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Ďurišin's Interliterary Mediterranean as a Model for World Literature

Abstract: During the 1980s, the Slovak literary theorist Dionýz Ďurišin drew on the structuralist and Marxist frameworks prevalent in the socialist Bloc to develop his concept of interliterary communities. In 1992, he published *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (What is World Literature?), which provided the foundation for applying this theory to such contexts of world literature as Central Europe and the Mediterranean. His final project was the trilingual (Italian, French, and Slovak) *Il Mediterraneo. Una rete interletteraria* (The Mediterranean: An Interliterary Network 2000), coedited with Armando Gnisci, which brought together Slovak, Czech, Russian, and Italian scholars working on Greek, Turkish, Maghrebi, and other Mediterranean literatures. This chapter uses Ďurišin's interliterary theory of the Mediterranean to examine the pioneering Arabic prose text *Al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq* (*Leg over Leg*, 1855) by the Ottoman-Lebanese writer Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, which takes its autobiographical narrator around the Mediterranean and beyond, challenging its linguistic and political hierarchies. It suggests that the interliterary Mediterranean is the ideal milieu for comparatists to study world literature.

1 Introduction: Ďurišin's Theory of World Literature

One of the earliest sustained engagements with the theory of Mediterranean literature emerged in a rather unlikely time and place: the landlocked Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, where even traveling to most Mediterranean countries (with the exception of Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast) was difficult for ordinary citizens up until the end of the Communist regime in 1989. The work of Dionýz Ďurišin (1929–1997), a researcher in world literature at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, drew on structuralist and Marxist frameworks to develop his concept of interliterary communities, which play an "intermediary function" between the national and world context. Rather than setting up strict boundaries, Ďurišin studied "the network of literary relations, which, from single unities (national literatures), proceeds through intermediate stages (groups of national literatures called 'interliterary communities') to the final stage, namely, world literature," which is "the ultimate target category for literary scholarship" (2012, 151). In 1992, Ďurišin pub-

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lished *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (What is World Literature?) which provided the foundation for applying this theory to a broader context.[1] His collaboration with the Italian comparatist Armando Gnisci resulted in the collected trilingual volume *Il Mediterraneo. Una rete interletteraria* (The Mediterranean: An Interliterary Network), published in Italian, French, and Slovak in 2000), which brought together scholars working on the "interliterary centrisms" of Mediterranean literature and its connections to the Slavic world.

Although it was published in two world languages, the lack of an English version has limited the reception of this collection in the Anglophone field of world literature, and Ďurišin's premature death has also limited its later impact in Mediterranean studies.[2] In *Teória literárnej komparatistiky (Theory of Literary Comparistics* 1975, published in English in 1984), Ďurišin presents several examples of interliterary communities, from "ethnically related national wholes… in a single state unit" (like Slovaks and Czechs), "ethnically kindred nations which do not share co-existence" (including Germanic, Romance and Slavic literatures), and "nations without the ethnical bond" but historically with a common state (such as Slovak's relationship to Hungarian literature). He suggests that "the geographical or the regional factor also possesses certain possibilities of creating interliterary communities," offering the examples of the Danube region or the (then-socialist) nations of Eastern Europe (Ďurišin 1984, 287). In *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (published only in Slovak, with a summary in French), Ďurišin is already adjusting to post-socialist political realities (he refers to the "former" Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, although Czechoslovakia was still united up until the following year), but his focus remains primarily on Slavic literatures. The book includes only a passing reference to Mediterranean literature in Chapter 6, "What are Interliterary Communities and the Interliterary Process?" In his reformulation of the categories of interliterary communities, he proposes "Northern European, Central European, East European, Mediterranean and other literatures" as geographic criteria broader than national or linguistic bonds (Ďurišin 1992, 156).

Ďurišin's theory has received its greatest attention in Slovakia and elsewhere in Central Europe, although it has also been discussed by the Spanish comparatist

1 Slovak scholars are fond of pointing out that this book appeared over a decade before David Damrosch's book of the same title, which does not mention Ďurišin, although there are several references to the earlier theorist in his latest work (see Damrosch 2020, 259, 262).

2 Ďurišin's Slovak colleague Marián Gálik has offered more practical reasons why his works had only limited success abroad: "One crucial factor was that it was impossible to buy these books in the world outside the former Czechoslovakia. A second reason was Ďurišin's shyness with anyone who tried to speak with him in western languages that he could not speak. A third reason was his uncompromising attitude to the view of others who had different opinions" (Gálik 2009, 11).

Claudio Guillén (1993, 98). According to Ladislav Franek, who compares Ďurišin's work with Guillén's, its "primary task was to search for such systems, concepts or points of departure, which would have the ability to bring the examined phenomena to the level of mutual relations and connections, both from the viewpoint of the internal development of literature, as well as in the sense of overstepping the narrow framework, in the direction to revealing the nature and regularity of world literature" (2014, 253). The Romanian comparatist Marcel Cornis-Pope suggests that "while Edward Said's term 'Orientalism' describes well the perspective of Western writers on the Eastern Mediterranean, it does not reflect accurately the more complex attitude of East-Central European writers towards the East," concluding that "[in] the spirit of Dionýz Ďurišin and Armando Gnisci's redefinition of the Mediterranean area as 'Una rete interletteraria' [...] we can argue that the mobility of writers across cultural and literary boundaries enhances their interconnectedness, hybridizing their literary and cultural production" (2014, 139, 143). The Slovenian scholar Marko Juvan has compared Ďurišin to such better-known scholars as Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, commenting that unlike their inter-national emphasis, Ďurišin focuses on "complementarity within the interliterary communities of Central Europe, Slavic nations, the Mediterranean, or the former Yugoslavia. Instead of lamenting lagging behind the center, he stresses the irregular and accelerated development of minor literatures. In place of influence, he proposes a dialogic notion of creative reception of metropolitan patterns" (Juvan 2018, 101). Juvan's emphasis on the minor is relevant for writers, as well as theorists, from nations outside the geographical limits of the Mediterranean region.

While Ďurišin's theory of interliterary communities examines the interaction of languages at the level of national groups, it does not place much emphasis on the interaction of different language affiliations within the work of an individual author. This issue has been discussed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who have proposed that Franz Kafka's "irreducible feeling of distance" from his native Czech territory led to his creation of a "minor literature" within the "major language" of German.[3] The English translation includes a foreword by the Algerian comparatist Réda Bensmaïa, who states that Kafka's work "will henceforth serve as a *rallying point* or *model* for certain texts and 'bi-lingual' writing practices that, until now, had to pass through a long purgatory before even being read, much less recognized" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, xiv, emphasis in the original).

3 They describe three main attributes of minor literature: "language" with "a high coefficient of deterritorialization," a "cramped space" that forces everything "to connect immediately to politics," and "a collective enunciation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 17–18).

Bensmaïa implicitly places "minor literature" in a Mediterranean framework: his reference to "bi-lingual" alludes to the Moroccan novelist Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Amour bilingue* (1984, translated as *Love in Two Languages*).[4] Although minor literature has often been conflated with ethnic minorities, Deleuze and Guattari characterize it as a specific function of writing, to "really become a collective machine of expression and really be able to treat and develop its contents." (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 18–19). The validity of this theory for Kafka's work has been the subject of debate, but it has served as a framework for the "minor" Mediterranean in the work of modernist writers from the margins of Europe, whose writings undermine political and cultural hegemonies that shape the Mediterranean as they flesh out the cultural hybridity that characterizes it (Sabatos 2016, 52–53).

Ďurišin and Gnisci's volume, while including contributions relating to Turkey and the Maghreb, mostly leaves unexplored what is arguably the heart of Mediterranean culture, and certainly its religious traditions: the Levant. Although his scholarship has received almost no attention in Middle Eastern studies, Ďurišin emphasizes the need for further study of what he called "Asian Mediterraneanness" (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 381). The example that will be discussed further below is that of *Leg over Leg* (1855) by the Ottoman-Lebanese writer Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1805/1806–1877). This uncategorizable text, first translated into English less than ten years ago, takes its autobiographical narrator around the Mediterranean and beyond, challenging linguistic and political hierarchies while pushing the boundaries of the Arabic novel. Rebecca C. Johnson observes that "[w]hat al-Shidyāq ultimately gives us in *Leg over Leg* is a theory of world literature," and as she notes, his work "imagines and constructs the world anew, through an omnivorous textuality, absorbing texts and literary forms through juxtaposition, quotation, imitation, and parody. Far from holding up Sterne or Lamartine as culturally distinct and inviolable paradigms, he incorporates them into Arabic literary categories, aligning *Tristram Shandy* with the *maqāmāt*" (2013, 1, xxx). As Gnisci observes, the "Mediterranean transcontinentalism— unique in the world —offers, inasmuch as it is an interliterary center, the 'strongest' yet intimations of the process that goes from national literature and ends in 'world literature'" (2005, 263). Reassessing *Leg over Leg* within the interliterary Mediterranean framework, discussed further below, will move beyond the context of Ottoman imperialism, Western colonialism, and Arab nationalism, and draw on Johnson's vision of

4 Bensmaïa's foreword also includes a reference to the Islamic world: "[If] Kafka's watchword was really 'thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image,' it was certainly not in the manner of the 'Turks' or 'Muslims' that Hegel describes in his *Aesthetics*," here alluding to the French philosopher Sara Kofman's *Mélancholie de l'art* (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, xvii).

world literature, which in turn resonates with Ďurišin's attention to processes of literary transculturations.

2 Centers and Peripheries in Ďurišin's and Gnisci's Interliterary Network

Much of Dionýz Ďurišin's career was spent at the Institute of World Literature (*Ústav svetovej literatúry*) of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.[5] Like the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow, the Institute sponsored academic research with an implicit agenda of fostering connections within the Soviet Bloc and its affiliated states. Róbert Gáfrik points out that although "Ďurišin was not enthusiastic about advancing the ideology of Marxism-Leninism [...] his work is permeated by concepts of dialectical and historical materialism" (2010, 22). Ďurišin was influenced by Slovak scholars in translation studies such as Anton Popovič (himself influenced by the Czech Jiří Levý), who were also considerably ahead of their time in theorizing a previously underexplored field of literary analysis, and whose work helped to shape the better-known "polysystems theory" developed by the Israeli scholars Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury. Ďurišin does not define world literature as the sum of all literary works in the world ("a complex or a compendium of literatures of the world") or a limited number of classical masterpieces ("a selective concept of world literature"). He calls for "a developmental concept of world literature" based on "facts that are the bearers of mutual relationships and affinities, those that are genetically and typologically mutually conditioned and systematized" (Ďurišin 2012, 157). With the fall of the "Iron Curtain," the Institute had greater opportunities to develop links with Western European scholars, and Ďurišin began parallel projects on the literatures of Central Europe and the Mediterranean.[6]

Ďurišin's collaboration with Armando Gnisci, a professor of comparative literature at La Sapienza University of Rome, led to the trilingual volume *Il Mediterraneo. Una rete interletteraria/ La Méditerranée. Un Réseau interlittéraire / Stredomorie medziliterárna sieť.* The beginning of the volume (following Ján Koška's

5 Established in 1964, it was known as the Institute of Literary Studies between 1973–1990, when it was redivided into separate institutes of Slovak and world literature.

6 Slovak has two related terms for "Mediterranean" using the prefix "stredo-" or central: "stredozemný" and "stredomorný," both of which show a more explicit parallel to "Central European," or "stredoeurópsky," than in English or Romance languages. While Czech also uses "středozemní," the Czech contributors to Ďurišin's and Gnisci's collection mostly use the adjective "mediterránní."

short piece on world literature and translation) features Ďurišin's essay "Medzikontinentálne súvislosti stredomorského kulturného a literárnoumeleckého procesu" ("Intercontinental Connections of the Mediterranean Literary and Cultural Process") and Gnisci's "La letteratura comparata come disciplina di decolonizzazione" ("Comparative Literature as a Discipline of Decolonization"). Except for Gnisci and his colleagues Franca Sinopoli and Costanza Ferrini, all of the contributors were Slovak (Ján Koška, Pavol Koprda, Daniel Škoviera, and Xénia Celnarová), Czech (Ivan Dorovskı, Miloš Zelenka, and Ivo Pospíšil) or Russian (Sofia A. Ilinskaia, Svetlana V. Prozogina, and Elena Riauzova).[7] These are followed by Gnisci's second essay, "La rete interletteraria mediterranea" ("The Mediterranean as Interliterary Network"), and Ďurišin's "Ústretovosť slovenského a talianskeho výskum medziliterárnosti?" ("Convergence of Slovak and Italian Research on Interliterarity?").[8] Most of the articles offer broad historical backgrounds rather than detailed close readings, and with the exception of Ilinskaya's article on twentieth-century Greek poetry, there is little on modern literature. The Italian and French sections also include Ferrini's extensive annotated bibliography "Mediterranean: A Self-Representation in Construction."[9]

After introducing interliterary centrism within the Czech and Slovak comparative tradition, Ďurišin proposes: "The particularities of the literatures of the Mediterranean region cannot be understood without studies of the Mediterranean milieu. Otherwise, we might forget the important connections between Spanish literature and culture with Arab literature. [...] Here we must think of the Israeli component, the influences in Syria and Lebanon, etc." After alluding to Greek culture and (South) Slavic literature, he adds "the Mediterranean viewpoints of French literature" and concludes with Italy, which he sees as having "the central status in the European part of the Mediterranean Sea"[10] (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 379). Touching on Central European and Nordic literatures, he returns to the "intercontinental character" of the Mediterranean, mentioning Syrian, Lebanese, Cypriot and Turkish influences, which make this interliterary network an

7 While the chapters by Koška, Ďurišin, Gnisci, Koprda, Dorovský, and Sinopoli present general overviews of "Mediterranean interliterary centrism," the others are devoted to the histories of specific national literatures: Ilinskaia on Greece, Škoviera on Slovakia, Zelenka on the Czech lands, Pospíšil on Russia, Celnarová on "Asia Minor" (mainly Turkey), Prozogina on the Maghreb, and Riauzova on Portugal.

8 In the French section, the order of Ďurišin's essays is reversed, perhaps due to an editing error.

9 This includes both fictional and non-fictional works ranging from the predictable reference points (i. e. Fernand Braudel and Predrag Matvejević) and some of the best-known figures of the region (i. e. Orhan Pamuk and Amin Maalouf) to writers whose works circulated less widely outside their national traditions (i. e. the Maltese Oliver Friggeri and the Syrian Hanna Mina).

10 All English translations from the volume (except Gnisci's chapter) are by the present authors.

ideal case study for his vision of world literature. Ďurišin also points out "the potential coexistence of Israeli literature with Polish, Czech, and Austrian cultures, in other words with Central European tendencies"[11] (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 385). Perhaps his most original insight is that "we do not understand Mediterraneanness as an isolated phenomenon only including the Mediterranean coast, but study it in its broadest intra-European connections", and cites the missionaries Cyril and Methodius, who brought Christianity to the Slavs: "The presence of Greek Mediterranean culture in Central Europe on the territory of Great Moravia, that is current-day Slovakia, was also the arrival of Greek, or more precisely Byzantine tendencies in the zone of Western Europe" (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 386).

Gnisci's essay "The Mediterranean as Interliterary Network," which was later published in English in a Canadian volume, begins by alluding to Herodotus and Braudel, as well as Tahar Ben Jelloun's "magic lake": "[D]ifferent ways of thinking historiographically of the Mediterranean have succeeded one another [...] In attempting to think of the Mediterranean literarily, my mind is overwhelmed with images and sketches, and shadows of images" (2005, 261). Gnisci claims that two of Ďurišin's concepts were particularly formative for his own work in the field: the Mediterranean's unique "transcontinentality" and its "interliterary centrism," which offers a "geographically specific test" for the Slovak theorist's "long and magisterial research" on world literature (2005, 263). This is exemplified through Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq's particular use of Arabic that undermines the political and cultural boundaries imposed by both Western imperialism and Ottoman imperialism. His *Leg over Leg* demonstrates Gnisci's claim that "[e]verything slides in the Mediterranean. The South under the North, the West over the East, the center towards the periphery" (Gnisci 2005, 264). As Jeffrey Sacks notes, al-Shidyāq's work is "both about and of language" (2015, 92) and he concurs with Mattityahu Peled's observation that "peculiarities of language appear to be the essence of [*Leg over Leg*]" (1985, 31). Al-Shidyāq offers a vision of world literature, as Johnson suggests, in which one cannot draw a clear-cut boundary between a hegemonic center and a marginalized periphery. All languages that are used in the region have the potential to make visible its multilingual and transcontinental character and to become the basis of a minor Mediterranean text, but Arabic writing in the late Ottoman period serves as a particularly rich example. Ďurišin and Gnisci's

11 In his acceptance speech for the Jerusalem Prize in 1984, published in *The Art of the Novel* (1988), Milan Kundera similarly extends the interliterary borders of Central Europe to the Mediterranean: "[The] great Jewish figures have always shown an exceptional feeling for a supranational Europe—a Europe conceived not as territory but as culture [...] Israel, their little homeland finally regained, strikes me as the true heart of Europe—a peculiar heart located outside the body" (Kundera 1988, 157).

Mediterranean framework reveals the processes, such as translation and hybridization, that can be found in al-Shidyāq's *Leg over Leg*.

3 Al-Shidyāq's *Leg over Leg* from the Minor to the Interliterary Mediterranean

Arabic has constituted a key component of the Mediterranean interliterary community for centuries, and during this time, different political projects have wanted to lay their claim to this language for their particular cultural vision. For example, Arabic language and literature played a key role in the constitution of Ottoman imperialism, and Arabic itself possessed a cultural prestige due to its sacred function as the language of Islam and its rich classical heritage. Furthermore, a considerable percentage of Ottoman vocabulary came from Arabic, and Arab poets and their works constituted a key component of the Ottoman cultural canon that many members of the imperial intelligentsia upheld (Arslan 2019). The study of Arabic among nineteenth-century Western scholars was concurrent with the rise of Western imperialism, and the nineteenth century also witnessed the Arab cultural "awakening," in which the Arabic language played a fundamental role (Suleiman 2003, 161).

The scarcity of works that reassess Arabic or Ottoman texts within a Mediterranean framework stems partly from the prevalent assumption that the Arab or Ottoman world is not a maritime culture. Numerous thinkers such as Hegel have associated Islamic civilizations with aridity (symbolizing oppression) and Europe with the Mediterranean (symbolizing freedom and open-mindedness), but the Ottoman Empire had a much more robust political and military presence in the Mediterranean than what historians previously assumed (Wick 2016 and Brummett 1993). The Ottomans controlled all the eastern and much of the southern Mediterranean, as well as a part of its northern coast, for centuries, and the Mediterranean was not simply perceived as a potential object of conquest for the Islamic world; for instance, the sea also played a key role in the constitution of Ottoman cultural identity (Haliloğlu 2017).

Gnisci notes that Ďurišin's work provides an image of the Mediterranean as a net with "numerous, simultaneous, but also successive or at least co-present centres", which contests any political vision that wants to turn the Mediterranean into a basin with "a single radiating centre" (2005, 263). As the Slovak Turkologist Xénia Celnarová explains: "Thanks to the fact that Ottoman Turkish became, after Arabic and Persian, the third universal means of communication in the Islamic world, its literary production found recipients not only within the Ottoman state but also be-

yond its borders, specifically in the Arabic lands of the Mediterranean regions" (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 323). Like Arabic literature or Ottoman literature in general, the work of Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq is usually not considered within a Mediterranean framework, with the exception of a few scholars (Starkey 2008). Critics have paid more attention to the difficulty of categorizing al-Shidyāq's text *Al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq fī mā huwa al-Fāriyāq (Leg over Leg or the Turtle in the Tree concerning the Fāriyāq, What Manner of Creature Might He Be* 1855) which carries characteristics of autobiography, travelogue, satire, and novel (Rastegar 2007, 103). It describes the life and travels of the character al-Fāriyāq (whose name is a combination of "Fāris" and "Shidyāq"), whose story displays significant parallels with al-Shidyāq's life.[12] Although al-Shidyāq was raised as a Maronite Christian (later converting to Islam), his work is not an example of a minor Mediterranean literature simply because it was composed by a member of a minority community, but instead because of his narrator's frequent comparison of languages, which undermines the authority of the "imperial center" of the Ottoman Empire. His experience was truly "transcontinental," since he lived around all three sides of the Mediterranean both within and beyond the Ottoman realms: Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Malta, Egypt, France, Tunis, and Istanbul.

Al-Shidyāq's use of Arabic renders *Leg over Leg* to be what Megan C. MacDonald has called a *navette* or shuttle that ultimately gives rise to a particular vision of the transcontinental Mediterranean. MacDonald has analyzed Salah Guemriche's bilingual French-Arabic dictionary, *Dictionnaire des mots français d'origine arabe* (Dictionary of French Words of Arabic Origin, 2007), which includes Arabic expressions that have become incorporated into the French language over centuries. She argues that this dictionary, including the preface that Assia Djebar wrote for it, reveals "a particularly trans-Mediterranean geographic space," as it functions as a shuttle which brings together "textures and tissues of sometimes disparate texts and languages" (MacDonald 2013, 58, 59). MacDonald thus demonstrates that this dictionary "defamiliarize[s] sites and linguistic archives thought to be familiar, in order to make them new spaces" (2013, 60).

Indeed, al-Fāriyāq often boasts of his mastery of Arabic; for example, he creates lists of Arabic words that end with the letter *dāl* and claims that all these words are related to "hardness, strength, and force" (2013, 1, 11). At the same time, there are moments in *Leg over Leg* that expose his sense of insecurity in regard to language. He complains about the difficulty of learning new grammar rules in Arabic (2013, 1, 171) and notes that "[t]he pen has refused to obey [his] com-

12 In the discussion below, "al-Shidyāq" will be used to refer to the author and "al-Fāriyāq" for his narrator, although there is naturally some overlap between the two.

mand" (2013, 2, 295). Furthermore, wherever he goes throughout his travels, al-Fāriyāq always carries with him *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (Comprehensive Dictionary) by al-Fīrūzābādī (1329–1414/1415). When he provides a long list of words, he asks readers to consult the earlier dictionary to find the actual definition of these expressions, leaving the impression that once he loses al-Fīrūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs*, he can easily lose the sense of authority and mastery that he conveys when he writes about Arabic.

Guattari and Deleuze claim that "each language always implies a deterritorialization of the mouth, the tongue, and the teeth" (1986, 19). Al-Fāriyāq also complains about how people make language mistakes as they cannot pronounce Arabic correctly because they "misuse" their mouth, tongue, and teeth. He himself confronts communities, such as what he calls "people of the ship" ("*aṣḥāb al-safīna*") who deterritorialize Arabic language through their wrong pronunciations: "God destroy these louts! They live in our country for years and still can't pronounce our language properly. They pronounce *s* with a vowel before it as *z*, and the palatal letters and others are a lost cause for them, despite which we don't laugh at them" (2013, 2, 62–63). Later, al-Fāriyāq notes that while people in Damascus speak eloquent Arabic, people in Aleppo, who live close "to the lands of the Turks," use many Turkish words in their Arabic: "[T]hey say *anjaq bi-yikfī* ('it's barely enough'), articulating the *j* in *anjaq* as though it were the Turkish *jīm*, *yitqallanu* meaning 'he uses it,' *khōsh khuy*, and so on, and all this on top of their strange-sounding dialect and the foreign-tinged accent with which they pronounce Arabic words" (2014, 3, 287).[13] Kamran Rastegar argues that al-Shidyāq puts a strong emphasis on his mastery of Arabic language to compensate for a sense of subjugation and displacement that he feels due to various factors such as the rise of Western imperialism and the unjust treatment that he and his brother received from the church clergy (2007, 107). Al-Fāriyāq may want to reinforce the impression that he is an authority on the Arabic language, but his text suggests that he has no strict control over it, as he confronts the deterritorialization of Arabic within the translingual character of the Mediterranean.

According to al-Fāriyāq, he never understood why Turks have established a political hegemony and even claim to be superior to Arabs. Instead, he suggests that Arabs are clearly superior because their language is superior, as it is also the language of Prophet Muhammad, the caliphs, and the Qur'an. He even claims that *all* scholars of Islam are Arabs, and writes: "I think, though, that most Turks are un-

13 The Arabic source text neither italicizes the terms anjaq or khōsh khuy nor puts a quotation mark around them to emphasize that they are foreign expressions. Therefore, these expressions also become incorporated into al-Fāriyāq's Arabic, giving the impression that they no longer stand as corrupt, foreign borrowings (2014, 3, 286).

aware of these facts and believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say *şöyle böyle* ('thus and so') and *bakalım kapalım* ('let's see-bee')," followed by a string of meaningless phrases interspersed with Turkish words (2013, 2, 49). While al-Shidyāq took a strong pride in his mastery of the Arabic language, he confronted the global political and cultural hegemony of Western Europe. As Abdelfattah Kilito (2017) points out, al-Fāriyāq, like Shidyāq himself, had to learn another language, English, which came at the expense of starting to forget Arabic and even experience a sense of estrangement from it.

Just as Turkish was required for finding employment in the Ottoman bureaucracy, French was necessary in the colonial system. For example, al-Fāriyāq recites a panegyric poem for the governor of Tunis, as classical Arab poets often composed works with the hope that they would be rewarded with money, gifts, and even job opportunities. The governor appreciates al-Fāriyāq's poem; however, he does not hire him because of his lack of knowledge of French (Kilito 2017, 71). Once again, al-Fāriyāq sees that the superior virtues of Arabic do not necessarily help him in economic advancement in a Mediterranean that has become incorporated into global capitalist networks. However much he may emphasize the glory of Arabs and Arabic, he ultimately has to come to terms with the fact that the achievements he boasts of took place a long ago, "in the age of caliphs." He has "no choice but to envision the future of the Arabs in Europe's present" (Kilito 2017, 85).

Although intellectuals of Arab cultural nationalism such as Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī (1847–1906) believed that "language and nation are two sides of the same coin" (Suleiman 2003, 99), *Leg over Leg* demonstrates that the Arabic language cannot remain under the control of a single ethnic or national community, affirming Ďurišin's claim that "the interliterary, hence supranational, perspective for the literary process becomes the basis for a generalization that is oriented toward the definition of the ultimate literary community—world literature" (Ďurišin and Gnisci 2000, 382). Arabic was the language in which many books in Paris, such as al-Shidyāq's *Leg over Leg*, and newspapers in Istanbul, such as his *al-Jawā'ib*, were published. The dissemination of published works from different parts of the Mediterranean further undermines the perception of Arabic as the sole property of a particular national or ethnic community. Al-Shidyāq witnessed the transition from scribal technologies to the wider use of the printing press (Rastegar 2007, 109). He criticizes Orientalist professors in France who publish works in Arabic, and chastises them for claiming that their mistakes are mere typographical errors. At the same time, he places the final responsibility for his text on his own publisher: "Do you not observe that M. Perrault, of Rue de Castellane, 15, Paris, *even though he knows nothing about the Arabic language*, has followed with the utmost care our instructions in terms of corrections and changes and gone to great lengths to compose the letters correctly and produce an excellent piece of printing, so

much so that he has come up, praise God, with the best thing ever printed in our language in Europe?" (2014, 4, 483; emphasis ours). New printing technologies give a Parisian publisher the opportunity to "come up with" the best Arabic work in Europe (*Leg over Leg* itself) which further contributes to the deterritorialization of the Arabic language.

4 Conclusion

Ďurišin's concept of interliterary communities can help theorists of Mediterranean literature in engaging with the "connectivity and fragmentation" identified by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell as defining features of ancient and medieval Mediterranean history (2000, 5). For example, Edwige Tamalet Talbayev has recently adopted a transcontinental approach for literary works from the Maghreb in order to move beyond the typical readings of these works as a representation of a clash between the French metropole and the Maghreb periphery, and instead demonstrates the deep imbrication of the Maghreb with diverse parts of the Mediterranean (2017). Doing away with the metropole/periphery dynamics as the sole model for studying Mediterranean literature does not mean romanticizing the Mediterranean as a cosmopolitan coexistence of different cultures. One can point out the connective networks that characterize the Mediterranean without overlooking the "darker hues" that also shape it (Talbayev 2017, 192). Furthermore, mapping out literary networks of the Mediterranean is fundamental and yet not sufficient for understanding the Mediterranean interliterary community. As Marko Juvan has also observed, Ďurišin pays attention to creative adaptations and formations of minor literatures. Therefore, his theory of the interliterary Mediterranean can also resonate with more recent works by critics, such as Yasser Elhariry (2017), who also pays attention to issues of language and aesthetics rather than solely to representations of political and historical events in works of Mediterranean literature. Critics of Mediterranean literature can examine the particular uses of a language in a single text for fleshing out both the fragmentation and connectivity between the minor and the interliterary Mediterranean.

Finally, Ďurišin sees no fundamental difference between Mediterranean literature and world literature in terms of their character, and claims that both feature similar dynamics, with world literature being the "final interliterary association" (2012, 158). Gnisci notes that for Ďurišin, "the Mediterranean area is both historically and culturally, from the artistic literary point of view, a central and concrete representation, a kind of living model of 'world literature'" (2005, 261). As Ďurišin himself puts it, the Mediterranean "allows us to see world literature in action" (2012, 152). Due to its uniquely tricontinental character that gives rise to intense

cultural cross-fertilizations, the interliterary Mediterranean is the ideal milieu for comparatists to study world literature.

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