

# Contemporary Arabic Literature and World Literature

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## **A Methodological Proposition\***

In memoriam Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

Whereas the acculturation and culture contact theories(1), which are so 'popular' in academic circles today, attempt to trace the mechanisms of the infiltration of an emitted cultural element (or of more than one) into another culture and society, mostly starting from a Western model as received in Non-Western, previously colonised countries, my theoretical proposition is to start from the receiving socio-cultural context instead. However, I do not propose to reverse the hitherto prevailing hierarchy of cultural 'maturity' of the emitted cultural elements vs. 'less mature' receiving socio-cultures as suggested in said theories. This hierarchy might be best illustrated by the fact that Western literatures, or those written in Western languages, were considered identical to World literature during at least the last two centuries.

On the contrary, according to the theoretical model suggested by me, we should regard the transmitted cultural element as being equal to the receiving socio-cultural context in which it is often remoulded according to the different living conditions, value systems and practices of the receiving culture in a specific phase of its history. However, when this remoulding process takes place in a way which is less aware of the objective difference between the received model and the relative specificity of the receiving context, I suggest to call it "socio-cultural interference"(2) by drawing on the concept of interference in linguistics. This concept is borrowed again from physics and biology. While using it to designate socio-cultural interference(s), I intend to describe and follow up the less conscious mechanisms related to the process of receiving an alien cultural element or model. This might remind us of the approach of imagology in Comparative Literature (3) or to some extent even, of the 'horizon of expectation' (Erwartungshorizont) of Hans Robert Jauss. However, my model is different, as it suggests to trace the mechanisms and forms of socio-cultural interferences at work on the receiving side, in order to establish an objective picture of the structural difference between the receiving and the transmitting socio-cultures. Once this contrastive 'map' (with its different subjective self-images and hetero-images) is set up and becomes familiar to the receivers of the transmitted cultural model, the objective prerequisites for a more sane and productive interaction between both cultures – the receiving and the received one – are, I would say, indeed given.(4) This is a general postulation which is of an epistemological nature. And I argue that it would be as valid with regard to immaterial as well as material cultural exchange, as has been shown, for instance, in the case of Pharmacology.(5) If I am to apply this general approach to Arabic vs. World Literature from the perspective of Comparative and General Literature, divergences will not only emerge with regard to René Wellek's ahistoric "Theory of Literature"(6), but also regarding the good will if not militant endeavours of the recently deceased René Etiemble, to "decolonise" and thus emancipate the concept of World Literature from its sheer Eurocentricité in modern times.(7)

Needless to say that Etiemble's heroic stance, not only in criticizing the new provinciality of a Western club asserting their canon of "world literary standards" but also in trying to widen their limited scope by stressing the importance of the cultural

contribution of non-Western literatures in the framework of the Encyclopedia Universalis (for which he was responsible with respect to the section on World Literatures), deserves our deep appreciation. However, his grand endeavours were marred by his purely philological approach drawing on Mallarmé's tenet: la littérature n'est que des mots. In this, he did not differ much from René Wellek's ahistoric maxim: literature is one and all (even though Wellek's "one and all" is confined to Western literatures or those written in Western languages); the approach is unfortunately the same.

Unlike Wellek who subscribed to exactly the Neo-Kantian apriories – asserted by Carl Friedrich Krause and his school – that were to underpin the main cosmopolitan tenets propagated by Ortega y Gasset in Spain during the early decades of the last century, I suggest an alternative approach based on what I call the relative socio-cultural specificities. To define what I understand by socio-cultural specificity ( I suggest, here, to introduce the English term specificity, a neologism designed to connote the abstract quality of the French category spécificité), I refer to Mohamed Dowidar, especially a passage in his book *L'économie politique: une science sociale*(8), which I would like to quote extensively:

*En ce qui concerne les faits sociaux, le processus social se présente dans l'ensemble des activités des individus et des groupes dans leurs répétitions perpétuelles dans les circonstances données des développements historiques d'une société donnée. Ses activités se répètent d'une manière particulière devenant ainsi une caractéristique de l'étape de développement de la société en question. Cette manière particulière de répétition des activités sociales leurs donnent une sorte de régularité. Grâce à cette régularité, on peut distinguer des relations qui se répètent sans cesse entre les différentes activités. Ce qui dessine pour chaque société, et même pour chacune des phases historiques du développement d'une seule société, ses lois objectives de fonctionnement et de développement. Et même quand il s'agit des sociétés différentes connaissant des lois objectives communes (comme celle de la circulation monétaire, par exemple), le mode de fonctionnement de ces lois peut être différente d'une société à l'autre, une différence qui émane des conditions spécifiques à chaque société : dans le cadre de l'histoire de la société humaine, chaque société a sa propre spécificité historique.*

I am well aware, of course, of the similarities among the various socio-cultures that assert themselves, especially today, and that are also revealed by empirical comparative research (though this must not make us oblivious of the differences between them, in terms of systems of values and visions of the world).(9)

That is why I am critical of the all too harmonising theories trying to stress the common in human literatures and cultures by subtly or overtly equating it with the hegemonial Western standards. Mustafa Badawi marginalizes, for instance, the role of the still living legacy (turath)(10)– not only its learned discourses, but also its folk variations – and focuses instead on Western influences and models. (See his work: *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*, Oxford 1993, as well as his articles, among which I want to point out as representative: *The Father of the Modern Egyptian Theatre: Ya`qub Sannu`*, in: *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. XVI, 1985, pp.132-145). Similarly, Pierre Cachia, after a discussion of the various forms and 'shades' of explicit and implicit religiosity in modern Arabic literature, describes Mahfuz' mysticism as 'questing', even though the questing attitude is a trait of the mystics. Amalgamating it with Western renaissance ideals, he comes to the following conclusion: "Egypt's

modernists – like those of many other climes – [note this insertion ! M.Y.] have Man very much at the center of the universe.” (See his book: *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature*, Edinburgh 1990, p. 150.) In the case of Mustafa Badawi, the motivation behind his attempt to minimise if not suppress the role of various ‘shades’ or types of religiosity in the imaginative realms of contemporary Arab writers could be taken to reflect a kind of socio-political defence mechanism against the often discriminating tendency in the West to stigmatise Arabs as “fundamentalists”. In fact, it is necessary to reveal to what extent international financial capital has, in its present predicament (while making use of scientific and technological achievements), a vested interest in veiling the mechanisms of its own conflict of interest with ordinary direct producers worldwide, thus replacing the perception of this conflict by a purposely alleged ‘war of religions’, even though it does not have any religious beliefs itself, except in the form of a dedication to its enormous profits. Therefore, we see it today directing its war efforts against the Arab as well as the entire Islamic region, while trying at the same time to ‘integrate’ it into its globalising commodity-gearred hegemonic world order. (See, for instance, its policies as represented by the statutes of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation.) By this, it resists scientific rationality according to which its hegemonial claims are not justified.

It is noticeable, though, that the religious traits in recent Arab literary productions were amply discussed in the context of the cultural activities of the Cairo International Book Fair, held in January 2002. This, however, has nothing to do with the image propagated in the Western media under the heading of so-called “religious fundamentalism”, as even an author like Nagib Mahfuz who figured prominently in this context, is deeply imbued with a religious vision of the world, perhaps a certain ‘questing’ one, as Cachia chooses to call it, or an agnostic mysticism, as I would put it.

In contemporary Arabic literature, one encounters a wide range of religiosity, ranging from piety to open denial of religious values. However, the majority can be located in the middle spectrum of the scale. Wasatiyya (moderation) is regarded to be a main characteristic in the Islamic religious realms of Arab writers today. As it were, Arab intellectuals living in the West as well as Western Arabists, who would easily be influenced by them, such as Cachia, often take the shortest route by suggesting that it is most of all a prevalence of modern ‘Western universal values’ that can be noticed in contemporary literary production today. This aprioristic view is, however, asserted without ever researching the objective differences extant, which would show a wide spread of attitudes and world views, reaching from Al-‘Aqqad’s or ‘Abdel-Tawwab Youssef’s religiosity to Sun’alla Ibrahim’s scientifically oriented literary realm. However, I would maintain, and so would Mahfuz probably see it, that what is at stake here is a kind of ‘surpassing’ [‘Aufhebung’, in the Hegelian sense] of the religious system of values, which is thus being ‘lifted up’ to a higher, more rational level. This is an approach that is altogether different from the fabricated dichotomy between the image of modern Western societies, vested with science and technology, and that of the traditional ones, allegedly overwhelmed by ‘fanatic fundamentalism’. This much publicised dichotomy would in fact be a suitable subject for imagological research. Meanwhile, a sound scientific attitude towards reality does not necessarily preclude the existence of a variety of cultural approaches, among them, the contemporary Arab one. Nothing could be more impoverishing for humanity, I guess, than a uniformity of its cultural inventions. This levelling uniformity is de facto, however, a necessary effect of the propagated commodified values of the world market, the various national and international institutions and organisations, their system of ‘reward’ and ‘punishment’ (meted out according to alleged ‘human rights’ categories), and their corresponding

ideology that is succinctly summed up in the following tenet: Man is Man everywhere and at every moment in history. According to this ideology, texts can 'travel' indiscriminately from one place to another, and from one era to another as well, by means of the vehicle of translation, and this basically without saying anything significantly different (or else, it is claimed, they would not even be translatable!).

This leads us to a methodological discussion of the issue of

### **The circulating myth of an unchangeable universality of literary production and reception:**

If we are to assume that each literary text endeavours to communicate a certain wish or concern via its imaginative realm in a given society, we have to admit that, once emitted, the text undergoes modifications, changes and additions on behalf of the recipient(s) confronting it in one and the same language and country. But how would the text and its reception be affected if it were to travel to other languages and countries? This displacement, if we are to borrow the term from psychoanalysis, might best be illustrated through an extreme lack of 'proper' communication as illustrated in the following dialogue between a 'normal' person and a 'schizophrenic':

"Hey, Conrad, I am Hans. Shouldn't we go out for a walk together?"

"Ah, Maria, too many people in the sky. Where are my reading shoes? [Then he stops talking for 30 min., after which he resumes:] Tea blue knee like red sea."

This involvement of the 'schizophrenic' in his own world of fantasies illustrates, even though in an extreme way (for the sake of clarity), what literature undergoes in its reception processes. The specific socio-cultural context (in which the recipient is embedded) alters, at times even significantly, the originally emitted literary message. This is, even more so, the case with translations in the socio-cultural sense of the word. As an example, let me refer to the performance of Alfred Farag's play, *Ali Ganah At-Tabrizi wa Tabi`uh Quffah*, performed by the Maybach company for almost a year between 1985 and 1986 in Germany (FRG), Austria, and several German-speaking Swiss cantons under the title *At-Tabrizi und sein Knecht*. The play was a huge success as it provoked laughter on the part of the German-speaking public while presenting one of its main scenes in which the actors appear to be eating the air as if it was a delicious meal.

The play borrowed in fact from three stories of the Arabian Nights, and the scene giving rise to laughter in a 'German' context showed a cobbler named Quffa who hoped to have a lovely meal for free at the house of His Excellency, prince Ali Ganah at-Tabrizi. He becomes instead an assistant and valet to the bankrupt prince. Both of them set out on a long journey around the world. When they arrive at a kingdom somewhere, they pretend to be rich merchants awaiting their caravan of luxurious goods in that town. Ali, the exotic prince, soon distributes the whole savings of Quffa among the people of the town. From there on, all the wealthy or at least modestly affluent merchants in town attempt to get in touch with him. The king even offers his daughter as a bride, thus to get hold of the wealth of the caravan. Ali and Quffa, therefore, live in abundance at the king's palace. However, the caravan never arrives. And on top of it, the king's wealth soon has vanished, as well, as Ali has distributed it among the ordinary folk and the poor. A kind of oriental Robin Hood! Reluctantly, the previously rich to whom Ali is now indebted, decide to hang him, after having given up their hope of ever seeing his caravan. As Ali is led to the gallows, a stranger with a glamorous turban arrives to announce the arrival of the long awaited caravan. It is none other than Quffa himself, who has disguised himself as a wealthy stranger. And

thus Ali is freed and while pretending to make a quick dash in order to be the first to receive his caravan, he takes flight with Quffa, joined by the princess, who is glad to accompany them.

Now, the context in which Farag wrote this play, in 1968, was that of the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of June, 1967. His play was a disguised critique in a slave language, as Brecht would say, of the failure of the Arab regimes to fulfil what they kept promising all the time: namely to liberate the Arabs of Palestine from the Israeli colonisation they are suffering from since 1948.

The most exciting scene in the play, that of Quffa eating the air at Ali's house, symbolized a self-deception implied in his way of giving credence to the empty promises of Ali, and at the same time a tendency to imagine that one's dreams had been fulfilled. This is the production and reception context of the play in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, whereas its reception context in the FRG, Austria, and Switzerland, during the mid-80s of the last century is quite different. The audience's exhilaration, in response to the scene of Quffa devouring the air, was one of airing a repressed feeling of 'living', or 'being truly alive', otherwise suppressed in a formally rationalistic society, as Max Weber might have put it(11), or a society reigned by instrumental reason, as Horkheimer would have maintained.(12) Derrida might add to this the virtually of their sense of being alive.

It is clear that we are not dealing here with the case of a society dreaming of abundance, as a certain degree of welfare has been achieved in all three German speaking countries in which Farag's play was performed.(13)

From the point of view of the native Germans or Swiss citizens of the mid-80s, therefore, devouring the air might also be taken to embody a critique of the promises of the "consumer society" as propagated by greedy business people, bankers and politicians, while the needs of many ordinary people in their own countries are not satisfied and those in the Third World are starving – a reproach comparable to the one formulated by the students protesting against their societies in 1968 in Germany and France. Their protest against a consumption oriented society during the relative economic boom of the late 60s in Central Europe is altogether different, however, from the students' revolt of the same era in various Arab countries like Egypt and Morocco, directed against a society of deprivation.

This example illustrates, I hope, the fallacy of the claim of so-called literary invariables in all world cultures, as maintained by such a leading comparatist as René Etiemble (in his famous book: *Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale*, *ibid.*), or of the strange claim made by Edward Said, when he argues for instance in his book *Culture and Imperialism* that Beethoven belongs to the Africans as much, as seemingly, he does to the Germans.(14) Such sweeping statements, despite their naively noble intentions, sever the literary and artistic works from their concrete production and reception conditions and thus mystify them.

This very point leads us to the second issue of this intervention, namely, the question dealing with the

### **Canonization of literature in Arabic as well as World Literature.**

Needless to say, we are still encountering that dominating fiction on a worldwide scale, as already stated at the outset of this paper, which identifies World Literature with European literatures, or at least literatures written in European languages. This often subtle understanding has been clearly voiced by Horst Rüdiger, the late German professor of Comparative Literature, in an oft-quoted statement of his:

World literature is not a General Assembly of the UN where the vote of a previous colony, that has been recently given its independence, being itself void of any intellectual or economic resources, would be equal to that of a Super Power, or of a population looking back on a cultural legacy encompassing thousands of years [sic!].(15)

However, it is not only by way of such Eurocentric statements that we are to demonstrate the irrationality of the dominating canon. In an even more subtle way, it is reflected by the ahistoric literary standards implied in the lists of 'important writers'. Such a list usually starts with Sophocles, Euripides, leading via Dante and Goethe to Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Balzac, Zola, and Brecht, thus to name only a few. It is true that the late René Etiemble added to this list the eminent writers of Africa and Asia who were for a long time excluded from World Literature as they did not write (nor were they published!) in any European language. Or else they were not sufficiently translated into any of these, supposedly decisive languages. However, the canon, even though widened now, to encompass all the literatures of the world, or most of them, is still arbitrary (in the pejorative sense of the word), as long as it abstracts literature from its specific production and reception contexts. This easily leads to a mystification of the literary phenomenon, whereas the recognition of its specific conditions of production and reception (and of its direct or indirect position with regard to either the dominating or dominated aesthetic ideologies) demystifies clearly enough the quality of its contribution and thus helps elucidate the reasons for having recourse to it and receiving it in a variety of different socio-cultural contexts. This is not only valid with regard to politically – and socially – committed literary works; it is also true in the case of apparently apolitical literary productions seen to be void of any social dimension as they ostensibly deal with the satisfaction of specific human needs in a given socio-economic and cultural context, be it by 'entertaining' or by 'distracting' ( see, for instance, Bachtin's studies on the phenomenon of carnaval).

### **The Nobel Prize in Literature and international recognition**

It is by now a well-known fact that non-European literatures get access to readers (and viewers!) the world over once awarded such a prize as the Nobel Prize. However, the committee awarding this prize is not merely influenced by literary considerations in its choices. This has been clearly documented in a book commissioned by said committee and entitled: *The Nobel Prize in Literature – A Study of the Criteria behind the Choices*, by Kjell Espmark, first published in English in 1991 by G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Its copyright is in fact held by its author since 1986, as it was first published that same year in Swedish as part of a series celebrating the bicentennial of the Swedish Academy. It is quite clear, however, that the English version of this book, on which the author worked together with an English native speaker, contains substantial additions regarding the Nobel laureates in literature awarded the prize after 1986, among them Nagib Mahfuz (laureate in 1988), who is mentioned on several occasions in the English version of this book.

In 1982, I delivered a paper entitled: *Literary and Social Transformations: The Case of Modern European and Arab Literatures*, at the Tenth Triennial Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), held at the time at New York University. My paper, which was published at the very end of the first chapter of the

proceedings of said congress by Garland Publishers (New York, N.Y.), was critical of the mystic idealism in the generational novels of both Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and Nagib Mahfuz's *Trilogy*. I concluded, with regard to what I called the dichotomy of human life in Mahfuz' literary realm, that

In the center of this very realm we find the individual in quest of his salvation – but on his own, instead of looking for the appropriate consciousness and organization of the class he adheres to. He stays in this situation torn between his prosaic instincts and metaphysical aspirations; the first pull him to the Earth and the second to Heaven. Human life appears thereafter reduced to the biological processes and wasted on metaphysics. The individual differences are just the result of the differences in the portion of eternal characteristics a human being is blessed with or not. Therefore justice in this utopia of Nagib Mahfuz is nothing but the possibility to realize these eternal values with regard to a dichotomy of people classified as good and evil. Indeed, this very idealistic value system determines the apparently very realistic, but in fact highly naturalistic, narrative technique in Nagib Mahfuz' trilogy...(16)

Now let us compare this critical assessment which happened to stand alone in the whole literature on Mahfuz published in European languages so far (until 1985), with the criteria of the committee awarding the Nobel Prize in literature as revealed in the book published by its member, Kjell Espmark, and commissioned by the committee. We read the following in the first chapter, entitled *A Lofty and Sound Idealism* ( p. 9):

*The Nobel Prize in literature was not primarily a literary prize; the literary prize of a work is weighed against its contribution to humanity's struggle 'towards an ideal' [put in inverted commas in the original].*

**The main tenet regarding the criteria underlying the choices involved in awarding said prize stresses (on p. 9 of said book) an**

*[...]emphasis on 'idealism of conception' and of 'idealism of life'[the inverted commas are again in the original].*

Now, I will end my intervention with these two quotations, the first published in 1985, in which I presented my criticism of the mystic idealism of Nagib Mahfuz and Thomas Mann, and the second published a year later (1986) in which the author (Kjell Espmark) asserts the special concern of the Nobel prize committee about supporting this very conservative idealism. There is another question looking for an answer: why did the committee decide at last to choose Mahfuz instead of Adonis, even though the latter was warmly supported by some members from the very outset of the deliberations of the committee, as stated in the English version of the book?(17) Even though the author stated that the committee opted at last for the epic form, the reasons for this decision may well remain partially in the dark. We do not learn for instance whether the committee got hold, in the course of its successive sessions, of the only criticism of Mahfuz' literary realm published so far in any European language.(18) And if so, was this critical account (although not intended to have this effect) rather 'useful' to the committee, as it presented a parallel criticism of Mahfuz and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, a work for which that author had been awarded the same prize, in 1929?

Whether or not it did or did not have this effect (which is not the real issue here), there is one thing we can be assured of, namely, that the choice of the committee with

regard to Nagib Mahfuz did not contradict the criteria which constitute the social policy underlying the prize (as officially stated in the book commissioned by the committee). As it is a well known fact that once an author is awarded this prize, his work gets translated into most of the widely spoken languages (symptomatically called *Weltsprachen*, universal languages, in German), this means a worldwide propagation of a certain aesthetic ideology. While the committee has been complying with the Nobel Prize criteria, in the case of Mahfuz, the widespread publication this entails helps in turn to reproduce the dominating social relations on a worldwide level by indoctrinating an ideology of mystic idealism which obscures reality, thereby neutralizing any materialization of a real emancipation of mankind from the reigning World Market mechanisms.

Unlike the Global Village ideology of the World Market, my methodological proposition is one of working out the objective differences between the various socio-cultures worldwide on the basis of real equality and openness towards each other. As they are objectively equal to each other while differing with regard to production and reception processes, and especially with respect to their specific reception contexts, this anti-hierarchical approach would not only help curb the leveling and unifying effect of World Market mechanisms, but also enhance today's intercultural relations by supporting a new trend of positive cultural and literary exchange on a worldwide scale. In the context of such a demystified and unprejudiced cultural exchange, contemporary Arabic literature would be (happily) inserted among the endless varieties of socio-cultural literary inventions of mankind. In order to make this possible, our world is in need of other international literary prizes and of another UNESCO: of a cultural institution of really democratically united Socio-Cultures worldwide that would be interacting on the basis of an equal enhancement of each of their indigenous contributions to World Literature and culture. Such an institution (or such institutions) should be organized and subsidized by the ordinary populations of the various socio-cultures the world over and run by their democratically elected representatives. I know it is a dream, as it jumps over so many existing obstacles in the reality of our world today, which is reigned by hegemonial interests and by mechanisms of the World Market. And yet, how many dreams of the past became reality today, except for one dream so far, which is that of rendering humanity genuinely humane and rational.(19)

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#### **Footnotes:**

\* I am most indebted to my friends and colleagues, professor Mohammed Dowidar of Alexandria University, Egypt, and Andreas Weiland of Aachen University, Germany. Their critical discussions of my text were of great value while I was working to give it its present form.

(1) See the influential works of the main founders of these theories: Herskovits, M.J.: *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contacts*, New York 1938; Malinowski, Bronislaw: *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, Chapel Hill, NC (The University of North Carolina Press) 1944.

(2) See my essay: *Preliminary Reflections on the Congress Theme: The Socio-Cultural Interaction Processes Between the Arab World and the West in Modern Times*, in:

Intercultural Studies, Yearbook of the International Association of Intercultural Studies (IAIS), Bochum 1983, pp.11-47 – [Def.: Socio-Cultural]

(3) Cf. Fischer, Manfred S.: Nationale Images als Gegenstand vergleichender Literaturgeschichte. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der komparatistischen Imalologie. Bonn 1981 (253pp.)

(4) See, with regard to this approach, my books (among other publications): *Min al-Tadakhul ila al-Tafa'ul al-Hadari*, Cairo 2001 (391pp.); *Al-Tadakhul al-Hadari wa'l-Istiqlal al-Fikri*, Cairo 1993 (199pp.)

(5) Even though this might look far-fetched, at a cursory glance, consideration of pharmacological research in its intercultural context has added a significant dimension to my contrastive socio-cultural model, namely that of "praxis". Almost parallel, though independently from my first writings outlining my intercultural, interactive model (1983), Mohamed Raouf Hamid, at the time lecturer of pharmacology at al-Fatih University in Libya, found out, along with his research team of undergraduate students that the regular consumption of hot pepper (capsicum) with each meal (a culinary Libyan custom), affects the absorption of medicine. They found out as well that, contrary to the internationally prevailing pharmacological assumptions at the time, this regular hot pepper consumption lessens the likelihood of contracting peptic ulcers. This discovery, springing from an experimental approach based on a presumed validity of socio-cultural specificities, has led to a considerable modification in general medical theories and pharmacological practice on a worldwide scale. It is noteworthy that said discovery, which was receiving due recognition during international pharmacological conferences from Japan (1981) to Austria (1982) and Switzerland (1983), and was subsequently drawn on by the pharmaceutical industry in many parts of the world, was originally accomplished by Libyan undergraduate students along with their supervisor, Professor M.R. Hamed, based on their sovereign questioning of Western-led norms, by taking into consideration their specific socio-cultural difference and treating it on an equal footing with those experiences from which the previously internationalised norms had sprung. - Cf. Hamed, M.R. / El Zarouk, K. / El-Makhzouni, A. / El-Bishty, W. / Metwally, S.A. / Gundi, M.B. / El-Naas, F.: The Influence of Cepcaicin on Drug Transport Across Biological Membranes, Abstract No. 141, p. 213, Fédération Internationale de Pharmacologie (FIP) abstracts, The 43rd International Congress of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Montreux, 5-9 September 1983.

(6) Formulated together with Austin Warren, and published in 1949

(7) See for instance, his book: *Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale*, Paris 1974; as well as his opus: *Quelques essais de littérature universelle*, Paris 1982, that he dedicated to Moenes Taha-Hussein, the son of Taha Hussein ('Amid al-Adab al-'Arabi).

(8) Paris 1973

(9) Cf. Leenhardt, Jacques / Josza, Pierre: *Lire la lecture. Essai de sociologie de la lecture*, Paris 1982

(10) See, contrary to this approach: 'Ayad, Shukri: *Al-Qissa al-Qasira fi Misr: Dirasa fi Ta'sil Naw' Adabi*, Cairo 1997; see also my critical review of Philip C. Sadgrove's Eurocentric approach in his book *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*,

1799-1882, Berkeley (Ithaca Press) 1996, in: Theatre Research International [Oxford University Press], Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp.215-6.

(11) See: 'Formaler Rationalismus', in his main opus, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Koeln / Berlin 1964, Vol. 1, p. 65. - What is meant here is that it is necessary to oppose real (non-artificial and non-virtual) rationality to that kind of formal rationalism that dominates most so-called modern Western societies today. ( Cf. Materialer vs. formaler Rationalismus, in: Weber, Max, *ibid.*)

(12) In his: *Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft*, 1947

(13) This dream of abundance seems to have constituted another, additional connotation of the scene in question, as of the entire play, in the Near East context.

(14) Introduction, p.XXVIII

(15) "Weltliteratur ist keine Vollversammlung der Vereinigten Nationen, in der die Stimme einer soeben in die Selbständigkeit entlassenen früheren Kolonie, ohne jegliche wirtschaftlichen und geistigen Ressourcen, mit derjenigen einer Grossmacht oder eines Volkes, das auf eine mehrtausendjaehrige Kultur zurueckblicken kann, gleichzusetzen ist." This revealing passage is included in: Horst Rüdiger, *Europaeische Literatur – Weltliteratur. Goethes Konzeption und die Forderungen unserer Epoche*, in: Rinner, F. / Zerinschek, K.: *Komparatistik. Theoretische Ueberlegungen und Wechselseitigkeit*. Heidelberg 1981, p. 39. Indeed because of the clarity of this racist statement, Rüdiger became 'famous', as it is often quoted to unveil what other, more subtle racists try to disguise in their discourses!

(16) p. 56 of the proceedings of said ICLA congress

(17) Cf. Skjell Espmark, *ibid*, p.143

(18) This contribution was also referring to Ibrahim Fathi's essay, *Al-'Alam ar-Rawai 'inda Nagib Mahfuz* (Mahfuz' Literary Realm), Cairo, n.d.

(19) I am well aware of the utopian character of this claim, as the present world economy tends towards a containment of the production process in the opposite direction, namely a further alienation of direct producers from their concrete and specific socio-cultural contexts, through a dismemberment of the production of commodities for the World Market, so that in each of the countries a part of the product gets manufactured and then the whole is assembled in a different country. However, what constitutes the real crisis of the world today is that, through the computerisation of the production process, most of the direct producers become not only redundant on the labour market, but also, once and for all, (totally) excluded from the production process. What ensues is that, given the progressive shortening of their social security schemes in the Western countries themselves, they become more and more unable to purchase the commodities offered by the market. In this lies the core of the present economic crisis on a worldwide level, a dilemma from which the financial capital, especially in the USA, tries to find an escape route by focusing on the militarization of the world, and the creation and support of conflicts worldwide, especially by means of replacing the real social relations through ideological and religious allegations, as represented in the theory of a Clash of Civilisations. All this leads to an ever increasing demand for arms on the World Market, and thus, to a

monumental enhancement of this sector of production and a sophistication of its destructive techniques. In this respect, Mohamed Dowidar is right when maintaining that at present, world financial capital is trying to impose its hegemonial domination over the globe by having recourse to scientific and technological achievements while hunting after religious clashes, even though said capital has no real regard for any religious values that are the product of human wisdom throughout the course of history. The supposed (and in fact instigated) religious conflicts are veiling the real conflict, which is a conflict between the ordinary direct producers and the maximization of profits on the World Market; whereas scientific rationality goes against a perpetuation of a further hegemony of financial capital over the world's populations. Needless to say that without accounting for this background, a precise recognition of the factor's behind the mechanisms of marginalisation of so-called Third World literatures and cultures, including contemporary Arabic literature, won't be lucid enough, especially in its precarious relation to the – so far – Western oriented 'World literary canon'. (See in this regard my essay: Towards a Real Decentralization of the Literary Canon: The Arab Contribution, in: Horwath, Peter et al. (eds.), Humanism and the Good Life, Proceedings of the Fifteenth Congress of the World Federation of Humanists, New York (Peter Land) 1998, pp.381-9)