11 "*Fa-ghrawraqat ʿuyūnuhum bi-l-dumūʿ*..."

Some notes on the flood of tears in early modern Arabic fiction

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This chapter expands on what has already been said above, especially in Chapter 9, on emotionalism as a key aspect of late nineteenth, early twentieth century Middle Eastern literature. When I – back in 1997 – wrote the article from which the chapter is derived, my primary aim was to bring attention to this phenomenon, which seemed to be unduly overlooked or even ridiculed in literary histories and research at the time.

I was inspired to do so by the fascinating lectures I had had the privilege to attend at Bonn University in the early 1990s, given by the late Peter Pütz, on German literature of the eighteenth century, particularly Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's plays and the periods of Enlightenment, *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress), and *Empfindsamkeit* (Sensibility). In German literature of that time, rationalism and emotionalism coexisted and were considered two sides of the same coin. Drawing from this comparison, I sought to challenge the prevailing negative opinion towards emotionalist and sentimentalist tendencies in the Arab(ic) Nahḍa by typologically comparing it to the 'German Nahḍa' and its sentimentalism, including its successor in the *Biedermeier* period.

Two years after my article (and obviously unaware of it), Stephen Sheehi released a study on Jurjī Zaydān's historical novel *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* ("The Fugitive Mamluk") from 1891, which was one of the texts I had examined in my article. While I had primarily focused on the novel as a reflection of the emerging bourgeoisie and their struggle for self-assertion in late nineteenth-century Arab society, Sheehi's analysis took a different approach. For Sheehi, neither the sociological aspect nor parallels outside the Arab world were at the centre of interest; rather, he examined the composition of the novel's inventory of characters, finding that historical and fictional characters each fulfilled different, complementary functions in relation to emerging subjectivity in general. In his article,

> [t]he distinction between fictional and historical characters is seen not to be an arbitrary one but to reflect two different movements of becoming reformed subjects. The split between these two sets of characters also corresponds to a distinction between public and private spaces. In other words, these two sets of protagonists reflect two different levels of

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> subjectivity, the political-cultural and the personal; each group of characters going through their own journeys of becoming efficacious native Arab subjects. Both cases can be read as allegories for subjective renewal and different tactics of the Nahḍah itself.
>
> (Sheehi 1999, 104–05)[1]

Another significant study on emotionalism and sentimentalist trends during the Nahḍa is Samuela Pagani's fine essay, "Manfalūṭī (1876–1924), l'amour pur, et la critique sentimentale de la civilisation", published in 2020.[2] This essay builds upon ideas raised in my 1997 article and Sheehi's observations, as well as Nājī Najīb's groundbreaking *Kitāb al-Aḥzān* from 1983. With its focus on al-Manfalūṭī's sentimentalism, Najīb's booklet had been an important source of inspiration already for my article/this chapter.

Pagani emphasizes the civilising function of emotions during the critical period surrounding World War I, when the old empires – and with them the old world order – collapsed, and new forms of political and societal organisation had to be found. With this, Pagani's approach aligns with Margrit Pernau's concept of "civilizing emotions" (Pernau 2015), which can provide a suitable conceptual framework for *all* the above findings on the phenomenon of emotionalism during the Nahḍa, as it highlights the interrelatedness of political and social nation-building, cultural expression, and the emotional-psychological condition of emerging subjectivity.

In Chapter 9, we demonstrated that al-Khūrī, in his *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranjī* (1859), saw "passion" as a desired addition to his critical analysis and enlightened vision of contemporary society. In the texts examined in the chapter below (as well as by Sheehi and Pagani), emotionalism appears to have taken the lead and become equally important as the rational(ist) aspects of emerging subjectivity. Moreover, these texts give proof to the fact that, during the later years of the Nahḍa, the emerged subjects became more imaginative, creative, and proactive in designing alternative world orders. For *The Fugitive Mamluk*, for instance, Sheehi pointed out that

> the "objectivity" of historical knowledge is also arranged by an imagination, or the imaginary, of the Renaissance "mind." This very imagination put forth a subjective *imago* for the

1 For a prolongation, or successor, of Sheehi's "political-cultural" subjectivity, see below, Part V (on nation building and the "national personality", etc.). The "personal" ascpet will step back for a while during the period of early nation building, but will find its successor in the many autobiographical novels and novels of formation of the self (cf., e.g., Chapters 15 and 19.4).

2 Pagani's article forms a chapter in the same volume on *adab*, edited in 2019/20 by C. Mayeur-Jaouen, in which also the first version of Chapter 4 of the present volume ("*Adab* as the Art to Make the Right Choice...") was published.

> ideal Arab subject, and was rooted in an epistemology of the Nahḍah that struggled to create new social, subjective, cultural and political spaces.
>
> (Sheehi 1999, 105)

This observation further emphasizes that the new 'modern' subjectivity encountered in Nahḍa texts has multiple – but definitively complementary – dimensions. As summarized towards the end of Chapter 9 above, it is an enlightened and critically reasoning subject, as well as a feeling and emotional subject. Additionally, it is a creative subject that utilizes its imagination and fantasy, not only in literature and the arts but also in envisioning possible new orders for the future (cf. Chapter 17, below, on utopia). While it may be challenging to quantify the degrees of imagination, fantasy, and creativity, if we observe an increase in these aspects of emerged subjectivity in the later decades of the Nahḍa, it could correspond to the shift from "Reproductionism" to "Creativism" in global history posited by Walter Falk.[3] This potential shift signifies the Arab's movement away from the old order of the Ottoman Empire towards new models of socio-political organisation. It could indicate a transition from Reproductionism, the reproduction and preservation of existing societal structures, to Creativism, the creation of new ideas and systems. These observations align with the discussions in previous chapters regarding periodisation and periodisational terminology.

* * *

11.1 Sentimentalism – a blind spot in literary histories

In Arabic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, tears flow in abundance, no matter which kind of narrative one might look at: be it the novels of entertainment, so popular at the time, or the so-called "historical" novels, they flow in short stories with idealistic and/or didactic intention, often moralizing or patriotic in purpose, as well as in narratives of social criticism or simply in those of adventures. The lachrymose element is present quite early in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in the first decades of the twentieth it reached the

3 See above, end of introductory section to Chapter 1, where I tentatively read the Arabs' turning away from the old order of the Ottoman Empire to new models of socio-political organisation as a possible indicator of a transition from Falk's period of "Reproductionism" to that of "Creativism"; see also Chapter 2, on periodisation and periodisational terminology in general, end of introductory section to Chapter 4 for a presentation of "Reproductionism", and Chapter 18.3 for a brief characterisation of "Creativism", and a follow-up on "Reproductionism").

zenith of its prosperity with authors living in the American diaspora, like Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883–1931), but also – and most remarkably – with the Egyptian Muṣṭafà Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1876–1924), to an extent that contemporaries considered the latter's influence and importance so great that they thought it appropriate to label the entire period around World War I the "Manfalūṭian era". This author, they say, "spoke with the tongue of all of us and put down on paper what every heart felt" (Nagīb 1983, 42), "all from Damascus in Syria down to Fes in Morocco the hearts of a whole generation beat" with Manfalūṭī's protagonists (ibid., 7), and there was rarely a house in which you would not have found at least one of this writer's works (ibid.).

It appears that sentimentality was highly popular and prevalent in the texts of that time, albeit with varying content. Consequently, one would expect the phenomenon of excessive tears to have been recognized and thoroughly studied in literary history. However, it seems that apart from Nājī Najīb (Nagi Naguib)'s study on al-Manfalūṭī titled *Kitāb al-aḥzān* (1983, see Bibliography).[4], this is not the case, potentially leading to sentimentality and tearfulness being reasons why both authors and readers of this literature have not been taken seriously and their works have been somewhat disregarded by scholarly research. Additionally, considering that Arab writers during this period extensively drew inspiration from European literature, the accusation of sentimentalism is coupled with a lack of originality. Consequently, delving deeper into this literature spanning no less than half a century may seem to be not worthwhile and might elicit nothing more than a pitiful smile.

Given the temporal and cultural gap between us and the subject we are investigating, it is not surprising that we might find amusement or a sense of humor in the flood of tears. In fact, this reaction is quite natural, as we often encounter similar responses in our own literary heritage.

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4 [The statement about the lack of scholarly attention given to the phenomenon is from the mid-1990s and therefore slightly dated. Since then, Margrit Pernau's fundamental research has pointed to the "civilising mission" of emotions and their powerful role in processes of nation building, and Samuela Pagani has come with a fine study of the function of "pure love" and a "critique sentimentale de la civilisation" in Muṣṭafà Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī's writings. I have myself likewise dealt with related questions on several occasions, e.g., in studies of Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *Çalıkuşu*, a 'best-seller' of early Republican Turkey (see below, Chapters 15 and 19.3) or in the article (included above as Chapter 9) on the importance of "passion" for al-Bustānī's recursor, Khalīl Al-Khūrī, already in 1859/60. An updated summary of pertinent research as well as a lexico-statistical approach is expected to be published soon, in a volume on Arab(ic) Modernism edited by Cleophera Ferrari, under the title "Modern feelings: On the role of emotions in the Arabic novel of the Nahḍa" – Guth and Johnsson, forthcoming).]

I recall instances in my German literature classes in high-school where we would jest about the agonizing "Sufferings of Young Werther" (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774) and fail to comprehend why such "kitsch" led to a veritable wave of suicides in Europe during its time. Similarly, I remember attending university lectures on G. E. Lessing's (1729–1781) dramas, particularly the one discussing *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755), which remains vivid in my memory. During the lecture, my esteemed late teacher, Peter Pütz, informed the audience that the performances of this highly pathetic *Trauerspiel* were accompanied by an outpouring of sentimental tears on stage and sparked deep emotions in the profoundly moved spectators; the modern student audience, however, burst out in loud laughter.

Nevertheless, today, once the initial laughter subsides, both Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* and Goethe's *Werther* receive the appropriate attention from literary historians, if not high regard. This is primarily due to our ability to read these texts as essential documents of an epoch whose significance in the history of literature, ideologies, and thought cannot be overstated: the age of Enlightenment, *Empfindsamkeit* (Age of Sensibility), and *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). Once we recognize this, the importance of *Miss Sara Sampson*, for example, should not diminish, even when we realize that Lessing himself may not have invented the plot of this *Trauerspiel*, but instead drew inspiration from an *English* piece of literature of that time – *Empfindsamkeit* as a whole was not a genuine German invention anyway, but rather initiated its 'sentimental journey' across Europe from *England*.[5]

Therefore, can we not approach tearful Arabic literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a similar manner?

It is important to clarify that I will not be able, in the essay below, to provide a definitive answer to this question that will satisfy the curiosity of the interested reader. Therefore, the objective of my study is solely to highlight certain phenomena present in German literature of the eighteenth century which, in my opinion, exhibit similarities in certain aspects. Through this exploration, my intention is to establish criteria that may be helpful in accurately describing and evaluating the so-called "beginnings" of modern Arabic fiction more effectively, with greater

5 From about 1715 onwards, the so-called "moral weeklies" (*The Tatter*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, etc.) were imitated in Germany and Switzerland (*Vernünftler*, *Der Patriot*, *Discourse der Mahlern/Maler der Sitten*, *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, and many others). Much favoured, translated, adapted, or imitated were also 'family novels' and 'novels of virtue,' especially those by Samuel Richardson. L. Sterne's sentimental novels, such as *Sentimental Journey* (1768) to which I am alluding, were equally received with great enthusiasm.

precision and more adequately than in the past when the only term with which these phenomena used to be approached was "romanticism". Unfortunately, the term is employed in some instances even today – as we shall soon discover.

11.2 Tears flowing in abundance – some examples

Why do so many heroes shed so many tears in this literature? Why is weeping obviously so important to the authors and the public alike? Let us have a look at some of the texts.

When the Lebanese author Salīm al-Bustānī (1848–1884) wrote his novel *Bint al-ʿaṣr* ("Daughter of Her Times",[6] published in 1875) he intended it as a story of social criticism. Making the narrator and the positive heroes his own mouthpiece, he criticizes sharply many of the evils which he thought were all too widespread at his time and therefore endangered common weal, e.g., the *tafarnuj* (blind imitation of the Europeans),[7] ostentatiousness and wastefulness of the rich compatriots as well as their habit of measuring everything and everybody by nothing else but their money and luxurious external appearances. This opinion clearly shows al-Bustānī as a man of the Nahḍa whose thinking, in various aspects, comes very close to that of the men of eighteenth century Enlightenment in Europe. Like the enlightened thinker with his reformist ambitions, al-Bustānī too has in mind the well-being of the entire contemporary society; Reason (*ʿaql*, *taʿaqqul*) for him has the very same overall importance as it has for the European men of Enlightenment; and just like the latter, they too associate reasonableness with moral goodness and attribute the presence of various evils primarily to a deficiency in understanding and sheer ignorance (*jahl*). In the didactic fervour nourished by a deep belief in the convincingness of arguments based on Reason, and in *what* he regards as reasonable and therefore morally acceptable – i.e., a critical evaluation, always consciously paying reverence to centuries-old traditions, of the pros and cons of the innovations imported from the West; modesty, thrift, righteousness; contempt for pure externals as opposed to love of the true, inner values – in all this al-Bustānī appears to think in the same, essentially *bourgeois*, spirit as the men of Enlightenment. Considering al-Bustānī's emphasis on the importance of education, it is possible to narrow down the social group associated with this mindset to an *educational* bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*), one that is opposed

6 A freer translation could probably be: "A Modern Girl."

7 [Cf. above, Chapter 4, on this topic in Khalīl al-Khūrī's *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranjī* (1859/60) and his contemporary Ottoman colleague Aḥmed Midḥat's *Felāṭūn Beğ ile Rāḳım Efendī* (1875).]

in *Bint al-ʿaṣr* to the group of wealthy merchants, tradesmen and bankers whom the author classifies as *akābir* or *aʿyān*, i.e., "patricians" or "notables".

In the novel, the protagonist Rīma expresses her emotions through tears as she declares her unwavering support for Mājid, her beloved, even in the face of his sudden and complete loss of wealth due to a jealous rival's scheme. She assures him of her continued love, stating that she will be content with a modest lifestyle as his wife. Her ultimate desire, she says, is to experience the happiness that comes from having the friendship and love of such a virtuous companion as Mājid. On the other hand, Mājid himself is moved to tears upon realizing that Rīma's affection for him is not dependent on his financial status. Despite the material bankruptcy he has just suffered, he rejoices for having made a big 'bargain' that will last the whole of his life.

Indeed, the tears shed by the heroes in this narrative are evident signs of being profoundly moved. This observation can potentially provide insight into further characterizing the educational bourgeoisie to which the author belongs. One possible approach is to examine the context in which these tears are shed. This context bears a striking resemblance to that of melodramas (*Rührstücke*) as described in a literary encyclopedia for the European context. Similar to the plots of these plays, the narrative under discussion here exhibits

> an essentially tragic outline of the plot [in *Bint al-ʿaṣr*, love and jealousy are destiny-like powers (!)]; a conciliatory end by which a bad closure is consciously avoided and which makes plausible, in some way at least, the excessive display of virtue, noble-mindedness and renunciation a motivation for which would otherwise have been difficult to establish; an ending that nivellates the plot's tragic potential into sentimentality by only modest punishments for the intriguing villains, but rich reward for the deceived victims, thus replacing, on the spectators' part, deep shockedness with relief and serene amusement [Mājid, e.g., in the end is so noble as to forgive his rival although he knows that the latter, until not long ago, had planned to have him murdered; the person pulling the wires of all intrigues and murderous plans – who is, at one occasion, even called a "devil" – is sentenced by a lenient judge to no more than exile in another town; and finally the reader is made to attend, above all, a double wedding]; and, as a whole, after going through a state of suspense between shocking tragedy and relieved serenity, in a simplified view of life moral seriousness and responsibility in the end enjoy watching the obligatory triumph of Virtue.
>
> (Wilpert 1979, 707, *s.v.* "Rührstück")

The *Rührstücke* characterised in the above entry are a literary genre that came intobeing during the age of Enlightenment as a derivative of the *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel* (eighteenth century bourgeois 'tragedy'). According to Wilpert, "Rührstücke" (melodramas) should be understood as a type of literature that, from a sociological standpoint, can be categorized as belonging to a bourgeoisie that has achieved social prestige *only recently*, a bourgeoisie, however, that has

already developed a strong sense of self-confidence and begun to idealize itself as representatives of the highest moral values. Drawing on this interpretation, there seems to be no inherent obstacle to applying a similar analysis to al-Bustānī's *Bint al-ʿaṣr* and other fiction...

... among which also the so-called "historical novels" – or, as I would prefer to label them, "historicizing romances" – of Jurjī Zaydān (1864–1914). The sentence that I have taken as the main title for this study is in fact a quotation, if slightly modified, from one of these romances, *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* ("The Straying/Fugitive Mamluk"[8]), published in 1891, i.e., sixteen years after al-Bustānī's *Bint al-ʿaṣr*. Here comes a short plot summary (page references are to the original edition indicated in the Bibliography):

> Beautiful Jamīla believes that her husband, an Egyptian mamluk named Amīn, has been slaughtered like all the other mamluks in the massacre of 1811 by which Mohammed Ali wanted to end the opposition of this formerly most influential group. Jamīla is pregnant, but for fear of enslavement after her husband's death she nonetheless takes the risk of fleeing, heading for Lebanon together with a faithful servant and her son. While giving birth to a second son (whom she names Gharīb) the first gets lost, so that on her arrival in Lebanon she is already mourning for two – supposedly dead – of her beloved (what she indeed does quite amply together with her servant). As good luck then has it, the refugees are welcomed as guests and accommodated with great hospitality by Emir Bashīr at the Bayt ad-Dīn palace. The emir even takes over the care for Jamīla's little son as if he was Gharīb's own father. Although everybody is quite happy with this new situation it is only now that the development of the novel's events really starts; as a matter of course, weeping has not yet come to an end either. In the following paragraph I have collected some of the most impressive passages of lachrymosity.
>
> Many years later Jamīla weeps as she comes to know that one of the mamluks allegedly managed to escape being murdered by Mohammed Ali's men, giving her back the hope that her husband could still be alive (Zaydān [n.d.], 61). She weeps again – and, in doing so, "the tears [almost] suffocate her" (*wa-qad khanaqat-hā l-ʿabarāt*) – when she thinks she must fear Bashīr's anger as soon as he would learn about her true identity, i.e., that she is the same Salmà who, some years ago, had fled from Lebanon because she did not want to be married to a man she did not love (ibid.). And again she "could not but weep" (ibid., 63) when she heard that beloved little Gharīb, on an expedition in Egypt with his 'father' Bashīr, once had not returned from a ride into the desert, but in the end had been rescued as through a miracle. "With her knees trembling" she soon gives "free rein to her weeping" (*aṭlaqat li-nafsihā ʿinān al-bukāʾ*) and again is almost "suffocated by tears" when she realizes that the miraculous rescuer of the desert must have been nobody else than her husband, her son's real father, until then believed to be dead; that the latter, however, is lost again because, ignorant of each other's existence, they had not recognized each other (ibid.,

8 German translation by Martin Thilo under the title *Der letzte Mameluck und seine Irrfahrten: ein historischer Roman* von Girǵī Zaidān (Barmen: Klein, 1917).

67). The faithful servant is thus sent out to take up his missing master's tracks. For him, too, "everything went black" and "his eyes became bathed in tears" (*fa-ghrawraqat ʿaynāhu bi-l-dumūʿ*) when he imagined what could have happened already to his master who, as he came to learn, out of desperation about the loss of his family, had volunteered for a mission at the front-lines in Sudan (ibid., 81). Twenty pages later, Amīn Beğ the Mameluk, still alive but wandering around aimlessly out of sheer grief, "broke out into tears" (*fa-nhamarat dumūʿuh*, lit., his tears gushed out) when, meanwhile in Lebanon, he happens to meet a young man who recognizes him as the one who rescued him from danger in the Egyptian desert (ibid., 99). Sometime before that, Gharīb had set out for a dangerous task (as he had done often before), and when his mother – weepingly – provides him with an amulet in order to protect him against all dangers on his excursion, he kisses it and puts it in his pocket... *wa-qad ighrawraqat ʿaynāhu bi-l-dumūʿ* (ibid., 89). When Amīn and Jamīla/Salmà, after such a long time of painful separation, meet again for the first time and when Amīn then learns that the man he had saved in Egypt and now met again here was his own son

> he turned away from her [Jamīla/Salmà] to Gharīb and cried out: "Oh my son, my son! You are my son, Gharīb?" He kissed him and embraced him, *wa-ʿaynāhu tajrifāni l-dumūʿ*. And now also Gharīb joined in weeping with the other two, so bewildered that everything appeared to him like a dream.
>
> (ibid., 101)

In the end, also the first son (who had been lost on the way from Egypt to Lebanon) reappears; he has lived through an odyssey but had also, on one occasion, saved his brother's live without knowing that he was his brother, and when this missing one finally rushes up to his parents to kiss their hands "everybody wept from the vehemence of joy" (*wa-l-jamīʿ yabkūna min shiddat al-faraḥ*, ibid., 122).

It may be difficult to believe, given the emotional nature of the summary, but novels like *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* were intended by Zaydān, an enlightened author, to serve as vehicles for *knowledge* to a wide audience, in this case knowledge pertaining to historical facts of the time of Mohammed Ali in Egypt and Emir Bashīr II in Lebanon.[9] Considering the sentimental nature of the novel's events (with which Zaydān skillfully intertwined the historical data that I had to omit for the sake of brevity), we can infer that the psychological disposition of Zaydān's reading public was likely not very different from that of the audience of August von

9 Cf. the novel's subtitle (as in the 3rd edn, Cairo 1904): *(riwāya) taʾrīḫiyya adabiyya tataḍamman ḥawādith Miṣr wa-Sūriyā wa-aḥwāla-humā fī l-niṣf al-awwal min al-qarn al-māḍī wa-min abṭāli-hā al-Amīr Bashīr al-Shihābī wa-Muḥammad ʿAlī Bāshā wa-Ibrahīm Bāshā wa-Amīn Beğ* "literary historical (account) containing events of Egypt and Syria and the general situation there in the first half of the last century, and of their heroes, the Emir Bashīr al-Shihābī, Mohammed Ali Pasha, Ibrahim Pasha, and Amīn Beğ".

Kotzebue (1761–1819), who was known for his sentimental dramas. This sentimentality is reminiscent of the *Rührstücke* or melodramas that dominated German stages during the time of Goethe and Schiller, much to their dismay.

It is evident that both Zaydān's romances and Kotzebue's plays appealed to a bourgeoisie that had expanded to a larger social stratum. This bourgeoisie had gained more confidence in themselves and had become accustomed to self-glorification. Consequently, the "scenes of remorse, reconciliation, reunion, and renunciation featuring tearful mothers and deeply moved grumbling fathers" , as described by Wilpert in reference to Kotzebue (Wilpert 1979, 707) might have exhibited a sense of routine or even triteness.

11.3 Ennobling language

The above survey of tearful passages in Zaydān's *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* has been interspersed with several quotations not without purpose. This was done, among other reasons, to prepare the ground for the following remarks, which will focus on the formal, linguistic aspects of this sentimentality. It is not hard to observe that the language used in these passages is very pathetic, and I believe that the frequency of tearful scenes in Arabic literature during this period can, to a certain degree, be explained also as an end in itself. In other words, one of the reasons for frequently engaging in lachrymose pathos is the opportunity it provides to temporarily depart from plain prose and adopt a more poetic style. But why should an intellectual like Jurjī Zaydān, who typically preferred a minimalistic, straightforward, and didactic writing style in his efforts to enlighten his contemporaries, would approve of infusing his prose with poetic touches through the inclusion of tearful passages within the main body of the text.

The reasons for him to do so may well have been similar to what favoured the predilection for 'poetical' settings in Europe during the emergence of the novel as a literary genre. In Europe, the novel emerged as a prose genre when the world itself had become, in a way, more 'prosaic' due to the collapse of the old order. In this new reality, man no longer felt at home, and things did not fit together neatly like rhymes anymore. With the "loss of poetical valence in form" accompanying the transition from poetic speech to prose, "the novel often sought compensation through highly 'poetical' plots involving lovers, artists, knights, brigands", and so on (Wilpert 1979, 692, *s.v.* "Roman", my translation). This desire for compensation stemmed from a longing for the lost poetic intensity in a prose-dominated world. Similarly, in the Arab world of the nineteenth century, the enthusiastic reception of literary prose can be attributed to a comparable revolution. The in-

trusion of the West and the numerous reforms that had already begun by the second half of the century to leave their mark in almost every sphere of life brought about a sense of loss in the world's 'orderliness' and 'poeticism'. Here, too, this loss was experienced as painful, and it was hoped that literature could offer compensation through poetical elements in an overall necessarily prosaic framework. How much the lost emotional intensity of poetry was longed for in a time when the reader could be reached already easier by prose can be seen from al-Manfalūṭī's words, sounding paradoxical:

> This time I want to be for you a poet without rhyme and without metre, for I wish to appeal directly to the heart; but this is not possible, unless by poetry.
>
> (quoted in Nagīb 1983, 14)

Secondly, the preference given to *larmoyant* passages as something more poetical than ordinary prose can be understood in relation to the prevailing literary criticism of the time, which still gave primacy to poetry and the revered, elitarian word art of the *maqāmāt*. In the circles that dominated contemporary literary life, writing pure and simple prose was often looked down upon and considered too popular and inferior. (We hardly need to recall that when Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, as late as 1913, published his novel *Zaynab*, he chose to use a pseudonym out of fear that it might harm his career as a lawyer if it became known that he wrote novels.)

If as a prose author, you wanted to avoid condemnation from the literary establishment but at the same time wished to appeal to the expanding reading public, which included a broader and less elitist social stratum thanks to the increased access to education, you had to strike a delicate balance. This meant finding a middle ground between a plain, unadorned, unmannered, 'prosaic' style that would please the new army officers, engineers, technocrats, and bureaucrats – all those who had benefited from the educational system's broader opportunities, among them an ever-increasing number of women – and, on the other hand, a style that would satisfy the expectations of the old elite still dominating the literary scene. Tears helped to solve this dilemma. Their emotional nature justified a more elevated and elaborate artistic mode of expression, and the more an author could incorporate tears into their work the more they would provide him/her with opportunities to showcase his/her prowess not only a prosaist, but also as someone well-versed in the use of the numerous linguistic and stylistic devices of classical Arabic rhetoric. In the small doses in which one was offered lexical brilliance and a poeticizing imagery here – portions that could be consumed without consulting a dictionary of linguistic rarities – those devices

naturally were highly estimated also by the reader: whoever read this kind of ennobled prose could claim that s/he was participating in literary life, and this was akin to being part of the educated elite or at least being equal to the old elite.

Thus, also from the poeticizing language of the lachrymose texts, or text passages, in question, conclusions on the sociological level can be drawn. We are faced here with a literature written by and for a class striving to attain a level of social prestige commensurate with their ever increasing number, a prestige, however, that was denied to them by the established elite, leading them to attempt to break the monopolies held by the old elite, such as their control over 'good' or 'high' literature.

Interestingly enough, parallels in the literature of European Enlightenment can be found on this purely formal linguistic level, too. In the so-called *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* (bourgeois 'tragedy'), for instance, the bourgeois 'appropriates' a literary genre, namely 'sublime' tragedy, from which they were previously excluded. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the bourgeoisie had been denied participation in tragedy and the realm of 'high' literature due to social standing restrictions, cf. the so-called *Ständeklausel* ("clause of social standing", see below; cf. Wilpert 1979, 782–3). Instead, the appearance of bourgeois characters on stage had been restricted to 'vulgar', 'inferior' comedy where they were confined to an existence as the object of popular amusement. It is most significant that the first thing the bourgeois does when he begins to emancipate himself, is that he starts weeping, and he does so in exactly that environment that still corresponds to his social and literary rank: comedy. The result is the transitional form labelled *comédie larmoyante* in France, *sentimental comedy* in England, and *weinerliches Lustspiel* in Germany. It is with the adoption of 'tragicality' via *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* that the eighteenth century bourgeoisie eventually gets completely rid of the odour of ridiculousness. This process of 'tragifying' the comical or ridiculous is obviously paralleled by the process, described above, of 'poeticisation' or 'poetification' of early Arabic prose, then still afflicted with the stain of wide popularity, with the help of tearful pathos; and the same process is at work when – like in eighteenth century Europe – those parts of the population who until then had been allowed to figure in nothing but the uncouth farces of popular theatre or in the *Karagöz* shadow plays, now invade the domain of the highly prestigious refined *adab*. In both cases a dignification of the common and the mean and, respectively, a popularisation of the elitarian takes place already on the linguistic surface of the texts in question.

It is clear, however, that the same phenomenon is also accompanied by a reevaluation with regard to content. The poetics of Renaissance and Baroque had established the *Ständeklausel* by pointing to the "height of fall" (*Fallhöhe*; cf.

Wilpert 1979, 262). The *Ständeklausel* implied that only kings, princes, or aristocrats were deemed 'high' enough in the social hierarchy to be in a position to suffer a really bad 'tragic' fall and thus be convincing in their tragedy; and it was only logical that the bourgeois, ranging much lower in the social hierarchy, according to this theory lacked the high position that was a prerequisite for making a deep fall, and so his miseries were *a priori* deprived of the chance of being classified as truly tragic. How could this bourgeoisie, in their eagerness to become socially accepted as part of the elite and wanting their needs to be acknowledged as tragic – how could they obtain for themselves the "height of fall" required for a tragic downfall? – The answer that both German *Empfindsamkeit* and Nahḍa sentimentalism found was very similar: they made themselves into aristocrats by replacing nobility of birth and wealth – something they did not possess – with *their* form of 'nobility', i.e., the nobility of feeling and thinking, the nobleness of virtue and high morals. As a consequence, they also could deny the old elite this new form of noblesse (which, from now on, would be the only true form).

Once again, exactly the same mechanism can be noticed to be at work in Arabic (and other Middle Eastern) literature, most significant perhaps in the works of al-Manfalūṭī. Let us have a closer look, for instance, at "*al-ʿIqāb*", a story from a collection, published in 1915, bearing the title, meaningful in itself for our study, of *al-ʿAbarāt* (The Tears). It has not been selected at random but because it seemed to me especially representative since the very same story, slightly different only in style and in some details of the plot, is to be found, as "Ṣurākh al-qubūr" (The Cry of the Graves), already in Jubrān's short collection of 1908, *al-Arwāḥ al-mutamarrida* (Rebellious Spirits). I do not know whether al-Manfalūṭī was inspired by Jubrān's story, or both of them drew on a third author;[10] but this is irrelevant anyway for our purpose here.

More important is the story's plot, which in both cases starts with a first-person narrator telling us about the terrible experiences he has been through in an imaginary town:

> He happens to attend a public court session where an *amīr*, assisted by a priest and a judge, sentences three people to horrible deaths without giving them the opportunity to defend themselves. The following day, the narrator discovers the corpses of the three lying in the desert outside the town, totally mutilated. When he has just begun to philosophize on a world in which there is no justice and a society that, in face of the wrong, abides by passivity, three persons appear who seem to have been closely related to the executed persons

10 Al-Manfalūṭī's story is said to have been modeled after an original American story entitled "The Cry of the Graves" (my edition of *al-ʿAbarāt*, p. lll, fn. 1). Is this "American story" Jubrān's *Ṣurākh al-qubūr*, or was it the model for both Manfalūṭī's *and* Jubrān's narrative?

and have now come to bury their beloved. Each of them tells the narrator what had happened before: The executed poor old man had done nothing but to ask for alms in a monastery where he had worked before, but then had been driven away abruptly when he had become old and decrepit, alms that would have helped him save his family from imminent death of starvation; when he was denied the alms and kicked away he had taken with him a sack of corn, the minimum to which he should have been entitled because he had never been paid his last wages. Thus, what he committed has never been a case of genuine theft. In the same way, the girl who was stoned to death for having committed adultery is in reality not an adulteress at all, nor is the young man who was executed for alleged murder a cold-blooded murderer. The girl, the narrator learns from herself, had been engaged to the man she loved but was forced, after her father's death, to consent to marry the lecherous judge whom her uncle, an opportunist, considered a better match; not wanting to betray her truly beloved fiancée she had fled from home the evening before the wedding to the judge was due to take place; when the latter's myrmidons found her she had, in total distress, sought shelter at her former fiancée's place, and there she had been caught. – As for the man who had been crucified, he too actually was innocent: he had killed only to defend the honour of his sister whom the emir's tax collectors had wanted to take with them as a "deposit".

With regard to language and style, this story is again an example of the ennoblement of prose by tearful pathos and, implicitly, of exalting the common. To this corresponds, on the level of content, the fact that a formerly lower social class has – like the bourgeoisie in *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* – become worth of tragic and thereby begun to ennoble themselves compensatorily.

In the above story, the old and the young man, the girl, their relatives and/or their beloved, all represent that group of "wretched" and "unfortunate" (*al-ashqiyāʾ fī l-dunyā*) to whom al-Manfalūṭī explicitly dedicates his "Tears" (cf. *al-ʿAbarāt*, "al-ihdāʾ") – those segments of the population who are most likely to identify strongly with protagonists who suffer, as they perceive themselves as victims in society. It may be difficult to judge whether the Arab masses of that time did indeed, or did not, suffer more than in earlier times; however, it can be taken for granted that education has made them more self-conscious and let them experience as wrong what perhaps would have been considered normal in the past: to have no say in politics but to be ruled autocratically; to be underprivileged as a native inhabitant of, say, Egypt as compared to the class of 'aristocrats' of Turko-Cirkessian origin, i.e., strangers, but also to the local feudal lords; to be exploited by a khedive who financed his Euromania through ever-increasing taxes; to be restricted by the censors in one's right to free expression of opinion; to be suppressed by the British occupation and to be misused, during World War I, by the invaders for their own ends; et cetera.

The tears that are shed in stories like "al-ʿIqāb" / "Ṣurākh al-qubūr" no longer serve the purpose they did in the past, which was to evoke emotions of happiness,

nor is lachrymosity accompanied by a happy ending anymore, as used to be the case in al-Bustānī's and Zaydān's works. As we ventured into the twentieth century, particularly during the years surrounding World War I, these tears transformed into wailing expressions of suffering and became deeply emotive, and a sense of pity increasingly intertwined with the readers perception of the lingering good amidst immense suffering. – What then drew people to such literature? Why was it crucial for there to be suffering and evocation of sympathetic pity?

One plausible explanation for this phenomenon could be as follows: By presenting protagonists with a social background similar to that of the reading public, stories provided a sense of companionship to suffering, which is a common human experience. This created ample opportunities for readers to identify with the characters and their struggles. The ordinary individual, the proverbial 'man in the street', would easily recognise themselves and their own hardships and misery reflected in the heroes and their suffering. Remarkably, this process of identification finds a parallel in the European Enlightenment movement. An author like G. E. Lessing, for instance, in his famous theoretical treatise on drama, the so-called *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, postulated that literary heroes should be *mit uns von gleichem Schrot und Korne* ("of the same stamp as ourselves", i.e., bourgeois) (cf. "75. Stück").

As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that in both cases, another crucial factor was the inclusion of everyday suffering, which had previously been deemed too mundane for 'high' literature. By incorporating such suffering, it implicitly granted it the dignity of being allowed into the realm of literature, consequently offering recognition and esteem to these experiences. The acceptance of the man in the street furthermore finds its expression in the pity with which the narrator – always an auctorial narrator weeping in utmost sympathy with the heroes – meets the misery of the poor and destitute. -- It is worth mentioning, as a brief note on the margins, that for al-Manfalūṭī, this compassion or pity, *raḥma*, occupies a role in both his literary theory and his works that is of equally central as is the concept of *Mitleid* (compassionate identification) in Lessing's theory of *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.

Another explanation for the prevalence of suffering in this kind of literature is that it elevated those who underwent such suffering to a higher status. By portraying the suffering of honest and virtuous individuals, their nobility of thought and moral superiority were emphasized. This emphasis on virtue and high moral standards had great significance, especially during the Enlightenment era when the bourgeoisie, in their pursuit of emancipation, had nothing to counter the upper-class nobility except their own virtuous qualities.

The same can be said for the mostly urban petty bourgeoisie that had considerably grown by that time and formed the target audience for authora like al-Manfalūṭī writes, but also for the lower strata of society in general. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr, for instance, quotes a novel by Maḥmūd Khayrat in which a simple girl from the countryside, who is in love with the son of a pasha and suffers from the fact that he will always remain out of reach for her, due to their social disparity, says the following:

> It is true, indeed, that I am not equal to him with respect to my social rank; however, in my bosom I carry a love that is so pure and sinere that it alone is sufficient to elevate me to a higher plane and a superior position.
>
> (*al-Fatāt al-rīfiyya*, 1903, quoted in Badr 1977, 170)

Like in eighteenth century German literature (see, for instance, Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, 1772), Manfalūṭī/Jubrān'ian heroes too monopolize Virtue for themselves. For the men of Enlightenment, the set of moral values prevailing in the bourgeois world is made up not only of virtue, but also of faithfulness and veracity and, especially during the *Sturm und Drang* period, also intensity and honesty of sincere feeling; it is opposed there to the domain of Nobility which is shown to be a realm of depravity, lasciviousness and lecherous vice, of insincerity and lies as well as of malicious intriguing (see, e.g., Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, 1784, where already the title makes clear which moral principles will clash in this drama). Al-Manfalūṭī's world is not much different, at most a bit clumsier perhaps, and the author also less critical of himself and his own class. Contemporary politics and their representatives are, by the way, experienced by al-Manfalūṭī, and probably likewise by his readers, as something belonging to the domain of vice and intriguing; in his and his public's opinion, staying away from politics is therefore considered as a prerequisite of remaining virtuous – and also untouched in their newly acquired ideal nobility:

> Would you, dearest sir, ever think that a man who has devoted his life to the service of Truth, set for himself the task of defending it against all injustice, and to save Virtue from the claws of Vice [...], a man who, in his messages, has let his weeping about the weak and the poor, the oppressed and the victims of injustice be heard in heaven and on earth, [would you think for only a moment that such a man] could be(come) a politician or a lawyer?
>
> (*al-Naẓarāt*, quoted by Nagīb 1983, 49)[11]

11 Nagīb gives "11/73" as page reference for his edition of the *Naẓarāt*. I was not able to track down this passage in my copy of another edition (see References) but found a chapter on "*al-Siyāsa*" that is very similar in tone (cf. this other edition, II: 78–81).

It is a common observation that the role of moral judge is often assumed by those who lack actual power. These individuals may demand their fair share of authority, yet simultaneously decline to take on the responsibilities and burdens that come with it.

It is worth noting that during al-Manfalūṭī's time, the 'bourgeoisie vs. nobility' opposition of the European Enlightenment became even more complex. Not only was there a reinforced divide between the general public, the masses, the 'common people' (*ʿāmma*), and the privileged elite (*khāṣṣa*), but there was also a stark division between the natives and the European occupiers. The native population also sought to elevate themselves in this context. It was an era in which the East, in the eyes of the native population, became the abode of noble and vibrant "spirituality" (*rūḥiyya*), while the West was perceived as the dwelling place of base and cold materialism (*māddiyya*) . This shift can be seen as analogous to the transition from the Enlightenment to *Sturm und Drang* periods in the history of German literature.

11.4 In conclusion

I believe that the aforementioned examples serve to demonstrate that a comparative analysis of nineteenth and early twentieth century Arabic literature alongside texts from the European Enlightenment, *Empfindsamkeit*, and *Sturm und Drang* periods can offer a deeper understanding of the concept of lachrymosity, surpassing the use of a blanket term such as 'Romanticism'. While the latter may be applicable in certain instances, it fails to capture the essence of literary works by authors like Salīm al-Bustānī, Jurjī Zaydān, and Muṣṭafà Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī, who represent a distinctive literary output predating the emergence of what is commonly known as the "artistic novel".

In the works of these authors, one will struggle to find elements characteristically associated with the Romantic movement in Europe, such as the sublimation of the creative ego into the universal and elemental, the phenomenon of 'Romantic irony' with its playful freedom and realisation of the unbridgeable gap between the finite and infinite, or the belief in existence as an everlasting process of development and change, and the individual as an expression of the infinite. While Romanticism did exhibit a tendency to aestheticize life and literature, the intention behind al-Manfalūṭī's and other so-called 'Romantics'' poeticisation of their texts can hardly be explained as a phenomenon striving to convert the real world into a function of the infinite (the soul, the *Geist*), nor is al-Manfalūṭī's 'poeticality' intended as a means to break up and overcome traditional forms in order to attain internal universality, or pursue similar objectives.

In conclusion, it is preferable to refrain from using terms like 'Romantic' when discussing lachrymosity, as it seems more fitting to draw parallels with similar phenomena in eighteenth-century European literature. However, at first glance, it may seem challenging to extend these parallels to the concept of secularisation, which played a pivotal role in eighteenth-century Europe. After all, is al-Manfalūṭī not closely connected to *religious* thinkers like Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and does he not express explicitly *Islamic* viewpoints in his stories and essays? – Appearances can be deceiving, and it is worth noting that many figures of the European Enlightenment were devout believers as well. Even a key representative of *Empfindsamkeit* like the poet Klopstock extols, in his *Messias*, the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ in solemn hexameters. The clearly religious appearance notwithstandig, signs of secularisation can be discerned in Klopstock's works too, such as his portrayal of earthly friendship as something "holy" or his talking about a "temple" of joy. It should also be mentioned that Klopstock's admirers would gather around him like a religious community rallying around their Messiah, elevating the poet to the status of a 'prophet' and viewing his words as a 'revelation'. Similarly, a closer examination of al-Manfalūṭī's writings reveals several features that can be compared to expressions of secularisation, reminiscent of those just mentioned.

For instance, when al-Manfalūṭī depicts "martyrs", these *shuhadāʾ* are not *shuhadāʾ* who lost their lives *fī sabīl Allāh*, but rather for the sake of faithfulness, virtue, honour, and other noble (but worldly) ideals. Contemporary accounts of individuals memorizing sayings by al-Manfalūṭī frequently employ the term *āyāt* for these sayings – typically used to refer to Quranic "verses", the word appears in a much more 'profane' context here. If it is indeed true that one could find one or more of al-Manfalūṭī's works in almost every household of the time, could this not be seen as a clear manifestation of secularisation, akin to the shift from reliance on a single book, the Bible, to a broader embrace of literature as a whole during the European Enlightenment?

Drawing on Nagi Naguib's observation that 'Manfalūṭism' possessed an "alluring mystical touch" (*lamḥa ṣūfiyya jadhdhāba*), one might even venture to interpret the Manfalūṭiyya as a secularised form of mysticism, analogous to the reading of Pietism as a secularised *Empfindsamkeit*. Both Islamic Ṣūfism and European Pietism, being rooted in personal experience and emotion, stand in contrast to rationalism and dry doctrine. In a similar vein, Manfalūṭism, along with *Empfindsamkeit* and *Sturm und Drang*, represents a reaction against increasing rationalism, emerging as a movement that opposes Reason as venerated by Enlightenment thinkers and Nahḍa reformers alike.