

Introduction: Beyond the Influence Paradigm

The Meccan scholar Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī (1511/12–82) travelled to Istanbul because he wanted the Ottoman administration to dismiss a military commander in Medina, Piri. During his stay in Istanbul in 1558, al-Nahrawālī met many prominent people of the Ottoman court. One of these was Ahmed Çelebi (d. 1563), who was the son of the famous grand mufti Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574) and served as instructor at the Sahn-ı Seman Medrese in Istanbul. Al-Nahrawālī was impressed with Ahmed Çelebi's great erudition and wrote: 'In his magnificent expressions, his purity of speech and his Arab-like qualities, he was similar to his father, inasmuch as he recited to me from memory and with the utmost mastery, chasteness of speech and harmony of sense, a number of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* as well as some verses from his own Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry'.¹ Later, Ahmed Çelebi recited to al-Nahrawālī the following Arabic lines from his quintain or *takhmīs*:²

The pearls of my necklaces o'er the horizons have I strewn
And my instructive thoughts have I set to verse in the path of poetry,
Who, then, would my equal be, when such are my singular gems of poesy?
Time is but one of my odes' reciters;
Whenever I a poem utter, Time becomes a reciter.³

While Ahmed Çelebi had composed the first three lines, the last two lines belonged to al-Mutanabbī (d. 965). Highly impressed with this *takhmīs*, al-Nahrawālī indicated that even the most eloquent Arabs could not create such a work.⁴

Al-Nahrawālī witnessed an imperialist practice of the Ottoman Empire that incorporated works by poets such as al-Mutanabbī into a multilingual repertoire of authors and works that, for poets like Ahmed Çelebi,

constituted the Ottoman canon. Earlier scholarship has adopted an ‘influence paradigm’ and argued that Ottoman literature developed under the strong influence of Arabic and Persian literatures before it modernised under the influence of French literature in the nineteenth century. As Victoria Rowe Holbrook has put it, this paradigm resulted from the significant emphasis that Orientalist philology put on a culture’s origins, hence its valorisation of Arabic and Persian over Turkish:

Among the organizing principles basic to Orientalist philology – following one trajectory of Muslim scholarly practice – was the positing of Islamic culture as a continuity beginning in the seventh century with the advent of the prophet Mohammed’s mission. It proceeded narratively from the study of the Arabic Koran and ‘classic Islamic’ golden age, institutionally producing scholars of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and periods designated by the successive political ascendance of users of each language. The culture of each period was evaluated as an instance of Islamic history to be traced back along a text-chain to its original (=more Islamic) source.⁵

As a result, ‘by virtue of the essentialist value philology assigned to origin, Turkish, being most distant from it, would be least worthy of study’.⁶

Arabic works like al-Mutanabbī’s poems are today often designated as a source of influence under which Ottoman identity took shape, since, as Saliha Paker has noted, ‘the “influence” studies established by [Fuad] Köprülü’s methodology became a major research paradigm for future generations of Turkish scholars’.⁷ This paradigm overlooks many Ottoman Turkish writings that considered these poems a key constituent of Ottoman culture, rather than works of ‘Arab ancestors’ who had a clear cultural superiority over Ottoman writers. These writings did not express a sense of submission and anxiety as they engaged with the Arabic and Persian traditions. Nor did their authors necessarily identify themselves as part of an Arabised or Persianate cultural community due to this engagement. In fact, some of these authors even categorised Arabic and Persian writings as Ottoman. *The Ottoman Canon and the Construction of Arabic and Turkish Literatures* moves beyond this ‘influence paradigm’ to undermine what Christopher Markiewicz has called ‘a twentieth-century concern with nationally circumscribed historiographical fields that privileges the linear evolution of distinct monolingual literary traditions, whether Turkish, Persian, or Arabic’.⁸ Hence, it challenges the tendency to study Ottoman literature as Turkish literature and to overlook what I call the ‘new life’ that al-Mutanabbī’s poems attained in the Ottoman context.

Literary Modernity and the Canon

Arabic and Turkish literary modernities have been defined by a wide range of stylistic and thematic shifts that emerged when writers began adopting Western styles and forms in the nineteenth century.⁹ To provide a reassessment of this definition, my book examines the hitherto neglected engagement of late Ottoman Arabic and Turkish writings with the Ottoman canon. Alexander Jabbari has studied Persian literary histories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to demonstrate that refashionings of the Persianate past have played a fundamental role for Persian literary modernity in both Indian and Iranian contexts. According to Jabbari, these refashionings also caused Persian literature to be ‘structured by a sense of time that is particular to European capitalist modernity’.¹⁰ In other words, modern Persian literary histories have compiled Persian texts in a linear, chronological order and reinforced a stark division between classical and modern Persian literatures. As a result, these histories not only erased the ‘cosmopolitan connections’ that the Persianate texts had with other milieus, but also ‘present[ed] an image of national heritage that appeared to be sui generis, independent, self-contained’.¹¹

In a similar vein, *The Ottoman Canon* will examine how Ottoman texts refashioned Arabic, Turkish and Persian textual traditions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contrary to the typical assumption, not all Ottoman writings defined Ottoman literature as the compilation of Turkish works produced within the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922). Instead, they envisioned an Ottoman canon that included a reservoir of works from diverse periods and cultures, such as al-Mutanabbī’s poems. My book pays attention to the reconfiguration of the relationships among the different linguistic traditions of the multilingual Ottoman canon during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many late Ottoman Turkish writings classified pre-modern Arabic texts as works of distant ancestors rather than as integral constituents of this canon. Authors of late Ottoman Arabic works categorised the same pre-modern Arabic texts as the classics of their heritage, while they also translated or wrote about late Ottoman Turkish writings. My book will present historically contextualised close readings of late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Arabic and Turkish works from authors such as Ziya Pasha (1829–80), Ahmet Midhat (1844–1912) and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987). Thus, it challenges the prevalent view that classical Arabic heritage served as the root from which modern Arabic literature naturally grew.

While *The Ottoman Canon* calls for moving beyond what it calls the ‘influence paradigm’, it does not claim that Ottoman poets never engaged

with Arabic and Persian works. Orit Bashkin and Sooyong Kim have described the features of what they call ‘an Ottoman literati’ in discussing Evliya Çelebi (1611–c. 1682), author of the famous seventeenth-century travelogue *Seyahatname* (*Book of Travels*): ‘Evliya himself was a Muslim and an Ottoman literati, Turkophone in speech and received an education appropriate to his religious affiliation and social rank, which entailed a training in Arabic and Persian to the extent that he could give instruction at least in their elevated varieties. In addition, he was expected to engage with the respective literatures and as a testament to that, the *Seyahatname* is replete with Arabic and particularly Persian literary references’.¹² According to Kim, members of the Ottoman literati needed to have certain qualifications. They had to be Muslim, work for the Ottoman administration in upper-level positions and become familiar with the Arabic, Persian and Turkish literary traditions.¹³ These members generally did not feel a sense of anxiety when they drew on Arabic and Persian works. In fact, the Ottoman poet Nefi (d. 1635) claimed that his Persian verses were so advanced that they ‘[s]pread tremor in the realms of India and Persia’.¹⁴ While poets such as Nefi wrote in Persian or even drew on the Persian canon, they did not necessarily consider themselves part of a Persianate community.

In contrast, Halide Edib [Adıvar] (1884–1964) captured ‘the influence paradigm’ as she described the impact of Persian literature on Ottoman authors:

The philosophical and mystical beauty of Persian literature with its exquisite delicacy of form made me feel that there is a spirituality and significance in form when it achieves the heights which it undoubtedly has in Persian literature. But its very perfection is a danger to any other literature and art which fall under its sway. It acts on them very powerfully and always in the direction of destroying originality. The admirers and imitators of the Persian culture were entirely enslaved and chained by its form as well as its spirit, and any slavery to form creates rigid and conventional artists. Once caught in such a formal school, any new and freer personal expression of beauty is stifled and killed. And this was what happened to the old Turkish literature.¹⁵

Here, Halide Edib’s writings posit Persian literature as a source of influence the perfection of which enslaved Turkish literature. Like many other authors of her time, Halide Edib reflected on issues of sovereignty: Turkish literature never could have declared independence because it remained under the influence of Persian literature. Halide Edib also generated a distinction between what she called an ‘old Turkish literature’ and a ‘new Turkish literature’. Therefore, as I argue throughout this book, attempts to

reinforce a strong boundary between ‘old literature’ and ‘new literature’ have habituated critics to study Turkish literature as a category that has always existed throughout the centuries.

Halide Edib’s observations capture the epistemological shifts that shaped the late Ottoman period. Both the interviewer and authors who feature in *Diyorlar ki* (They are Saying So, 1918) – a set of interviews that Ruşen Eşref [Ünaydın] (1892–1959) conducted with various authors such as Nigar Hanım (1862–1918), Sami Paşazade Sezai (1860–1936), Halid Ziya [Uşaklıgil] (1865–1945), Rıza Tevfik (1869–1949) and Cenab Şahabeddin (1871–1934) – frequently used the terms ‘old literature’ (*eski edebiyat*, *edebiyat-ı kadime*) and ‘new literature’ (*edebiyat-ı cedide*).¹⁶ Here, ‘old literature’ refers to the classical Ottoman poetry that had developed under the Arabic and Persian influence, while the ‘new literature’ refers to the literature that started to ‘modernise and rejuvenate’ in the nineteenth century due to its engagement with the West. The prevalent assumption that the nineteenth century witnessed a transition from ‘old literature’ to ‘new literature’ has caused critics to think that ‘Arabic literature’ and ‘Turkish literature’ had existed throughout the centuries; they merely ‘modernised’ and ‘renewed’ themselves during the late Ottoman period. Nevertheless, *The Ottoman Canon* will demonstrate that there were not necessarily two distinct monolingual literary traditions of Arabic and Turkish that awaited rejuvenation as ‘pioneers’ such as Namık Kemal (1840–88) or Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī (1858–1930) solely ‘modernised’ their respective national heritages.

As critics have maintained a stark boundary between ‘classical literature’ and ‘new’ or ‘modern literature’, they overlooked many pre-Ottoman poets’ ‘afterlives’ in the Ottoman context. ‘Afterlife’ has become one of the most widely used concepts in Comparative Literature over the past few decades.¹⁷ The discipline has thus steered attention to the new receptions, or ‘new lives’, that a text attains in a new context and moved beyond an almost exclusive focus on a text’s original context, or its ‘source culture’, as the sole milieu in which it should be studied. In a similar vein, my book pays attention to the ‘new life’ that pre-Ottoman Arabic and Persian works adopted in the Ottoman context. Ultimately, *The Ottoman Canon* argues that, as Ottoman writers incorporated poets from pre-Ottoman times, such as al-Mutanabbī, into the Ottoman canon, they generated an ‘Ottoman al-Mutanabbī’ in their works.

The institutional divisions that Holbrook has identified as the impact of Orientalist philology has also caused critics to overlook al-Mutanabbī’s Ottoman afterlife and instead study al-Mutanabbī within the context of the classical Arabic canon only. Instead, my work studies pre-Ottoman poets

such as Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr (d. c. 646/47) as part of the multilingual Ottoman canon. Samuel Hodgkin has analysed how Soviet writers contributed to ‘the replacement of a Persianate canon, a set of literary practices and model texts, with *the* Persian canon, a pantheon of heroic writers and a discursive “heritage” defined in relation to the broader field of world literature’.¹⁸ I observe a similar dynamic in late Ottoman Arabic and Turkish works that conceptualise Arabic and Turkish literatures as national literatures which are comparable with and translatable to other national literatures of the world. This conceptualisation could not have taken place without the reassessments of the Ottoman canon during the late and post-Ottoman periods.

To draw attention to the new afterlives that pre-Ottoman works attained in the Ottoman context, I depict the Ottoman canon as a ‘reservoir’ in order to emphasise that texts can have multiple affiliations which are not solely circumscribed by the time and place of their production. The Ottoman reservoir includes Islamicate texts circulating from different source cultures and time-periods, such as the pre-Islamic poems of *al-Mu‘allaqāt* and works by Firdavsi (c. 940–c. 1020–26). Saliha Paker has built on Anthony Pym’s concept of ‘interculture’ – ‘beliefs and practices found in intersections or overlaps of cultures, where people combine something of two or more cultures at once’ – and argued that ‘[Ottoman intercultural] would have to be conceptualized in the intersection of three cultures (Persian, Arabic and Turkish), as the trilingual, tricultural site of operation of Ottoman poet-translators’.¹⁹ Paker has also emphasised that Ottoman intercultural ‘should be distinguished from the generally held notion of a “common Islamic culture”’.²⁰

The Ottoman Canon builds on and extends Paker’s work. As my book will examine what Paker has called ‘Ottoman poet-translators’s’ engagement with Arabic and Persian sources, it moves beyond the tendency to study the works of these poet-translators only. The earlier scholarship has examined the Arabic and Persian works that ‘Ottoman-era authors’ produced; for example, it has studied Köprülüzaade Abdullah Pasha’s (d. AH 1148 [1735/36]) Arabic works,²¹ or Nefi’s Persian poems.²² *The Ottoman Canon* emphasises that critics should not only study the Arabic and Persian works that these writers composed; they should also examine the new ‘meanings’ or ‘afterlives’ that pre-Ottoman and/or non-Ottoman Arabic and Persian texts accrued in the Ottoman context. Furthermore, my book emphasises that many members of the Ottoman literati did not engage with Arabic, Persian and Turkish *languages* only. They also engaged with specific *poets and texts* from the Arabic and Persian linguistic traditions that earlier scholarship has categorised as a source of influence rather than as a stream feeding the Ottoman reservoir.

Introduction

This shift of emphasis from an almost exclusive focus on languages to specific poets and texts brings attention to a rather obvious and yet sometimes neglected key point: Ottoman interculture does not encompass all Arabic and Persian texts. Yet, the prevalent view that Ottoman literature drew on the Arabic and Persian traditions has sometimes reinforced the assumption that the Ottoman literati merely accepted the Arabic and Persian canons as givens. However, they selectively appropriated works from the Arabic and Persian traditions and excluded many others as they forged the Ottoman canon.

The canon, often defined as ‘a pantheon of high-cultural works from the past’,²³ has received significant attention in literary studies, because scholarship on canons has demonstrated that a text’s value significantly depends on extrinsic factors rather than on its innate high quality. These extrinsic factors include audiences and institutions such as universities that consume, disseminate and make value judgments on these texts. Ottoman Studies has also witnessed a rising interest in canonisation over the past few years. For example, Sooyong Kim has analysed Zati’s (1471–1546) poetry to reveal the ‘fundamentally contingent and constructed process of Ottoman canon-making’.²⁴ Likewise, Tahera Qutbuddin has analysed the ‘Ottoman canon of Arabic philology and literature at the turn of the [sixteenth] century’.²⁵ In her analysis of Mihri Hatun’s (c. 1460–c. 1506) works, Didem Havlioğlu has observed that the sixteenth century witnessed ‘the self-construction of the early modern Ottoman literati through many textual maneuvers’.²⁶

Like any canon, the Ottoman canon is an imaginary construct. As John Guillory has noted, ‘the canon is never other than an imaginary list; it never appears as a complete and uncontested list in any particular time and place, not even in the form of the omnibus anthology, which remains a selection from a larger list which does not itself appear anywhere in the anthology’s table of contents’.²⁷ The canon may have an imaginary character; in other words, no single work captures ‘the Ottoman canon’. However, its imaginary character does not mean that the canon has no tangible impact or that the canon simply does not exist. The canon shapes the discussions and literary biographies (*tezkiye*) of the early modern Ottoman period; anthologies shape the decisions, selections and exclusions that Ottoman authors exerted in their writings. Conversely, these authors ‘imagined’ the canon as they discussed and quoted the authors and texts they deemed of high value. Although no work can provide a list of texts that constitutes the Ottoman canon, one can have ‘access to the canon’,²⁸ as Guillory has also put it, since one gives a close reading of anthologies and debates in Ottoman texts to identify texts that authors deem valuable.

The sense of imaginary unity that a canon upholds necessitates the ‘deracination’ of its components from their immediate historical context. For example, in order for al-Mutanabbī to become an ‘Ottoman poet’, he needed to be taken out of his original ‘classical Arabic context’ and instead become transplanted into an Ottoman context in which his verses bolstered Ahmed Çelebi’s reputation. Here, al-Mutanabbī became a part of what Trevor Ross calls an ‘imaginary packaging’, since canons as ‘imaginary packagings’ link texts from highly disparate milieus.²⁹ Only when late Ottoman authors no longer saw Arabic and Persian texts as part of the Ottoman ‘imaginary packaging’ could Ottoman literature start to be envisioned as the precursor of modern Turkish literature.

Throughout this book, I use the term ‘Ottoman literati’ rather than ‘Ottoman authors’ when I refer to the circumscribed community that Paker, Havlioğlu, Kim and Bashkin have described: Turkophone people (almost always men) who engaged with Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetic traditions and often held high administrative positions in the empire. Therefore, while Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī may be classified as an Ottoman author, he does not belong to the Ottoman literati. ‘The Ottoman canon’ which I will discuss throughout the present work refers to the ‘imaginary packaging’ of authors and texts to which the members of the Ottoman literati alluded in their writings. The Ottoman canon, like the community that upholds it, is far from stable, and shifting socioeconomic contexts have always generated vast changes in what this canon constitutes. At the same time, many of the texts that I will examine bestow a sense of permanence and unity upon what they call the ‘Ottoman language’ or ‘Ottoman literature’. Therefore, I use the term ‘the Ottoman canon’ to refer to an imaginary textual tradition that, according to many members of the Ottoman literati, seems to have little, if ever, changed throughout the centuries and achieved to consolidate an elite and exclusionist community of letters.

As it points to the key distinction between the Ottoman literati and Ottoman authors, *The Ottoman Canon* contributes to recent works that have paid attention to ‘Ottoman Arabic texts’ – that is, Arabic works produced in the Ottoman era. These works make up for the earlier neglect of the Ottoman period in Arabic Studies, which has examined the Ottoman era as an age of decadence. Recent works have undertaken the highly fundamental task of examining Ottoman Arabic texts. For example, Esther-Miriam Wagner’s edited volume *A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic* came out in 2021.³⁰ Similarly, in 2022 Ghayde Ghraoui and Hacı Osman Gündüz (Ozzy) have edited an issue of *Philological Encounters*, titled ‘The Ascendent Field: Critical Engagements with Ottoman Arabic Literature’.³¹ As my book builds

on the burgeoning field of ‘Ottoman Arabic literature’, it also pays attention to the Ottoman canon in order to study ‘non-Ottoman Arabic texts’ as part of the Ottoman cultural landscape. I will show diverse instances in which these texts attained a ‘new life’ in Ottoman Turkish writings, such as Ziya Pasha’s *Harabat* (AH 1291–92 [1874/75–75/76]) and Süleyman Nazif’s (1869–1927) *Firak-ı Irak* (1918). I will compare these works with Arabic texts such as Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī’s (1875–1945) and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s writings that refashioned pre-modern Arabic texts as pedestals on which modern Arab identity stood. As recent work on Ottoman Arabic literature has shown, authors such as al-Ḥakīm often overlooked this literature because they believed that Arabs suffered from a cultural decline during the Ottoman period. At the same time, *The Ottoman Canon* points to a key point that recent scholarship on the Ottoman-era Arabic texts has overlooked: although the Ottoman ‘imaginary packaging’ in the works of the Ottoman literati includes many Arabic texts, it excludes almost all works of ‘Ottoman Arabic literature’.

As it points out various forms of exclusions, *The Ottoman Canon* builds on Arif Camoglu, who has called for ‘[u]nearthening the imperial epistemology that permeates nineteenth-century Ottoman writing’.³² As the earlier scholarship has focused almost exclusively on how Ottoman Turkish authors engaged with Western European imperialism, it has tended to overlook the imperialistic and expansionist discourse that also characterises their works. Camoglu, instead, has steered attention to this expansionist discourse in order to ‘activat[e] Ottoman literature as a zone of interrogation for the critique of imperialism in literary studies’.³³

The Ottoman Canon will also discuss the exclusion of women from the canons, both Ottoman and national. For example, as Boutheina Khaldi has demonstrated, Mayy Ziyāda (1886–1941) faced numerous misogynistic remarks. Many people assumed that only a man could have written what Ziyāda wrote and sometimes ‘went so far as to believe that she might be hiring a male writer to write for her or be plagiarizing’.³⁴ Yet, Ziyāda also received immense praise for her work during her lifetime.³⁵ Women writers such as Ziyāda did not necessarily remain marginalised within literary circles, even if they frequently encountered misogynistic attitudes. However, *The Ottoman Canon* will show that it was often the male authors who either saw themselves or were described by others as ‘pioneers’ who modernised their national literatures. They also thought that their national community needed to have or even ‘possess’ a literature so that it could become like other advanced nations. The writers I will examine in this book rarely expressed a strong skepticism towards the very notion

of literature itself, like the notion one finds in the following words from another woman writer, Halide Edib: ‘Whenever I see or read of a great military hero performing his deeds and of history or literature recording them, I wonder in the same way, not about the children only, but about the simple grown-up people as well. If only history would refuse to record martial glories and literature and art to immortalize them, there might be some semblance of peace and relative human happiness in the world’.³⁶ Women authors played key roles in the literary circles of the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods. At the same time, *The Ottoman Canon* will focus mostly on male writers, since, as Chapter 2 will examine more in depth, it was often male authors who put forth the current paradigms and assumptions that solidified the institutional divisions that Holbrook has also observed in Middle Eastern Studies.

Some recent works that have emphasised the need to do away with the question of the canon and move beyond an analysis of people who have been studied as figures who ‘pioneered’ modernity movements have redirected attention to the numerous linguistic traditions that circulated widely within the late Ottoman Empire, such as Greek, Armenian, Karamanlica (Turkish written in Greek letters) and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino).³⁷ They have thus studied texts by women and/or non-Muslim writers, such as Fatma Fahrünnisa (1876–1969) and Evangelinos Misailidis (1820–90), and examined the issues of multilingualism and boundary transgressions that characterised the period. While acknowledging the crucial need for more similar works, this book focuses on canonised Ottoman intellectuals who have been studied as ‘pioneers’ and generated a rather exclusionist understanding of Ottoman literature and identity. The exclusionist Ottoman reservoir that shaped the cultural vision of authors such as Ziya Pasha does not capture the linguistically and culturally rich literary landscape of the empire that the recent scholarship has laid out. Much like this scholarship that has overcome the nationalistic frameworks which shaped Ottoman Studies by mapping out the diverse linguistic traditions circulating within the empire, my work serves the same aim through another approach. It demonstrates that the Ottoman literary reservoir includes works written outside the Ottoman territories and even before the establishment of the empire.

Instead of merely mapping out the literary networks of the Ottoman Empire or listing similarities between the Arabic and Turkish literatures, my book calls for examining how the terms ‘Arabic literature’ and ‘Turkish literature’ have emerged and eventually shifted in meaning. I here build on recent works that reveal nineteenth-century epistemological transformations which have shaped how we think of the terms ‘*adab*’ and

‘Arabic literature’ today. For example, although the term ‘*adab*’ initially referred to the compilation of all works from diverse genres that made a person educated and moral, it began to refer only to fictional works such as poems and novels starting in the nineteenth century.³⁸ Furthermore, as Chapter 2 will discuss in depth, recent scholarship by critics such as Karim Mattar, Yaseen Noorani, Shaden M. Tageldin and Michael Allan has demonstrated how Western frameworks transformed the ways in which critics have studied Arabic literature.³⁹ Likewise, M. Kaya Bilgegil has demonstrated that, although the terms ‘*edeb*’ or ‘*edebiyat*’ corresponded to a wide range of knowledge areas, they started to be used as literature in the modern sense only in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ My book reveals another kind of epistemological shift: it proposes that the conceptualisation of the histories of Arabic and Turkish literature as two linear trajectories in the nineteenth century could not have taken place without reassessments of the Ottoman canon.

A canon as an imaginary list provides a sense of imaginary unity for the community that affiliates with this canon. Therefore, debates on the canon ultimately shape debates on the communal selves whose boundaries become reinforced as they affiliate with the ‘imaginary packagings’ that canons constitute. Walter Feldman has noted that the moments in which new canons were consolidated in the Ottoman Empire corresponded to those time-periods in which a sense of self emerged: ‘[A] consciousness of “self” coincided with the need to create standards and canons that were more amenable to centralization, whether toward the state in the seventeenth century, or toward a nationalistically oriented academia at the beginning of the twentieth’.⁴¹ Therefore, the construction of Arabic and Turkish literatures that involved reassessments of the multilingual Ottoman canon took shape in conjunction with the construction of a new sense of communal self – a bounded, modern national subject.

For example, Mervat F. Hatem has observed that a key marker of the transition ‘from an Ottoman centered community into an increasingly narrow national one in nineteenth-century Egypt’ was ‘a change in the power relations between Turkish and Arabic (and to a lesser extent Persian) as literary and official languages’.⁴² Turkish still presented an important cultural capital in Egypt in the nineteenth century, because many school textbooks were published in Turkish and Turkish was a language of literary expression.⁴³ At the same time, many members of the Arabic-speaking intelligentsia obtained important positions in the Ottoman government. Since most people in Egypt spoke Arabic, the Arabic language generated a sense of social solidarity among Egyptians and ultimately laid the basis for Arab cultural nationalism.⁴⁴

A study of these linguistic and cultural shifts will also lead to a reassessment of how scholars study classical Arabic and Ottoman literatures. *The Ottoman Canon* undermines the current scholarship's tendency to study Ottoman literature as a precursor of modern Turkish literature or to examine the history of Arabic and Turkish literature as two parallel trajectories that did not flow together within the Ottoman literary reservoir. The re-assignment of the literary traditions that fill up the Ottoman reservoir to distinct cultural and political communities constitute a shared feature of what has been studied separately as Arabic and Turkish literary modernities. Veli N. Yashin has noted that the late Ottoman period witnessed philological practices that aimed to organise the scattered works of different languages within a linear historical trajectory, hence reinforcing the division between classical and modern literatures.⁴⁵ As Arabic and Turkish writings of the late Ottoman period organised their respective linguistic tradition in a strictly historical order, they had to reflect on an Ottoman canon in which their tradition became intertwined with other Islamicate traditions.

By fleshing out characteristics of the Ottoman literary reservoir, my book provides new perspectives on the study of the *Tanzimat*, a period of statewide reforms and cultural transformations in the late Ottoman Empire, and *al-nahḍa*, a period of Arab cultural 'awakening'. Many historians of the Ottoman Empire often use the term '*Tanzimat*' (literally reorganisation) to refer to the period between 1839 and 1876 when the empire undertook many political and cultural reforms due to the growing Western influence.⁴⁶ While critics have often used the term '*al-nahḍa*' to refer to political, cultural and literary transformations throughout the Arab world that emerged in the nineteenth century under increasing Western influence,⁴⁷ Tarek El-Ariss has examined the *nahḍa* as a speech act and performance.⁴⁸ He has demonstrated that many intellectuals across the Arab world have actually used the term '*nahḍa*' to refer to a series of interconnected issues such as change, modernisation and civilisation, rather than to a delimited time-period or a set of texts. By foregrounding the numerous trials and contradictions within *nahḍa* texts, El-Ariss's work has undermined the typical perception of the *nahḍa* as a 'unified and homogeneous project'.⁴⁹

Recent scholarship on the *Tanzimat* has amplified the linguistic diversity of the empire's literary landscape for providing new perspectives on the *Tanzimat*; however, most scholars still tend to view the *Tanzimat* as a homogenous modernisation project within a delimited time-period. Yet, the term '*Tanzimat*' has also been used as a speech act in those Turkish writings that employed the term to evoke a series of interconnected themes and ideas. For example, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–62), one of the

most influential figures in the field of Turkish literature, personified the *Tanzimat* and depicted it as a subject. After noting that the ‘Turkish subject’ transformed in the late Ottoman period, he wrote: ‘This is what the *Tanzimat* did’.⁵⁰ *The Ottoman Canon* will thus examine the *Tanzimat* and *al-nahḍa* also as speech acts that contributed to the consolidation of autonomous, national selves, such as ‘the Turkish subject’ that Tanpınar discussed.

Methodology and the Historical Context

To undermine attempts to assign texts to a single period and culture, *The Ottoman Canon* will often follow the methodology of ‘literary thinking and a practice of close reading’, which, as Selim Kuru has pointed out, can also serve as a possible future direction for Ottoman Studies, which has largely shunned these approaches:

Literature defies periodization because it will never belong to any given period – no matter how carefully crafted by literary historians. Literature belongs to, if not overflows from, the grand arc of a language. Consequently, literary thinking and practice of close reading of documentary and literary sources, which are largely absent in current Ottoman history-writing, may be an antidote to the pitfalls of strict periodization – pitfalls such as the use of the fraught term ‘early modern’.⁵¹

I thus use the methodology of close reading to undermine the tendency to assign texts to one historical context only and to overcome the strict periodisations that have characterised the fields of Arabic literature and Ottoman Studies.

Concerning the distinction between history and literature in terms of their methodological approaches, Sharon Marcus has noted: ‘If one can identify the core method of any discipline, then the method of theory is the critique of existing assumptions; the method of history is generalization based on immersion in the largest and widest range of sources possible; and the method of literary and visual criticism is interpretation based on close reading’.⁵² The discipline of history has shaped the main methodological approaches in Ottoman Studies. As Alexis Wick has put it, ‘[t]he disciplines of history and Orientalism have shared from the outset a distrust of theory and philosophy, a legacy that Ottoman studies, perhaps more than any other field, has inherited’.⁵³ Due to this legacy, Ottomanists do not engage much in self-reflection, as they become largely preoccupied with ‘the immense treasure trove that are the Ottoman archives, containing a wealth of continuous documentary that remains across time and

space probably unequaled in the world'.⁵⁴ Perhaps due to the impact of the discipline of history and its methodological inclinations on Ottoman Studies, Ottomanists have often studied events and texts of the Ottoman period and overlooked the new life that pre-Ottoman works took on in the Ottoman context.

At the same time, the past few years have witnessed a rise in works in Ottoman Studies that emphasise the need for more collaborations between historians and literary critics, suggesting that the future direction of Ottoman Studies for which Kuru has called will likely take place. For example, Monica M. Ringer and Etienne E. Charrière, the editors of *Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity*, have noted that they asked for contributions from both historians and literary critics for their project: 'Historians often use novels as illustrations – as textual "images" that accompany analysis of historical context. [...] Literary scholars, on the other hand, are much more concerned with examining literary technique and applying literary analysis'.⁵⁵

All methodological choices come with a cost. As *The Ottoman Canon* gives historically contextualised close readings of late Ottoman and post-Ottoman literary works, it does not provide a comprehensive historical overview of the institutions that contributed to the consolidation of the imperial and national canons.⁵⁶ Nor does it pinpoint the 'exact' historical moment when these canons came into existence. While my book touches on various institutions such as medreses (Introduction), the Rüşdiye schools (Chapter 4) and Istanbul University (Chapter 6), which all played a major role in the consolidations of canons, further research in history and sociology can shed light on the sociological and historical factors that culminated in the solidification of these canons.

At the same time, literary analysis provides significant advantages in order to observe how a canon links works from highly disparate times and locations – that is, its 'imaginary' character. I thus 'have access to the canon', as my book points out how late Ottoman and post-Ottoman texts discuss poets and works from pre-modern times while they also respond to the shifting dynamics of their times. Close readings provide in-depth case-studies that demonstrate how authors who have been studied as 'pioneers' of their respective national traditions generated diverse 'imaginary packagings' as they made literary comparisons and wrote about literature. Furthermore, rather than assigning the authors whom I study to a single historical and literary movement, a close reading fleshes out the contradictions and paradoxes that characterise the works under study. I point to these contradictions without feeling a need to resolve them, to show that it is not possible to pinpoint the 'exact' moment when the Ottoman

canon disappeared and national literatures emerged. As I observe certain cultural shifts, such as the tendency of late Ottoman works to categorise pre-modern texts as ‘classics’, *The Ottoman Canon* also uses close reading as a methodology to lay out the complexity of the texts it examines.

At first, it may seem an unlikely choice for a work on the Ottoman canon to perform close readings of late rather than early modern Ottoman works. As Kuru, Kim and Havlioğlu have demonstrated, the sixteenth century witnessed the consolidation of the Ottoman literati and the multilingual Ottoman canon that they ‘imagined’. However, I focus on the late Ottoman period, as this canon becomes visible especially when more authors criticised what they called the ‘old literature’ and the canon that this ‘old literature’ stood for, because ‘[l]ike everything that passes, the canon is easier to see in its twilight’.⁵⁷ Late Ottoman and post-Ottoman works that often called for a ‘new literature’ allow critics many opportunities ‘to have access’ to the Ottoman canon as they can observe the languages, texts and authors that this canon brought together.

The close readings that *The Ottoman Canon* conducts also pay significant attention to historical and socioeconomic contexts. As a result, *The Ottoman Canon* elaborates on important similarities between modern Arabic and Turkish literatures, because many authors of late Ottoman Arabic and Turkish literatures also responded to a common set of economic, cultural and political transformations that shaped the entire empire.⁵⁸ While the Ottoman Empire had conquered much of the Arab world by 1517, political and cultural reforms in the empire during the nineteenth century resulted in a state centralisation that intensified interactions between the Arabic and Turkish cultures. The imperial administration also had a growing presence in the Arab lands, due to various factors such as the pan-Islamist policies of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), vast territorial losses on the Balkans and an expanding network of railways and telegraphs. Authors of both Arabic and Turkish literatures during the late Ottoman period confronted similar socioeconomic changes, including the rise of a merchant class and the privatisation of state land.⁵⁹ These authors also confronted the rise of Western imperialism and sometimes claimed that the West had political, military, scientific and even cultural superiority over the Islamic world in their writings. This confrontation with Western European hegemony led many writers to develop a nostalgia for medieval and early modern times, as they believed that Islamic civilisation had been superior to Western civilisation during these periods.

Furthermore, *The Ottoman Canon* directs attention to travels and textual circulations as key factors contributing to the formation of national subjects and the literatures to which they seek claim. As *nahḍa* authors wrote

about their Arabic heritage (*al-turāth*), they met in person or wrote about Ottoman Turkish writers. Numerous *nahḍa* authors also spent a portion of their lives in Istanbul. In a similar vein, many late Ottoman Turkish authors lived and worked in administrative positions in Alexandria, Baghdad, Damascus, or Beirut. These authors also wrote about the history of the Arabs, as they travelled to the Ottoman Arab provinces and read Orientalist works. During their travels, they may have become more aware of the discrepancy between the Arabic that they used and the Arabic that the people who lived in these provinces spoke. Even though these authors may have had a solid reading knowledge of Arabic, this does not necessarily mean that they could easily communicate in Arabic. For example, Halide Edib noted that '[t]he Arabic [she] had learned from books did not help [her] much'⁶⁰ when she was in Alexandria. Likewise, when she was in Syria, she talked 'to [an Arab] in broken Arabic'.⁶¹ Cenab Şahabeddin also noted that the Arabic he had learned did not help him much during his travels in Alexandria.⁶² The diverse encounters that travels and textual circulations generated contributed to the consolidation of national subjects. As Mary Louise Pratt has put it, '[a] "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other'.⁶³ Although the Ottoman Empire had significant differences from the colonial contexts that Pratt's work examines, my study will also demonstrate that it is useful and even necessary to conduct a comparative study of Arabic and Turkish literary modernities, because both modernities were shaped by the contacts and encounters that late Ottoman travels and textual circulations generated.

Since many Ottoman writings substantially engaged with classical Persian works, there is a clear need for more studies that reassess Persian and Turkish literary modernities by studying their engagement with the Ottoman reservoir.⁶⁴ Still, *The Ottoman Canon* mainly focuses on late Ottoman Arabic and Turkish works, due to their similar historical and socioeconomic contexts, to put emphasis on the entangled processes that led to the formation of Arab and Turkish national subjects. Furthermore, as Chapters 1 and 5 will discuss in greater depth, late Ottoman authors showed a substantial engagement with Orientalist works, which posited Arabic culture and literature as the 'origin' that later 'Oriental' civilisations copied. Even authors who complained about the Persian influence on Ottoman literature ultimately viewed Arabic literature as the ultimate 'source' that had influenced Persian literature and Arabic texts as works that 'Arabised' Ottoman writers. Therefore, even though Persian literature has been claimed to have had a substantial influence on Ottoman literature, many debates on what it means to be an Ottoman revolved around

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discussions on Arabic literature and Arab identity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although recent scholarship in *Nahḍa* Studies has undermined the typical assumption that modernity was simply borrowed from the West, it often did not elaborate on the diverse manners in which *nahḍa* intellectuals engaged with Ottoman Turkish literature. Intellectuals who have been studied as pioneers of Arab cultural nationalism often expressed discontent with the Turkish or Ottoman political hegemony; however, this discontentment did not deter them from engaging with the Ottoman literary reservoir in various ways. As *The Ottoman Canon* will show, authors such as Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī (1846–1906), in fact, considered themselves pioneers who would give a new direction to the Ottoman Empire in their writings that included important advice about how the empire should modernise.

Late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Arabic writings often complained about the Ottoman political hegemony over Arab lands. Ulrich W. Haarmann and Şükran Fazlıoğlu have revealed that many Arabic writings of the late Ottoman Empire depicted Turks as despots.⁶⁵ Ussama Makdisi and Selim Deringil have demonstrated that the central Istanbul administration infringed on diverse parts of the empire, such as Beirut and Baghdad, more than ever in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁶ Yet, these political shifts do not necessarily suggest that an Istanbul centre generated a full cultural hegemony over the Arab world. In other words, political power hierarchies among different linguistic and ethnic communities in the Ottoman Empire did not neatly map onto the power hierarchies that shaped the empire's literary and cultural domains. Therefore, *The Ottoman Canon* also examines those Arabic writings that translated or discussed Ottoman Turkish works in order to further nuance our understanding of the power dynamics that shaped the Ottoman cultural and literary landscape. At this point, it is important to emphasise that *The Ottoman Canon* will not provide a comprehensive overview of 'the Arab image' in late Ottoman Turkish writings since it will focus on Turkish works from a relatively circumscribed community. While, as my book will show, members of the circle of Ottoman literati often made discriminatory remarks about the empire's ethnic and religious groups, including Arabs, further research may point to diverse representations from different communities on which my book does not dwell much.

Outline of the Book

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, *The Ottoman Canon* consists of six chapters. The first two chapters will examine the reassessment

of the relationships among the linguistic heritages that constituted the Ottoman reservoir. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will demonstrate that the increasing mobility of people and texts in the late Ottoman Empire led to new interpretations of Ottoman culture and identity. Chapter 6 will show that the Ottoman reservoir could find new embodiments in Arabic and Turkish novels after the empire's demise.

Chapter 1 will examine Ziya Pasha's (1829–80) famous anthology of Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry, *Harabat* (Tavern, AH 1291–92 [1874/75–75/76]) and the anthology's introduction that provides a comparative history of these traditions. I pay attention to two metaphors – ocean and spring – that stand for different kinds of canon formation circumscribing the texts that literary communities choose to preserve and remember. *Harabat* asserts that Arabic, Persian and Turkish traditions mix so perfectly that they form, in Ziya Pasha's words, an 'ocean'. I use the term 'reservoir' to designate what Ziya Pasha called an ocean, because this ocean encompasses works from various 'streams' – that is, languages – while it also has strict boundaries, as it excludes works such as folk poems or Greek texts that also circulated in the Ottoman Empire. Later, the chapter will demonstrate that many literary histories written after *Harabat* claim that Ottoman literature could not surpass and merely imitated the Arabic and Persian literatures which had set the standard for eloquence and poetics. They also describe Arabic and Persian literatures as springs (*menba*) that ultimately nourished Ottoman literature. Despite key differences between *Harabat* and later literary histories, Chapter 1 will also undermine the typical scholarly view that *Harabat* presents one of the last examples of the classical Ottoman tradition. Although Ziya Pasha's praise for classical Ottoman poetry may be interpreted as a reaction against modernity, *Harabat* provides new perspectives on the relationships among linguistic traditions that constituted the Ottoman literary reservoir. To demonstrate how *Harabat* refashions the poetic heritage, the chapter will present a close reading of the Arabic poems that *Harabat* quotes and an excerpt from its introduction that provides a history of Arabic literature.

Chapter 2 will examine literary histories from the late Ottoman period. In particular, I focus on the literary histories by Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914), whose writings have played a formative role for the field of Arabic literature. This chapter will argue that late Ottoman literary histories often depicted the histories of Arabic and Turkish literatures as two parallel trajectories that did not intersect with each other, contributing to the current conceptualisation of the classical Arabic heritage as the root from which modern Arabic literature grew. I will offer a close reading of an article in the famous journal that Zaydān edited, *al-Hilāl*, on Namık Kemal

(1840–88), who is often studied as a pioneer of modern Turkish literature. The article describes Namık Kemal as the pioneer of a modern ‘Turkish *nahḍa*’. By describing Namık Kemal as a pioneer, the article renders the Ottoman cultural landscape familiar for Arabic readers and overlooks Namık Kemal’s vision for a new Ottoman literature in which Arabic works played a key role. I will then focus on another article in which Zaydān writes about ‘the history of Turkish language arts’ (*tārīkh ādāb al-lughā al-turkiyya*) and point out the similarities between this article and one of the most canonised works in the field of Arabic literature, *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughā al-‘arabiyya* (The History of Arabic Language Arts, first serialised in *al-Hilāl* in 1894–1895 and eventually published as a multi-volume work in 1911–14). These similarities reinforce the depiction of Arabic and Turkish literatures as akin to mirror-images that look alike but never intersect in the Ottoman cultural reservoir. To lay out his vision of modern Arab identity, Jurjī Zaydān had to reassess not only the history of Arabic literature, but also the multilingual Ottoman reservoir. The second section will examine the use of the term ‘classics’ or ‘classical’ in the literary histories by Jurjī Zaydān, Rūḥī al-Khālidi (1864–1913) and İsmail Hakkı [Eldem] (1871–1944). It will demonstrate that these works established a linear historical trajectory for both Arabic and Turkish literatures. In particular, they depicted Arabic literature as a source of influence the origin of which predated the emergence of Turkish literature, rather than as an integral influx into the Ottoman reservoir.

Chapter 3 will pay attention to the dissolution of old economic, ethnic, religious and cultural hierarchies during the late Ottoman period. In particular, it examines the reception of two key markers of modernisation that became prevalent in late Ottoman society because of this dissolution: the tarboosh headgear and the novel genre. As some of these markers such as the tarboosh signified a more egalitarian vision of Ottoman identity, various late Ottoman writings depicted both tarboosh and novel as a means of disguise. For example, they feature characters who wander in disguise after they put on a tarboosh and describe the novel as a piece of clothing that old texts, such as *The Thousand and One Nights*, can put on. Therefore, they reinforce the impression that the new markers of modernity signified shifts in appearance rather than in essence. As a case-study, I will perform a close reading of *Hasan Mellah* (AH 1291 [1874/75]) by Ahmet Midhat (1844–1912) and *What ‘Īsā ibn Hishām Told Us* (*Ḥadīth ‘Īsā ibn Hishām*, 1898–1902) by Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī (1858–1930). This chapter will point out a paradox: while late Ottoman writers claimed that new markers of modernity, such as the novel genre, did not signify the dissolution of the cultural and political order that the Ottoman reservoir

served, the material conditions of their societies prepared the ground for the social displacements that generated a reassessment of this reservoir. I will ultimately examine what late Ottoman works ‘camouflage’, which helps me focus attention on the shared socioeconomic context that renders a comparative study of the construction of Arabic and Turkish literatures fruitful. The chapter’s conclusion will emphasise that those works which seek to identify ‘the first novel’ in both Arabic and Turkish contexts often study the novel as a visible marker of rupture between classical and modern literatures; they have thus habituated critics to view Arabic and Turkish literatures as national literatures that have existed since time immemorial.

Chapter 4 will examine translations between Arabic and Turkish in the late Ottoman Empire. Earlier scholarship has analysed the increasing number of translations from Western languages, French in particular, as a key marker of literary modernity. However, this period also witnessed an increase in the number of translations between Arabic and Turkish. Chapter 4 will argue that translations between these two languages during the late Ottoman period generated a common repertoire of themes and concepts in Arabic and Turkish writings, while largely impeding linguistic exchanges. As a case-study, I will analyse *Daf^c al-hujna fī irtidākh al-lukna* (Overcoming the Flaws of Speech Defects, AH 1331 [1912/13]) by Ma^crūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945) and then examine al-Ruṣāfī’s engagement with Ottoman Turkish writings. *Daf^c al-hujna* provides a list of Arabic words that were borrowed from Turkish. Al-Ruṣāfī claimed that these words had become more popular among Arabic speakers because ‘unskilled translators’ had popularised them through their translations from Turkish to Arabic. The chapter will then investigate *al-Ru’yā fī baḥth al-ḥurriya*, which is al-Ruṣāfī’s Arabic translation of *Rüya* (Dream, published posthumously in 1908) by Namık Kemal (1840–88). In particular, I compare the source text *Rüya* with its Arabic translation *al-Ru’yā* to understand the choices that al-Ruṣāfī made as translator. While al-Ruṣāfī’s translation remains ‘faithful’ to the source text in terms of content, it replaces expressions that he would later list in *Daf^c al-hujna* as corrupt borrowings from Turkish with what al-Ruṣāfī considered their ‘true’ Arabic equivalents. Finally, I will present a close reading of al-Ruṣāfī’s poem ‘Nuwāḥ Dijla’ (The Lamentation of the Tigris) and Süleyman Nazif’s (1869–1927) *Firak-ı Irak* (The Separation from Iraq, 1918), a compilation of works on the Ottoman defeat in Iraq during World War I. Although the Ottoman defeat in Iraq becomes a shared source of suffering for al-Ruṣāfī and Süleyman Nazif, both writers provided different interpretations of the same event. While Süleyman Nazif associated the Ottoman defeat with

the dissolution of an Ottoman reservoir that included works by poets such as Imru' al-Qays (d. c. 550), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965) and Nefi (d. 1635), al-Ruṣāfī lamented the loss of Ottoman military and political power. At the same time, his work does not openly advocate a cultural vision in which Arabic works belong to an Ottoman reservoir.

Chapter 5 will demonstrate that proponents of both 'old literature' and 'new literature' in the late Ottoman Empire contributed to the conceptualisation of Arabic works as a source of influence that Arabised Ottoman culture. First, my chapter will analyse Hacı İbrahim's (1826–88) articles on Arabic language and literature. Hacı İbrahim has been studied as a 'conservative' author who criticised *Tanzimat* modernisation because he constantly praised Arabic language and literature. At the same time, as a proponent of 'old literature', he advocated 'modern' views. For example, he emphasised that Ottomans should not merely understand Arabic works; they should also translate them into Turkish. Furthermore, Hacı İbrahim believed that there was no difference between Arabic and Ottoman literatures; in fact, an anonymous author who shared his key beliefs also claimed in the 162nd issue of the newspaper *Malumat* that 'Ottoman literature means Arabic literature'. Finally, while Hacı İbrahim claimed to resist the empire's Westernisation efforts, his articles draw on the Orientalist discourse to substantiate his points about Arabic and Ottoman literatures. The second section of this chapter will study a key juxtaposition in the newspaper *Malumat*: its issues feature photos from late Ottoman Syria, likely taken during Ahmet Rasim's (1864–1932) expedition to Syria, and pre-Ottoman Arabic poems with their Turkish explanations on the same pages. One may first interpret these pages as juxtaposition between tradition, signified by classical Arabic works, and modernity, signified by the photos of Ottoman Arab provinces. At the same time, I interpret both photos and poems as signs of Ottoman modernisation. As the photos reveal how Ottoman provinces became an object of the gaze, the section on the poems will pinpoint the increasing tendency to view Arabic and Turkish works as translatable between each other. I will then present a close reading of Ahmet Rasim's *Arapların Terakkiyat-ı Medeniyesi* (The Civilisational Development of Arabs, AH 1304 [1886/87]), which translates excerpts from Gustave Le Bon's (1841–1931) *La Civilisation des Arabes* (The Arab Civilisation, 1884). While Ahmet Rasim chose not to translate many sections in Le Bon's works, he, like Le Bon, emphasised that each community *possessed* a literature. After pointing out the similarities between Hacı İbrahim and Ahmet Rasim, the chapter's conclusion will discuss Ahmet Rasim's post-Ottoman biography of Şinasi (1826–71) to demonstrate that a pre-Ottoman element of the Ottoman literary reservoir, an excerpt from

al-Ḥarīrī's (d. 1122) *Maqāmāt*, appears even in a post-Ottoman work that claims to have left behind the classical tradition.

Chapter 6 will examine how the critical and fictional works of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–62) and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987), who have been studied as pioneering figures of modern Turkish and Arabic literature, respectively, described the relationship between the Ottoman past and their national communities. In particular, it will discuss both authors' shared engagement with *Oedipus Rex* (c. 429–25 BC) by Sophocles (d. 406/5 BC) to provide new perspectives on their reception of the Ottoman past. This chapter will argue that both Tanpınar and al-Ḥakīm depicted the Ottoman past as a source of psychological complexes that undermined the spiritual health of their national communities. *Oedipus Rex* constituted a rich source of reflection for Tanpınar who wrote about what it meant to be a Turk and for al-Ḥakīm who wrote about what it meant to be an Egyptian and an Arab. Tanpınar claimed that all Turkish people suffered from an Oedipal complex, while al-Ḥakīm wrote an Arabic adaptation of the play and claimed that the play was appealing to the Egyptian mind. Furthermore, Tanpınar's *On Dokuzuncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (History of Nineteenth-Century Turkish Literature, 1949), claims that works of classical Arabic literature, such as *al-Muʿallaqāt* and al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, deprived the Turkish subject of authenticity. While al-Ḥakīm did not write about Turkish literature in his critical works, the main character in his novel *Return of the Spirit* (*ʿAwdat al-rūḥ*, 1933), Muḥsin, struggles against his Turkish mother who sabotages Muḥsin's dream to become a writer who expresses the 'eloquent tongue of his nation'. Similarly, the main character in Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* (*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, 1954), Hayri İrdal, can never break free from Abdüsselam Efendi, a Tunisian who is described as Hayri İrdal's father-figure by Hayri İrdal's psychoanalyst doctor. Both Muḥsin and Hayri İrdal want to transform the dynamics of the families that carry the traces of the cosmopolitan Ottoman past so as to be able to produce a new culture that generates a sense of emancipation; however, they realise that this aspiration to emancipation and authenticity is difficult and even impossible to achieve. Through an analysis of the characters who received little attention in earlier scholarship – the Turkish mother in al-Ḥakīm's novel and the Tunisian father-figure in Tanpınar's novel – this chapter will undermine the most typical readings of the *Return of the Spirit* as the realisation of a nationalist vision and *The Time Regulation Institute* as a satire of Turkish modernisation. It will also conclude that, although the Ottoman Empire's demise generated political and linguistic divisions, Tanpınar and al-Ḥakīm had similar visions of identity, culture and literature.

The conclusion will discuss my book's contributions to the most recent scholarship on multilingualism and modernities in the Ottoman Empire. More works today study translations and textual circulations to reassess different modernities, such as the *nahḍa* and the *haskala* (Jewish modernity), within a shared Ottoman context. Instead of merely mapping out translations and textual circulations, literary critics can also study the epistemological and material shifts that led to the formation of new canons and the reassessment of old ones. Likewise, while recent works have studied 'Arabic literature as world literature' and 'Turkish literature as world literature' to overcome earlier nationalistic approaches to literature, my work reveals another way to achieve the same goal: it studies how the concepts of 'Arabic literature' and 'Turkish literature' emerged within a transnational context. As my work focuses on how Arabic texts took on 'new lives' in the Ottoman context, it also suggests that recent studies examining late Ottoman Armenian, Greek and Judeo-Spanish works sometimes risks generating a one-to-one correspondence between texts and people; for example, it risks projecting Judeo-Spanish literary works as the possession of a Judeo-Spanish community. Such an assumption can sometimes overlook the 'new lives' or 'afterlives' that these works could have experienced and the diverse communities they could have cultivated. Finally, the conclusion posits that poets such as Ka'b ibn Zuhayr or Sa'dī (c. 1213–91/92) inhabited 'multiple worlds', hence emphasising the need for more works that study the 'Ottoman Ka'b ibn Zuhayr' or the 'Ottoman Sa'dī'.

Notes

1. Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali, *Journey to the Sublime Porte: The Arabic Memoir of a Sharifian Agent's Diplomatic Mission to the Ottoman Imperial Court in the Era of Süleyman the Magnificent*, trans. Richard Blackburn (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Kommission, 2005), 181. Blackburn's translation is accompanied by a CD-ROM that contains the Arabic manuscript.
2. *Takhmīs* is a poetic form in which a poet adds three hemistiches to each *bayt* (two hemistiches) of an existing poem.
3. al-Nahrawali, *Journey to the Sublime Porte*, 182. For al-Mutanabbī's verse which Ahmed Çelebi quotes, see Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1983), 373. Ziya Pasha's *Harabat*, which Chapter 1 will analyse, also quotes the same verse. Ziya Paşa, *Harabat* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, AH 1291–92 [1874/75–75/76]), 2: 493.
4. al-Nahrawali, *Journey to the Sublime Porte*, 182.
5. Victoria Rowe Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love: Turkish Modernity and Mystic Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 15–16.

6. Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love*, 16.
7. Saliha Paker, 'On the Poetic Practices of "a Singularly Uninventive People" and the Anxiety of Imitation: A Critical Re-Appraisal in Terms of Translation, Creative Mediation and "Originality"', in *Tradition, Tension and Translation in Turkey*, ed. John Milton, Saliha Paker and Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 30.
8. Christopher Markiewicz, 'Books on the Secretarial Arts and Literary Prose', in *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, ed. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1: 658.
9. As I will show throughout this book, many late Ottoman writings declared that they started to produce a 'new literature' which draws on Western forms and themes. Much of the earlier scholarship has thus defined both Arabic and Turkish literary modernities as thematic and stylistic shifts that occurred in the nineteenth century due to their authors's engagement with the West. However, more recent works have challenged the notion that modernity resulted from the simple imitation of Western ideas in Middle Eastern contexts. For some recent examples, see Marilyn Booth and Claire Savina (eds), *Ottoman Translations: Circulating Texts from Bombay to Paris* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023); Rebecca C. Johnson, *Stranger Fictions: A History of the Novel in Arabic Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); Monica M. Ringer and Etienne E. Charrière (eds), *Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity: Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2020); Elizabeth M. Holt, *Fictitious Capital: Silk, Cotton and the Rise of the Arabic Novel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Karim Mattar, *Specters of World Literature: Orientalism, Modernity and the Novel in the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020); and Marilyn Booth (ed.), *Migrating Texts: Circulating Translations around the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).
10. Alexander Jabbari, 'The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 420.
11. Alexander Jabbari, 'From Persianate Cosmopolis to Persianate Modernity: Translating from Urdu to Persian in Twentieth-Century Iran and Afghanistan', *Iranian Studies* 55, no. 3 (2022): 613. Here, Jabbari notes that Urdu scholarly works, such as Shibli Nu'mānī's (1857–1914) *Shi'r al-ʿAjam* (Poetry of the Persians, 1908–18), played a fundamental role in the 'emergence of national literature and literary history in Iran and Afghanistan' (612).
12. Sooyong Kim and Orit Bashkin, 'Revisiting Multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire', *Review of Middle East Studies* 55, no. 1 (2021): 130–31.
13. Sooyong Kim, *The Last of an Age: The Making and Unmaking of a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Poet* (London: Routledge, 2018), 13.
14. Sooyong Kim, 'The Poet Nef'ī, Fresh Persian Verse and Ottoman Freshness', *Iranian Studies* 55, no. 2 (2022): 551.

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15. Halide Edib Adıvar, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib. 1926. New Introduction by Hülya Adak*. (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2004), 183.
16. Ruşen Eşref, *Diyyorlar ki* (Istanbul: Kanaat Matbaası, 1918), 25, 28, 36, 39, 40, 43, 57, 62, 64, 135, 144, 249.
17. See Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, ‘Joyce’s and Borges’s Afterlives of Shakespeare’, *Comparative Literature* 60, no. 3 (2008): 207–27; Darrah Lustig, ‘The Task of the Survivor in Ruth Klüger’s “weiter leben” (1992) and “Still Alive” (2001)’, *Studia austriaca* 21 (2013): 29–50; Vilashini Cooppan, ‘The Ethics of World Literature: Reading Others, Reading Otherwise’, in *Teaching World Literature*, ed. David Damrosch (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009), 34–43.
18. Samuel Hodgkin, ‘Classical Persian Canons of the Revolutionary Press: Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī’s Circles in Istanbul and Moscow’, in *Persian Literature and Modernity: Production and Reception*, ed. Hamid Rezaei Yazdi and Arshavez Mozafari (London: Routledge, 2019), 187.
19. Saliha Paker, ‘Translation as *Terceme* and *Nazire*: Culture-bound Concepts and Their Implications for a Conceptual Framework for Research on Ottoman Translational History’, in *Crosscultural Transgressions: Research Models in Translation Studies II: Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. Theo Hermans (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2002), 137.
20. Paker, ‘Translation as *Terceme* and *Nazire*’, 121.
21. Orhan İyişenyürek, ‘Köprülüzâde Abdullah Paşa ve El Yazısı Divanının Muhtevası’, *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 26, no. 1 (2022): 23–44.
22. Kim, ‘The Poet Nef’i’.
23. Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.
24. Kim, *The Last of an Age*, 139.
25. Tahera Qutbuddin, ‘Books on Arabic Philology and Literature: A Teaching Collection Focused on Religious Learning and the State Chancery’, in *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, ed. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1: 609.
26. Didem Havlioğlu, *Mihri Hatun: Performance, Gender-Bending and Subversion in Ottoman Intellectual History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2017), 43. Although late Ottoman authors did not specifically use the term ‘canon’ (*kanon*), Chapter 2 shows that they employed the term ‘classics’ (*klasikler*) in their writings as they identified works which had a high cultural value for them.
27. John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 30.
28. Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 30.
29. Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 24.

30. Esther-Miriam Wagner (ed.), *A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021).
31. Ghayde Ghraawi and Hacı Osman Gündüz (Ozzy) (eds), 'The Ascendant Field: Critical Engagements with Ottoman Arabic Literature', *Philological Encounters* 7, no. 3–4 (2022).
32. Arif Camoglu, 'Inter-imperial Dimensions of Turkish Literary Modernity', *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 64, no. 3 (2018): 449.
33. Camoglu, 'Inter-imperial Dimensions', 449.
34. Boutheina Khaldi, *Egypt Awakening in the Early Twentieth Century: Mayy Ziyādah's Intellectual Circles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 142.
35. Khaldi, *Egypt Awakening*, 155.
36. Adivar, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 118–19.
37. For works that study the diverse languages of the empire, see Booth and Savina (eds), *Ottoman Translations*; Ringer and Charrière (eds), *Ottoman Culture and the Project Of Modernity*; Booth (ed.), *Migrating Texts*; and Mehmet Fatih Uslu and Fatih Altuğ (eds), *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı İstanbul'u'nda Modern Edebi Kültür* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014).
38. Michael Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 76.
39. Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*; Karim Mattar, *Specters of World Literature*; Yaseen Noorani, 'Translating World Literature into Arabic and Arabic into World Literature: Sulayman al-Bustani's *al-Ilyadha* and Ruhi al-Khalidi's Arabic Rendition of Victor Hugo', in *Migrating Texts: Circulating Translations around the Ottoman Mediterranean*, ed. Marilyn Booth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 236–65; and Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
40. M. Kaya Bilgegil, *M. Kaya Bilgegil'in Makaleleri*, ed. Zöhre Bilgegil (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993), 256.
41. Walter Feldman, 'The Indian Style and the Ottoman Literary Canon', *International Journal of Persian Literature* 3 (2018): 33.
42. Mervat F. Hatem, *Literature, Gender and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of 'A'isha Taymur* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8.
43. Hatem indicates that Persian literary works also circulated in Egypt. At the same time, because schools in Egypt started to have a technocratic bent in the nineteenth century, there was a decrease in the use of Persian in the late Ottoman Egypt. See Hatem, *Literature, Gender and Nation-Building*, 50–52.
44. *Ibid.*, 54.
45. Veli N. Yashin, "'The True Face of the Work': Sovereignty and Literary Form in Literary Historiography', *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 2 (2017): 166.
46. Etienne E. Charrière and Monica M. Ringer have recently called for a more comprehensive definition of the term '*Tanzimat*' and used it to refer to the

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- last years of the Ottoman Empire starting from 1839. Etienne E. Charrière and Monica M. Ringer, 'Introduction', in *Ottoman Culture and The Project of Modernity: Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel*, ed. Monica M. Ringer and Etienne E. Charrière (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2020), 2–3. Literary critics have also used the term 'Tanzimat literature' (*Tanzimat edebiyatı*) for categorising literary works from the late Ottoman Empire. Like in the *Nahda* Studies, more works among the *Tanzimat* Studies of the past few years have challenged these typical definitions of the *Tanzimat*. See M. Kayahan Özgül, *Dîvan Yolu'ndan Pera'ya Selâmetle: Modern Türk Şiirine Doğru* (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2006).
47. This book will draw on recent scholarly works that have undermined an understanding of the *nahda* as a stark rupture from an authentic classical tradition that initiated modernity. For a compilation of representative *nahda* texts, see Tarek El-Ariss, ed., *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2018).
 48. Tarek El-Ariss, 'Let There be Nahdah!' *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (2015): 260–66.
 49. El-Ariss, 'Let There be Nahdah!', 263.
 50. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *On Dokuzuncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2018), 52.
 51. Selim Kuru, 'Early, Yet Already Late: Literary Musings on Historical Questions', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 7, no. 1 (2020): 57.
 52. Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 7.
 53. Alexis Wick, *The Red Sea: In Search of Lost Space* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 54.
 54. Wick, *The Red Sea*, 54.
 55. Ringer and Charrière, 'Introduction', 11.
 56. For a comprehensive overview of shifts in the meaning of the term '*edebiyat*' during the late Ottoman Empire and institutional transformations that contributed to the construction of a national literary canon in early republican Turkey, see Kani İrfan Karakoç, 'Ülüs-devletleşme Süreci ve "'Türk' Edebiyatı"'nın İnşası (1923–1950)' (Unpubl. PhD dissertation, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2012).
 57. Kramnick, *Making the English Canon*, 9.
 58. Although *The Ottoman Canon* goes beyond the earlier scholarship that often compared Arabic or Turkish literature with only Western literatures, it is clearly not the first work that compares Turkish literature with Arabic literature. Critics such as Ḥusayn Muḥib al-Miṣrî and Stephan Guth have compared the two literary traditions in a comprehensive manner. See Ḥusayn Muḥib al-Miṣrî, *Bayna al-adab al-'arabî wa-l-turkî: dirâsa fî al-adab al-islâmî al-muqâran* (Cairo: al-Dâr al-Thaqâfiyya li-l-Nashr, 2003), and Stephan Guth, *Brückenschläge: eine integrierte 'turkoarabische' Romangeschichte*

- (Mitte 19. bis Mitte 20. Jahrhundert) (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2003). This book does not provide an extensive coverage of the similarities and intertextual relationships between the Arabic and Turkish traditions, as these critics do. Rather, it fleshes out the Ottoman canon's multilingual character to reassess some key categories used in literary studies and Middle Eastern Studies, such as 'classical Arabic literature' and 'Ottoman literature'.
59. Stephen Sheehi, 'Towards a Critical Theory of *al-Nahḍah*: Epistemology, Ideology and Capital', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43, no. 2–3 (2012): 293.
 60. Adivar, *Memoirs of Halidē Edib*, 290.
 61. Ibid., 396.
 62. Cenab Şahabeddin, *Hac Yolunda* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmet İhsan, 1909), 158.
 63. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 7.
 64. For Persian works that were published in Istanbul in the nineteenth century, see Christophe Balaÿ, 'Diasporadaki Fars Edebiyatı: İstanbul 1865–1895', trans. Çiğdem Kurt, in *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı İstanbulu'nda Modern Edebi Kültür*, ed. Fatih Altuğ and Mehmet Fatih Uslu (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), 267–78. For an analysis of Persian literary modernity in a comparative frame, see Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity Between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English and Persian Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
 65. See Şükran Fazlıoğlu, *Arap Romanında Türkler* (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2006), and Ulrich W. Haarmann, 'Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the 'Abbasids to Modern Egypt', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 2 (1988): 175–96. By foregrounding the unequal power hierarchies within the Ottoman cultural context, *The Ottoman Canon* also undermines the prevalent view in Turkish secondary sources that Western imperialism caused the deterioration of the relations between the Arabs and the Turks who had lived in perfect harmony with each other, since both communities believed in the same religion, Islam.
 66. Selim Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003): 311–42, and Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–96.