

Auerbach, Tanpınar and Edib in Istanbul: Reinventing the Humanities and Comparative Literature

An Interview with Efe Khayyat on *Istanbul 1940 and Global Modernity:
The World according to Auerbach, Tanpınar, and Edib*

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During the last decade ground-breaking studies on Erich Auerbach have appeared in English, reviving the interest in Auerbach's extraordinary work worldwide. Kader Konuk's *East West Mimesis* (2010), for instance, demonstrates the historical, geographical and academic circumstances that conditioned Auerbach's writing of *Mimesis* in Istanbul. Konuk aptly shows how Auerbach's masterpiece is not just a work of exile, as Edward Said and others once argued, but was thoroughly informed by Auerbach's tenure in Istanbul between 1936-1947. As another example, the collection of writings by Auerbach, *Time, History and Literature* (translated by Jane O. Newman, 2013) along with James I. Porter's comprehensive introduction to the volume, covers Auerbach's intellectual trajectory from beginning to end, depicting Auerbach as a multifaceted intellectual (philologist, philosopher, historian, literary critic), and revealing the relevance of Auerbach's work to comparative and world literary studies today. Despite these and many other extraordinary contributions to Auerbach scholarship, there seemed to be something missing in this ever-expanding corpus.

Did Auerbach not have any non-Western colleagues to work with in Istanbul? Did he not have Turkish colleagues at Istanbul University in addition to Turkish students? If Auerbach was the chair of Western languages and literatures at Istanbul University, who taught non-Western literatures and cultures – Turkish, Arabic and Farsi, at least, or English for that matter – at Istanbul University? What were those Turkish scholars doing while Auerbach was working on his masterpieces? What would today's comparative and world literary studies look like if they were read together with Auerbach? *Istanbul 1940 and Global Modernity* (2019) addresses these questions by interpreting Auerbach's work together with the works of his most prominent colleagues during those years: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) and Halide Edib (1884-1964). Khayyat claims that, despite the lack of evidence of interaction between these figures and despite the differences concerning their subjects of study, Auerbach, Tanpınar and Edib had similar concerns about the humanist tradition when, they all believed, it was threatened in the East and the West alike by global modernity. Tanpınar was a scholar of Ottoman and Turkish literature as well as a novelist. Edib was an international intellectual and writer dividing her time between Istanbul, Cairo, Beirut, Paris, Delhi, London and New York, among others. They were both born and raised during the last decades of the late Ottoman era and lived through the years when the modern, Republican Turkey took pains at negotiating its Muslim-Oriental past. They were intellectuals in-between,

engaged with both Eastern and Western humanist archives. According to Khayyat, this is what makes them interesting when read side by side with Auerbach, since he argues that Auerbach's account of Western realism, despite focusing exclusively on the Western canon, points to a non-Western, non-Christian horizon with its vision of gradual secularization and "de-Christianization." Khayyat's book not only traverses various histories in the East and West, but also multiple languages from German and French to global English, from Ottoman and modern Turkish to Arabic and Persian. It is undoubtedly a work of history and literary criticism as much as a work of philology and fiction in the spirit of Auerbach.

Before I met Khayyat in Istanbul, I had the opportunity to discuss *Istanbul 1940* with him via e-mail exchanges as I read the book. It was wonderful but also mournful to talk about *Istanbul 1940* in the city where Auerbach, Tanpınar and Edib met almost a century ago. The following interview was conducted after these exchanges and via e-mail over a few months (February-April 2019) between Istanbul where I live and New York where Khayyat lives.

O.T.: *Istanbul 1940* is a unique book, truly one of a kind. I agree with Martin Puchner's statement on the back cover: "This is a book only Khayyat could have written." Could you say a few words about the intellectual trajectory that brought you to *Istanbul 1940*?

E.K.: Thank you, Oğuz, for this opportunity and your kind words. I studied at Istanbul University and in Rome at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana: English philology in Istanbul (the department was founded by Edib) and philosophy in Rome. Once I fancied myself a medievalist: the first thesis I wrote was on Duns Scotus. Writing on Scotus and *haecceitas*, I came across Martin Heidegger, which was my introduction to contemporary philosophy. Then I worked as a translator and an editor for a journal of philosophy for years in Istanbul, published in cultural journals across Europe, and organized numerous conferences and events. I was lucky enough to work with some extraordinary intellectuals during my career in Istanbul, among them Murat Belge, Ferda Keskin, Enis Batur, Asli Erdoğan, Ali Akay, Hrant Dink... I also traveled a lot before I decided to return to the university.

Then I received an MA in cultural criticism at Bilgi University before heading to New York for my Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. There too I was fortunate enough to be with some extraordinary people. I spent six years with Gayatri Spivak at Columbia; Marc Nichanian and Gil Anidjar have always been there for me, and I worked with Friedrich Kittler in Berlin. David Damrosch was kind enough to co-organize with me the first meeting of Harvard's Institute for World Literature in Istanbul in 2009. Şeyla Benhabib has always been incredibly generous... and then there is Orhan Pamuk: we worked together both in Istanbul and in New York. Anyway, I could continue to drop names, but let me stop here. You get the idea. I'm not entirely sure what exactly these larger than life figures from different milieux contributed to what you call my "intellectual trajectory," but I know that I owe them, and that each one of them marked the way I think. I traveled a lot after going back to the university too: I taught in Germany and France before receiving my Ph.D. And since I started teaching at Rutgers, I've lectured across the world: in the UK, India, China, Switzerland and Serbia etc. Long story short, a circuitous route brought me to where I am, thanks to number of coincidences and some luck, the generosity of many friends and colleagues, and perhaps my inability to stay put.

O.T.: *Istanbul 1940* is an extremely ambitious book that strikes the reader from the very first sentence: "I wish I could start where Erich Auerbach left off and write a book that, like *Mimesis*, 'may be cited as an illustration' of how history is better off as fiction." Let us start with where Auerbach left off. The final chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis* deals with modernist fiction. Towards the end of the book, Auerbach suggests that the fragmentary, perspectivist form of the modernist novel informs his own historical-philological method as well. You show that he contrasts this method with the totalizing methods of what he calls "historical sciences." Totalizing and positivist social sciences versus fragmentary and imaginative historical philology... It seems that this is where Auerbach left off. But where, in your opinion, did Auerbach really leave off? Considering the academic habitus that a scholar of comparative literature is currently involved in, why do you think it is not possible to realize your wish today?

E.K.: You are right, I don't think that it's easy to start where Auerbach left off because of the way we study culture today. The kind of literary criticism we practice and teach today seems to me to be quite regressive and far less political. Think of his signature style: that understated tone that marks all of his writings. I can tell you from my classroom experience that those reading him for the first time often find his excruciating attention to detail, accompanied by his monotonous, nonchalant voice, terribly boring. I think all this is sheer irreverence and an expression of humility at once on his part. On the one hand, he merely performs literary criticism, always with a keen eye on style, like a well-behaving, if also a little boring, university professor. On the other hand, his criticism draws conclusions that gradually shape an understanding of our political history, an intellectual history of our global modernity. Moreover, literary history as he conceived it, is at the same time history of religion. His attention to style teaches us something new about the relation of faith and fiction to reality, and the relation of politics to religion, not only in the modern world but since time immemorial! Critics often observe that he wrote histories of mentalities, what they mean is that Auerbach drafted an intellectual history of our present, of the modern subject – a genealogy of the mental theatre of modernity.

Auerbach thought he could do this as a philologist or as a man of letters, but not simply because he prioritized his field over and against other fields of study. It's not that philology is better or more truthful than philosophy, history, political science, or sociology. His philology offered truths of a different order. He did consider his critique an heir to *Geisteswissenschaften*, but at the same time he was completely aware of the belatedness of such approach. In other words, he did not employ what you call the "totalizing methods" of the nineteenth-century European mind, while still providing a "total" view of things. He sought to avoid the loudness, the authoritarian certitude of the nineteenth-century European mind by allowing his method for humanistic inquiry to be informed by the literary in the modern sense, by inviting a degree of fiction into his strictly historical account. That is what I find fascinating about his ambitions and his understatements. For him, practicing modernist philology was to do what *Geisteswissenschaften* once did, but without any claim whatsoever to scientific, philosophical, or other authority or certitude. Practicing philology or literary criticism in the twentieth century, then, is to step back from Auerbach's perspective, to relinquish scientific authority to claim the license to say anything and everything and in every possible way. This is how Derrida once defined literature by the way, describing his own somewhat literary technique as an effort "to say anything and everything and in every

possible way," and pointing out that the modern institution of literature overflows, opposes to, or even seeks to undo institutionality. There you see the reason why I take Auerbach's equation of his philological method to the method of the modernist novel as essential in doing his work justice. Nowadays though, even in literature departments where we assign bits and pieces of Auerbach's writings to our students, disciplinary organization and specialization are but *sine qua non*. Everyone wants to be loud, certain, exact etc.

O.T.: Perhaps against this kind of disciplinary "institutionality", you also state in the opening paragraph that your book "involves a degree of fiction." It may seem as a shocking statement for a scholarly book of this caliber. Perhaps you gave us an off-the-beaten-path and rather imaginative type of scholarly book like Auerbach's? Except for your tremendous endnotes and bibliography, of course.

E.K.: This is a book about three intellectuals – Auerbach, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, and Halide Edib (Adivar) – who got together in Istanbul in the year 1940, working at the same institution and pursuing the same goal for years, which was to modernize and Europeanize that institution. In the nineteenth century, that institution, or the *Darülfünun*, was conceived of as the non-European equivalent of the European university. Its Europeanization at this point in time coincides with the darkest hour of European history, accompanied by unrest, violence, and destruction taking hold of the entire world.

These intellectuals posed themselves as always looking at the larger world, the world beyond Istanbul while writing their histories in pursuit of their common goal. Yet for each of them that background of a larger world was something different. For Auerbach it was the West, for Tanpınar and Edib it was the Orient, Muslim Orient or the East at large. Although they worked together and they all worked to explain how and why they had found themselves at their moment in (European or Europeanizing) history, and even though they had similar methods, as the book shows, they did not and could not feed one another intellectually, at least not on the surface.

We have hardly any comments in their writings about one another. This does not mean that they did not complement each other, though. That is why being a little imaginative, some digging into depths is necessary to place them next to one another retrospectively. Bringing them together, interpreting their writings together today draws different pictures of their lifeworlds and enables new ways of viewing their legacies. It provides a more complete view of the world and the world-historical moment they approached from different angles but from the common point of view of their meeting place in Istanbul. It also provides a more complete view of what they took literature and critique to be. All this, I believe, has a lot to teach our present in so far as the world historical moment of these critics' narratives has shaped and continues to shape our present.

O.T.: To begin with Auerbach's take on the matter in question: he sets out to write a millennia-long cultural history with a peculiar "synthetic perspectivism" ("conception *synthétique et quasi-métaphysique des forces historique*" in Auerbach's parlance), which is his own brand of philological method, as you point out, "something akin to a general *Geisteswissenschaft*." This, you argue, "required him to write histories without being a historian, develop a philosophy of history without being a philosopher, think deeply about religion without being a theologian, elaborate on the social and political conditions of life without being a sociologist, and so on." It seems to me that your statement about Auerbach perfectly describes the position of the comparatist in today's university.

E.K.: As I said, Auerbach sometimes strikes me as simultaneously irreverent and humble. You are right in that the finest comparatists of our time occupy similar positions intellectually, among them you could count Edward Said, who reintroduced Auerbach to a global audience a few decades ago. There are many others, of course. But they are all oppositional figures. They achieve what they achieve despite the institutional constraints of the contemporary academia and all sorts of other institutionalized biases. I mean, as comparatists, we do not work to train Edward Sais in the contemporary university. Of course, great critics continue to emerge, but again, as figures of opposition. My observation that it's not easy start where Auerbach left off was meant to point out the oppositional, *irreverent* aspect of his thought.

O.T.: I can see your point about Auerbach's humility, despite his own totalizing claims. But how was it possible for Auerbach to assign primacy to literature in "engaging reality," as you point out in the book, while heavily depending on other fields and not prioritizing his own field?

E.K.: Auerbach interprets all sorts of texts, and all sorts of genres of writing, in *Mimesis* and other works that I discuss. He reads sacred texts, history, philosophy, fiction and autobiography, sociology and psychology etc. But he reads texts in terms of their contribution to the development of realism. He views modern literature as a crucial moment in the history of realist reception and representation, even as the peak of that history. That history begins with the Bible, slowly evolves into literature in the modern sense, which in turn paves the way to "historical sciences" – in his vocabulary – and modernist fiction. It is the realism of modern literature, the "synthetic perspectivism" that modern men and women of letters distill from Christian realism that informs our contemporary realisms, including what Auerbach calls historical-scientific realism.

The Bible carries the seeds of literary realism, then, and the historical sciences are an offshoot of literary realism, which is to say that the sciences of the social and contemporary modernist literature are cross-breeds. While Christianity is one step behind literature in its realism, historical sciences overshoot the destination. With Christianity we lack perspectivism, which renders Christian realism tyrannical, and with the historical sciences of modernity we lack the synthesis which renders historical scientific knowledge fragmentary.

Regardless, again, modernist literature and historical sciences are nineteenth-century cross-breeds, they are heirs to literary realism, in Auerbach's mind. So he does not rely on historical sciences, but rather either points at their shortcomings, or – while praising them for their realism – shows how they could not have come to existence without literary realism and its "synthetic perspectivist" imaginary. If this is still prioritizing literature over other ways of accounting for reality, you should note what underlies the literary method and the literary knowledge that it produces. Literary knowledge is neither verifiable – i.e. it does not claim scientific authority – nor is it tyrannical. Nor does the literary method – the way I describe it in different contexts in the book: regressive, Dionysian, etc – lend itself to power-knowledge in a manner that is comparable to the historical-scientific methods. This is to say that the priority of literature here is due to the resignation it enables – resignation from power-knowledge.

O.T.: I agree that literature or literary knowledge taken in that sense does not readily lend itself to power/knowledge, unless, perhaps, we take into account their potential instrumentalization. More on this shortly. Let us first revisit Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar and Halide Edib's take on the matter at hand. You claim that they display

an intellectual attitude similar to Auerbach's. As his colleagues in Istanbul University in the 1940s, having been disturbed by the "cultural erosion" accompanying Turkey's Europeanization, they "wrote histories of non-European humanisms." Since there is no direct interaction between them, what are your grounds for imagining affinities between these three figures?

E.K.: Well, first of all, my goal was not to show or claim that these three intellectuals influenced one another. Such an argument would not be worth making anyway. It would have been difficult to prove too. After all, they studied different traditions. Yet their ambitions and reservations mirror each others'. The impossible scopes of their intellectual histories – from Homer to Woolf, or from the *Mu'allaqat* to Nâzım Hikmet – mirror one another as well. Despite having directed their gazes in different directions – Auerbach to the West, Tanpınar the Muslim Orient, and Edib at once further East and further West – it is clear that they were responding to the same moment in history, from Istanbul where they worked together, and with the same concerns. This is why I thought it was even more interesting that they ignored one another – apart from some general comments they made, which could as well be interpreted as anti-Semitic in Tanpınar's case, by the way, biased in different ways in Auerbach's and Edib's cases.

They were all in a hurry to salvage what they could from their respective archives right where they all thought was the end of history. Perhaps that is why they didn't have the time to study each others' works. Regardless, that is one of their meeting place in their minds – right at the end of a world. But there are other meeting points. Another is, I argue, the space of literature, of modern literature. Because as humanists and literary critics, they all reacted to the methods of modern disciplinary history and social sciences in the same way, and they all seemed to have a similar understanding of the literary method, or literature as method, as it were. While working to recreate an outdated, still very much "Oriental" educational institution in the image of the modern European university, they had the opportunity to rethink the university and the humanities at the end of times – right at the end of Europe from Auerbach's perspective, at the end of the Islamicate civilization from Tanpınar's and Edib's perspectives. I would go so far as to argue that they together, that is, as a collective, even reinvented the European humanities. Unfortunately only Auerbach's portion of greater invention has reached us to pioneer cultural criticism and comparative literature as we practice them today. Imagine what comparative literature would have looked like if Auerbach had reached us as part of the collective I study – or what other disciplines and fields of study would have emerged if Tanpınar and Edib had reached us together with Auerbach. As you see one *must* be imaginative to do these critics justice.

O.T.: Let us continue with Tanpınar. Tanpınar sets out to account for Turkey's Islamicate past when the modern Turkish Republic was making an enormous effort to leave behind its Ottoman past. The most crucial development of this era was perhaps the adoption of Roman letters (1928) and the "purification" of Turkish language that followed, which would gradually deprive Turkish of Arabic and Persian influences. All this meant the suppression of the Ottoman "archive," archive in the sense of a "civilizational library," as you put it, one that articulates a particular way of "sensing and feeling, thinking and telling." You argue that Tanpınar wrote his seminal work on Ottoman-Turkish literature, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı* ("19th Century Turkish Literature," 1949), to inquire what remained – and perhaps could (not) possibly remain – of that archive in European Turkey.

In Auerbach's case what is at stake was the destruction of Western humanist tradition (or "archive," as you put it) and the leveling of cultural differences in a globalizing world. In Tanpınar's case what is at stake was the ambivalent presence of the Islamicate past at the moment of a Westernized present without a history. Whereas Auerbach's Western humanist tradition begins with the Bible and ends up with gradual "de-Christianization", Tanpınar's humanism not only affirms Western humanistic values, yet it is also ambivalently informed by what he himself calls the "Muslim Oriental" legacy. Tanpınar's project seems to be much more difficult than Auerbach's since he tries to find the convergences between these two different – and somewhat antinomial – traditions. Would you agree?

E.K.: These critics had to take into consideration the catastrophes – from the Holocaust to the Partition, the Armenian genocide to pogroms, countless catastrophes taking place around them as they figured out what shape the European humanities would take in a new era in this part of the "Europeanizing non-Europe." Neither modernity nor tradition appeared the same during those tumultuous times. Modernity did not appear to be capable of delivering its promises in the face of unprecedented corruption, deceit, violence and destruction across the world. In the meantime, once looked-upon traditions of the past came into view differently in retrospect. Long story short, from the perspective of these critics, for better or worse, it was possible and perhaps even necessary to view with a fresh eye modernity and the tradition, histories of technology and religion, of culture, politics and fiction. Theirs is a moment of awakening, of a latter-day-enlightenment, as it were, when they had to shed their inherited wisdom and all their prejudices, and start from scratch as they set to work to interpret texts modern and traditional – an entire human history dating back to time immemorial.

The kind of openness they nurtured and even developed into a method for literary and cultural critical inquiry is just exemplary. It is because we fail to interpret the work of this collective as what it is that the complete picture of the attitude in question has long escaped our attention. Auerbach has long been accused of being Eurocentric, for instance, while it's really easy to accuse Tanpınar and Edib of conservatism and biases of all sorts. But I think Auerbach's task was as difficult as Tanpınar's, to address your question directly.

Tanpınar and Auerbach both found convergences, as you say, or overlaps between the promises of modernity and the horizon of the respective traditions they traced. Both Auerbach and Tanpınar were ultimately interested in the political horizon of the traditional, religious trajectories they traced. The Biblical revolution, in Auerbach's case, and the Quranic revolution, in Tanpınar's (and to a certain extent Edib's) case, are turning points in the history of "the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation" (in Auerbach's very own words). But I think your hunch is right in that it is easier for us to understand Auerbach's core argument, while Tanpınar's and Edib's observations on Islamicate pasts and presents are shadowed today by our prejudices and inherited wisdoms. Tanpınar's criticism is not available in English, there is that issue to begin with: but *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı* was published in French, recently, so Western (and American) audiences are getting more and more familiar with his criticism. *A Mind at Peace (Huzur)* and *The Time Regulation Institute (Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü)* and some other fictional writings came out in English recently, but his essays, which are crucial to the story that *Istanbul 1940* tells, have not been translated into any Western language.

O.T.: Let us go back to the late 19th century Ottoman literature then, to the period that engendered the “crisis.” The section titled “Quixotic Turks” in your book opens with Ahmed Midhat (1844-1912), arguably the greatest novelist of the Tanzimat era. He wrote a novel titled *Don Quixote in Istanbul* (1877) that attempts to adopt *Don Quixote* into Ottoman reality and morals, with a view to assimilate this European into the Ottoman society or life-world. You argue that as a literary phenomenon *Don Quixote in Istanbul* remained without much impact but Don Quixote himself would become a crucial figure for the revolutionary Young Turks. After Young Turks seized the power in 1909, Ömer Seyfeddin (1884-1920) would rise in the literary scene to denounce Midhat’s way of engaging Don Quixote as Hamletism. You show how Seyfeddin would go so far as to embrace Don Quixote in opposition to Midhat’s and Ottoman intelligentsia’s Hamletisms – his truly mad strategy culminating in his call to Turks “to become a nation like Greeks, like Armenians, like Jews, or like any other nation on the face of this earth.” This call would soon overshoot its destination as radical Turkish nationalism, eventually leading to catastrophes for the Armenians, Greeks and Jews living in the Ottoman territory. And as you point out: “the silent, literary writing of the sort Tanpınar praises, the one that renders writing *representing*, would turn into *literally* writing – writing on the ‘flesh of the world’ as Rancière would say.” This is one of the most striking moments in your book that shows the political stakes of literary translation and representation, of mimesis in a way. But taking my cue from your comments on the Don Quixotism of Turkish nationalism, I would like to pose a somewhat related question. Don Quixote, a fiction as he may be, does real things in Turkey. You argue that the Orientalist fiction of the terrible “Turk,” i.e. the Turk as the fabulous and horrifying, stereotypical Oriental, did real things in Europe and to Europe as well. What do you mean when you say Europe has “also turn[ed] somewhat Oriental, somewhat Turk” in the process of “Europeanizing the non-European world”?

E.K.: The section on Don Quixote in the second part of the book (which is at the same time a discussion of Tanpınar’s *ikilik*), and the section on Hamlet in part three (which is dedicated to Edib), both address the question of the political stakes of literary representation. Part one (on Auerbach) addresses the same question more generally and also with reference to *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* in particular, so these sections build on each other. The sections on Turkish *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* also address the question of the political (or politico-theological, if I may) stakes of literary translation. I look at the relation of translation to conversion.

Remember that *Mimesis* displays an unwavering sympathy for and intellectual commitment to the everyday, common life—to the life of the majority of the people living on the face of the earth, or simply the “multitude.” For Auerbach, until the Gospels, only the shiniest and the greatest – the strongest men, prettiest women, biggest swords and longest beards etc – could make difference; only the shiniest could make enough difference to be perceived as worth remembering. Only the shiniest made it to the stories people shared with each other about themselves and one another. The pagan mind simply lacked the means to do any better. First the Gospels overcome this mindset. First the fishermen of Galilee climb up to the stage of (tragic) representation, playing major roles in the greatest tragedy of all time, that of salvation. After that, the more common life, or the life of the real and simple majority of humans, seeps into human consciousness to mark our stories and books, the more realist those stories, books, and our reception of ourselves become. This is how an entire Western-European

civilization evolves in Auerbach. First the fishermen of Galilee climb up to the stage, but then come others – book by book other peoples and parts of the world climb upon the same stage as the history of the European humanities evolves.

The story that Auerbach narrates after the Gospels is the history of the transformation and adjustment of the Christian mind to the real, larger world. So we have a series of conversions in Auerbach's account of realism and its globalization: first conversion to Christianity and out of the mental theater of antiquity at the dawn of Western realism, and then a history of conversion out of Christianity as the history of Western realism all the way to our present. Now both *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* have important roles to play in this latter history of what Auerbach also calls "de-Christianization," but I will not get into the details of this now. What I want to remind you here is that given what I have said thus far, it must be clear that there is no history of Western realism, in Auerbach's mind, without the non-Christian. One of the things the book does is to show that Auerbach quite often emphasizes the cathartic effects of the Christian-European exposure to the non-European-Christian world. Christian-European civilization evolves in such a way that it continuously embraces, accepts as is, "devours" as Valéry would say, or incorporates the non-Christian, the non-European – by gradually "turning Turk," to a certain extent.

I know that you find this latter conclusion of mine rather imaginative, and you may be right. It's just that this is the only way I can interpret Auerbach, for the better or the worse, and whether what I do amounts to "supplementing" rather than interpreting or not. But there is more. How does this expansion of the European mind, this de-Christianization work? Through real interventions: through exchanges, travels, translations etc. Through contact with the non-Western world, first merely imagined, and then real. Obviously these real and imagined "contacts" do not leave the non-Western world untouched. This is to say that de-Christianization does not and cannot take place in a vacuum of sorts, but has immediate implications beyond Christianity and Europe that slowly engulf the entire world. From the perspective of Tanpınar's and Edib's part of the world, this same space where Europe moves beyond itself is the space of modernization, Europeanization, and to a certain extent, yes, Christianization. There is then a correlation between non-Western modernization and de-Christianization, that is if we must stick to this conceptual vocabulary of dichotomies etc. In reality what we have is more identity than two correlating movements.

I look at *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet* in Ottoman-Turkish translation to show how "Europeanization of non-Europe" is a moment in European history as it is a moment in other cultural trajectories, on the one hand; and on the other to see how far the process of de-Christianization could evolve in reality. One could use a different, perhaps more academic vocabulary to make this same case – and it was indeed done in many different genres of writing and academic disciplines. What our triumvirate (I guess being Turkish, and studying Turkish modernity, I have a fixation on "triumvirates") enables me to do is to come up with a summary judgment in plain tongue (if I may) after a bird eye's view of the cultural history of globalization that these intellectuals themselves produced in their criticism. I came to the observations on "globalization" or global modernity ("in the singular," as Dirlik taught us) that I share with you now after reading Auerbach, Tanpınar and Edib along with their archives. I did write some additional chapters that I could not include in full in the book: a chapter called "The Quranic Revolution" that responds to Auerbach's thought of a Biblical revolution,

another one called “Who Killed Beşir Fuad,” and yet another titled “Hiç” that traces a cultural trajectory from calligraphic writing to Samipaşazade Sezai’s realism. These chapters will be collected in another book, I hope. What *Istanbul 1940* does is to interpret Auerbach, Tanpınar, and Edib’s collective work as the tip of an iceberg.

O.T.: The conception of modernity or globalization in the singular also appears in the title of your book: *Istanbul 1940 and Global Modernity*. I find it significant because I believe that one of the implications of the – by now somewhat outdated – discourse on “alternative modernities” is risking marginalization of the configurations of modernity beyond Europe. From that perspective, it is so easy to interpret non-Western modernities in isolation or as if they were not a matter of concern for the European, as if this process called modernization were simply a unilateral dissemination from Europe to the rest of the world. In other words, “modernities in the plural” may lead one to ignoring the Western involvement in the history of non-European modernization. I believe that taking modernity in the singular, the way Arif Dirlik and you do, is not reductive or essentialist because it leads us to viewing modernity in transnational and translanguagual contexts rather than as national and monolingual cases.

Now let’s turn to Halide Edib (1884-1964) to analyze the complexity of this *singular* and global modernity. I too think that as an international public intellectual committed both to the Eastern and Western humanist archives, she is the “liveliest” and at the same time most challenging figure in your book. As you suggest: “[Her] world is larger than Auerbach’s and Tanpınar’s combined and extends from her hometown of Istanbul to Cairo and Beirut, and from there to Paris, Delhi, London, and New York. [...] Edib’s world-view is closer to the perspective we have today on the cultural history of global modernity and world literature.” You add that although she, like Auerbach, was interested in the “spiritual foundations of life in common [...] her thoughts on the human spirit risks reducing difference to mere masques.” She also nurtures many antithetical ideas about modernization such as seeing “Westernization and nationalization being simultaneously re-Islamization.” What kind of potentials and promises do you see in Edib in particular?

E.K.: It is worth noting that Edib has a history of exile, like Auerbach, first in Europe and then in the East as well – further East in India, where she taught alongside Gandhi and Iqbal, among others. I think one of the most original aspects of Edib’s thought – but also Auerbach’s and Tanpınar’s – on their common present, on that moment of global modernity that they addressed from Istanbul, is that they perceived it critically while resisting provincialisms and simplistic anti-modernisms. It is all too easy to view non-Western modernity as a process whereby, for better or worse, alien elements, ideas, and agents of European modernity affect (or infect, depending on how one feels about things, I guess) traditional bodies. It must have been much easier to go that way for Edib. But like Auerbach and Tanpınar, she provides us with a different model. The book explains why and how, from Auerbach’s perspective, European Turkey is not some prosthetic form but part of the European body. It is true that Turkish modernity sometimes looks like a cancerous growth from Auerbach’s perspective, but I will not get into that now.

Edib, like Auerbach, turned to the “spiritual foundations” enabling not only European modernity but also non-European Europeanization, which is how she could think of Westernization as simultaneously Islamization. This latter pattern of thought is as old as Ottoman-Turkish modernity – already Young Ottomans thought that Islam was always

already democratic, that democratization was to be pursued in the name of the tradition, in the name of Islam etc. Edib plays with that pattern of thought, looking at non-European Europeanization from beyond Turkey, from a place very close to our moment of global modernity. Her "Spirit" – human spirit – was born in the East, in India to be precise, as pure spirit in time immemorial. As the Spirit travels Westbound on a journey to settle in the world, it overshoots its destination in the history of an initially "spiritual" Christianity. It turns into an "over-emphasis on matter," in Edib's terminology, on material gain and worldly power, to shape the modern Western mind, colonialism, and politics over time. But the pendulum continues to swing back Eastbound in the mean time, offering a corrective to this movement, and finds an equilibrium point where human spirit settles most comfortably in the human body with the Islamic moment in the history of the spirit. Then again, the Muslim spirit gets caught in an Eastbound trajectory, ending up with an "over-emphasis on the spirit," forsaking the material world altogether over the course of the history of Islam. This latter movement means handing worldly power on a silver platter to colonial powers or Oriental despots. Edib says an Englishman once told her that "'Christianity was Eastern in essence (because of its emphasis on the soul), we have Westernized it; Islam was Western in essence (because of its emphasis on society), you have Easternized it'."

Now, Edib lectured on Spirit in India – her history of Spirit is not only that of Christianity and Islam, but it is true that she looks at these two "spiritual movements" as exemplary. These exemplary moments have implications for all the peoples of the East and the West in her mind. Regardless, working with this metaphor of a grandfather clock, I wanted see where the pivot might be. I wanted to understand what exactly enabled Edib's thought of a global history of the human spirit, which provides an account of the multiple cultural historical trajectories leading to the conditions she observed at her own moment of global modernity. I soon noticed that being a woman of English letters meant a great deal for her thought – what enabled her to teach in India, for instance, was precisely her embeddedness in the Anglophone cultural universe. Remember that she first wrote and published her memoirs in English (in 1926) – not French, Arabic or Turkish. I can say more, but to make a long story short, soon I began to read Edib's writings as English literature. What the book does is to interpret Edib as perhaps one of the first voices of global English, or as an early figure of "English as a cultural system," as Aamir Mufti calls it. So in the book, we move from European Turkey being a moment in European history to Edib's writings being English literature. While the history of Turkish Europeanization was heavily marked by Francophile modernity, when we meet Edib in Istanbul, we find ourselves in a new world whose center is no longer Paris. I think Edib's writings, but also her figure as an intellectual, are most instructive for an in depth analysis of English as a cultural system, and its implications for South to South relations. For instance, she enables me to give an account of Turkish Indias, of what becomes of India in Turkish imagination over the course of Turkish Europeanization and its different stages.

O.T.: To conclude, I would like to turn to Orhan Pamuk, since your account of global modernity culminates in his work. It has almost become a commonplace to read Turkish modernization through the concept of "belatedness," which has been a major influence on Turkish intellectuals' interpretation of their own case since the appearance of Gregory Jusdanis's *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture* (1991). However, you have a different take on the concept of "belatedness." You take your cue from the Turkish

expression "*sonradan görme*" with all its rich connotations ("literally 'the one who has not seen (it) before'" or more properly, "Johnny-come-lately, social climber or nouveau riche, or better still *arriviste*") to interpret Pamuk as a "newcomer" on the stage of global letters. Pamuk leads you to a radical conclusion in the final paragraph of your book: "What does it mean to be oneself, European, a novelist, modern or even 'human' [...] if not to pretend to be oneself, European, a novelist, modern or even 'human'?" I think this rhetorical question about the performance (and "the performative" more generally) gives us the political horizon of your book. Can you say a few words about what distinguishes Pamuk as a "newcomer" from his "belated" predecessors (Ziya Pasha, Ahmed Midhat, Seyfeddin and Tanpınar) in your account of Turkish modernization?

E.K.: I write on the issue of late modernity in different contexts, first to juxtapose Faiz Ahmad Faiz's and Edib's modernisms. With Pamuk I look at a different aspect of what is deemed belated modernity, one that is not often of interest to critics. I assume you would agree here if I said, telegraphically, that Ottoman and Turkish modernity was first of all rushed – that everyone familiar with Turkish modernity can observe how alarm and haste marked its entire history. So much so that even during the early republican era one seldom comes across with the sort of calm that enabled Tanpınar, for instance, to look back to see how far it had gone. I think Pamuk owes a lot, as he himself admits, to Tanpınar's calm – to Tanpınar's pause, as it were, which I alternatively address as an intellectual impasse. While Tanpınar's cultural history is at once an act of mourning, turning into some "intellectual directionlessness" (as Auerbach would say) at times to paralyze his thinking on the future of Turkish modernity and even his own acts of literature, the generations of writers and intellectuals following Tanpınar, including Pamuk, managed to overcome Tanpınar's melancholy.

So I treat Pamuk as a yardstick of sorts, if you don't mind my saying so. Tanpınar's cultural history did recognize the enormity of the destruction and cultural erosion that accompanied modernization in Turkey. His criticism and fiction also acknowledged the radical changes still taking place in modern Turkey, along with their inevitability within the logic of what appears to be a form of globalization. Yet even in Tanpınar there is a sense of insufficiency and immaturity to Turkish modernity. Even in Tanpınar, it is as if something were missing, some secret ingredient remained yet to be discovered for Turks to turn properly modern and European. Walking, talking, thinking and feeling, reading and writing like modern Europeans just did not suffice. Like his predecessors, Tanpınar believed that Turkish modernity lacked authenticity, that it was all but performance, merely pretense. What that secret ingredient might be, what was needed for the authenticity of the sort they had in mind, we may never know. But we do know that Tanpınar did not think that he himself had managed to become a modern man of letters. In his diaries he also explains that things could have been different for him had he been born somewhere in Europe. Regardless, I look at Pamuk's and his predecessors' writings to ask how Turkish literature might have overcome this issue of authenticity and immaturity to pave the way to writers and thinkers such as Pamuk. I read Pamuk to see what he has to teach us about being and pretending, doing and performing, belief and deed. It is in this context that I ask, suggesting that Pamuk would have wanted us to ask: "What does it mean to be oneself, European, a novelist, modern or even 'human' [...] if not to pretend to be oneself, European, a novelist, modern or even 'human'?" I think that this rhetorical question sums up Pamuk's discoveries about modernity and Turkish literature and explains what distinguishes Pamuk from his predecessors.