

2 The simultaneity of the non-simultaneous

The global dimensions of Middle Eastern literature (esp. in the nineteenth century)

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This chapter: Chapter 1 showed that, since the middle of the nineteenth century, newly emerged subjectivity in the Arab world went through two main phases: an early one, characterised by self-awareness but still little self-confidence, and a second one in which emerged subjectivity, now matured, began to feel prepared to leave the safe haven of the old Ottoman Empire to start into a new life of national independence. Moreover, we saw that these two phases, the specificity of the Arab(ic) case notwithstanding, also seemed to share features of a more general nature with periods *outside* the Arab world, features that let them appear, and made them describable, as specifications of common *global* developments. This led us to the discovery of “reproductionist” traits (shared with global “Reproductionism” as described by Walter Falk), in the first phase, and more “creativist” aspects (shared with Falk’s global “Creativism”), at the later stage.

The present chapter – originally written almost two decades earlier than the article reproduced in Chapter 1 – takes up and elaborates on several of these same ideas. The overall question is the periodisation of Middle Eastern literary (and other) history and the adequacy and ethics of periodisational terminology.

Let us take the term *Nahḍa* as an example. Used as such, in its Arabic form, as a technical term of Middle Eastern cultural history, it suggests an Arab(ic) idiosyncrasy, something rather specific, peculiar to the Arab world, a period with a temporality of its own. Such an Arab(ic) *Nahḍa* may be compared to the Turkish *Tanzīmāt* or contemporary phenomena in the West, but the choice of an Arabic term would still suggest Arab(ic) specificity. If we, on the other hand, decide to use English terms, like “Renaissance”, “Enlightenment”, or “Modernism”/“Modernity”, we insinuate identity, or at least similarity, with periods of Western cultural history, conjuring up an association of the *Nahḍa* with phenomena from so different periods of European cultural history as the sixteenth, eighteenth, or twentieth centuries, respectively. This sounds strange, but is the *Nahḍa* not comparable to *any* of these? And couldn’t we also speak of the *Nahḍa* as the Arabs’ ‘*Tanzīmāt*’ or of the *Tanzīmāt* as an Ottoman-Turkish ‘*Nahḍa*’? Of course, we could, given that the Arab(ic) *Nahḍa* shares many traits with the Ottoman *Tanzīmāt*, just as it also displays a lot of features that we know from all

the other periods of European cultural history mentioned above. But specialists of the Nahḍa, the Tanẓīmāt, Renaissance, Enlightenment, or Modernism will be quick to protest. Equating the Nahḍa with the other periods is wrong, they will say, it distorts, or even betrays, the significance of established periodisational terminology, because there are at least as many differences between the Nahḍa and the other periods as there are communalities between them. Thus, the price we pay for what we gain by using existing terminology taken from different times and regions – namely, insight into similar traits – is high: we lose as much as we gain. On the other hand, if we refrain from a comparison of the Nahḍa with phenomena from outside the Arab(ic) cultural sphere, the Arab(ic) case seems to remain somehow singular, ‘suspended in the air’, uncomparable to movements or tendencies observable in other cultures.

How then can we account, in terms of periodisational terminology, for the fact that the Arab(ic) Nahḍa is at the same time similar to *and* different from the Tanẓīmāt, the Renaissance, the period of Enlightenment, et cetera, that it has a temporality of its own but takes place simultaneously with events *outside* the Arab world and displays many features that give proof of its ‘modernity’, it’s contemporaneity with ‘global’ movements of its time?

While most of the chapters of the present volume will focus exclusively on the Arab(ic) case, this Chapter 2 reminds us of the benefits of keeping in mind the *simultaneity* of what may seem non-simultaneous (due to the use of periodisational terminology the meaning of which has been pre-defined by its usage for phenomena from different temporal and cultural contexts).

While it seems more confusing than helpful, and also discriminating, if not humiliating, to transfer terms generally used for much *earlier* European periods over to an Arab(ic) context – to call the Nahḍa an Arab(ic) ‘Renaissance’ or ‘Enlightenment’ suggests its lagging behind the corresponding developments in Europe by a century or more –, approaches following Samuel Eisenstadt’s idea of “multiple modernities” seem to be more promising, and also more adequate, doing justice to the fact that both the Nahḍa and the Tanẓīmāt, as well as simultaneous movements in Europe, all are ‘modernities’, each giving its specific answer to the challenges of a world that has started to change radically from the late sixteenth, early seventeenth centuries onwards, that is, the beginning of Modern Times. Each civilisation comes with its own cultural signifiers, but the signified – modernity – is basically identical for all.

However, Falk’s approach – which will be recurred on, or at least referred to, in several of the chapters that are to follow here – goes a step further. It refrains even from the terms ‘modernity’ or ‘Modern Times’, although these would help us to conceive of the Nahḍa as of an Arab(ic) form of a more global multi-

ple modernity. Falk thinks that ‘modernity’ or ‘Modern Times’ not only are still too Eurocentrist to serve as suitable terms for global periods, but also much too unspecific – they cover several centuries of cultural history, and in this way include many periods as their sub-periods, and they tell us little about the actual character of the respective periods of a synchronised “global time” (*Weltzeit* in German).

This is why he decided to create a new periodisational terminology, one that is both culturally neutral and more telling with regard to the specific meanings of the chosen terms. While regarding the *Nahḍa* as a ‘modern’ period allows us to see parallels between Arab(ic) and European ‘modernities’ in general, Falk’s terminology helps us to differentiate “reproductionist” and “creativist” phases within the *Nahḍa* that run parallel to simultaneous reproductionist and creativist phases in other cultural spheres that share with them the same framework of global time. And the terms “Reproductionism” and “Creativism” are more precisely defined than the rather unspecific term ‘modernity’.

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2.1 Introduction

The following contribution is a plea for a new way of ‘reading’ the history of how Middle Eastern literatures have evolved since the nineteenth century.¹ I would outline my main thesis as follows:

It appears to me to be possible to generally describe the processes at work in the literary history of modern Middle Eastern literatures, at least to a certain degree, as a set of particularisations of contemporary *global*² developments. I am convinced that (a) this is the case already since the beginning of the nineteenth century at the latest (and not just since the last few decades of the 20th), and that (b) it is *grosso modo* also possible to place these literatures in *direct* synchrony with the main currents of ‘great’ Western literatures (and not in lagging, staggered phases). This means that these literatures, *despite* manifold and at times very distinct differences in their external appearance, were always just as ‘modern’ as Western literatures, were always ‘up-to-date’, not just with their

¹ For the moment, my starting point are the Arabic and Turkish literature of this period. On the issue of generalisation, see below.

² With the term “global” I am referring to the regions wherein “universal time” operates and holds its validity (see below).

own specific temporalities but with that of ‘universal time’ (*Weltzeit*, a term coined by W. Eberhard). Underpinning this assertion is the assumption that there is a “multilinguism” of modernity (Schulze 2000, 6), one in which “the European dialect of modernity is merely one of many cultural dialects of modernity” (ibid.).

Within the confines of the space available here it is of course impossible from the outset to provide comprehensive theoretical and textual support for this thesis. Nevertheless, I hope to be able to give some convincing arguments and indications that will show that this thesis is not fully without substance.

I view the relevance of my thesis for the problematic dealt with in this volume³ as being concentrated in three points:

- *Interculturality and Interaction*: It is my view that the concepts ‘interculturality’ and ‘interaction’ are only suitable for describing so-called ‘genetic’ relations between literatures, i.e., those springing forth from *direct* exchange. They are not useful for grasping parallels that emerge *without* directly exerted influence or interaction. We can also only operate with the term ‘intertextuality’ in a limited way in these cases. In addition, as it is employed today, the prefix *inter-* suggests a reciprocity, a giving and taking performed by *both* sides (whereas between the modern Middle Eastern and Western literatures reception occurred mainly in one single direction – Western literatures hardly took any notice of developments in their Middle Eastern counterparts). Furthermore, whenever we view a phenomenon under the aspect of ‘interculturality’ – ‘culture’ understood here as a sign system – our interest is normally more directed towards the signified than towards the signifiers; or, ‘culture’ understood as ‘language’, we are more concerned with the level of *parole* than with that of *langue*. Taking part in modernity is, however, independent of signifiers; the same signified can be expressed in different cultures through different signifiers. As I will attempt to show, the alterity of phenomena of literary cultures does not exclude participation in the same kind of (or at least very similar) processes: time did not pass, nor does it pass, any slower in the ‘Orient’, nor in line with another framework, even if it appears to be different or the hands of the clocks are supposed to move anti-clockwise – what is measured and displayed is a *Weltzeit*, universal time.

3 [The “volume” referred to here is *Crossings and Passages in Genre and Culture*, ed. C. Szyska and F. Pannewick (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), where this chapter was first published as an article.]

- *Intertextuality*: The present essay would like to place for once the temporal dimension in the concept of ‘intertextuality’ at the centre of attention and heighten sensitivity for the problem of periodisation as an important aspect in intertextuality (understood in the broad sense of a relationship between systems of texts).
- *Genre*: Closely tied to the concept of ‘modernity’, characterising an epoch and in this way directly addressing the issue of periodisation, are the concepts of genre. Above all the ‘novel’, as the ‘modern’ genre *par excellence*, has until now frequently been seen as a Western invention that then ‘spread’ further. However, the idea of the global nature of literary history processes, and so also of modernity, demands a modification of this notion.

I will first offer a short sketch of how I have reached this thesis, namely through a comparison between two national literatures. Then I will follow with my arguments for a rethink and, to conclude, offer some thoughts on the possible consequences such a rethinking may generate on various levels.

2.2 Starting point: two Middle Eastern literatures compared

A comparative view of the history of Arabic and (Ottoman) Turkish novels, such as I have pursued for some time now,⁴ brings to light countless shared features in the most divergent of areas – despite the particularities which certainly do exist and shall in no way be denied. From the profusion of congruences I will present just a few examples, concentrating on the nineteenth century, the main focus of our interest because it is commonly depicted as the age when modernity began ‘belatedly’ in the ‘Orient’.

Correspondence (in the depiction) of the general lines of development from the nineteenth century to the present. A look at standard references of ‘national’ literary history shows that similar periods marked by similar breaks are employed when describing the development of both Arabic as well as Turkish literature(s) during the last one and a half centuries. One model (Ostle 1991) establishes three “ages” (also considered applicable to Persian literature): 1850–1914; 1914–1950; and from 1950 onwards. In the meantime, a further break located around 1980 would also probably find general agreement. All the histories of ‘modern’ literature in the Middle East that I am familiar with locate the start of

⁴ [The result of this “pursuit” was my post-doctoral thesis, published in 2003 under the title *Brückenschläge* (Building Bridges); see Bibliography.]

literary modernity in the region with translations of and adaptations from works written in European languages, and all view the nineteenth century in the first instance as a period of *reception* of European patterns (Ostle's model thus entitles the entire era prior to the First World War as "The Age of Translation and Adaptation"). In both literatures the new prose genres and theatre begin to develop during this period. Overall the nineteenth century is portrayed for both literatures with little internal division. For Arabic narrative prose hardly any break is seen until around 1900, for the Turkish around 1880, if at all – but even here this break only marks the rise of the first 'more mature' local works produced by authors 'better versed' in their craft, and for which the preceding decades had served as it were as an apprenticeship. It is the common view of historians of both Arabic and Turkish literature that the 'immaturity' of the bulk of literature in this first phase is mainly due to its didactic nature (it is largely used as a medium for enlightenment and moral instruction as well as for propagating reformist ideas) and its entertainment character (so as to be able to keep up and survive in an age of increased competition in the arena of the private press, which had become the main medium for the new generation of authors, there was pressure to adapt to the taste of a broad public who longed for adventure, romance and detective novels and their shallow, sensational and sentimental distraction; hence, a great deal of European, mainly French, serial novels were translated and/or adapted – in both Arabic and Turkish often the same authors, even the same works –, and in this way many of their own creations rely far more on the 'low', popular narrative traditions as on the 'high' aesthetic style of classical prose). So as to counter a decay into populism, a number of authors emphasise anew the character of literature as *art*; some of them argue (albeit from time to time with certain concessions) in favour of maintaining the highly rhetoricised, and hence elitist, traditional style; others propagate an increased orientation towards Western models considered high quality in terms of their content and narrative techniques. As a whole, the first phase presents itself as a "lutte entre les deux courants 'occidentalisant' et 'orientalisant' (= conservateur)" (so Akyüz 1964, 509, for the Turkish) or, somewhat more differentiated, as an age in which four directions critical of the still prevailing old tradition are formed, "emotionalism, naturalism, neo-classicism and rationalism" (Hamarnéh 1998, 231, for the Arabic). Following the usual historical accounts, modernism, and with it also the *courant occidentalisant*, ultimately beats concurring 'traditional' leanings. In Turkey, the works of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group (1896–1901) are considered to be the definitive turning point,⁵ in Arabic litera-

5 Cf. Akyüz 1964, 509: "La littérature turque a, en effet, acquis, à la fin de cette période assez

ture Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's *Ḥadīth 'Īsā b. Hishām*, published at around the same time (1898 ff.), is generally seen as the “swan-song of classical literature” (Brockelmann/Pellat 1986, 113). Between the turn of the century and the First World War both literatures then develop quite similar conceptions for the creation of a “national literature” (Ar. *adab qawmī*, Turk. *millî edebiyât*).⁶ In both instances, national literature orientates itself formally on Western models; at the same time, however, it calls for authentic themes and local characters and settings. Furthermore, this national literature is at first seen in connection with the national uprisings and struggles for independence from Western subordination, and advocated with patriotic enthusiasm. Ostle lets the second main phase in the history of modern Middle Eastern literatures begin with this ‘romantic nationalism’. After the disillusionment in the first years of independence, in the interwar period, an increasingly critical realism develops, one aimed at the ruling powers but also self-critical. During and after the Second World War this critical realism then turns into ‘social criticism’. In contrast to ‘Romanticism’,⁷ in which the problems facing individuals (repeatedly an alter ego of the educated author) in a backward society stand in the foreground, the scope of social realism of both literatures opens up so as to include more general problems, the reason why longer texts now frequently seek to present panoramas of the whole of society. Even when now and then characterised by differing emphasis,⁸ social realism becomes dominant from the 1950s onwards, although ‘Neo-Romantic’ currents come to life in both. From around the middle of the 1960s realism in both literatures experiences its first crisis: the view of reality held until now is questioned in so far as there no longer appears to be anything solid, secure or constant. Having completely lost their bearings, authors now seek to find new ground under their feet. Together with the prevailing political conditions the dominant literature with its mimetic approach is condemned and discarded.

courte, mais pleinement consacrée à une activité intense et dynamique, un caractère exclusivement occidental, tant par son contenu que par sa technique”. [For an example of the literature of this group – Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's *Aşk-ı Memnu* – and for a discussion of the ‘place’ of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group in literary history, see below, Chapter 18.]

6 [See above, Chapter 1, end of introductory section “This chapter”, where the shift to a literature of independent nations is seen in relation to Walter Falk's “Creativist” period.]

7 The term ‘Romanticism’ is used above all in the context of Arabic literature (e.g. for Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān or Muşţafā Luţfī al-Manfalūṭī); but there are also corresponding currents in Turkish literature [see, e.g., below, Chapters 15 and 19.3. on R. N. Güntekin's *Çalıkuşu*].

8 In Arabic literature rural themes are certainly taken up; by and large, however, the novels continue to be set in the big cities. In contrast, a so-called “village literature” (*köy edebiyatı*) develops in Turkish literature.

The literature of ‘New Sensibility’⁹ or ‘New Inwardness’¹⁰ go beyond the established socially-critical realism by incorporating into their concept of realism new, previously ignored and often also hushed up *other* realities, ones placed under a taboo, including those from dreams and myths. Writing assumes extremely innovative, avant-garde, experimental features, at times entering the surreal and the fantastic. Into the 1970s writing nevertheless still has a political function for many intellectuals: they believe that they are able to ‘bring about change’, to ‘get somewhere’ with their causes.¹¹ Since around 1980, however, a general abstinence from commitment to social criticism or a political cause is evident both in Turkey and Arab countries. In both cases this stems from a radically deconstructionist attitude that frequently includes the loss of individual identity, i.e., the destruction of the self, the basis for blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction, if not at times abolishing them completely.¹² – A rapid survey of 150 years of literary history can of course only mark the most general lines of development and indicate Arabo-Turkish correspondences. And yet, even when we ‘zoom in’ somewhat closer, congruences can still be found in the most divergent of aspects. A few random examples, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century, may suffice to illustrate this:

Genre hierarchy: In both Arabic and Turkish literature, narrative prose only slowly gained the status of recognised ‘literature’. Prior to that, poetry and a poeticised (i.e., highly rhetoricised and embellished) prose alone could claim to possess the qualities of good literature, while story-telling was regarded merely as a popular “folk activity” (Cachia 1990, 105). To abandon decorative language was at first almost unthinkable, it would have been something almost obscene.¹³ Later, the function of the ‘elegant’ style altered: “The demands of style were not forgotten, but the effects now sought were not ornamental but emotional”, writes Cachia (1990, 105), formulating one of the most important shifts to occur in the transition to modern literature. Parallel to this shift, the “loss of poetic value sedimented in form” incurred by the transition to prose was compensated

⁹ *ḥassāsiyya jadida*: an expression from Edward al-Kharrāṭ (and already prior to him Ṣabri Ḥafīz) referring to Arabic literature.

¹⁰ *Neue Innerlichkeit*: Kappert 1985, 642 f., for Turkish literature.

¹¹ Cf. the designation of the third main phase (since 1950) as “The Age of Ideology and Polarization” in Ostle 1991.

¹² For a survey of Arabic and Turkish fiction under this specific aspect cf. my “Individuality lost, fun gained”, i.e., Guth 2007a.

¹³ For the Turkish context, cf., e.g., Dino 1960, 572–3: “Le dépouillement des termes [...] choque l’écrivain turc; cette nudité, pour ainsi dire, du mot, il lui faut l’habiller, la rendre présentable à son public”.

for by dealing with “particularly ‘poetic’ material” (Wilpert 1979, s.v. “Roman”), like love, the blows of destiny, etc.¹⁴ Gradually, poetry lost its reputation, and among the novelists ‘populists’ became differentiated from ‘artists’ (see below). The novel and the short story prised themselves free from the forms they were previously closely tied to (traditional autochthonous genres such as *hikâye*, *risâla*, *maqâma*, but also the essayistic *maqâla* / (*baş*) *makale*).

The role of the author: The authors of the nineteenth century in Arab regions as well as in the core countries of the Ottoman Empire saw themselves as enlighteners whose task it was to reform society, as ‘engineers’ who had the knowledge to repair the broken ‘social structure’ (*al-hay’a al-ijtimâ’iyya*), or ‘doctors’ who could cure the ‘body’ of this society from ‘diseases’. Here, prose became the main means of expression for the ‘teachers of the nation’.

Social contexts: Within the changing literary landscape of the nineteenth century, each of the existing genres can be ascribed to a specific social group in both the Arabic and Turkish domains. Generally speaking, in both cases prose stands for a stratum of society that had been educated in the institutions newly created in the first decades of the nineteenth century and were now working in the new ‘secular’ institutions.

Moreover, Arabic-Turkish correspondence extends even to the *smallest details* in a countless number of cases. For example, there are heroes with almost identical profiles; there are almost identical character constellations, basic plot structures, thematic and stylistic congruencies, and so on. And these are not just congruencies between ‘freely floating’ elements; they also fulfil at the same time the same functions within the whole, i.e., they are systemic congruents.¹⁵ (This is important, for in order to assign two texts or literatures to one and the same period, they must fulfil the condition of systemic congruence because periods are *systems* of meaning (whose components interrelate in a specific way).)

Based on these and many other features shared by Arabic and Turkish literature over more than one and a half centuries, it appears possible, and indeed also very meaningful, to view both histories of the novel as belonging together.

¹⁴ Original German: “die Einbuße an dichterischer Werthaltigkeit in der Form [...] durch besonders ‘poetische’ Stoffe auszugleichen”.

¹⁵ Cf. in this regard my individual case studies: Guth 1994 (juxtaposing Orhan Pamuk’s *Sessiz Ev*, written 1980–83, published 1983, and ‘Abduh Gubayr’s *Tahrîk al-qalb*, written 1977–79, published 1982), Guth 1996 (comparing Şun’allah İbrâhîm’s *al-Lajna*, 1981, and Orhan Pamuk’s *Kara Kitap*, 1990), and Guth 2000 (R. N. Güntekin’s *Çalığışu*, 1922, and M. H. Haykal’s *Zaynab*, 1913). – [For a large-scale study of Arabic-Turkish parallels, cf. my postdoctoral thesis, *Brückenschläge* (Building Bridges) = Guth 2003b.]

It goes without saying that this does not mean that viewing them as individual literatures, with their respective specificity and ‘individuality’, is no longer meaningful and necessary. It only means that, on an overarching level, a level *above* the ideo-syncretasies of ‘national’ literatures, there is obviously a level of more general and not less real facts and relations that are worth considering, not just due to their abundance, but also because of their higher degree of general validity. This is indispensable precisely also for the individual national-philological perspectives: the features and contours of the specific can, after all, be thoroughly and deeply understood only in their relationship to something general against which it strives to contrast itself and stand out.

2.3 How general are the shared features?

The question that arises at this point is: what precisely is the nature of the level we have arrived at by abstracting the specific features of the individual ‘national’ literatures, and which degree of general validity have we reached on this level? Is the evidence gathered only valid for the – obviously closely related – pair of Arabic and Turkish literatures, or is it also applicable to other literatures, and if so, to which?

One assumption seems to suggest itself immediately here: features shared by Arabic and Turkish literary history might be describable as the result of a belonging of both to the literary tradition of a larger *region* where all pertinent members share the multi-faceted heritage (political, economic, social, cultural, historical, etc.).¹⁶ We would then be dealing with a literary-cultural unit which is determined territorially by the borders of the Ottoman Empire (incl. its Arab provinces) resp. those of its successor states and whose specific nature must be explainable through exclusively Arabo-Turkish conditions not shared with any other literature. This seems to make little sense, however, for even a fleeting view of the development of modern *Persian* literature shows that here, too, many similarities are to be noted, similarities which run temporally parallel:¹⁷ Poetry and the poeticising style were first of all dominant here as well; here, too,

¹⁶ Until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire other forms of influence, contact and relations between authors or groups may also be considered. From 1923 at the latest, however, a so-called ‘genetic’ comparison is no longer tenable, and even before 1923 it seems more accurate to interpret these similarities ‘typologically’ and rather than ‘genetically’.

¹⁷ For information on modern Persian literature see, in addition to the entry mentioned in the next footnote, the two short surveys by Rahnama 1988/92, esp. 534–6, and Haag-Higuchi 2001. – For more detailed surveys, cf. Meisami 1991 and Katouzian 1991.

'modern' prose literature developed from a complex background of traditional 'folk' narrative, other forms of 'higher' literary prose that flourished in the nineteenth century, and translations from European languages; here, too, does the 'vernacular' become accepted gradually as part of literature after initially only finding hesitant use; here, too, was a 'national literature' movement demanding a literature close to the common people and speaking the "language of the everyday and about the everyday" (Krüger 1974, 41), and a subsequent phase of disillusionment with the formation of a socially critical realism in the period between the Wars, and so on and so on – congruencies abound, and there is no point in dealing with them in more detail here.

If the characteristics gained through the abstraction from Arabic and Turkish literature are also valid for Persian literature, are we then dealing with a type of literature that we should sensibly call 'pan-Oriental', or at least 'Middle Eastern'?

For sure, such a label would have a *certain* justification, as specific phenomena that in many respects can be explained as results of a joint Middle Eastern literary tradition and a joint 'Islamic' history, cannot be found in literatures that do *not* share this same tradition (e.g., a specific metaphoric language, references to the Koran, common references such as the *Majnūn Laylā* plot, etc.). A further argument which until now was used to explain the difference between a modern Middle Eastern literature and other, in particular European, literatures was its relative 'belatedness': whereas Europe had already passed through the epoch of Enlightenment in the 18th century, the common accounts of Middle Eastern literary history posited a period of 'Enlightenment' in the 'Orient' not before the middle of the nineteenth century; literary Romanticism, in the West a phenomenon of the early nineteenth century, first settled in the 'Orient' at the end of the nineteenth and in early 20th century; European realism first found its eastern 'imitator' three quarters of, or even a whole, century later; etc. Only very recently has this notion of the 'latecomers' constantly 'lagging behind' behind Western 'forerunners' and 'masters' made way for a recognition of equal achievement (mainly based on the 'authenticity' and 'original fantasy' of 'typically Oriental' story-telling).

This view (according to which the Western epochs not only arrived with considerable delay in the 'Orient', but also took place there in temporal compression, condensedly, i.e., much quicker and, on top of everything, mostly understood only superficially and emulated syncretistically) certainly also has a *certain* justification. Many phenomena, including the novelistic genre, did indeed make their debut in the 'Orient' much later than in the West and then showed specific 'hybrid' 'deformations'. And yet, such a view is also quite inad-

equate – in two respects. First, the ‘belatedness’ (as compared to the ‘main literatures’ of the West) and in this context also the replacement of an autochthonous and ‘traditional’ narrative tradition with a ‘modern’, Western-type one, is not specific to Middle Eastern literatures. As *postcolonial studies* have shown, Middle Eastern literatures share this with numerous other literatures from non-European countries whose history has been shaped by colonialism (or quasi-colonialism, as in Turkey). But they also share this with many ‘smaller’ European literatures that developed on the margins (and in the shadow) of the great main literatures, for example with those in the Balkans or in Scandinavia; it has even been claimed that a belatedness of some decades behind the processes at work in the West is the fate of one of the ‘great’ literatures, too – Russian literature. Seen in this light, it appears more meaningful to assign a great portion of the congruencies in Turkish and Arabic literary history not to a ‘Middle Eastern’, but rather to a more general typology of ‘marginal’ literatures, with its own laws of development and periods.

But this view too does not quite do justice to the empirical facts. Traditional comparative literature (that is studies limited to European and Northern American literatures) already makes clear how problematic the construction of an alterity of ‘marginal’ literatures is, for a non-simultaneity of the simultaneous, an anachronism or a hybridisation cannot be stated for all phenomena one encounters when comparing ‘marginal’ to ‘central’ literatures: rather, these literatures participate directly in many developments, without any ‘staggered phases’ behind those of the ‘great’ literatures. Why, then, should this not be the case in the ‘Orient’, too? Is the idea of a belatedness of the ‘Oriental’ literatures not simply due to the persistence of the old ‘Orientalist’ construction of the ‘Orient’ as the ‘Other’? And has this construction of the ‘Orient’ as the essentially ‘Other’ not also obstructed a comparison between not just surface phenomena (= signifiers) but also meanings (= sets of signifieds), i.e., an investigation into their functions within the periods at stake?

2.4 The global dimension

That there could also be a level of participation of Middle Eastern literatures in global developments, from the nineteenth century onwards at least, and *without* staggered phases, appears probable given the simple fact that the Middle East had by then already been closely integrated into global developments *politically*

and *economically* for a long time.¹⁸ And in the spheres of *cultural achievements* and *civilisation*, too, Istanbul or Cairo were hardly lagging behind Paris, London, Berlin or Vienna: one only needs to consider contemporary urban architecture, the parks, the hotels and theatres then built; the opera houses with their almost identical programmes; institutions such as the *café dansant*; or the literary salons. Moreover, Arab and Turkish authors of 'modern' narrative prose also graduated from similar educational institutions in their homeland (or, if they had gone to study in Europe, even the same ones) as their 'Western' colleagues, and in addition to their own 'traditional' literary canon they engaged with and absorbed the same literary canon as their European contemporaries, though perhaps not to the same extent.

Indeed, parallels to the prevailing contemporary conditions in the West are to be found in abundance in the Middle East, not just in the *contexts* shaped by global developments that surrounded literature, but also in the *texts* themselves, both on the surface as well as in their deep structures. That the literature of the 'Orient' is tied into a global discursive community and not so backwardly 'Oriental' and underdeveloped, is, for example, already quite obvious, on the surface level, from the fact that certain fashions are followed as a matter of course. The motif of 'death through consumption', for instance, is found in contemporary Western texts as well as in Turkey and Egypt. The fact that in several works of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* group (end-nineteenth century) a conspicuous number of tragic figures die of tuberculosis made literary critics playfully label the literary production of the group as *verem edebiyatı* "literature of consumption"; and in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913) the title heroine dies – after a long and painful suffering – from this very same illness. Such sentimentalism has until now been smiled at and dismissed as something that contemporary sophisticated literature in the West had long overcome. This may in part be true; yet it should not be overlooked, firstly, that in the literary output of the West during the *fin de siècle* and the period prior to the First World War, there are many highly sentimental, 'emotional' texts that very much 'go to the heart', even among those canonised as 'good' literature. Secondly, all too frequently such judgements are comparing apples with pears. When, for example, a large part of the literature produced by Middle Eastern authors during the second half of the nineteenth century is made up of more or less shallow love, adventure, detective, historical and other novels, above all *entertaining* as well as *moralis-*

¹⁸ Cf. Schulze 1998, where a retelling of Islamic history as part of world history is attempted already from the 16th century onwards ("provisionally" using *Western* periodizational terminology).

ing-edifying, it is wrong to contrast these texts with something more sophisticated and complex in narrative technique from European literature than what they themselves strove to be: namely simply serial novels that did not even claim to be of high literary quality.¹⁹ When the texts which fascinated a mass public in contemporary France or England were translated into Arabic or Turkish or adapted to suit the local conditions, or when such fashions served as orientation for their own production, then the ‘Orient’ was in no way different, for example, to Germany where works that had proven to be best-sellers abroad [such as those by Ch. P. de Kock (1794–1871), F. Soulié (1800–1847), E. Sue (1804–1857), Jules Verne (1828–1905), J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737–1814), father and son A. Dumas (1802–1870 and 1824–1895, respectively), D. Defoe (1660–1731), Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) or Walter Scott (1771–1832)]²⁰ got translated soon after their original publication, and local texts of the same style appeared. And just as it was well known in Germany that these serial novels were not literature of a particularly high quality, they were attached little aesthetic value in the ‘Orient’, too: literary ‘beauty’ was something completely different from this commercial prose. Therefore, either we ascribe modernity also to the ‘Orient’ in this regard, or we must likewise deprive ‘imitators’ such as Germany of their always presupposed modernity.

It is, of course, not necessarily *Western* European literature with which a correspondence has to exist in order to pass as ‘modern’. A motif such as that of the unreflected, merely superficial adoption of Western fashions, equally characteristic of Arabic and Turkish literature of the second half of the nineteenth century (in the one we have the *mutafarnij*, in the other the *alafranga züppe*, both translatable as “Euromanica” or “Euro-Freak”), is naturally not to be found in French, English or German texts. But we only need to look at another ‘great’ literature – Russian – to find the same motif with very similar connotations: at the end of the novel *Oblomov* (1859) by Ivan Goncharov (1812–1891), for exam-

19 Most of the authors understood themselves in the first instance as “public moralists”, a term used by Al-Bagdadi 1999b for the Arab authors; it is, however, just as applicable to Turkish authors. Accordingly, the Ottoman Ahmed Midhat “once denied having written anything ‘which may be called literary.’ He described his goal as having been ‘to address the majority, to illuminate them and to try to be an interpreter for their problems’”: Evin 1983, 81 (with quotations from Kemal Yazgı, *Ahmet Mithat Efendi*, 1940, 24). Cf. also Midhat’s statements on the (non-) artistic character of his work cited in Kudret 1987, i:37–38. – Jurji Zaydān, too, did not regard his historical novels as good literature, in the first place, but rather “sometimes as popularized history [...], sometimes as ‘entertainment’”: Cachia 1990, 83.

20 A survey of the translations of these authors into Turkish can be found in Strauss 1994, into Arabic in Khoury 1965?) and Nuşayr 1990.

ple, the lethargic title hero is compared to the main figure from a contemporary comedy, a figure who is the symbol of “a Russia that has merely donned a Western cloak, but in its inner remains uneducated, unreformed and immovable” (Rothe 1987, 154; my translation). This Russia is characterised by Goncharov in a way similar to how Arab and Turkish reformers of the nineteenth century judge the situation prevailing in *their* countries:

The norms of life were finished and handed down to them [the inhabitants of the small village Oblomovka, the symbol of an idyllic, ideal Russia] by their parents, and they had them, also finished, from the grandfather, and the grandfather from the great-grandfather, with the bequest to keep them just as intact and untouched as the flame of Vesta.

(Gontscharow 1987, 70)²¹

But I wanted to search for indications of the contemporaneity of ‘Oriental’ literatures and their participation in global developments not just on the surface of texts. It needs to be considered – only the construction of the ‘Orient’ as the ‘Other’ had obstructed this thought for so long – that modernity could also possibly express itself differently than in European clothes, that literatures could thus be just as modern *although* they appear in forms taking up autochthonous traditions, utilise other styles and thus ‘speak another language’.

Here is not the place to deal with the basis of the methodological approach I regard as being the most helpful in providing convincing proof of congruencies in the way how life is experienced and perceived as ‘meaningful’ in any given period. Nevertheless, it is a fact that an application of the so-called *componential analysis*,²² developed by the late Walter Falk (Marburg, †2000), on Arabic and Turkish texts repeatedly allows us to recognise their affiliation to the same systems of meaning referred to by contemporary European texts. This is not just the case for more recent times,²³ and not just for the 20th century (cf. Falk 1984; see also Guth 1994), but rather, as I have been able to show on a number of test cases, also for the nineteenth century.²⁴ One example may suffice to illustrate this.

²¹ Russian: *Norma žizni byla gotova i prepodana im roditeljami, a te prinjali eë, tože gotovuju, ot deduški, a deduška ot prededuški, s zavetom bljusti eë celost' i neprikosnovennost', kak ogon' Vesty.*

²² The theory's ‘classical’ manual is Falk 1983 (new ed. 1996).

²³ Cf. my “Individuality lost, fun gained” [Guth 2007a] (on some recurrent motifs of novels from Turkey, the Maghrib and the Mashriq, of the 1980s and 1990s).

²⁴ For an earlier analysis of a *late* nineteenth century Turkish novel, cf. Guth 1997a [= Chapter 18 in the present volume].

In Khalil al-Khūrī's novel *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* ("Oh dear, so I'm not a European after all!", 1859/60)²⁵ the overall meaning is structured²⁶ into

- an Actuality determined by what the author calls *wujūd ahlī*, the "local way of being there" or "indigenous way of life"; under this category the author resumes of the old-fashioned mores, dress codes, ways of life, etc., and, in this text particularly, the well-established practice of marrying daughters to a male member of the extended family;
- a Potentiality whose main element is the conceited wish of the 'Euromanic' Mikhā'il to elevate himself above his fellow countrymen by imitating European lifestyle, in particular his attempt to leave behind the despised cultural identity by marrying his daughter Émilie to a Frenchman and so overcome the *wujūd ahlī* for something allegedly better and more cultivated;
- a Resultant consisting of the very painful recognition of the insurmountability of the naturally given identity and a regretful insight into the positive aspects of the *wujūd ahlī*.

With this componential structure al-Khūrī's text clearly illustrates the same type of experiencing the meaning of existing in the world as can be observed in German literature between 1820 and 1880, although their textual surface naturally comes with very different appearances (different themes, plots, styles, etc.). Falk summarized their structures in the following 'period formula':

- Actuality – The general and the lawful, dominating in space
 Potentiality – The specific and the unique, tending towards renewal
 Resultant – The individualised reproduction of the general²⁷

(Falk 1984, 31)

That the components of al-Khūrī's text can be understood as individual specifications of this more general, global²⁸ system of meaning is in my view evident.

²⁵ For more detail on this novel, see Wielandt 1980, esp. 130–136; Guth 2003b, 10–47 (compared with a contemporary Turkish text), and Chapter 4 in the present volume.

²⁶ For the underlying theory of the trinary structure of 'meaning' and the corresponding method of literary analysis cf. Falk (1983, 2nd ed. 1996). The terms 'actuality' and 'potentiality' should not be confused with the concepts of *actu/ἐνεργία* 'in fact' and *potentiā/δυνάμει* 'in possibility' by which Aristotelian hylemorphism refers to the givenness of οὐσία in formed vs. unformed matter.

²⁷ Original German wording: "AK: Das Allgemeine und Gesetzshafte, herrschend im Raum; PK: Das Besondere und Einzigartige, tendierend zur Erneuerung; RK: Die individualisierende Reproduktion des Allgemeinen".

[For further examples of Middle Eastern texts sharing ‘global’ componential structures, cf. below, Chapters 8 and 18].

Component Analysis has the great advantage of being able to reveal the ‘deep structures’ of a period that otherwise remain concealed under often completely differing textual surfaces. If a sharing of the *essentially similar* world experience and ‘universal time’ can be conceived as possible, it is also possible to search for more specifically *literary* congruencies (even though these may still be very much of a general nature). As the following two examples may show, such parallels can be found on the most divergent of levels (these will conclude my collection of evidence).

The most important current of European literature following Romanticism is Realism. Falk has described Realism as the style in which the general experience of meaning between around 1820 and 1880, sketched above, manifests itself in the *arts* (in *politics*, it is expressed in the “law-abiding restoration or conformist progressivism, in the *sciences* as positivism” – Falk 1983, 160–161; my translation). Parallelling the ‘Oriental’ nineteenth century with European ‘Enlightenment’ has until now left no room for an Middle Eastern ‘Realism’ in the nineteenth century. According to the usual view, Realism could emerge in the ‘Orient’ only after the region had passed through the phases of a cultural (incl. literary) development, which, in line with the allegedly general laws of Evolution, would follow the stage of ‘Enlightenment’. ‘Realism’ was therefore never imagined as possible in the ‘Orient’ before the 20th century, or at the end of the nineteenth century at the earliest. A more impartial view, however, could identify numerous elements indicating a tendency towards Realism already in the ‘Oriental’ nineteenth century. The propagation of ‘clear’, comprehensible prose stripped of rhetorical devices, for example, is not just a phenomenon of Enlightenment, but contains also a realist component: such a language is needed as an instrument for achieving a detailed registration, an exact description and a sharp analysis of the conditions demanding reform. Meanwhile, a number of texts (particularly in Arabic) still utilises the old style while trying to produce a similar assessment of the prevailing situation; they attempt to reach scientific precision and detail on the language level by reactivating the rich vocabulary of

²⁸ Falk had initially abstracted the component categories from *German* texts, but then tested their validity for non-German texts and subsequently postulated their “universality”. I prefer the term ‘global’ for I do not see any metaphysical force at work here, rather only a supra-regional discourse community, one though that neither covers the whole world nor all strata of society (cf. n. 2 above).

the classical language, which they consider to have become stunted in the period of 'decline'. The hitherto highly valued metaphoric mode of expression is strictly limited in both its 'higher' and 'lower' style; what was known as a fixed metaphor (especially in Ottoman Divan literature) now goes through a 'renaturalisation', i.e., expressions become divested of their metaphorical meaning; for example, the 'moon' now indeed refers to the moon and not to the face of the lover; literature now serves (the description of) reality, whereas before that, reality (as a reservoir for similes, metaphors etc.) had served literature. The trouble taken to describe and explain the given reality can even be observed in the so-called 'folk literature': already in some stories told by the professional café storytellers from around the middle of the century there are passages – very unusual for a genre previously only concerned with 'action' – in which persons are characterised, rooms described and landscapes painted. This occurs to an even more extensive degree in novels, where the human psyche is included now as a topic for observation, description, analysis and scientific explanation. Everybody was careful to not to write what might be unrealistic or improbable (whereby 'improbable' merely means 'free of logical contradictions and the supernatural fantastical') and everyone kept hold on what was above all known and familiar in the reader's life-world (even though frequently presented in sensationalist and/or sentimental form). History belonged here, too, which is why, for example, Jurjī Zaydān's historicising romances, despite all their invented adventures and melodramatic plots, should be classified as *realistic*, if not outright *naturalistic*. – With all these features the Arabic and Turkish texts demonstrate, although certainly not in every respect, how the authors took a fundamentally *scientistic* approach to the world, one also characteristic of the European realists of the same age.

A last piece of evidence supporting an interpretation of phenomena in Middle Eastern literatures as part of global processes is the development towards an idea of the autonomy of art, as represented by the *Servet-i Fünûn* group in Turkey before the turn of the century. Using as an example shifts in the genre landscape, I will compare this group with parallel developments favouring this idea in France.²⁹ The emphasis on the intrinsic value of aesthetics in contrast to an economic value was preceded in France, as in Turkey, by strong expansion in the literature market during the second half of the nineteenth century, in both cases triggered by factors such as new printing techniques and the extension of school education from around 1860 onwards. This led mainly to an expansion of

²⁹ In the following I will use Jurt 1995, 153 ff., as my reference for French literature. Jurt summarises here studies by Rémy Ponton and Christophe Charle.

the novel, because it was the novel that could satisfy the needs of the new, greatly extended reading public. Complementary to this advancing popularisation of literature, there arose a counter-movement in both France and Turkey, first of all in the domain of *poetry*.³⁰ Poetry certainly no longer yielded anything economically, but still enjoyed a high level of symbolic status in both countries. Therefore, the poets of French Symbolism, for instance, were able to therefore reject the novel as being at the mercy of the market, just as in the 'Orient' numerous advocates of the poeticising old 'high' style turned against the 'decline of literature' caused by its increased popularisation. The novelists, for their part, in both countries attempted to enhance the subordinate position of their genre and to assert themselves against the poeticisers, whether it be through an increased embellishment of their own prose style, through intensifying *qua* emotionalisation³¹ or through ascribing to renowned categories *external* to literature: Balzac sometimes called his novels *études de mœurs*, at other times *études philosophiques* or *études analytiques*, and Zola lent his novels legitimacy not by appealing to aesthetic categories, but rather by comparing (in 1868) his novel-writing to the analytical dissection performed by a surgeon, in this way presenting himself as a scientist. Turkish (and also Arab) authors did exactly the same. They, too, no longer saw themselves as being primarily storytellers or artists performing with language; rather, as for example Aḥmed Midḥat in 1880, they thought of themselves as someone whose task it was to *describe* specific ways of behaviour and to *explain* the circumstances responsible for it, for the gain in reading for the reader would reside in their *understanding* of life and the course of events (i.e., in rational comprehensibility);³² even prior to this, in a novel such as Nāmīk Kemāl's *İntibāh* (1876), it is striking how frequently the word "dissect" (*teşrīh*) occurs (cf. Dino 1973, 93–4); and in 1892, Sāmīpaşazāde Sezā'ī defined the art of the novelist as the "science (!) of literary explanation".³³ A further differentiation and specialisation then follows within the sphere of the novel itself. In the 1880s, a rift opens up between the psychologists and naturalists in France, a process that definitely has its counterpart in Turkey (though until now not yet perceived as a parallel). Although the French psychologists

30 In the case of France, it was especially *lyrical* poetry.

31 "The demands of style were not forgotten, but the effects now sought were not ornamental but emotional", writes Cachia 1990, 50, on Arabic literature, in this way describing one of the most important shifts which occurred – also in Turkish – in the transition to 'modern' literature.

32 Aḥmed Midḥat 1880, in no. 1 of the journal *Şark*, quoted in Özkırımlı 1987, iv: 994.

33 Sāmīpaşazāde Sezā'ī in the preface to his collection of stories, *Küçük Şeyler* (1892), quoted in Özkırımlı 1987, iv:994.

are opponents of the ever-advancing popularisation of literature (and even if they come from the same upper classes as previously the advocates of the poetic elitists), they do not select poetry for their purposes, for this, although still enjoying reputation, nevertheless appeared to be a thing of the past; instead, they decide to use the medium of the novel, on the basis that it offers better competitive conditions as poetry. In order to assert themselves against the popular naturalists on this terrain, they couple the novel with the prestigious concept 'psychology' (recalling H. Taine, next to E. Renan, one of the great authorities in the intellectual field), counter the milieu descriptions of the naturalists with psychological analysis and do not write about the common people (as the naturalists do) but pick the higher echelons of society as their preferred object of study. The fact that the *Servet-i Fünûn* group also set the events of their psychological novels in the better circles of society, adopted the 'autonomy of art' as their motto and so ascribed to the abstinence from politics and social criticism this demanded – this attitude has until now been explained as a way of avoiding 'Abdülhamid'ian censorship. But for this purpose, a self-imposed limitation to pure psychology would have sufficed, the claim laid upon the elitist notion of 'autonomy' and the monopolisation of the genuinely 'artistic' would not have been required. These aspects are only plausible when viewed as the result of a development similar to the one in France, especially since the *Servet-i Fünûn* members themselves were mostly from the upper strata of society.

There are many further parallels, but the two cases described above may suffice for now, so that we can proceed to ask which kind of conclusions we may draw from the above?

2.5 Conclusions

I hope that the above considerations have shown that a parallel reading and periodisation of Western and Middle Eastern literatures, directly next to each other, is not entirely unfounded, and even makes very good sense. While such a parallelling certainly does not claim complete identity between these phenomena, it is rewarding to view them as belonging to the same 'global' processes.

Such a view entails a number of consequences. An important task of Middle Eastern literary studies (above all literary *history*) should be to describe these literatures in their temporal relationship with *simultaneous* phenomena in the West. To achieve this, the usual paths must be left behind. In particular, this demands, first and foremost, an initial suspending of customary terminology, to avoid falling into the trap laid out by conventional Eurocentrist periodisational concepts. For it makes much more sense to place an author such as Jubrān

Khalil Jubrān next to Stefan George than to declare him a ‘Romantic’ and in this way construct a correspondence with European authors from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Jubrān may have used many means of expression recalling Western Romanticism, yet he himself was mainly productive in the twentieth century. In a similar way, the aesthetic notion formulated by Mikhā’il Nu’ayma in *al-Ghīrbāl* (1923), that literature could only then generate a convincing effect when the authors have “thought through and ‘*felt through*’” (Landau 1968, 281; my translation and italics) what they write, or even the emphasis on feeling and personal experience also observable in Egyptian writers such as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī,³⁴ al-‘Aqqād³⁵ and Ibrāhīm Nāji³⁶ or the Ottoman Yakup Kadri (Karasosmanoğlu),³⁷ can be seen together with roughly simultaneous European phenomena, such as the widespread irrationalism and currents like *Lebensphilosophie* (“Philosophy of Life”). To put it a bit pointedly: instead of (or at least not to the same degree as) directing our attention to the *non-simultaneity* of the simultaneous (and hence on *alterity* and difference), we should make ourselves aware of the *simultaneity* of the non-simultaneous (and hence the *global* dimensions).

This would not just have consequences for reflections on Middle Eastern literatures but also for periodisational and genre concepts developed from and for European literatures, as these are generally used as if they were of global (or even universal) validity. Therefore, one task should be to scrutinise the Eurocentric concepts to see whether they are in fact useful for describing global phenomena. Should a term like ‘naturalist novel’ prove to be suitable for a global phenomenon, it should definitely cover a number of varieties (occasionally very distinct from one another on the textual surface) – a French, German, Arabic, or Turkish naturalist novel. None of these varieties should then possess the power to impose its surface characteristics to describe the genre or period as a whole and so allow a classification of the others as its imperfect offspring, or ‘hybrid’. This implies that European-style novels and short stories, while undoubtedly modern genres, cannot claim an exclusive right to modernity – modernity can express itself through ‘traditional’, autochthonous genres, too.

34 *inna l-shi‘r wijdān* (“Poetry is feeling”): quoted in Brugman 1984, 117.

35 He defines the poet as one who “feels and makes [us] feel” (*yash‘ur wa-yush‘ir*), a statement from 1912, quoted in Brugman 1984, 128.

36 According to Nāji poetry deals with hardly anything else than “the poet’s intensely personal experiences”: Badawi 1975, 130.

37 In an early work such as *Erenlerin Bağından* (1918/19) he consciously uses a “language of the heart”: Atsız 1988/92 (my transl.)

For studies concerned with the ‘great’ literatures this may mean a painful withdrawal from their position as the defining power. And yet, they too would benefit. For it is only through the mediation of the *tertium comparationis* of the global processes at work that they will first become truly aware of their own (national, or regional) specificity. In other words, without taking non-European – for example, Middle Eastern – literatures into consideration, it is not possible to determine what, actually, is specifically ‘Western’ about Western literatures. And without such an insight into the ‘multilingualism’ of modernity it will also remain impossible to grasp the fact “that modernity is at the same time both specific and universal” (Schulze 2000, 6).