poetry and Western Romanticism
Rumi's mystical poetry and Wordsworth's spiritual reflections
Desert imagery in Arabic poetry and pastoral landscapes in Romantic poetry
Emotional intensity in Arabic ghazals and Shelley's lyrical verse

Box 2.2 Comparative case studies: Arabic poetry and Western Romanticism

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What is the Arabic word for mysticism?
2. Which Arabic poetic form influenced European troubadour poetry?
3. Name one Arabic poet whose mystical works are compared with Western Romanticism.
4. Identify two shared themes between Arabic and Western literatures.
5. Give one example of stylistic borrowing between Arabic and Western traditions.

2.3 Modern And Contemporary Interactions

2.3.1 Western literary influence on modern Arabic prose and drama

Modern Arabic literature has been deeply shaped by contact with Western literary traditions.

Prose refers to written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without the structured rhythm of poetry. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Arabic writers began experimenting with new prose forms such as the رواية (riwāya, novel) and المسرحية (al-masraḥiyya, drama), both of which were influenced by Western models.

For example, Egyptian writers like طه حسين (Taha Hussein) and نجيب محفوظ (Naguib Mahfouz) adopted the novel form to explore social, political, and philosophical issues. Similarly, Arabic drama drew inspiration from European theatre, with playwrights incorporating dialogue,



stagecraft, and realism into their works. These borrowings did not replace Arabic traditions but enriched them, creating hybrid forms that reflected both local and global influences.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for drama is _____.



Plate 2.3 Arabic novel influenced by Western literary forms

2.3.2 Arabic writers in dialogue with Western modernism and postmodernism

Modernism refers to a literary movement that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, characterised by experimentation, fragmentation, and a break from traditional forms.

Postmodernism followed, emphasising irony, intertextuality, and the questioning of grand narratives. Arabic writers engaged with both movements, adapting their techniques to Arabic contexts.

For instance, the works of **أدونيس (Adonis)**, a Syrian poet, reflect modernist experimentation with language and imagery, while novelists such as **عبد الرحمن منيف (Abdelrahman Munif)** incorporated postmodernist techniques like multiple perspectives and non-linear narratives. These interactions demonstrate how Arabic literature entered into a creative dialogue with Western literary movements, producing innovative works that resonate globally.



Fill in the blank: The Arabic poet known for modernist experimentation with language and imagery is _____.

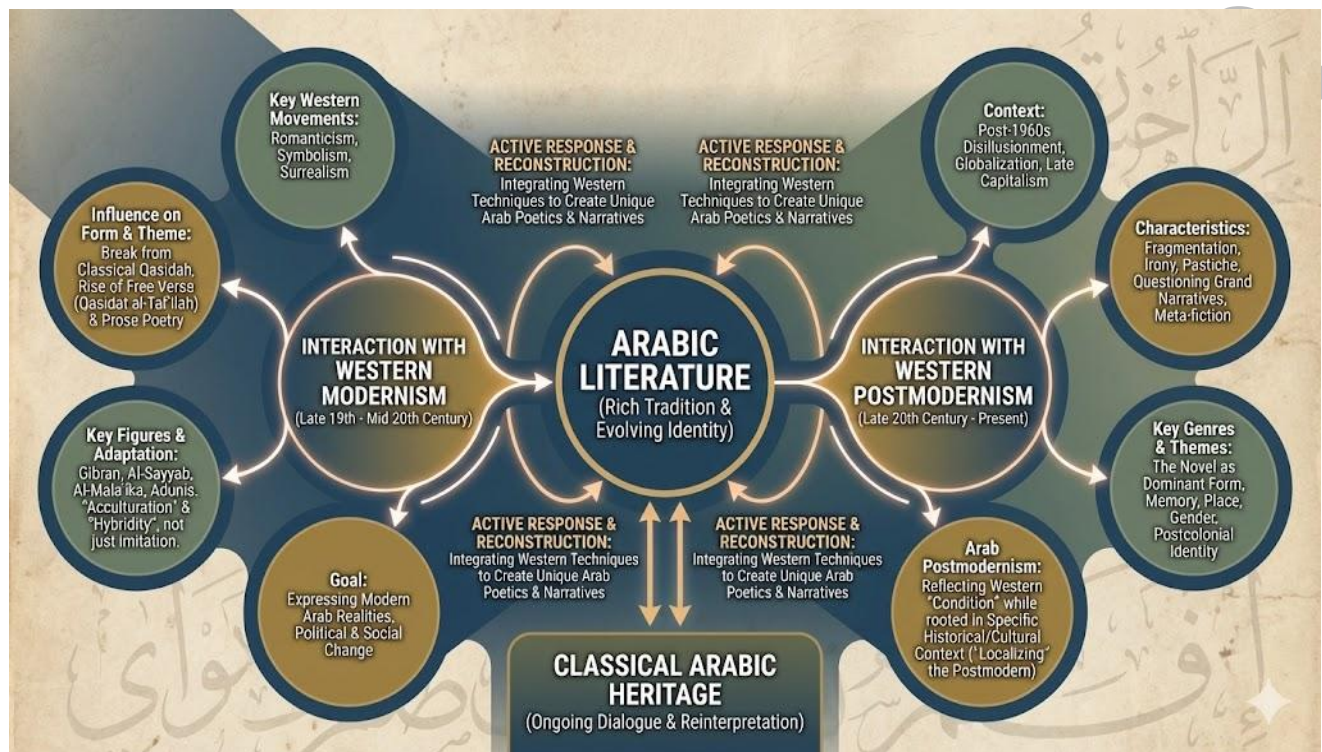


Figure 2.3 Arabic literature in dialogue with Western modernism and postmodernism

2.3.3 Reciprocal influences in translation, comparative criticism, and global networks

In the contemporary period, Arabic and Western literatures continue to influence each other through **translation**, **comparative criticism**, and **global literary networks**. **Translation** (الترجمة, al-tarjama) remains a vital tool for cultural exchange, allowing Arabic works to reach Western audiences and vice versa. Comparative criticism involves evaluating texts across traditions, highlighting similarities and differences. Global literary networks, such as international book fairs and digital platforms, provide spaces for dialogue and collaboration.

For example, the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's novels into English and French introduced Arabic literature to a global readership, while Western works translated into Arabic enriched



local literary discourse. Comparative criticism has also fostered deeper understanding of how Arabic and Western texts engage with shared human concerns.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for translation is _____.

Contemporary channels of Arabic-Western literary exchange
Translation of novels, poetry, and drama
Comparative criticism in academic journals
International book fairs and literary festivals
Digital platforms for global readership

Box 2.3 Contemporary channels of Arabic-Western literary exchange

Pilot questions 2.3

1. What is the Arabic word for drama?
2. Name one Arabic novelist influenced by Western literary forms.
3. Which Arabic poet is associated with modernist experimentation?
4. What is the Arabic word for translation?
5. List two contemporary channels of Arabic-Western literary exchange.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the dynamic relationship between Arabic and Western literatures, showing how centuries of dialogue, translation, and cultural exchange have shaped both traditions. We began by tracing the historical foundations, including the translation movements of the Abbasid era, the influence of Arabic texts on medieval Europe, and their rediscovery during the Renaissance. We then explored thematic and stylistic exchanges, highlighting shared motifs such as love, mysticism, heroism, and nature, alongside stylistic borrowings like the muwashshah and the adoption of Western narrative forms. Finally, we examined modern and



contemporary interactions, considering how Western literary movements influenced Arabic prose and drama, how Arabic writers engaged with modernism and postmodernism, and how reciprocal exchanges continue today through translation, comparative criticism, and global literary networks.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to analyse historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations (SLO 2.1), explain the influence of Arabic texts on Western thought (SLO 2.2), identify and describe shared themes (SLO 2.3), evaluate stylistic borrowings between traditions (SLO 2.4), assess the impact of Western movements on modern Arabic literature (SLO 2.5), and demonstrate how reciprocal influences persist in contemporary contexts (SLO 2.6). These outcomes provide you with the skills to critically engage with Arabic-Western literary relations and to appreciate their significance in global literary studies.

Glossary of Terms

Adonis (أدونيس): A Syrian poet known for modernist experimentation with language and imagery in Arabic poetry.

Al-Khwarizmi (الخوارزمي): An Arabic mathematician whose works on algebra influenced European mathematics during the Renaissance.

Al-tarjama (الترجمة): The Arabic word for translation, referring to the process of transferring texts across languages and cultures.

Al-tasawwuf (التصوف): The Arabic term for mysticism, often expressed in Sufi poetry that explores themes of divine love and spiritual longing.

Al-butūla (البطولة): The Arabic word for heroism, celebrated in Arabic epics such as *Sirat 'Antara*.

Drama (المسرحية): The Arabic term for drama, a literary form influenced by Western theatre and adopted into modern Arabic literature.



Ibn Rushd (ابن رشد): Also known as Averroes in Latin, an Arabic philosopher whose commentaries on Aristotle shaped European scholastic thought.

Jalal al-Din Rumi (جلال الدين الرومي): A Persian Sufi poet whose works of mystical love are often compared with Western Romanticism.

Love (الحب): A recurring theme in Arabic and Western literatures, expressed as both earthly affection and divine devotion.

Muwashshah (موشحات): A strophic poetic form developed in Andalusia, which influenced European troubadour poetry.

Nature (الطبيعة): A common theme in Arabic and Western literatures, represented in desert imagery in Arabic poetry and pastoral landscapes in Western Romanticism.

Novel (الرواية): The Arabic word for novel, a prose form influenced by Western literary traditions and widely adopted in modern Arabic literature.

Postmodernism: A literary movement characterised by irony, intertextuality, and non-linear narratives, which influenced Arabic novelists such as Abdelrahman Munif.

Prose: Written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without structured rhythm, widely used in modern Arabic literature.

Renaissance: A European cultural movement marked by the rediscovery of classical knowledge, much of which was preserved and transmitted through Arabic scholarship.

Sirat 'Antara (سيرة عنترة): An Arabic epic celebrating the heroism of the pre-Islamic poet and warrior Antara ibn Shaddad.

Stylistic borrowings: The adoption or adaptation of literary forms and techniques from one tradition into another, such as Arabic poetry influencing European verse.

Themes: Recurring ideas or motifs in literature, such as love, mysticism, heroism, and nature, shared across Arabic and Western traditions.



Taha Hussein (طه حسين): An Egyptian writer who adopted the novel form to explore social and philosophical issues in modern Arabic literature.

Translation movements: Organised efforts in the medieval period to transfer knowledge from Greek into Arabic and later from Arabic into Latin, bridging cultures.

Western Romanticism: A literary movement in Europe emphasising emotional intensity, spirituality, and the sublime in nature, often compared with Arabic mystical poetry.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Define the term “translation movements” in the context of Arabic-Western literary relations. *(Linked to SLO 2.1)*
2. Identify the Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Averroes who influenced European scholastic thought. *(Linked to SLO 2.2)*
3. State the Arabic word for mysticism. *(Linked to SLO 2.3)*
4. Name the Arabic poetic form that influenced European troubadour poetry. *(Linked to SLO 2.4)*
5. Mention the Arabic word for drama. *(Linked to SLO 2.5)*

Short-answer questions

6. Explain how the translation of Greek texts into Arabic and later into Latin shaped European intellectual development. *(Linked to SLO 2.1)*
7. Describe one way Arabic poetry influenced Western Romanticism. *(Linked to SLO 2.3)*
8. Analyse how Western literary movements such as modernism impacted Arabic prose. *(Linked to SLO 2.5)*
9. Demonstrate how translation continues to serve as a channel of exchange between Arabic and



Western literatures today. *(Linked to SLO 2.6)*

10. Identify two shared themes between Arabic and Western literatures and briefly explain their significance. *(Linked to SLO 2.3)*

Long-answer questions

11. Evaluate the historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations, focusing on translation movements and medieval exchanges. *(Linked to SLO 2.1)*

12. Discuss the thematic and stylistic exchanges between Arabic and Western literatures, providing examples of shared motifs and stylistic borrowings. *(Linked to SLO 2.3, SLO 2.4)*

13. Assess the impact of Western literary movements on modern Arabic literature and explain how reciprocal influences continue in contemporary contexts. *(Linked to SLO 2.5, SLO 2.6)*

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Translation movements were organised efforts to transfer knowledge from one language and culture into another, particularly Greek into Arabic and later Arabic into Latin.
2. Ibn Rushd (ابن رشد).
3. التصوف (al-tasawwuf).
4. موشحات (muwashshah).
5. المسرحية (al-masrahiyya).

Short-answer questions

6. The translation of Greek texts into Arabic preserved and expanded ancient knowledge, which was later translated into Latin, providing European scholars with access to philosophy, science, and medicine that shaped medieval and Renaissance thought.



7. Arabic mystical poetry, such as Rumi's works, influenced Western Romanticism by emphasising emotional depth, spirituality, and the sublime.
8. Western modernism introduced experimentation, fragmentation, and new narrative techniques into Arabic prose, seen in the works of Adonis and Abdelrahman Munif.
9. Translation continues to serve as a channel of exchange by making Arabic works accessible to Western audiences and Western works available to Arabic readers, fostering global literary dialogue.
10. Two shared themes are love (الحب, al-hubb) and nature (الطبيعة, al-tabi'a). Both highlight universal human concerns, though expressed differently in desert imagery and pastoral landscapes.

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Translation movements during the Abbasid era transferred Greek knowledge into Arabic, which was later translated into Latin, influencing European intellectual development.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that centres like Toledo and Sicily facilitated this exchange, and that Arabic scholars such as Al-Khwarizmi and Ibn Sina contributed original works that shaped European mathematics and medicine.

12. *Basic response:* Shared themes include love, mysticism, heroism, and nature, while stylistic borrowings include the muwashshah influencing troubadour poetry and the adoption of the novel form in Arabic literature.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may expand by comparing Rumi's mystical poetry with Wordsworth's spiritual reflections, or noting how Arabic ghazals parallel Shelley's lyrical verse, showing convergence on universal experiences.

13. *Basic response:* Western literary movements such as modernism and postmodernism influenced Arabic prose and drama, introducing new techniques and perspectives.

Reciprocal influences continue through translation and comparative criticism.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add examples such as Naguib Mahfouz's novels reaching global audiences through translation, or Arabic writers



adapting postmodernist techniques like non-linear narratives, demonstrating ongoing dialogue in global literary networks.



Part 2.1 Historical foundations of Arabic-Western literary relations

1. الترجمة (al-tarjama)
2. Ibn Rushd (ابن رشد, Averroes)
3. موشحات (muwashshah)
4. Al-Khwarizmi (الخوارزمي)
5. Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle; Al-Khwarizmi's works on algebra; Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine*; Andalusian poetry and philosophical writings

Part 2.2 Thematic and stylistic exchanges between Arabic and Western literatures

1. التصوف (al-tasawwuf)
2. موشحات (muwashshah)
3. Jalal al-Din Rumi (جلال الدين الرومي)
4. Love (الحب, al-hubb) and nature (الطبيعة, al-tabi'a)
5. The muwashshah influencing European troubadour poetry; adoption of the novel form in Arabic literature

Part 2.3 Modern and contemporary interactions

1. المسرحية (al-masrahiyya)
2. Naguib Mahfouz (نجيب محفوظ)
3. Adonis (أدونيس)
4. الترجمة (al-tarjama)
5. Translation of novels, poetry, and drama; comparative criticism in academic journals; international book fairs and literary festivals; digital platforms for global readership



General References

- Bassnett, S. (2006). *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Damrosch, D. (2003). *What is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Al-Sharafi, A. (2015). *Comparative Literature in Arabic Studies*. Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr.
- Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature (Open Educational Resource). Retrieved from <https://archive.org>

Illustrations

Figure 2.1 Transmission of knowledge through translation movements

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing arrows from Greek to Arabic to Latin to Europe, representing translation movements.”
- Suggested OER source: “translation movement diagram OER”

Plate 2.1 Andalusian muwashshah manuscript

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Andalusian manuscript with Arabic muwashshah poetry.”
- Suggested OER source: “Andalusian muwashshah manuscript OER image”

Box 2.1 Selected Arabic contributions rediscovered during the Renaissance

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic contributions Renaissance OER”

Figure 2.2 Shared themes in Arabic and Western literatures

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing shared themes like love, mysticism, heroism, and nature across Arabic and Western literatures.”
- Suggested OER source: “shared literary themes Arabic Western OER diagram”



Plate 2.2 Andalusian muwashshah manuscript influencing European poetry

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Andalusian manuscript with Arabic muwashshah poetry.”
- Suggested OER source: “Andalusian muwashshah manuscript OER image”

Box 2.2 Comparative case studies: Arabic poetry and Western Romanticism

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic poetry Western Romanticism comparative case studies OER”

Plate 2.3 Arabic novel influenced by Western literary forms

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image showing an Arabic manuscript of a novel beside a Western novel.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic novel Western influence OER image”

Figure 2.3 Arabic literature in dialogue with Western modernism and postmodernism

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic literature interacting with Western modernism and postmodernism.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic literature modernism postmodernism OER diagram”

Box 2.3 Contemporary channels of Arabic-Western literary exchange

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic Western literary exchange contemporary OER”



Series 3: Influence of Arabic on Other Literary Traditions

3.1 Arabic influence on African literary traditions

- 3.1.1 Ajami writing systems in Hausa and Yoruba
- 3.1.2 Arabic themes in African oral poetry and storytelling
- 3.1.3 Case studies of Arabic-African literary fusion

3.2 Arabic influence on Asian literary traditions

- 3.2.1 Persian adaptations of Arabic poetic forms
- 3.2.2 Arabic philosophical and religious texts in South Asia
- 3.2.3 Arabic motifs in Turkish and Central Asian literatures

3.3 Arabic influence on European literary traditions beyond the West

- 3.3.1 Transmission of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts into medieval Europe
- 3.3.2 Arabic contributions to Spanish and Sicilian literatures
- 3.3.3 Comparative case studies of Arabic-European thematic exchanges

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the literary relations between Arabic and Western traditions, tracing historical foundations, thematic exchanges, and modern interactions. Building on that knowledge, this Series turns our attention to the wider global impact of Arabic literature. Arabic has not only shaped Western thought but has also left a lasting imprint on African, Asian, and European traditions beyond the West. By examining these influences, you will see how Arabic literary forms, themes, and intellectual contributions travelled across cultures, enriching diverse traditions and creating new forms of expression.



The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to analyse and evaluate the influence of Arabic literature on other global traditions. By the end of the Series, you should be able to identify specific areas of influence, explain how Arabic texts were adapted into different cultural contexts, and assess the significance of these exchanges for world literature.

We shall commence this Series by exploring Arabic influence on African literary traditions, focusing on Ajami writing systems and the blending of Arabic themes with oral poetry. Next, we will move on to Asian traditions, examining Persian adaptations, South Asian philosophical texts, and Arabic motifs in Turkish and Central Asian literatures. Finally, we will wrap up by considering Arabic influence on European traditions beyond the West, looking at the transmission of scientific and philosophical texts, contributions to Spanish and Sicilian literatures, and comparative case studies of thematic exchanges.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 3: Influence of Arabic on Other Literary Traditions

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** analyse the influence of Arabic on African literary traditions, with emphasis on Ajami writing systems and oral poetry.
- **SLO 3.2** explain how Arabic themes and motifs were integrated into African storytelling and literary fusion.
- **SLO 3.3** describe the adaptation of Arabic poetic forms within Persian literature.
- **SLO 3.4** evaluate the role of Arabic philosophical and religious texts in shaping South Asian literary traditions.
- **SLO 3.5** identify Arabic motifs present in Turkish and Central Asian literatures.
- **SLO 3.6** assess the transmission of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts into medieval European traditions.
- **SLO 3.7** demonstrate how Arabic contributions enriched Spanish and Sicilian literatures.
- **SLO 3.8** compare thematic exchanges between Arabic and European literatures beyond the West through selected case studies.



3.1 Arabic Influence On African Literary Traditions

3.1.1 Ajami writing systems in Hausa and Yoruba

One of the most visible influences of Arabic on African literatures is the development of **Ajami writing systems**. **Ajami** refers to the adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Wolof, and Swahili. In Arabic, the word عجمي ('ajamī) means “foreign” or “non-Arabic,” and in this context it denotes the use of Arabic letters to represent sounds in African languages.

Ajami manuscripts were used for religious, educational, and literary purposes. They allowed African scholars to record poetry, chronicles, and correspondence in their own languages while maintaining a connection to the Arabic script. This practice strengthened cultural and intellectual ties between Arabic and African traditions.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word عجمي ('ajamī) means _____.

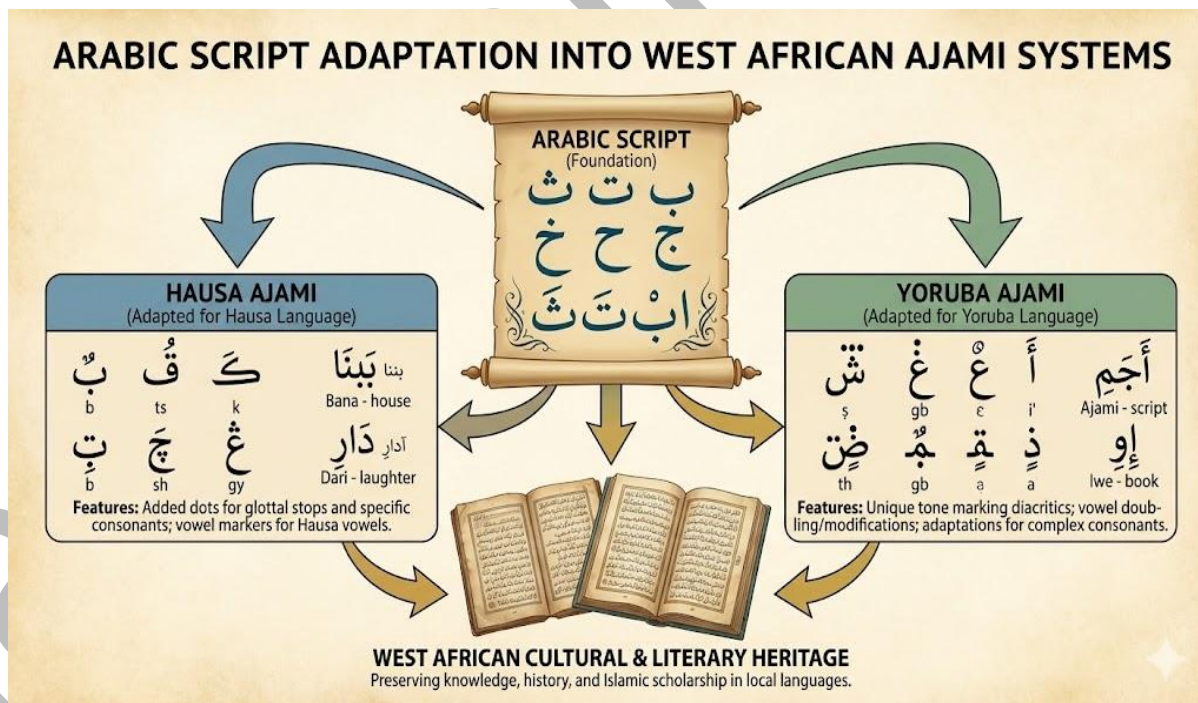


Figure 3.1 Adaptation of Arabic script into Hausa and Yoruba Ajami systems



3.1.2 Arabic themes in African oral poetry and storytelling

Arabic literature also influenced African **oral poetry** and **storytelling traditions**. Oral poetry refers to verse composed and transmitted verbally, often performed in communal settings.

Through centuries of contact, African poets incorporated Arabic themes such as الحب (al-hubb, love), الإيمان (al-īmān, faith), and الجهاد (al-jihād, struggle) into their works.

For example, Hausa praise poetry often blends Islamic religious motifs with local cultural expressions. Yoruba oral traditions similarly absorbed Arabic religious vocabulary, enriching their storytelling with new layers of meaning. This blending demonstrates how Arabic themes were localised and reshaped within African contexts.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for love, often appearing in African oral poetry, is _____.



Plate 3.1 Hausa Ajami manuscript with Arabic-influenced poetry



3.1.3 Case studies of Arabic-African literary fusion

Several case studies highlight the fusion of Arabic and African literary traditions. In Senegal, Wolof Ajami texts combine local proverbs with Qur'anic references. In Nigeria, Hausa poets such as شيخ عثمان دان فوديو (Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio) composed works in Ajami that blended Islamic scholarship with African cultural identity. Yoruba scholars also produced Ajami texts that integrated Arabic religious vocabulary into local narratives.

These examples show how Arabic influence did not erase African traditions but enriched them, creating hybrid forms of literature that reflected both worlds.

Fill in the blank: The Hausa scholar who composed Ajami works blending Islamic scholarship with African identity was _____.

Selected case studies of Arabic-African literary fusion
Wolof Ajami texts combining proverbs and Qur'anic references
Hausa Ajami poetry by Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio
Yoruba Ajami manuscripts integrating Arabic religious vocabulary

Box 3.1 Selected case studies of Arabic-African literary fusion

Pilot questions 3.1

1. What does the Arabic word عجمي ('ajamī) mean?
2. Which Arabic themes were incorporated into African oral poetry and storytelling?
3. What is the Arabic word for love?
4. Name one Hausa poet who composed Ajami works blending Islamic scholarship with African identity.
5. Give one example of Wolof or Yoruba Ajami texts that show Arabic-African literary fusion.



3.2 Arabic Influence On Asian Literary Traditions

3.2.1 Persian adaptations of Arabic poetic forms

One of the most significant areas of Arabic influence in Asia is found in **Persian literature**.

Adaptation refers to the process of taking an existing form or idea and reshaping it to suit a new cultural or linguistic context. Persian poets adopted Arabic poetic forms such as the قصيدة (qaṣīda, ode) and the غزل (ghazal, lyric poem), while infusing them with Persian imagery, themes, and stylistic innovations.

For example, poets like حافظ (Hafez) and سعدی (Sa‘di) composed ghazals that retained the Arabic structure but expressed Persian cultural sensibilities. This blending created a rich literary tradition that influenced later Islamic literatures across Asia.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for the lyric poem form widely adopted in Persian literature is _____.

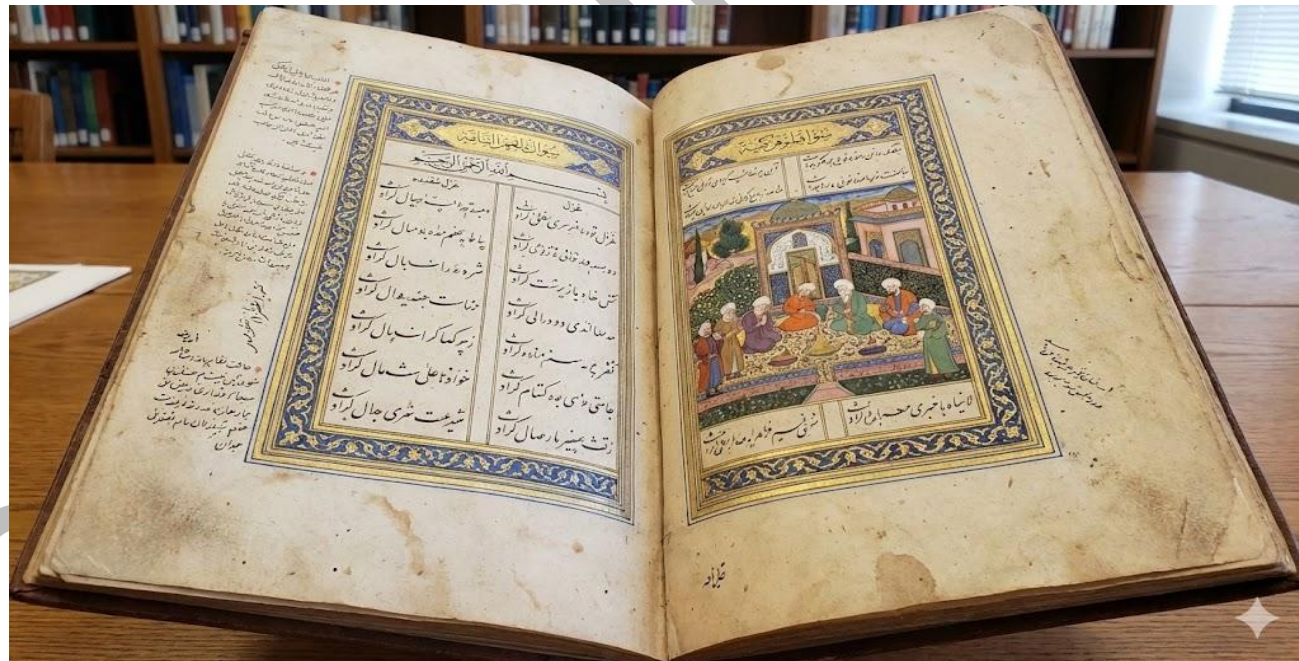


Plate 3.2 Persian manuscript of ghazal poetry adapted from Arabic traditions



3.2.2 Arabic philosophical and religious texts in South Asia

Arabic philosophical and religious texts also shaped South Asian literary traditions.

Philosophical texts are writings that explore fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, and ethics, while **religious texts** provide guidance on spiritual and moral life. Arabic works such as الكندي (al-Kindi), الفارابي (al-Farabi), and ابن سينا (Ibn Sina) were translated into Persian and later studied in South Asia, influencing intellectual discourse.

In addition, Arabic religious texts, particularly the القرآن الكريم (al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, the Holy Qur'an), were central to South Asian literary culture. Commentaries and translations into Urdu and other languages incorporated Arabic vocabulary and stylistic features, enriching local literatures.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic term for the Holy Qur'an is _____.

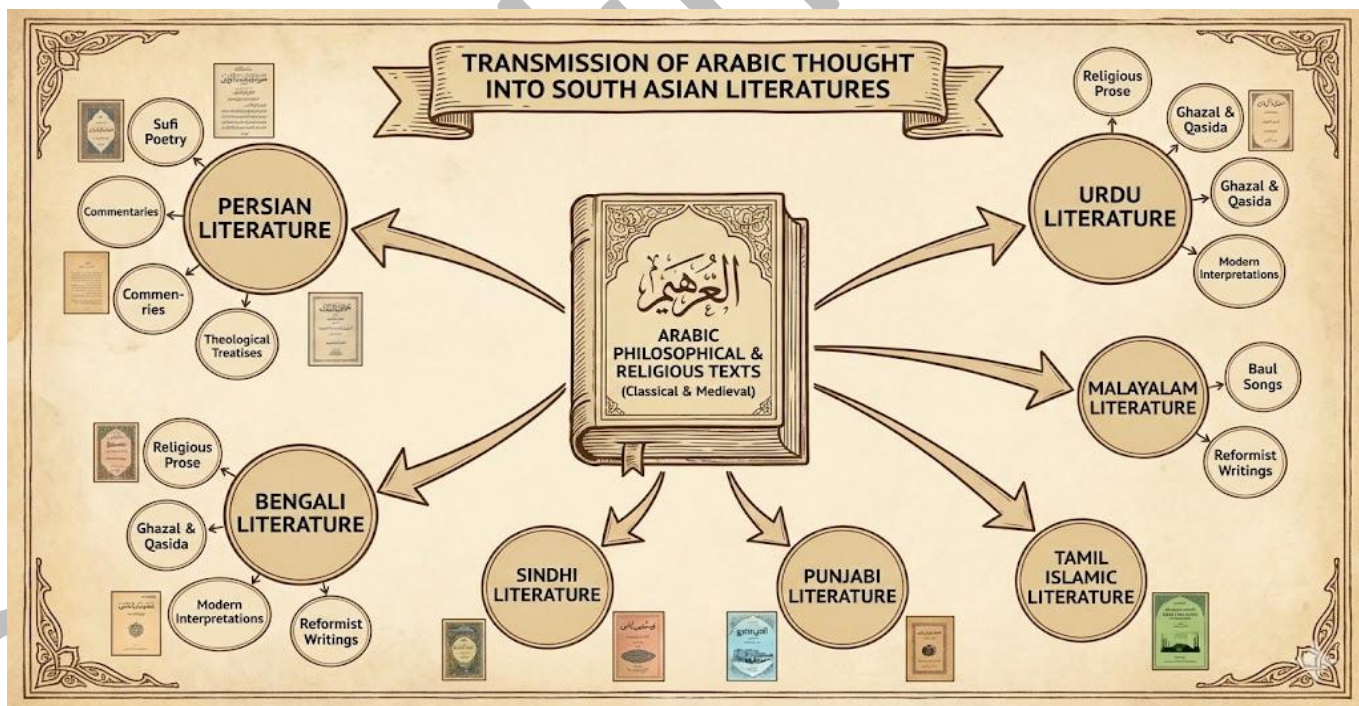


Figure 3.2 Transmission of Arabic texts into South Asian literatures



3.2.3 Arabic motifs in Turkish and Central Asian literatures

Arabic influence also extended to Turkish and Central Asian literatures. **Motifs** are recurring symbols, themes, or ideas in literary works. Arabic motifs such as الإيمان (al-īmān, faith), الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī, divine love), and الجهاد (al-jihād, struggle) were integrated into Turkish poetry and Central Asian narratives.

For instance, Ottoman poets drew heavily on Arabic religious and mystical imagery, while Central Asian writers incorporated Qur'anic references into epic storytelling. These motifs helped shape a shared Islamic literary culture across Asia, while still allowing for regional diversity.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic phrase for divine love, often appearing in Turkish and Central Asian poetry, is _____.

Selected Arabic motifs in Asian literatures
Faith (الإيمان, al-īmān)
Divine love (الحب الإلهي, al-ḥubb al-ilāhī)
Struggle (الجهاد, al-jihād)
Qur'anic references in epic storytelling

Box 3.2 Selected Arabic motifs in Asian literatures

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What is the Arabic word for the lyric poem form widely adopted in Persian literature?
2. Name one Persian poet who composed ghazals influenced by Arabic traditions.
3. What is the Arabic term for the Holy Qur'an?
4. Identify two Arabic philosophers whose works were transmitted into South Asia.
5. What is the Arabic phrase for divine love often appearing in Turkish and Central Asian poetry?



3.3 Arabic Influence On European Literary Traditions Beyond The West

3.3.1 Transmission of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts into medieval Europe

One of the most important contributions of Arabic scholarship to Europe was the **transmission of scientific and philosophical texts**. **Transmission** refers to the process of transferring knowledge across cultures and languages. Arabic scholars such as ابن سينا (**Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna**) and ابن رشد (**Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes**) produced works on medicine, philosophy, and metaphysics that were translated into Latin and studied in medieval European universities.

These texts shaped European scholasticism, particularly in centres such as Paris and Bologna, where students engaged with Arabic commentaries on Aristotle. The influence of Arabic science was also evident in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, laying foundations for the European Renaissance.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Averroes is _____.





Figure 3.3 Transmission of Arabic texts into medieval Europe

3.3.2 Arabic contributions to Spanish and Sicilian literatures

Arabic influence was particularly strong in Spain and Sicily due to centuries of close contact. In Spain, Arabic poetry and prose shaped the development of **الأدب الأندلسي (al-adab al-Andalusi, Andalusian literature)**. The **موشحات (muwashshah, strophic poems)** and **زجل (zajal, vernacular poetry)** became popular forms that influenced Spanish lyrical traditions.

In Sicily, Arabic scholars contributed to courtly culture, producing works in science, philosophy, and literature that blended with local traditions. This cultural fusion enriched European literatures, leaving traces in vernacular poetry and early Romance languages.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic poetic form that influenced Spanish lyrical traditions is called _____.



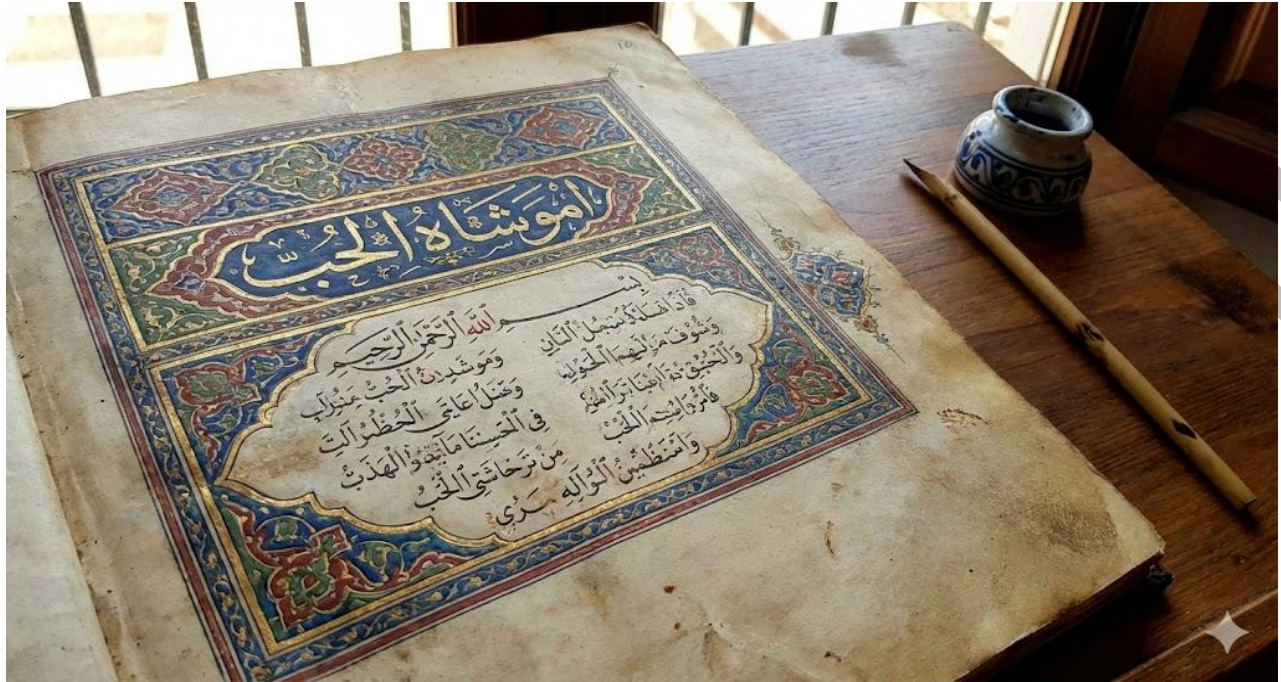


Plate 3.3 Andalusian manuscript with muwashshah poetry

3.3.3 Comparative case studies of Arabic-European thematic exchanges

Arabic and European literatures shared several **thematic exchanges**, meaning recurring ideas or motifs that appeared across traditions. Themes such as **الحب (al-hubb, love)**, **الطبيعة (al-tabi'a, nature)**, and **البطولة (al-buṭūla, heroism)** were expressed in both Arabic and European works, though with different cultural nuances.

For example, Arabic mystical poetry influenced European contemplative traditions, while Arabic epics such as **سيرة عنترة (Sirat 'Antara)** resonated with European heroic narratives like *The Song of Roland*. These case studies highlight the interconnectedness of literary traditions and the shared human experiences they reflect.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic epic that resonates with European heroic narratives is _____.



Comparative case studies of Arabic-European thematic exchanges

Rumi's mystical poetry and European contemplative writings

Sirat 'Antara and The Song of Roland

Andalusian muwashshah and Spanish lyrical traditions

Box 3.3 Comparative case studies of Arabic-European thematic exchanges

Pilot questions 3.3

1. Who is the Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Averroes?
2. What is the Arabic term for Andalusian literature?
3. Which Arabic poetic form influenced Spanish lyrical traditions?
4. Name one Arabic epic that resonates with European heroic narratives.
5. Identify two themes shared between Arabic and European literatures.

Series Summary

This Series has examined the influence of Arabic on other literary traditions, highlighting how Arabic texts, themes, and motifs travelled across Africa, Asia, and Europe to enrich local cultures. We began with African traditions, where Ajami writing systems in Hausa, Yoruba, and Wolof demonstrated the adaptation of Arabic script, and oral poetry incorporated themes of love, faith, and struggle. We then moved to Asia, exploring Persian adaptations of Arabic poetic forms such as the ghazal, the transmission of philosophical and religious texts into South Asia, and the integration of Arabic motifs into Turkish and Central Asian literatures. Finally, we considered European traditions beyond the West, focusing on the transmission of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts into medieval universities, the contributions of Andalusian and Sicilian literatures, and comparative case studies of shared themes such as heroism and mysticism.



By completing this Series, you should now be able to analyse Arabic influence on African literary traditions (SLO 3.1, SLO 3.2), describe Persian adaptations and evaluate the role of Arabic texts in South Asia (SLO 3.3, SLO 3.4), identify Arabic motifs in Turkish and Central Asian literatures (SLO 3.5), assess the transmission of Arabic scholarship into Europe (SLO 3.6), demonstrate Arabic contributions to Spanish and Sicilian literatures (SLO 3.7), and compare thematic exchanges between Arabic and European traditions (SLO 3.8). These outcomes provide you with a clear understanding of how Arabic literature shaped global traditions and continues to resonate across cultures.

Glossary of Terms

Ajami (عجمي): The adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Wolof, and Swahili.

Al-adab al-Andalusi (الأدب الأندلسي): The term for Andalusian literature, which developed in Spain under Arabic influence and blended Arabic and local traditions.

Al-buṭūla (البطولة): The Arabic word for heroism, often celebrated in epics and poetry.

Al-hubb (الحب): The Arabic word for love, a recurring theme in Arabic and world literatures.

Al-ḥubb al-ilāhī (الحب الإلهي): The Arabic phrase for divine love, frequently appearing in mystical poetry and Turkish or Central Asian literatures.

Al-īmān (الإيمان): The Arabic word for faith, a central motif in religious and literary texts.

Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (القرآن الكريم): The Holy Qur'an, the foundational religious text of Islam, which influenced literary traditions across Asia and beyond.

Ghazal (غزل): An Arabic lyric poem form, later widely adopted and adapted in Persian literature.



Ibn Rushd (ابن رشد): Known in Latin as Averroes, an Arabic philosopher whose commentaries on Aristotle influenced European scholastic thought.

Ibn Sina (ابن سينا): Known in Latin as Avicenna, an Arabic philosopher and physician whose works shaped European medicine and philosophy.

Muwashshah (موشحات): A strophic poetic form developed in Andalusia, which influenced Spanish lyrical traditions.

Qaṣīda (قصيدة): An Arabic ode, a long poem with a formal structure, often adapted in Persian literature.

Sirat ‘Antara (سيرة عنترة): An Arabic epic recounting the heroism of Antara ibn Shaddad, resonating with European heroic narratives.

Transmission: The process of transferring knowledge, texts, or cultural elements across languages and regions, such as Arabic works moving into Latin Europe.

Zajal (زجل): A vernacular poetic form from Andalusia, influenced by Arabic traditions and contributing to Spanish lyrical culture.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Define the term *Ajami* in the context of African literary traditions. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Identify the Arabic word for love that appears frequently in African oral poetry. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. State the Arabic poetic form widely adopted in Persian literature. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. Name the Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Avicenna. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
5. Mention the Arabic phrase for divine love often found in Turkish and Central Asian literatures. (Linked to SLO 3.5)



Short-answer questions

6. Explain how Ajami writing systems strengthened cultural ties between Arabic and African traditions. *(Linked to SLO 3.1)*
7. Describe one way Arabic themes influenced African oral storytelling. *(Linked to SLO 3.2)*
8. Analyse how Persian poets adapted Arabic poetic forms such as the ghazal. *(Linked to SLO 3.3)*
9. Demonstrate how Arabic philosophical texts shaped intellectual discourse in South Asia. *(Linked to SLO 3.4)*
10. Identify two Arabic motifs integrated into Turkish or Central Asian literatures. *(Linked to SLO 3.5)*
11. Assess the impact of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts on medieval European universities. *(Linked to SLO 3.6)*
12. Explain the role of Andalusian poetic forms such as the muwashshah in shaping Spanish lyrical traditions. *(Linked to SLO 3.7)*
13. Compare one Arabic epic with a European heroic narrative. *(Linked to SLO 3.8)*

Long-answer questions

14. Evaluate the influence of Arabic on African literary traditions, focusing on Ajami writing and oral poetry. *(Linked to SLO 3.1, SLO 3.2)*
15. Discuss the transmission of Arabic philosophical and religious texts into South Asia and their impact on local literatures. *(Linked to SLO 3.4)*
16. Assess the contributions of Arabic literature to European traditions beyond the West, with reference to Spain, Sicily, and thematic exchanges. *(Linked to SLO 3.6, SLO 3.7, SLO 3.8)*

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions



1. Ajami refers to the adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Wolof, and Swahili.
2. الحب (al-hubb).
3. غزل (ghazal).
4. ابن سينا (Ibn Sina).
5. الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī).

Short-answer questions

6. Ajami writing systems allowed African scholars to record their languages using Arabic script, linking local traditions with Arabic scholarship.
7. African oral storytelling incorporated Arabic themes such as love, faith, and struggle, enriching local narratives.
8. Persian poets retained the Arabic structure of the ghazal but infused it with Persian imagery and cultural sensibilities.
9. Arabic philosophical texts introduced new ideas on ethics, metaphysics, and knowledge, shaping South Asian intellectual traditions.
10. Faith (الإيمان, al-īmān) and divine love (الحب الإلهي, al-ḥubb al-ilāhī).
11. Arabic texts translated into Latin influenced scholasticism in universities such as Paris and Bologna, shaping medieval European thought.
12. The muwashshah introduced strophic structures and lyrical innovations that influenced Spanish poetry.
13. *Sirat 'Antara* resonates with *The Song of Roland*, both celebrating heroism and cultural identity.

Long-answer questions

14. *Basic response:* Arabic influence on African literatures is evident in Ajami writing systems and oral poetry that incorporated Arabic themes.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add examples such as Hausa Ajami poetry by Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio and Wolof texts combining Qur'anic references with local proverbs.



15. *Basic response:* Arabic philosophical and religious texts, including works by al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina, were transmitted into South Asia and influenced local literatures.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may highlight how Qur'anic commentaries shaped Urdu literature and how translations of Arabic texts enriched Persian and Indian intellectual traditions.

16. *Basic response:* Arabic contributions to European traditions included the transmission of scientific and philosophical texts, Andalusian poetic forms, and thematic exchanges.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may expand by noting the role of Sicilian courts in blending Arabic and European cultures, and by comparing Rumi's mystical poetry with European contemplative writings.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1 Arabic influence on African literary traditions

1. Foreign or non-Arabic.
2. Love, faith, and struggle.
3. الحب (al-hubb).
4. Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio.
5. Wolof Ajami texts combining proverbs with Qur'anic references; Yoruba Ajami manuscripts integrating Arabic religious vocabulary.

Part 3.2 Arabic influence on Asian literary traditions

1. غزل (ghazal).
2. Hafez or Sa'di.
3. القرآن الكريم (al-Qur'ān al-Karīm).
4. Al-Kindi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna).
5. الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī).

Part 3.3 Arabic influence on European literary traditions beyond the West

1. Ibn Rushd (Averroes).
2. الأدب الأندلسي (al-adab al-Andalusi).
3. موشحات (muwashshah).
4. سيرة عنترة (Sirat 'Antara).
5. Love (الحب, al-hubb) and heroism (البطولة, al-buṭūla).



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Illustrations

Figure 3.1 Adaptation of Arabic script into Hausa and Yoruba Ajami systems

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic script adapted into Hausa and Yoruba Ajami writing systems.”
- Suggested OER source: “Ajami writing Hausa Yoruba OER diagram”

Plate 3.1 Hausa Ajami manuscript with Arabic-influenced poetry

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of a Hausa Ajami manuscript containing poetic verses influenced by Arabic themes.”
- Suggested OER source: “Hausa Ajami manuscript poetry OER image”

Box 3.1 Selected case studies of Arabic-African literary fusion

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic African literary fusion Ajami OER”

Plate 3.2 Persian manuscript of ghazal poetry adapted from Arabic traditions



- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of a Persian manuscript showing ghazal poetry influenced by Arabic poetic forms.”
- Suggested OER source: “Persian ghazal manuscript Arabic influence OER image”

Figure 3.2 Transmission of Arabic texts into South Asian literatures

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic philosophical and religious texts transmitted into South Asian literatures.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic texts South Asia transmission OER diagram”

Box 3.2 Selected Arabic motifs in Asian literatures

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic motifs Turkish Central Asian literatures OER”

Figure 3.3 Transmission of Arabic texts into medieval Europe

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing Arabic texts flowing into medieval European universities, with arrows from Baghdad to Toledo to Paris.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic texts transmission medieval Europe OER diagram”

Plate 3.3 Andalusian manuscript with muwashshah poetry

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Andalusian manuscript showing muwashshah poetry with decorative script.”
- Suggested OER source: “Andalusian muwashshah manuscript OER image”

Box 3.3 Comparative case studies of Arabic-European thematic exchanges

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic European thematic exchanges OER case studies”



Series 4: Reciprocal Influences Between Arabic and Global Literatures

4.1 Cross-cultural exchanges in medieval and early modern periods

- 4.1.1 Arabic texts translated into European and Asian languages
- 4.1.2 Global texts translated into Arabic
- 4.1.3 Case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science

4.2 Shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures

- 4.2.1 Love, mysticism, and spirituality in comparative perspective
- 4.2.2 Heroism and epic traditions across cultures
- 4.2.3 Nature and the environment as a literary theme

4.3 Contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature

- 4.3.1 Arabic writers engaging with global literary movements
- 4.3.2 Global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions
- 4.3.3 Translation, comparative criticism, and digital networks today

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined how Arabic literature influenced African, Asian, and European traditions beyond the West. That exploration highlighted the far-reaching impact of Arabic texts, themes, and motifs across diverse cultures. In this Series, we shift our attention to the reciprocal nature of these exchanges, considering how Arabic literature not only shaped global traditions but was itself enriched by them. This



perspective is vital for understanding Arabic literature as part of a wider world dialogue, rather than as an isolated tradition.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to analyse and evaluate the two-way interactions between Arabic and global literatures. By the end of the Series, you should be able to identify cross-cultural exchanges, explain shared themes and motifs, and assess contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature.

We shall commence this Series by exploring cross-cultural exchanges in the medieval and early modern periods, focusing on the translation of Arabic texts into other languages and the incorporation of global works into Arabic scholarship. Next, we will continue with shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures, examining love, mysticism, heroism, and nature in comparative perspective. Finally, we will wrap up by considering contemporary reciprocal influences, looking at how Arabic writers engage with global literary movements, how global authors draw inspiration from Arabic traditions, and how translation and digital networks sustain these exchanges today.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 4: Reciprocal Influences Between Arabic and Global Literatures

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** analyse how Arabic texts were translated into European and Asian languages during the medieval and early modern periods.
- **SLO 4.2** explain how global texts were translated into Arabic and assess their impact on Arabic scholarship.
- **SLO 4.3** evaluate case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science between Arabic and global traditions.
- **SLO 4.4** describe shared themes of love, mysticism, and spirituality across Arabic and global literatures.
- **SLO 4.5** compare heroic and epic traditions in Arabic and other world literatures.
- **SLO 4.6** interpret how nature and the environment are represented as literary themes across cultures.
- **SLO 4.7** demonstrate how contemporary Arabic writers engage with global literary movements.



- **SLO 4.8** identify examples of global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions.
- **SLO 4.9** assess the role of translation, comparative criticism, and digital networks in sustaining reciprocal influences today.

4.1 Cross-Cultural Exchanges In Medieval And Early Modern Periods

4.1.1 Arabic texts translated into European and Asian languages

During the medieval period, **translation** became a crucial means of cultural exchange.

Translation refers to the rendering of texts from one language into another, enabling knowledge to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. Arabic texts in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy were translated into Latin, Persian, and other Asian languages. Scholars such as ابن سينا (**Ibn Sina, Avicenna**) and ابن رشد (**Ibn Rushd, Averroes**) had their works studied in European universities, influencing scholastic thought.

In Asia, Arabic texts were translated into Persian and later into Urdu, enriching South Asian intellectual traditions. This process allowed Arabic scholarship to become part of a global dialogue, shaping the foundations of science and literature across continents.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Avicenna is _____.



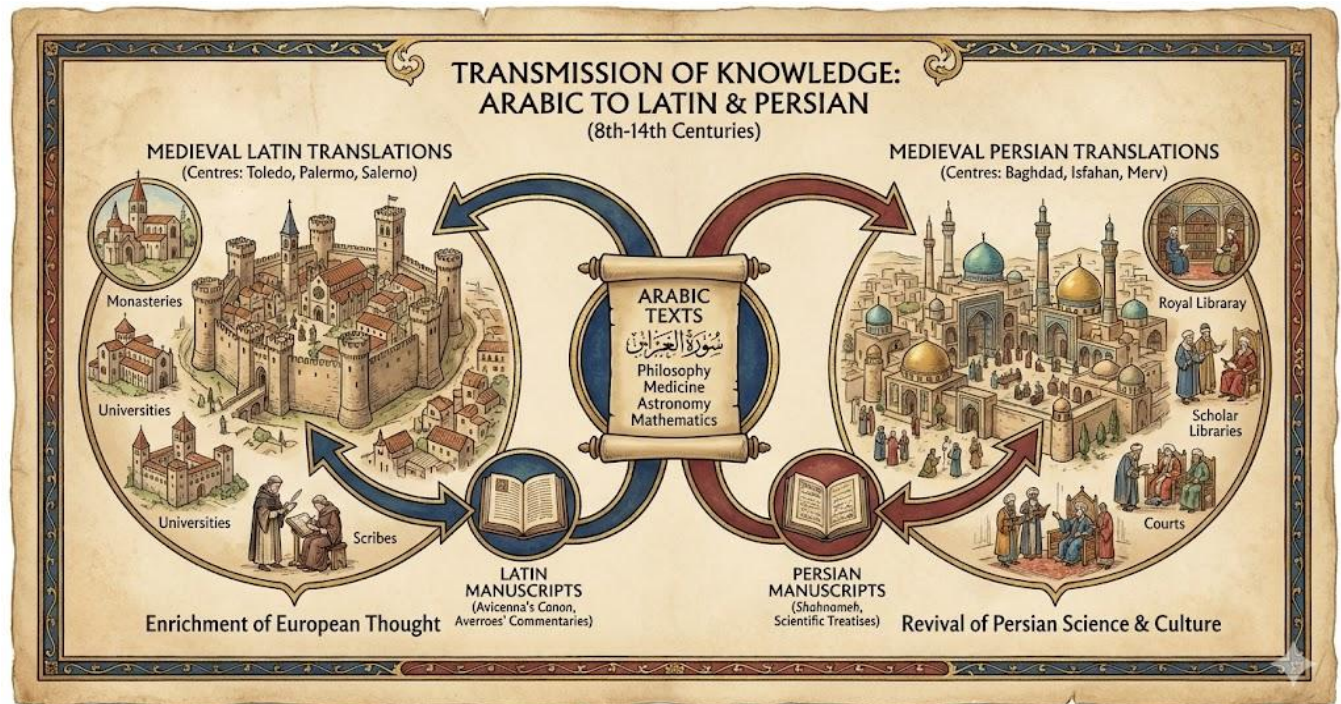


Figure 4.1 Transmission of Arabic texts into European and Asian languages

4.1.2 Global texts translated into Arabic

The exchange was not one-sided. Arabic scholars also translated **Greek, Persian, and Indian texts** into Arabic. For example, works of Aristotle and Galen were rendered into Arabic, forming the basis of Islamic philosophy and medicine. **Aristotle's Organon** and **Galen's medical treatises** became central to Arabic scholarship, later influencing European thought through re-translation into Latin.

This reciprocal exchange demonstrates how Arabic literature absorbed global knowledge, reinterpreted it, and then transmitted it back to other cultures.

Fill in the blank: The Greek philosopher whose works were translated into Arabic and later influenced Islamic philosophy is _____.





Plate 4.1 Arabic manuscript of Aristotle's Organon

4.1.3 Case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science

Mutual enrichment occurred when Arabic and global traditions interacted to produce new knowledge. For instance, the **بيت الحكمة (Bayt al-Hikma, House of Wisdom)** in Baghdad served as a centre for translating and synthesising texts from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources. Arabic scholars such as **الخوارزمي (al-Khwarizmi)** developed algebra by building on earlier traditions, while European scholars later adopted these innovations.

In medicine, Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine* combined Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge, becoming a standard text in Europe for centuries. These case studies highlight the reciprocal nature of cultural exchange, where Arabic literature and science both influenced and were influenced by global traditions.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic scholar who developed algebra by building on earlier traditions was _____.



Selected case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science

Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad translating Greek, Persian, and Indian texts

Al-Khwarizmi's development of algebra

Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine* combining Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge

Box 4.1 Selected case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Who is the Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Avicenna?
2. Which Greek philosopher's works were translated into Arabic and later influenced Islamic philosophy?
3. What was Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad?
4. Name the Arabic scholar who developed algebra.
5. Give one example of how Arabic and global traditions enriched each other in medicine.

4.2 Shared Themes And Motifs Across Arabic And Global Literatures

4.2.1 Love, mysticism, and spirituality in comparative perspective

One of the most enduring themes in both Arabic and global literatures is **love**. **Love** (الحب, **al-hubb**) refers to deep affection or passion, often expressed in poetry and prose. Arabic poets such as **مجنون ليلى (Majnūn Laylā)** wrote of romantic love with intensity, while mystics like **جلال الدين (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī)** explored **divine love** (الحب الإلهي, **al-ḥubb al-ilāhī**) in their works.

These themes resonate with European traditions, such as the courtly love poetry of the troubadours, and South Asian devotional poetry.



Mysticism and spirituality also form a shared motif. **Mysticism** refers to the pursuit of direct experience of the divine, often expressed through symbolic language. Arabic Sufi poetry influenced Persian ghazals and even European contemplative writings.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic phrase for divine love, often appearing in mystical poetry, is _____.

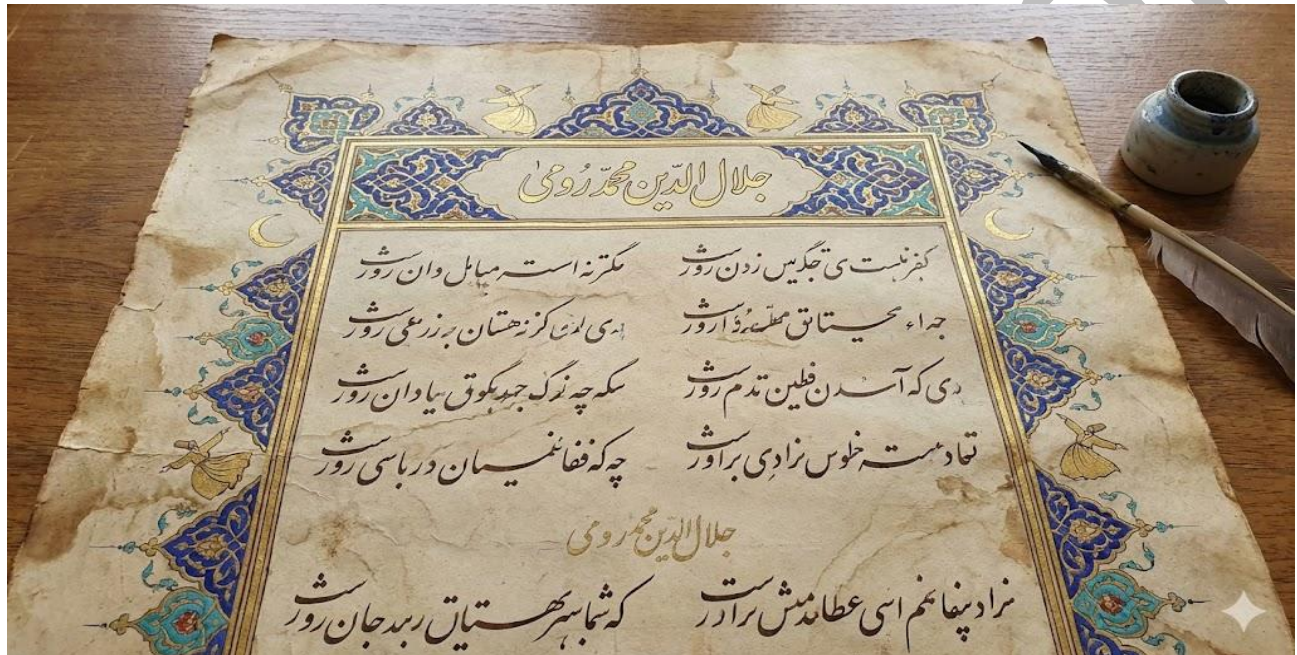


Plate 4.2 Manuscript of Rūmī's poetry with Arabic mystical themes

4.2.2 Heroism and epic traditions across cultures

Another shared motif is **heroism**. **Heroism** (البطولة, *al-buṭūla*) refers to acts of bravery and honour celebrated in literature. Arabic epics such as *سيرة عنترة* (*Sīrat 'Antara*) recount the adventures of Antara ibn Shaddād, a pre-Islamic Arab hero. These narratives parallel European works like *The Song of Roland* and South Asian epics such as the *Mahābhārata*.

Epic traditions often highlight cultural values, identity, and moral lessons. The Arabic emphasis on courage and loyalty found echoes in European chivalric tales, showing how themes of heroism transcend cultural boundaries.



Fill in the blank: The Arabic epic that celebrates the hero Antara ibn Shaddād is called _____.

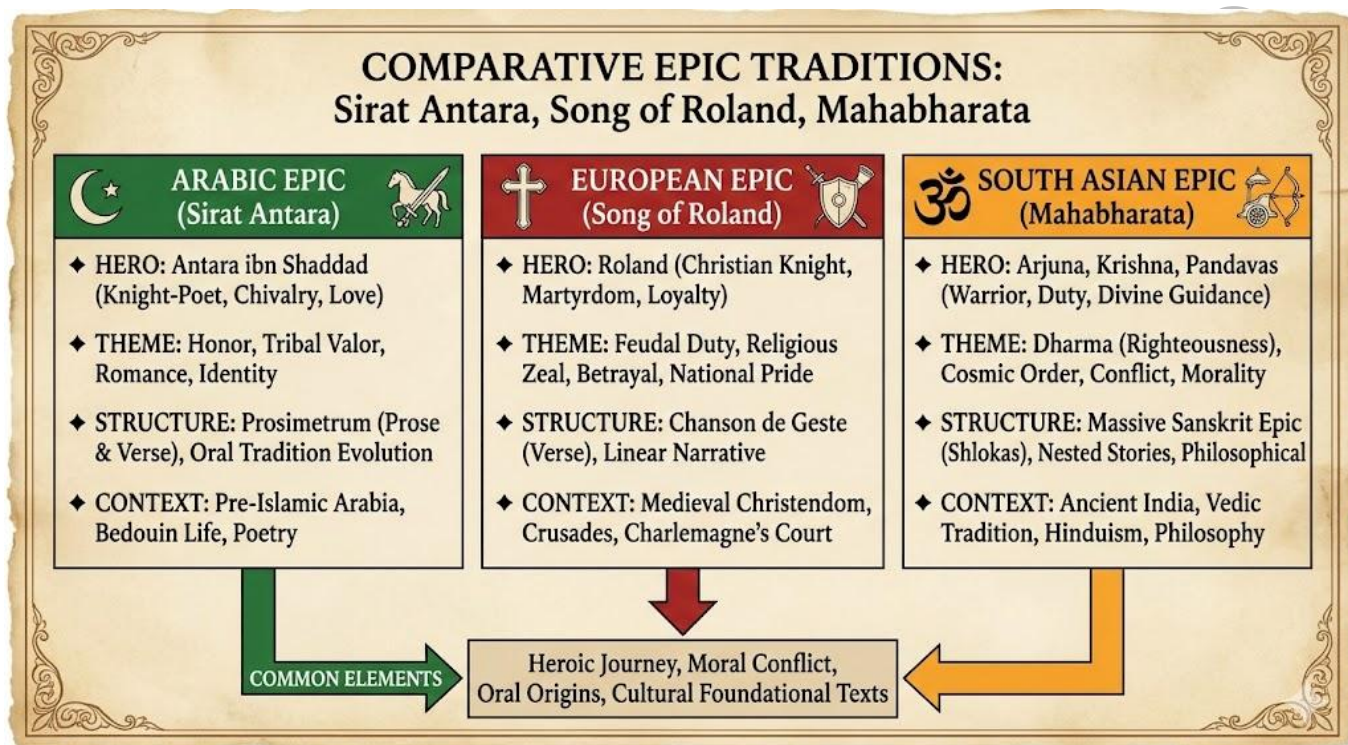


Figure 4.2 Comparative diagram of Arabic and global epic traditions

4.2.3 Nature and the environment as a literary theme

Nature is another universal theme. **Nature** (الطبيعة, al-ṭabīʿa) refers to the physical world, including landscapes, seasons, and animals, often used symbolically in literature. Arabic poets frequently described deserts, gardens, and rivers, using them as metaphors for human emotions and divine presence. For example, the desert could symbolise hardship, while gardens represented paradise.

Global literatures also employed nature as a motif. Japanese haiku, European pastoral poetry, and African oral traditions all used natural imagery to convey meaning. This shared focus on the environment demonstrates how human experience of nature inspires creativity across cultures.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic word for nature, often used symbolically in poetry, is _____.



Selected shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures
Love (الحب, al-hubb) and divine love (الحب الإلهي, al-ḥubb al-ilāhī)
Mysticism and spirituality in Sufi and global traditions
Heroism (البطولة, al-buṭūla) in Arabic and European epics
Nature (الطبيعة, al-ṭabīʿa) as metaphor in poetry

Box 4.2 Selected shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What is the Arabic phrase for divine love often appearing in mystical poetry?
2. Name the Arabic epic that celebrates the hero Antara ibn Shaddād.
3. What is the Arabic word for nature, often used symbolically in poetry?
4. Give one example of how Arabic mystical poetry influenced global traditions.
5. Compare one Arabic epic with a European or South Asian epic.

4.3 Contemporary Reciprocal Influences In World Literature

4.3.1 Arabic writers engaging with global literary movements

In the modern era, Arabic writers have actively participated in **global literary movements**.

Global literary movements refer to collective trends in literature that transcend national boundaries, such as modernism, postcolonialism, and realism. Writers like نجيب محفوظ (Najīb Maḥfūz), who won the Nobel Prize in Literature, engaged with themes of urban life and social change that resonated internationally. Similarly, contemporary Arab authors incorporate techniques from global traditions, including stream of consciousness and magical realism, while maintaining distinctly Arabic voices.

This blending demonstrates how Arabic literature is not isolated but part of a worldwide conversation.



Fill in the blank: The Arabic Nobel Prize-winning author who engaged with global literary movements is _____.



Plate 4.3 Najīb Mahfūz as a representative of Arabic engagement with global literary movements

4.3.2 Global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions

Reciprocal influence also flows into global literatures. **Reciprocal influence** refers to the mutual impact of two traditions on each other. Global authors have drawn inspiration from Arabic texts, motifs, and storytelling techniques. For instance, غسان كنفاني (**Ghassān Kanafānī**) and his narrative style influenced postcolonial writers, while Arabic mystical poetry inspired European and American poets such as Goethe and Emerson.

Arabic epics and tales, including ألف ليلة وليلة (**Alf Layla wa-Layla, One Thousand and One Nights**), have profoundly shaped global storytelling traditions, influencing genres from fantasy to modern novels.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic collection of tales that influenced global storytelling traditions is _____.



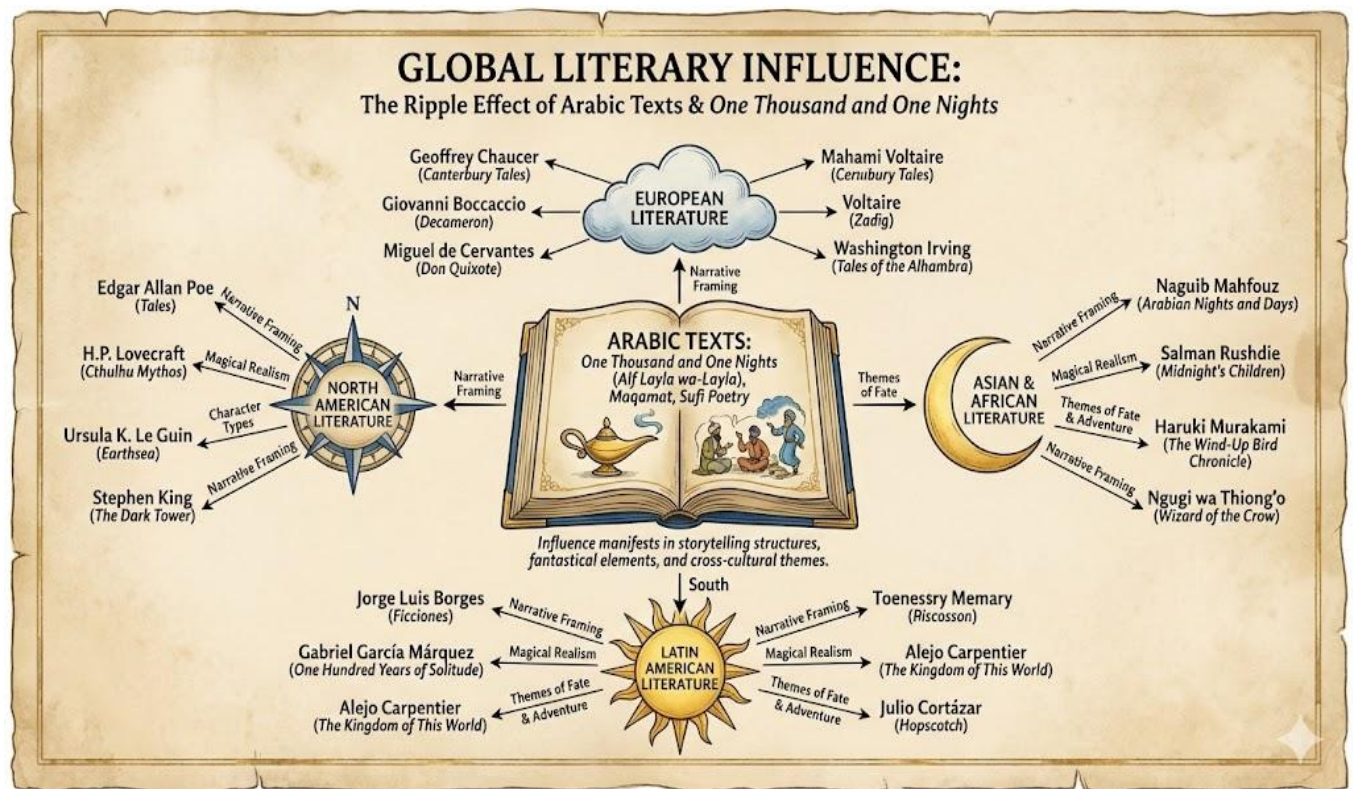


Figure 4.3 Global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions

4.3.3 Translation, comparative criticism, and digital networks today

In contemporary times, **translation** and **comparative criticism** play vital roles in sustaining reciprocal influences. **Translation** is the process of rendering texts into another language, while **comparative criticism** refers to the analysis of texts across cultures to highlight similarities and differences. Arabic works are increasingly translated into English, French, and other languages, while global texts are translated into Arabic, ensuring ongoing dialogue.

Digital networks further enhance these exchanges. Online platforms, literary festivals, and digital archives allow Arabic and global literatures to interact in real time. This interconnectedness ensures that reciprocal influences continue to thrive in the twenty-first century.

Fill in the blank: The process of rendering texts into another language is called _____.



Contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature
Arabic writers engaging with global literary movements
Global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions
Translation, comparative criticism, and digital networks

Box 4.3 Contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature

Pilot questions 4.3

1. Who is the Arabic Nobel Prize-winning author who engaged with global literary movements?
2. What is the Arabic collection of tales that influenced global storytelling traditions?
3. What is the process of rendering texts into another language called?
4. Give one example of a global author inspired by Arabic mystical poetry.
5. Explain how digital networks sustain reciprocal influences in world literature today.

Series Summary

This Series has explored the reciprocal influences between Arabic and global literatures, highlighting how Arabic traditions both shaped and were enriched by exchanges across cultures. We began with cross-cultural exchanges in the medieval and early modern periods, focusing on the translation of Arabic texts into Latin, Persian, and other languages, as well as the incorporation of Greek, Persian, and Indian works into Arabic scholarship. We then examined shared themes and motifs such as الحب (al-hubb, love), الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī, divine love), البطولة (al-buṭūla, heroism), and الطبيعة (al-ṭabī‘a, nature), showing how these ideas resonate across Arabic, European, Asian, and African traditions. Finally, we considered contemporary reciprocal influences, including Arabic writers engaging with global literary movements, global authors inspired by Arabic texts such as ألف ليلة وليلة (Alf Layla wa-Layla, One Thousand and One Nights), and the role of translation, comparative criticism, and digital networks in sustaining dialogue today.



By completing this Series, you should now be able to analyse historical exchanges of texts (SLO 4.1–4.3), describe and compare shared literary themes across cultures (SLO 4.4–4.6), and evaluate contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature (SLO 4.7–4.9). These outcomes provide you with the skills to recognise Arabic literature as part of a global conversation, enabling you to connect past traditions with present-day literary interactions.

Glossary of Terms

Al-buṭūla (البطولة): The Arabic word for heroism, often celebrated in epics and poetry to highlight courage and honour.

Al-hubb (الحب): The Arabic word for love, a recurring theme in Arabic and global literatures, expressed in both romantic and spiritual contexts.

Al-ḥubb al-ilāhī (الحب الإلهي): The Arabic phrase for divine love, commonly found in mystical and Sufi poetry, symbolising the soul's longing for God.

Al-ṭabī'a (الطبيعة): The Arabic word for nature, used symbolically in poetry to represent emotions, hardship, or paradise.

Alf Layla wa-Layla (ألف ليلة وليلة): Known in English as *One Thousand and One Nights*, a famous Arabic collection of tales that influenced global storytelling traditions.

Bayt al-Hikma (بيت الحكمة): The House of Wisdom in Baghdad, a major centre for translation and scholarship where Greek, Persian, and Indian texts were rendered into Arabic.

Comparative criticism: The study and analysis of texts across different cultures to highlight similarities, differences, and reciprocal influences.

Global literary movements: Collective trends in literature that transcend national boundaries, such as modernism, realism, and postcolonialism.



Majnūn Laylā (مجنون ليلى): A legendary Arabic figure symbolising passionate, often tragic love, widely referenced in poetry.

Mysticism: The pursuit of direct experience of the divine, often expressed through symbolic and spiritual language in literature.

Reciprocal influence: The mutual impact of two traditions on each other, where Arabic and global literatures exchange ideas and motifs.

Sīrat ‘Antara (سيرة عنترة): An Arabic epic recounting the heroism of Antara ibn Shaddād, resonating with European and Asian epic traditions.

Translation: The process of rendering texts into another language, enabling knowledge and literary traditions to cross cultural boundaries.

Zajal (زجل): A vernacular poetic form from Andalusia, influenced by Arabic traditions and contributing to Spanish lyrical culture.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

1. Define the term *translation* in the context of Arabic and global literatures. (Linked to SLO 4.1, SLO 4.9)
2. Identify the Arabic philosopher known in Latin as Avicenna. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
3. State the Arabic phrase for divine love often appearing in mystical poetry. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
4. Name the Arabic epic that celebrates the hero Antara ibn Shaddād. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
5. Mention the Arabic collection of tales that influenced global storytelling traditions. (Linked to SLO 4.8)



Short-answer questions

6. Explain how Arabic texts were transmitted into European universities during the medieval period. *(Linked to SLO 4.1)*
7. Describe one way global texts enriched Arabic scholarship. *(Linked to SLO 4.2)*
8. Analyse how themes of love and mysticism in Arabic poetry resonate with global traditions. *(Linked to SLO 4.4)*
9. Compare the heroic values in *Sīrat ‘Antara* with those in *The Song of Roland*. *(Linked to SLO 4.5)*
10. Demonstrate how nature is symbolically used in Arabic poetry and relate it to another global tradition. *(Linked to SLO 4.6)*
11. Assess the contributions of Najīb Maḥfūz to global literary movements. *(Linked to SLO 4.7)*
12. Identify one global author inspired by Arabic mystical poetry and explain the influence. *(Linked to SLO 4.8)*
13. Evaluate the role of digital networks in sustaining reciprocal influences today. *(Linked to SLO 4.9)*

Long-answer questions

14. Evaluate the reciprocal exchanges of texts between Arabic and global literatures in the medieval and early modern periods. *(Linked to SLO 4.1–4.3)*
15. Discuss shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures, focusing on love, heroism, and nature. *(Linked to SLO 4.4–4.6)*
16. Assess contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature, with reference to Arabic writers, global authors, and translation networks. *(Linked to SLO 4.7–4.9)*

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions



1. Translation is the process of rendering texts into another language, enabling knowledge to cross cultural boundaries.
2. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).
3. الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī).
4. سيرة عنترَة (Sirat ‘Antara).
5. ألف ليلة وليلة (Alf Layla wa-Layla, *One Thousand and One Nights*).

Short-answer questions

6. Arabic texts were translated into Latin in centres such as Toledo, then studied in universities like Paris and Bologna.
7. Greek works of Aristotle and Galen were translated into Arabic, enriching Islamic philosophy and medicine.
8. Arabic mystical poetry emphasised divine love, influencing Persian ghazals and European contemplative writings.
9. *Sīrat ‘Antara* emphasises courage and loyalty, while *The Song of Roland* highlights chivalry and faith.
10. Arabic poetry used deserts and gardens symbolically; Japanese haiku similarly used natural imagery to convey emotions.
11. Najīb Maḥfūz engaged with realism and modernism, presenting urban life in Cairo in ways that resonated globally.
12. Goethe was inspired by Arabic mystical poetry, incorporating its themes into his *West-Eastern Divan*.
13. Digital networks allow real-time literary exchanges through online platforms, festivals, and archives.

Long-answer questions

14. *Basic response:* Arabic texts were translated into Latin and Persian, while Greek and Indian works were translated into Arabic, enriching both traditions.



Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add examples such as Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad, Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle, and the re-translation of Arabic texts into Latin that shaped European scholasticism.

15. *Basic response:* Shared themes include love, mysticism, heroism, and nature, expressed in Arabic poetry and epics alongside global traditions.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may expand by comparing Majnūn Laylā with European troubadour poetry, Sīrat 'Antara with the *Mahābhārata*, and Arabic desert imagery with African oral traditions.

16. *Basic response:* Contemporary reciprocal influences include Arabic writers engaging with global movements, global authors inspired by Arabic texts, and translation networks.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may highlight Najīb Maḥfūz's Nobel Prize, Goethe's inspiration from Arabic poetry, and the role of digital archives in sustaining reciprocal exchanges today.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

Part 4.1 Cross-cultural exchanges in medieval and early modern periods

1. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).
2. Aristotle.
3. Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad.
4. Al-Khwarizmi.
5. Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* combined Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge and became a standard text in Europe.

Part 4.2 Shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures

1. الحب الإلهي (al-ḥubb al-ilāhī).
2. سيرة عنترَة (Sīrat 'Antara).
3. الطبيعة (al-ṭabī'a).



4. Arabic mystical poetry influenced Persian ghazals and European contemplative writings.
5. *Sīrat ‘Antara* can be compared with *The Song of Roland* or the *Mahābhārata*, as both celebrate heroism and cultural identity.

Part 4.3 Contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature

1. نجيب محفوظ (Najīb Maḥfūz).
2. ألف ليلة وليلة (Alf Layla wa-Layla, *One Thousand and One Nights*).
3. Translation.
4. Goethe, who was inspired by Arabic mystical poetry and incorporated it into his *West-Eastern Divan*.
5. Digital networks sustain reciprocal influences by enabling real-time exchanges through online platforms, literary festivals, and digital archives.

References and Attributions [Series 4]

General References

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutas, D. (1998). *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society*. London: Routledge.
- Hunwick, J. O. (2004). *Arabic Literature of Africa*. Leiden: Brill.
- Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature (Open Educational Resource). Retrieved from <https://archive.org>
- Open Access Islamic Manuscripts Portal. Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.library.cornell.edu/islamic>

Illustrations



Figure 4.1 Transmission of Arabic texts into European and Asian languages

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing arrows from Arabic texts to Latin and Persian translations in medieval centres.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic texts translation Latin Persian OER diagram”

Plate 4.1 Arabic manuscript of Aristotle’s Organon

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic manuscript of Aristotle’s Organon translated into Arabic script.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic manuscript Aristotle Organon OER image”

Box 4.1 Selected case studies of mutual enrichment in philosophy and science

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic global mutual enrichment philosophy science OER case studies”

Plate 4.2 Manuscript of Rūmī’s poetry with Arabic mystical themes

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of a manuscript page showing Rumi’s poetry with Arabic mystical motifs.”
- Suggested OER source: “Rumi manuscript Arabic mystical poetry OER image”

Figure 4.2 Comparative diagram of Arabic and global epic traditions

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram comparing Arabic epic traditions (Sirat Antara) with European (Song of Roland) and South Asian (Mahabharata).”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic epic Sirat Antara comparative epics OER diagram”

Box 4.2 Selected shared themes and motifs across Arabic and global literatures

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic global shared literary motifs OER”



Plate 4.3 Najīb Maḥfūz as a representative of Arabic engagement with global literary movements

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of Najib Mahfouz with manuscripts reflecting global literary influences.”
- Suggested OER source: “Najib Mahfouz Nobel Prize Arabic literature OER image”

Figure 4.3 Global authors inspired by Arabic texts and traditions

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing global authors influenced by Arabic texts such as One Thousand and One Nights.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic influence global authors One Thousand and One Nights OER diagram”

Box 4.3 Contemporary reciprocal influences in world literature

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic global reciprocal influences contemporary literature OER”



Series 5: Arabic Literature, Translation, Religion, and the Arts

5.1 Arabic literature and translation traditions

- 5.1.1 Translation of Arabic texts into Latin, Persian, and other languages
- 5.1.2 Translation of global texts into Arabic
- 5.1.3 Case studies of translation shaping literary and intellectual traditions

5.2 Arabic literature and religion

- 5.2.1 Qur'anic influence on Arabic prose and poetry
- 5.2.2 Religious themes in Arabic mystical and philosophical writings
- 5.2.3 Comparative perspectives: Arabic religious motifs in global literatures

5.3 Arabic literature and the arts

- 5.3.1 Poetry and music: from qasīda to song traditions
- 5.3.2 Visual arts and calligraphy in literary contexts
- 5.3.3 Theatre, film, and modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the reciprocal influences between Arabic and global literatures, highlighting how Arabic traditions both shaped and were enriched by exchanges across cultures. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the intersections of Arabic literature with translation, religion, and the arts. These areas are central to understanding how Arabic texts have travelled across languages, inspired religious thought, and found expression in music, calligraphy, theatre, and film. By examining these connections, you will see how Arabic literature continues to serve as a bridge between intellectual, spiritual, and artistic traditions worldwide.



The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to analyse the role of translation in shaping Arabic and global literatures, explain the influence of religion on Arabic literary forms, and evaluate how the arts have adapted and reimagined Arabic texts across different contexts.

We shall commence this Series by studying Arabic literature and translation traditions, focusing on how texts were transmitted into and out of Arabic and the case studies that illustrate their impact. Next, we will continue with Arabic literature and religion, examining Qur'anic influence, mystical writings, and comparative perspectives with global literatures. Finally, we will wrap up by exploring Arabic literature and the arts, considering its relationship with poetry and music, visual arts and calligraphy, and modern adaptations in theatre and film.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 5: Arabic Literature, Translation, Religion, and the Arts

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define the role of translation in transmitting Arabic texts into Latin, Persian, and other languages.
- **SLO 5.2** explain how global texts such as Greek and Indian works were translated into Arabic and shaped literary traditions.
- **SLO 5.3** analyse case studies where translation influenced intellectual and literary development in Arabic and global contexts.
- **SLO 5.4** describe the Qur'anic influence on Arabic prose and poetry.
- **SLO 5.5** interpret religious themes in Arabic mystical and philosophical writings.
- **SLO 5.6** compare Arabic religious motifs with those found in global literatures.
- **SLO 5.7** demonstrate how Arabic poetry has been adapted into musical traditions.
- **SLO 5.8** evaluate the role of visual arts and calligraphy in enriching Arabic literary expression.
- **SLO 5.9** assess modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts in theatre and film.



5.1 Arabic Literature And Translation Traditions

5.1.1 Translation of Arabic texts into Latin, Persian, and other languages

One of the most significant features of medieval scholarship was the **translation** of Arabic texts into other languages. **Translation** refers to the rendering of a text from one language into another, making knowledge accessible across cultures. Arabic works in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy were translated into Latin in centres such as Toledo, and into Persian and other Asian languages. Scholars like ابن سينا (**Ibn Sīnā, Avicenna**) and ابن رشد (**Ibn Rushd, Averroes**) became central figures in European universities, where their writings shaped scholastic thought.

This movement ensured that Arabic literature and science were not confined to the Islamic world but became part of a global intellectual heritage.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic philosopher whose works were widely translated into Latin and studied in European universities is _____.



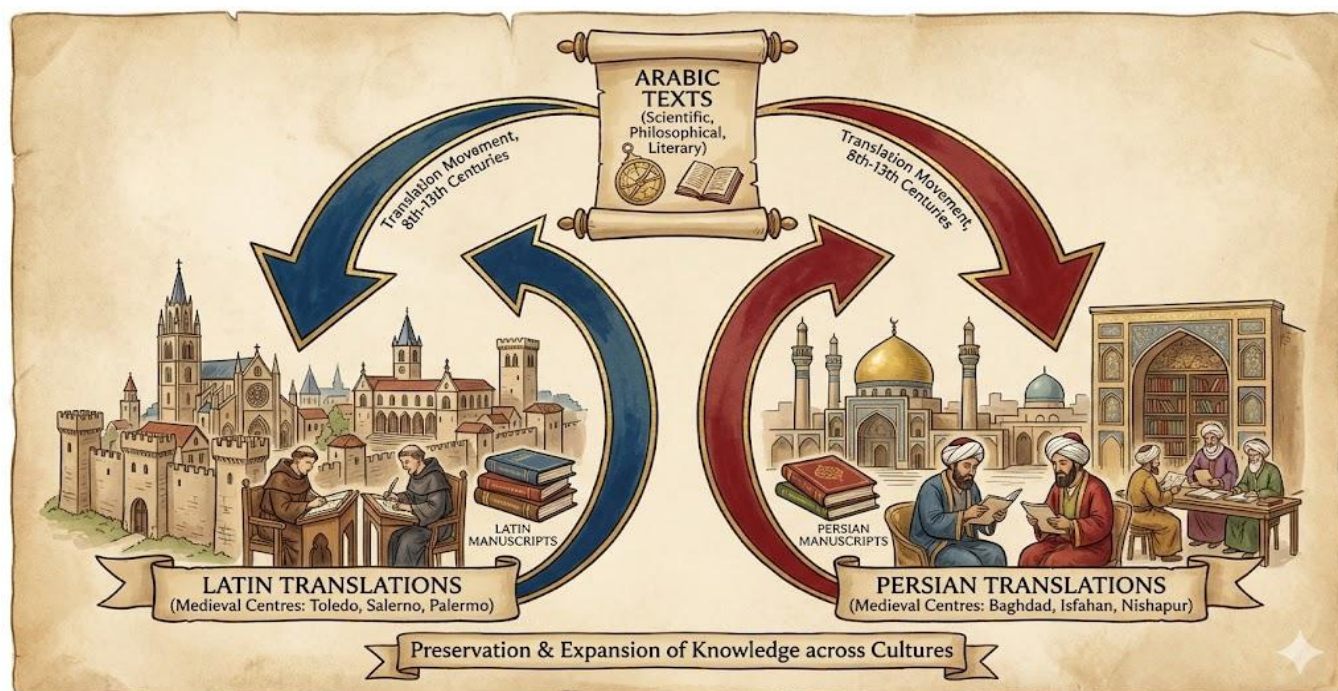


Figure 5.1 Transmission of Arabic texts into Latin and Persian

5.1.2 Translation of global texts into Arabic

The exchange was reciprocal. Arabic scholars translated **Greek, Persian, and Indian texts** into Arabic, enriching their own literary and intellectual traditions. Works such as Aristotle's *Organon* and Galen's medical treatises were rendered into Arabic, forming the foundation of Islamic philosophy and medicine. These translations were not mere copies but often included commentary and adaptation, making them uniquely valuable.

This process demonstrates how Arabic literature absorbed global knowledge, reinterpreted it, and then transmitted it back to other cultures through later translations.

Fill in the blank: The Greek philosopher whose works were translated into Arabic and became central to Islamic philosophy is _____.



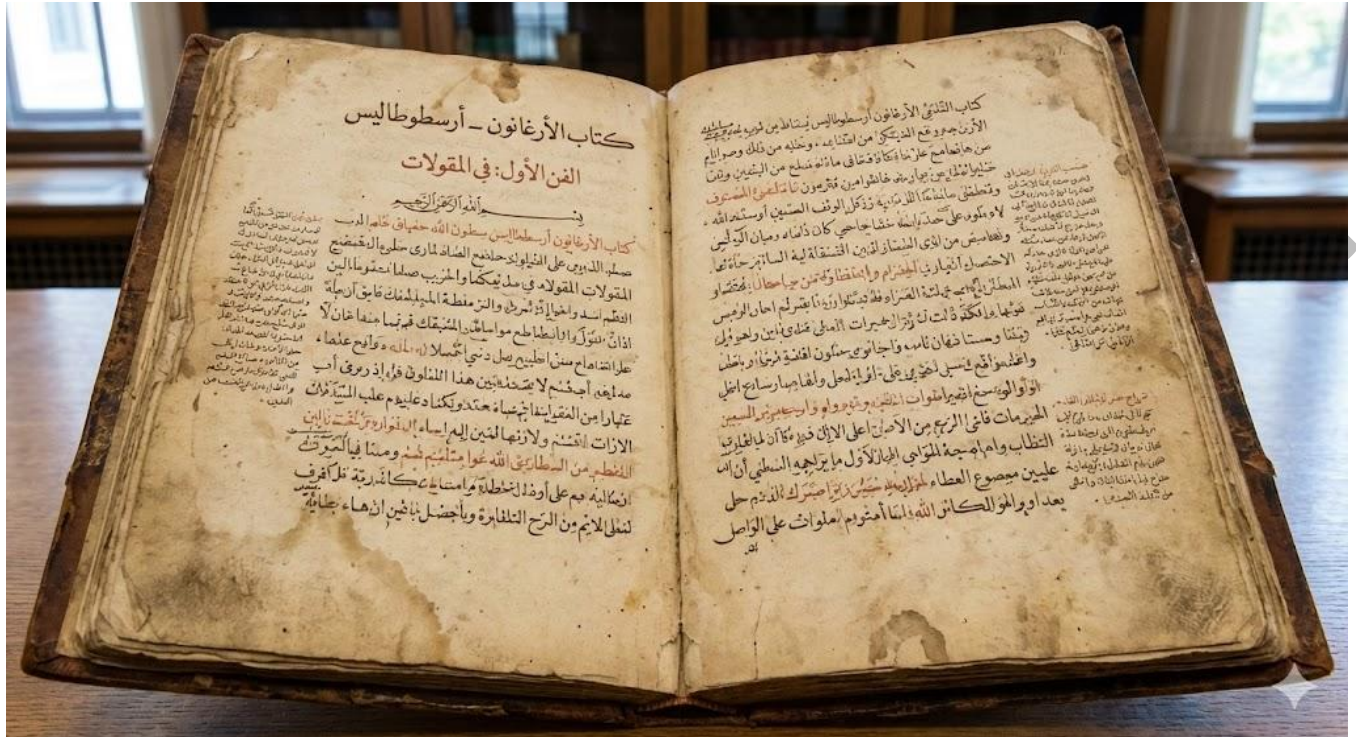


Plate 5.1 Arabic manuscript of Aristotle's Organon

5.1.3 Case studies of translation shaping literary and intellectual traditions

Mutual enrichment is best illustrated through case studies. The **بيت الحكمة (Bayt al-Hikma, House of Wisdom)** in Baghdad was a centre for translation and scholarship, where Greek, Persian, and Indian texts were studied and reinterpreted. Scholars such as **الخوارزمي (al-Khwarizmi)** developed algebra by building on earlier traditions, while Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* combined Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge, becoming a standard text in Europe for centuries.

These examples highlight how translation was not simply a linguistic exercise but a creative process that shaped the course of intellectual history.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic scholar who developed algebra by building on earlier traditions was _____.



Selected case studies of translation shaping literary and intellectual traditions

Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad translating Greek, Persian, and Indian texts

Al-Khwarizmi's development of algebra

Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* combining Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge

Box 5.1 Selected case studies of translation shaping literary and intellectual traditions

Pilot questions 5.1

1. Who is the Arabic philosopher whose works were widely translated into Latin and studied in European universities?
2. Which Greek philosopher's works were translated into Arabic and became central to Islamic philosophy?
3. What was Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad?
4. Name the Arabic scholar who developed algebra.
5. Give one example of how translation enriched Arabic and global intellectual traditions.

5.2 Arabic Literature And Religion

5.2.1 Qur'anic influence on Arabic prose and poetry

The **Qur'an** is the central religious text of Islam, regarded by Muslims as the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Its language and style profoundly shaped Arabic prose and poetry. The Qur'an introduced new forms of **rhythmic prose** (السجع, *al-saj'*), which blended



poetic cadence with prose structure. This influenced later writers, who adopted Qur'anic imagery, symbolism, and rhetorical devices in their works.

Arabic poets often drew upon Qur'anic themes such as divine justice, mercy, and the beauty of creation. Prose writers, including historians and philosophers, also used Qur'anic expressions to lend authority and elegance to their texts.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic term for rhythmic prose, influenced by the Qur'an, is _____.



Plate 5.2 Qur'anic manuscript illustrating rhythmic prose (al-saj')

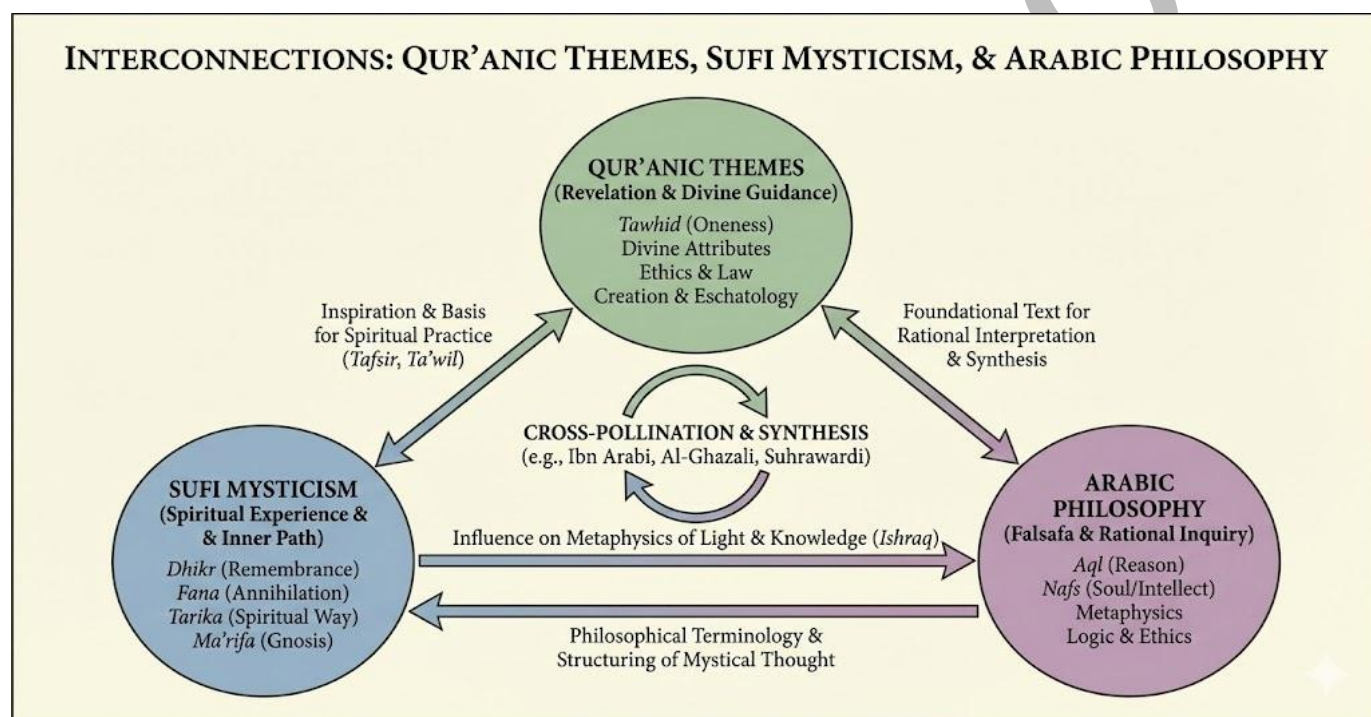
5.2.2 Religious themes in Arabic mystical and philosophical writings

Arabic literature also reflects **mysticism** and **philosophy**. **Mysticism** refers to the pursuit of direct experience of the divine, often expressed through symbolic language. Sufi poets such as جلال الدين الرومي (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī) and ابن عربي (Ibn 'Arabī) wrote extensively about divine love, spiritual union, and the soul's journey. Their works used metaphors of wine, gardens, and light to express spiritual truths.



Philosophical writings, influenced by both Qur'anic thought and Greek philosophy, explored questions of existence, ethics, and the nature of God. Thinkers like الفارابي (al-Fārābī) and ابن رشد (Ibn Rushd) integrated religious themes with rational inquiry, creating a rich intellectual tradition.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic mystic who wrote extensively about divine love and spiritual union was _____.



Caption: Figure 5.2 Connections between Qur'anic influence, mysticism, and philosophy in Arabic literature

5.2.3 Comparative perspectives: Arabic religious motifs in global literatures

Religious motifs in Arabic literature resonate with global traditions. For example, themes of divine love in Sufi poetry parallel Christian mysticism in the works of St. John of the Cross. The Qur'anic emphasis on justice and mercy finds echoes in Jewish and Christian scriptures. Similarly, metaphors of light and gardens appear in Persian, Indian, and European literatures, showing shared symbolic language across cultures.



These comparative perspectives highlight the universality of religious themes and the role of Arabic literature in shaping global spiritual and literary traditions.

Fill in the blank: The Christian mystic whose writings on divine love parallel Arabic Sufi poetry is _____.

Comparative perspectives on Arabic religious motifs in global literatures

Divine love in Sufi poetry and Christian mysticism (e.g., St. John of the Cross)

Justice and mercy in Qur'anic and Biblical traditions

Symbolism of light and gardens in Arabic, Persian, Indian, and European literatures

Box 5.2 Comparative perspectives on Arabic religious motifs in global literatures

Pilot questions 5.2

1. What is the Arabic term for rhythmic prose influenced by the Qur'an?
2. Name the Arabic mystic who wrote extensively about divine love and spiritual union.
3. Which philosopher integrated Qur'anic thought with rational inquiry in Arabic literature?
4. Give one example of how Arabic religious motifs resonate with global traditions.
5. Which Christian mystic's writings on divine love parallel Arabic Sufi poetry?

5.3 Arabic Literature And The Arts

5.3.1 Poetry and music: from qasīda to song traditions

Arabic poetry has long been intertwined with **music**, creating a rich tradition of oral performance. **Qasīda** refers to a classical Arabic ode, often composed with strict metre and



rhyme, and recited or sung to convey themes of love, praise, or lament. Over time, qasīda influenced musical traditions in Andalusia, giving rise to **muwashshah** and **zajal**, which blended poetic artistry with melodic expression.

In modern times, Arabic poetry continues to inspire song lyrics, with contemporary musicians drawing on classical forms to connect audiences with cultural heritage. This demonstrates how literature and music reinforce each other, ensuring the survival and adaptation of poetic traditions.

Fill in the blank: The classical Arabic ode, often recited or sung, is called _____.



Plate 5.3 Arabic manuscript of a qasīda with musical elements

5.3.2 Visual arts and calligraphy in literary contexts

Arabic literature is closely linked to **calligraphy**, the artistic practice of writing. **Calligraphy** refers to stylised and decorative handwriting, often used to present sacred or literary texts.

Qur'anic manuscripts were adorned with elaborate calligraphy, while poetry collections were decorated with geometric and floral designs.



Visual arts also complemented literature through illustrations in manuscripts, where images of gardens, battles, or mystical symbols enriched the reading experience. Calligraphy and visual art thus elevated literature beyond words, transforming texts into aesthetic and spiritual artefacts.

Fill in the blank: The artistic practice of stylised handwriting used to present sacred and literary texts is called _____.

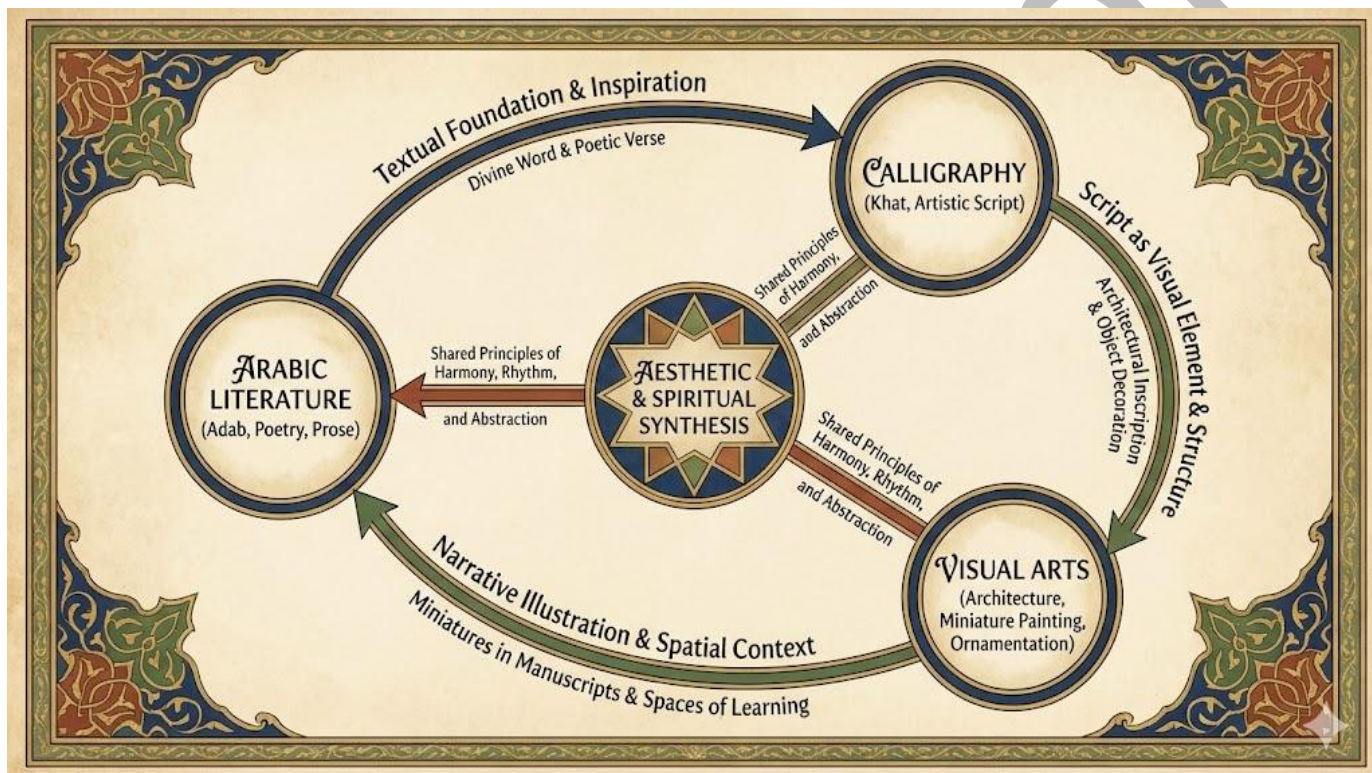


Figure 5.3 Connections between Arabic literature, calligraphy, and visual arts

5.3.3 Theatre, film, and modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts

Arabic literature has also inspired **theatre** and **film**, offering new ways to engage with classical and modern texts. **Theatre** refers to the performance of dramatic works before an audience, while **film** refers to the visual recording of stories for cinematic presentation. Plays based on Arabic epics and folktales, such as *One Thousand and One Nights*, have been staged across the Arab world and beyond.



In cinema, directors have adapted Arabic novels and poems into films that explore social, political, and cultural themes. These adaptations demonstrate how literature continues to evolve, finding new life in artistic forms that reach wider audiences.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic collection of tales that has inspired theatre and film adaptations worldwide is _____.

Modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts

Theatre performances based on *One Thousand and One Nights*

Film adaptations of Arabic novels exploring social and cultural themes

Poetry-inspired musical and cinematic productions

Box 5.3 Modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts

Pilot questions 5.3

1. What is the classical Arabic ode, often recited or sung?
2. What is the artistic practice of stylised handwriting used to present sacred and literary texts?
3. Name one Arabic collection of tales that has inspired theatre and film adaptations worldwide.
4. Give one example of how Arabic poetry influenced musical traditions.
5. Explain how calligraphy enriched the presentation of Arabic literature.

Series Summary

This Series has examined the intersections of Arabic literature with translation, religion, and the arts, showing how texts travelled across cultures, shaped spiritual thought, and inspired artistic expression. Starting with translation traditions, we explored how Arabic works were transmitted into Latin and Persian, and how global texts such as Greek and Indian writings were absorbed



into Arabic scholarship. We then moved on to religion, considering the Qur’anic influence on prose and poetry, the role of mysticism and philosophy, and comparative perspectives with global traditions. Finally, we looked at the arts, highlighting the relationship between poetry and music, the importance of calligraphy and visual design, and modern adaptations of Arabic texts in theatre and film.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and explain the role of translation in shaping Arabic and global literatures (SLOs 5.1–5.3), describe and interpret religious themes in Arabic prose, poetry, and philosophy (SLOs 5.4–5.6), and evaluate how Arabic literature has been expressed through music, calligraphy, theatre, and film (SLOs 5.7–5.9). These outcomes provide you with the skills to connect Arabic literature with wider cultural, religious, and artistic traditions, reinforcing its place within global intellectual and creative exchanges.

Glossary of Terms

Al-saj‘ (السجع): Rhythmic prose style found in the Qur’an, blending poetic cadence with prose structure.

Algebra: A branch of mathematics developed by al-Khwarizmi, building on earlier traditions and transmitted through Arabic scholarship.

Bayt al-Hikma (بيت الحكمة): The House of Wisdom in Baghdad, a major centre for translation and scholarship where Greek, Persian, and Indian texts were studied and reinterpreted.

Calligraphy: The artistic practice of stylised handwriting, often used to present sacred and literary texts in Arabic manuscripts.

Canon of Medicine: A medical text by Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) that combined Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge and became a standard reference in Europe.

Film: A modern artistic medium that adapts Arabic novels, poems, and folktales into cinematic productions.



Muwashshah: A lyrical poetic form that developed in Andalusia, blending classical Arabic poetry with musical traditions.

Mysticism: The pursuit of direct experience of the divine, often expressed through symbolic language in Sufi poetry and prose.

Qasīda: A classical Arabic ode composed with strict metre and rhyme, often recited or sung to convey themes of love, praise, or lament.

Qur'an: The central religious text of Islam, regarded as the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad, which profoundly influenced Arabic prose and poetry.

Reciprocal translation: The two-way process of translating Arabic texts into other languages and global texts into Arabic, enriching both traditions.

Sufi poetry: Mystical Arabic verse that explores themes of divine love, spiritual union, and the soul's journey.

Theatre: A performance art form where Arabic epics, folktales, and modern texts are adapted for live audiences.

Zajal: A vernacular poetic form from Andalusia, influenced by Arabic traditions and often performed with musical accompaniment.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. Define the term *translation* in the context of Arabic and global literatures. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Identify the Greek philosopher whose works were translated into Arabic and became central to Islamic philosophy. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. State the Arabic term for rhythmic prose influenced by the Qur'an. (Linked to SLO 5.4)



4. Name the Arabic mystic who wrote extensively about divine love and spiritual union.
(Linked to SLO 5.5)
5. Mention the classical Arabic ode that was often recited or sung. (Linked to SLO 5.7)

Short-answer questions

6. Explain how the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma) contributed to translation and scholarship.
(Linked to SLO 5.3)
7. Describe one way Qur'anic themes influenced Arabic prose and poetry. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
8. Analyse how Sufi poetry used metaphors to express spiritual truths. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
9. Compare Arabic religious motifs with those found in Christian mysticism. (Linked to SLO 5.6)
10. Demonstrate how Arabic poetry influenced musical traditions in Andalusia. (Linked to SLO 5.7)
11. Evaluate the role of calligraphy in presenting Arabic literary texts. (Linked to SLO 5.8)
12. Identify one modern artistic adaptation of Arabic literature in theatre or film. (Linked to SLO 5.9)

Long-answer questions

13. Evaluate the reciprocal exchanges of translation between Arabic and global literatures in the medieval period. (Linked to SLOs 5.1–5.3)
14. Discuss the influence of religion on Arabic literature, focusing on Qur'anic prose, mysticism, and philosophy. (Linked to SLOs 5.4–5.6)
15. Assess the relationship between Arabic literature and the arts, with reference to poetry, calligraphy, and modern adaptations. (Linked to SLOs 5.7–5.9)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions



1. Translation is the process of rendering texts into another language, enabling knowledge to cross cultural boundaries.
2. Aristotle.
3. السجع (al-saj').
4. Ibn 'Arabī.
5. Qasīda.

Short-answer questions

6. Bayt al-Hikma in Baghdad served as a centre for translating Greek, Persian, and Indian texts, enriching Arabic scholarship.
7. Qur'anic themes introduced rhythmic prose and imagery, influencing later poets and prose writers.
8. Sufi poetry used metaphors such as wine, gardens, and light to symbolise divine love and spiritual union.
9. Arabic Sufi poetry emphasised divine love, which parallels Christian mysticism in the works of St. John of the Cross.
10. Arabic poetry influenced Andalusian musical traditions through forms such as muwashshah and zajal.
11. Calligraphy elevated Arabic texts by presenting them as aesthetic and spiritual artefacts.
12. *One Thousand and One Nights* has been adapted into theatre and film worldwide.

Long-answer questions

13. *Basic response:* Arabic texts were translated into Latin and Persian, while Greek and Indian works were translated into Arabic, enriching both traditions.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add examples such as Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine*, and the re-translation of Arabic texts into Latin that shaped European scholasticism.



14. *Basic response:* Religion influenced Arabic literature through Qur'anic prose, mystical poetry, and philosophical writings.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may expand by comparing Qur'anic justice and mercy with Biblical traditions, highlighting Ibn 'Arabī's mystical writings, and noting al-Fārābī's integration of Qur'anic thought with rational inquiry.

15. *Basic response:* Arabic literature influenced the arts through poetry and music, calligraphy, and modern adaptations in theatre and film.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may highlight the role of Andalusian lyrical forms, the aesthetic significance of Qur'anic calligraphy, and contemporary cinematic adaptations of Arabic novels exploring social and cultural themes.



Part 5.1 Arabic literature and translation traditions

1. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).
2. Aristotle.
3. Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad.
4. Al-Khwarizmi.
5. Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* combined Arabic, Greek, and Persian knowledge and became a standard text in Europe.

Part 5.2 Arabic literature and religion

1. السجع (al-saj').
2. Ibn 'Arabī.
3. Ibn Rushd (Averroes).
4. Qur'anic themes of justice, mercy, and divine love resonate with Biblical and Christian traditions.
5. St. John of the Cross.

Part 5.3 Arabic literature and the arts

1. Qasīda.
2. Calligraphy.
3. *One Thousand and One Nights*.
4. Arabic poetry influenced Andalusian musical traditions through forms such as muwashshah and zajal.
5. Calligraphy enriched Arabic literature by presenting texts as aesthetic and spiritual artefacts.



General References

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutas, D. (1998). *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society*. London: Routledge.
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- Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature (Open Educational Resource). Retrieved from <https://archive.org>
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Illustrations

Figure 5.1 Transmission of Arabic texts into Latin and Persian

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- Suggested OER source: “Arabic texts translation Latin Persian OER diagram”

Plate 5.1 Arabic manuscript of Aristotle’s *Organon*

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic manuscript of Aristotle’s *Organon* translated into Arabic script.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic manuscript Aristotle *Organon* OER image”

Box 5.1 Selected case studies of translation shaping literary and intellectual traditions

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic translation case studies Bayt al-Hikma OER”



Plate 5.2 Qur’anic manuscript illustrating rhythmic prose (al-saj‘)

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of a Qur’anic manuscript highlighting rhythmic prose style al-saj‘.”
- Suggested OER source: “Qur’an manuscript rhythmic prose saj‘ OER image”

Figure 5.2 Connections between Qur’anic influence, mysticism, and philosophy in Arabic literature

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing connections between Qur’anic themes, Sufi mysticism, and Arabic philosophy.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic literature Qur’an mysticism philosophy OER diagram”

Box 5.2 Comparative perspectives on Arabic religious motifs in global literatures

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic literature religious motifs comparative perspectives OER”

Plate 5.3 Arabic manuscript of a qasīda with musical elements

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic manuscript of a qasida with musical notation.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic qasida manuscript music OER image”

Figure 5.3 Connections between Arabic literature, calligraphy, and visual arts

- AI-generated using prompt: “Generate a diagram showing connections between Arabic literature, calligraphy, and visual arts.”
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic literature calligraphy visual arts OER diagram”

Box 5.3 Modern artistic adaptations of Arabic texts

- Created in-text as a formatted table.
- Suggested OER source: “Arabic literature theatre film adaptations OER”

