# Introduction

Against the backdrop of the political unrest and the rapid societal cataclysm that took place in the Arab world and Turkey in the 2010s, the multifaceted discourses on identity in the region gain contemporary relevance. Furthermore, cultural, societal and even religious dogmas are being questioned at an accelerating rate. For a more profound understanding of the mechanisms fostering present-day developments, a closer look at the vivid literary debates on identity in the Arab world and Turkey could provide guidance. A recurring theme in these debates, which in the history of ideas dates back to 19th-century Arab and Ottoman writers of the Nahda/Tanzimat era such as Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, ʿAlī Mubārak and Namık Kemal, has been the contrasting juxtaposition between European modernity and local cultural tradition. Such thinking poses the question: is total rejection of one's own past necessary to become true modernists? And if not, how can one relate to tradition while avoiding that embrace of a forfeited, reactionary position?

Indeed, one of the main characteristics of Arabic and Turkish literature over the course of the 20th century is an increasing engagement with and revival of cultural heritage. Observable in the Turkish context is the conscious usage of traditional narrative styles by distinguished writers such as Halide Edip[1] and Yaşar Kemal, a general interest in Ottoman history and the establishment of the historical novel as a medium to challenge official Kemalist historical narratives.[2] Similarly in the Arab world, writers have increasingly made use of history as a metaphor, as a subtle – yet prolific – way to exercise social criticism against the region's omnipresent oppressive regimes.[3] In this regard, one could also mention the revival of the traditional literary forms such as the *maqāma*[4] and the interest in writing historical novels by writers such as Nagīb Maḥfūẓ and Gamāl al-Ghīṭānī.[5] Moreover, as the modernist Nasserist ideology began to be questioned in the aftermath of the defeat in the Six-Day War in June 1967, Arab writers have turned evermore towards cultural heritage as a process of self-examination.[6]

Against this background, it comes as no surprise when towering intellectual figures in both the Arab World and Turkey, such as Nagīb Maḥfūẓ and Orhan Pamuk, regard Islamic mysticism, usually referred to as *taṣawwuf* in Arabic, *tesavvuf* in Turkish, or

1 Elena Furlanetto, *Towards Turkish American Literature: Multiculturalism in Post-Imperial Turkey* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2017), 115–116.

2 Erika Glassen, "*Öffnung nach Westen. Abkehr von der literarischen Tradition. Der Roman, ein neues Medium*," in *Länderbericht Türkei*, ed. Udo Steinbach (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2012), 478–496, here 487–495.

3 Roger Allen, "Intertexuality and Retrospect: Arabic Fiction's Relationship with its Past," in *Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Literature since 1967*, eds. Luc Deheuvels, Barbara Michalak-Pikulska and Paul Starkey (Durham: Durham University, 2003), 1–12, here 8–9.

4 The *maqāma* is a traditional form of narration in classical Arabic literature written in rhymed prose.

5 Allen, "Intertextuality and Retrospect," 4–12.

6 Ibid., 3–5.

*Sufism* in English, to be a leading source of inspiration to their literary works.[7] Besides establishing continuity with the past, Pamuk recently considered Sufism to be the prevailing medium for overcoming cultural paradoxes and to reconcile the strong tensions between secular Kemalism and traditional Muslim piety in Turkish society.[8] Pamuk makes use of mysticism in a very original manner that widens the arc of suspense in his works. Simultaneously, Pamuk makes use of mystical topoi and language to form a postmodern synthesis that allows for the construction of meaning through storytelling. In turn, Maḥfūẓ, who underwent a transformation from social realism in his early years towards a stronger influence of cultural heritage in general, and Sufism in particular, added a further dimension by meditating on the act of writing. As Ziad Elmarsafy puts it:

> As Mahfouz's career progresses the equation between the artist and the Sufi generates a process whereby the novel traces a sort of sanctification, the becoming Sufi of the artist as a means of recovering a self under siege from social and political upheaval.[9]

Hence, in Maḥfūẓ's understanding, the mystic and writer become one. Writing turns into an inner sanctuary, an escape from the oppressive political environments. The act of writing becomes a prayer of sort; storytelling enables the Self to rest from the dreary political realities of authoritarian modernist ideologies. Thus, writing, in contrast to reason-driven, materialist modernity, becomes meaningful, enabling the Self to connect with something beyond immanent reality. Writing becomes the antidote to the "disenchantment of the world" anticipated by Max Weber and a critical response to secular political ideologies.[10] Rather than a mere recourse from modernity, writing becomes a space for the sacred and a sanctuary for the mystical in a secular age. The act of writing is hence not reactionary or anti-modern but rather an attempt to search for alternative modernities and postmodernities where mystery is retained. In this context, writing becomes a counter vision to disenchantment: a counter vision that I refer to as Re-enchantment.[11]

This study aims to look at the Arab and Turkish novels' interest in Sufism in relation to secular modernity. Although there are many approaches for countering modernism and reality, Sufism is for many reasons a particularly potent intellectual tool that may be used in processes of re-enchantment in literature. As will be discussed in detail in chapter 1.2, Sufism naturally decenters the role of reason by emphasizing the role of

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7 For Maḥfūẓ, see Ziad Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 25; for Pamuk, see Erdağ Göknar, *Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel London* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 210–212.

8 Göknar, *Secularism and Blasphemy*, 152.

9 Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, 25.

10 For a more elaborate discussion of Weber's term, see chapter 2.

11 In recent years, scholars from various academic fields have begun to regard Re-enchantment not as recourse from modernity but instead as an integral part of modernity itself. For further reading, see Richard Jenkins, "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium," *Max Weber Studies*, 1, No. 1 (2000): 11–32, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24579711, and Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, "Introduction: The Varieties of Modern Enchantment," in *The Re-enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, eds. Joshua Landy and Michael Saler (Stanford: Stanford University), 1–14.

intuitive wisdom and knowledge (*maʿrifa*).[12] Moreover, the Sufi emphasis on the ambiguity of language and the non-linear notion of time[13] could be instrumentalized in novels to form counter-narratives to linear narrations of secular nation-states. Sufism is, in other words, equated with re-enchantment not only because it decenters rationalism, celebrates linguistic ambiguity and favors circular temporality over linearity, but it can also be easily incorporated in postmodern narratives of re-enchantment. Both noble prize-winning writers mentioned above are the most notable within the context of our interest, yet numerous other examples could and should be made. Is the appropriation of Sufi language, tropes and philosophy by Arabic and Turkish literati an attempt to reconcile their modern alienating present with a more authentic past in order to overcome cultural paradoxes? Or is this phenomenon to be seen as a regional manifestation of a postmodern re-enchantment that, aligned with critics of modernity such as Max Weber, Martin Heidegger and T.S Eliot, seeks to heal a disenchanted world and provide endowment with meaning for the present?[14] Or is this to be seen as a wider Near Eastern intellectual project where the process of re-enchantment through Sufism is a strategy to subvert Eurocentric notions of modernity and call secularism into question? These are the core questions that this study will discuss on the basis of selected novels from modern Arabic and Turkish literature. Considering the multifaceted nature of Sufism, this study will focus on several aspects of the topic, including reflections on the purpose of the intentional use of mystical language, concepts and philosophy in contemporary Arabic and Turkish literature. It will also discuss Sufism in relation to cultural memory and its potential role as an identity-establishing element in a post-colonial context. Furthermore, it will discuss how the revival of Sufi tropes and themes corresponds to more general developments in postmodern literature on the global stage. Elements of Sufism can be found in the works of figureheads of postmodernism such as Jorge Luis Borges, Doris Lessing and even Salman Rushdie,[15] and one of its key features has been described as:

> […] inward looking, a kind of spiritual austerity and spiritual discipline for a post theological, industrial, materialist age, in which Gnostic moments of insight were few and far between. Postmodern literature and arts return to storytelling (though not storytelling as opposed to the truth), to ideas of melody in music, to embellishment in architecture and a more expansive attitude to "the world".[16]

However, before examining the method, the historical context and individual writers that will be included in this study, the context of this study needs to be defined. This

12 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Capitol Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011), 43, 130 and Roger Arnaldez, "Maʿrifa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0686.

13 Gerhard Böwering, "The Concept of Time in Islam," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 141, No. 1 (1997): 55–66, quotation 60–62, https://www.jstor.org/stable/987249.

14 For Weber, see Wolfgang Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt: Sechs Studien zu Max Weber* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 2; for Heidegger, see, Pelagia Goulmari, *Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Postcolonialism* (London, New York: Rouledge, 2015), 254–256; for Eliot, see Ibid., 175–185.

15 Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, 8.

16 Goulimari, *Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Postcolonialism*, 149.

study seeks to compare the development of the Arabic and Turkish novel during the second half of the 20th century. My motivation for choosing Arabic and Turkish novels and not, for instance, works written in Persian or Hausa is merely personal. Having studied Arabic literature in Egypt and Germany, I began to learn Turkish in 2013 and moved to Ankara two years later where I started my research. While studying the modern Turkish novel, I discovered striking congruencies between 20th-century Arabic and Turkish literature. Intellectuals and novelists in Istanbul and Ankara seemed to address similar questions of modernity, secularity and cultural heritage as their colleagues in Beirut and Cairo did, yet I found hardly any research literature in European languages that dealt with this remarkable fact. This led me to choose a comparative approach which is still anchored in Arabic studies yet includes Turkish novels to illustrate the congruency between these literary traditions.

Considering the geographical vicinity and the shared political and cultural Ottoman history, it may seem natural to include Turkish novels rather than Persian or Urdu examples that would have required a detailed examination of Subcontinental and Shiite contexts with which I am – alas – not familiar. This comparative approach is by no means a novelty, yet there are only a few publications that make use of it. Therefore, one needs to begin by examining the difficulties and benefits of such a comparative approach. Stephan Guth, in this respect, prepared the ground for this study. In Guth's monumental study from 2003, *Brückenschläge: eine integrierte 'turkoarabische' Romangeschichte (Mitte 19. bis Mitte 20. Jahrhundert)*, to which this research project is deeply indebted, Guth examines the history of the Arabic and Turkish novel from the mid-19th until mid-20th century in a groundbreaking manner. By applying a comparative method, Guth's study is not only innovative; it also clearly illustrates both the congruencies and incongruences between the two literary traditions. One of the defined goals in his study is to contribute to the establishment of comparative approaches to Arabic and Turkish studies.[17] Guth contrasts this approach to traditional approaches where scholarly research is conducted within the disciplines of either Arabic studies or Turkish studies, while comparative approaches are only used in relation to European literature.[18] In this respect, this study is inspired by Guth's comparative approach. Initially, it is therefore necessary to briefly outline the major congruencies *and* incongruences on the political and cultural level before moving to the main topic. On the political level, the Turkish national solo effort becomes visible through the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic in 1923 and the subsequent abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, which practically extruded religion from the public sphere for decades.[19] The radical changes on the political level were also reflected in culture through the language and alphabet reforms of 1928.[20] Indeed, these reforms on the cultural level have been widely regarded

17 Stephan Guth, *Brückenschläge: eine integrierte 'turkoarabische' Romangeschichte (Mitte 19. bis Mitte 20. Jahrhundert)* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), 1.

18 Ibid., 4–5.

19 Udo Steinbach, "Vom Osmanischen Reich zum EU-Kandidaten: ein historischer Bogen," in *Länderbericht Türkei*, ed. Udo Steinbach (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2012), 30–34.

20 Ibid.

as a break with the past. The repercussions of these reforms are summarized by Priska Furrer in the following manner:

> Auf kulturellem Gebiet wurde die nationale Neuorientierung u. a. durch eine forcierte Politik der Sprachreform vorangetrieben, die das Türkische von Arabismen und Persismen "reinigen" und näher an die gesprochene Sprache des einfachen Volkes heranbringen sollte. Seinen vielleicht auffälligsten Ausdruck fand der Bruch mit der Vergangenheit in der Ersetzung der arabischen durch die lateinische Schrift, die in 1928 verordnet und in kürzester Zeit durchgesetzt wurde. Diese Schriftreform war nicht nur ein Akt von höchster Symbolkraft, sondern hatte auch sehr konkrete Auswirkungen: Was vor 1928 geschrieben worden war, wurde für die in Lateinschrift geschulten neuen Generationen unlesbar, der Zugang zum schriftlichen kulturellen Erbe auf die Texte beschränkt, die im Laufe der Jahre in Transkription neu aufgelegt wurden.[21]

In the parlance of the Turkish novelist and poet Hasan Ali Toptaş, the final result of these reforms was the creation of a *Dil Yâresi*; a play on words which means "wounded heart" in Ottoman and "wounded tongue" in modern Turkish.[22] The replacement of Arabic and Persian vocabulary by Kemalist neologisms served the new founded Republic's ideological attempts to create a modern Turkish nation-state out of the ruins of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire.[23] As Jale Parla puts it:

> When the language reform was undertaken, Ataturk's object was to invent an ahistorical, primordial, homogeneous essence of Turkishness that would manifest itself in the diverse Anatolian civilizations and achieve its final materialization in the formation of the Turkish Republic […]. So, on the one hand, there was this attempt at dehistoricizing or ahistoricizing history and, on the other hand, a specific, intentional historicizing, which entailed a spatiotemporal invention to inspire in the population the notion of a nation with its geopolitical mapping, collective memories of heroic deeds, membership in a superior "race," possession of an *Ursprache* or a *Grundsprache*, and construction of a national linguistics. In short, it entailed the usual procedures of nation building, with which students of nationalism are now so familiar.[24]

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21 Priska Furrer, *Sehnsucht nach Sinn: Literarische Semantisierung von Geschichte im zeitgenössischen türkischen Roman* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005), 1–2 The English translation of the quote reads as follows: "The reorientation in the sphere of culture was i.a. impelled by the forced politics of the language reform. This reform sought to 'purify' Turkish from Arabic and Persian loan words and bring it closer to ordinary people. This rupture with the past found its most remarkable expression through the substitution of Arabic by Latin alphabet that was decreed in 1928 and enforced within short time. This alphabet reform was not only an act of high symbolic power, it also had tangible consequences: anything written before 1928 became illegible for the new generations who were educated in the Latin alphabet. Moreover, access to written cultural heritage would be limited to those texts that were republished in transcription over the years."

22 Jale Parla, "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel," *PMLA*, 123, No. 1 (2008): 27–40, quotation 27, https://dx.doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.1.27.

23 Ibid., 27–29.

24 Ibid., 30.

Moreover, in the early Republican era, the first generation of intellectuals regarded the novel as an educational vehicle to raise national consciousness. Thus, they deemed it their duty to put their art in the service of the Kemalist project.[25] As we proceed, we will examine how Turkish authors from the 1960s onwards increasingly begin to distance themselves from this attitude.

As one compares the Kemalist nation building project to the situation in the Arab world, one finds striking differences. On the political level, it proved impossible to separate Islam from nationalism to the extent that things developed in the secular Turkish Republic.[26] Unlike the Turks, Arab intellectuals were trapped in a cultural dilemma that Albert Hourani summarizes as follows:

> Islam was what the Arabs had done in history, and in a sense, it had created them, given them unity, law, a culture. For both Muslim and Christian Arabs, in different ways, there lay a dilemma at the bottom of Arab nationalism: secularism was necessary as a system of government, but how was complete secularism compatible with the existence of an Arab sentiment?[27]

Since Arab identity was entangled in Islam itself, a complete separation between religion and state proved difficult. Once one compares the situation on the cultural level, one finds both striking differences and similarities between the Arab and the Turkish situation. Ever since the Arab Nahda in the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, usually referred to as the "awakening," multifaceted debates regarding language reform and national literature are found, centering around intellectuals based in Beirut and Cairo.[28] These debates were promoted by the establishment of a modern public sphere, particularly during the rule of the Egyptian Khedive Ismāʿīl (1863–1879), the era when the periodical press (*al-ṣaḥāfa*) began to reach a wider readership.[29] As Khedive Ismāʿīl in 1863 replaced Ottoman Turkish as the language of power by declaring Arabic to be the only official language of Egypt, the incentives to modernize Arabic language increased even more.[30] Hence, Khalīl al-Khūrī, editor of the journal *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār*, among many others, argued that the Arabic language had to be adapted to modern phenomena. In his view, a more efficient language would function as an instrument for administration, modern journalism and science instead of being a language limited to religious domains.[31] The aspiration of Khalīl al-Khūrī and like-minded thinkers was a

25 Ibid., 28.

26 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 296–297.

27 Ibid., 297.

28 Fruma Zachs, "'Under Eastern Eyes': East and West in the Arabic Press of the Nahḍa Period," *Studia Islamica*, 106, No. 1 (2011): 124–143, quotation 128–136, https://dx.doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341255.

29 Elisabeth Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8–9.

30 Dagmar Glaß, "Creating a Modern Standard Language from Medieval Tradition: The Nahḍa and the Arabic Academies," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 835–843, quotation 836.

31 Ibid., 838–839.

tongue of the nation (*lisān al-umma*) that would play an identity-establishing role in the Arab nation-building project.[32] Furthermore, as national literature emerged in the Arab world during the 20th century, Arab literati put their art in service of Arab nationalism: variably manifested as local nationalisms (Egyptian, Palestinian etc.) or as Panarabism.[33] In this sense, Arab intellectuals and writers took a position comparable to the stance of Kemalists in Turkey. Yet, even if their views on language and literature as a vehicle for the nation-state project are comparable, they deeply differ regarding the role of Islam and cultural heritage. In the Arab world, religion was never extruded from the public sphere as was the case in the secular Turkish Republic, and language reforms never resulted in a break with the indigenous written cultural heritage. In short, in the Arab context, the dissociation of the Islamic past did not occur to the same extent as in Turkey.

In addition to the aforementioned difference in how to relate to the Islamic past, language cannot serve to connect the dots between the literary groups since Arabic and Turkish belong to two fundamentally different language families. Despite these different developments, it is striking to find other developments that appear to be congruent. As Guth notes, this parallelism is not only observable in literary content, form and aesthetics but also chronologically. In other words, the developments of the modern Arabic and Turkish novel unfold along similar literary-historical patterns.[34] This is partly explained by the fact that the Arab world and Turkey both belong to a Near Eastern cultural region that has historically been heavily influenced by Islam and whose borders are congruent (apart from the Maghreb) to the 19th-century Ottoman Empire.[35] Yet, the shared Ottoman and Islamic heritage is insufficient to explain that Arabic and Turkish literature developed similarly after the fall of the Ottoman empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The question is hence why such a parallelism, which could be observed over many decades after the fall of the Ottoman empire, exists? Guth answers the question using the concepts of *typologischer Vergleich* and *genetischer Vergleich* that he borrows from German comparative literary theory.[36] *Genetischer Vergleich* examines how congruent literary development evolves through intellectual exchange and contact between different groups of writers. This kind of intellectual exchange, Guth explains, existed within the context of the Ottoman empire, yet, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, this exchange became neglectable and de facto non-existent.[37] Intellectual exchange as an explanatory model for this parallelism is hence not plausible. Far more beneficial is instead the *typologischer Vergleich* which examines how economic, social, cultural and geographical similarities result in congruent literary developments. On that note, Guth explains that the typological similarity could largely be explained trough similar relation to Western modernity and literature.[38] Writers both in the Arab World

32 Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde*, 10–11.

33 Jeff Shalan, "Writing the Nation: The Emergence of Egypt in the Modern Arabic Novel," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 33, No. 3 (2002): 211–247, quotation 212–213, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/15700640260496695.

34 Guth, *Brückenschläge*, 432.

35 Ibid., 534–535.

36 Guth, *Brückenschläge*, 441–442.

37 Ibid., 428.

38 Ibid., 448.

and Turkey followed literary developments in Europe and were heavily influenced by them. These similar relations to Western literature and culture at large play a leading role in the outline of Arabic and Turkish 20th-century literary history. A tangible West-East dichotomy that is divided into a "traditional-oriental" and a "modern-Western" sphere is central in both Arabic and Turkish novels of the 1930s and 1940s.[39] Frequently, protagonists of such novels are torn between these spheres, sometimes allegorized in the form of a love story between individuals from different social backgrounds. From the 1950s onwards, narratives with a West-East dichotomy are complemented with novels with an explicit sociopolitical agenda. A trend towards social realism represented by writers such as Yaşar Kemal in Turkey and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī in the Arab world depict poverty and social injustice both in rural areas and the precarious situation of a proletariat residing in newly urbanized areas. These novels seek to raise political awareness and project their hopes for change on a future revolution that may transform society in the direction of a Western style modern state.[40] As will be discussed in details in chapter one and in the case studies, the sociopolitical trend is followed by a literature that calls the possibilities of revolutionary change into question and frequently revolves around protagonists who are alienated and spiritually disoriented. This change should be seen in context of the secular regime's inability to fulfill its promise to create democratic modern nation-states and social welfare. In short, the parallelism can be observed over many decades and follows a congruent development from West-East dichotomy narratives via social realism, towards narratives that question the nation building project. In addition to my personal motivation to compare Arab and Turkish novels, this parallelism in literary history is a strong argument to adopt a comparative approach. As will be discussed below, I have chosen texts that reflect and illustrate how this parallelism continues after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and, therefore, invite a comparative approach.

Considering the congruences and incongruences outlined above, the approach on how to conduct such a study needs to be chosen while being aware of the potential difficulties. The situation gets even more complex once exterior influences from Western literature are considered. Before moving into the case studies, Chapter 1 examines how the urge towards the mystical in contemporary Arabic and Turkish literature both arises from the regional context and simultaneously reflects global postmodern literary currents. The latter will be addressed in chapter 1.1 "The Disenchantment of the World": Western Critics of Modernity, The Concept of *Multiple Modernities* and the Urge towards the Mystical." In this chapter, arguments by some of the leading Western critics of modernity will be briefly discussed. As we shall see below, they share a critical position towards the Cartesian subjectivity and anticipate a re-enchantment of the world through "poetic reason" (*Die dichtende Vernunft)*.[41] This philosophical background is essential for the deeper understanding of Maḥfūẓ's aforementioned "sanctification of the novel," Pamuk's likewise aforementioned "construction of meaning through storytelling" and

39 Ibid., 429.

40 Ibid., 430–432.

41 Anthony Cascardi, "The critique of Subjectivity and the Re-enchantment of the World," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 50, No. 196 (1996): 243–263, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23954808.

indeed for all of the case studies that will be included in this study. In addition, the chapter will also discuss Shmuel Eistenstadt's concept of *multiple modernities.* According to this concept, modernity can no longer be understood as a single monolithic phenomenon but rather as various processes across the world that, by necessity, do not follow the European pattern of secularization, and the declining role of religion in society is not a given. In turn, chapter 1.2 "The Mystical Turn as Process of Self-examination: Sufism in Relation to Modernity and Cultural Heritage" will focus on how the mystical turn in contemporary Arabic and Turkish literature relates to regional developments in the politics, culture and literature of the 20th century. Particularly relevant in Arabic literature is the defeat in the Six-Day War in June 1967, and its impact on intellectual debates and even Arab identity itself. I will argue that this traumatic event resulted in a questioning of the modernist Pan-Arab project as a whole and made Arab writers turn towards cultural heritage as a process of self-examination. This comes in parallel to similar developments in Turkish literature where modernist Kemalist narratives were questioned with the failure of the nation-state project to keep its promise of political stability and material wealth. By introducing Eisenstadt's concept of *multiple modernities*, which rejects the notion that modernization and westernization are identical, chapter 1 will discuss how the appropriation of mysticism could be considered as an attempt to imagine *multiple modernities* beyond the Enlightenment paradigm. Once the historical, cultural and philosophical background has been outlined on both a global and regional level, the current state of research will be presented and the contributions and significance of this study will be discussed in relation to previous scholarship. The main focus will be on two publications to which this study is indebted to, Guth's *Brückenschläge*: Erdağ Göknar's *Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel* (2013) and Ziad Elmarsafy's *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (2012). Ziad Elmarsafy's *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* examines the phenomenon of Sufism in Arabic literature since the 1960s. Elmarsafy's study has served as an inspiration to this exploration and also brought suggestions for case studies that I will include. It also links the revival of Sufism to events in politics and culture. My study is in many ways a continuation of Elmarsafy's work, albeit, with a slightly different focus. I will more thoroughly explore the interest in Sufism in Arabic and Turkish literature as being a response to secular modernity. For this purpose, it became natural for me to include Turkish novels in my research as they react against the Kemalists' secularism in a similar way as the Arabic novels do. By comparing how Arab and Turkish novelists respond to secular modernity through Sufism, the horizon is widened beyond traditional academic disciplines and is therefore complimentary to previous research in the field. As I will discuss below, this perspective allows a view of the Sufi novel as a wider Near Eastern intellectual project that aims at going beyond boundaries defined by secular nation-states.

Once the theoretical background has been discussed, as described above, the focus will move to the case studies which form the center of this book. In total, nine novels written by different authors have been chosen to examine the various aspects of the topic. The case studies have been divided into three main chapters, containing three different writers each. After a short introduction, the work of each author will be analyzed in a

subchapter of its own. Each chapter will be concluded with a final comparative perspective that seeks to integrate the selected case studies into a wider literary context.

Chapter 2, titled "Rural Mysticism versus Urban Modernity: An Elegy of the Old World and an Expression of a New World Being Born," includes novels focusing on the rapid transformation of rural space in the early 1960s. Here, urban modernity is often portrayed as something threatening to disconnect the villagers from their cultural and religious past. In this context, rural mysticism serves as an inner sanctuary where the protagonists find hope and meaning in a world in which nothing seems certain. Notable is the role of the Sufi saint, a figure onto which the villagers project their longing for the Divine. However, as the process of urbanization continues, it becomes abundantly clear that the enchanted rural world belongs to the past and is doomed to be sacrificed on the altar of modernity. As we shall see in the works of al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ (Sudan), Yaşar Kemal (Turkey) and ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim (Egypt), the disenchantment of rural space appears to be inevitable. Therefore, the works have the character of elegies rather than syntheses between tradition and modernity.

Chapter 3 "Sufism and Commitment: 'My Sufism Is that I Care about Human Concerns and Social Issues'" examines how writers blend the socially committed zeitgeist of the late 1960s with mysticism. Congruent with Jean Paul Sartre's notion of *littérature engagée*, Arab writers began to take a more critical stance towards their authoritarian regimes.[42] Groundbreaking is Nagīb Maḥfūẓ's reinterpretation of the Sufi understanding of chivalry (*futuwwa*). In Maḥfūẓ's understanding, *futuwwa* becomes a spiritual act of selfless service where the writer remains committed to the community without expecting personal benefit. In this reading, the mystical path towards self-realization is not exclusively turning inwards; it also exteriorly manifests itself in acts of social commitment.[43] This attitude is reflected in the works of the Iraqi author ʿAzīz al-Sayyid Jāsim, who forms in his works an "unholy Trinity" of politics, sex and mysticism. Observable in the works of the Turkish novelist Oğuz Atay is a transformation of his characters from the wounded, alienated self in his early works towards a reinterpretation of the Sufi notion of *al-insān al-kāmil* (Turkish: *Kâmil bir insan*).[44] His novel *Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı: Mustafa İnan* (*The Life of a Scientist: Mustafa İnan*) is a *Bildungsroman* in which the mystic merges with the socially committed scientist in the figure of the protagonist Mustafa İnan. Even if the notion of social commitment in literature peaked in the 1960s, the chapter includes novels published as late as 1988. The categorization is not to be understood as periodical but rather thematical. Even if socially committed literature culminated in the 1960s, its influences can be traced way beyond the end of that decade.

In chapter 4 "Sufism and Memory: Challenging Dogmatic, Nationalist Historiography and Using Sufism to Tell Another Story," the role of the socially committed writer will be retained, yet it changes somewhat in character. The selected works are engaged in a process of deconstruction of monolithic modernist *master narratives*. The novelists

42 Verena Klemm, *Literarisches Engagement im Arabischen Nahen Osten* (Würzburg: Ergon, 1998), 96–97.

43 Elmarsafy, *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, 26–30.

44 The term *Kâmil bir insan* is a Turkish translation of the Sufi concept known in Arabic as *al-insān al-kāmil*. Originally coined by Ibn ʿArabī to describe the Prophet, the concept meant that a human being could attain divine qualities through the mystical path of meditation and contemplation.