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FROM CULTURE TO EMPIRE: THE THOUSAND  
AND ONE NIGHTS' ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE  
AND THE INVASION OF EGYPT IN 1882.

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

My thesis is that fantasies and stereotypes about the Near-Eastern Orient in translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* were reflected in nineteenth-century English literature and art, effectively creating a cultural bias that ultimately influenced the decision to invade Egypt in 1882. William Blake's comment, 'Empire follows art not vice versa as Englishmen suppose' is significant in light of Edward Said's statement that, 'the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth.'<sup>1</sup> I examine this sensitive truth by analysing stereotypes such as the despotic sultan, the effeminate entourage, the good liberator genie (European), the ineffectual indolent people and the lewd princess/sultana. Drawing on Derrida and Saussure, I trace the shifting signifiers used to refer to the Near East, from Saracen to Barbarian to Moor to Turk and ultimately Arab. I examine the further development of these stereotypes in the pseudo-Oriental genre, particularly William Beckford's *Vathek* (1782) and Byron's *The Giaour* (1813), then in examples of other forms, including Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* (1850). I argue that George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) shows Egypt's ancient Biblical past being claimed alongside its 'modern' *Nights*-based counterpart, further supported by analysis of timeless deserts and inert Bedouins in paintings by Lewis and Dadd. The cultural constructions of the Arab developed thus far find their fruition in Disraeli's *Tancred* (1847), in which he expresses his colonial views. The novel is one mode of discourse he adopted, in the steps he put in place to fulfil his vision, and which I suggest influenced Gladstone's views on the subject in his published pamphlets, and in his annotations on his reading. I conclude by examining how Gladstone's decision to invade Egypt in 1882 was influenced by the very stereotypes – particularly of the despotic ruler and the indolent ineffectual people - which I trace from the beginning of the thesis through the *Arabian Nights* discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> William Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 447, and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 96.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

AN	The Arabian Nights
ANE	The Arabian Nights Entertainments
SDUK	The Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge
KG	The King of the Golden River
HT	Hard Times
T	Tancred
Modern Egyptians	The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians
SR	The Song of Roland
AB	Adam Bede
KHM	Kinder- und Hausmärchen

## THESIS INTRODUCTION

Quoting an official of the Levant Company in the seventeenth-century, H. S. Deighton remarks, 'If it rayned gold [at Alexandria] [...] wee should not think it worth the while to go and fetch it.'<sup>1</sup> This was the British imperial attitude towards Egypt nearly two hundred years before the invasion; there was no interest either economically or politically in Egypt. In my PhD thesis I examine the relationship between Imperial Expansion and Orientalist literature and art, in its wider context from the eighteenth century up to WWI, evaluating William Blake's assertion that 'Empire follows art not vice versa as Englishmen suppose'.<sup>2</sup> Through examining the fantasies and stereotypes about the Orient in translations of the *Thousand and One Nights*, as well as how these fantasies and stereotypes were reflected in English literature and art, I intend to reach a conclusion on how and to what extent such tropes have influenced the political decision of turning the Imperial machine toward the Near East. In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said asserts, 'the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth'.<sup>3</sup> I argue in my PhD thesis how this sensitive truth, through the *Arabian Nights*- Orientalist discourse, led to the changes in Victorian Imperial policy and subsequently the British invasion of Egypt in 1882.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> W. Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 447.

<sup>3</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 96.

In spite of the large amount of literature dedicated to critiquing the influence of the *Nights* as well as other 'Eastern' texts, there has been no study to my knowledge directly linking translations and annotations of any of these texts to the shift in Britain's imperial policy in the late nineteenth century. In his *Companion to the Nights*, Robert Irwin asserts that 'from the eighteenth century onwards, translations of the *Nights* circulated so widely in Europe and America that to ask about its influence on Western literature is a little like asking about the influence on western literature of that other great collection of Oriental tales, the Bible'.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of his use of elusive terms such as 'Western' and 'Oriental', which is controversial as I explain later, Irwin's stress on the influence of the *Nights* on 'European' and 'American' literatures is clear. He names several landmark books, such as *The Divine Comedy*, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, *Middlemarch* and *Anna Karenina* to support his statement; to this might be added Robert Louis Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* (1882) which imitates the *Nights* in its narration style and its Persian-sounding character names.<sup>5</sup> In addition, he dedicates a whole chapter in his *Companion* to demonstrate how wide-ranging such influence is, and titles it 'Children of the *Nights*'. Taking up where Irwin left off, I examine in my thesis the impact of this literary history on political history. Stephen Arata makes a similar assertion in his brief article on the *Nights*: 'Like those other great narrative miscellanies from the eastern Mediterranean, the Bible and the *Odyssey*, *The Arabian Nights* was known to many who never opened it. Or, more commonly, never opened it past childhood yet retained ever after the most vivid—

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2009), p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> Irwin, p. 237 and Robert Louis Stevenson, *New Arabian Nights* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015).

which is not always to say the most accurate—memories of it’.<sup>6</sup> Arata provides a good summary, in the rest of his article, of the history of translations of the *Nights* from French to English up to Edward William Lane’s translation (1838-40). Following on from Arata, I examine what kind of impact such ‘vivid’ yet inaccurate childhood ‘memories’ may have had on those who read it. Besides the critical work on the *Nights* as a text, some important work has been conducted on the *Nights* in the field of comparative translations. Haddawy’s Norton Critical edition and translation, for example, is based on the Arabic edition by Muhsin Mahdi, and goes to unprecedented lengths to compare major translations of the *Nights* by Galland, Grub-Street, Lane, Payne and Burton, as well as listing numerous imitations and pseudo-translations of them.<sup>7</sup> Mahdi and Haddawy’s work on comparative translations of the *Nights*, if we can refer to it under such a title, is so detailed and careful as to render any other attempt of this kind valueless, unless based on a newly-discovered manuscript or being undertaken from an original perspective. Hence, comparing translations for overall accuracy is not my concern in the present research. My close analyses and comparisons are rather for highlighting the impact of certain inaccuracies and mistranslations on the cultures they were translated within, in order to assess their subsequent influence on history and British foreign policy. Before, as well as alongside, Mahdi and Haddawy’s critical translations, however, there are critical works of great value to the study of the *Nights* as a discourse. One of these critical works is Tarek Shamma’s study of translations of

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Arata, “On E. W. Lane’s Edition of The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments, 1838.”, *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net (2012), <[http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838)> [accessed 22 May 2014], para 1 of 14.

<sup>7</sup> *The Arabian Nights*, trans. by H. Haddawy (New York: Norton & Company, 1990).

the *Nights* in nineteenth-century England. Shamma not only examines and compares the translations but also questions and assesses the value of translation as a process in itself, as I explain in Chapter Two. Before embarking on comparing nineteenth-century translations, Shamma reaches important conclusions on translation as a process, including for instance: 'What is unique about translation, in other words, is that it is the voice of the Other, a space for different values and beliefs that may contradict those of the target culture, and therefore pose a challenge to them'.<sup>8</sup> These conclusions are used by him later on as criteria by which he assesses the translations he tackles. His conclusions on the *Nights* as well as on translation in itself will also be of aid to me in my examination of Lane's and the Grub-street translations of the *Nights*. I do, however, disagree with Shamma's pan-Arabist terminology, especially his use of the term, 'Arab world', for the Arab hegemony over the former territories of Persia and Byzantine came to an end by the twelfth century and with it came the end of the Arab world. Using such terminology to refer to these territories in modern times is referring to them as the Byzantine or Persian Worlds. I will delineate on this point in further detail in my study of signifiers in Chapter One.

One brief but significant work besides the above is C. Knipp's 'The *Arabian Nights* in England: Galland's Translation and Its Successors'. Knipp mainly assesses Burton's translation by comparing it to its predecessors, which is useful for reading Burton but more importantly, and more relevantly to my research, his article highlights significant qualities in previous translations of the *Nights*. Knipp

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<sup>8</sup> *The Arabian Nights*, trans. by H. Haddawy (New York: Norton & Company, 1990).



discovers through comparing Burton to Payne that Burton based his translation on Payne's and exaggerated it. Based on this she lays the blame for the archaic quality of Burton's translation on Payne's pseudo-Biblical style and 'that Burton's real distinctions are that his version of John Payne's version of the *Nights* is the lengthiest and the most readable'.<sup>9</sup> Knipp, moreover, compares a passage from Galland's French translations by the Grub-Street English and by Lane, Payne and Burton. Based on this brief case-study Knipp arrives at the conclusion that 'Galland's story-telling skill is not only unusual in a scholar but perhaps also represents a deeper affinity with the Arabic tales than other redactors have shown', declaring both Galland's French and its Grub-Street translation as the best stylistically so far.<sup>10</sup> Each translator had his own agenda and motives for embarking on such a large project. Hence, each bent the book to their needs; either adding to it from other manuscripts, writing more stories, expurgating it, or stylistically manipulating it to reflect an archaic quality of time to it. I elaborate on this in Chapter Two.

Further to the above discussed critics of the *Nights*, two landmark studies of the *Nights* in nineteenth-century English literature have to be mentioned in my literary review: *Scheherazade in England* by Muhsin Jasim Ali and *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* edited by Peter L. Caracciolo. Ali's work is largely concerned with the critical reception of the *Nights*. It also surveys the imitations of the *Nights* from the eighteenth century to Victorian times. His survey is useful for shedding light on the important pseudo-Oriental genre and its ultimate demise by the turn of the

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<sup>9</sup> C. Knipp, 'The Arabian Nights in England: Galland's Translation and Its Successors', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 5 (1974), pp. 44-54, p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> Knipp, p. 52.

eighteenth century: 'Grub Street hacks and booksellers found in the success of the *Nights* more than sufficient justification for flooding the market with reprints and imitations, until the pseudo-Oriental tale exhausted itself as a genre by the end of the century, leaving the *Nights* unrivalled'.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless Ali's work, like that of Irwin and Shamma, has to be read with caution. Their perspective treats three different regions with distinct cultures and languages as one: 'the Arab world'. Caracciolo, on the other hand, exclusively surveys references to the *Nights* in English literature in his 'Introduction'. His survey is wide-ranging and useful. His 'Introduction' covers the *Nights* from its first translation in the early eighteenth century to modern times, he concludes by asserting that the *Nights* 'continues to exercise an influence over writers working in Britain today' and predicting an infinite future for their impact: 'Like the *Nights* themselves, the history of their influence is an "endless" tale'.<sup>12</sup> The book, in addition, includes chapters by various scholars on specific authors' interactions with the *Nights* such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, to which I shall refer in subsequent chapters. However, Caracciolo's work, though useful, is dated now, and does not include extensive analyses of pseudo-Oriental literature or of Orientalist Victorian authors such as Disraeli, whom I discuss in my thesis.

In her investigations of historical theory, Mary Fulbrook states that history and literature were perceived, at least by historians, as complete opposites:

History was, at least since the more scientific turn of the twentieth century, a discipline quite distinct from literature. Literature was about things that

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<sup>11</sup> Muhsin Jassim Ali, *Scheherazade in England: A Study of Nineteenth-Century English Criticism of the Arabian Nights* (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1981), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Peter L. Caracciolo, 'Introduction', in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, ed. by P. L. Caracciolo. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), pp. 1-61, p. 61.

had not happened, and history was about things that had. Literature was about imagination and invention; history was about telling the truth. Historians wrote about facts, to be clearly distinguished from fiction and myth.<sup>13</sup>

Within this Manichaeian framework, truth could influence imagination, and history or historical events would influence fiction but not vice versa. When poststructuralism came along many Orthodox Marxist historians viewed it as an attack on Marxism. Their reasons for taking this stance against poststructuralism become apparent if one takes a look at what orthodox Marxism is. Robert Young defines orthodox Marxism in these words:

A Marxism that adheres first and foremost to economism, the reductive singular explanation of all human phenomena through economic determinism, whereby all human life and history, all aspects of culture and ideology are merely the reflection of economic relations.<sup>14</sup>

This monolithic interpretation of historical events did not tolerate the new text-based linguistic view of historiography.

In spite of coming from a long orthodox Marxist tradition, Hayden White's work on nineteenth-century historians helped deconstruct the Orthodox Marxist view of history as a concrete set of events. Drawing on poststructuralism, White argued that nineteenth-century historians were working largely under one of these 'four modes of historical consciousness': 'Metaphor, Synecdoche, Metonymy, and Irony. Each of these modes of consciousness provides that basis of which specific

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p.10.

strategies of historical interpretation can be employed for “explaining” it.’<sup>15</sup> With these modes being linguistic styles or figures of speech, White asserts that ‘there are no apodictically certain theoretical grounds on which one can legitimately claim an authority for any one of the modes over the others as being more “realistic”’. Consequently, ‘we are indentured to a choice among contending interpretative strategies in any effort to reflect on history-in-general [...] as a corollary of this, the best grounds for choosing one perspective on history rather than another are ultimately aesthetic or moral rather than epistemological’.<sup>16</sup> In this sense there is no set interpretation of history, and all accounts of history are poetic reflections. White was clearly influenced by post- structuralism and its focus on linguistics which changed how history was perceived. Fulbrook explains:

With the “linguistic” turn history dissolved into relativist discourse; the truth could not only never be known, but was indeed itself merely an article of faith. Historical works were essentially fictions written in realist mode, with conventions such as quotations from sources and scholarly footnotes serving to bolster the reality effect.<sup>17</sup>

Within this framework, historical events are generally agreed on but their historiography is one of aesthetic perspective. This is something I take further in my argument against the view that historical events shape culture but not vice versa.

Specifically within Imperial history, this was and still very much is historians’ views as will be discussed below. My work attempts to break away with trending as well as orthodox approaches of the historiography of the British Empire in the

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<sup>15</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory*, p. xi.

<sup>16</sup> Hayden White, pp. xi – xii.

<sup>17</sup> Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, p. 3.

Near East. Orthodox approaches to imperial history tend to take the monolithic view that history/empire and/or foreign policy influence culture, that is literature and art. I align myself with the few voices which are calling for a change to this perspective. In Young's words, for instance, 'the idea of culture as the passive production or reflection of economic conditions', has little or no consideration for cultural influence over imperial history.<sup>18</sup> One example of this is the one holistic account of Egyptian history from the early modern period up to the late pan-Arabist state, P. J. Vatikiotis' *The History of Egypt* (1991). The book adopts such a strict view of history, narrating political events from beginning to end with little if any remark on the reverse process. He notes for instance: 'Over five hundred years had passed since the Arabs first occupied the Nile Valley. The natives appeared at first to cling tenaciously to their religious faith, but soon and with amazing docility adopted both the Islamic faith and the language of their new masters'.<sup>19</sup> Here Vatikiotis, in spite of acknowledging the distinction between coloniser and colonised in faith and culture, takes the linear view that accounts only and purely for the influence of the coloniser over the colonised. There is no mention here for how both Islam and Arabic were Egyptianised to become something largely distinct from the invader's intrusions, nor does Vatikiotis account for the Egyptianisation of the Arab invaders themselves; two points to which I shall return in later chapters. Vatikiotis's revised views in the 1990s follow from H. S. Deighton's similarly linear approach in the 1960s when examining the 'Egyptian Question' during Palmerston's reign. He discusses how the Prime

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<sup>18</sup> Young, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt: From Mohammad Ali to Sadat* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 17.

Minister had no difficulty in persuading his 'Englishmen', 'especially those who had no experience of Egypt at first hand, of the truth of Palmerston's own private judgement that "Mehmed Ali has divided the population of Egypt into two classes, the Rich and the Poor. The rich class consists of Mehmet Ali himself single and alone, the poor class all the other inhabitants of Egypt"'.<sup>20</sup> Deighton does not however explain why Palmerston had such a strong and antagonistic view of the Macedonian/Albanian ruler of Egypt, nor attempts to investigate the cultural dimensions which may have influenced the Prime Minister's views.

Vatikiotis and Deighton were informed by Robinson and Gallagher's early sixties research. In their iconic *Africa and the Victorians* (1961), Robinson and Gallagher have asserted that it was the disorder in Egypt which forced Britain to reluctantly invade the country in order to protect the Suez Canal.<sup>21</sup> In his survey of scholarship on the subject in the late 1980s, Hopkins discovers that Robinson and Gallagher's long accepted Suez Canal justification is not a valid one, for 'the admiralty did not think that the canal was in danger, and [...] continued to base its strategy on the Cape route until the 1890s.'<sup>22</sup> Quoting from D. A. Farnie's *East and West of Suez*, Hopkins continues, 'there was no imminent danger to the waterway in any form when the cabinet sanctioned the invasion.'<sup>23</sup> Ironically, it was the inauguration of the invasion itself, in the form of the bombardment of Alexandria, which caused 'the

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<sup>20</sup> H. S. Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic*, ed. by P. M. Holt. 231-48, p. 234.

<sup>21</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse, 'Review of *Africa and the Victorians* by R. Robinson; J. Gallagher; A. Denny', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 14 No. 3 (1962), pp. 574-576, and Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 76-121.

<sup>22</sup> A. G. Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2 (1986), pp. 363-91, p. 373.

<sup>23</sup> Hopkins, p. 374.

threat of a retaliatory strike against the Canal', not the opposite.<sup>24</sup> The economic-based historiography of the British empire which I have briefly surveyed above, remains current in studies of the empire in the twenty-first century. For instance, John Darwin in his *Unfinished Empire* (2012), argues that it is individual-oriented British enterprise which is the brick and mortar of the empire since its Irish beginnings. He reflects on the British Empire before the incidents leading to WWI:

It seemed as if they [the British] had made themselves indispensable to the commercial prosperity not just of their empire but of most of the rest of the non-European world. To the empire coloured red on the map, the City had added an empire glued together by debt and defended by gold.<sup>25</sup>

Such a view does not take into consideration the give-and-take aspects of culture which surround trade as well as political and military actions.

In addition, the Marxist perspective has been on the rise after Said and lately it has been, if anything, becoming increasingly puritanical and dismissive – or at best indifferent - of other non-Marxist approaches, as I demonstrate below. After Said, Bhabha introduced gender and class – alongside Said's race – as further 'domains of difference' within the frame of '*nationness*' and postcoloniality as part of an attempt to define his theory of hybridity.<sup>26</sup> His theory instead of singling out one approach is rather an attempt to combine all approaches under an all-inclusive umbrella, as well as a rejection of nationalist calls which base themselves on notions of cultural purity:

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<sup>24</sup> Hopkins, p. 374.

<sup>25</sup> John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 185.

<sup>26</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 2.

Cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are very vicariously addressed to –through – an Other. This erases any essentialist claims for the inherent authenticity of purity cultures which, when inscribed in the naturalistic sign of symbolic consciousness frequently become political arguments for the hierarchy and ascendancy of powerful cultures.<sup>27</sup>

In this sense it is the process of multi-directional influence between colonised and colonisers which produces culture ultimately. To this might be added the point that the process of translation can consciously or unconsciously lead to a misrepresentation of certain aspects of the cultures in question. In the process of translation, signifiers change to reflect certain vilifications and otherings between cultures, as well as gaps of understanding and gaps of commensurability. Bhabha's work focuses mainly on the 'hybrid gap' however, between translation and meaning, where he locates the colonised. He continues: 'It is in this hybrid gap, which produces no relief, that the colonial subject takes place, its subaltern position inscribed in that space of iteration [...]'.<sup>28</sup> This is the point from which Gayatri Spivak takes over in her 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. Spivak adds a much-needed feminist angle to the postcolonial Marxist approach to make up what came to be referred to as the 'holy trinity' of postcolonial theory – Said, Bhabha and Spivak.<sup>29</sup> By comparing the self-sacrificing widow ritual of the *sati* to 'Ghandian resistance' to the coloniser, she not only sheds light on Indian female cultural roots and their persistence as means of resistance but in addition launches gendered

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<sup>27</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Bernard, Ziad ElMarsafy and Stuart Murray, 'Introduction' in *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*, ed. by Anna Bernard, Ziad ElMarsafy and Stuart Murray (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 4.



subaltern studies within the Marxist postcolonial hemisphere, which can be very useful when applied to studies of stereotypes of the harem, female slaves and the trope of a subdued female East awaiting the arrival of the male European coloniser, which I discuss further below.<sup>30</sup>

There has been some stagnation, nevertheless, within postcolonial theory after the so-called 'trinity' until Neil Lazarus appeared on the horizon with his notion of new modernity in the post-colonial world. In a section titled 'The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism' in his celebrated *Postcolonial Unconscious*, Lazarus merges aspects of Raymond Williams's interpretation of modernism with that of Theodore Adorno in order to create his theory of postcolonial modernism:

Williams lists exile and metropolitanism, for instance – as being *uniquely responsive to modernity*. It constructed its own historically, socially, and culturally specific protocols, procedures, and horizons as those of the modern as such. As Williams puts it, modernism recast, rewrote, and rearranged cultural history, producing a selective tradition whose selectivity remained invisible to modernism itself: the authors and 'theoretic contours' usually addressed under the rubric of modernism constituted a highly selected version of the modern which then offer[ed] to appropriate the whole of modernity'.<sup>31</sup>

Lazarus combines this 'unique' selective 'modernity' with Adorno's definition of 'modernism' in that its 'essential gesture is to say "no" to modernity'.<sup>32</sup> Lazarus

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<sup>30</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp.271-313, p. 302.

<sup>31</sup> Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 28.

explains that his 'point is that while colonialism is commonly taken as intrinsic to the socio-historical project of modernity, modernism is not typically viewed [...] as featuring an anti-colonial dimension'.<sup>33</sup> This is exactly the dimension he is adding to modernity and modernism, and it is a fresh and original addition. I have two concerns in regards to it however. The first is that this approach is mainly exclusive to what is referred to as post-colonial/post-liberation literature and is of little or no relevance to older literature imparted by the coloniser about the colonised or the colonised-to-be. In this sense, it can only be applied to recent literature and Lazarus does not offer a perspective for how his approach could be applied to nineteenth-century literature which was produced during the heyday of the British Empire and in the fin de siècle when modernity itself was born. My second concern regarding Lazarus' new approach – which is rather more relevant here – is its over-emphasised orthodox Marxism. Here I am referring to the second meaning which Robert Young provides of orthodox Marxism as one 'based on a deterministic philosophy of history in which the historical imperative is reduced to the narrative of European history as the transition to modernity'.<sup>34</sup> This stems from the Hegelian dialectic, which Marx inherited, of a 'metaphysical "grand narrative" in terms of historical progress towards an ultimate goal'.<sup>35</sup> Whether we choose to call that ultimate goal 'democracy', 'progress' or 'modernism', it is still a Eurocentric view of the world which does not take into account the plural possibilities of postcolonial existence and their largely forgotten or ignored pre-colonial roots.

In addition, Lazarus's orthodox Marxist new 'Third World' modernity is ironically

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<sup>33</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Young, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Fulbrook, p. 14.

nostalgic of two long-gone eras: the time of the rise of both modernism and Marxism in Europe in the early twentieth century on one hand, and on the other that of the postcolonial era, of decolonisation, third world making and unity, and third world embracing of pseudo- communist socialism toward the mid-century. The term 'third world' itself betrays this kind of nostalgia and is reminiscent of Fanon and Spivak's terminology. This was a time when their ideas were being freshly added to the pyramid of postcolonial theory.<sup>36</sup> Lazarus justifies his assertive Marxism by remarking that there has been a 'recoil from Marxism evident across cultural studies as a whole in the Anglo-American academy in the post-1975 years'.<sup>37</sup> Lazarus criticises Said both as a sample of 'the best postcolonialist accounts' and as proof of the evident 'recoil from Marxism' he mentions. On *Culture and Imperialism* he writes: "imperialism" is typically cast as a political dispensation and referred, in civilizational terms, *to the West*, rather than to Capitalism'.<sup>38</sup> Lazarus, in addition, cites Benita Parry who makes a similar case against Said.<sup>39</sup> Although Said does not consider capitalism, he should not be criticised for not swapping his political approach with a Marxist one, which is what both Lazarus and Parry are arguing for. Firstly, Said ought to have recognised capitalism as one of the cogs of the imperial/orientalist project, but not as the beginning, the middle and the end of it – it is not. Secondly, claiming that there has been a 'recoil from Marxism' within postcolonial discourse overlooks the strong Marxist dimensions to influential theorists such as Bhabha and Spivak which culminate in Lazarus' theory itself. Marxism in postcolonialism has been on an

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<sup>36</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, recurs throughout the book.

<sup>37</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 37.

upward slope even in what Lazarus himself argues.

Decolonial theory seems to offer a more effective alternative, being born out of Native American experience and indigenous studies. . Patricia Noxolo explains that ‘Decolonial writing emerges from a different positionality’ for ‘there is nothing “former” or “post” about’ it. Decolonial writings largely are ‘about the continuous colonisation and re-(or neo-) colonisation’ of their countries.<sup>40</sup> Noxolo argues that ‘postcolonial theory’ is still ‘useful in the careful work of analysing’ indigenous experience, but decolonial theory offers what postcolonial theory does not provide:

By contrast, decolonial theory makes a louder and more radical challenge, linked more directly to protest and direct confrontations with existing practice. Decolonial theory is focused on an epistemic challenge to colonialist thinking, with an emphasis on radical delinking from the sources of ongoing inequalities that have deep historical roots in European imperialism, but that are continually re-staged and re-routed through the continuing and deepening inequalities brought about through neoliberalism, including in the neoliberal university system.<sup>41</sup>

Along similar lines Michael Doxtater argues that ‘Indigenous knowledge remains unsubjected, sovereign, and ignored’, largely confined within the sphere of anthropological performativity within exhibitions and festivals. ‘Once decolonized’, however, ‘the process for enacting Indigenous knowledge of governance, agriculture, architecture, mathematics, astronomy, communications, medicine,

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<sup>40</sup> Patricia Noxolo, ‘Decolonial Theory in a Time of the Re-Colonisation of UK Research’, *Transactions of the Royal Geographical Society*, 42 (2017), pp. 342-344, p. 342.

<sup>41</sup> Noxolo, p. 342.

healing, and much more' can take effect.<sup>42</sup> Doxtater's arguments are rooted within the native American culture and experience, not only due to the context of his studies, but also because re-rooting decoloniality within the post-postcolonial sphere is very recent. Thirteen years separate Doxtater's work from Noxolo's, but as we see in Doxtater's work the seeds for this re-rooting are strongly present. Besides providing the means for delinking indigenous culture from colonial narrative, decolonial theory also challenges the systematic re-packaging of colonial strategies into new practices and systems today. Nevertheless, the term indigenous can be problematic as it may be understood in racial rather than cultural terms. The notion of the 'indigenous versus the colonial', refers to the cultural struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor, the party whose culture is being repressed or even effaced and the party who is replacing it by their own practices and traditions.

A lack of caution in exporting concepts and theories - akin to the risk decolonial theory faces - can be seen in race theories and studies, albeit from increasingly American and American-influenced perspectives. Robert Davis for instance compares Mediterranean slavery to trans-Atlantic slavery and equates slave trade across the Mediterranean basin with the highly racialized American slave trade. This is problematic owing to racial affinity between the peoples of the Mediterranean, as I discuss in more detail later in chapter one. Even more revered figures in the field, such as Frantz Fanon, have the effect of being divisive and inaccurate. Whether it is *Black Skin, White Masks* or *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon's

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<sup>42</sup> Michael G. Doxtater, 'Indigenous Knowledge in the Decolonial Era', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 28 Nos. 3&4 (2004), pp. 618-633, p. 620.

language is highly charged and ethnically inaccurate. His two main groups, the Algerian 'Arab' and the 'white' French coloniser, are often similar in looks or appearance – even by Fanon's own acknowledgement - yet he persists in describing them in a language that paints them by different imaginary colours. For instance when he narrates the story of one of his Algerian patients whom he calls 'Arab', he notes between brackets that 'he looked like a European'.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the merits of Fanon's work should be understood and recognised within the context of the Algerian postcolonial war in which he worked and fought. This simplification and contextually misapplied view in Davis's work as I mention above and as I discuss in Chapter One. It is becoming increasingly a common problem, since 'the legacy of black slavery' has 'no equivalent in Europe' and perhaps no equivalent in the rest of the world.

Edward Beasley goes even a step further in his study of nineteenth-century race theories and establishes that the concept of white itself, which is used in the 'Western'/Anglo-Saxon world to refer to race, is understood differently in other parts of the world. 'For what the "races" are and who fits into each one are not things that every culture agrees on'.<sup>44</sup> The concept of 'whiteness' itself as synonymous with race is investigated further by Gary Taylor. He remarks that ironically to our conceptions now, 'the *Oxford English Dictionary's* first citation of the compound noun White man, referring to "A man belonging to a race having naturally light-coloured skin or complexion", dates from 1695 – and refers to Muslims in Morocco. Its first recorded example of white as a generic noun dates from 1671 –

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<sup>43</sup> Fanon Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 221.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 1.

and refers to a North African Muslim'.<sup>45</sup> It was not until 1700 that 'most Englishmen – perhaps all Englishmen – considered themselves “white” in today's sense of the word.<sup>46</sup> In fact the concept of 'racism developed out of the dominant and authoritative white scientific discourse' to replace the older and rather superficial notion of 'colourphobia'.<sup>47</sup> According to Taylor, 'colourphobia' was more of a wariness of people who looked different, unlike hierarchical bigotry on the basis of race. Yet the term itself seems to betray the discursive assumptions of the analyst. 'Alterityphobia' or 'differencephobia' may have worked better without reducing the difference to colour. Nevertheless, it is arguable that 'races' as a modern concept is divisive and responsible for shocking atrocities of ethnic cleansing and war crimes, perhaps serving as a motive for war in itself, particularly as it became more intrinsic in the twentieth century. Philosopher Kwame Antony Appiah argues against the hollowness of racial categories. In his series of BBC lectures, he proclaims that ethnic categories are a 'void and dangerous business'. 'There is little doubt that genes make a difference, along with environment, in determining' one's 'height or the color of' one's 'skin':

Some people are cleverer or more musical or better poets than others and perhaps genes play a role there, too. But those genes are not inherited in racial packages. And so, if you want to think about how the limits of individual human capability are set by genetic inheritance, it won't help you to think about races. Race is something we make; it is not something that makes us. Thus categorising human beings, something which runs

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<sup>45</sup> Gary Taylor, *Buying Whiteness: Race, Culture, and Identity from Columbus to Hip-Hop* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> Gary Taylor, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Gary Taylor, p. 5.

throughout the Orientalist/imperialist discourse on a socio-biological basis that is reliant on appearance, can be a void and dangerous business.<sup>48</sup>

Such categories, though hollow and imaginary, formed part of the accumulated knowledge brought/reported back from the empire by imperial agents and Orientalists, including illustrations and paintings by Frederick Lewis, Edward William Lane and Holman Hunt whose depictions of alterity of race and colour played a big role in imparting a specific type of subjective knowledge. This subjective knowledge in turn played an important role in laying the grounds for the empire in direct as well as indirect ways.

In his reading of nineteenth-century literature, Thomas Richards takes this one step further in his discussion of *Dracula* and *The Riddle of the Sands* as samples of the national atmosphere in the fin de siècle. He explains that 'each of the novels equates knowledge with national security' and that in this sense the novels as well as the Victorian imagination 'sees a British mastery of the means of knowledge as overpowering threats to empire.'<sup>49</sup> Within this light Edward William Lane can be better understood as he asserts in the mid-nineteenth century that 'a great improvement in the intellectual and moral state' of those he calls 'modern' Egyptians 'in consequence of the introduction of European sciences [...] is not probable'.<sup>50</sup> Similarly John Ruskin makes a supercilious assumption on valuable art: 'there is none in America, none in Asia, none in Africa'.<sup>51</sup> Based on Richards' notion that knowledge was empire, assuring the Victorian English nation that other

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<sup>48</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Mistaken Identities: Creed, Country, Color, Culture, Lecture 3: Colour, Accra', *BBC R4*, 'Reith Lectures 2016', transcript, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> T. Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: East-West Publications, 1978), p. 223.

<sup>51</sup> J. Ruskin, *Unto This Last and Other Essays on Art and Political Economy* (London: Dent, 1907), p. 55.



nations do not possess knowledge or art also meant confirming the possibility of continuing to control those nations. John Frederick Lewis, who lived in Egypt during the 1840s, suggested these notions of arrested developments in his oeuvre, and particularly in his desert paintings such as *A Halt in the Desert* (1855), *A Frank Encampment in the Desert of Mount Sinai* (1856) and *Edfu, Upper Egypt* (1860). From 1850 onwards, authenticity and colour were Lewis' trademark and he was viewed, because of his lengthy stay in Cairo, as an authority to refer to about the habits of this side of the world,<sup>52</sup> along with Edward William Lane, the mid-Victorian translator and re-inventor of the *The Thousand and One Nights* (1836-41). In the case of Lane, who provided and owned anthropological knowledge on Egypt, this meant definite appropriation of Egyptians as a discourse, in John Frederick Lewis' the appropriation of Egypt and the Egyptians as a visual art. Together, they provided a comprehensive mastery and empirical control over the Egyptians they reproduced, shaping a political dream of a militarily subdued Near East, best expressed in Disraeli's *Tancred*: 'Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet [...] she shall have Alexandria'.<sup>53</sup> Thus the empire seems to have developed out of a rhetorical enterprise of cultural imperialism as well as the fantasies reproduced within it and reproducing it.

The fantasy of a subdued female East awaiting its conquest is further amplified by the imaginary space of the 'harem' as depicted in nineteenth-century literature and art. Diane Robinson-Dunn confirms, in *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture*, that 'British imperialists in Egypt hoped both to penetrate

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<sup>52</sup> 'Both he and Lane were considered experts in all facets of modern Egyptian culture.' E. M. Weeks, 'Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis and the Art of Orientalist Paintings', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by N. Tromans. (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 22-32. p. 28.

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred* (London: Longmans, Greens and Co., 1880), p. 263.

the forbidden space of the harem themselves and to take action that would have a profound impact on that space.<sup>54</sup> In addition, I examine several paintings and works of art – as I explain below - in order to showcase how the mirage of a fictional Orient was applied to and imposed upon a real one; and how in turn this may have served as a motive for occupying Egypt in 1882 as well as further colonial expansion in the Near/Middle East afterwards. Diane Robinson-Dunn acknowledges that the Eastern Mediterranean powers ‘had been a source of fear and wonder for English people throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and even as late as the early nineteenth century’.<sup>55</sup> Ross Forman, on the other hand, classes the British model ‘as an acquisitive Empire, able to select, absorb, domesticate and recycle the commodities, peoples, languages and methods of other cultures, and claim to be superior to its subjects and competitors because of its superior capacity to make such choices and integrations’.<sup>56</sup> He goes on to explain that literary ‘acquisition’ is a ‘textual model for Empire’, ‘especially in terms of the growth’ of all kinds of published literature, ‘which had as their goal the incorporation of the world outside Britain into a British network.’<sup>57</sup> We will see glimpses of this kind of literary ‘acquisition’ in Charles Dickens’ *Thousand and One Humbugs* and Ruskin’s *The King of the Golden River*. Combining both Robinson-Dunn’s and Forman’s points, this thesis will examine the extent to which ‘fear and wonder’ is closely linked to the Victorian wish to possess the Eastern Mediterranean Orient and ultimately to the invasion of Egypt in 1882.

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<sup>54</sup> D. Robinson-Dunn, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Robinson-Dunn, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> R. G. Forman, ‘Empire’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 91-111, p. 95.

<sup>57</sup> Forman, p. 95.

As the signified that I discuss in nineteenth-century texts in the signifiers 'Arab' and 'Turk' is at least a thousand years old, I decided to demonstrate its origins in the first chapter. In Chapter One I trace the signifiers used to refer to Near Eastern inhabitants from Saracen to Turk, Moor and Arab. I argue that while the signifiers changed for various political and cultural reasons the imaginary stereotype of the signified stayed almost the same. I establish in my argument that the currently standing signifier, the 'Arab', is linked to the incorrectly labelled publication of the *Arabian Nights* (1706-21). In addition, the 'Arab' signifier is problematic to the identities of the peoples of the region, with the 'Arab' being their former coloniser. There are several indicators that the Eastern Mediterraneans in general, and particularly Egyptians, did not refer to themselves as 'Arabs', being distinct countries of distinct cultures, which stand aloof historically and geographically from Arabia, in spite of the Arab invasion of the seventh century A.D. In his attempt at establishing the foundations of Arab nationalism in the Middle East, Haim Gerber discovers, although trying to prove otherwise, that 'Arab nationalism appeared in the Levant in the late Ottoman period'.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Egypt, which occupies a central role in this research as potentially a turning point of British colonial policy, did not identify itself with Arabism, but in fact at this point of time it remained, as it had done for centuries, conscious of its distinct identity, and 'the Egyptian public opinion remained hostile or at best indifferent' to Arabism.<sup>59</sup> Ulrich Haarman goes even a step further:

The Muslim newcomers to Egypt [...] proved susceptible to the Egyptian

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<sup>58</sup> Haim Gerber, 'The Limits of Constructedness: Memory and Nationalism in the Arab Middle East', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 10 Issue 3 (Jul 2004), pp. 251-68, p. 265.

<sup>59</sup> Gerber, p. 265.

*genius loci*. After the Arabs stationed in Egypt lost their traditional fiscal privileges to the new Turkish military élite from 830 onwards, they allowed themselves to be gathered in and Egyptianized with increasing speed.<sup>60</sup>

Haarmann also demonstrates how even Islam was ‘Egyptianized’ in the process: ‘The Caliph [...] is said to have condescended to write to the Nile, the lord of the rivers [...] and symbol of pagan Egypt [...]’<sup>61</sup> This demonstrates that nineteenth-century Egyptians did not think of themselves as Arabs, but continued to identify with their richer older past. In this sense, the ‘Arab’ was a construct in the English imagination, prompted by the *Nights*’ Orientalist discourse. Paradoxically, the coloniser imposed this imagined identity on the colonised leading to a lasting conflict based on the legacy of Arabism and pan-Arabism in the regions.

In Chapter Two I discuss the geographically widespread provenance of the stories of the *Nights* as opposed to the way they are depicted by the translators as Eastern or ‘Arabian’. Chapter Three examines the pseudo-oriental genre and the Near-Eastern stereotypes that were amplified through it before being inherited by mainstream literature. I trace these stereotypes in Chapter Four in Lane’s and Lewis’s depictions of Egyptians, locating this within the political crisis that involved Egypt in the 1830s. In Chapter Five I highlight how the ancient Egyptian past was claimed alongside its modern counterpart, using George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859) as a case study. Chapter Six discusses the previously-mentioned stereotypes and traces them within mainstream literature, particularly that of Dickens and Ruskin. Chapter Seven reveals how literary romanticism met its political counterpart,

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<sup>60</sup> Ulrich Haarmann, ‘Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1980), pp. 55-66, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> Haarmann, p. 65.

culminating in the invasion of Egypt in 1882, with one of the justifications for the invasion being that ancient Egypt is the root of Christianity.

In my thesis overall, and in Chapter Seven in particular, I establish an overlap between literature and imperial politics in Disraeli's life and fiction, as is evident in his novel, *Tancred, or the New Crusade* (1847), in which he depicts the invasion through the character of a welcoming Arab prince:

Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet [...] and precious arms [...]. There she will find an immense empire ready made, a first rate army, and a large revenue. In the meantime I will arrange with Mehemet Ali. He shall have Bagdad and Mesopotamia, and pour the Bedouin cavalry into Persia. I will take care of Syria and Asia Minor. The only way to manage the Afghans is by Persia and by the Arabs. We will acknowledge the Empress of India as our suzerain, and secure for her the Levantine coast. If she like, she shall have Alexandria as she now has Malta: it could be arranged. (T, 263)

Here Disraeli puts forward his imperial dream in the words of Fakredeem, an 'Arab' prince. Thus the conquest is not presented here as much of a conquest at all, but rather an invitation for the English Tancred to rule an 'East' which is characterised therefore as subdued and waiting for his arrival.

Many of the stereotypes I trace in my research, including the mirage signifier of the 'Arab' applied to the whole Eastern Mediterranean, still exist today. Moreover, my research will help in understanding some contemporary aspects of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa (Near/Middle East) - a world which has not yet recovered from its colonial past and continues to haunt Europe with a discourse of its civil wars, revolutions, illegal immigrants and refugees. I define my

work as discourse analysis and I locate it between literary and historical Orientalist texts, with discussions of some artistic representations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### TRACING THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS: SARACENS, TURKS, BARBARIANS, MOORS AND ARABS

*The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* was first published anonymously in English in 1704. Since then its presence in English literature and culture has been ubiquitous. The manuscript was translated from a newly-published French edition titled, *Les Mille et Une Nuit*, meaning *The Thousand and One Nights*. This raises questions in regards to the chosen title of the English translation. Why 'Arabian'? And Why 'Entertainments'? This chapter deals with the former question, as for the later I will be discussing it in Chapter Three. Chapter Two will focus mainly on the nature of the *Nights* as a global collection of fairy tales.

The medieval Arabic manuscript of the *Nights* was discovered by the French Orientalist, Antoine Galland, during his travels in Syria in the late seventeenth century. When he returned to France, his publisher saw commercial potential in translating it, which Galland did in *Les Mille et Une Nuit*. Galland, like many readers today, assumed that the manuscript was a collection of Arabian fairy tales. This assumption is clear in the footnotes which he added to his translation as I discuss in Chapter Two. This was not true however, as the Arabic manuscript was itself a translation from Persian with adaptations and added tales. The Persian manuscript was titled, *Hazar Afsaneh*, meaning *The Thousand Nights*, itself a collection of tales gathered from the far reaches of the Persian Empire for the entertainment of the Sultan.<sup>1</sup> They were framed within the Schahriar-Schaherazade narrative

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<sup>1</sup> Irwin, pp. 46-5

framework where Shaherazade tells a new story to the sultan every night to save her life. The names of the characters of this narrative framework, whether Schaherazad or Schahriar are Persian which is also further evidence that this framework narrative was Persian.

In regards to the chains of tales within the narrative, they were a miscellany of folk tales from across the wide dominions of the Persian empire and beyond. These tales were gathered and/or adapted primarily to entertain the Persian king and they did not belong to one single geographical place or era, as will be discussed in more details in the next chapter. I discuss here however the labelling of the *Nights* by the anonymous English translator as Arabian and how this was constructed as something that was readily available within the binaries of East and West. The 'East' and 'Arabia' were already associated in the Renaissance with the alternative, with what was elsewhere and sensual. Lady Macbeth mentions it, 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand', and Anthony fearing for his hardness exclaims, 'The Beds of the East are soft'.<sup>2</sup> We sense here some of this divide between what's Eastern and what's Western; I trace the signifier of the Arab in the present chapter within these binaries.

Arguments of a perpetual dichotomy between East and West, though ungrounded, have been read and resurrected over every major conflict concerning the two homogeneous entities. Today such premises mostly pass unquestioned; it does sound perfectly natural and current in news reports in the UK or the US to discuss the problems or differences between East and West, as though they were

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<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (London: Penguin, 2005), II.v1.49, and *Anthony and Cleopatra* (London: Penguin, 2005), II.vi.49-52.



two countries with distinct borders, not ideological concepts that transcend the definitions of geography and/or ethnography. It is the formulation of such mythical ideological conceptions of Near-Easterners (inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa) that I trace within works of fiction and artistic illustrations in this chapter, beginning from their early conceptualisation at the time of the crusades and up to their reconfigurations in early modern England.<sup>3</sup> I visit each of the imagined figures of the Near-Easterner within the European and specifically English imagination: the 'Saracen', the 'Moor' (whether of Barbary and Morocco or of Muslim Spain) the 'Turk' of the Ottoman Empire, and finally the new and contemporary mythical figure, the 'Arab'. Drawing on Frederick Saussure's and Jacques Derrida's definitions and redefinitions of the 'signifier' and the 'signified', I intend to demonstrate how the inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa were defined from the first crusade, within an imagined framework of a specific stereotype, and re-introduced at every conflict under a new name to suit the new context, or rather the new conflict.

## I. Saracens in the Making

In 1095 Pope Urban II gave a speech to a gathering of French and German bishops and Princes, as well as a crowd of the public, in a central French town called Clermot. His famous speech, besides being influential in mobilising the first crusade, it also played a great role in founding the formulation of the

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<sup>3</sup> I avoid using the contemporary term Middle East, due to its Euro-centricity. Its older equivalent, Near East, is used only where relevant and due to its historical significance. Both terms, however, refer to an area, that is not definable by geography, ethnography, language or creed, and define it simply by its proximity to Europe. I utilise the more geographically and ethnographically appropriate, Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, wherever possible. Whereas I use the 'Levant' interchangeably with the 'Eastern Mediterranean' depending on the historical context.

Christian West versus Islamic East divide. I quote only parts of the speech here:

From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth and has repeatedly been brought to our ears; namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, 'a generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God,' violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. They have led away a part of the captives into their own country, and a part they have killed by cruel tortures. They have either destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of their own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness....The kingdom of the Greeks is now dismembered by them and has been deprived of territory so vast in extent that it could be traversed in two months' time.

On whom, therefore, is the labour of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you, you upon whom, above all other nations, God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage, bodily activity, and strength to humble the heads of those who resist you? Let the deeds of your ancestors encourage you and incite your minds to manly achievements:-the greatness of King Charlemagne, and of his son Louis, and of your other monarchs, who have destroyed the kingdoms of the Turks and have extended the sway of Church over lands previously possessed by the pagan. Let the holy sepulchre of our Lord and Saviour, which is possessed by unclean nations, especially arouse you, and the holy places which are now treated, with ignominy and irreverently

polluted with the filth of the unclean. Oh, most valiant soldiers and descendants of invincible ancestors, do not degenerate; our progenitors, but recall the valour of your progenitors.<sup>4</sup>

What Urban II is describing here must be primarily the conquest of Anatolia by the Turkic Seljuks in 1068-71 who reinvigorated the spirit of Islamic conquest over three hundred years after the Arabs took over Byzantium, 'the kingdom of the Greeks'.

Speaking in 1095, Urban relates the incidents of 1071 as news and merges them with references to the seventh century Arab conquests of Byzantium. Urban however had his motives for inciting holy war nearly twenty five years after the Seljuks took over Anatolia.; being holy Pope in 1095, he saw his subjects torn by internal wars and economic 'strife'. Phillips explains, 'In Urban's Mind, the fundamental cause of such chaos was a diminution of faith'.<sup>5</sup> His solution was a holy war; his appeal would unite the warring European factions and knights around a common enemy, offer salvation and promise earthly reward in the 'land of milk and honey'.

But if you are hindered by love of children, parents, or of wife, remember what the Lord says in the Gospel, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me', 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Urban II in James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History: Vol. I* (Boston: Ginn and co., 1904), p. 313.

<sup>5</sup>Jonathan Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (London: The Bodley Head, 2009). p. 2

life.' Let none of your possessions retain you, nor solicitude for you, family affairs. For this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder and devour one another, that you wage war, and that very many among you perish in intestine strife.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, in the process of mobilising the masses, Urban II utilises the sown seeds of a much older conflict. He claims that those who 'defiled' the 'churches of God' are a 'race from the kingdom of the Persians'. The 'churches' and 'territory' which have been 'dismembered' were 'possessed' by the 'kingdom of the Greeks' or Byzantium, the Greek-Orthodox Empire. Thus he is resurrecting here the old argument of Persian vs Greek, which was a result of the ancient Greco-Persian wars,<sup>7</sup> and bringing it back from antiquity to aid him in creating a new conflict, but on a much larger scale. It is worth noting here that a similar conflict – albeit within a different framework - must have been known relatively recently to the educated elite, considering the rivalry between Byzantium and Persia which existed before the Arabs claimed much of the two competing empires' territories - I shall revisit this point below.

Thirdly, he deploys in addition the Turk vs Frank conflict. Invoking the greatness of the French king, Charlemagne, who re-instated the fragmented Roman Empire under his reign in 800 and ruled much of its former territories. The 'kingdoms of the Turks' to which Urban refers here must be a reference to both the Seljuk Turkic tribes as well as the Avars, who the only pagan kingdoms encountered by

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<sup>6</sup> Urban II quoted in Robinson, p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 106-51.

Charlemagne on the Eastern fringes of Europe.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Urban's use of the term 'Turk' rather than 'Seljuk' or 'Avar' for these peoples appears to be for the sole reason of weaving the conflicts between the former regions of the last reign of the Roman Empire and its neighbours, against 'Mohammedans'. In selecting such terminology he delivers two emotive messages: this is not a new conflict, for the 'ancestors' of his audience were at war once with these 'pagan' peoples; and these 'Turks' are on the same level as the 'Persians' who were the cause of much sorrow for the 'Greeks' in antiquity and in recent years, if not lower. In addition, they both come from the East, a place where danger exists on a 'Biblical' scale, but so also does heavenly reward for whoever claims it.

Fourthly, Urban II adds a whole new dimension to the old conflicts, by claiming that the invaders 'depopulated' these 'lands of the Christians' and became the new settlers. This argument is lacking in foundation, nevertheless we continue to hear echoes of it in contemporary academic and literary texts. It is true that the Near East, or what should be referred to more appropriately as the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, were in large part Christian before the Arab conquest in the seventh-century A.D., but this was not the Christianity that was in harmony with its European counterpart as Rana Kabbani implies in her work: the 'Christian Church which had spanned that strategic [Mediterranean] coastline found itself powerless before the victorious armies of the Arabs' in the seventh century.<sup>9</sup> It is true that the Arabs invaded Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia which were held under Byzantine rule, as well as other non-Byzantine and non-Christian

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<sup>8</sup> Mathias Becher, trans. by David S. Bachrach, *Charlemagne* (Yale, Yale University Press: 2003), pp. 59-80.

<sup>9</sup> R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Pandora Press. 1988), p. 14.

territories such as Persia and other parts of Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, Kabbani's notion of a homogeneous Mediterranean before the Arab invasions is mistaken for two reasons. First, the Byzantine Empire was itself a symbol of a disunited Christianity; it separated from the Roman Empire and distinguished itself with its Orthodox faith in opposition to its Roman Catholic counterpart. Second, far from ruling similar-faith countries as in the case of the late Catholic Roman Empire, Byzantium ruled over large populations of diverse Christian faiths and churches, including the Nestorian Church in Mesopotamia, the Jacobite Church in Syria and the Coptic Church in Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the history of Byzantine rule over these formerly Roman Levantine dominions is filled with persecutions and oppression as much as the history of Catholic post-Roman domains in Europe is filled with conflict, wars and civil wars rather than Christian love. As Wheatcroft explains:

The Levant had been fought over by the Byzantines and the Persians since the days of Justinian. Heraclius and the Byzantines had regained full control of the Holy Land from the Persians barely ten years before the arrival of the Muslims. Moreover, many of the Christians in the region were regarded as schismatics and heretics by the Orthodox authorities in Constantinople, who had oppressed them remorselessly.<sup>11</sup>

Islam also, like Christianity, had its fractions and rebellious cults early on, which led to the split of the caliphate initially, and ultimately to the creation of individual states ruled by sultans and kings until the Ottoman invasions later on.<sup>12</sup> It is evident that the history of the Levant is one of struggle for power between colonial forces

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<sup>10</sup> Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2002), pp. 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Wheatcroft, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Hourani, pp. 39-43.

of multitudinous origins and of multifarious faiths, there has never been a transcendent cultural homogeneity of any kind before or after the Arab conquest, in spite of the similarities between the cultures of the Mediterranean basin as a whole.

Besides the above discussed over-simplification of the pre-Islamic history of the Levant, Kabbani writes with Colonel Nasser's pan-Arabist agenda in mind – itself a child of Arab colonialism in the region which was ironically resurrected under British Imperialism in the late nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> She uses the term 'Arab', as nineteenth-century Orientalists did, to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the Levant, almost as a replacement to the word 'Semite', something to which I shall come back in later chapters when discussing the writings of Disraeli and Lane. Kabbani describes Medieval Levantine scholars as 'Arab travellers and geographers'.<sup>14</sup> Whether intentional or unintentional, this is a problematic construction, as the countries of the Levant had a rich and lengthy history stretching far beyond the Arab conquest. This is demonstrable by simply mentioning the Assyrian, the Phoenician, the Pharaohnic, the Persian and the Sasanian civilisations which had their own languages and cultures before being colonised ultimately by Arabs. In addition, this mendacity has misled other historians and critics into using the same delusive terminology. After all Kabbani is not the inaugurator of it but a continuer of a tradition propagated by Edward William Lane in the nineteenth century and fed back to the Levant as part of British Colonialism and British-resurrected Arab nationalism. Thus we find Andrew Wheatcroft for instance, whom I shall discuss in more detail shortly, deploying

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<sup>13</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Letter to Christendom* (London: Virago, 1989), p. 29 & p. 65, and Phillips, pp. 340-45.

<sup>14</sup> Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient*, p. 2.

Kabbani's terminology without any examination. He refers to the indigenous inhabitants of the Levant, who were Christian when the Arabs invaded their lands, as the 'Christian Arab population';<sup>15</sup> confusing the signifier which refers to the locals, 'Christian', with the other which indicates their coloniser, 'Arab'. Ironically Wheatcroft thanks Kabbani in his 'Acknowledgements' for 'pointing out mistakes in the first printing' of his book.<sup>16</sup> With Kabbani's pan-Arabist agenda in mind, one may question the nature of any corrections she may have exerted on Wheatcroft's text.

Nevertheless, Kabbani is correct about Islam's evolution as a defining factor in European imagination when encountering both the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the North African Mediterranean which is commonly referred to as Maghreb – an Arabic word which ironically means 'West' as this was the furthest region westwards to which the Arabs had ventured. The populations of the Eastern Mediterranean and Maghreb, instead of being substituted by Arabs as is sometimes carelessly implied in Orientalist writings, were converted, in faith or in appearance, in the early centuries of Arab rule. Islam was brought along by the conquering Arab armies as a colonising tool, which reinforced their power over the region. In a chapter titled '*Dhimmitude*', Bat Ye'or details the Arabs' process of turning the conquered peoples of the Levant into second class citizens, '*dhimmis*', in their own countries by subjecting them to the tax of being non-Muslim and confiscating their lands at will. The only protection from this treatment was either seeking foreign protection or converting to Islam; a process of 'Islamization' which

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<sup>15</sup> Wheatcroft, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Wheatcroft, p. xvi.



proved successful for some time.<sup>17</sup> The majority of the local populations were either forcibly converted or put under pressure to choose to convert, but Urban was skilfully justifying war of the highest level by denouncing the populations of the Levant by their former, or perhaps their contemporary faiths. There are reservations on some of the emotive language Ye'or uses throughout the book, but the points she makes in this chapter are highly informed. As Phillips asserts, 'Urban and his circle of advisers constructed a case whereby violence could [...] be seen as a morally positive act.'<sup>18</sup> The first crusaders rejoiced in massacring the population of Jerusalem,<sup>19</sup> perhaps in an attempt to reverse the depopulation which they understood had taken place previously. Moreover, the concept of depopulation itself is one which also lasted with the newly defined entities, East and West, until today. Lawrence Durrell, for instance, depicts the Christian Copts of Egypt as 'Descendants of the Pharaohs, Offspring of St Mark',<sup>20</sup> as opposed to the vast majority of non-Christian Egyptians who are supposed to be descendants of depopulators. We encounter similar notions in twenty-first century literary texts; in a novel which gives itself away from the title and cover - *Virgins of Paradise Street* - the American author echoes Durrell more elaborately:

Her life had been made richer by her union with Yacob, who had drawn her into the mystical and beautiful world of a people who had been in Egypt since before the time of Mohammed. The Copts, followers of St. Mark, enjoyed a history rich in stories and legends and miracles; Yacob had in fact been named for the first man whom the infant Jesus had healed during the

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<sup>17</sup> Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude, Seventh-Twentieth Century* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp. 69-140.

<sup>18</sup> Phillips, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Phillips, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 474.

### Holy Family's flight into Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Urban's merging of the two ancient conflicts, the Greeks and the Persians on the one hand and Charlemagne and the Avars on the other, into one larger feud creates the illusion of an ephemeral conflict that has always existed, parallel, if not identical, to the eternal conflict between good and evil within Christianity itself. Moreover, the struggle for power and territory which has always blighted human civilisations of all shapes and kinds, served to skillfully establish the novel divide between two newly-formulated entities; Saracens, 'an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God' versus 'race of Franks' who are 'beloved and chosen by God'.<sup>22</sup> They are the two homogeneities of East and West, which to a large extent forged the 'Western' sense of identity accepted and celebrated today.

## II. Saracens Between the Seraphic and the Satanic

In this section I discuss three medieval legends which occupy a unique position between myth and reality: Prester John, the *Song of Roland* and Saladin. Whereas Prester John is an imaginary figure which lured the crusaders at low times with the promise of showing up with a helping hand, the *Song of Roland* is a folkloric epic that belonged to medieval oral tradition and was recorded later. It is based on the adventures of Emperor Charlemagne - to whom Urban refers - and his imaginary right hand man, Roland. Unlike Prester John and Roland, Saladin is a historical figure from the chronicles of the crusades who became mythologised and eventually graduated to a popular character in main stream English literature, in novels such as Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (1825) and in contemporary popular

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Wood, *Virgins of Paradise Street* (New York: Turner, 2012), p. 489.

<sup>22</sup> Urban II quoted in Robinson, pp 312-13.

fiction, as in Jack Hight's *Saladin Trilogy* (2012). The three legends are discussed here to demonstrate their relation to the development of ambivalence toward the Near East, as well as to highlight the intertwined complex relationship between myth/literature and history.

Prester John is a mythical figure who was very popular among crusaders and medieval European aristocrats considering joining the crusade. The birth of Prester John in medieval myth and reality alike is understood to be the moment of 'the arrival of the famous letter addressed to the Emperor Manuel Comnenus' of Byzantium, 1143-1180. The letter elaborately described his 'wealth and power', which influenced 'international politics' in late medieval Europe.<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Phillips summarises the myth in the following terms:

Prester John was a quasi-mythical figure who had existed on the fringes of Europe's imagination for decades. He was thought to rule a Christian empire to the east, a notion based upon the memory of preaching in India by Apostle Thomas.<sup>24</sup>

It is in the mythical oral tale of Prester John that the ambivalence toward the East in general and the Near East in particular could be understood. Prester John represented to medieval Papal Europe the East's ability to turn good and eventually put an end to the eternal war between good and evil, God and the devil, and the Christian and the 'infidel'. If the Saracen Near East was Christian once, then there could be still something of goodness left in it for it to turn back again, if all was not lost already. It is just such a Manichean dilemma of curses and hopes that swung

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<sup>23</sup> C. F. Beckingham, 'The Achievements of Prester John' in *Between Islam and Christendom: Travellers, Facts and Legends in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Phillips, p. 223.

the Near East as a pendulum in medieval Papal European imagination between fear and awe, wretchedness and exultation, hell and heaven.

In the *Song of Roland*, we are met by a similar amalgam of extraordinary paradoxes. In the medieval Anglo-Norman epic, Muslims pray: 'May Muhammad protect you/And Apollo too, whose holy laws we keep.'<sup>25</sup> Here the 'Saracens' pray to the anti-Christ and to the pagan god

of the ancient Greeks, combining the satanic with Classical glory. It is worth mentioning here also that the reference to Apollo is weighted with theological authority, since St Augustine identified the ancient Greek gods in particular, and 'the gods' of all nations in general as 'harmful demons'.<sup>26</sup> At another point the 'Saracens' seem to have a parallel trinity to Catholic and Orthodox Christianities, in addition to 'Muhammad' and 'Apollo' there is also 'Tervagant' (*SR*, 2696-97), who was believed to be a violent female deity or in other words the exact antithesis of the virgin Mary; the anti-Mary if we can call her so. Thus, the Saracen other was perceived paradoxically within exact antonymous terms on the one hand, as well as ambivalent equivalence on the other. In addition to the oxymoron of the Saracen trinity, the theme of the oath of treachery is central to the poem. We find Roland's father-in-law, Ganelon, when attempting to betray the Franks to the Saracens is asked to commit himself to the plan by swearing to 'betray Roland': 'On the relics of his sword Murgleis/ He swore the treason and committed his crime' (*SR*, 605-609). It is in the oath that the commitment to betray is fulfilled, and thus the crime is swearing the oath rather than treason itself. This is easily

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<sup>25</sup> *The Song of Roland*, trans. by Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), p. 42. Further referencing to the poem will be between brackets, using the initials of the poem and the line number of the quoted verse.

<sup>26</sup> St Augustine, *City of God* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 41-43.

comprehended within the Faustian/Satanic framework of Ganelon's selling his soul to the devil; once the deal is struck there is no going back and at the end of the epic 'Ganelon died a traitor's death' (SR, 3973). As the translator, Glyn Burgess puts it:

We find nearly seventy Saracens mentioned by name in the text and the author clearly has a predilection for telling us that their home lies within a valley [...], a location presumably deemed to be in keeping with their association with the devil.<sup>27</sup>

In this sense, Ganelon has signed a pact with the agents of the devil, the satanic Saracens. Besides the pact, treachery is key to the definition of the evil demonic Saracens. For instance, Abisme is described in *laisse* 114 in these words:

Out in front rides a Saracen, Abisme;

He had no greater villain in his

company, A man of evil traits

and mighty treachery.

He does not believe in God, the son of the

Virgin Mary; And is as black as molten pitch.

(SR, 1470-74)

Combined with villainy and treachery is the darkness and/or 'blackness' of complexion, which recurs in the poem and, as will be explored in subsequent

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<sup>27</sup> Glyn Burgess, 'Introduction' in *The Song of Roland*, trans. by Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), p. 20.

sections of the chapter, also recurs in depicting Near Easterners and Moors in general no matter how white or pale they were in complexion. Artistic depictions of Saracens in medieval art also reflect similar simplifications of colour and nuances in complexion. It is evident that this is a mark of their evil and a sign of their damnation, being a reference to the children of Ham:

When Roland sees the accursed men,  
  
Who are blacker than ink  
  
And have nothing white save their teeth,  
  
The count said: 'Now I truly know  
  
That we shall die today for certain.' (*SR*, 1932-36)

All is not lost however, for among the Saracens there is a knight as close to a Christian as a Saracen could ever be, he is a man of 'true valour' (*SR*, 3135).

Baligant mounted his war-horse,  
  
His stirrup was held by Marcule from Outremer;  
  
His crotch is very large  
  
And he has slender hips and broad ribs;  
  
His chest is large and handsomely formed,  
  
His shoulders are broad and his face is very fair,  
  
His look is fierce and his hair curly.  
  
It was as white as a flower in summer;

His courage has often been tested in battle. (SR, 3155-3163)

Baligant stands for the noble Christianity of the Near Eastern past, the epitome of the noble savage before Rousseau's trope. He is what the present of the Near East could have been, what it could be. The narrator cannot help but utter a lament: 'O God, what a noble baron, if only he were a Christian' (SR, 3164).

Baligant leads me to the final medieval myth I am discussing in the present section of the current chapter: Saladin. John Victor Tolan explains that although Saladin was a conqueror of crusaders, he is 'more frequently lionized' by 'Latin Christian writers', 'sultan of Egypt and Syria, becomes, in the medieval European imagination, Saladin, epitome of chivalry, generosity, and tolerance.'<sup>28</sup> Indeed, one needs only to recall Sir Walter Scott's narration of this medieval episode in *The Talisman* (1825) to realise how idolised Saladin is in English as well as central and Southern European literature. Saladin is, for instance, one of the figures who are included in Dante's *Inferno*. Tolan recognises that Dante, reserved a place for Saladin in the 'noble Castle' of the 'City of Light', the place assigned for 'virtuous pagans' in Hell, those closest to Christianity.<sup>29</sup> The legend of Saladin posed a considerable dilemma for medieval writers of both England and France. Saladin represented the epitome of chivalry, of knighthood itself and yet he was a pagan Saracen, not Christian. Then attempts to incorporate him into popular legend started taking route in folk myths and literature: 'in later middle ages, authors will claim that Saladin was the descendant of a French woman [...], that he travelled to

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<sup>28</sup> John Victor Tolan, 'Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination' in *Images of the Other: Europe and the Muslim World before 1700* (Cairo American University Press, 1997), p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Tolan, p. 8.

Europe incognito and jousted, that he was secretly attracted to Christianity — even that he converted!’<sup>30</sup> Legends such as those of ‘Saladins of Anglure’ originating in Champagne, France, circulated in oral traditions and folk tale. Considering the popularity of the legend, it is not surprising then that ‘the name “Saladin d’Anglure” survived into the late twentieth century’.<sup>31</sup> Tolan goes on to explore many of the medieval legends and tales in which Saladin is one of the main characters including *Roman de Saladin*, *Conti di Antichi Cavalieri*, and *Récits d’un Ménéstrel de Reims* (1260s), where he is ‘a non-Christian model of virtue’.<sup>32</sup> Tolan declares:

Yet there is a tension in many of these texts between the desire to paint the ideal ruler in non-Christian, non-European colors and the need to domesticate him by squeezing him into more familiar canons of behaviour.<sup>33</sup>

The historical Saladin was far from his character in literary tales and myths and was not always as close to chivalry in historians’ accounts as he is depicted in legends. Being from a subordinate Kurdish family, he twisted rules in order to achieve his ambitions for power and glory. Jonathan Phillips sums him up in these words:

Saladin was not a great battlefield general; his triumph at Hattin was down more to a Frankish foolishness than his own skill. His gifts were more as a man of huge personal charisma and consummate political ability. While he was undoubtedly a pious individual determined to accomplish the obligations of the jihad, he did not shrink from conflict with his fellow

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<sup>30</sup> Tolan, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Tolan, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Tolan, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Tolan, p. 29.



Muslim – and not just the heretical Shi’a, but also his political opponents in the Sunni world.<sup>34</sup>

It is Saladin’s ‘charisma’ and political formidability which made him the stuff of legends, not his chivalry or military might. More importantly, it is the need for a non-Christian hero on the Franks’ behalf which made him so; the urgent need for a glimmer of hope in the Saracen Near East as well as the human imperativeness of nostalgia for what could have been.

The three myths were popular in Southern European oral traditions. Each had something to add to the legacy and stereotypes of the Saracen, but the Saracen will soon be forgotten with the arrival of a new signifier on the scene.

### III. New Saracens for Old

Jacques Derrida in ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, explains the infinite state of substitutions in language:

This field [language] is in fact that of *freeplay*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble. This field permits these infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and founds the freeplay of substitutions.<sup>35</sup>

Such ‘infinite substitutions’ occur within the cycle of ‘sign’, ‘signified’ and ‘signifier’, which Ferdinand de Saussure defines in *Course in General Linguistics*: ‘I propose to

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<sup>34</sup>Phillips, p. 165

<sup>35</sup> J. Derrida, ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’ (1970), <<http://www.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f13/DrrdaSSP.pdf>> [17 November 2015], p. 9.

retain the word sign [signé] to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound image respectively by signified [signifié] and signifier [signifiant].<sup>36</sup> I shall argue here that the image of the inhabitants of the Near East, appropriately called the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, continued to hold the same characteristics but under different consecutive signifiers. The first substitution of signifiers I record and trace here is that of 'Saracen' by 'Turk'. Like all substitutions, they went through a transitional period when they were used interchangeably, or rather synonymously, until 'Turk' became more dominant. It is perhaps worth noting here that the term 'Saracen' itself is debatable in regards to its origins and why it came to represent Near Eastern peoples in Medieval times. The OED traces its origin: 'from Old French *sarrazin*, via late Latin from late Greek *Sarakēnos*, perhaps from Arabic *šarqī* "eastern".'<sup>37</sup> The origin does not seem convincing here, particularly because this etymology is deeply rooted in our modern understanding of the imaginary constructs of East versus West which I discussed earlier in the chapter. In Classical Arabic it is highly unlikely for an Arab to refer to themselves as 'eastern', as much as it is odd for the Saracens of the Song of Roland to refer to themselves as pagan. A recent French T.V. programme suggests a much more plausible origin to the word, which the French Institute du Monde Arab has also endorsed on their website.<sup>38</sup> Sarrasin has two meanings in French: buckwheat and an individual Saracen. According to the French series, *Nos Ancêtres Sarrasins*, the buckwheat meaning superseded the Saracen meaning due to buckwheat imports from the Near East which led to its implementation as a signifier for Near Eastern peoples. The programme also highlights how representations of Near Easterners

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<sup>36</sup> Frederick de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/saracen>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.imarabe.org/actualite/nos-ancestres-sarrasins>

as black in medieval times could have been due to the colour of buckwheat itself.<sup>39</sup>

The point on the incommensurability of depicted details in medieval narratives is highly illuminating and informs some of the arguments I have made already and arguments I shall be making later in the chapter.



Figure 1: storming a Saracen castle. Tapestry. Strasbourg, c. 1400. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>40</sup>

‘Turk’, on the other hand, is not wholly new, Urban II mentions it in his speech as discussed previously. There are many reasons as to why the transition from ‘Saracen’, as the dominant signifier of the inhabitants of the Near East, to ‘Turk’ started taking effect from the late middle ages, the principal one is that the Ottomans were establishing themselves as the new superpower on the scene, having founded their state ‘upon a theory of infinite expansion, and annual war to advance its territories.’<sup>41</sup> The Ottomans dedicated all available resources to conquer all peoples and annex all territories that were not under Ottoman rule, expanding across the Levant and North Africa, as well as along the fringes of Russia and into the borders of Europe on land and by sea. As Marcus Keller declares,

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<sup>39</sup> <http://nos-ancestres-sarrasins.francetv.fr/prologue.html>

<sup>40</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 183.

<sup>41</sup> Wheatcroft, p. 6.

One reason for the stability of the Turk as the main Oriental figure occupying the French imagination is the dominance of the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean and southeast Europe during the century and a half that separates the first Ottoman siege of Vienna (1529) from the second (1683).<sup>42</sup>

In England manifestations of the transition from 'Saracen' to 'Turk' are many; I mention just some here. C. F. Beckingham for instance draws the attention of his readers to a 'very rare' pamphlet published in London 'about 1515', titled 'Alcoran' and claiming to be a translation of the Muslim holy book, and located in the 'Reference Division of the British Library'. It is only 'six leaves' long, but its importance to me here lies in its use of 'Turk' and 'saracen'. At one point the author of the pamphlet states that "'the sarasyns bylevth so moche in our faith that they ben lyghtely converted'", and concludes the manuscript by "'Thus ends the Alcoran of the Turkes lawe made by the fals Nygromancer Machomet.'" <sup>43</sup> It is apparent here that the sixteenth century had been witness to the transition from 'Saracen' to 'Turk'. Adrian Tinniswood explains that in the second half of the same century,

In 1575 the English clergyman Thomas Newton wrote that Turks and Saracens were once 'very far from our clime and region, and therefore the less to be feared, but now they are even at our doors and ready to come into our houses'.<sup>44</sup>

'Turk', as the new 'Saracen', was becoming well-established by that point but as

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<sup>42</sup> Marcus Keller, 'The Turk of Early Modern France', in *L'Esprit Créateur*, Volume 53, Number 4, Winter 2013, pp. 1-8, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> C. F. Beckingham, 'Misconceptions of Islam' in *Between Islam and Christendom: Travellers, Facts and Legends in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), pp. II-III.

<sup>44</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests and Captivity in the 17th-Century Mediterranean* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 6.

Jacques Lacan asserts 'What dominates here [the network of signification] is the unity of signification, which turns out to never come down to a pure indication of reality, but always refers to another signification'.<sup>45</sup> All the connotations that were associated with the 'Saracen' and discussed in the previous section, were being transferred also to the new signifier, consciously and unconsciously. For the new signifier, the Ottoman 'Turk' happened to possess similar characteristics to the former one, due to the Ottomans' political, military and religious status, which perhaps made it a favourable substitute to 'Saracen' in the collective unconscious substitution process. While examining some sixteenth-century French publications, Keller asserts that there was a 'deeply rooted pan-European fear of the Turk', and concludes:

What emerges from the case studies of these sixteenth-century texts, then, is a profound ambivalence toward the Turk. Because of his power and his status as an ally as well as his relative obscurity and religious alterity, he inspired fear and awe.<sup>46</sup>

The same could be said of the English texts discussed above and below. Fear of the Turk and the transitional synonymy of 'Turk' and 'Saracen' could be found even in Shakespeare and Marlowe, to whom I will return in the next section of the present chapter. I will conclude with the words of the Bishop of Carlisle in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which also drew the attention of Adrian Tinniswood, '

For Jesus

Christ in glorious Christian field.

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<sup>45</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006), p. 345.

<sup>46</sup> Keller, pp. 3-4.

Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross

Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens.<sup>47</sup>

#### IV. Barbarians, Moors but Turks

Besides 'Saracens' and 'Turks', 'Barbarians' and 'Moors' were also terms used particularly during the expulsion of the Spanish Moors to North Africa, which was referred to as Barbary at the time. Barbary has had a long volatile history of interaction with coastal Europe either through peace, trade and diplomacy or war, piracy and Mediterranean slavery. Being the name used to refer to the Mediterranean states of North Africa which expanded from the plains of Libya to the green hills of Maghreb, Barbary is a word that finds its roots in the Greek term for 'non-Greeks' referred to earlier in the chapter. In *The Fall of Natural Man*, Anthony Pagden elaborates on another dimension for the meaning and etymology of the term:

For the Hellenistic Greeks, the *barbaros* was merely a babbler, someone who could not speak Greek. But an inability to speak Greek was regarded not merely as a linguistic shortcoming, for a close association in the Greek mind between intelligible speech and reason made it possible to take the view that those who were devoid of *logos* in one sense might also be devoid of it in another. For most Greeks, and for all their cultural beneficiaries, the ability to form civil societies (*poleis*) – since these were the clearest indications of man's powers of reason – were also the things that

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<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II* (London: Penguin, 2008), IV.2075-78.

distinguished man from other animals. For only man possesses the reason required to communicate with his fellow creatures or, indeed, a tongue sufficiently broad, loose and soft to be able to form intelligible sounds. Barbarians, as we shall see, were considered to have failed significantly in respect of both these capacities.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the inhabitants of North Africa seem to have always been identified by the Europeans they came in contact with as ‘the others’, with all the antonymous connotations the word is capable of exporting. One thing Barbary is unmistakably identified with is piracy, and particularly in recent years the debate on the enslavement of Europeans. I shall argue here that, like Eastern-Mediterraneans or Levantines, the Barbarians/Moors were also referred to as Turks, and that piracy and slavery were rife on both sides of the Mediterranean during the struggle that first took place during the crusades.

Ironically, and unlike what is accepted of Barbary as the scourge of Christendom, the beginning of Barbary’s attacks on Southern Europe and European ships in the Mediterranean is down to an unusual incident in the lives of two Greek Ottoman brothers. The two brothers, Oruc and Hizir, were known as the Barbarossa brothers ‘on account of their red beards’, rather than their connection to Barbary. According to Tinniswood,

Oruc was attacked by the Knights of St John while returning on his father’s ship with a third brother, Ilyas, from a trading mission to the Levant. Ilyas died in the fight and Oruc was captured and set to work as a galley slave.

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<sup>48</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 16.

Oruc was 'ransomed three years later' but he had learned the ways of privateering as a slave and took to avenging his slavery and the slaughter of his brother, Ilyas, by setting himself up as a privateer 'at Antalya on the Turkish coast'. He then joined his other brother, Hizir, 'at Tunis, from where the two corsairs preyed on Italian merchant shipping and waged a sea jihad against the Knights of St John'. From Tunis they expanded to Algiers and parts of Morocco which were at the time under 'Spanish rule'.<sup>49</sup>

The Knights of St John as a military order stretches far back to the crusades. Also known as the Knights Hospitallers, they were crusading knights who settled in the Levant, then as the locals started gaining back their lands the military order of St John were first expelled to Rhodes and eventually settled in Malta by 1571.<sup>50</sup> Besides being called the Order of St John, they came to be called also the Order of the Knights of Malta. In addition, they fought a war of piracy and privateering (state-commissioned pirates) against Levantine commercial ships, both as a form of avenging their expulsion and as a way of continuing the crusades. Adrian Tinniswood explains what they perceived as 'a Christian's duty to fight' by referring to the words of the Bishop of Carlisle in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which I quoted earlier:

For Jesus

Christ in glorious Christian field.

Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross

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<sup>49</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests and Captivity in the 17th-Century Mediterranean* (London: Vintage, 2011), pp. 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Phillips, p. 311.



Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens.<sup>51</sup>

It is apparent and evident that both Barbary under the Barbarossa's regime and Malta under the Order of the Knights in the sixteenth century, were caught up in the messy spiral of bloodshed which was initiated by Urban II's exquisite oratory. Other states and countries and nations were also caught up in the whirlwind on both sides, but I shall return to this shortly.

One of the arguments which steered academic debate on Barbary in the last decade is Robert Davis' 'white slavery' claim. Davis's argument is however somewhat problematic. First, Davis' chief aim for writing his book is to create a parity between trans-Atlantic slavery which targeted mainly black African slaves, and Mediterranean slavery on the Barbary side which he claims targeted principally white European slaves.<sup>52</sup> This takes Mediterranean slavery entirely out of context since it was based on religion and the legacy of the crusades as shown above, rather than targeting a specific race or people of a particular complexion. The Saracen was depicted as black in medieval illustrations, not because this was the Saracen's colour or race, but because this was the Manichean medieval tool of representing them as evil, as opposed to the Frank who was good. Whether this played a role in the development of targeting black Africans in the context of cross-Atlantic slavery, is for other research to investigate. It is clear here that cross-Mediterranean slavery was entirely different and a-racial in context, considering the ethnic affinity between the two sides. In fact it could be argued that the crusades had only ended on land when the last crusaders were expelled from the

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<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare, *Richard II* (London: Penguin, 2008), IV.2075-78.

<sup>52</sup> Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500-1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 4 & p. 24.

Levant and were resumed at sea on both sides of the Mediterranean, chiefly between Catholic Southern European (Mediterranean) countries and Muslim North African states. On the one hand, the Knights of Malta, who were secretly funded by the French government and French individuals, were under the nominal rule of Sicily, which was part of the Spanish Empire. On the other, North African Barbary states were under a precarious nominal rule by the Ottoman Sultan, at times including Moroccan territories.<sup>53</sup> We see in this map of 1554 that Barbary or Barbaria clearly included the Moorlands or Marock, though this may have changed in the subsequent centuries.



Figure 2: Map of Africa 1554, clearly showing Morocco as part of Barbary

<sup>53</sup> Tinniswood, p. 7.

In addition, the Reconquista of Muslim Spain, which led to the expulsion of most of the inhabitants of the country who are often referred to as Moors/Moriscos

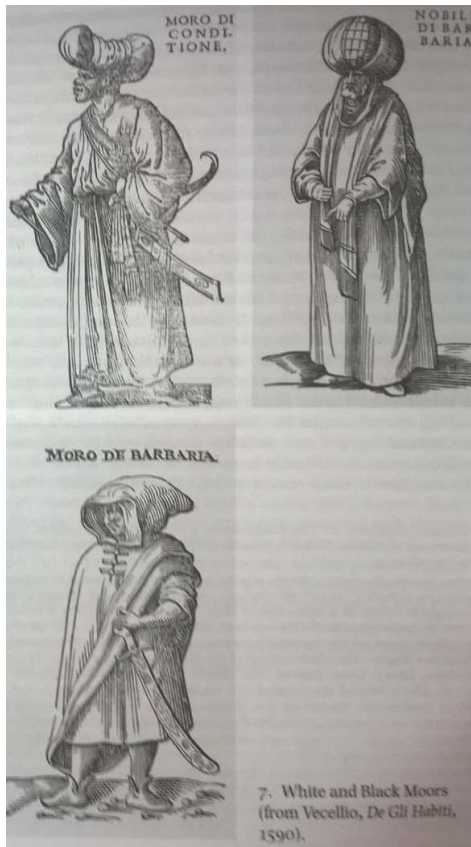


Figure 3: three different representations of the Moor (White and black in different costumes), from Vecellio, *De Gli Habiti*, 1590).

(*Mudéjares*), was in nature and framework a crusade on a different front. Under the blessings and 'spiritual encouragement' of Pope Sixtus IV, 'men from England [...], Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Poland and France' joined the annual campaigns to expel the Moors toward the end of the fifteenth century,<sup>54</sup> perhaps as a form of reversing the 'depopulation' Urban II claimed had taken place in 1095. This large population of expelled Spanish Moors

resettled across North Africa and Morocco in successive generations with

their diaspora in the North-African collective mind,<sup>55</sup> which explains in part why the Barbarossa brothers were so successful in uniting the privateering efforts of Barbary against European crusading/piracy strongholds: Malta, Tuscany, Sicily, Leghorn, France, Spain and related territories and shipping,<sup>56</sup> and why it continued to be of appeal until the late-eighteenth century.

Second, Davis discusses Mediterranean slavery from a narrowly-American 'black' and white perspective and disregards, consciously or unconsciously, the historical racial affinity between Southern Europe, North Africa and the Levant,

<sup>54</sup> Phillips, p. 308.

<sup>55</sup> Tinniswood, p. 150.

<sup>56</sup> Earle, pp. 11-12.

something which even ancient Greek myth acknowledges. According to the myth of Europa, all Europeans are the offspring of Phoenician Europa and Poseidon, the sea god – in some accounts Zeus. In addition, Davis is keen to highlight the European ancestry of captured individuals and territories by Barbary states, as in the case of Tabarca 1741 which was ‘seized by Tunisians’.<sup>57</sup> He, however, never bothers to mention the direct Balkan origin of the brothers with ‘red beards’ who turned Barbary into such a formidable centre for privateering on European ships, nor does he illustrate the evident demographics of large sections of Barbary society which could claim direct European/white origins. These stretch from the Ottoman janissaries, who were largely from Russian Tartar background to the majority of Barbary Corsair Captains, ‘Renegades’, who were Christian Europeans, many with a vendetta against their home countries. Furthermore, the principal language of the pirates of Barbary was a lingua franca derived from Italian, a testament to the large numbers of renegades which perhaps constituted the vast majority of the population.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the full populations of Converted Moors who were expelled from Spain and resettled across the North African coast, were themselves largely of native Spanish/Iberian origins, unlike their literary representations as black, as in Shakespeare’s *Othello*.<sup>59</sup> Andrew Wheatcroft demonstrates that ‘the bulk of the growing Muslim community [in Muslim Spain] were not immigrants from North Africa or their children, but converts from Christianity’.<sup>60</sup> The Arab conquest of Spain, like the conquest of Egypt and the Levant, was followed by a process of conversion, rather than ‘depopulation’. Besides the racial affinity which

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<sup>57</sup> Davis, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Tinniswood, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Upmanyu Chatterjee, ‘Othello Sucks.’ *India: Another Way of Seeing*. (London: Granta, 2015), pp. 169-181, p.171.

<sup>60</sup> 62 Wheatcroft, p. 78.

the aboriginal inhabitants of North Africa shared with Southern Europe, the existence of large populations of expelled Spanish Moors, renegades and janissaries who were of direct European origins/ancestry in Barbary makes it apparent that Davis's assertion of 'white' is entirely irrelevant to the demography and ethnography of slavery in the Mediterranean basin. 'White slavery' as a term and discourse could be more appropriate perhaps when examining cases of white slaves in the Americas, which is the subject of Don Jordan and Michael Walsh's *White Cargo: the Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America*.<sup>61</sup>

When it comes to North Africa, initially the distinction was between two categories: 'Barbarians' and 'Moors'. But by 'the sixteenth century' they 'were dismissively divided in the English popular imagination into "Turks", who were part of the Empire; and "Moors", who lived in or came from Morocco'.<sup>62</sup> Tinniswood goes on to explain that the 'distinction was not hard and fast; both terms were loose, generic, and often interchangeable'.<sup>63</sup> By the eighteenth century all of North Africa was 'barbarous'. Lotfi Ben Rejeb observes: 'in 1721, John Windus referred to "the very people whom, since their expulsion from Spain, we have justly called barbarous, from their cruelty, pride, and inveteracy against the Christian name"'.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Barbarians or Moors, all North Africans, like the Eastern Mediterraneans, were also called Turks, whether to denote Muslims or to mean a type of Ottoman Turk, or both, which was often the case, since informed

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<sup>61</sup> Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *White Cargo: the Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> Michael Neill, 'Introduction' in *Othello: The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-179. P. 46.

<sup>63</sup> Tinniswood, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Lotfi Ben Rejeb, 'The general belief of the world': Barbary as genre and discourse in Mediterranean history', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, Vol. 19 Issue 1 (March 2012), pp. 15-31, p. 17.



distinctions and understanding of the region were quite 'hazy'.<sup>65</sup> For instance, Peter Earle, a modern historian, uses the term within historical context when examining slave trade between Malta and France: 'Experts considered the Turks, and especially North Africans, to have no equal as rowers, and it was felt essential to have at least one Moslem slave per bench'.<sup>66</sup> This is not too different from an earlier example: Thomas De Quincey uses 'Turk' and 'Barbarian' synonymously in his 1821 *Confessions*:

I question whether any Turk, of all that ever entered the paradise of opium-eaters, can have had half the pleasure I had. But, indeed, I honour the Barbarians too much by supposing them capable of any pleasures approaching to the intellectual ones of an Englishman.<sup>67</sup>

Racism and xenophobia toward the Near East were current in the nineteenth century and I shall return to this attitude in later chapters. The above excerpt is sufficient enough however to demonstrate that 'Turk' and 'Barbarian' with its demeaning connotations were developed so that by the early nineteenth century they were used interchangeably to refer to the inhabitants of the Near East up to early-nineteenth century.

In her 'Representation of India on Jacobean Popular Stages', Susan Anderson assesses the role of drama in formulating 'a sense of English identity'. Anderson explains that the 'shows often invoked images of foreign or "strange" peoples and places' which 'appealed to a much broader audience'.<sup>68</sup> We get a sense of such

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<sup>65</sup> A pamphleteer once suggested 'an English blockade on Istanbul' in order to force Barbary to 'free their captives' without ransom. Tinniswood, p. 193.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970), p. 170.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (London: Penguin Classics, 1971), p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> Susan Anderson, 'Representations of India on Jacobean Popular Stages', *Theatre Survey*, Volume 54 Issue 1 (January 2013), pp. 7-25, p. 10.

'exotic' invocations in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I* and *II* (1587-88). The *Tamburlaine* plays invoke a multifarious spectrum of ethnicities and peoples from Africa, Asia as well as Europe. We encounter Moors, Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, Arabs, Balkans, Bulgarians and Hungarians - peoples whom Tamburlaine conquers and subdues. There is no usual binary here but a hybrid complexity of influences taking place between the various groups represented on stage. Tamburlaine, however, is a tragic hero who foreshadows the writing of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* a year later. Modelled after a compelling Ottoman expansion across the three old continents, *Tamburlaine* reflects 'the acquisitive energies of English merchants' in the Mediterranean.<sup>69</sup> Daniel Vitkus observes, 'Tamburlaine is only a more transgressive, exaggerated, exoticized version of what the English themselves desired to be.'<sup>70</sup> The plays thus 'offer to English audiences the delightful spectacle of Turkish humiliation' in two contradictory ways:<sup>71</sup> firstly, in Tamburlaine himself as an external force conquering the territories that were implicitly understood by Elizabethan audiences to be part of the Ottoman Empire; secondly, in Tamburlaine's ultimate defeat by the combined forces of the territories he had once subdued in Ottoman fashion. Thus, Tamburlaine for Elizabethan audiences was both: a figure to aspire to be like on one hand and on the other someone to detest and seek to defeat. In addition, his act of burning 'the Turkish Alcoran' (T II, Act 5 Scene I, 172) is both evidence of the implausibility of the Muslim faith and an act of Muslim impiety on the one hand, as well as a divinity-provoking illicit action that should not be admired or replicated on the other. For Tamburlaine does not only offend,

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<sup>69</sup> Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Vitkus, p. 67.

<sup>71</sup> Vitkus, p. 56.

'Mahomet' (who was thought to be the god of Islam), but also offends 'God' of Christianity and claims to be an 'earthly god' himself (T II, Act I Scene 3, 138).

Another better-known and more striking example of misinformed representations of Moriscoes and North Africans in Elizabethan drama is that of *Othello* (1603). Written not long after the expulsion of Spanish Moriscoes from Spain, the Elizabethan audiences were aware of the Moriscoes' diaspora. As I previously mentioned, the majority of Moriscoes were native Spanish who converted or were converted to Islam after the Arab invasion in the eighth century. It is worth mentioning here also that the current representations of Othello in films and stage performances as black is due mainly to the African American civil rights movement which found in Othello a convenient hero for their cause.<sup>72</sup> 'Othello's identity', Daniel Vitkus remarks, 'is derived from a complex and multilayered tradition of representation that includes the classical barbarism, the "blackamoor", and (an early modern version of the medieval types of lust, cruelty, and aggression) the Turk.'<sup>73</sup> Othello, a Spanish Christian, tries to assert his Christianity and Venetian patriotism, hence asserting his alterity from the 'Turc'. He declares:

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,

Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Neill, 'Introduction' in *Othello*, ed. by Michael Neill and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 52-58.

<sup>73</sup> Vitkus, p. 90.



And smote him thus. (Othello, Act V, scene ii, xxx)

In addition to his darkness of complexion, Othello also fits other aspects of the stereotype of the Near East; he is sexually obsessed which makes him gullible to Iago's plot of jealousy. At the end of the play he kills Desdemona, in a scene that clearly situates them as emblems of a stark contrast between black and white, demonic and angelic, and eroticism and chastity.

As Keller asserts:

The Polysemy of the word Turc alone is a sure sign of the extent to which ideas about the Ottomans, Islam, the Middle East, and North Africa are in flux during the early modern period: Turc can simply designate any Muslim, regardless of his origin. A member of the ruling elites in one of the Barbary states could be called Turc, as could a subject of the Ottoman Sultan in the Balkans. Likewise, Jews and Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were also often thought of as Turcs.<sup>74</sup>

The term survived as a signifier of sorts until the nineteenth century; when Thackeray visited John Frederick Lewis at his home in Cairo in the 1840s, he was surprised to find his friend dressed like a 'Turc'.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, 'Turk' and its variants began to wither away from the beginning of the eighteenth century with the publication of a *Thousand and One Nights* (widely known as *The Arabian Nights*) as will be shown below. From this point onwards, 'Arab' and its variants began to take its place slowly but steadily.

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<sup>74</sup> Keller, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: Pandora Press. 1986) p. 83.

## V. Arabs: The Last Apparition of the Near East

Like 'Turks', which ethnically refers to the inhabitants of Turkey whether of old or new, but was used to universally mean Near-Eastern or Muslim, 'Arabs' refers ethnically to peoples from Arabia, which is the part of the Arabian peninsula below the Levant, but came to be used as a universal term to refer to Near-Easterners - or more specifically sometimes the Muslims of the Near East – as I will be arguing throughout the rest of my thesis. Keller remarks:

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire's influence on Europe had peaked and so had the French interest in all things Turkish. While turqueries remained part of the Rococo aesthetic, chinoiserie gradually rivalled them in popularity and contributed to the extension of the imaginary Orient to the Far East. India and Persia also began to challenge the Ottoman Empire's near monopoly over the French oriental imagination, especially after Antoine Galland's translation of *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (1704-17).<sup>76</sup>

Although Keeler is here mainly concerned with the development of French Orientalist discourse, it is useful to us when considering its English Orientalist counterpart. One could easily replace 'French' with 'English' in the above extract, since the dawn of the twin discourses is highly similar, being born out of Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (1704- 17). Galland's text was translated in England by an anonymous Grub-Street translator shortly after its publication in France. The English translator published it under *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1706-21).

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<sup>76</sup> Marcus Keller, 'The Turk of Early Modern France', in *L'Esprit Créateur*, Volume 53, Number 4, Winter 2013, pp. 1-8, p. 6.

The title, which does not reflect the meaning of Galland's, 'The Thousand and One Nights', is based on Galland's assumption rather than the English translator's that the stories were written by an 'Arabian' author for an 'Arabian' audience. In addition, Galland was also ignorant of the geography of the Eastern Mediterranean which he sold himself as an expert on, hence referring to certain towns as places in Arabia in spite of their being located elsewhere. This is clearly apparent in Galland's footnotes. It is a striking irony that an Elizabethan playwright, such as Christopher Marlowe, who had never been to the Levant, understood the distinctions between the peoples there better than an eighteenth-century French Orientalist who claimed to have lived and acquired his manuscript in Levantine Syria. In the *Tamburlaine* plays, Marlowe charts out the Eastern peoples and their kingdoms as Tamburlaine conquers one after another, as discussed previously. A brief glance at the 'Dramatis Personae' demonstrates this for the reader/viewer before indulging into the play itself. None of the kingdoms or the peoples of North Africa or the Levant are referred to as Arabian at any point in the play. Nor is Tamburlaine's lover and then wife, Zenocrate, the daughter of the 'Sultan of Egyptia' referred to as Arabian (*T*, Act I Scene II, 6). Only the lord of 'Arabia', who is also Zenocrate's, 'first betrothed' is referred to as such (*T*, Act 5 Scene I, 530).

It is Edward William Lane's *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) which anthropologically defined the inhabitants of the former territories of the Ottoman-engulfed Arab Empire as Arab, and used Egypt as a microcosm of their supposedly homogeneous traditions and customs. Lane expresses in *Modern Egyptians* his assumption that a well-translated edition of the *Nights* - he despised Galland's - would have saved him the trouble of writing *Modern Egyptians*, for the tales should be taken as 'presenting faithful pictures of

the state of Arabian manners and customs at the period when they appeared'.<sup>77</sup> I return to this point in Chapter Two.

After the British forces invaded Egypt in 1882, they started feeding aspects of British Orientalist ideology to the Egyptian public through British-controlled newspapers and journals; some of these ideas shocked and disturbed the Egyptian public. In a correspondence which attracted Timothy Mitchell's attention in *Colonising Egypt*, we observe: "How have we come to be regarded as part of the Orient?" asked a reader who wrote to the Egyptian journal *al-Muqtataf* in 1888. "Are we not closer to Europe than to China or North Africa?" It had happened, replied the editor, because those who study us "call themselves Orientalists."<sup>78</sup> The average Egyptian did not view him/herself as Arabian or Oriental. It was something alien to him/her until it was imposed upon their mentality by the new invaders. Thus as we find the Saracens of the *Song of Roland* refer to themselves over and over again as pagans (SR, 1543), British colonial forces expected and demanded from the Egyptians they subdued to identify themselves as Arabs.

There is no doubt that the story of Arabism and pan-Arabism deserves a separate paper and perhaps thesis, but I refer briefly to some highlights in the timeline of its history here as relevant to the emergence of 'Arab' as a signifier to the Near East and its persistence today. First, during WWI the British government made promises of 'self-government' to 'the Arabs' if they helped during the war in defeating Ottoman Turkey.<sup>79</sup> Egyptians naturally took it to be a reference to themselves as well as other Near Easterners to whom the British referred to as

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<sup>77</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 333

<sup>78</sup> Mitchell, p. 169.

<sup>79</sup> T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1997), p. 8.

'Arabs'. Several negotiations took place, and the nations who were colonially grouped under the signifier paradoxically used Arabism as a form of demanding their promised independence from colonial forces. Of course this emotive experience may have influenced the national identities and self-images of many of the peoples of the Levant and North Africa, but the real danger came from the arrival of Nasser's 1952 coup d'état and his pan-Arabist ideology. In order to instil his sweeping pan-Arabist agenda, Nasser used the propaganda machine of film, radio and T.V. to sell falsified versions of history in emotive packages to a world which reads and writes in Classical Arabic, but speaks modern lingual variations. The pan-Arabist film machine was mighty and one of its highly successful projects was transforming Saladin into an Arab nationalist leader. Being of Kurdish background and the Sultan of Egypt who unified the Levant under his sword, Saladin was far from the champion of Arabism, at the time of the crusades, as Nasser's propaganda claimed him to be. It is needless to say here that Arabism, let alone pan-Arabism, only came into being from the end of the nineteenth-century.<sup>80</sup> Many of the regimes of the region today have been established either in liaison with Nasser or influenced by his ideology and tried to compete with him on the leadership of the 'pan-Arabist' states. For instance, the military council in Egypt which was founded by the 1952 coup d'état still controls Egypt today under the leadership of a military president in spite of a 2011 revolution. In addition, the Baath Party in Syria which formed the first pan-Arabist state in unison with Nasser's leadership first, then in competition with him, is continuing to rule Syria today, albeit amid a civil war.<sup>81</sup> It is not surprising then that many of the peoples of the region tried to rise against

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<sup>80</sup> Phillips, pp. 335-355.

<sup>81</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt: From Mohammad Ali to Sadat* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 399-406.

their oppressive pan-Arabist governments in successive uprisings in 2011. Furthermore, what has been labelled the 'Arab-Israeli' conflict led to further instilling of 'Arab' as a signifier for the inhabitants of the region, since it was used to refer to them in terms of their alterity to Israel. Non-Jewish Israelis are referred to by the Israeli government and media as the 'Arabs of Israel': the others of Israel. I quote here two articles from a leading Israeli newspaper, *Haretz*. In the first the author is planning to join the two peoples/'ethnicities' of Israel: 'There is nothing for me in a distant land. I have to return, gird my loins, roll up my sleeves and join the Jews and Arabs who are still fighting for our future.'<sup>82</sup> Conversely, in the second the author quotes one of the founding fathers of Israel, Ben Gurion: "Until a Jewish soldier is hanged for murdering Arabs, these acts of murder won't end", Israel's first prime minister told his stunned cabinet 66 years ago, when Jewish murders of Arabs had become all too common'.<sup>83</sup> Such persistence in incorrectly using the 'Arab' signifier to refer to non-Jewish locals has been of influence on countries in amity with Israel. In the US, the Arab American current continues to be strong and rife; being defined by its opposition and alterity to Israel and connections with its neighbouring countries, but little else.

Edward Said himself was ironically victim to this circumstance, being an American of Palestinian birth; he continued to refer to himself in his essays and books as Arab, connoting a sense of resilient rebellion against the Israeli imperial institution at his home of birth as well as at his adopted home. Benita Parry remarks in her 'Retrospect on the Limits of Postcolonial Studies':

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<sup>82</sup> Sayed Kashua, 'The Hebron Shooting Made Me Want to Be Home in Israel More Than Ever', <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.712077>

<sup>83</sup> Gidi Weitz, 'Ben-Gurion in 1951: Only Death Penalty Will Deter Jews From Gratuitous Killing of Arabs', <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.712125>

Said did not start out as a radical critic, his radicalism achieved – or perhaps thrust upon him – as responses to the wider contemporary events and predicaments of the era. The first of these was an intensified consciousness of the Palestinian situation, and with this, a keen awareness of the afflictions visited on those dispossessed by colonialism (Said 2001:119).<sup>84</sup>

The identification of many Eastern Mediterranean and North African Americans and/or non- Jewish Israelis with the term that was imposed upon them by the former coloniser(s) was also paradoxically reflective of a similar rebellious attitude, which shares an uncanny parity with the situation their countries of ancestry had gone through earlier in the century under British and French occupations.

Today there are many calls, albeit amid understandable confusion and resistance from pan-Arabists, for discarding this false ‘Arab’ cloak and restoring the ancient and proud identities of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. One example of this is an article by a Lebanese vicar which went viral in the two lingua francas of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa: Classical Arabic and French. In ‘Non, nous ne sommes pas des Arabes’, father Théodoros Daoud asserts that ‘La Syrien n’est pas un Arabe, l’Irakien n’est pas Arabe, l’Egyptien n’est pas un Arabe, le Libanais n’est pas un Arabe, le Jordanien et le Palestinien non plus.’<sup>85</sup>

As discussed earlier in the chapter, many academic texts have to be approached with caution when it comes to terminology. Due to the aforementioned colonial and pan-Arabist constructions it is not uncommon to encounter a reference to pre-

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<sup>84</sup> Benita Parry, ‘A Retrospect on the Limits of Postcolonial Studies’, *Counter Text*, 1.1 (2015), pp. 59-75, p. 60

<sup>85</sup> Daoud, Théodoros, ‘Non, nous ne sommes pas des Arabes’, <http://www.tabrat.info/?p=3188>

historic inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean as Arabs as we observed in Wheatcroft, or to come across the Spanish terms, 'moros and moriscos', which are widely understood in English as Moors and Moriscoes, translated incorrectly by the author of an academic paper on linguistics into 'Arabs and captives'.<sup>86</sup> Similarly due to the currency of the signifier today, dictionaries also are not far- removed from corruption. I believe I have demonstrated sufficiently here the progression of one signifier after another in reference to the inhabitants of the Near East in English imagination. The Saracen is the Turk, the Barbarian, the Moor and the Arab; the same apparition reappearing in a new cloak at every occasion. The one which has persisted till today is the Arab and this is largely due to the most influential Near Eastern text in the English literary canon.<sup>87</sup> It is perhaps fitting then to begin the next chapter in the story of the influence of literature and art on British imperial history by a thorough examination of *The Thousand and One Nights*, or as it has been first and foremost labelled: *The Arabian Nights*.

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<sup>86</sup> Joanna Nolan, 'Lingua Franca – a not so simple pidgin', *SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 17 (2015), pp. 99-111, p. 100.

<sup>87</sup> Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 35



## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGLISH-PRESSED *ARABIAN NIGHTS*

In the previous chapter I traced the signifiers used to refer to the Near East in order to explain why the *Nights* was titled *Arabian* in the first English translation. In the present chapter, I shed light on some of the misconceptions about the Near East as they developed through the *Nights*-Orientalist discourse, in order to indicate in later chapters how these misconceptions influenced imperial policy. Highlighting the centrality of the *Nights* to the 'Arab' signifier and stereotype is key here as I draw and expand on this analysis in my discussion of relevant literature and art, as well as in my investigation of relevant historical events, in subsequent chapters. The *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21) is the very first translation in English of *A Thousand and One Nights*, since its publication continued to influence British literature until recent times,<sup>1</sup> and seems to have also steered Victorian Imperialism towards Egypt and the Near East.<sup>2</sup> Translations of the *Nights* are numerous; nevertheless, only Edward William Lane's translation besides Galland's are of direct significance to the present research, due to their being the only two major translations in English to be published prior to the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, which is the culmination point of this research.

#### A. One Translation Too Many

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2009) pp. 237-92.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to my explanation of the term Near East and my use of it in Chapter One, p. 35.

The *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21) is the very first translation in English of *A Thousand and One Nights*. It was translated from Antoine Galland's *Mille et Une Nuit* (1704) by an anonymous Grub-Street translator as soon as news of its first published volume reached England. Antoine Galland, a French scholar well-read in several languages, is generally considered the European discoverer of the Arabic manuscript which was itself a translation of other older translations of ancient folk tales. The English translator, in spite of producing a lucid translation lasting unchallenged for over a century, remains anonymous to this day. Furthermore, his choice for the title as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* rather than *A Thousand and One Nights* seems to have inaugurated a tradition followed by future translators. This part of the present chapter is split into three sections: the first section discusses some of the significant changes added by Antoine Galland and his Grub-Street translator; the second section examines Edward William Lane's expurgations and annotations of his translation; the third section sheds light on John Payne's and Richard Burton's closely-linked texts. The three sections showcase the extent to which translators of the *Nights* took liberties with the text in order to tailor it to their personal needs as well as to the needs and expectations of their target audiences.

#### I. Galland and His Grub-Street Translation

Antoine Galland's *Mille et Une Nuit* (1704-17) and its subsequent Grub-street English version, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21) were produced at a time when Europe was reconnecting with its medieval past through an unquenchable thirst for the new genre of fairy tales, something which had massively contributed to the

translation's instantaneous success. It was even very popular amongst culturally influential figures such as Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli and Charlotte Bronte, who reproduced the stories of the *Nights* in their fiction, alluded to it in their works, imitated its plots, and reincarnated its themes and characters.<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, its stereotypes of Near Eastern or Levantine cultures seems to have left its footprint on the 'Middle East' until now. Surprisingly, the first and only English translation to be made of the *Nights*, in the eighteenth-century is the Grub-Street translation of Galland's, which was titled *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21). This title is not a translation of the French, *Mille et Une Nuit*, nor its Arabic original, *Alf Layla wa Layla*, meaning one thousand and one nights.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately there are no explicit explanations of this deliberate deviation from the French text. One could assume however that this title was probably selected for commercial reasons. After all a Grub-Street publication was bound to have profit before honesty on its list of priorities. Still this presumption does not answer why 'Arabian' was specifically chosen for this profitable entertainment enterprise instead of 'Levant' or the exotic 'Orient'. An examination of the text itself provides some clues to the answer.

At the end of the 'Twenty-Seventh Night' and before the beginning of *The Story of the Three Calendars*, a footnote (translated from the French) explains that from this point onwards the flow of the narratives will not be interrupted by the main frame of Scheherazade's story at the end of every night. Galland here justifies his decision

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<sup>3</sup> Irwin, pp. 237-92.

<sup>4</sup> S. Arata, "On E. W. Lane's Edition of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, 1838." *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net (2012), <[http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838)> [accessed 22 May 2014], p. 2.

thus, 'There are of these Arabian Tales, where neither Scheherazade, sultan Schahriar, Dinarzade, nor any distinction by nights, is mentioned; which shews that all the Arabians have not approved the method which this author has used'.<sup>5</sup> Assuming mistakenly that the Nights has been produced by a single author, Galland tries to prove the author's insensibility to his Near Eastern audience whom he refers to as 'the Arabians'. He also interrupts the narrative of 'The Story of The Three Calendars', which is set in Baghdad, to explain that Amine drank her cup of wine first as this is 'the custom of the Arabians' (ANE, p.70). Galland was clearly ignorant of the nature of the *Nights* as a folkloric narrative which does not belong to one single author or era. Furthermore, he was also misinformed about the geography of the Levant which he was believed to have lived in for years.<sup>6</sup> In a footnote he describes the Mediterranean city of Alexandria as 'a town of Arabia' (ANE, 175).<sup>7</sup> His misinformed notes as well as his enchantment with the Nights were reproduced all over Europe, including England; the Grub- Street translator accepted it as a fact and cheaply branded the whole book, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

It is very evident within Galland's *Nights*, that there is great confusion in terms of the language, geography, religion and races of the three regions referred to today as the 'Middle East'. The term 'Arabian' is not just used to refer incorrectly to the peoples of the Levant but also to the language they speak, combining the meanings of both 'Arabic' and 'Arab' as they are used today. One of the princes

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<sup>5</sup> *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), reprint of the very first original edition of 1706-21, p.66. Further referencing to this text will be put between brackets as ANE followed by p. and the page number.

<sup>6</sup> Galland travelled and lived in the Eastern Mediterranean (Levant), and acquired his Arabic manuscript in Syria where he also interviewed a Hannah Dyab, an old Syrian woman, who is said to have narrated some of the stories he added to the translation. For further details please see Irwin, pp. 15-19.

<sup>7</sup> *Les Mille et Une Nuits* (1949), trans. by Antoine Galland (Paris: Chez Le Normant, Imp.-Libraire, 1949), p. 281.

within the *Nights* says, 'I applied myself to geography, to chronology, and to speak our Arabian language in its purity' (*ANE*, p.89). Further on, the narration is interrupted by Galland to make the point that, 'Beder, in the Arabian language, signifies the Full Moon' (*ANE*, p. 499). Ironically neither Baghdad nor Alexandria are located in the Arabian Peninsula; one is located in modern-day Iraq and the other on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. Moreover, none of the events of any of the stories of the *Nights* take place in Arabia. The only factor linking Iraq, Egypt and Arabia to the word 'Arabian' of the title is the erudite lingua franca of these lands, which seems to have led to calling all the inhabitants of the Middle East in eighteenth-century English 'Arabian' and in contemporary English 'Arab'.<sup>8</sup>

It is true that the Middle East was ruled by Arabs since the Arab conquest of the seventh century - for four centuries and by proxy after that - until the Ottoman invasion of the sixteenth century, which has led to the imposition of the Arabs' language and religion on the peoples they ruled over, but this does not mean that the inhabitants of these regions were substituted by Arabs nor their identities by Arabism. In fact the tribal Arabs, who were only a handful in comparison to the populations they ruled over and were culturally distinct from the Persians or the Egyptians, 'soon lost their identity within the world of Islam and forgot all about it until it was newly constructed in the early twentieth century.'<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, 'the term "Arab"' was used in the 'intervening centuries' to refer 'mainly to the Bedouins of the desert.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Arab is the inhabitant of Arabia (the Arabian peninsula) which is part of the region of West Asia.

<sup>9</sup> H. Gerber, 'The Limits of Constructedness: Memory and Nationalism in the Arab Middle East', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 10 Issue 3 (Jul 2004), pp. 251-68, p. 258.

<sup>10</sup> Gerber, p. 258.

Albert Hourani, a twentieth-century-British scholar of Lebanese origins, makes a clear distinction in his *History of the Arab Peoples*, as early as the preface, between 'Arabic-speaking' and 'Arab'.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, presumably for publication reasons, all the titles and the sub-titles of the book have been kept to the rather shorter and more familiar 'Arab Peoples'. Something similar also takes place in the publications of Lane, Payne and Burton: they name their translations something close to *The Thousand and One Nights*, but always with the addition of *The Arabian Nights* below it. It would take the length of a full thesis to demonstrate the reasons for the identification of the Middle Eastern undemocratic governments with Arabism and Pan-Arabism in the post-colonial era. I hope I demonstrated sufficiently here and in Chapter One that this was not the regional sentiment, and certainly not that of either medieval or nineteenth-century Egyptians. Nevertheless, this is not the furthest Galland and his Grub-Street translator have gone in misrepresenting the peoples of the region as I further demonstrate below.

When Galland's Arabic manuscript ran out of stories before completing the thousand and one nights Galland took literally, he used stories narrated to him by a Syrian from Aleppo called Hanna Diab to supplement the narrative. According to Irwin, 'Galland took extraordinary liberties with the stories he received from Diab.'<sup>12</sup> Irwin also has doubts about the origins of some stories including: 'Aladdin', 'Ali Baba' and 'Prince Ahmed and His Two Sisters', as they have not appeared in any 'Arabic manuscript written before Galland's translation of the *Nights*'.<sup>13</sup> Johnson confirms that this suspicion of such iconic stories in the *Nights* is well-

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<sup>11</sup> Hourani, A., *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2002), p. xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Irwin, p. 17

<sup>13</sup> Irwin, p. 17

founded: 'The Story of Aladdin, Arabist scholars now believe, with its morphology closer to French fairy tales [...] was of Galland's own creation.'<sup>14</sup> She concludes that, 'those stories most associated with popular conceptions of the *Nights* were more likely pseudotranslations than translations, having known no Arabic original.'<sup>15</sup> It is significant for the modern reception of the *Nights* in Europe that it is the stories which were written by the French translator for an audience with an 'Arab' stereotype in mind, that have resonated the most.

A closer look at some of these stories of dubious origins would confirm that they were Galland's own well-written stories. 'The Story of Aladdin', for instance, is set in the capital of China and yet the first character the reader encounters is a 'taylor' called 'Mustapha' (*ANE*, p. 653): an Arabic, often Muslim name. Another aspect of syntactical difference in the Aladdin stories is the reference to Africa as 'a country' rather than a continent (*ANE*, p. 659).<sup>16</sup> The term 'African' is only mentioned within Aladdin's story, any reference to African characters elsewhere in the text is either in terms of the colour or the country they belong to. Ethiopia, for instance, is mentioned earlier in the text as a country or a region in Africa and 'Ethiopian' is used to refer to people from such lands (*ANE*, p.262). Thirdly, there is also a very strong current of anti-Semitism in the story of Aladdin: the account of the Jew's deceit. It is true that general racist remarks are predominant throughout the *Nights*, however many of the stories reflect harmony between the religions of the regions, namely: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as in 'The Story of the Little Hunch-back'. 'Aladdin', however, is the only story in Galland's

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<sup>14</sup> R. C. Johnson, 'Beautiful Infidels: The Western Travels of 'The Arabian Nights'', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 46 No. 3 (Spring 2013), pp. 434-39, p. 435.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, 'Beautiful Infidels', p. 435.

<sup>16</sup> The word 'taylor' is spelt this way in the text.

*Nights* where a Jew is actively deceiving someone, making it more in line with European eighteenth - and nineteenth-century strong sentiments against Jews, which Walter Laqueur coined as 'Judaophobia'.<sup>17</sup>

For over a century this translation of *The Arabian Nights* has continued to be the main representative of the peoples it has been given the name of their lingua franca in English. Subsequent translations could only attempt to get beyond its centrality by exaggerating its stories and excessively annotating them. Nevertheless its endless chain-like narrative has never stopped inspiring authors, artists and politicians, and its prisoner queen has been the subject of wild British dreams and illicit aspirations.<sup>18</sup> Has the *Nights* also inspired the course of British imperialism and turned its wheel towards what they called the 'Arab world'?

## II. Edward William Lane's *Nights* (1838-40)

The study of Arabic was more of a hobby rather than a scholarly profession to Edward William Lane. He trained in his brother's business as an engraver, but dedicated most of his leisure time to studying Arabic. Due to his obscure origins, not much is known about this stage of his life or the motives behind this fascination with a language which had little resource in England for anyone to learn it. Nevertheless it appears that he managed somehow to master it and when he needed a warmer climate to recover from his chronic bronchitis, he chose mastered the disguise so well that he was not usually recognised as a non-Ottoman

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<sup>17</sup> W. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Irwin, p. 265.



European, in a city which received many a visitor from across the vast territories of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup> Under disguise, Lane produced *Modern Egyptians* and his translation of the *Nights*; both are examined below in terms of Lane's misrepresentation of Egypt and nineteenth-century Egyptians as Arabs arrested in time.

It seems that Lane was familiar with French Orientalist work on Egypt, as during his leisurely stay there as an engraver of exotic scene, he managed to write a full study of Egypt (*The Description of Egypt*) reminiscent in name and essence of the French *Description de l'Égypte* which was produced during Napoleon's military campaign in Egypt between 1789-1801. Lane's *Description* did not make it to print however, and Lane struggled for some time until he won the patronage of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The SDUK was not interested in Lane's *Description of Egypt* which included large sections on its ancient civilisation, but rather in Lane's first-hand experience of contemporary Egyptian life. They commissioned him to spend further time in Egypt to complete what was published as *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (usually referred to just as *Modern Egyptians*) in 1836. I return to the SDUK further below in this chapter and in my discussion of the 'Egyptian Question' in later chapters, in regard to its role and influence on Lane's work.

*Modern Egyptians* is very important for the study of Lane's *Nights*, not just because it established Lane as an authority on Egypt and the 'Arabian' peoples, but also for two more important reasons. First, Lane managed to achieve through

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<sup>19</sup> E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: East-West Publications, 1978), p. 9.

*Modern Egyptians* what he could not do when he failed to publish his *Description of Egypt*; he established the pseudo-scientific tone of the anthropological observer, raising British Orientalism to a scholarly level and making it on a par with its French counterpart.<sup>20</sup> Second, Lane expresses in the book his own assumption that a well-translated edition of the *Nights* - he despised Galland's - would have saved him the trouble of writing *Modern Egyptians*, for the tales should be taken as 'presenting faithful pictures of the state of Arabian manners and customs at the period when they appeared'.<sup>21</sup> Stripping the book of its literary romantic value and canonising the assumption that all these Levantine peoples are one and the same, or rather in the words of his grandnephew and biographer, Stanley Lane-Poole, 'those Arab, Persian, or Greek, but still Mohammadan, conditions of life and boundaries of the mental horizon [...] are generally distinguished by the name of Arabian.'<sup>22</sup> Such an Orientalist presumption has survived in many ways till today; Josef Harovitz defines the 'Arabs' similarly, 'learned men who wrote in Arabic, whether Arabians, Persians or whatever their origins.'<sup>23</sup> This ethnolinguistic approach was first introduced by James Cowles Prichard, in 'works dating from 1813 to 1847'. Edward Beasley explains that this was Prichard's 'mature position, that people should be characterized by language groups, and he maintained it in the last two decades of his life (and fame) in the 1830s and 1840s'.<sup>24</sup> Similarly references to the region in today's main stream media, such as the BBC and the *Guardian*, carry this generalising attitude toward the region(s), as I have already explained in my

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<sup>20</sup> I briefly discuss some aspects of this in my analysis of Orientalist art in subsequent chapters.

<sup>21</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 333.

<sup>22</sup> S. Lane-Poole, 'Preface' in E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from a Thousand and One Nights*, ed. by Stanley Lane-Poole, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), p. vii.

<sup>23</sup> J. Harovitz, 'The Origins of *The Arabian Nights*', in *The Arabian Nights*, ed. by D. Heller-Roazen (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp. 386-409, p. 386.

<sup>24</sup> Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 11-12.

discussion of the 'Arab' as a signifier of the Near Eastern stereotype in Chapter One.

With Lane the term 'Arabian' was used to include all nineteenth-century Muslims no matter what language they spoke. He used Egypt as a microcosm of 'Arabian' lands and the *Arabian Nights* as the ultimate channel through which he could convey his experience of Egyptian life to English readers. Apart from a very brief and initial stay in Alexandria, which he abandoned for not being Eastern enough in his eyes, he only stayed in Cairo.<sup>25</sup> Haddawy explores how Lane even pruned the *Nights* to make it fit around his experience in Cairo: 'But instead of being faithful to the life depicted in the tales, Lane omits sometimes a few details, sometimes whole passages, curiously because he finds them inconsistent with his own observations of life in Cairo.'<sup>26</sup> Lane's stay in Egypt was lengthy, it was 'his country of specialization'.<sup>27</sup> He went to Egypt with an already set conception of 'Eastern' life and rejected any mode of life that did not suit his vision, until he settled in the Islamic quarters of Cairo which suited his purposes best. Thus, he based his descriptions of all the cultures of nineteenth-century Egyptians on Cairenes and his authoritative annotations of the *Nights*, which he considered Arabian, on the Islamic quarters of Cairo. His two false premises sound very ludicrously Aristotelian and one is driven from the other. They may be set like this:

All Mohammedans are Arabians

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<sup>25</sup> T. Shamma, *Translation and the Manipulation of Difference: Arabic Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*

(Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2009), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> H. Haddawy, 'Introduction' in *The Arabian Nights*, trans. by H. Haddawy (New York: Norton & Company, 1990), pp. ix-xxix, p. xxi.

<sup>27</sup> Shamma, p. 20.

Egyptians are Mohammedans

Therefore: All Egyptians Are Arabians

All Egyptians are Arabians

Cairo is the capital of Egypt

Therefore: Cairo represents all Arabian (Mohammedan) cities and Egyptians all Arabians (Mohammedans).

Lane's implicit premises as well as their conclusions were accepted by his wide English readership in spite of being as fantastic as stating all Christians are English or all Europeans are British. His pseudo-scientific tone was readily accepted by a wide audience which craved its defamiliarising otherworldly nature,<sup>28</sup> particularly at a time when the Egyptian had stood out from the wider signifier of 'Turk', during Egypt's conflict with the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s and 40s.<sup>29</sup> I return to this point in Chapter Three.

Lane's translation of the *Nights* is the first translation of the text to be heavily annotated, something which turned into a tradition to be fully inherited by Burton towards the end of the century. In fact, his notes were long enough to be gathered and republished independently by his biographer and grandnephew, Stanley Lane-Poole, in a book titled *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from a Thousand and One Nights*. Lane-Poole's justification for a title, which is paradoxical to Lane's

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<sup>28</sup> J. Shacker-Mill, 'Otherness and Otherworldliness: Edward W. Lane's Ethnographic Treatment of The Arabian Nights', *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 113, No. 448 (Spring 2000), pp. 164-84, p. 167.

<sup>29</sup> I return to this point in this chapter and in further details in subsequent chapters.

*Modern Egyptians*, sums up his great uncle's career:

[...] the Arabian Society in which a Saladin, a Beybars, a Barḳoḳ, and a Ḳait-Bey moved, and of which the native historians have preserved so full and graphic a record, survived almost unchanged to the time of Moḥammad 'Alee, when Mr. Lane spent many years of intimate acquaintance among the people of Cairo. The life that he saw was the same as that described by El-Maḳreezee and Es-Suyooṭee; and the purely Muslim society in which Mr. Lane preferred to move was in spirit, in custom, and in all essentials the same society that once hailed a Hároon er-Rasheed, a Jaḳfar el-Barmekee, and an Aboo-Nuwás, among its members. The continuity of Arabian social tradition was practically unbroken from almost the beginning of the Khalifate to the present century, at least in such a metropolis of Islám as Cairo, or as Damascus or Baghdad.<sup>30</sup>

Stanley Lane-Poole writes in terms reminiscent of his great uncle, Lane, in their generalisations. His words surpass Lane's however in their certainty and assertive tone. For this was published one year after the British invasion of Egypt, and all was justifiable in this sense of new authority in spite of his lack of evidence. According to this view, the modernity of these Egyptians/Arabs/Muslims/Orientalists is faux, merely temporal and can only be defined by their contemporaneity with the real modern civilisations of nineteenth-century Europe, which they will never properly learn or attain. Concluding the chapter titled 'Language, Literature and Science' of *Modern Egyptians*, Lane writes:

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<sup>30</sup> S. Lane-Poole, 'Preface' in E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from a Thousand and One Nights*, ed. by Stanley Lane-Poole, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), pp. x-xi.

We may hope for, and indeed reasonably expect, a very great improvement in the intellectual and moral state of this people, in consequence of the introduction of European sciences [...]; but it is not probable that this hope will be soon realized to any considerable extent.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, it seems that Lane used the *Nights* as a means not just to convey his experiences in Cairo, but also as a way of smuggling large sections of his unpublished *Description of Egypt* into print. 'Lane mined his earlier manuscript extensively for the edition's most remarked-upon feature: its detailed, wide-ranging, and often extraordinarily lengthy explanatory notes.'<sup>32</sup> These notes, which are meant to represent all those thought of as 'Muslims', whether Greek, Indian, Persian, Turkish or Egyptian, are completely based on Lane's encounters of life in Cairo and readings of Egyptian sources. Every chapter in his book of notes includes examples of and incidents from the streets of Cairo, and an over-reliance on El-Jabartee, the iconic medieval Egyptian historian. Even in his long essay on 'Arabian' laws, Lane writes on the Egyptian judiciary system and lists various sentences for several crimes, implying that they are exactly the same across the whole Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and West Asia. He writes in very broad terms, for instance, 'A man (an Arabian) who kills another in self-defence, or to defend his property from a robber, is exempt from all punishment.'<sup>33</sup> On superstition he writes, 'An implicit belief in magic is entertained by almost all Muslims; and him

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<sup>31</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 223.

<sup>32</sup> S. Arata, "On E. W. Lane's Edition of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, 1838." *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net (2012), <[http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838)> [accessed 22 May 2014], p. 3 of 7.

<sup>33</sup> E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from a Thousand and One Nights*, ed. by Stanley Lane-Poole, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), p. 19.

among them who denies its truth they regard as a freethinker or an infidel.’<sup>34</sup> He uses the word Muslim here, but he does not refrain, in spite of his experience and alleged knowledge, from using the more derogatory and rather inaccurate ‘Mohammedan’ interchangeably with it throughout.<sup>35</sup> ‘Mohammedans’ of course implied worshippers of Mohammed, hence Mohammad’s place in the seventh circle of Dante’s *Inferno* (1320).<sup>36</sup> Catering for the expectations of his audience, Lane draws a pseudo-scientific picture in a realistic tone of an ‘East’ as his ‘West’ perceives it and expects it to be, not as it really is nor as it perceives itself.

Without the annotations, Lane’s translation of the *Nights* itself is much less valuable to the average Victorian reader. His ‘literalism’ has had the negative effect of alienating the cultures he framed the *Nights* to represent. His translation is too literal at times to the extent of making the English language sound like a whole new language of its own. According to Irwin, Lane’s education was far from scholarly and he was not a ‘literary man, and, apart from Arabic literature, he had read little except the Bible.’<sup>37</sup> In clumsily and closely following the Arabic text in the name of authenticity, he produced a translation which is hard to read and in many ways unintelligible. His text is littered with expressions such as ‘reason fled from his head’, ‘my master and light of mine eye’ and ‘on my head be your command’. Lane’s bizarre pseudo-Biblical archaic style influenced Payne and Burton later on, and its traces can be found in major twentieth-century works, such as C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where ‘the grand Calormene manner’ echoes Lane’s *Nights*:

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<sup>34</sup> Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Medieval Europe imagined Islam and ‘Mohammad’ as Anti-Christianity led by ‘Anti-Christ’, due to the common assumption then that Muslims, or ‘Mohammedans’ in this case, worshipped ‘Mohammad’, the way Christians worshipped Christ.

<sup>36</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* (New York: New American Library, 2009), pp. 226-231.

<sup>37</sup> Irwin, p. 24.

'O my father and O the delight of my eyes'.<sup>38</sup> Like Galland, Lane also took great liberties with the text, disregarding many tales he saw as unnecessary, bowdlerizing the *Nights* and eliminating Scheherazade's frame narrative at the beginning and end of each tale; as Irwin notes, 'Lane's literary judgment was erratic and his editing arbitrary.'<sup>39</sup>

Lane's premises are both conscious and preconceived, for he recognizes the fact that Egyptians are different from the other peoples of the regions he calls 'Arabian'. In *Modern Egyptians*, Lane's pen flows for pages analysing the Egyptian (Cairene) accent, demonstrating its difference by comparing it to Syrian and Bedouin accents, 'The pronunciation of Egypt has more softness than that of Syria and most other countries in which Arabic is spoken.'<sup>40</sup> Yet he remembers his premises soon after and when he describes how Egyptians, or rather the Cairenes he saw, write, Lane explains, 'The Arab, in writing, places the paper upon his knee'.<sup>41</sup> The whole process of describing simple every-day actions in such an alienating and generalising tone is systematic in both *Modern Egyptians* and Lane's translation of the *Nights*. According to Shamma, there are two types of translations: a domesticating kind which assimilates 'the other' into the target culture, and an alienating one which aims rather to stress the differences and the otherness of the source culture. Whilst Galland's belongs in many ways to the former, Lane's completely fits within

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<sup>38</sup> Lewis, C. S., *The Chronicles of Narnia, Book 3: The Horse and His Boy* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> Irwin, p. 25.

<sup>40</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 210. It is worth mentioning here that Arabic is not a commonly spoken language, but is the lingua franca of the dominions that used to be part of the Arab empire. The modern spoken languages are not currently canonised due to the strong streak of pan-Arabism in the three named regions. It is surprising how Lane did not recognise that then. His circles however are likely to have been highly erudite and religious due to the nature of the neighbourhood he chose to stay; in religious Islamic circles, particularly amongst the Islamic scholars, Arabic was and still is the main medium of communication, similar to Medieval Latin perhaps.

<sup>41</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 211.



the latter. 'Lane's translation embraced literalism, a strategy which produced foreignized representations and was a means of collecting information about prospective colonies.'<sup>42</sup> Shamma asserts that Lane intentionally aimed to alienate Muslims, Arabs and Egyptians and makes the assumption that Lane's strategy was an imperial one. Kabbani also draws similar conclusions, 'He (Lane) offered his society a capacious picture of Egypt; Egypt, that is, for Western consumption and coloured by Western bias.'<sup>43</sup> Lane was not associated with any governmental departments, even though he may have aspired for a governmental post, nor was he acknowledged by any British university in his lifetime.<sup>44</sup> However, his sponsors, the SDUK, had an influence over him and had even exerted a lot of pressure on him during the processes of writing *Modern Egyptians* and translating the *Nights*.<sup>45</sup> It is also worth noting here that the publication of Lane's *Modern Egyptians* and translations of the *Nights* were during the Egyptian Question/Crisis of the 1830s and early 1840s. The governor of Egypt, an autocratic province of the Ottoman Empire, claimed independence and sent a globally-experienced army to invade a weak Istanbul, claiming all Ottoman territories in its way as part of the new Egyptian state. This was perceived by the British political elite as a threat to the global balance of power and sparked the educated elite's - including the SDUK's - interest in Egyptian news. I shall return to the Egyptian crisis of the 1830s-40s in Chapters Four and Five.

The SDUK may have shaped Lane's translation of the *Nights* more than is generally acknowledged. Being composed of philanthropists, merchants and

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<sup>42</sup> Shamma, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: Pandora Press. 1986), p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Shamma, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Shacker-Mill, p. 174.

statesmen, it is generally believed that it aimed at publishing non-mainstream books to educate a wider audience from every walk of Victorian society in England. Charles Knight, the SDUK committed publisher, explains in his diary that the 'Vice-Chairman' of the SDUK was Lord John Russell, a religious- liberty enthusiast who influenced the 'Repeal of the Corporation and Tests Act' (1828).<sup>46</sup> Lord John Russell also 'served twice as Prime Minister', in 1846 after Peel resigned and briefly in 1865 upon Palmerston's death.<sup>47</sup> Under his zeal for Anglican religious liberty, Knight produced *The Pictorial Bible* between 1836 and 1838, which was a heavily annotated and illustrated edition. Thus Lane's annotated *Nights* was produced in the footsteps of its SDUK predecessor project, with the aim of extending the Victorians' knowledge on the original lands of the Bible. Quoting from Knight's diary, Shacker-Mill remarks, 'Knight recalls Lane's "bold and simple, rendering of Eastern modes of expression" which was found to be reminiscent of "our translation of the Bible"'.<sup>48</sup> It seems that the SDUK's interest was in studying and publishing materials on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East in general. *The Pictorial Bible* with its annotations on the history, geography and demography of the Biblical regions was their tool for delivering the aspects of the regions' inhabitants in ancient times, and the *Nights* for modern/medieval times. Thus the former could be seen as an Old Testament and the latter a New one for understanding the 'Arabian' 'Orient' and delivering it to be claimed and digested by every Victorian. Egypt of course was more than a central element to the whole

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<sup>46</sup> C. Knight, *Passages of a working life during half a century: with a prelude of early reminiscences* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1864), p. 99.

<sup>47</sup> British government website, History, Past Prime Ministers, Lord John Russell <<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/lord-john-russell-1st-earl-russell>> [12 December 2014].

<sup>48</sup> Shacker-Mill, p. 175.

process, as demonstrated above. In *The Imperial Archive*, Thomas Richards remarks:

The familiar Victorian project of positive knowledge divided the world into little pieces of fact. A fact was a piece of knowledge asserted as certain, and positive knowledge was considered by both Mill and Comte to be the sum of objectively verifiable facts. The problem here of course was that facts almost never added up to anything. They were snippets of knowledge, tiny particularized units responsible for our current idea of information.<sup>49</sup>

These 'snippets' of knowledge about particular individuals within a neighbourhood that had specific characteristics inside a large ancient multi-ethnic city, were taken by Lane, exaggerated and reproduced as if they were 'objectively verifiable facts' about the three regions of North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and West Asia, grouped under the label of Near East.

The difference between Galland and Lane's *Nights* is not the difference between French and English Orientalism, but rather the difference between the initial romantic/literary/fantastic stage of European Orientalism towards the Orient and the second more authoritative pseudo-scientific attitude. Said puts it in these terms:

The difference between representations of the Orient before the last third of the eighteenth century and those after it (that is, those belonging to what I call modern Orientalism) is that [...] Europe came to know the Orient more scientifically, to live in it with greater authority and discipline than

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 6.

ever before.<sup>50</sup>

Both approaches aimed at misrepresenting their 'Orient': Galland presented an 'Arabian' world of Rucks, Genies, magicians and fairies, and Lane produced rather backward, superstitious, medieval and banal 'Arabian' manners and customs. The former created an ambivalent world of wonder and danger, magic and terror; the latter turned this fiction into fact, an anthropological account of eccentric superstitious peoples arrested in time. Despite their differences, both approaches were successful at their mutual goal; deeming this bizarre and exotic Near East of the *Nights* more Oriental and formidably believable, leading to a cumulative stereotype of an imaginary Orient of imaginary peoples. The *Nights*-based Orientalism gave birth to pseudo-Oriental literature, and pseudo-Oriental literature left its marks on the subsequent main stream literature of Victorian times, creating a cult of fiction upon fiction, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Kabbani remarks: 'Each man used the *Arabian Nights* to express his personality and his preoccupations and both of their texts taken together illustrated the contradictory penchants of the Victorian age.'<sup>51</sup> On a larger scale, and in the preceding and successive centuries to the Victorian age, the *Nights* was adopted and recycled in great measure, which often proved popular. Its popularity was with politicians and literary authors as well as public readership. For instance, a search on ECCO database for the *Arabian Nights* reflects how its popularity was on an upward scale, particularly from the last three decades of

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p.22.

<sup>51</sup> Kabbani, p. 45.

the eighteenth century onwards. In addition, both Disraeli and Gladstone were fans, and Charles Dickens and the Brontës mention it profoundly in their works as I demonstrate later on. Burton's success sparked a new wave of public interest and consequently imitations of the *Nights*, which came close to becoming a genre of their own accord, similar to the pseudo-Oriental genre of the eighteenth-century fin de siècle: from Robert Louis Stevenson's *More New Arabian Nights* (1885) to Oscar Wilde's *The House of Pomegranates* (1891) and beyond. In the next chapter I discuss the literary genre which was sparked by the influence of the publication of the very first translation of the *Nights* in England, the pseudo-oriental genre and the further development of the stereotypes I highlighted in it.

### **One Translation Too Many**

In Part B of the present chapter I focus mainly on the overlapping elements between some of the tales in the *Brothers Grimm* and the *Nights* in order to highlight the extensive presence of the *Nights* in mainstream folklore and fairy tales in subtler and less conspicuous ways. This part of Chapter Two focuses on how the *Nights* seeped into the *Brothers Grimm* through French sources. The sections highlight these overlapping areas, in addition, for the purposes of showcasing the influence of the *Nights* on texts it is often least associated with, as well as widening the horizon for the scope of comparison between the *Nights* on one hand, and other global myths, fairy tales and folkloric narratives on the other. These similarities showcase how the *Nights* is a collection of stories from across the ancient world and not as narrowly Arabian as it has been framed to be in its English discourse.

Ever since their publication in 1857, the full collection of tales gathered by the Grimm brothers have been a landmark in German and world literature. This was indeed the intention of 'Jacob and Wilhelm' who 'presented the *KHM* to their public essentially as a monument of national folklore'.<sup>52</sup> In this section, I examine how Germanic the Grimm's German tales are, by inspecting their sources and drawing on scholarship addressing the topic. In addition, I highlight some of the common elements in the *Nights* and the Brothers Grimm, in terms of their deeply rooted oral traditions. Lastly this section concludes by highlighting evident aspects of the *Nights'* influence on the Germanic tales.

Unlike common perception of the Brothers Grimm stories as purely Germanic folkloric fairy tales, the origins of many of their tales are more diverse and multifarious. I discuss here mainly their French and *Thousand and One Nights* origins, which are the subject of question to this part of the chapter. In his *One Fairy Story Too Many*, John Ellis traces the origins of Grimm's fairy tales back to their sources and the individuals who narrated them, employing investigative techniques and relying on a unique copy of the first edition which included the brothers' 'marginal handwritten notes' on the sources of individual tales.<sup>53</sup> The brothers publicised their work as deeply rooted in the ancient Germanic forests of folklore and that their collection of it was the fruit of tracking down old peasants who narrated stories passed down generation after generation in oral tradition. Along with this the brothers 'deliberately concealed the true nature of their informants' who were not always old, illiterately folkloric or even Germanic.<sup>54</sup> Ellis

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<sup>52</sup> John Ellis, *One Fairy Story too Many*. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Ellis, p. 31.

concludes his discussion of the *Brothers Grimm's* sources by establishing the following:

First, the sources of the material the Grimms used were not older, untainted, and untutored German peasant transmitters of an indigenous oral tradition but, instead, literate, middle-class, and predominantly young people, probably influenced more by books than by oral tradition – and including a very significant presence of people who were either of French origin or actually French-speaking. Second, knowledge of the sources shows that they were largely limited to the brothers' family, friends, and acquaintances in their home area, which indicates both a very narrow base for the collection and that the brothers devoted very little energy and interest to collecting. Third, the Grimms deliberately deceived their public by concealing or actually misstating the facts, in order to give an impression of ancient German folk origin for their material which they knew was utterly false.<sup>55</sup>

The French origin is highly important for the purposes of this part of the present chapter, since French culture was the introducer or rather the re-introducer of the *Nights* to European and English audiences of fairy tales as well as for the great influence of the *Nights* on its welcoming French audience. Robert Irwin establishes this link between the French origins of many of Grimm's tales and the *Nights*:

Two of their 'best' informants in Kassel had a French background, and their memories of childhood stories from Galland may account for the appearance of distorted but still recognizable versions of 'Aladdin' and 'Ali

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<sup>55</sup> Ellis, pp. 35-36.

Baba' in the Grimms' collection of German folklore. The Grimms themselves identified the *Nights* as the ultimate source of eight of the tales they had been told.<sup>56</sup>

Just as translators of the *Nights*, ancient as well as nineteenth-century, took liberties with the *Nights*, the German brothers also expurgated tales to make their collection suitable for their target audience of nineteenth-century family-oriented Germans. Andrew Teverson explains how 'the Grimms removed some of the more grisly entries', such as the story of 'How Some Children Played at Slaughtering'. Teverson continues, 'The Grimms also made some of the stories less confrontational for children by transforming the wicked mothers of stories such as "Hansel and Gretel" and "Snow White" into wicked stepmothers'. The stories 'became standard fare in the nineteenth-century nursery, in which context they functioned to reinforce conventional ideas about family, about German cultural identity and about society'.<sup>57</sup>

German folklore is not alone in being largely influenced by adapted tales from the *Nights*, and indeed the influence of the *Nights* was not exclusive just to the set-in-print German folklore. Irwin remarks that 'Tales from the *Nights*', divested of their 'Oriental' settings, 'circulated orally in Germany in pre-modern times and for that matter in Italy, France and Spain too' (101).<sup>58</sup> Thus even the tales that the Grimms recorded from German sources are likely to be neutralised/adopted tales from the *Nights* in the oral traditions of several European countries. This leads to the following section on how Odysseus was also Sinbad or vice

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<sup>56</sup> Irwin, *Companion*, p. 101.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Teverson, *Fairy Tale: The New Critical Idiom*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 66-67.

<sup>58</sup> Irwin, *Companion*, p. 101.



versa.incommensurability. James Iveniuk for instance, discusses ‘Westernized incarnations’ of Sinbad in American culture, while Muhsin Al Musawi criticises ‘Western interference into the legacy of the *Nights*’. The divisive nature of approaching the *Nights* as well as Sinbad from this angle is something which I call for a reconsideration of as well as a departure from, since the *Nights* is a text which locates itself beyond the imaginary peripheries of East and West. The character of Sinbad and the nature of his naval adventures bear great resemblance to that of Odysseus and the *Odyssey*. It is unknown which preceded which. The *Odyssey* could have found its way to Persia through Hellenistic (Greek) Egypt, or Sinbad could have sailed to Greece after being taken from ‘an Egyptian or a Persian folk tale’.<sup>59</sup> My comparison here is a case study of how the *Nights* are a global narrative and not Eastern or ‘Arabian’ as it is titled in its English translations.

One passage from the first voyage of Sinbad is juxtaposed here against its equivalent in the *Odyssey*, to showcase the similarities discussed. Two translations have been cited (Grub-Street translation of Antoine Galland’s, ‘First Voyage of Sindbad’, 1706-21:146). in chronological order. In all the passages from translations of both texts, a famous seafarer who was deemed dead at sea is identified and congratulated at being found alive. He tells his story to a famous king, alongside a courtly crowd, who generously bestow fortunes upon the hero. Then the traveller, now with his wealth restored and added to, asks the king for his leave and he finally loads his fortune onto a ship and sails home, as follows:

At last, he knew me himself, and embracing me, Heaven be praised, says

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<sup>59</sup> Iveniuk, James, “The Seventh Signification of Sinbad: The “Greeking” of Sinbad from the Arabian nights to Disney”, *Semiotica*, Vol. 189 No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-21, p. 2.

he, for your happy escape, I cannot enough express my joy for it; there are your goods, take and do with them what you will. I thanked him [...].

I took out what was most valuable in my bales, and presented it to king Mihrage, who, knowing my misfortune, asked me how I came by such rarities? I acquainted him with the whole story: He was mightily pleased at my good luck, accepted my present, and gave me one much more considerable in return. Upon this, I took leave of him, and went aboard the same ship, after I had exchanged my goods for the commodities of the country.

He ceased, but his audience were so entranced by the tale that no one moved in the hushed twilit hall. At last the voice of Alcinous replied to him across the silence: 'Lord Odysseus, however great your misfortunes hitherto, now that you have eventually attained my bronze-floored house, my stately house, I think you will not suffer further deflection from your way home: touching which I have a charge for all you frequenters of my palace, who came to hear our minstrel and drink our ruddy aldermanic wine. Already a polished coffer has been packed with the clothes and gold ornaments and other gifts brought in for the stranger by the Phaecian councillors. Let all of us here, as from ourselves, now present him with a great tripod complete with cauldron. Later we can strike a levy from the common herd and recoup our costs, for it would be a sore business if such liberality fell unrelieved on any single party.' So said Alcinous and he was warmly approved. (T. E. Lawrence, *Odyssey*, 1932:183)

The settings are different due to their being adopted into the cultures they were translated within, nevertheless the similarities are evident: the dead hero is restored in reputation and fortune to life; the eager king listens to the hero's adventures and rewards him generously; and the hero, though rich and comfortable, asks to leave and sails home. The shared excerpts above are not exclusive and are only selected as a case study to illustrate how both stories are likely to have been born out of one stem.

Some readers may wonder how much influence was exerted by the *Nights* on translators of the *Odyssey* or how much influence the *Odyssey* exerted on translators of the *Nights*. This is a question without one definite answer, for the cycle of influence between the *Nights*, on the one hand, as a global narrative and other world myths and fairy tales on the other is indefinite and perhaps dates back to pre-historic oral traditions, as discussed in the previous section on the Brothers Grimm.

## Conclusion

So far the common belief amongst Arabist scholars was that Arabic literature had been exclusively poetry up to the late nineteenth century; certainly all surviving literature from Arabia testify to this. The discovery of *Tales of the Marvellous* (2014) changes this fact to a certain extent however; although the discovered manuscript dating from is an Egyptian copy, and not from Arabia, it has the marks of a culture that prevailed during the five-century-long rule of the Arab Empire/Caliphate(s). Another mark of the Arab Caliphate on *Tales of the Marvellous* is the extensive presence of poetry in it. Irwin explains that 'Though the

poetry is not distinguished, its presence in *Tales of the Marvellous* is one indication that the collection had pretensions to be something more literary than a collection of folktales'.<sup>60</sup> This is in great contrast to the *Nights*, which though rhymed, is much less poetic, and which was even considered vulgar and lowly, leading to its descent into obscurity under Arab rule and afterwards, until Galland's discovery of it. Kabbani notes on the popular fiction quality of the *Nights*, 'They [tales of the *Arabian Nights*] were purposefully crude, and pandered to the prejudices of the uneducated men who listened to them being narrated'.<sup>61</sup> In addition to the previous points, 'the Umayyad caliphs and their governors and generals feature more prominently in *Tales of the Marvellous* than in the *Nights*'.<sup>62</sup> Thus *Tales of the Marvellous* is to a great extent more 'Arabian' than the *Arabian Nights*. I conclude here by raising the question, if we are accepting the incorrect title of *Arabian Nights* due to the mistakes of the early translators, are we not also entitled to call this collection of stories *English* or *French Nights* since they have been adapted and added to in both languages? Perhaps we should refer to it, for that very reason, as *Anglo-French Arabian Nights*? Or accept it as it is, a multi-ethnic trans-cultural folkloric book, and embrace it under its global-natured, infinitude-implying title, *The Thousand and One Nights*. In the next chapter, I trace the stereotypes developed through the discussed translations of the *Nights* into the pseudo-Oriental genre.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Irwin, "Introduction" in *Tales of the Marvellous and News of the Strange*, Malcolm C. Lyons (trans), (London: Penguin Classics, 2014), p. xiii.

<sup>61</sup> Kabbani, p. 48.

<sup>62</sup> Irwin, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Pseudo-Oriental Gothic

In the first two chapters I examined the reasons behind the labelling of the *Nights* as Arabian as well as some of the stereotypes that arose through the translations. I will be focusing here on why the *Nights* was labelled 'Entertainments'. In discussing the reasons behind the widely-accepted classification of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) as the first Gothic novel and subsequently the initiator of Gothic as a genre, Joseph Crawford discusses the development of the Gothic in pre-eighteenth-century literature and their fall 'out of favour':

The old vocabulary of demons, witches, sorcery, and Satanic pacts, which had been used for centuries to write about and understand the nature of human evil – the language that had allowed Lady Macbeth, for example, to articulate what she was doing and feeling as she planned the murder of her king – had fallen out of favour, dismissed as a remnant of superstition with no place in any rational man's religion. The amoral avengers and destroyers who had stalked the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage – Barabas, Aaron, Tamburlaine, Vindice, and their ilk – had been banished as barbaric aberrations, not befitting the drama of a civilised society. Aiming to create a literature which would help to free society from prejudice, fanaticism, despotism, and superstition, which they saw as having been the besetting sins of the previous era, writers from Locke to Fielding set a literary agenda

in which such incarnations of radical, 'metaphysical' evil had no place.<sup>1</sup>

In this sense there was a departure from all horror or traditional fearful elements by the turn of the seventeenth century. Walpole's novel consequently was a mid-eighteenth-century rebellious re-introduction of Gothic into the literary world. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there was more and more reliance on Near-Eastern elements and particularly motifs from translations of the *Nights* which were popular as discussed in the previous chapter. Tyrant sultans, oppressed slaves, erotic harems and supernatural figures whether genies, demons or Iblises started to become recurrent, turning into a sub-genre in its own right of the gothic, labelled the pseudo-Oriental. Muhsin Jassim Ali states that 'Late eighteenth-century critics were inclined to stress the interrelatedness of the two modes, remarking now and then that the Gothic romance was originally influenced by the Arabians'.<sup>2</sup> Some gothic critics still do not distinguish between the gothic and its pseudo-Oriental sub-genre. Treating *The Castle of Otranto* and *Vathek* as the main gothic novels of the eighteenth century, Crawford elaborates on this interrelatedness:

It was not coincidental that both Walpole and Beckford initially claimed that their works were translations of genuinely ancient material, from Italy and Arabia respectively: with their scenes of grotesque violence and blatant supernaturalism, both works stood well outside the main tradition of

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph, Crawford, *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism: The Politics and Aesthetics of Fear in the Age of the Reign of Terror* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ali, p. 31. Arabian in this context was a reference to Near Easterner, at times it overlapped with 'Turk' at times it was lightly distinct in meaning all the other non-Turk Near Easterners. But the distinction was often hazy as I explained in Chapter One.

eighteenth-century British fiction.<sup>3</sup>

This reflects the complex interrelatedness between the gothic genre and the pseudo-Oriental tale which is highly influenced by the *Nights*, as Ali states. In addition, such complex influence of the *Nights* on the Gothic genre paves the way for the inheritance of the mainstream novel of these *Nights*-influenced gothic/pseudo-Oriental motifs and ultimately stirs British Imperialism toward Egypt in 1882, which marks a shift in imperial expansion towards Africa and the Near East.

### I. William Beckford's *Vathek*: An Arabian Tale

*Vathek* is considered widely to be the ultimate pseudo-Oriental tale (namely tales written in the style and/or setting of the *Nights*) and in many ways one of the last survivors of this genre before it went out of fashion towards the 1830s.<sup>4</sup> The genre itself as a form of rhetoric was one based on the amplification of the 'Arab' stereotype in tales which were sold as tales from Arabia. This form of entertainment was based on the popularity of the *Nights* and its tales. In the preface to one of the reprints of Galland's *Nights* in Edinburgh, the author of the preface explains why the tales of the *Nights* were appealing in comparison to 'the existing romances with their stock situations and plots'. Muhsin Jassim Ali discusses the preface and the motifs which the author of the preface attributes to the *Nights*' popularity and quotes from it:

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<sup>3</sup> Crawford, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Muhsin Jassim Ali refers to it in his 1981 *Shaherazade in England* (p. 12 & 51), Irwin includes it in his chapter on the 'Children of the Nights' (p. 245) and Joseph Crawford mentions it alongside Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* as a pioneering Gothic tale with 'Arabian' setting (p. 24).

Magicians, Genies, Fairies, Lamps, Rings, and other Talismans, dance in such profusion through those volumes, as could not but make the reader wonder and stare, who was acquainted only with witches mounted on broom-sticks, and with little viewless elves, dancing occasionally by moonlight.<sup>5</sup>

Such were the motifs which eighteenth-century imitators of the Oriental tale used to reproduce the appealing factor. 'With its stories of veiled women and intriguing encounters, Galland's *Nights* established rather than effaced old impressions'.<sup>6</sup> Ali suggests that 'instead of maintaining the early clerical condemnatory attitude towards Islam and the East, early eighteenth-century writers dwelt on the topic "with gusto"'.<sup>7</sup> The new attitude of 'gusto' was manifested in specific tropes about the Near East, challenging conventional morality and in the process exaggerating existing ideas about the indolence and the debauchery of the Near East in the English imagination. I discuss two texts as examples of the pseudo-Oriental genre here: *Vathek* and *The Giaour*. I will highlight here the similarities between *Vathek* and Galland's *Nights*. Through close analysis of both Beckford's tale and Byron's poem I will demonstrate the tropes of the despotic sultan, the evil power-seeking sultan's mother, the lustful princess, the effeminate prince and the helpless indolent Orientals awaiting external assistance.

*Vathek* shares several elements with Galland's English translation of the *Nights*, to which it is claimed to be a continuation. First, it was written in French and translated to English in the first instance without any arrangement with or consent from the author.<sup>8</sup> Second, it claimed to be translated from a genuine 'Arabian

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<sup>5</sup> Ali, pp. 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> Ali, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ali, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> R. Aliakbari, 'Fictions of Phantasmagoria: A Postcolonial reading of William Beckford's *Vathek*', *Journal*



Tale',<sup>9</sup> though it is not, just as Galland's Aladdin chain of stories are not translations but stories written by Galland as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Framing stories as reports or discovered manuscripts was common practice in the eighteenth century, however, as in the case of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Moreover, as I explained in Chapter Two, the *Nights* themselves are not Arabian in their totality but Arabic translations and adaptations of older stories and manuscripts. Third, both spring from French Orientalism. William Beckford had never been to the Orient himself and his knowledge of the 'Orient' is entirely based on reading French Orientalist books, specifically d'Herbelot and Galland's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697) from which he directly borrowed the character of Vathek, after which he named the novel and protagonist.<sup>10</sup> Fourth, like Galland, Beckford's ignorance of Islam and the region (s) he was referring to is apparent in his work. 'Mahomet' is featured in the story as a divine figure who resides in 'the seventh heaven' (V, 130). This is also comparable to Lane's use of 'Mohammedan', which has been discussed in the previous chapter, and the medieval European misconception of Mohammad as parallel to Christ, rather than a human prophet Muslims revere but do not worship.<sup>11</sup>

Writing it at the age of twenty-one, Beckford gave his imagined French-inspired *Arabian Nights* Orient a European Gothic nature and its main character the exaggerated air of a medieval European anti-hero. In his discussion of *The Castle of Otranto* and the birth of the Gothic, Joseph Crawford explains that:

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of *International Social Research*, Vol. 5 Issue 22 (Summer 2012), pp. 16-21, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> W. Beckford, *Vathek: an Arabian Tale* (London: George Slater, 1819), p. v. Further referencing to this story will be put between brackets as V followed by page numbers.

<sup>10</sup> B. d'Herbelot and A. Galland, *Bibliothèque Orientale: ou Dictionnaire Universel Contenant Tout Ce Qui Fait Connoître les Peuples de l'Orient* (Paris: s.n., 1777), pp. 574-77.

<sup>11</sup> Quran (3:144).

What was new in 1764 was thus not the specific material that Walpole employed, which he freely owned, having drawn from older sources, but the association of a particular constellation of fictional tropes – gloomy castles, secret passages, terrified damsels, evil and domineering aristocrats, ghosts, storms, ancestral curses, inherited sins, and mysterious and unnatural happenings – with a name, ‘Gothic’.<sup>12</sup>

Beckford used this ‘constellation’ of Gothic elements combined with a *Thousand and One Nights* setting to present a Faustian-style tale of a Near-Eastern Oriental despot who is urged to rise from his indolence and pursue evil powers by his witch mother. Vathek is a fictional ‘grandson of Haroun Al Raschid’ (V, 7), one of the prominent caliphs in the history of the Islamic empire who is also featured in one of the story chains in the *Nights* (ANE, 726-829). Nevertheless the reader is encouraged to believe that Vathek, like Haroun Al Raschid, is a real historical figure around whom the story was woven. The fact that the story is described in the preface as a translation from an ‘Arabic original’ (V, v) adds to this effect. Although he is very much influenced by Goethe’s *Dr Faustus* in his insatiable pursuit of forbidden ‘knowledge’ (V, 150), Vathek outgrows the stereotype of an Oriental despot to stupendous proportions. Besides his superhuman eye, he has the ability to communicate with demons and excels at succumbing to their requests which include sacrificing ‘fifty’ children and other horrific crimes against the people of the capital (V, 34-41). He is also gluttonous, for he prides himself on being ‘the greatest eater alive’ (V, 25).

The trope of the indolent pleasure-seeking Oriental despot, readily available in

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<sup>12</sup> Crawford, p. 2.

the powerful figure of the Ottoman Sultan, his entourage, janissary and harem, gained even more currency after the publication of the *Nights* in the early 1700s. The character of the sultan, Schahriar, seemed to depict an even more amplified version of the Ottoman Sultan and his power. With the slow transfer from the signifier of the 'Turk' to the signifier of the 'Arab', discussed in Chapter One, the stereotype of the Near Eastern despot was also extended to include the mirage figure of the 'Arab'. Along with absolute power and despotism, the stereotypes also included corruption, nepotism and unjust privileges to the sultan's sycophantic entourage, something which the Levant Company seemed to have witnessed in the Ottoman Sultan's court when they were granted their first audience. Vlami explains that the practice of offering presents to 'Ottoman officials' was 'customary in nature' and was 'expected by individuals holding power, from the sultan to the grand vizier, from the local judge (qadi) to the customs officer of a provincial town'.<sup>13</sup> The stereotype of the despotic sultan and his corrupt circle of officials recurs throughout the pseudo-Oriental subgenre of the gothic and is inherited in mainstream novels of the nineteenth century in references to sultans or harems by authors such as Dickens and Disraeli whom I discuss in later chapters, as well as in Lane's and Lewis's illustrations and paintings. Here, Beckford's *Vathek* is the fulfilment of this embodiment of the stereotype, as much as Hassan is in Byron's *The Giaour*. 'Giaour' is the name of the main character in Byron's tale, who is the antithesis of the *Vathek*-like Hassan, and it means infidel. As expected from an Oriental monarch, *Vathek* is 'much addicted to women' (V, 115) and dedicates a whole palace for keeping his 'Houris' (V, 9). He is also

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<sup>13</sup> Vlami, p. 61.

described as 'indolent' (V, 103) - I will return to the development of this vice as part of the Oriental trope in my discussion of Lewis's Bedouins in his desert paintings in Chapter Four. Vathek leads a hedonistic existence and his activity is limited to either pure pleasure or pure evil in pursuit of 'forbidden power' and 'knowledge' (V, 10 & 150-151). Besides indolence and the harem, another type of corruption which the Company members encountered is the lack of sufficient protection for them from rogue Turks who regarded them as dispensable 'Franck(s)'. An incident from some of the Company's minutes, which was published in the *London Evening Standard* in 1901 upon its discovery in the consulate in Constantinople, highlights this where one Turk attempted to attack a Mr Humphrey and 'declared he thought nothing of adding the life of another Franck to the number of two he had already taken away.'<sup>14</sup> We can see glimpses of this in Vathek's sacrifice of innocent people and children in pursuit of forbidden knowledge.

The concept of forbidden knowledge which is the prime mover of the events of the story is a European Christian theme springing from the account of Adam and Eve's sin in eating from the tree of knowledge in Genesis (which is an Eastern-Mediterranean tale in origin),<sup>15</sup> and features in the myth of Faust. Ironically, however, in the Islamic account the tree is one of immortality and is not associated with knowledge, whether forbidden or allowed.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Beckford's ignorance of the Near-Eastern Orient he wrote on has been revealed by his motif of forbidden knowledge. This is something we encountered in Galland's erroneous knowledge of

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<sup>14</sup> Levant Company minutes in *London Evening Standard*, Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1901.

<sup>15</sup> Bible (2:17).

<sup>16</sup> Quran (20:120).

the geography of the Levant and will encounter again when discussing Ruskin's work in Chapter Six.

Even the female characters in Beckford's *Orient* fit within their allocated stereotypes. According to Diane Robinson-Dunn, traditional English views about gender roles were translated into an imperial disapproval of the harem and the power and the influence it may in some cases provide some women. Robinson-Dunn offers the example of a writer who 'referred to the female slaves of the imperial harem as the elite of the Ottoman Empire, which was ruled by, using an oft-quoted phrase, a "monstrous regiment of women"'.<sup>17</sup> This was seen as one of the reasons that assumed corruption was rife in the Ottoman Empire as well as a sign for the effeminate nature of the Ottoman officials, who were regarded as puppets controlled by their women. Within this framework, 'the mother of the sultan was often portrayed as an especially dangerous figure who had illegitimate influence.'<sup>18</sup> Thus Carathis, Vathek's 'Greek' but Mohammedan mother is even more evil than himself, and 'as wicked, as a woman could be' (V, 55). With her witchcraft she devises 'tablets' for her son, 'fraught with preternatural qualities, and advised him to consult them, as emergencies might require' (V, 96). When Vathek gets distracted from his demonic pursuit by falling in love with Nouronihar, Carathis reprimands him 'Put an end to your gluttony, and hear the splendid promises with which you are favoured' (V, 49). Furthermore, she facilitates his crimes for him and passes onto him her knowledge from years of being a witch. Her council to her indolent son is clearly linked with his crimes and the spread of corruption in the

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson-Dunn, p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson-Dunn, p. 128.

kingdom just like the stereotype about any Ottoman Sultan and his mother's council. When Vathek discovers the fate awaiting him after a lifetime of succumbing to his mother's influence over him, he curses her and the day he was born: "Execrable Woman!" answered the Caliph, "Cursed be the day thou gavest insatiable lust for forbidden knowledge. He refers to her before commanding her to the fire as 'Princess whose knowledge, and whose crimes, have merited a conspicuous rank in my empire' (V, 224).

Being Greek, in other words European, and at the same time Muslim as well as a witch, contributes to the shape-shifting aspect of the signifiers associated with Islam, that is 'Turk' and 'Arab'. Like accepted European assumptions about the Barbarossa Brothers, Carathis is an evil Greek Muslim who revels in acts of bloodshed and savagery, a stereotype, which may have even helped turn the tide against Mehmet Ali, the Greek ruler of Egypt, in 1841 when he was on the verge of annexing Istanbul, as will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition, her witchcraft associates her with European conventions of forbidden knowledge, as much as it ties her and Islam to standard assumptions about the religion's satanic and idolatrous nature. Furthermore, with Greece being part of the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century this led to an ambivalence in the way Greeks were perceived - particularly at a time that preceded the Greek War of Independence and Byron's involvement in it. On the one hand, there was the Islamic evil image we see in Carathis, on the other there was the image of the enlightened Greek of antiquity who required liberation from the Ottomans as we see in Byron. This ambivalence between the Islamic Greek and the ancient Greek culture is akin to the ambivalence we see between modern Egypt and its association with Islam on the one hand and ancient Egyptian culture on the other. I will return to this point

in Chapter Five.

The second most important female character in the story, Nouronihar, though not a witch, is immorally materialistic. Being betrothed to Gulchenrouz does not prevent her from getting infatuated by Vathek's powers and possessions, and ultimately eloping with him from her betrothed to seek the palace of Eblis - the Islamic name for Lucifer - (V, 106), where they both are doomed to eternal damnation (V, 150). She is easily swayed by Vathek's powers; she yields 'to his will with the most bewitching submission' (V, 106). Nouronihar's name is directly borrowed from 'The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari Banou' in the *Nights*, which is part of 'Harun al-Rashid' chain of stories; according to Irwin, these tales have been added 'in Iraq in the ninth or tenth century'.<sup>19</sup> Nouronihar as Galland points out in a footnote is 'the Arabian word that signifies day-light' (ANE, 820). In the *Nights*, Nouronihar is a princess who is as beautiful as daylight, but falls ill and three princes compete to save her and win the reward of marrying her. Her character is reproduced here as that of a fortune seeker who, instead of being impressed with the delightful wonders the three princes bring from faraway lands (ANE, 831-32), is rather filled with 'fondness' at the sight of Vathek's terrible and violent powers (V, 120). Thus her beauty is sensualised and demonised here by the added lustful infatuation with Vathek's demonic powers.

Apart from Vathek, the evil despot, every other male in the story is either weak and ineffectual against the Caliph or effeminate as in the case of his rival, Gulchenrouz, Nouronihar's lover. Gulchenrouz is depicted from the beginning in a highly effeminate light. We are told that well into his teens he was kept with the

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<sup>19</sup> Irwin, p. 48.

girls: 'though he had passed his thirteenth year, they still detained him in the harem' (V, 123). Gulchenrouz is also compared to the girls of the harem in terms of his strength and his build: 'but his arms which twined so gracefully with those of the young girls in the dance, could neither dart the lance in the chace, nor curb the steeds that pastured in his uncle's domains' (V, 124). When Vathek asks Emir Fakreddin – we encounter another Fakreddin in Disraeli's *Tancred* in Chapter Seven - to break his word to Gulchenrouz and give him Nouronihar in marriage and the prince attempts to apologise, Vathek responds: 'Would you surrender this divine beauty to a husband more womanish than herself?' (V, 140). Gulchenrouz is then left helplessly 'with the dwarfs' after being tricked by one of Vathek's schemes (V, 106).<sup>20</sup> Similarly the simple-minded vizier retires to 'lament at his leisure' the loss of his two sons who were sacrificed amongst the fifty children (V, 41). In addition, he cannot convince Vathek to leave his daughter alone and when he tries to trick him, his trick is unsuccessful (V, 107). Thus neither Fakreddin is able to stand up against Vathek's advances towards his daughter, nor Gulchenrouz is able to display any signs of masculinity against Vathek's claims.

In addition, the crowds who lose fifty of their children to Vathek as a sacrifice are only capable of actions of 'lamentations' and 'exclamations' (V, 40). In spite of their evident anger they cannot act together to 'punish him' and 'avenge the innocent' (V, 40). They, moreover, quickly forget his crime against them when they are fooled into thinking that he is in danger; 'their love to their sovereign

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<sup>20</sup> Eastern femininity and homosexuality is a theme that recurs in tropes deployed in nineteenth-century fiction. Burton takes this further in his lengthy annotations of his translations. Victorian morality disapproved of anything that digressed from the Victorian ideal for masculinity and homely traits. In this light tropes of male femininity and homosexuality were projected onto the Near Eastern other as an example for what not to become.



immediately awoke', they 'hurried half naked to the square' and 'their whole thoughts were occupied with the means of his safety' (V, 46). They are then fed to the fire of the Giaour like helpless lambs as a sacrifice. Throughout the story there is no mention of any reaction from the people of Baghdad to Vathek's continuous sequence of terrible crimes against them and their children. They have no voice or representative and they wait passively until the good Genii saves their children and liberates them from Vathek by banishing him into the palace of Eblis (V, 131). As Al-Alwan points out, the good Genie stands for 'the "good" European saviours and liberators, who, with their super power and superior culture, take it upon themselves to liberate the people and keep them safe in a state of 'blissful ignorance and tranquillity',<sup>21</sup> just as Gulchenrouz is kept at the end of the story. We see this good Genie trope in Byron's fight against the Ottomans and the character of Tancred in Disraeli later on, and we see Gladstone embodying it when he makes the decision to 'reluctantly' invade Egypt in 1882. The idea of the victimised peoples who are struggling under the rule of a tyrant will be invoked in 1882 and would influence the decision to invade Egypt as I will discuss in Chapter Seven.

In his discussion of the presence of the *Thousand and One Nights* in English literature, Peter Caracciolo draws on Henry Weber's *Tales of the East* and explains: 'Beckford used the *Nights* [...] to create a fantasy that at times is more potent, bizarre and cruelly sensual than anything which has yet appeared among the English imitations of the Eastern tale.'<sup>22</sup> *Vathek* is sensually 'potent' and extreme in its depiction of a fictional and fantastical orient. It is a fictional story based on

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<sup>21</sup> M. Al-Alwan, 'The Orient 'Made Oriental': A Study of William Beckford's *Vathek*', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30 Issue 4 (Fall 2008), pp. 43-52, p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Caracciolo, 'Introduction', in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, p. 4.

other fictional stories and accounts of the Orient. It seems that at this point of time introducing a story set in an unfamiliar place was not enough to guarantee success, even though the story includes all the stereotypes designed to make a European readership feel safe and secure in sensing their superiority over a vast and unfamiliar, previously powerful, other. Such stereotypes include the despotic sultan, the sexually available princess, the devilish Sultana and the ineffectual indolent Orientals. It is this imaginary Orient which Lane confirms later in *Modern Egyptians* first (when he tells the reader extraordinary accounts, including his Egyptian friend who has an insatiable appetite for eating glass, at one point eating a whole chandelier) and second in his excessive annotations of the *Nights*.<sup>23</sup> This is also the same Near Eastern Orient Byron built his fame upon and like a good Genie, extinguished his life fighting Vathek-like Turks to save Oriental Greeks.

## II. Byron: The Giaour

In a letter to a friend in 1813 (the year of the publication of the first edition of *The Giaour*), Byron advised, 'stick to the East, the public is orientalising'.<sup>24</sup> This was the heyday of the Oriental tale, being nearly a hundred years of an ongoing successful reception of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, and Byron's poem with its flavour of his travels in Greece in 1809 was met with great success. Greece at the time was perceived as part of the Orient due to long-term Ottoman occupation.

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<sup>23</sup> R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: Pandora Press. 1986), p.40.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in *Norton Anthology of English Literature* Online, <  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20050223100023/http://www.wwnorton.com/nael/romantic/topic\\_4/byron.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20050223100023/http://www.wwnorton.com/nael/romantic/topic_4/byron.htm)

> [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018].

This was also a time when the Levant Company had proved to be successful not just within its own activities, but in the commercial and diplomatic activities of its child company, the East India Company, which was surpassing it in profits.<sup>25</sup> The surplus of the products of the East from both companies were flooding the London market before the main cargo was reshipped to their new destinations across the Mediterranean and the Levant. The appetite for the flavours of the East were not just sought in the carpets, the silks, the cinnamon and the nutmeg but also in the wonderful tales of the *Nights* and their imitations which brought all these things to life. Byron who was the best seller of the pseudo-Oriental tale in his day wrote in 'Beppo' (1818) also subtitled 'A Venetian Story':

Oh! that I had the art of easy writing

What should be easy reading! . . .

How quickly would I print (the world delighting)

A Grecian, Syrian, or Assyrian tale;

And sell you, mixed with western Sentimentalism,

Some samples of the finest Orientalism.<sup>26</sup>

This simple definition of the pseudo-Oriental tale gives us an insight into their appeal and of the recurrent tropes that circulated within it, something we see in his most successful tale of the genre, *The Giaour* (1813).

Like *Vathek* in its claim to be Arabian and the Galland-written stories in *the Nights*, *The Giaour* claims to be an authentic 'fragment of a Turkish Tale' in its

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<sup>25</sup> Wood, p. 17

<sup>26</sup> Lord Byron, *Beppo: A Venetian Story* (London, John Murray, 1818), p. 25, stanza XLVIII.

subtitle. Here what's 'Turkish' embodies and signifies also what is Saracen, Barbarian, Moor or Arab as discussed in Chapter One. Like the *Nights* also, the plot of *The Giaour* is initiated through the betrayal of the Sultan's lover, albeit in this case it is his female slave rather than the Sultana. We encounter this in the bard's framework narrative before Scheherazade's stories begin (ANE 2). In addition, the Fisherman, who narrates much of the story here, is reminiscent of the fisherman in 'The Story of the Fisherman' which Shaherazade tells on the eighth night in the *Nights*. However, the fisherman in the *Nights* comes across a genie rather than a Giaour and he has to listen to the story of the genie who explains that like the Giaour he had committed a crime against a mighty king, in this case Solomon rather than Hassan (AN 34). The genie bears even further resemblance to the Giaour here; he is a spirit rather than human and in this sense a stranger and a slave in the world of Solomon.

In *Vathek* the sequence of the main events are sparked by the arrival of a stranger, a guest, also referred to as the Giaour. He turns out to be a genie and an emissary of Iblis or Lucifer. The Giaour seems to possess more powers than Vathek himself, making him feel insecure about his wives. He commands his subordinates to keep an open eye on the harem to protect his wives from any advances the Giaour might make: "'Go", redouble your vigilance, and be sure look well to my circassians, who would be more to his taste than all the rest' (V, 30). Vathek's fear of his guest's 'voraciousness' and anxiety for his wives, particularly the 'circassians' of the harem, seem to be fulfilled in Byron's tale where the Giaour, in this case Venetian not Indian as in the genie's case, falls in love with Hassan's favourite courtesan from the harem, Leila 'Circassia's daughter' (G, 505). As in *Vathek*, the slave was supposed to be under guard, perhaps Hassan had sensed something, but

the 'Nubian' slaves who were given that task, 'did not watch their charge too well' (G, 465-66). Like Beckford's Giaour, Byron's Giaour also possesses great abilities, albeit not on a preternatural scale. He is able to catch up with Hassan's entourage, combat and kill all of Hassan's twenty bodyguards and finally fight and kill Hassan himself to avenge Leila's death. We see glimpses of the *Song of Roland* here when Hassan's death is explained as much by the Giaour's prowess as it is by the lack of response from the Muslim God:

He called the Prophet, but his power

Was vain against the vengeful Giaour:

He call'd on Alla – but the word

Arose unheeded or unheard. (G, 679-82)

The Giaour's triumph over Hassan and his guard seems to have some vampiric quality; this is not surprising given the fact that Polidori's *The Vampyre* was borne out of a Byronic evening a few years later.<sup>27</sup> Hassan is seen here covered with wounds, dripping with blood and dying while his severed hand is still quivering:

With Sabre shiver'd to the hilt,

Yet dripping with the blood he spilt;

Yet strain'd within that sever'd hand

Which quivers round that faithless brand (G, 655-58)

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, 'Introduction' in John Polidori, *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. vii-xxvi, p. x.

In this graphic scene we discover that the Giaour 'bends' over Hassan as Hassan 'bled below' (G, 673-74). When Hassan's people receive the news, they call the Giaour a 'vampire' (G, 755), and curse him to 'wander' around 'Eblis' throne' in hell. In this sense, he is seen by them as an emissary of Lucifer sent to earth for the destruction of their Lord, just as Beckford's Giaour is in *Vathek*.

Like Beckford's Giaour also, the Giaour here is defined as a 'stranger' from his description as well as his name, which means infidel in Turkish. The narrator poet tells us in the words of the friar of the monastery where the Giaour sought refuge and to whom he confessed his 'crime':

'Yet seems he not of Othman race,  
But only Christian in his face:  
I'd judge him some stray renegade,  
Repentant of the charge he made,  
Save that he shuns our holy shrine,  
Nor tastes the sacred bread and wine.'<sup>28</sup>

The Giaour, moreover, has a 'pallid brow'; in other words he is white European and his Venetianness is emphasised this way, as opposed to 'Black Hassan', whose blackness seems to overlap with his Turkishness. It is not clear here whether Byron is describing Hassan as black in terms of pure colour or in terms of good and evil. In his depiction of the battle scene between Hassan and the Giaour, the French

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<sup>28</sup> Lord Byron, 'The Giaour' in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 810-815. Further references will be added within the text with the initial G and the line numbers between brackets.

artist Eugene Delacroix depicted Hassan as black in the painting (1826) for reasons that are as unclear. Either way this seems to follow the older tradition of depicting Saracens as black in medieval art. The Giaour, nevertheless, is a stranger in a foreign land, under a foreign ruler, just like the genie in 'The story of the Fisherman' in the *Nights*. Similarly Leila, 'daughter of Circasia' is also an enslaved European under the command of Hassan's despotic rule. There seems to be a justification here for their 'crime' due to their affinity, and their European kindred. The murdered body of Leila is also in many ways representative of the lost Athenian Empire and the glory of ancient Greece, something which Byron was very attached to. In the Introduction to Byron's *Major Works* in 'Oxford World's Classics' series, the editor explains that Byron identified with the Greek cause from the beginning of the Greek Rebellion in 1813, the year of the publication of the first edition of *The Giaour*. The question of joining the Greek Rebellion was not a matter of if for Byron but a matter of when, resolved in 1823: 'The idea remained in his mind through the early years of the Greek war of Independence, but he did not finally determine to go until 1823, when he was asked to become a member of the London Greek Committee' which was set up by the Greek community to discuss methods for aiding the Greek cause.<sup>29</sup>

The story thus is one of rebellion of the oppressed Christian Europeans against Ottoman slavery and tyranny, a rebellion akin to that of the genie and the other spirits against Solomon. There is a natural reason for why the Giaour and Leila fall in love with each other, but their positions within the Ottoman setting and

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<sup>29</sup> Jerome J. McGann, 'Introduction' in Lord Byron, 'The Giaour' in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xxii.

Hassan's rule are only due to their slavery and Hassan's unnatural tyranny, no matter how great a ruler Hassan is. We are given glimpses of this in Byron's introductory note to the poem, labelled 'Advertisement':

The story, when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave who was thrown, in the Mussulman manner, into the sea for infidelity, and avenged by a young Venetian, her lover, at the time the Seven Islands [Corfu] were possessed by the Republic of Venice, and soon after the Arnauts [Albanians] were beaten back from the Morea [Peloponnese peninsula], which they had ravaged for some time subsequent to the Russian invasion. The desertion of the Mainotes [the inhabitants of Maina, a district of Peloponnesus], on being refused the plunder of Misitra [Mystras], led to the abandonment of that enterprise, and to the desolation of the Morea; during which the cruelty exercised on all sides was unparalleled even in the annals of the faithful.<sup>30</sup>

Here we are presented with the upheaval of conquest in the Greek islands as a backdrop to the story. The seven islands were under the command of the 'Republic of Venice', the Giaour's country, but the Russians tried to annex them and the Ottomans successfully conquered them with the help of 'Tartar' troops (G, 549), which are likely to have been part of the Ottoman janissary who were often recruited from boyhood as discussed in the first chapter. Leilathen is not just a female protagonist around whom the story was written but an allegory of the Greek glories of antiquity and its affinity with an as glorious Italian past, personified in the character of the 'Venetian' Giaour. Hassan too is not just a murderous

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<sup>30</sup> Lord Byron, 'The Giaour' in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 205.



jealous lover, but a representation of the Ottoman Empire's enslavement of European territories and the destruction of their glorious civilisations. The Giaour's murder of Hassan is not just the victory of one lover over another, but a victory of the Western European over the Ottoman (the Eastern European), of love over slavery, of democracy ('the Republic of Venice') over Oriental despotism, and of Christianity over Islam. In the end, the Giaour seeks refuge in a monastery where he is recognised as a renegade of their own.

Even though Byron refers to the poem as a story in his introductory note, the story is presented in the form of a poem. This further adds to the interpretation of the story, for poetry was the chosen form of ancient peoples, including the Greeks, for presenting stories. Epic stories such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were recorded and retold in verse. In addition, there are three narrators in the poem: the Giaour, the fisherman and the monk. Their narration overlaps, which echoes the overlapping narrations in the *Nights*, and it is not clear where one finishes and another begins. Besides the Christian symbolism of the three narrators, their persona is also Christian whether it is the monk or the fisherman, or the Giaour who is judged by the monk as a 'repentant' 'renegade'. In addition, the Giaour asks to die a 'humblest' death with nothing 'save the cross', above his head (G, 1324-25). Furthermore, the blurred lines of the narration give a sense of the complexity of cultures the islands possess. To add to this complexity, when he posed for Thomas Phillips for a portrait (1813) in 'Oriental' dress as was the custom among elite society, Byron chose the dress of an Albanian and his portrait features on the cover of his *Major Works*. The figure of the Albanian intensifies this complexity, for the Balkans stand at the intersection between the Russians, the Tartars, the Greeks, the Turks and the Venetians, even though they are often regarded as

Greek, which perhaps explains Byron's choice. This also reminds us of the Barbarossa Brothers, Greek Balkans who sought independence by establishing their own pirate state on the coast of Barbary as discussed in Chapter One. In a conversation with Lord Byron published in the *Coventry Herald* in the year of his death, Byron explains that *The Giaour* was based on his infatuation with a Turkish girl with whom he had an affair, and like Leila she was 'sown in a sack' and was about to 'be thrown into the sea'. His bodyguards were 'faithful Albanians' and he relied on them to intercept the troops charged with the task of murdering the girl. He rescued the girl, but 'she died', a few days later.<sup>31</sup> This not only explains the background of the poem but his choice of dress in the portrait as one of his 'faithful' Albanian guards. We moreover, see within this the relevance of Mehmet Ali, the Albanian Greek ruler of Egypt who, during Byron's travels, was in the process of building both a navy and an army to later attempt to annex Istanbul. Byron was aware of Ali and of his activities and mentioned him in his account when describing the force he had to encounter, he described it as a 'force similar to Ali's'.<sup>32</sup> This is due to Ali's involvement in the Greek War of Independence and his despatches of several forces to suppress the rebellion in 1821 on behalf of the Ottoman sultan who promised him further territories as a reward. We will never know whether Byron would have identified with Ali's cause for sovereignty and empire in the 1830s. I will return to Ali in the next chapter.

The Saracen, the Turk or even Arabian, is the main villain or antihero in Beckford's *Vathek* and in Byron's *Giaour*—it is the same trope of a lustful, gluttonous tyrant with insatiable greed for worldly pleasure and an endless appetite for

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<sup>31</sup> 'Lord Byron's *Giaour*' in the *Coventry Herald*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1824.

<sup>32</sup> 'Lord Byron's *Giaour*' in the *Coventry Herald*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1824.

villainy. The tropes of the pseudo-Oriental Gothic genre which eventually came to an end by the late 1820s, continued to live on in mainstream literature of the nineteenth century. Glimpses of it appear in Dickens and snippets of it are resurrected in Disraeli.<sup>33</sup> Between 1880 and 1882, political correspondence, news lines and election speeches were also invoking the same stereotype as I will discuss in later chapters.

## Conclusion

The pseudo-Oriental genre has been to a large extent tangled with the political affairs of the Levant/Near East, whether in the figure of Byron himself and his involvement in the Greek Revolution against the Ottomans or indirectly through the dealing of the Levant Company. The Turkish influence seems to have had an impact however on decisions taken during the Eastern Question/crisis as I will discuss in the next chapter, and this impact – amongst other factors - has had a direct effect on Egypt,<sup>34</sup> which posed a major threat to Turkey's future during the crisis. The pseudo-Oriental tropes on the other hand found a new life in mainstream literature and gained a new currency and a focus on Egypt after Lane's factual study of modern Egyptians as Arabs and John Frederick Lewis's successful paintings and their representations of indolence in Egypt as we will see in later chapters.

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Thousand and One Humbugs', *Household Words*, Vol. XI, Magazine No. 265 (21 April 1855), pp. 265-67. And Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred* (London: Longmans, Greens and Co., 1880), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> The Egyptian – after the publication of Lane's *Modern Egyptians* (1836) and his translation of the *Nights*, was perceived as 'Arabian', Asiatic or African by Palmerston, as opposed to the Turk who in spite of his tyranny was still European and consequently more superior. I discuss this point more elaborately in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE EGYPTIAN/EASTERN QUESTION AND BRITISH NEAR-EASTERN ORIENTALISM (LANE, LEWIS AND DADD)

In the introduction to the thesis I quoted Said's assertion in his *Orientalism*: 'The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth.'<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I will be exploring how Prime Minister Palmerston handled the Egyptian Question of the 1830s and the clear line that was drawn between the Turk as a European and the modern Egyptian as an alien, as well as how the previously discussed stereotypes may have influenced the government's decision to intervene in the conflict. I will also explore how these stereotypes about the Near-Eastern Orient, as drawn principally from the *Nights* and developed in the pseudo-Oriental tale were directed towards the Egyptian under the signifier of 'Arab' through the works of Edward William Lane and John Frederick Lewis. This will be a foundational background against which I will demonstrate in later chapters how these very stereotypes had been manipulated by, and caused the misunderstanding of, decision makers leading to the British invasion of Egypt in 1882 which marks the change of imperial policy and the beginning of British expansion in Africa and the Near East.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 96.

## I. The Egyptian Question/Crisis

In 1832 *The Spectator* published breaking news that the 'army of the [Ottoman] Sultan has suffered a severe defeat' at the hands of Ali Pasha's forces, the ruler of Egypt: 'The particulars are given by the latter, in a document entitled the Fifth Bulletin of the Army of Syria. The Sultan's troops consisted of 10,471 men, regulars; of whom Ibrahim [Ali's adopted son and commander of his troops] killed 2,000, and took 2,500 prisoners.'<sup>2</sup> Nearly half the Ottoman army was either killed or captured and the Egyptian army was on the march to take over the rest of Syria. By the end of the decade, we read in another report that the conflict had ended and that the Sultan had offered Ali Syria besides his rule over Egypt and Arabia:

It is not very probable that the Allies will interfere to prevent these acts of the Sultan; which will be as much the acts of his free-will as anything rendered unavoidable by the necessities of his position can well be. MEHEMET ALI, thus holding Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, by the voluntary grant of the Sultan and with the consent of the Allies, will be stronger than he was before. The critical state of affairs in these countries favours such a consummation; and the Pasha, being a man who can learn from experience, will act with prudence, bide his time, and seize it when it comes.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the acts were seen as the Sultan's free will, they were not looked upon favourably by the 'Allies' (Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and France) as it would give Ali too much power against a crumbling Ottoman Empire, which he would overtake at a latter opportunity. The author of the report seems to have been mistaken

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<sup>2</sup> *The Spectator*, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1832, P. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *The Spectator*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1841, P. 14.

about one thing, that the 'Allies' would not intervene. Vatikiotis argues on the other hand, that the Sultan's sovereignty was being 'undermined' by Ali's 'material and military superiority'.<sup>4</sup> This appears to be true. One of the Sultan's Generals convinced him that he could defeat Ali's army and the Sultan did not waste time to attempt to gain back the upper hand; this did not materialise on the battlefield and the new confrontation led to another resounding defeat of the Ottoman forces. Due to the renewed aggression after reaching an agreement, Ali's forces under the command of his son Ibrahim garrisoned outside Istanbul waiting for Ali's command to invade the city and demand the Sultan's seat. Palmerston seemed to have been behind renewed Turkish hostilities, however, in spite of assuming a neutral position since the beginning of the crisis in the early thirties. By 1839, it was becoming more apparent that he had started to take sides: 'It is alleged that Lord Palmerston stimulated the late Sultan to hostilities with Egypt, and that MEHEMET ALI is enraged at this double-dealing on the part of England' wrote the *Spectator's* reporter(s).<sup>5</sup> Why then did Palmerston take sides toward the end of the conflict? We may find an answer to this question in Edward William Lane's publications.

In 1836, Lane's first edition of *Modern Egyptians* achieved an astounding success, partly because of the Egyptian question in the media, and partly because it crystallised so many hazy stereotypes that lingered in the air, including the hopelessness of educating the Egyptians in advanced European sciences, and categorising them as Arabs or a people of the desert not of civilisation.<sup>6</sup> In 1838, the first volume of his translation of the *Nights* appeared, and the rest of the

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<sup>4</sup> Vatikiotis, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spectator*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1839, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Lane, Edward William, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, East-West Publications), p. 223.

translation followed in consecutive volumes between then and 1840. In his annotations of the *Nights*, he claimed in a pseudo-scientific tone that it is a true reflection of 'Arabian' life which has remained unchanged for centuries, confirming the Vathek stereotype, by asserting the despotic Schahriar as a life-like sultan, rather than a fairy-tale character. Palmerston started reacting to the crisis in 1838 and took until 1841 (a year after the last of Lane's *Nights* was published) to drive the pasha's forces out of Syria and to 'confine him for the remainder of his life [...] to what he called "his shell of Egypt"'.<sup>7</sup> In part this had to do with an opinion he expressed in 1832 that 'the Turk was a better reformer than the Egyptian,'<sup>8</sup> since the Turk was 'European' whereas the Egyptian was not.<sup>9</sup> In the process of intervening in the conflict, he made sure to persuade 'his Englishmen' of 'the truth of Palmerston's own private judgement that "Mehmet Ali has divided the population of Egypt into two classes, the Rich and the Poor. The rich class consists of Mehmet Ali himself single and alone, the poor class all the other inhabitants of Egypt,"'<sup>10</sup> a view remarkably in line with Edward William Lane's Schahriar and William Beckford's Vathek. We will see in Chapter Seven how this view and this specific stereotype will be invoked to justify the invasion of Egypt in 1882. It is worth mentioning here that Disraeli, who was a young MP at the time, may have been inspired by this Vathek-influenced rhetoric when writing *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (1845) which discusses the division in society between the rich and the poor and how it is the aristocrat's mission to lead society back to a harmonious state between

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<sup>7</sup> H. S. Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 232.

<sup>8</sup> M., Vereté, 'Palmerston and the Levant Crisis, 1832', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 24 No. 2 (Jun., 1952), pp. 143-151., p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> Vereté, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 234.

classes. *Sybil* is the first novel in Disraeli's political trilogy, of which *Tancred* is the most relevant to the subject of my thesis. I will return to Disraeli's political novels in Chapter Seven. For the time being, we get a sense in the 1830s of both a transference of the signified in 'Turk' to the signifier of 'Arab', as well as a clear line between who is Turk on one hand and who is Arab on the other particularly in Palmerston's view which I discussed above. It is worth noting here that in spite of the clear marker of difference during the Eastern Question of the 1830s between 'Turk' and 'Arab', the line would still be blurred at times in the future whether for political or rhetorical reasons, and British writers would still commonly argue that Turks were worse than Arabs and vice versa. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, the 'Arab' due to his perceived inferiority would not always be a vehicle of comparison as opposed to the Turk, who is Eastern but still European. Just to give an example on this here, the suffragettes found a comparison with Turkey a good vehicle for projecting their frustration at the lack of equality in England. The 'British Turk' (1878), a poem published in *The Women's Suffrage Journal* offers a good model for this type of comparison.

With this clear transference or handing over from one signifier to another after a hazy period of over a century and a half, came also the projection of the stereotypes previously discussed, such as Oriental indolence, despotism, debauchery and corruption. Indolence becomes particularly predominant with the signifier 'Arab' due to the association with nomadism, the desert and hot climates. I will discuss these particular associations of the 'Arab' stereotype in the paintings of John Frederick Lewis alongside Lane's writings and illustrations since both were seen as an authorities on Egypt.



Before moving on to Lewis's paintings, however, I will look briefly at Lane's sponsor and publisher, the SDUK or the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and its connection with the political establishment in order to assess whether the SDUK has had an impact on the change of foreign policy in regards to Egypt. The SDUK was founded in 1826 with the intention implied in its title. As a society it was in correspondence with several other societies across the UK, including the Royal Geographical Society of London, Royal Agricultural Society of England, Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, as well as prominent literary figures such as Charles Dickens.<sup>11</sup> The SDUK's understanding of what useful knowledge is seems to be reflected in the nature of its most successful publications. Charles Knight explains in his autobiography that during the period during which he was entrusted as Publisher for the Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 'The Pictorial Bible was the most successful of the more permanent class of such publications; the *Thousand and One Nights* was the most beautiful'.<sup>12</sup> The two works seemed to complement each other. Whereas the Pictorial Bible was about spreading knowledge of the lands and ancient civilisations mentioned in the Bible with footnotes and careful woodcut illustrations, Lane's heavily annotated translations of the *Thousand and One Nights* followed on from his work on *Modern Egyptians*, and continued to cast an image of the 'modern' Near East as held in a frozen time capsule. Both Arabia and Egypt are illustrated and mentioned

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<sup>11</sup> Based on the SDUK correspondence kept in the University of London's Special Collections at the National Archives: Letter from Royal Agricultural Society 13/1/1843, letter from Royal Geographical Society 26/1/1830, letter from Royal Zoological Society 1840, letter from Charles Dickens in regards to American piracy of publication copyrights 7/7/1842. SDUK special collections letters were previously archived under SDUK/22-42, now archived by the correspondent's name.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century*, Vol. I (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864), p. viii.

Copy.  
 Publication Committee; 14<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>r</sup>. 1833.  
 W. Malden in the Chair  
 W. Gompertz      W. Long  
 M. Fox              M. Knight.  
 W. Long reported that he & M. Fox had con-  
 -ferred with M. Lane.  
 He likewise reported that he had perused  
 the M. S. laid on the table at the last meet-  
 -ing of the Committee & thought it well executed,  
 & that M. Lane was competent to write the  
 two volumes proposed.  
 Resolved that M. Lane be engaged to  
 write for the Library of Entertaining Knowledge  
 two volumes illustrative of the Manners &  
 costumes of the Modern Egyptians.  
 That

Figure 4: Offer Letter from the SDUK, kept in the University of London's Special Collections at the National Archives

repeatedly in the notes of the Pictorial Bible due to their associations with the Biblical stories. It is mainly ancient Egypt, however, that is referred to in the Pictorial Bible. Exodus and Moses' struggle with the Pharaoh particularly associates such Biblical stories with ancient Egypt. The Society was keen for Lane to publish *Modern Egyptians* and *The Thousand and One Nights*, and sponsored him generously to make several lengthy stays in Egypt to complete these projects. In the case of *Modern Egyptians*, Lane resided in Egypt for two years to complete the work, as we see from his letter addressed to the SDUK's publishing committee and stating his arrival in England on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1835 with a complete manuscript two years after the committee's offer letter.

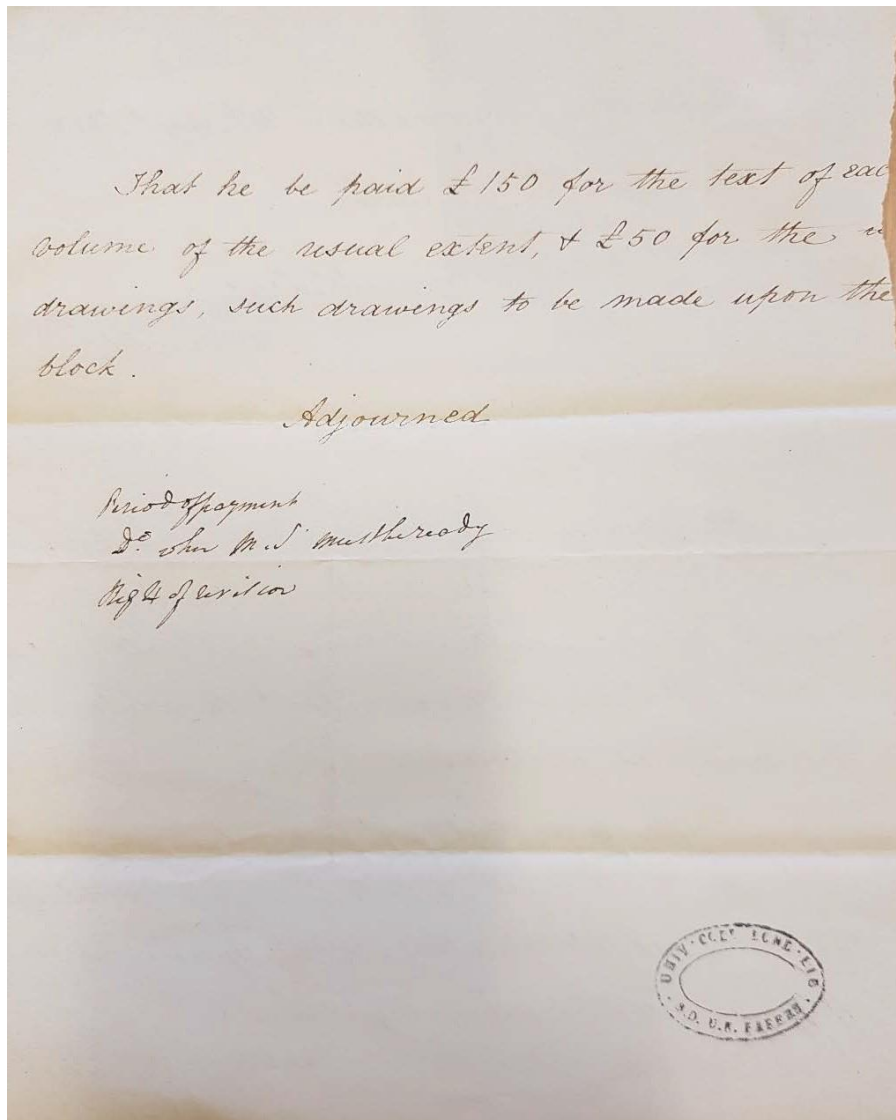


Figure 5: Back Page of Offer Letter from the SDUK, kept in the University of London's Special Collections at the National Archives

20 Nov 1835 - Mr. E. W. Lane  
 arriving. arrive, & date  
 of "The Egyptian"  
 W. L.

7. Notting Hill Square  
 Monday - 2nd Nov. 1835.

My dear Sir - I have neglected, for  
 two days, to inform you of my arrival  
 here, in the hope of being able to call  
 upon you. A severe cold has prevented  
 my having this pleasure, & I fear,  
 will confine me to the house some  
 days longer.

In a week I hope to submit, to  
 the Society, the whole of my work  
 excepting an Appendix, on the Copts &c,  
 & some specimens of Egyptian songs &  
 chants, which are written, but not  
 fairly copied. I retain the M. S. for a

Figure 6: Letter from Lane, kept in the University of London's Special Collections at the National Archives

few days for the purpose of adding  
 some notes which I wrote during the  
 last month of my stay in Cairo.

With many thanks for the trouble  
 which you have taken on my behalf,  
 I remain, my dear Sir,  
 Y<sup>r</sup> very faithfully  
 Edw W Lane -

You may as well  
 keep this note  
 of Mr Lane.

Figure 7: Letter from Lane, kept in the University of London's Special Collections at the National Archives

*Modern Egyptians* and *The Thousand and One Nights* are in a sense then the New Testament to the Pictorial Bible and its focus on ancient Egypt. The surviving correspondence and meeting notes between the SDUK's publishing committee and Lane demonstrate that the Society assessed a written sample for *Modern Egyptians* based on which they made him an offer 'for £150 & £50 for the drawings'. This was in August 1833, only a year after the crisis between Egypt and Turkey broke out. In November 1835, Lane sent a letter explaining that he had arrived in England (after nearly a two-year stay in Egypt) and 'that he was ready to hand in the complete manuscript of ME'.<sup>13</sup> Three years later the first volume of his translations of the *Nights* was published also under the sponsorship of the SDUK. But why was the SDUK interested in Lane's Modern/Arab Egypt and his view or interpretation of it as medieval? The answer to this question lies in one key member of the society, Lord John Russell. Lord John Russell was Prime Minister twice, first between 1846 and 1852, then again for a brief year from 1865 to 1866, just before Disraeli took over. During the crisis however, Russell was Palmerston's foreign secretary. He is reported to be the one who first coined the phrase which would later become associated with the crisis. In a letter to the Duke of Wellington, he wrote: 'the great object is to keep the peace of the world'.<sup>14</sup> For achieving the so-called 'peace of the world', 'four of the great European powers, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia' conducted 'the negotiations which ultimately culminated in the famous treaty of July 15, 1840'.<sup>15</sup> France was inclined towards Ali's plans at this stage and

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<sup>13</sup> Correspondence between Edward William Lane and the SDUK in the SDUK archives of the Special Collections at the National Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Spencer Walpole, *The Life of Lord John Russell* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), p. 347.

<sup>15</sup> Walpole, p. 346.

consequently 'was left out of the arrangement'.<sup>16</sup> This diplomatic situation nearly escalated to a war between England and France, with both countries strengthening their fleets and doubling their coastal garrisons. Through Lord Russell's diplomatic efforts a crisis with France was averted and France was swayed to join the league of European powers against Egypt. Consequently, and in a dejavu situation to the war against Napoleon, the five European powers formed an alliance which ultimately destroyed the Egyptian fleet in the Mediterranean and defeated its army in Syria. Ali was offered Egypt for the rest of his life and for his offspring, on the condition of swearing allegiance to the sultan and paying the annual tribute. Egypt became once more an Ottoman state and the Palmerstone's intentions of keeping the Turk superior to the Egyptian were fulfilled.

Besides Palmerstone's distinction between the Turk who is European and the Egyptian who is not, a brief examination of Lord John Russell's colonial speech as Prime Minister in 1850 may offer an insight into his view of the world:

I consider it to be our bounden duty to maintain colonies which have been placed under our charge [by God]. I think we cannot get rid of the obligation and responsibility to govern these colonies for their benefit, and I trust that we may be the instrument of improving and civilising those portions of the world in which they are situated.<sup>17</sup>

Russell's invocation of a divine duty to rule over colonies here echoes Pope Urban II's speech in Chapter One when he called for a holy crusade. Russell was a colonialist who believed in what Kipling later labelled 'the white man's burden',

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<sup>16</sup> Walpole, p. 346.

<sup>17</sup> Lord John Russell's *Speech on Colonial Policy*, Hansard 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1850 (545-546).

civilising the world and ending 'sloth and heathen Folly'.<sup>18</sup> It was England's duty to rule these colonies for 'their benefit', just like the good genie in *Vathek*, or Tancred in *Disraeli*, rescuing people from their indolent selves, saving them from their despotic rulers, and bringing the light of civilisation to them. We will see in Chapter Six how both John Ruskin and Charles Dickens shared similar views to Russell's. In response to the hypothetical question that the peoples of the colonies may one day ask to govern themselves, Russell answered:

I do not think that that time is yet approaching. But let us make them as far as possible fit to govern themselves; let us give them, as far as we can, the capacity of ruling their own affairs; let them increase in wealth and population; and whatever may happen, we of this great empire shall have the consolation of saying that we have contributed to the happiness of the world.<sup>19</sup>

His answer to the question of whether the colonials would one day govern themselves here echoes Edward William Lane's claims about the conditions of Modern Egyptians – which he perceived as microcosmic of Arabs – that this is not likely to happen anytime soon:

We may hope for, and indeed reasonably expect, a very great improvement in the intellectual and moral state of this people, in consequence of the introduction of European sciences [...]; but it is not probable that this hope will be soon realized to any considerable extent.<sup>20</sup>

The peoples of the Near East remain frozen in innocent Biblical times and it is

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<sup>18</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), p. 787, verse 23.

<sup>19</sup> Lord John Russell's *Speech on Colonial Policy* (pp. 17-54), quoted in Walpole, p. 340.

<sup>20</sup> Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 223.



Europe's mission to look after them just as a parent looks after a child. The 'peace of the world' in the 1830s, or the 'happiness of the world' in the 1850s, is dependent on maintaining and civilising the colonies. Within this framework, the crisis between Turkey and Egypt then, was of the colonial (the Egyptian) overtaking the coloniser (the European Turk) and this was a complete disturbance of world order. As Paul Scherer explains, Lord John Russell agreed with Palmerston's view that 'the Sultan must be kept the superior and Mehmet Ali the subordinate power',<sup>21</sup> even though the Ottoman was not regarded with approval due to the Ottomans' association with Islam and their 'Eastern' attributes. Regardless of this, in Palmerston's and Russell's view the Turk was still a European coloniser, albeit of a lower quality than the Briton. Being a prominent member of the SDUK and part of its committee which offered Lane the opportunity to publish his work in 1833, Lord John Russell was echoing Lane's ideas nearly twenty years after he approved their publication as an act of dissemination of useful knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Lane's SDUK-sponsored work which established him as an authority on Egypt were complimented from 1851 onwards by the paintings of John Fredrick Lewis who also came to be regarded as another authority on Egypt due to his ten-year residence in Cairo as we see below. Lewis's work on Egypt particularly cast an image of an indolent Near-Eastern Orient where little happens but rest and pleasure.

## II. Indolent Orient: Two Halts in the Desert

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<sup>21</sup> Scherer, p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> 'History' in *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, < <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/sduk.htm> > [accessed 21 April 2018].



During Victorian times, indolence was used to justify the stigma of inferiority which society sought to apply on any of its poorer classes whenever it saw fit. In *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861), Henry Mayhew uses activity as a way of defining the dichotomy between rich and poor within nineteenth-century England. He explains 'that the members of every community may be divided into the energetic and the un- energetic; that is to say, the hardworking and the non-hardworking, the industrious and the indolent classes.'<sup>23</sup> This is a reference to the deserving and undeserving poor dichotomy which was predominant in Victorian culture, particularly after the 1832 Poor Law Act which Lord Russell was part of the cabinet that oversaw its making. In this sense, Mayhew is referring to the undeserving poorer working classes of Victorian England as the indolent ones. This stigma of indolence was similarly applied to the poorer peoples of the world, who were also deemed inferior, in contrast to the newly advanced Europe in general, and to Victorian England in particular. V. G. Kiernan demonstrates in *The Lords of Human Kind* (1988), how this attitude was consistently applied to the non-European races of the world: 'the nigger is a lazy beast',<sup>24</sup> 'Asiatic idleness'.<sup>25</sup> This was done as part of European Orientalism which paved the way – perhaps reluctantly and without committed political organisation at first - for European imperial rule by justifying the inferiority of the other peoples of the world. After all the indolence of these races was perceived as being due to the fact that they lacked 'Government' and therefore 'must be compelled to work'.<sup>26</sup> In *The Imaginary Orient*, Linda Nochlin asserts, 'The very notion of "Orientalism" itself in the visual

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<sup>23</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 330.

<sup>24</sup> Kiernan, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Kiernan, p. 213.

<sup>26</sup> Kiernan, p. 215.

arts is simply a category of obfuscation, masking important distinctions under the rubric of the picturesque, supported by the illusion of reality.<sup>27</sup> With this mind, I will closely analyse and compare two paintings; John Fredrick Lewis's *A Halt in the Desert* (1855) and Richard Dadd's *The Halt in the Desert* (1845) in order to explore the representations of Bedouins in both paintings, as well as determine how and to what extent they depict indolence as an Oriental vice. I relate Lewis's work to Lane's, as both were classed as authorities on Egypt, in order to highlight the stereotypes I discussed in the previous chapters, particularly indolence, as well as how these stereotypes were focused mainly on Egypt and the Egyptians through their respective works. Richard Dadd's paintings are primarily a point of reference against which I contrast Lewis' paintings since both discuss the same subject matter but from opposite viewpoints.

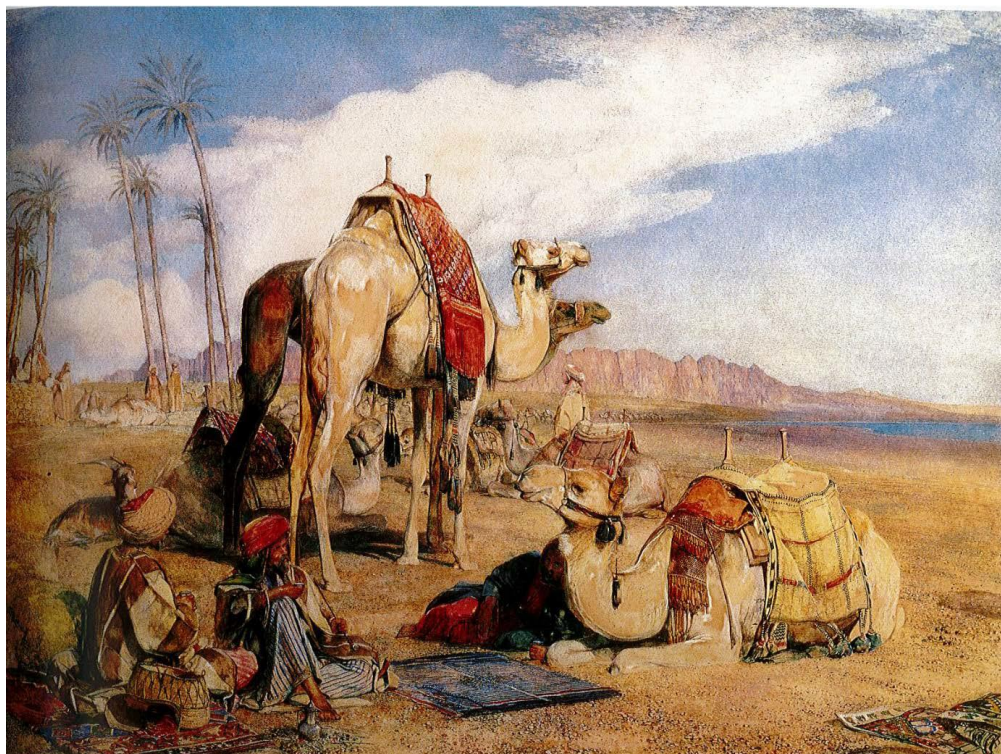


Figure 8: 3A *Halt in the Desert* (1855), J. F. Lewis, Watercolour, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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<sup>27</sup> L. Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient' in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, ed. by L. Nochlin (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 56

As a watercolour painting, Lewis's *A Halt in the Desert* (1855) does not have the colourfulness of Lewis's other watercolour paintings, especially when compared to some of his dazzling ones, such as *The Hhareem* (1850). Apart from the stark whiteness of the cloud, Lewis uses mainly two shades of colour throughout the painting: shades of yellow and shades of blue. The yellow stretches from its palest cream on two camels, through to its richer reddish form in one Bedouins' turban, another's gown and the camels' saddles, to its darkest shades in the Bedouins' skin colours. The blue ranges from the greenish turquoise of the leaves of the palm trees to the sky and sea blues. The colour plays a very important role in the painting and implies two things: one, that these Bedouins have always been there in this picturesque pre-historic nature, they have even adopted the same colour themes willingly in their dresses and their saddles and have become completely indifferent to the fatal sun above them; two, the Bedouins' intense brown skin colour in the context of the other shades of brown in the animals and the desert around them implies their racial inferiority. The first Bedouin from the left is wearing a gown that matches the hide of the gazelle behind him. The second Bedouin's face is exactly as brown as the leg of the camel behind him and even his red turban is mirrored in the conspicuous red patch at the top of the camel's haunch. The third Bedouin near the forefront of the painting could pass completely unnoticed as though he were the mere shadow of his camel's body on the sand. The Bedouins are completely naturalized; they are identified as part of nature and the animal kingdom rather than culture and civilisation. In this kind of world everything merges into one inferior prehistoric organism; human, animal, desert, plant and time. It is highly likely that Lewis could have been painting all these inferior brown Bedouins with



the powder of their crushed ancestors. Mummy brown was a popular pigment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to its rich quality. The pigment was produced by crushing pharaoh mummy parts that had been transported in ship loads for the purpose to the UK.<sup>28</sup> This likelihood makes Lewis's depiction of the Bedouins as inferior ironic as the pigment itself carries traces of their glorious ancestral past which Lewis's art was helping destroy.



Figure 9: *The Halt in the Desert* (1845), Richard Dadd, Watercolour, The British Museum, London.

Unlike Lewis's day-time desert *Halt*, Dadd depicts his in the depth of the night. As is typical of Dadd's work, the painting is a watercolour which carries a dream-like quality to it. *The Halt in the Desert* (1845) depicts a group of Bedouins and Europeans, most likely Dadd's patron and his companions, a point to which I shall return later. The only people who are seemingly resting are Europeans, their attires indicating their origins, and the only two Bedouins present in the painting are in a

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<sup>28</sup> Kristin Romey, 'Was This Masterpiece Painted with Ground Mummy?', *National Geographic*, <<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/09/mummy-art-painting-delacroix-pigment-ancient-Egypt/>> [accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September 2018].

state of activity; an overdressed one uncannily facing the viewer and looking into the fire, as though to guard it or keep it going, the other leading a horse and heading in the dark towards the cluster around the fire. This challenges the notion of Oriental indolence on one hand, and may on the other be considered by some viewers as suggestive of the Bedouins' inferiority due to their being the attendants of the party. A keener second glance would refute such perception however, as the magical glow of the fire on the central Bedouin's figure represents him as a majestic presence. With Dadd being a fairy painter, the smoke of the fire, moreover, is in the form of a hazy figure, as though it is the servant genie of the lamp in *The Thousand and One Nights*, ready to fulfil the Bedouin's wishes. The two Bedouins in the painting almost contrast each other in colour as one stands in the fire light and his gown appears to be white or pale cream behind the dancing flames, the other is in the dark and is seen only as a profile silhouette, as though they represent the binary of night and day. The night is well-lit by a full moon which shows a stretch of blue sea to the right of the canvas, as in Lewis's *Halt*. Many brown horses appear behind the cluster of people to be grazing on the wild vegetation of what seems to be some kind of oasis from the number of palm tree silhouettes present in the background. As in Lewis's *Halt*, Dadd depicts mountains in the background as well, albeit majestically silver-lit by the full moon. The sky is also carpeted by a gentle layer of cloud which shies away from eclipsing their lunar queen. As in Lewis's painting, shades of yellow and blue have also been used here.

Richard Dadd executed his painting in 1845, at a very early stage of his forty-year old stay at Bethlem asylum.<sup>29</sup> Richard Dadd's remarkable talent for painting

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<sup>29</sup> N. Tromans, 'The Orient in Perspective', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. By N. Tromans (London: Tate Publishing, 2008) p.

was manifest from an early age. He achieved fame and success early on in his life, becoming a member of the Royal Academy of Artists at the age of 20. In 1842 Dadd accompanied Sir Thomas Phillips on a trip around the Levant. He often complained that the caravan did not stop long enough for him to paint. While in Egypt he started getting delusions of being chased by the ancient Egyptian god, Osiris, but it was treated as a symptom of severe sun stroke. Back in Britain his delusions resumed; during one of his fits he stabbed his father to death. Upon this he was admitted to Bethlem hospital and spent the rest of his life as a patient, allowed unusual free practice of his art as part of his therapy at a time when this was not common practice.<sup>30</sup> *The Halt in the Desert* (1845) is one of many paintings he executed during his life-long illness and one of few he actually based on experience rather than pure imagination, clearly showing an untainted positive impression of the Orient which stayed with him. Moreover, the dreamlike quality of the painting is characteristic of Dadd's expertise in fairy painting, according to Jeremy Maas, 'Fairy painting was close to the centre of the Victorian subconscious' and reflected 'the desire to escape the drear hardships of daily existence'.<sup>31</sup> The presence of the moon in this nightly painting could well have been associated by his Victorian contemporaries as another sign of his mental illness. Indeed Dadd himself seems to have made a similar association when he wrote to 'Frith before reaching Egypt of having often "lain down at night with my imagination so full of wild vagaries that I have really and truly doubted of my own sanity."' <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 'Richard Dadd, 1817–1886: An Overview', The Victorian Web (21 May 2007), <<http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/painting/dadd/index.html>> [accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2014] (Para. 1 of 2)

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Maas, 'Victorian Fairy Painting' in *Victorian Fairy Painting* ed. by Jane Martineau (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1998), pp. 10-21, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Patricia Allderidge, *The Late Richard Dadd* (London: Tate Gallery Publications Department, 1974), p. 21.

While Dadd's contact with the Near Orient was through his brief and swift Levantine tour, John Frederick Lewis spent ten years in Cairo, 1841-51.<sup>33</sup> He bought a house in a rich neighbourhood, grew a beard and dressed in 'Eastern' fashion. Not much is known of his lengthy stay in Egypt apart from a brief account by Thackeray, who met him there and mocked him in a letter to a friend for looking like a 'Turc' and seemed to think, whether this were true or imagined, that he was keeping an odalisque behind the arabesque screen of his house.<sup>34</sup> Here 'Turc' is used in the same sense as Lane's 'Arab' as discussed in Chapter One. Thackeray was completely shocked when he found his old friend in Cairo, leading what he perceived as the full life of an Easterner. He described Lewis in his *Notes from a Journey from Court Hill to Grand Cairo* (1846) as "a languid lotus-eater" who led the "dreamy, hazy, lazy, tobaccified life" of a privileged Turkish bey.<sup>35</sup> Thackeray's account goes in accordance with some speculative theories which suggest that some of the central figures featuring in some of his paintings such as *A Frank Encampment in the Desert of Mount Sinai* (1842) and *The Carpet Seller* (1860) are self-portraits. Lewis would not be to blame if he had embraced the languid life of the Near Orient but the place itself would, for as Edward William Lane explains in *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836):

The heat of the summer months is sufficiently oppressive to occasion considerable lassitude, while at the same time, it excites the Egyptian to intemperance in sensual enjoyment; and the exuberant fertility of the soil engenders indolence little nourishment sufficing for the natives, and the

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<sup>33</sup> E. M. Weeks, 'Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis and the Art of Orientalist Paintings', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by N. Tromans (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 22-32. p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: Pandora Press. 1986) p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Weeks, p. 26.

sufficiency being procurable without much exertion.<sup>36</sup>

On another occasion, Lane elaborates:

Indolence pervades all classes of the Egyptians, except those who are obliged to earn their livelihood by severe manual labour. It is the result of the climate, and the fecundity of the soil. Even the mechanics, who are extremely greedy of grain, will generally spend two days in a work which they might easily accomplish in one; and will leave the most lucrative employment to idle away their time with the pipe [...].<sup>37</sup>

Apart from his *The Hhareem*, which he was almost forced to produce in 1850 when his membership of the academy came into jeopardy 'on account of not having submitted anything to their exhibition since arriving in Egypt,'<sup>38</sup> Lewis ironically did not paint during his lengthy stay in Egypt, and only drew sketches. All of his Orientalist paintings were executed back in England. Both *Halts* have been drawn from memory; however Lewis's, which is supposedly authentic, breathes the spirit of Orientalism, and Dadd's nocturnal production seems to be a rather more magical representation of the Near Orient. Together the two paintings reflect the ambivalence towards what was perceived as an *Arabian Nights* Near East, a point to which I shall return briefly below. Both painters are unorthodox Orientalist painters, especially Dadd who seems to be fascinated by supernatural creatures and fairy tales with meticulous miniature detail, hence the dream quality of his paintings. They were contemporaries. However Dadd was Lewis's predecessor in

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<sup>36</sup> E. W. Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1908), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Lane, p. 302.

<sup>38</sup> N. Tromans, 'Harem and Home', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. By N. Tromans. (London: Tate Publishing, 2008) p. 132.



fame and success before falling ill. Both seem to have developed a special fascination with the desert, watercolours and unique attention to detail. They are nevertheless very different in their approaches towards 'the Orient'. For Dadd the Orient seems to represent a positive experience, reflected in one of the magical worlds he dreams of and paints about. From 1850 onwards, authenticity and colour were Lewis's trademark and he was viewed, because of his lengthy stay in Cairo, as an authority to refer to about the habits of this region,<sup>39</sup> along with Edward William Lane, the mid-Victorian translator and re-inventor of the *The Thousand and One Nights* (1836-41) as discussed in Chapter Two. Lewis' paintings of the desert seem to instil two concepts about the *Arabian Nights'* Orient as conceived by England: one, these regions are permanently in an ancient, prehistoric Biblical time;<sup>40</sup> two, the peoples of these regions have remained as primitive as the lands they inhabit.<sup>41</sup> The former is the consequence of the latter and both imply a trait viewed very negatively in the then industrious 'hard-working' English-speaking world: indolence. As pointed out earlier, the vice of laziness and slumber was used by the nouveaux riches Middle Classes in Victorian times to justify the economic, intellectual, and cultural divide between themselves and the poor, the paupers, and ironically, the working classes.<sup>42</sup> Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* (1859) is representative of the cultural view of laying the responsibility on the poor to better

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<sup>39</sup> 'Both he and Lane were considered experts in all facets of modern Egyptian culture.' E. M. Weeks, 'Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis and the Art of Orientalist Paintings', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by N. Tromans. (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 22-32. p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> S. D'Alessandro, *Oriental Painting as a Place of Absence and The Map of Love by Ahdaf Soueif*. Textus XVIII, (2005), pp. 397-408 (p. 403).

<sup>41</sup> "Wilkie had come to Palestine – as he writes to Sir Robert Peel in a letter of 18 March 1841 from Jerusalem – to gain material for his Christian subjects and to study peoples who had changed little since Biblical time." J. Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500-1920*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 151

<sup>42</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 1963), pp. 151-184, p. 152.

themselves. In this sense, being rich was synonymous to industriousness and hard work, and being poor with laziness and unwillingness to improve their conditions. I shall revisit this point below. In time indolence turned out to be the attribute of the peoples they regarded as their inferiors, to justify the one-sided processing of 'the other', and the systematic subjugation of non-European peoples. Said states, 'Orientalism, the other, the Arab, was forced to go the way of the Oriental. Each time tent and tribe are solicited, the myth is being employed'.<sup>43</sup> I will return to the figure of the 'Arab' in my discussion of Dickens's and Ruskin's work in chapter Six.

*A Halt in the Desert* (1855) exudes indolence even before we get to see it. From its title one deduces that it is one of many halts in the desert and after viewing the painting, it becomes very clear from the laid back attitude these people are depicted with, that they spend most of their time halting, slouching and lying in the sand with their as indolent animals. It also reproduces the camel in various poses, 'that classical sign of Oriental lethargy'.<sup>44</sup> A 1778 fresco on the ceiling of the East India Company headquarters depicts similarly languid Orientals whose sole activity is to offer the 'riches' of the East to 'Britannia'.<sup>45</sup> In his late eighteenth-century work, Edward Gibbon uses indolence as one of the main vices of Roman Emperors which led to the ultimate demise of the Roman Empire and stresses this in several chapters of his accounts of the empire's history. This is due to its being a 'savage' vice which cannot co-exist with the superior attributes of civilisation:

If we contemplate a savage nation in any part of the globe, a supine

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<sup>43</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism*. (London: Penguin, 1977) p. 308.

<sup>44</sup> N. Tromans, 'Introduction: British Orientalist Painting', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 6-21, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> The British Library: Foster 245, Roma Spirdione, 'The East offering its riches to Britannia'.

indolence and a carelessness of futurity will be found to constitute their general character. In a civilised state, every faculty of man is expanded and exercised; and the great chain of mutual dependence connects and embraces the several members of society. The most numerous portion of it is employed in constant and useful labour. The select few, placed by fortune above that necessity, can however, fill up their time by the pursuits of interest or glory, by the improvement of their estate or of their understanding, by the duties, the pleasures, and even the follies of social life.<sup>46</sup>

In this sense, Lewis's Bedouins are indolent in their mental capacity as well as in their physical outlook, for they are neither in 'useful labour' nor even engaged in 'the follies of social life'.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon assesses the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser and particularly Algerians under French occupation. What he states applies to Lewis' Bedouins; they, along with 'the palm-trees and the camels make up the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence of the French'.<sup>47</sup> Lewis stayed in Egypt nearly three decades before the British invasion in 1882, but his paintings instil the Orientalist attitude toward its named Orient. In his desert paintings, Lewis paints an Egyptian *Arabian Nights'* Orient devoid of civilisation, of industry, of progress, of time and also devoid of evolved modern human beings. His is a desert of arid flora and fauna; its sluggish Bedouins

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<sup>46</sup> E. Gibbon, *The History of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, V.1 (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1872), p. 174

<sup>47</sup> F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 201.

merely contribute to its aridity. The desert longs for the industrious European, the good genie, who could 'With a stick' compel the natives to work,<sup>48</sup> to cultivate it and turn it into a paradise. In 1851, the Great Exhibition of the Crystal Palace tried to reproduce this mirage of an Egyptian *Arabian Nights'* Orient in this fashion. *The Illustrated Exhibitor* remarks:

We have before us a mute running commentary on the age, its attainments, and shortcomings. Here, the changeless East, the conditions of whose petrified civilisation have preserved the excellencies as well as the imperfections of youth, contrasts with changeful Europe.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly the World Exhibition, in Paris 1889, tried to create a mini-model of Cairo as the Orientalist knows it, not as it knows itself. The organising committee was so proud of its creation that it even invited an Egyptian delegation to come and see it. Timothy Mitchell details how offended the four Egyptian visitors were to notice that "even the paint on the buildings was made dirty". He adds in the same account:

Their final embarrassment had been to enter the door of the mosque and discover that, like the rest of the street, it had been erected as what the Europeans called a façade. 'Its external form as a mosque was all that there was. As for the interior, it had been set up as a coffee house, where Egyptian girls performed dances with young males, and dervishes whirled.'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Kiernan, p. 233.

<sup>49</sup> *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, June 7, 1851 Issue 2, p. 34.

<sup>50</sup> T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (London: University of California Press, 1991), p. 1.

The Egyptian delegation point out the stark contradiction in European Orientalism: the European representation of the Orient is as a façade behind which it could continue practicing the vices of its own culture. Such a representation of the Orient is as unrealistic as the claimed authenticity of Lewis's Orientalist paintings, which is undermined by his own lethargic unproductivity during his ten-year stay in Cairo. *A Frank Encampment in the Desert of Mount Sinai* (1856) and *Edfu, Upper Egypt* (1860) are two of Lewis' other desert-themed paintings which have been executed with the same Orientalist approach, featuring ancient ruins, and indolent Bedouins with resting camels. They all merge with the desert, indicating two things, each derived from the other. First, that this was once the place of a great and ancient civilisation. Second, that this civilisation ceased to progress a long time ago, letting the wild desert claim it back like the Roman Empire.

In *Orientalism*, Said examines the desert in Orientalist writings and specifically Chateaubriand's. In his analysis of the French author's writings Said remarks that, 'Description of the Orient is obliterated by the designs and patterns foisted upon it by the imperial ego, which makes no secret of its powers.'<sup>51</sup> In his argument he translates this passage from Chateaubriand's French text:

When one travels in Judea, at first a great ennui grips the heart; but when, passing from one solitary place to another, space stretches out without limits before you, slowly the ennui dissipates, and one feels a secret terror, which, far from depressing the soul, gives it courage and elevates one's native genius. Extraordinary things are disclosed from parts of an earth worked over by miracles: the burning sun, impetuous eagle, the sterile fig

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<sup>51</sup> Said, p. 174.

tree; all of poetry, all the scenes from Scripture are present there. Every name encloses a mystery; every grotto declares the future; every summit retains within it the accents of a prophet. God Him-self has spoken from these shores: the arid torrents, the riven rocks, the open tombs attest to the prodigy; the desert still seems struck dumb with terror, and one would say that it has still not been able to break the silence since it heard the voice of the eternal.<sup>52</sup>

The Oriental desert is 'one solitary place' after 'another' without 'limits'. This is the same Biblical place from which 'God Him-self has spoken', the place of 'miracles' and divine rocks, the place which has remained unchanged since it was 'struck dumb with terror' and continues to grip the heart with 'great ennui', a place of lethargy of mind, body and soul. Said explains, 'if the Judean desert has been silent since God spoke there, it is Chateaubriand who can hear the silence, understand its meaning, and - to his reader - make the desert speak again.'<sup>53</sup> The same comment applies to Lewis and his paintings. It is Lewis who can give the place back the voice it lost since ancient times and make it communicate its primitiveness to the civilised and advanced Victorian. Lewis' Bedouins are as voiceless and ineffectual as Vathek's people. Like Chateaubriand, we will see how Tancred in Chapter Seven would seek to take on this divine duty and attempt to communicate with the deity in this desert again whereas the locals would remain helpless. Lewis's figures seem to particularly lack the power of speech and when they are in a communicative pose, their mouths are 'struck dumb' completely shut and the

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<sup>52</sup> Said quoting from Chateaubriand, p. 174.

<sup>53</sup> Said, p. 174.

communication seems to be taking place through gestures and gesticulations. The lethargic gaze features in each of his desert paintings, always with a 'struck dumb' mouth. Only in his sensual paintings, like in *The Hhareem* (1851), does the lethargic gaze turn into a lustful one, and even there the gazing figures are lounging or resting like all of Lewis's Oriental figures. Remarking on the Orientalist approach toward the Semitic Orient, the Middle East (which was referred to in the nineteenth-century as the Near East), Said sums it up:

No Semite advanced in time beyond the development of a 'Classical' period; no Semite could ever shake loose the pastoral, desert environment of his tent and tribe. Every manifestation of actual 'Semitic' life could be, and ought to be, referred back to the primitive explanatory category of 'the Semitic.'<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, T. E. Lawrence asserts this kind of Orientalism as late as 1926 with the authority of his Arabian experience behind him:

There were few, if indeed there was a single northern Semite, whose ancestors had not at some dark age passed through the desert. The mark of nomadism, that most deep and biting social discipline, was on each of them in his degree.<sup>55</sup>

In a fashion reminiscent of Lane's over-arching statements about the Egyptian as microcosmic representation of all Near Easterners, Lawrence remarks on the Arab as microcosmic of all the Semitic races of the Near/Middle East:

The common base of all the Semitic creeds, winners or losers, was the ever

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<sup>54</sup> Said, p. 235.

<sup>55</sup> T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), p. 20.

present idea of world-worthlessness. Their profound reaction from matter led them to preach bareness, renunciation, poverty; and the atmosphere of this invention stifled the minds of the desert pitilessly.<sup>56</sup>

While Lane blamed hot climate in 1836, Lawrence presented the Oriental indolent in 1921 as the culprit as well as the victim for their mental and physical sluggishness. This is an interesting development of the perception of Oriental indolence over eighty years of one-sided studies of the Orient. Within the former's framework, Lewis' Bedouins are helplessly indolent, within the latter's they are helplessly indolent but they are also to blame. In both lights the Bedouins are trapped in vicious circles without the forgiving possibility of any redemption. This Orientalist conclusion is not particularly surprising when we look at what Henry Mayhew wrote *In London Labour and London Poor*, with the London society in mind:

Hence all society would appear to arrange itself into four different classes:

- I. THOSE THAT WILL WORK.
- II. THOSE THAT CANNOT WORK.
- III. THOSE THAT WILL NOT WORK.
- IV. THOSE THAT NEED NOT WORK.<sup>57</sup>

These categories as well as his other categories which I cited above are found in 'all civilized countries', where 'there will necessarily be a greater or lesser number of human parasites living on the sustenance of their fellows'.<sup>58</sup> Mayhew's

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<sup>56</sup> Lawrence, p.22.

<sup>57</sup> Mayhew, p. 331.

<sup>58</sup> Mayhew, p. 330.



categories however do not apply to 'every community' as may at first appear but to society within countries considered 'civilised'. On another level, if we apply Mayhew's categories to the Victorian global hierarchy of peoples, then it becomes apparent that Oriental and specifically 'Semitic' peoples would fall under 'the an-ergetic', 'the non-working', 'the indolent'.<sup>59</sup> Racial theories in the nineteenth centuries endorsed this kind of global hierarchy. In his discussion of Arthur de Gobineau's theories, Edward Beasley notes that in this framework 'nonwhites in general' and specifically 'those who are not artists, are like dull, miserable animals making their way across the landscape'.<sup>60</sup> Putting Lewis's Bedouins within this framework, and against the featured ruins of the ancient artists in the background of the paintings, they fit this description as though it was written about them. Gobineau's racial theories resonated in France and England. Matthew Arnold, for instance, cites him in his writings.<sup>61</sup> Even when the evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin feels moved to take action against governor Eyre's massacres in Jamaica in the 1860s, he does this out of benevolence toward what he calls the 'inferior races'.<sup>62</sup> Also worth mentioning here that the poorest of London's vagrant classes were referred to as street Arabs. I will return to the notion of street Arabs and the Eyre affair in my discussion of Dickens and Ruskin in Chapter Six.

Idleness, in addition, was viewed as a feminine attribute in Victorian times. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock sheds light on some shortcomings of postcolonial theories. In the process of doing so she analyses the Victorian 'idea of the idle woman'.<sup>63</sup> The middle-class Victorian woman had to pursue the feminine

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<sup>59</sup> Mayhew, p. 330.

<sup>60</sup> Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 53

<sup>61</sup> Beasley, p. 66.

<sup>62</sup> Beasley, p. 99

<sup>63</sup> A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London:

ideal of an 'idle' life style:

Frigid, neurasthenic and ornamental; wilting in the airless hothouse of Victorian domesticity; fretfully preoccupied by trifles; given to irrationality and hysteria; languishing in ennui: incapable of constancy, decision or stature [...].<sup>64</sup>

Many of the Victorian 'feminine' attributes here are remarkably similar in one way or another to the Orientalist attributes toward the feminised Orient and to Lewis' Bedouins as demonstrated in my above analysis. From this perspective, Lewis' Bedouins are not only devoid of activity, mental sharpness, advancement, individuality and modernity but, like Vathek's people, are also lacking in their effectuality and masculinity.

Having considered the strong traits of Orientalism in Lewis's work, it would be an over-statement to brush all aspects of his *oeuvre* with the Orientalist colour. Indeed imperialistic Orientalism itself is not necessarily intentional - and it would be an oversimplification of the matter to deem it as continuously and consciously so. More often it is a unconscious reflection of the cumulative stereotypes which were developed and drawn upon in Victorian culture over a length of time. Emily Weeks compares Lewis' *The Reception* (1873) to Lane's anthropological account of the function of the place in *Modern Egyptians*, and goes to great lengths to highlight Lewis's diversifying efforts. She criticises Lane's narrow perception of Egyptian Society as an 'array of facts and figures' which can be 'logically categorised, and presented objectively and coherently for the benefit of the world

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Routledge, 1995), p. 160.

<sup>64</sup> McClintock, p. 160.

at large.’ Within Lane’s framework, ‘the *mandarah*’ or the reception ‘could have only one simple, strictly functional, definition: it was a public space of entertainment and reception on the first floor of an Islamic house, in which a man received his male visitors.’<sup>65</sup> She praises Lewis’s significant ‘departures from Lane’s text’ in presenting the reception as a place where the lady of the house is receiving her visitors, while being waited for by her female servants and shadowed by her gazelle pet, which is also another female symbol, as Weeks points out.<sup>66</sup> Of course Lewis is unique in being capable of going against Lane’s authority which many artists referred to in order to verify their materials, but this is simply due to his being an authority himself on Egypt with a decade-long stay behind him as evident knowledge and experience. As Weeks explains, Lewis’ presentation of the reception as a feminine place ‘is an incisive and innovatory process of reading and thinking in which the layers of convoluted allusions and unexpected meanings in the picture can at last be recognised.’<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless some viewers may associate Lewis’s departure here with his feminisation of the Orient in his desert paintings. The featuring of the feminine pet, the gazelle, with a man would have been emasculating enough if we consider Weeks’ convincing analysis here – which also applies itself very well to the point of the emasculated Bedouins in the desert paintings. In addition, Lewis’ attempt here is one of conscious diversification and an appeal against Lane’s cold and narrowly inaccurate order of categories, in spite of Lewis’s own Orientalist – and perhaps

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<sup>65</sup> E. M. Weeks, ‘Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis and the Art of Orientalist Paintings’, in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by N. Tromans (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 22-32. p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Weeks, p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Weeks, p. 29.

sub-conscious - traits.

Whereas Lewis's is *A Halt in the Desert*, Dadd's, on the other hand, is *The Halt in the Desert*, implying an isolated case. The depicted characters are enjoying the halt by not physically halting but by seeking entertainment and making arrangements for the rest of the journey. Dadd's *Seated Man with Chibouk* (1842/3) is another example of this Orientalist-free approach toward the Orient. The seated man directly gazes at the viewer, fully conscious of his existence and his individuality. He does not come across here as part of the background for the picture but rather the centre of the painting itself, nor does he merge with the Oriental desert as one of its beasts or ruins. One of the reasons why Dadd escaped several of the Orientalist attributes current in his time was the fact that he relied mainly on self-teaching and free practice to learn his trade in his early youth, before joining the academy. Unsurprisingly, the academy itself looked disapprovingly upon the self-teaching route and regarded it, within the same light through which Orientalism regarded the Orient, as 'idleness' and 'irrecoverable waste of time'.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, Dadd was not completely immune from the Orientalist culture surrounding him. After all he was recommended to Thomas Phillips as an artist companion by David Roberts, the 'first distinguished professional painter' in Britain to depict the Near East – and Roberts's recommendation of Dadd was an attempt to establish what Tromans referred to as a British Orientalist '*silsila* among the professional artists'.<sup>69</sup> Indeed there are traces of Orientalism in Dadd's youth.. He sent a letter to David Roberts describing Oriental Greeks:

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<sup>68</sup> Allderidge, p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Tromans, pp. 18-19.

It seemed a large assortment, or menagerie, of pompous ruffians, splendid savages, grubby finery, wild costume... I never saw such an assemblage of deliciously-villainous faces: they grinned, glowered, and exhibited every variety of curiosity. Oh, such expression! Oh, such heads! Enough to turn the brain of an artist.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed the last sentence of the above passage is foretelling of the mental illness he developed by the end of his Levantine tour. Whether it was the Levantine faces which triggered his illness is highly unlikely and would require a separate research in its own merit. It is worth mentioning here however that Allderidge implies such a bizarre claim in her work without referring to any medical theories or concrete evidence.<sup>71</sup> Her assumptions are directly driven from an unreliable account by Sir Thomas Phillips in which he mentions that the crew of their boat, at one of the stops, left the boat near Luxor and found a sheltered spot from sight in the sands of the looming ancient temples. They made a circle and started chanting. Phillips and Dadd followed them in the moonlight only to find them 'writhing and chanting in growing frenzy while one of them intoned passages from the Koran, until several sank foaming at the mouth and senseless on the sand.'<sup>72</sup> The fact that such a scene never made it to any of Dadd's paintings during his mental illness, is enough evidence that it did not have as strong an 'effect' on Dadd's 'sensibility' as Allderidge claims. Moreover, the fact that his *Halt in the Desert* which includes several elements of the scene depicted by Phillips but none of the Orientalist wild vagaries and the dervishes who are capable of fantastical things – and who feature

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<sup>70</sup> Allderidge, p. 19, quoting from Dadd's letters to David Roberts in October 1843, located in the Art Union.

<sup>71</sup> Allderidge, p. 21.

<sup>72</sup> Allderidge, p. 21.

in British Orientalist writings from Lane to Lawrence Durrell - sheds doubts on whether such a scene occurred in the first place and that Phillips' depicted scene was not a Lane-influenced corruption of real incidents. Indeed, it is such Orientalist corruption of art and culture which Dadd seemed to have escaped through his illness. Dadd's mental illness can be credited with many things. Besides allowing him the time to paint – something which his speedy Levantine tour did not - it 'liberated him from Victorian pedantry' and complicity in adhering to popular stereotypes.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Dadd's illness, which could be perceived today as a form of schizophrenia, is emblematic of a broader schizophrenia amongst a Victorian society oscillating between: wealth and poverty, materialism and spirituality, selfhood and the other, Hellenism and Hebraism, Occident and Orient, and Victorian individuality and Orientalism.

The binary of day and night between the two *Halts* seems to reflect another deeper binary between the imaginary constructs of East and West. Mernissi argues that while the West celebrated activity, the East cherished the concept of 'samar' with devotion. 'Samar can mean, among other things, "to talk in the moonlight".' She speaks of her own amusement when she discovered that northern Europeans 'never really liked sleep and were suspicious of the moon.'<sup>74</sup> In that sense Lewis's Bedouins are doubly sinful for not just halting but also for 'mooning the afternoon away' and Dadd's resting European travellers have freed themselves from the confinements of northern European society to love and admire the night, the desert and 'the Orient'. Together, both depictions, like Richard Dadd's illness, are

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<sup>73</sup> J. Jones, 'Locked up in Bedlam', *The Guardian* (17 June 2015), <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/jun/17/richard-dadd-victorian-artist-bedlam-mental-illness-fairies>> [accessed 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015], para. 6 of 11.

<sup>74</sup> F. Mernissi, 'Seduced by 'Samar'', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, ed. by N. Tromans. (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 33-45, p. 33.

a symbol of the schizophrenic nature of Orientalism and its ambivalence toward what was perceived as the *Arabian Nights'* Orient, or more specifically the Egyptian Near East.

## Conclusion

When Mehmet Ali, the ruler of Egypt, outgrew the Ottoman Empire's economic and technological stagnation and expanded in its territories in the 1830s, Lord Palmerston 'decided to drive the pasha's forces out of Syria and to confine him for the remainder of his life [...] to what he called "his shell of Egypt"'.<sup>75</sup> The reason behind this was not just the simple self-declared, often quoted balance of power in Europe, for Muhammad Ali began his challenging expansions to the territories of the Ottoman Empire in 1832, and Palmerston procrastinated until 1838. There were deeper and more rooted reasons for him to react then. Long before taking any action, however, Palmerston expressed his conviction in 1832 that 'the Turk was a better reformer than the Egyptian.'<sup>76</sup> For after all, though very Eastern still, Turkey and the Turks are 'European', as he put it in a letter to Lord Granville.<sup>77</sup> Egypt and the Egyptians on the other hand, were put in the category of the Arabian Orient, therefore inferior to the 'European' Turk. This view was emphasised further by Lane's publication of *Modern Egyptians* in 1836 and his translations of the *Nights* 1838-40. Both works focused on the figure of the 'Arab', and presented 'Modern Egyptians' and Modern Egypt as microcosmic examples of what the 'Arab'

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<sup>75</sup> H. S. Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 232.

<sup>76</sup> M., Vereté, 'Palmerston and the Levant Crisis, 1832', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 24 No. 2 (Jun., 1952), pp. 143-151., p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> Vereté, p. 150.

was and what his customs were. At this point then we get a sense of both a transference of the signified in 'Turk' to the signifier of 'Arab', as well as a clear line between who is Turk on one hand and who is Arab on the other. With this clear transference or handing over from one signifier to another after a hazy period of over a century and a half, came also the projection of the stereotypes previously discussed; such as Oriental indolence, despotism, debauchery and corruption. Indolence becomes particularly predominant with the signifier 'Arab' due to the association with nomadism, the desert and hot climates. We will see later how Ruskin will use the 'Arab' as a signifier with its nomadic and indolent connotations to refer to countryside migrants living in the ghettos of London.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### ***ADAM BEDE: AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GENESIS***

In a story of the *Nights* titled, 'The History of Prince Zeyn Alasnam, and the King of the Genii', Prince Zeyn goes through a set of trials to prove his worth for an immense treasure. The King of the Genii, who owns a timeless magical island in a mysterious lake in Cairo, appears to the prince in three revelations and ultimately offers the prince a magical mirror ('glass') to help him identify the last piece of his treasure, which his father had prepared for him before he died (*ANE*, pp. 571-83). In the first lines of *Adam Bede* (1859), Eliot writes: 'With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader'.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I argue that Eliot's invocation of the Egyptian sorcerer's magic mirror in the prologue was much more than a passing remark. With the sorcerer here more than likely the King of the Genii whose role Eliot assumes as a revealer of the past, and the reader as Prince Zeyn going through the trials and revelations set by Eliot.

Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) has often been examined from religious and gender studies perspectives. Jon Singleton remarks, for instance, that 'Adam's views on the Bible seem to establish the narrative's frame of reference within a traditional Christian worldview'.<sup>2</sup> Tim Dolin, meanwhile, uses *Adam Bede* to explain that

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<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (New York: J. B. Alden, 1884), p. 5. Further references to the novel will be added within the text, with the initials of the title and page numbers between brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Singleton, 'Malignant Faith and Cognitive Restructuring: Realism in *Adam Bede*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39.1 (2011), 239-60 (p. 240).

'Assumptions about women's nature and vocation are also carried through into the language of the fiction, where a woman's very authority to speak must constantly be justified'.<sup>3</sup> Being Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede* is also held to reflect aspects of her early life and her religious upbringing. Little or no attention, however, has been directed towards the ancient Egyptian dimension of the novel. After she lost her Evangelical faith in the early 1840s, Eliot embarked on 'reading about the relationships between various cultures'.<sup>4</sup> Youngkin asserts that 'Eliot came to embrace the idea that Western civilization should be understood in relation to Eastern civilization, that the origins of Western culture came from the East'.<sup>5</sup> This is a notion which seemed to take hold from the 1830s onwards. Publications such as the SDUK's Pictorial Bible (1834) testify to that. By the time of the British invasion of Egypt in 1882, Egypt would be claimed as the 'mother' of Christian rituals and Britain's inheritance by 'birthright'.<sup>6</sup> In my analysis of *Adam Bede*, I shed some light on how Egypt's ancient past was being claimed alongside its modern counterpart in order to show in later chapters how this culminated in a rhetoric that justifies the occupation of Egypt as a rightful 'inheritance'.

Drawing on David Carroll, Jon Singleton explains that with Eliot's writing 'however one reads a text, event, or a character, different but equally plausible readings must be assumed to exist, even when they are not apparent'.<sup>7</sup> In the following pages, I develop my interpretation of *Adam Bede* as an ancient Egyptian genesis, combining both Christian and ancient Egyptian symbolism and motifs. The

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Dolin, *George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Molly Youngkin, *British Women Writers and the Reception of Ancient Egypt, 1840-1910: Imperialist Representations of Egyptian Women* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Youngkin, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> Ben William Oxlen, *Egypt: and the Wonders of the Land of the Pharaohs* (London: Trubner and Co., 1884), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Singleton, p. 253

chapter is split into nine sections. In the first section, I go over various plausible interpretations of *Adam Bede*, drawing on existing scholarship as well as my reading of the novel. The second section briefly sheds light on aspects of the historical context which may have influenced Eliot's writing of the novel. The third section examines Eliot's beliefs and related writings. The fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth sections of the chapter compare the main characters of the novel to their Genesis counterparts as well as to the relevant gods and goddesses in ancient Egyptian creation mythology. The ninth section is the conclusion of the chapter where I emphasise my main points here as well as explain my view of why Eliot attempted to rewrite the Biblical creation story of humanity in the first place.

### **I. Interpretations of *Adam Bede***

George Eliot begins the novel with a reference to an Egyptian sorcerer who reveals accounts of the past in his magic mirror (AB 5). Such an invocation is by no means an arbitrary one, and its role as an initiator of the novel can be read in a number of ways. Firstly and of great pertinence to the purposes of this chapter, the first line of the novel is a strong indicator of the Egyptian layer of meaning to *Adam Bede*. The whole novel in a sense is a demonstration within the Egyptian Sorcerer's 'mirror' of 'ink', a world within a world within a world, or rather a meaning within a meaning within a meaning just as the *Nights* are. The Egyptian Sorcerer here, besides being a reference to the King of the Genii, could well also be a subtle reference to the sun god, Ra, the first creator who initiated life out of chaos by using the powers of the Nunn, the ancient waters that surrounded the world from

which the Nile springs. In this case it is creatively referred to as ink. Indeed, the song that the 'workman' sings in the next Paragraph, which is an eighteenth-century hymn, is almost a prayer to the sun god: 'Awake, my soul, and with the sun/ Thy daily stage of duty run;/ Shake off dull sloth...'

Secondly, Eliot aligns herself on another level with the 'Egyptian sorcerer' as a creator of worlds. Taking on the role of a creator god, she addresses the reader directly:

This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.

Thus, the universe of the novel is created for the reader just as the Biblical universe is created for Adam (and Eve). In this sense, Eliot is not only the creator god of Egyptian mythology but also the Biblical god of Genesis too. On an even higher level and taking Eliot's agnosticism into account here, she is also comparing herself to the primary Biblical writer of Genesis.

At the centre of the 'mirror' lies Hayslope, a village representative of the garden of Eden on the Biblical level, and of the Primeval Mound on the Egyptian one. The garden of Eden as featured in Genesis as well as in *Paradise Lost* is central to the novel, and its centrality is rather conspicuous to critics such as Clifford J. Marks and Ryan Marr to whose work I briefly refer in my analysis. The Primeval Mound, on the other hand, like most of the other Egyptian references and motifs in *Adam Bede* have seemingly passed unnoticed till now. The Primeval Mound, in Egyptian mythology, is the first part of the known world to emerge out of the Nunn or the

ancient life-giving waters that submerged everything and continued to surround the emerging world after creation began. Hayslope stands as both this Primeval Mound, this first garden, this Eden, as well as the centre of the world of Maat, the world of order. Egyptian myth, like Greek mythology later on, is self-centred. In this case, the Primeval Mound was Egypt itself where the world began and the forces of Maat, order, lay in Egypt itself, as opposed to the forces of Chaos which occupied surrounding deserts and alien lands.

In addition, the 'far-reaching visions of the past' Eliot mentions in the first sentence strongly indicate, on the one hand, that this is a historical novel, as the date 1799 makes clear, to the Victorian reader, and on the other suggests a multiplicity of 'visions' which can be as 'far-reaching' as can be imagined. Moreover, referring to the reader as the 'chance-comer', strongly brings an element of fortune into play. Not all readers for instance would have the background knowledge to understand all the 'visions' which the text or rather the 'mirror' offers.

Taking all the above elements into account, I will demonstrate in the following sections how the main characters of the novel are woven with Biblical and ancient Egyptian threads to create an amalgam which in itself is unique and original in spite of its being based on ancient and in part well-known materials. I will first provide some historical context to the time Eliot began her career in and shed light on some publications and political events which may well have influenced her literary make up. Afterwards, I will briefly discuss Eliot's agnosticism and how this may have influenced her writing.

## **II. Egypt in the Early Victorian Context**

The time during which Eliot was paving the way for her career as a translator first and then literary author was also a time when Egypt dominated a significant spot on the political scene. The Egyptian Question/Crisis in the 1830s and early 1840s was something which attracted much attention in the press, due to how quickly the newly-emerging Egyptian State was engulfing the Ottoman Empire, at one point reaching the doorstep of Istanbul itself, and leading to what was perceived as an imbalance in world powers. This could be the subject of a separate paper but it is sufficient to mention this dimension briefly here. In addition, as nineteenth-century England was starting to veer towards religious conservatism, there have been attempts at explaining the holy word through existing knowledge about the ancient world and the holy land. One of these attempts was launched by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge through popular publications such as their *Penny Magazine* and more importantly *The Pictorial Bible*, as well as the *Nights and Modern Egyptians* which I discussed earlier in the section on Lane. According to Tim Dolin, the author of *George Eliot* in Oxford's *Authors in Context* series:

The utilitarians founded the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) in 1825, which laid the foundations for the emergence of popular scientific and technical education in Britain during the period.<sup>8</sup>

In this sense explaining or understanding the Bible went hand in hand with new and emerging scientific research about the ancient world.

Charles Knight, the SDUK's contracted publisher, explains in his autobiography

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<sup>8</sup> Dolin, p. 66.

that during the period when he was entrusted as Publisher for the Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, '*The Pictorial Bible* was the most successful of the more permanent class of such publications; *The Thousand and One Nights* was the most beautiful'.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a brief look through the list of illustrations in *The Pictorial Bible* shows how ancient Egyptian figures and bas-reliefs relied upon in the form of illustrations for the diffusion of Biblical knowledge as the oldest known of any civilisation, alongside their more recent Classical and Persian counterparts. In a clear reference to the new trend of Pictorial Bibles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and perhaps a subtle allusion to the SDUK's very own Pictorial Bible which was published in the thirties, we encounter Lisbeth's request from Seth: 'An', Seth, thee may'st reach down Adam's new Bible wi' th' pictures in, an' she shall read a chapter' (AB 104).

The publication of *The Pictorial Bible* anticipates in many ways the SDUK's next chosen project which was one focused on Egypt. It was Edward William Lane's translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, his second major published work after *The Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*. Lane heavily annotated his translation of the *Nights* to reflect his self-restricted life within the Islamic quarter of Cairo which he treated as a microcosmic neighbourhood of what he referred to as 'Arabian Manners and Customs', or rather in the words of his grandnephew and biographer, Stanley Lane-Poole, 'those Arab, Persian, or Greek, but still Mohammadan, conditions of life and boundaries of the mental horizon [...] are generally distinguished by the name of Arabian'.<sup>10</sup> Such an Orientalist presumption

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century*, Vol. I (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864), p. viii.

<sup>10</sup> S. Lane-Poole, 'Preface' in E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from a Thousand and One Nights*, ed. by Stanley Lane-Poole, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), p. vii.

has survived in many ways well into the twentieth-century; Josef Harovitz for instance defines those whom he calls 'Arabs' similarly, 'learned men who wrote in Arabic, whether Arabians, Persians or whatever their origins.'<sup>11</sup> It seems also that Lane used the *Nights* as a means not just to convey his experiences in Cairo, but also as a way of smuggling large sections of his unpublished *Description of Egypt* into print. 'Lane mined his earlier manuscript extensively for the edition's most remarked-upon feature: its detailed, wide-ranging, and often extraordinarily lengthy explanatory notes.'<sup>12</sup> Lane's earlier manuscript, which did not make it to print, contained long sections on ancient Egyptian culture and was likely imitative of the French *Descriptions del'Egypt*, given the similarity in title to the French encyclopaedic work, which was well known at the time being born out of Napoleon's campaign in Egypt 1798- 1801.

Eliot, the author-to-be who read avidly in several languages, was likely to have been influenced by all such writings. Moreover, Eliot's understanding of Egyptian mythology would have been likely to be informed by Ipolito Rossellini's four volume work, *Monumenti dell'Egitto e della Nubia* (1843), which was developed with Champolion during their final expedition to Egypt and Karl Lepsius's *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (1849), which was groundbreaking at the time due to Lepsius's development of Champolion's techniques of deciphering hieroglyphics. Lepsius's work was also encyclopedic in its inclusion of ancient Egyptian monuments and its commentary and explanations of the myths and inscriptions on

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<sup>11</sup> J. Harovitz, 'The Origins of *The Arabian Nights*', in *The Arabian Nights*, ed. by D. Heller-Roazen (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp. 386-409, p. 386.

<sup>12</sup> S. Arata, "On E. W. Lane's Edition of *The Arabian Nights*' Entertainments, 1838." *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net (2012), <[http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=stephen-arata-on-e-w-lanes-edition-of-the-arabian-nights-entertainments-1838)> [accessed 22 May 2017], p. 3 of 7.



them. She is likely to have seen ancient Egypt as the place where knowledge whether Biblical, cultural, scientific or archaeological stems from, which explains why she would have chosen to do her own creative combination of ancient Egyptian religion and the Biblical creation story, as I elaborate in more detail in the next few sections of this chapter.

### III. George Eliot's faith and lost faith

George Eliot had a conservative and religious upbringing, like other Victorian figures such as John Ruskin and the Brontës, against which she rebelled in her youth. Her intellectual development and wide readership may have also induced her doubts. Dolin explains: She lost her faith suddenly and completely sometime in 1841, the year she and her father moved to Foleshill near Coventry [...]. From that moment on she was untroubled by agnosticism: ultimately the truth or otherwise of religions became unimportant to her. She was, however, deeply troubled by her own disbelief'.<sup>13</sup>

Her early career as a translator, in addition, may have also shaped her views later in her life. Her two most important translations to my purposes here are David Strauss' *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1846) and Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1854). The former is said to have had such a grip on her while undertaking the task of translating it that she became 'Strauss-sick – it made her ill dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion'.<sup>14</sup> Dealing with faith from a

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<sup>13</sup> Dolin, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup> Dolin, p. 15.

purely logical perspective was very new to a youthful Eliot, but it had a lasting impact on her. We encounter this emphasis on logic when encountering matters of faith and God in *Adam Bede*, Adam says of the Wesleyan faith: 'I thought I could pick a hole or two in their notions' (AB 166).

The latter text was also influential, even though it was completed and published eight years after the former. Bearing in mind that its publication was only six years before *Adam Bede* came out, I quote certain passages of it at length here. The logical resonance of *The Essence of Christianity* must have had a resounding appeal to someone who would later become 'the greatest novelist of ideas in English'.<sup>15</sup> The following extract, for instance, casts great doubts on the notion of God: Every other God, whom thou supposes, is a God thrust upon thy feeling from without. Feeling is atheistic in the sense of the orthodox belief, which attaches religion to an external object; it denies an objective God – it is itself God. In this point of view, only the negation of feeling is the negation of God. Thou art simply too cowardly or too narrow to confess in words what thy feeling tacitly affirms. Fettered by outward considerations, still in bondage to vulgar empiricism, incapable of comprehending the spiritual grandeur of feeling, thou art terrified before the religious atheism of thy heart. By this fear thou destroyest the unity of thy feeling with itself, in imagining to thyself an objective being distinct from thy feeling, and thus necessarily sinking back into the old questions and doubts – is there a God or not?<sup>16</sup>

The author's process of systematic deconstruction of Christian faith must have had

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<sup>15</sup> Dolin, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Feuerbach Ludwig, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by George Eliot (London: John Chapman, 1854), p. 10.

a great impact on the translator's intellect. On another occasion, the author distinguishes between Christian and 'heathen' eternities:

The distinction between the heathen eternity of matter and the Christian creation in this respect, is only that the heathens ascribed to the world a real, objective eternity, whereas the Christians gave it an invisible, immaterial eternity.<sup>17</sup>

And sums it up later in the text: 'Christ therefore is the distinction of Christianity from Heathenism' (149). It is not that surprising then that George Eliot spent the next six years of her life investigating other forms of 'heathen' or polytheistic faiths as well as trying to create her own reconciliation between Christianity and the oldest form of polytheism, the ancient Egyptian faith.

George Eliot was, however, conspicuously drawing on Methodism in *Adam Bede*, rather than Christianity in general. I disagree with Clifford J. Marks who claims in his article that George Eliot was trying to 'redeem middle-class Methodism' by showing how 'religion' could be saved. Marks acknowledges Eliot's cynicism about Christian dogma yet he still believes that Eliot was trying to save religion in spite of her 'personal doubts'.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Marks more credibly comments that *Adam Bede* 'navigates among various social forces, representing early 1800s Wesleyan Methodism as a spiritually charged yet pragmatically hindered religion'.<sup>19</sup> It is more plausible to perceive Eliot's choice of Wesleyan Methodism as representative of Christianity in the context of how highly spiritual it

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<sup>17</sup> Ludwig, trans. by Eliot, p. 83.

<sup>18</sup> Clifford Marks, 'George Eliot's Pictured Bible: Adam Bede's Redeeming Methodism', *Christianity and Literature*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Spring 2000), pp. 311-30, p. 312.

<sup>19</sup> Marks, p. 312.

was in comparison to the rather wealthier and gold-and-silver clad Anglicanism or even Catholicism, which could have made it seem more in touch with the figure of Christ himself. In this sense, Eliot was giving Christianity a purer form when she was attempting to reconcile it with older religions. Dolin explains that she was ‘rejecting traditional religion because she was “too earnest to accept it”’.<sup>20</sup> It is such implications of her loss of faith that I believe drew Eliot to other forms of older religions, and particularly Egyptian mythology, by attempting to combine them with her knowledge of the Bible. Her purpose was to create an alternative that is an amalgam of ancient religions, a more plausible kind of truth, which in many ways stems from the notion that ancient Egyptian ‘Osirianity’ is the root of Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Henry James explains in an 1885 essay on Eliot that part of her ‘genius’ was ‘her love of general truth’.<sup>22</sup> She was indeed ahead of her time in attempting an alternative to the dogmatic narrative of Christianity. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, sixteen years after the publication of *Adam Bede* to seek just that. In her acclaimed essay which is largely regarded as the manifesto of the Theosophical Society,

H. P. Blavatsky explains that ‘Theosophy claims to reconcile the two foes. It premises by saying that the true spiritual and primitive Christian religion is, as much as the other great and still older philosophies that preceded it – the light of Truth – “the life and the light of men”’.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Blavatsky asserts that ‘the world has been hitherto sufficiently cursed with the intellectual extinguishers known as dogmatic creeds’ and asserts that ‘the very *raison d’être* of the Theosophical

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<sup>20</sup> Marks, p. 312.

<sup>21</sup> Oxlen, pp. 233-293.

<sup>22</sup> Henry, ‘Henry James on George Eliot’ in *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by David Carroll (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 490-504, p. 498.

<sup>23</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, ‘Is Theosophy a Religion?’, *Lucifer*, Vol. 3, (November, 1888), p. 10.

Society was, from its beginning, to utter a loud protest and lead an open warfare against dogma or any belief based upon blind faith'.<sup>24</sup> Thus George Eliot seems to have been in tune with something that developed later on, perhaps influencing its making by being part of the intellectual period that led up to it. In the next section I begin dissecting the gnostic aspects of her novel in the characterisation of Adam Bede.

#### **IV. Atum or the Two Adams: Adam and Seth Bede**

Bede is a medieval English monk and historian, and the author of *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Adam's surname is an allusion to an older English Christianity. In this section I will be looking at how this older English Christianity is combined with an ancient Egyptian dimension in the main character Adam as well as in aspects of the two secondary male characters of his brother, Seth and his love rival, Arthur.

In Egyptian mythology Atum or Atum-Ra is 'the father and mother of all things'.<sup>25</sup> His first creation were the twins, Shu and Tefnut, who were in matter the product of 'his seed and his fingers' but in essence Atum's 'powers of thought and utterance' transformed into the first two gendered deities, who are expelled from

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<sup>24</sup> Blavatsky, 'Is Theosophy a Religion?', p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 63. I rely on Pinch's elaborate work on Egyptian mythology here as it is classed as the most complete and up to date work on the subject in English. Eliot of course read publications of her time (I mention Rossellini and Lepsius), but it is impossible to know or draw out a map based on Eliot's knowledge of ancient Egyptian beliefs since she read in several languages. In this sense, I found it more relevant to draw on a twenty-first century publication in the spirit that perhaps my close analysis would illustrate the similarities and comparisons between ancient Egyptian creation stories, Genesis and the alternative creation story Eliot wrote.

his mouth or through the nose and mouth.<sup>26</sup> Atum's first act of creation not only resulted in the creation of the two genders but it also gendered him in the process as 'the father', and his 'hand' as a mother. In addition, Atum honoured his hand by transforming it into his 'consort', 'daughter', mother goddess and 'sexual partner'.<sup>27</sup> Pinch explains that 'this goddess was often identified with Hathor, who came to be regarded as the female creative principle',<sup>28</sup> which makes the Hand of Atum a pertinent goddess to my analysis of *Adam Bede* as I will explain in the next section of this chapter.

Atum or Atum-Ra is not to be confused however with the Amun/Amen who is rather the equivalent of God in Christianity. 'Amun was the mysterious creator god whose name meant the Hidden One. He was most commonly shown as a bearded man in the prime of life'.<sup>29</sup> He created the 'world egg' from which all life began.<sup>30</sup> The equivalent to Amun or God in the novel is 'the grandfather' who is also referred to as 'the old squire'. There are various indicators of this, including his mysterious origin and background. Hetty, for instance, questions whether he is at all born to somebody: 'he might have been earth-born, for what she knew; it had never entered her mind that he had been young like other men' (AB 138). He also features very briefly in the novel, and only in direct contact with Adam as in the promotion scene, otherwise his presence is mainly in people's conversations as I will further explore in subsequent sections below. Atum, on the other hand, is the creator deity from whom all living beings came. He was regarded as 'the father and

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<sup>26</sup> Pinch, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> Pinch, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Pinch, p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> Pinch, p. 100.

<sup>30</sup> Pinch, p. 101.

mother' of the gods and the 'ultimate divine and royal ancestor'.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, Atum was the equivalent to Adam, although Adam is only the ancestor of all humanity in Genesis and his consort Het Hathor, the personification of his Hand, the equivalent to Eve. The similarity in name between Adam and Atum, and in having a consort who is the personification of a body part is significant.

We are introduced to Adam/Atum in Eliot's novel singing a song invoking morality and sincerity followed by this description:

Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned, muscular man, nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad fingertips, looked ready for works of skill [...]. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured, honest intelligence. (AB 6)

The emphasis on Adam's 'saxon' race in the description is not just to demonstrate that the ancient Egyptian heritage is being claimed by a purely English race but also due to the Victorian notion that the 'saxon' is the best of what England could produce, a natural leader of the world. I will return to this point in more detail in my discussion of Ruskin and Disraeli's racial ideas in the next two chapters. Nevertheless such a description of Adam recalls to mind both the Hand of Atum

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<sup>31</sup> Pinch, p. 11.

which was his aid in creating the world as Adam here is creating works of carpentry, as well as the curse of 'painful toil' in the original sin and the repentant Adam whose sentence was:

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.<sup>32</sup>

Another scene in the novel which recreates that sense of Eden, is that when Adam and Hetty went and 'gathered the currants' near the 'red bushes' in that idyllic peak of the summer when

the level rays piercing the screen of apple-tree boughs, the length of bushy garden beyond, his own emotions as he looked at her and believed that she was thinking of him, and that there was no need for them to talk – Adam remembered it all to the last moments of his life. (*AB* 201)

But 'Adam was mistaken about Hetty' as Eliot clearly tells us, just as the Adam of Genesis was mistaken about listening to Eve and eating from the 'apple-tree boughs'. It was in Eliot's terms, 'a very old story' (*AB* 201). Later on, when Adam reveals to Hetty the foolishness of her situation, she feels a 'cruel force' in being aware of this knowledge and as Adam and Eve ran around the garden plucking 'fig leaves' to cover their newly revealed nudity (G 3:7), Hetty 'was plucking the leaves from the filbert trees, and tearing them in her hand' (*AB* 290).

Seth on the other hand, is a new, younger Adam in Genesis. He was born 'just

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<sup>32</sup> *Bible*, Genesis 3:18-19. Further references to the book of Genesis will be added within the text, with the chapter and verse numbers between brackets.



like him – in his very image’ (G 5:3). Even though he is Adam’s third son in Genesis, he is Adam’s brother in Eliot’s story. He is a workman like Adam, another Bede, but he is not as skilful or as strong as Adam. We are introduced to his absent-mindedness at work early on in the novel when he makes a door and forgets to install its panels, making the other three workmen in the workshop burst out in ‘a loud roar of laughter’ (AB 7). As Arthur is a threat to Adam’s courtship of Hetty as we explore below, Seth is a threat to Adam’s courtship of Dinah. He is the other, other Adam. From an Egyptian perspective the god Seth is not a purely evil god, for the rest of the gods seek his help when confronting monsters from the realm of chaos, where true evil resides. For instance, ‘Seth was needed by the gods to defend the solar barque from the chaos monster’.<sup>33</sup> It is this neutral or rather good dimension of the Egyptian Seth’s character that we see in the Seth of *Adam Bede*. Indeed, Eliot makes a subtle reference to Seth’s rescue of the ‘solar barque’ when we encounter the villagers’ gossip about his courtship of Dinah, and his strength and bravery: ‘when we saw the old tree all afire [...], Seth made no more ado, but he up to’t as bold as a constable’ (AB 20).

Adam, as Seth does in some way Seth, plays the role of the Adam of Genesis as well as the father of all beings, Atum. Adam, being a carpenter here also, is in many ways Jesus, the new Adam. Adam and Seth are English and Christian as their surnames indicate but they are also ancient Egyptian, perhaps incarnations, in their deeds and actions as I demonstrated above.

## V. Hathor or the Two Eves: Dinah and Hetty

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<sup>33</sup> Pinch, p. 191.

Hathor, as I mentioned in the previous section, is one of the primary creation gods. One gets to learn more about her though through the events that followed after the creation of humanity. When the chief creator god Atum-Ra heard of humanity's plot against his reign, he asked his council of gods and they advised him that 'no Eye is more able to smite them. Let it go down as Hathor'.<sup>34</sup> Hathor was chosen because she is the personification of Ra's pure passion in its various forms, in this case wrath. On the first day of Ra's punishment, Hathor 'overpowered humanity' by slaughtering the rebels and wading in 'their blood'. Hathor, unstoppable as she was, being in pure wrath, planned to continue 'her slaughter' the next day against the rest of humanity. But Ra was now victorious and did not want to punish the rest of humanity for the rebels' mistakes. In order to stop Hathor's madness he ordered the high priest of Ra in Heliopolis to 'grind up' a red mineral for pigment while 'his maid servants' mashed 'barley'. They made '7,000 jars of beer' coloured red to 'look like blood'. Ra or his servants flooded 'the fields' with the 'red beer' (74). Hathor saw her 'beautiful reflection' in the red 'flood' and she 'drank and it delighted her heart'. She returned to Ra drunk, more self-obsessed and oblivious about humanity. Ra 'welcomed her back and from that day on alcohol was drunk during the festivals of Hathor'.<sup>35</sup>

In this story of Het Hathor one encounters the goddess's particular traits of utmost 'beauty', out-of-control passion and to a large extent self-indulgence. These traits are also dominant in Eliot's characterisation of Hetty Sorel, for instance:

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<sup>34</sup> Pinch, p. 74.

<sup>35</sup> Pinch, p. 75.

Hetty Sorrel often took the opportunity, when her aunt's back was turned, of looking at the pleasing reflection of herself in those polished surfaces, for the oak table was usually turned up like a screen, and was more for ornament than for use; and she could see herself sometimes in the great pewter dishes that were ranged on the shelves above the long deal dinner-table, or in the hobs of the grate, which always shone like jasper. (AB 67)

Hetty's narcissitic indulgence in the reflection of her beauty on everyday objects such as the 'oak table' and the 'great pewter dishes' is reminiscent of Het Hathor's. Moreover, the hobs of the grate which are themselves an indication of the danger of self-indulgence, are particularly reminiscent in their glow of the colour of 'blood' which flooded the Nile valley and beguiled Hathor into drunkenness and submission. 'In this state of mind how could Hetty give any feeling to Adam's troubles, or think much about poor old Thias being drowned' (AB 93). This state of mind, which in Het Hathor's case is drunkenness, in Hetty's case is a 'pleasant delirium' and a 'barrier of dreams'.

On another occasion, we encounter another reference to Hetty's preternatural infatuation with herself in a similar fashion to Het Hathor's which Eliot depicts as 'her peculiar form of worship' and that 'worshippers never allow inconveniences to prevent them from performing their religious rites' (AB 137). This peculiar act of worship is admiring her reflection under the 'rising moon' light in the 'queer old-looking glass' mirror which 'had numerous blotches sprinkled over' it. The frame is also made of solid 'mahogany' and mahogany as a type of red wood also recalls that image of Hathor looking at her reflection in the red flood. The 'brass candle-socket on each side' of the mirror, or rather on each side

of Hetty's reflection, is also reminiscent of typical reliefs of Hathor with her peculiar mark of beauty, her protruding turned out ears (*AB* 136-37). On Het Hathor Pinch writes:

Hathor was the golden goddess who helped women to give birth, the dead to be reborn, and the cosmos to be renewed. This complex deity could function as the mother, consort, and daughter of the creator sun god. Many lesser goddesses came to be regarded as 'names' of Hathor in her contrasting benevolent and destructive aspects. She was most commonly shown as a beautiful woman wearing a red solar disk between a pair of cow's horns.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover:

As the female creative principle, she could be the most seductive and alluring of deities. The erotic side of her nature made Hathor the patroness of lovers in Egyptian poetry and justified the Greeks in identifying her with Aphrodite.<sup>37</sup>

This erotic and self-indulgent element of Hathor is highly recognisable in Hetty. Hetty is however only one half of Eve's character, as I explain below.

As there are two Adams, Hetty and Dinah are two Eves or rather two dimensions of one Eve. This aspect of Eliot's novel becomes more apparent in Chapter XV: 'Hetty and Dinah both slept in the second story, in rooms adjoining each other, meagrely-furnished rooms, with no blinds to shut out the light, which was now beginning to

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<sup>36</sup> Pinch, p. 137.

<sup>37</sup> Pinch, p. 138.

gather new strength from the rising of the moon' (*AB* 136). The two 'adjoining' rooms in the house, illuminated by the lunar light, give a sense of sisterhood and female strength on one level, but on the other depicts an image of the female reproductive system, where the two ovaries, the two rooms in this case, occupy a higher level to the uterus. In this sense, Hetty and Dinah represent the Victorian female dichotomy of the whore and the angel; the two sides of Eve. Whereas Hetty represents vain and lustful feminine beauty, Dinah's face 'was one of those faces that make one think of white flowers with light touches of colour on their pure petals'. She is the angelic Methodist preacher who through Methodism has transcended the conformity of the house. At the same time, we sense something beyond the power of the angel in Eliot's depiction of Dinah. Her 'eyes had no peculiar beauty beyond that of expression; they looked so simple, so candid, so gravely loving, that no accusing scowl, no light sneer, could help melting away before their glance' (*AB* 21). Her commanding presence is rather that of a goddess. Even her name is reminiscent of Diana, the huntress. We catch glimpses of this aspect of her in sentences such as, 'Dinah walked as simply as if she was going to market, and seemed as unconscious of her outward appearance as a little boy'. Like a marble statue of Diana, in full commanding confidence, Dinah has 'no blush, no tremulousness' (*AB* 21). She carries in the novel the characteristics of the virgin goddess, Diana and the Virgin Mary.

Dinah, the exact antithesis of Hetty, the other dimension of Eve, has this calming effect upon people. When Lisbeth is so upset about her husband's death, Dinah visits her and offers herself as a daughter to share her grief just as Ruth does with Naomi in the Book of Ruth. In no time both Dinah and Seth observe a 'greater quietness of spirit that had come over Lisbeth' (*AB* 104). Being the antithesis of each

other as well as the two dimensions of the Victorian Eve, every woman, is also reflected near the end of the novel when Dinah goes to visit Hetty in prison. Dinah shouts twice to an incredulous Hetty, 'Hetty... Dinah is come to you'. Then they embrace:

They stood so a long while, for neither of them felt the impulse to move apart again. Hetty, without any distinct thought of it, hung on this something that was come to clasp her now, while she was sinking in a dark gulf; and Dinah felt a deep joy in the first instance that her love was welcomed by the wretched lost one. The light got fainter, as they stood, and when at last they sat down on the straw pallet together, their faces had become indistinct. (*AB* 403)

Instilling traditional Victorian gender stereotypes as we encountered in Eliot's depiction of Adam for instance, Dinah by the end of the novel takes a rather angel in the house role. In spite of her beginning as a rebel female preacher, with a boyish walk, she becomes domesticated by the very suffering that she was tending in the people around her, such as Mrs Poyser, Hetty and Lisbeth. The scene of the change of heart between Adam and Dinah is a very domestic one where Dinah is carrying out all kinds of house work with high levels of feminine efficiency. Eliot, reminds the reader that Dinah was not bad at all 'eighteen months ago' when she came to comfort Lisbeth after Thias' death and that even 'Lisbeth praised her deft movements, and gave a modified approval of her porridge'. Dinah has been working on her domestic skills, however, and 'had made great advances in household cleverness' since then (*AB* 441). In a typical angel in the house sort of fashion, beautiful Dinah walked into Adam's writing room and 'opened the window

and let in the fresh morning air' and the crisp sun rays 'made a glory about her pale face and pale auburn hair as she held the long brush, and swept, singing to herself [...] a sweet summer murmur'. Then Adam walked in from behind as Dinah was 'singing' and 'dusting' (AB 141). This sweet summer murmur turns out to be one of 'Charles Wesley's hymns' and thus we get a full domestication of Dinah as well as her Methodist belief, and the reader is led to imagine Adam and Dinah as husband and wife before it happens by the end of the novel. We are also reminded of Dinah's angelic nature before Adam and Dinah's matrimony when Lisbeth sees a picture in the Pictorial Bible of 'the angel seated at the great stone that has been rolled away from the sepulchre' and shouts, 'That's her – that's Dinah'. Adam even goes a step further and says, 'Dinah's prettier, I think' (AB 448).

According to Youngkin, 'Eliot would have known that the Egyptian goddess Hathor and Isis had regenerative, life-giving powers'.<sup>38</sup> It's evident from my analysis here that Eliot knew far more than that. It could be argued here that the process of domestication is part of Eliot's imagination of Eve or Hathor. Both Adam and Eve ran wild in the forest before their sin, and their sentence, childbearing and consequently domestication came only as part of the punishment. Similarly, Hathor who ran wild in the marshes of the Nile was eventually led back to Atum's side as discussed. The novel, therefore, mimics or rather reinvents such processes of domestication within a different setting between Adam and Dinah, claiming the ancient Egyptian past in order to reproduce an English version of the Genesis story.

## VI. Between Adam and Seth: Arthur Donnithorne

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<sup>38</sup> Youngkin, p. 77.

Captain Donnithorne is introduced in the early pages of the novel in dazzling terms: 'to the Hayslope tenants he was more intensely a captain than all the young gentlemen of the same rank in his majesty's regulars; he outshone them as the planet Jupiter outshines the Milky Way' (*AB* 56). Such a bright description recalls to mind Milton's Lucifer whose name is justified in a footnote attached to lines 425-26 in the following terms: 'Satan was so named because, before his fall, he excelled the other angels as Lucifer (Light-bearer, the Evening or Morning Star, Venus) excels in brightness the other planets and stars'.<sup>39</sup> At another occasion, Arthur Donnithorne refers to himself in these terms: 'I'm a devil of a fellow' (*AB* 113). Furthermore, when we catch the first glimpse of Hetty's infatuation with Arthur, his effect on her is depicted in adjectives like 'gold' and 'white' and explained as 'warm rays' that 'set poor Hetty's heart vibrating' (*AB* 89).

Arthur Donnithorne has also great expectations of himself; in Satan's case this is considered dangerous vanity. In Eliot's depiction of Arthur he is a 'good fellow' who is perceived by the ladies as 'nice' but who is also the 'prime offender' who normally gets away with little 'consequences' to his actions 'in spite of his loudly expressed wish' (*AB* 114). His primary disagreement with his 'grandfather' is summarised in the following lines:

there was no having his way in the stables; everything was managed in the stingiest fashion. His grandfather persisted in retaining as head groom an old dolt whom no sort of lever could move out of his old habits, and who was allowed to hire a raw succession of raw

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<sup>39</sup> PL, 425-26.



Loamshire lads as his subordinates [...]. (AB 115)

Like Satan who was troubled by the introduction of these new naïve humans to his world, Arthur wants to have 'his way' without the interference of these poor commoners. This ambition and this vanity, is also reflected in Milton's Lucifer:

He trusted to have equalled the Most High,  
  
If he opposed, and, with ambitious aim  
  
Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
  
Raised impious war in Heaven, and battle proud,  
  
With vain attempt. [...] (PL 40-44)

Similarly, the Egyptian Seth shares this rebellious nature with his successors. He rebelled against the divine order of Atum-Ra, the father of the gods and murdered his chosen brother, Osiris, to usurp his place, uncannily reflecting an early combination of Cain's crime with Seth's nature. According to Pinch, Seth was 'the tumultuous god who was the enemy of his brother, Osiris'. 'Seth acts as a catalyst in Egyptian myth. His thoughtless actions are bad in themselves but can lead to good outcomes'.<sup>40</sup> Within Hellenistic Egypt, the Ptolemaic dynasty and the Greek newcomers aligned their gods with their Egyptian counterparts. 'By the Greco-Roman Period, Seth was vilified in most temples. The Greeks identified Seth with the monster Typhon, who rebelled against the gods and had to be destroyed by Zeus. Seth-Typhon was invoked in spells to kill the magician's enemies as he had killed his own brother, Osiris, or to separate lovers as he had

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<sup>40</sup> Pinch, p. 191.

separated Osiris and Isis'.<sup>41</sup> Thus even during the process of Greek and Roman appropriation of Egyptian gods, the rebellious nature of Seth was preserved in new narratives. Furthermore, some 'New Kingdom texts describe Seth as committing a series of sacrilegious crimes such as felling sacred trees and hunting sacred fish, birds, and animals. He was also notorious for breaking sexual taboos. His lustful nature lead him into inappropriate heterosexual and homosexual encounters'.<sup>42</sup> We can see the lustful, albeit exclusively heterosexual, dimension of the Egyptian Seth's character in Arthur Donnithorne's actions throughout the novel.

In the temptation scene, we are reminded of Arthur's Egyptian dimension by Eliot's reference to his eyes as of 'Egyptian granite', and of his serpentine Genesis layer by the fact that 'he doesn't know in the least what he is saying' and in the movement of his arm as it 'is stealing round the waist again, it is tightening its clasp' (*AB* 125). His threat to Adam's position as a suitor and Eliot's change of the story are expressed more explicitly here too: 'he may be the first youth kissing the first maiden, he may be the Eros himself, sipping the lips of psyche' (*AB* 126). Psyche as a depiction of Hetty, and the alignment of Het Hator with Aphrodite and Aphrodite with Psyche also reinforces the whole narrative of the novel as a new creation story combining all the old ones: 'it is all one' (*AB* 126). This 'kiss' or rather the memory of it leads to a symbolic exit out of Eden, a 'gate at the end of the wood', to which they walk with 'beating hearts' for 'already something bitter had begun' and Arthur feeling 'uncomfortable'

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<sup>41</sup> Pinch, p. 194.

<sup>42</sup> Pinch, p. 193.

takes his 'arm off Hetty's waist' but it is too late (AB 126), and transgressing the grandfather's rules and the nature of himself as a 'gentleman' and herself as a peasant girl would only lead to 'misery' (AB 127).

When Hetty starts to suffer the consequences of her weakness, 'she cursed' Arthur 'without knowing what her cursing would do' (AB 347), a curse reminiscent of God's in Genesis leading to the 'thorns and thistles' the earth grows for Adam, as discussed above. The curse is also reminiscent of Het Hathor's uncontrollable wrath against those who rebelled against Amun, with consequences that nearly got out of hand, if it were not for Amun's guile and wisdom. Unlike Satan who metamorphoses into a monster and falls from grace, or Egyptian Seth who loses the battle to Horus, his brother's son, Arthur passes almost unscathed for he 'had not an evil feeling in his mind toward any human being' (AB 398). Whereas Satan is defeated and gets transformed into a fallen angel, Seth is defeated by Isis and Osiris' son, Horus and gets castrated by him. Like Seth, Arthur gets knocked out by Adam and loses his one child whom Hetty loses. Like Seth also who retires into the desert in the world of chaos, Arthur banishes himself to a precarious life in the 'army'.<sup>43</sup> The end of the novel puts Adam and Dinah's fruitful union in great contrast with the two Seths, Arthur and Seth, who have remained bachelors without any offspring at all in the case of Seth, and without any surviving offspring or partner in the case of Arthur. The killing of Arthur's offspring is significant also on another level here, as the offspring of evil were either murdered or pursued in ancient Egypt. For instance, crocodiles were seen in some places in Upper Egypt as manifestations of Seth.

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<sup>43</sup> Pinch, p. 420.

Pinch mentions that 'at Edfu, Crocodiles were reviled as followers of Seth'. In addition, 'in temple texts at Edfu, the king promises to kill all crocodiles and crush their eggs',<sup>44</sup> being viewed as representatives of the evil god and his offspring.

Besides the dimension of the Egyptian Seth in Arthur's character, he also has elements of Milton's Lucifer. In the beginning of the novel, we encounter him planting the seed of ambition in Adam's head in a speech with too familiar references to my analysis here; such as 'woods', 'devil', 'right-hand'. His 'grandfather' is of course the owner of the mansion on top of the hill, and the owner of all the green dense woods of Hayslope, a representative of the God of Genesis. Arthur Donnithorne uses also references to the *Thousand and One Nights*, reminiscent of our discussion of Edward William Lane's translation above, in his depiction of how he would climb up the ranks and lift Adam up with him:

When I was a little fellow and Adam was a strapping lad of fifteen, and taught me carpenting. I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grand- vizier. And I believe now he would bear the exaltation as well as any poor wise man in an Eastern story. If ever I live to be a large-acred man, instead of a poor devil, with a mortgaged allowance of pocket-money, I'll have Adam for my right-hand. He shall manage my woods for me, for he seems to have a better notion of these things than any man I ever met with [...]. I have mentioned the subject to mygrandfather once or twice, but for some reason or other he has a

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<sup>44</sup> Pinch, p. 127.

dislike to Adam, and I can do nothing. (AB 57)

In a similar narrative to Genesis, Arthur depicts himself as Adam's friend. He wants to help him better himself and promote him to be a manager of the woods, only a step under the 'grandfather', instead of being a mere dweller in it. It is the 'grandfather', according to Arthur who does not like Adam and does not want him to attain this position. Similarly, it is God, according to the serpent in Genesis, who doesn't want Adam and Eve to 'be like God, knowing both good and evil' (G 3:4). Moreover, Arthur's surname is another reminder of and indicator of the association between Arthur's character and the curse of the fall from Eden:

[...] the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. (G 3:18-19)

The 'thorns and the thistles' which the ground 'will grow' are the first part of Adam's punishment for succumbing to temptation. In this sense Arthur Donnithorne is closely associated with both temptation and punishment in the novel, which is evident in his temptation of Hetty leading to her ultimate fall and banishment from England, as Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan and banished from Eden.

Arthur Donnithorne fulfils a complex role in Eliot's genesis. In many ways, he is Lucifer, the fallen angel, the tempter, the seducer and the sinner. In other ways, he is also Seth, the evil god who nevertheless is not so evil, who gets defeated and loses his offspring and who is in the beginning and the end of the novel a good

friend of Adam's. This line from the novel is a good representative of Arthur and Adam's relationship: 'In this way it happened that Arthur and Adam were walking towards the same spot at the same time' from opposite directions (AB 418).

## VII. Thias and Lisbeth Bede: Other gods and goddesses

Thias, which is short for Matthias, is a subtle allusion to the apostle Matthias who was chosen to fill Judas's vacant disciple position. Matthias is also said to be the author of the gnostic gospel of Matthias, which was considered heretical. Matthias's life and death are uncertain and largely speculative, some accounts claim that he was martyred by Ethiopian cannibals when he went there to preach the gospel, other accounts claim that he travelled to Damascus, and other sources Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> The obscure Matthias whose life and death are uncertain shares, in one account at least, the same fate of drowning, with Eliot's Thias Bede. In this sense, considering the uncertainty and opaqueness surrounding the life and death of Matthias and the heretic verdict on his gospel, Eliot's subtle reference to Matthias in the character of the unconventional father figure of Thias Bede, is another indication from early on in the novel that this is an alternative gnostic narrative of Genesis. On another level, death by drowning itself and its occurring at night-time, is a reference to the deputy god Thoth who rules the 'night sky' and whose 'moon of Thoth' controls the tides.<sup>46</sup> The proximity in name here between Thias and Thoth is also conspicuous to the informed reader.

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<sup>45</sup> 'Saint Matthias', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Matthias>>, [accessed 5 July 2017].

<sup>46</sup> Pinch, p. 75.

Lisbeth Bede, Adam's mother, represents to a large extent the goddess Isis who 'is the protective mother of Horus and the loyal wife of Osiris'.<sup>47</sup> Lisbeth, in her mourning the death of her husband, Thias, is described in the following passage in words that could well fit Isis, who mourned the death of her husband, Osiris, for the good part of her youth, until she managed to find his body parts, revive him temporarily and conceive their son, Horus:

Lisbeth Bede loves her son with the love of a woman to whom her first-born has come late in life. She is an anxious, spare, yet vigorous old woman, clean as a snow drop. Her gray hair is turned neatly back under a pure linen cap with a black band round it; her broad chest is covered with a buff neckerchief and below this you see a sort of short bed gown made of blue checkered linen, tied round the waist and descending to the hips [...]. (AB 36)

In addition, Lisbeth is also the matriarch of the house, which is another aspect she shares with Isis who 'was the mother of each Egyptian king' and whose 'maternal tenderness eventually included all humanity'.<sup>48</sup>

Like Thias Bede, who besides his Egyptian dimension has deep Christian significance, Lisbeth's representation of Isis is highly associated with Christianity. On several occasions, we encounter Lisbeth requesting Dinah or one of her sons to read from the *Pictorial Bible* as discussed in previous sections. Furthermore, Isis herself was deeply associated with Christianity and her iconography of nursing her son, Horus, has had a great impact on the development of Mary's iconography with

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<sup>47</sup> Pinch, p. 149.

<sup>48</sup> Pinch, p. 149.

baby Jesus. Pinch adds:

Plutarch suggested that the all-powerful Isis allowed herself to be portrayed as a woman of sorrows to console suffering humanity. This, and her promise to believers of a happy afterlife, made the Isis cult the closest rival to Christianity in the early centuries of the first millennium C.<sup>49</sup>

Slowly and eventually, large elements of the Isis cult was absorbed within a flourishing Christianity as the Classical world and its cults and religions lurked in the past. In this sense, both Thias and Lisbeth Bede are two different combinations of early Christianity and ancient Egyptian symbolism reflecting the roots of Christianity in ancient Egyptian mythology. Claiming that the origin of Christianity is rooted within Egyptian culture and mythology was one of the justifications that were made for the occupation of Egypt in 1882 as we will see in Chapter Seven.

### **VIII. Three Binaries but Two Settings: Loamshire vs Stonyshire**

The garden of Eden as featured in Genesis as well as in *Paradise Lost* is central to the novel, and its centrality is rather conspicuous to critics such as Clifford J. Marks, Courtney Berger and Ryan Marr to whose works I briefly refer below. The Primeval Mound, on the other hand, like most of the other Egyptian references and motifs in *Adam Bede* have largely passed unnoticed till now. The Primeval Mound, in Egyptian mythology, is the first part of the known world to emerge out of the darkness of the Nun or the ancient life-giving waters that submerged everything

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<sup>49</sup> Pinch, p. 151.



and continued to surround the emerging world after creation began. Pinch explains:

Nun was a personification of the primeval ocean from which all life came after creation, the watery darkness known as the nun continued to surround the world. [...] As a deity, Nun was considered the oldest of beings.<sup>50</sup>

The Nun is not to be confused with Atum, the first man/god or Amun, the creator of the egg of the world from which Nun and everything else came. Nun was very much present in ancient Egyptian life being the source of the Nile. 'During the annual Nile flood, Egypt seemed to revert to its primeval state, and civilization was in danger of being swept away'.<sup>51</sup> The similarities here in name and essence to Noah's flood are unmistakable, which must have been apparent to Eliot too. The high risk of drowning and of the destruction of civilisation are also recurrent in the novel, whether in the form of 'old Thias' drowning in the 'brook' (AB 60), or in Hetty's narration of how she 'tried to drown' herself 'in the pool' (AB 484), or an imaginary apocalyptic event in Dinah's speech (AB 29).

The Primeval Mound on the other hand, 'was the first land to rise above the primeval ocean at the dawn of time'. In some creation versions which imagine the creator being in the form of a bird who laid the 'world egg', 'the Mound was its first perch',<sup>52</sup> and a shell from that first egg was used as a first land. Here again we encounter similarities to the story of Noah's flood and the potential for the destruction of civilisation and reverting to prehistoric chaos as well as Noah's bird,

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<sup>50</sup> Pinch, p. 172.

<sup>51</sup> Pinch, p. 173.

<sup>52</sup> Pinch, p. 180.

raven first then dove, which successfully found a mound where the 'water was abated from the face of the land' and the ark landed safely and civilisation began (Genesis 8:8). In a sense also, the lethal aspect of the flood whether in its initial form of prehistoric ocean/Noah's flood or in the form of the annual Nile flood is reflected in how the Nun is connected in mythology to 'an abyss that formed the lowest depths of the underworld' (Pinch 172). Thus life and death were closely associated with each other, since the annual flood was vital for the agricultural cycle but always came at the risk of death. Similarly, Noah's flood gave Noah and his followers a chance for a new beginning by destroying all the others. In the novel also the brook gives Adam and his brother Seth a new beginning by drowning their father and ridding them of the costly burden of his drunkenness and lack of labour. Hetty also tries to 'drown' herself but she is somehow unsuccessful at this cleansing exercise, an indicator of her curse or unredeemed soul until Dinah offers her redemption through cleansing words and companionship in her last hours.

Hayslope stands for both this Primeval Mound, this first garden, this Eden, as well as the centre of the world of Maat, the world of order. Egyptian Mythology, like Greek mythology later on, is self-centred. As Pinch explains:

The central concept of Egyptian cosmology and ethics was personified as the goddess Maat wearing an ostrich feather on her head. The word *maat* can mean, truth, justice, righteousness, order, balance, and cosmic law [...]. The primary duty of an Egyptian king was to be the champion of *maat*. In the afterlife, the dead were judged on whether they had spoken *maat*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Pinch, p. 159.

In this case, the Primeval Mound was Egypt itself where the world began and the forces of Maat, order, lay in Egypt itself, as opposed to the forces of Chaos which occupied surrounding deserts and alien lands. This leads one here to Stonyshire, a rugged town with less ease of living, not as blessed or fortunate as Hayslope. Stonyshire is described as 'a bleak, treeless region, intersected by lines of cold gray stone' (AB 16). Its 'barren hills' are contrasted to its neighbouring 'rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged':

High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north; not distant enough to be clothed in purple mystery, but with sombre greenish sides visibly specked with sheep, whose motion was only revealed by memory, not detected by sight [...]. And directly above them the eye rested on a more advanced line of hanging woods, divided by bright patches of pasture or furrowed crops, and not yet deepened into the uniform leafy curtain of high summer, but still showing the warm tints of the young oak and the tender green of the ash and lime. Then came the valley, where the woods grew thicker [...]. It was that moment in summer when the sound of the scythe being whetted makes us cast more lingering looks at the flower-sprinkled tresses of the meadows.

(AB 16-17)

This idyllic picture of Hayslope, of an Eden lurking in that perfect moment in time between spring and summer in the early pages of the novel, and in contrast the 'barren hills' of the northern snow-ridden Stonyshire makes the binary apparent: Hayslope is Heaven, Eden, Paradise, the Primeval Mound, whereas Stonyshire is

Satan's land, Hell, the abyss, the underworld.

Yet the stark binary between Hayslope and Stonyshire, is disturbed by the simple fact that Dinah Morris, the angelic preacher and the one-dimensional Eve is from Snowfield, Stonyshire as she introduces herself to Mr Irwine: 'I come from Snowfield, in Stonyshire' (AB 81). On the one hand this emphasises the fact that goodness is not naturally intrinsic in women, on the other hand however this makes the blasphemous presumption that angels could come from Hell. Reversing the traditional Christian belief that Hell is solely for demons and condemned souls, Snowfield is the birthplace of the main force of good in Eliot's novel in spite of being part of Stonyshire. Dinah's preaching is significant here as it is only demonstrated in the novel within Hayslope; we do not see her preaching in Snowfield, the land of the condemned. At the same time, Hetty's sinful journey to and within Stonyshire foreshadows her condemnation and ultimate banishment by the end of the novel.

## **IX. Conclusion: Implications**

In her translation of *The Essence of Christianity*, one encounters highly critical passages of Christianity which may perhaps have been highly influential in leading Eliot to lose her Evangelical faith around that time of her life. One such passage is encountered by the reader early on in the book, which is significant to my analysis of *Adam Bede* here:

the most excellent, the first, the supreme being; it essentially presupposes a critical judgement, a discrimination between the

divine and the non-divine, between that which is worthy of adoration and that which is not worthy.<sup>54</sup>

The presupposition of the excellence of the first and supreme being is something which Eliot echoes in her characterisation of *Adam Bede*, and which she acts against in her choreography of the other main characters. Following in the footsteps of Milton, Eliot glorifies Arthur who plays a role at times very similar to Lucifer's in *Paradise Lost*. In addition, Seth instead of being Adam's offspring is to a large extent Adam's equal but younger brother. Furthermore, Eliot also gives Dinah and Hetty, the two sides of Eve, more independence of action and autonomy of will. This should not be confused with feminism as we recognise it today for two main reasons. First, both Hetty and Dinah have to fulfil their Genesis sentence of childbearing, regardless of Dinah's passion for Methodism or Hetty's tendencies for self-indulgence. Second, the independence and autonomy of Dinah and Hetty has to be seen within the context of the independence and autonomy of all the other main characters who are portrayed as distinctly different characters from Adam rather than his offspring or spouses - a distinction which Eliot sought, perhaps after writing these words in her translation of *The Essence of Christianity*: 'Christianity extinguishes this qualitative distinction; it sets the same stamp on all men alike, and regards them as one and the same individual, because it knows no distinction between species and the individual'.<sup>55</sup> It is not surprising then to recognise here that Eliot was attempting to recreate an earlier gnostic type of Christianity as a form of personal theology by blending the main elements of the

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<sup>54</sup> Feuerbach, trans. by Eliot, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Feuerbach, trans. by Eliot, p. 158.

creation story in Genesis with its earlier ancient Egyptian counterpart. In *Adam Bede*, she creates a transcendent creation story which reaches out to the roots of humanity and offers universal salvation within an English setting away from Victorian religiosity. Singleton explains that:

ego-transcending religious experience is the ultimate goal of literature for Eliot. For her, the essence of poetry and religion, 'which is the same thing', is a belief structure that recognizes the otherness of existence: a faith that does no violence.<sup>56</sup>

Within this light, we can read *Adam Bede* as a covert story of Atum-Ra, an English gnostic gospel, a reconciliation of faiths and a recovery of universalism amid aggressive and exclusive Victorian conservatism. At the same time, it is also a story that claims the ancient Egyptian past as a rightful English inheritance, initiated from the beginning by the mysterious actions of the 'Egyptian sorcerer'. As we will see in Chapter Seven, such rhetoric would be used to justify the occupation of Egypt in the 1880s.

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<sup>56</sup> Singleton, p. 255.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DICKENS, RUSKIN AND THE 'ARABIAN' NIGHTS

In this chapter, I continue to discuss the stereotypes I previously traced through the *Arabian Nights*' discourse in the pseudo-Oriental tales and the Orientalist paintings of John Frederick Lewis. My discussion of these stereotypes here however moves on to discuss how the fiction of two prominent social thinkers treat the topic. I focus mainly on Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* (1850). I examine how Dickens and Ruskin borrowed from the tales of the *Nights* to express complex ideas, and I relate the *Nights*-inspired imagery within the two novels to their authors' colonial views and to their other works. In this sense this continues my work on Eliot's *Adam Bede* in the previous chapter in terms of how Egypt's past and present were being claimed or acquired from a literary perspective. In the first section of this chapter I discuss Dickens's ambivalence towards the *Nights*, in the way he shows admiration for it and at the same time subverts its tales to reflect his criticism of some Victorian ideologies, such as Benthamism. This showcases Victorian ambivalence towards the *Nights* and the Near East which eventually influenced the decision to invade Egypt in 1882. In the second section, I discuss John Ruskin's use of the two *Nights* tales of the 'Story of the Fisherman' and the 'Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister', as well as how he deceptively placed his story within a Germanic Brothers Grimm framework and why. In my discussion I relate the concealment of his debt to the *Nights* to his racial views, which he expressed in his other works, and I relate his and Dickens's racial views to other Orientalist

depictions of 'Arabs' and Bedouins.

### **A. Dickens, Alibaba and the *Arabian Nights* Orient**

Peter Caracciolo observes that Dickens 'rapidly' rediscovered the *Nights* after the publication of Lane's 'translations'.<sup>1</sup> In this section, I will examine how Dickens utilised the *Nights* as a tool for instilling magical wonder in his readers, as well as a deep sense of fear of anything Oriental. In addition, through highlighting Dickens's references to the *Nights* in some of his works and closely analysing *Hard Times*, I will demonstrate how he carried over the stereotypes discussed in the previous chapters, and developed them further in his work. This will be examined in order to show how the *Nights* was manipulated to serve Dickens's purpose of romanticising colonialism and promoting it, in order to continue Britain's role as the leading power of the world on the one hand, and on the other protect the Near-Eastern Orient from its posited dangerous self.

When Dickens wished to express his anger at the government for their mismanagement of the Crimean War (1853-56), he found no better way to do so than in a pseudo-*Nights* article called 'The Thousand and One Humbugs'. The article, which was published as a piece of mock-news, announces the discovery of a new Arabic manuscript, similar in form and narrative to the *Nights*. It is called 'The Thousand and One Humbugs', and is followed by a mock-introductory chapter which is in fact a satire on the government. In it, the House of Commons becomes 'Howsa Kummauns', Lord Palmerstone 'vizier Parmarstoon' and Queen Victoria a

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<sup>1</sup> Caracciolo, 'Introduction', in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, p. 22.



dictatorial 'sultan' who only cares about himself.<sup>2</sup> Though brief and not of great significance to Dickens's literary career, it highlights two significant facts: the importance of *The Arabian Nights* to Dickens's own imagination and to his ideas on the creative process in general; and how the Near East as represented in the *Nights* provided a safe place for Victorians to project their fears and frustrations at their own social and political conditions. It could appear at the first instance that this is comparable to the trope of the noble savage, used in European tradition to satirise European decadence by positing an innocent alternative, but this is not the case here. Here Dickens is associating the queen and the government with a cruel, despotic, backward 'Arabian Nights' orient, and he continues to draw on this 'Arabian Nights' orient in this way in other works, as will be demonstrated below. The idea of associating the queen with the sultan in the *Nights* does not seem to be very unfamiliar to the English readership of the 1850s. In an 1853 report in *The Spectator*, the reporter puts together the queen and the *Nights'* sultan although his purpose is to disassociate her from the sultan. Reporting on Queen Victoria's meeting with William Dargan, the prominent Irish engineer and railway pioneer, the reporter wondered:

how did the Queen bear herself? Was it with the inaccessible sublimity of a half- deified Sultan—with the " affable " affectation of an irresponsible Autocrat—or with the bluff familiarity of a crowned gossip, which breaks restraints of etiquette, and burlesques the very institution of hereditary monarchy? No: the Queen had a duty to perform ex officio—that of giving

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<sup>2</sup> C. Dickens, 'The Thousand and One Humbugs', *Household Words*, Vol. XI, Magazine No. 265 (21 April 1855), pp. 265-67.

the highest possible re-cognition to the merit of a particular endeavour and of an individual; and her official dignity was needed for that purpose.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to Dickens's mockery, the reporter here expresses how Queen Victoria was far removed from acting like the *Nights*' 'half-deified Sultan' who took life as he wished. She performed her 'duty' in spite of 'a hideous past' with Ireland.

Dickens, however, did not always draw on the *Nights* in his writings. According to Caracciolo: 'Until 1839 none of Dickens's writings, public or private, made much mention of the *Nights*'.<sup>4</sup> This changed after Dickens discovered Lane's translations that year: 'on the turn of that year [...] there were indications that Dickens was rapidly rediscovering the *Nights*'. He replied to a query in January 1839: 'If I had a copy of the Arabian Nights [i.e. at hand] I could show you where it is in a second. But [...] for the life of me I can't at a pinch remember the fellow's name, though I think it was Shacbac.'<sup>5</sup> By the 1850s, Dickens's references to the *Nights* become more common in his work in a way which expects his readers to understand them, as in the case of 'The Thousand and One Humbugs'.

Besides 'The Thousand and One Humbugs' Dickens alludes to the *Nights* directly and indirectly in many of his works, and deploys it as a literary tool to strengthen his characterisation and his motifs on the importance of imagination. In *Hard Times*, for instance, he utilises the *Nights* as a definitive means for sharpening the contrast between two characters who are also symbols of two completely different ways of thinking: Mr Gradgrind and Sissy Jupe. I look at *Hard Times* particularly here due to the *Nights*-inspired metaphors which are key to understanding his main points in

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<sup>3</sup> *The Spectator*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1853, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Caracciolo, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Caracciolo, p. 22.

the novel as well as how he interacted with the *Nights*. In chapter two of the novel, Mr Gradgrind, the man of facts and statistics who treats his pupils as numbers rather than individuals, asks 'girl number twenty',<sup>6</sup> Sissy Jupe, to define a horse. Sissy, however, cannot deliver any 'facts' on horses, and Bitzer, Gradgrind's pet pupil, answers the question: 'Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty- four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth' (*HT*, 18). Sissy comes from a family who live and work in the circus, and she is thus unable to fit into Gradgrind's fact-based and heartless educational system which does not allow any space for her natural childish creativity and imagination. In Gradgrind, Dickens depicts an ugly caricature of Benthamism and its followers and he finds the *Nights*, its tales and its Orient very useful for his purpose. In the first chapter, Gradgrind's eyes are described as 'two dark caves' and his voice as 'dictatorial' (*HT*, 7-8), foreshadowing the dictatorial 'sultan' of the *Nights* whom Sissy mentions later in chapter nine (*HT*, 83), and recalling Beckford's ultimate Oriental dictator, Vathek: 'the one with a thousand of the blackest crimes' (*V*, 131). Dickens also employs names with relevant meanings to the plot. Thus the schoolmaster grinds the children's creativities and individualities to facts and employs teachers who choke the pupils' innocent childhood out of them. Indeed in a more direct reference to the *Nights*, M'Choakumchild, the new school teacher, is likened to 'Morgiana' in the story of 'Alibaba' and the children to the forty jars (*ANE*, 778-79), where their 'robber Fancy' is 'lurking within' which he, with his fatal teaching methods, will 'kill

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<sup>6</sup> C. Dickens, *Hard Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge, printed at the riverside press, 1869), p. 11. Further referencing to the novel will be put between brackets as *HT* followed by page numbers.

outright' or in some cases manage only to 'maim' (*HT*, 16).

This image is central to the novel as a whole and in its relation to the tale of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'. In one sense it portrays Gradgrind himself as an Ali Baba figure who is foolishly unaware of the impending doom he has inaugurated here by employing M'Choakumchild rather than letting the thieves in, in another by turning the forty thieves into innocent children full of wonder and imagination and Morgiana and Ali Baba into villains and murderers of imagination. Dickens enforces on one hand his condemnation of Victorian educational values as completely overtaken by Benthamism, and on the other strengthens the stereotyping of powerful Oriental men and women as villains. Like Lane, Beckford, and in some ways their predecessor Galland, Dickens believed the *Nights* to be a direct representation of the Near East. In his *Dickens and the Invisible World*, Harry Stone asserts the impression of the *Nights* on Dickens and Victorian readership in general, 'Everything was exotic, yet somehow believable too, for the stories and all their trappings came out of a mysterious East where soft fountains and hanging gardens, harems and pleasure domes, sultans and scimitars, did most veritably exist.'<sup>7</sup>

This is not the only time Dickens uses the *Nights* to attack educators who have little regard for 'fancy'; in an essay he attacks his childhood tutor Mr Barlow, who was as obsessed with facts as M'Choakumchild:

The incompatibility of Mr Barlow with all other portions of my young life  
but himself, the adamantine inadaptability of the man to my favourite  
fancies and amusements, is the thing for which I hate him most. What right

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<sup>7</sup> H. Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy and Novel-Making* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 25.

had he to bore his way into my Arabian Nights? Yet he did. He was always hinting doubts of the veracity of Sinbad the Sailor. If he could have got hold of the Wonderful Lamp, I knew he would have trimmed it and lighted it, and delivered a lecture over it on the qualities of sperm-oil, with a glance at the whale fisheries.<sup>8</sup>

There are apparent echoes here between M'Choakumchild and Mr Gradgrind on one hand and Mr Barlow on the other. Even the horse is mentioned in the same passage of the essay:

He would so soon have found out – on mechanical principles – the peg in the neck of the Enchanted Horse, and would have turned it the right way in so workmanlike a manner, that the horse could never have got any height into the air, and the story couldn't have been.<sup>9</sup>

It is evident then that Dickens was enchanted by the *Nights* and rediscovered it as an adult after Lane published his translation, turning it into a vehicle through which he criticises the educational system and industrialisation.

Coketown as a microcosm of industrial Victorian England in *Hard Times* is compared by Dickens to an evil Orient, albeit more doomed. Its 'Fairy palaces' are factories and its 'melancholy mad elephants' are machines which produce a stifling 'smell of hot oil everywhere'. Their 'atmosphere' is 'like the simoom: and their inhabitants, wasting with heat, toiled languidly in the desert' (*HT*, 108-109). Gradgrind, the 'sultan' of Benthamism (*HT*, 83), learns the hard way at the end of the novel that the circus is as important as the classroom and 'fancy' is as

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Mr Barlow' in *All Year Round*, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1869.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Mr Barlow' in *All Year Round*, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1869.

important as facts (*HT*, 284). Although 'for Dickens an ability still to delight as an adult in the wondrous tales that had enchanted one as a child is always a sure sign of a good and kind heart',<sup>10</sup> like in the case of Sissy Jupe and Louisa in Book One of the novel, there is also a danger to this sense of 'wonder' (*HT*, 233). In *Dombey and Son* for instance, the double-edged quality of 'wonder' is summarised in young Paul's case who 'lived on, surrounded by this arabesque work of his musing fancy, and no one understood him.'<sup>11</sup> Indeed he soon grows unwell due to thinking and wondering beyond his years, and withers and dies. Likewise, Tom, in *Hard Times*, who wonders with his sister in front of the 'fire' on how to manipulate Bounderby to get 'away from home' (*HT*, 74), ends up dying in the end of the novel while serving his sentence in a penal colony.

In fact, there is a mysterious link between the wonderful, the exotic and imagination on one hand and the Oriental/colonial world on the other, in several of Dickens's novels. Young Paul, for instance, who withers due to wondering and thinking, has his position defined in the beginning of *Dombey and Son*, in a passage which catches Edward Said's attention in *Culture and Imperialism*:

The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre. (*DS*, 2)

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<sup>10</sup> M. Slater, 'Dickens in Wonderland', in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, ed. by P. L. Caracciolo. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), pp. 130-42, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> C. Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848), p. 118. Further referencing to the novel will be put between brackets as *DS* followed by page numbers.

Dombey and his son are at the centre of the universe which they have defined by colonial control and mercantile activity, but it is the imaginative Paul, the son of the 'Sultan' (*DS*, 121), who is meant to continue the expansion of the empire. Without colonies, there will be no place for the enterprise called Dombey and Son. It is worth noting here, that Dickens seems to be suggesting the inclusion of the Near East into Britain's empire, by associating the *Arabian Nights'* Orient with the mercantile colonies of the Caribbean, something which Disraeli suggests more explicitly as we will see in the next chapter. I will return to the colonies of the Caribbean in my discussion of the Jamaican rebellion (1865) in the next section. Similarly, in *Great Expectations*, Magwitch who fills Pip's life with 'wonder' in different ways is actually a criminal who is doomed to penal banishment.<sup>12</sup> At another level, he serves as the sponsor for Pip's new wonderful life as a gentleman. In the end however Magwitch, is caught while Pip is helping him escape from London and is sentenced to death, something which is foreshadowed in the beginning of the novel in Magwitch's first encounter with Pip. There is a direct reference here to the *Nights*, as in *Hard Times* and *Dombey and Son*. Slater highlights this reference to 'The Tales of the Genii' in *Great Expectations*: 'The sultan was aroused in the dead of the night, and the sharpened axe that was to sever the rope from the great iron ring was put into his hand, and he struck with it, and the rope parted and rushed away, and the ceiling fell.'<sup>13</sup> Dickens finds no better way to strengthen the sense of wonder and 'mystery by which Pip has been unwittingly surrounded since childhood,' but through such an allusion to the tales of the *Nights*.<sup>14</sup> The possession of this Oriental wonder is as important for the

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<sup>12</sup> C. Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London, Penguin, 2012), p. 440.

<sup>13</sup> Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 357.

<sup>14</sup> Slater, p. 138.

continuation of Britain's supremacy, as it is for Pip's emergence as a gentleman.

Although *Hard Times* (1854), *Dombey and Son* (1846) and *Great Expectations* (1860) were written prior to the beginning of the British military expansion in the Near East, Dickens seems to have already suggested and justified the need for British imperial possession of the region in writing 'novels' which 'romanticize colonial expansion.'<sup>15</sup> He seems to be saying, as wonderful as it could be, the Near Eastern Orient is as doomed as Magwitch, and like Pip we have to try to save it from its violence and criminality, even though we know that we too are doomed to fail in doing so. In the next section, I will discuss how John Ruskin holds similar pro-colonial views and I will also expand on Dickens's colonial and racial ideas in my discussion.

### **B. Ruskin's Fairy Tale and the *Thousand and One Nights***

John Ruskin is known for his influential writings on a various and vast spectrum of topics, and more importantly his art criticism. Little attention or regard however is addressed towards his one and only story, or rather fairy tale, *The King of the Golden River, or The Black Brothers; a Legend of Styria* (1841). Even when the story is considered, it is often read as a mere reproduction of the tale of 'The Water of Life' in *The Brothers Grimm*, with little or no connection to any other literary works, let alone the *Thousand and One Nights*. Critics like Ulrich C. Knoepflmacher and Jane Merrill Filstrup attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of such a reading

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<sup>15</sup> S. Perera, 'Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation: Empire and the Family Business in *Dombey and Son*', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 33 Issue 4 (1990), pp. 603-20, p. 607.



by using psychological and autobiographical elements from Ruskin's life and other writings, and wrestle with facts to prove a valid but rather incomplete point. Closely examining Ruskin's tale makes it apparent however that *The Brothers Grimm* appearance of *The King of the Golden River* is only a frame, and the filling is evidently based on *The Thousand and One Nights*. I reveal here the *Nights* essence of Ruskin's fairy tale and discuss why he concealed it while highlighting his racial and colonial views which he shared with Dickens, Disraeli and other Victorian sages. My analysis here sheds a light on the cultural framework through which the *Nights* tales were treated and it forms an important step in demonstrating how such stereotypical views were translated into an imperial desire later on.

#### I. Thousands of Stories

John Ruskin wrote *The King of the Golden River, or The Black Brothers; a Legend of Styria* in 1841 in response to a challenge by 'the thirteen-year-old Euphemia Gray', his future wife.<sup>16</sup> Ruskin must have witnessed the astounding success of Edward William Lane's new translation of the *Nights* 1838-40 before writing his story. In fact Irwin asserts in his companion to the *Nights* that John Ruskin was one of the 'partisans of Lane's translation'.<sup>17</sup> He had also read as a child an expurgated version of Galland's Grub-Street translation, a point to which I shall come back later. As he was only twenty-one when he wrote the story and had not yet established his name as a celebrated art critic and social commentator, *The King of*

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<sup>16</sup> U. C. Knoepfelmacher, 'Resisting Growth through Fairy Tale in Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*', *Children's Literature*, Vol. 13 Issue 1 (January 1985), pp. 3-30, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Knoepfelmacher, p. 4.

*the Golden River* had to wait another ten years before getting published.<sup>18</sup> In the very little critical attention given to Ruskin's tale only two works stand out: Filstrup's 'Thirst for Enchanted Views in Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*' and Knoepfmacher's 'Resisting Growth Through Fairy Tale in Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*'. Although both acknowledge that Ruskin read the *Nights* as a child as he admits in volume III of *Praeterita*, neither realise the fact that his tale borrows heavily from it, being rather distracted by the Germanic framing of the story.<sup>19</sup> Filstrup asserts very early in his article that 'Ruskin took as a model for *The King of the Golden River*', the Brothers Grimm tale, 'Water of Life'.<sup>20</sup> Knoepfmacher, who makes a similar assertion, tries, like Filstrup, to justify Ruskin's 'departures' from his model unconvincingly by linking it to his confined childhood: 'Ruskin departs quite markedly from the German models he later professed to have followed as submissively as Gluck follows the authority of his superiors'.<sup>21</sup> Ruskin states in his epilogue to the story that he has based it on the Grimm Brothers' tales, and certainly there are many elements in his story to suggest and even convince the reader of this claim.<sup>22</sup> The three brothers' names are German: Schwartz, Hans, and Gluck. The story itself is set in the Germanic Austrian mountains of Styria and the main characters are three brothers like in the tale of the 'Water of Life'. There is no dying father king here, however, and the competition is rather between Schwartz and Hans. Moreover there is no princess to win, something which both Filstrup and Knoepfmacher are baffled by. The clues for these shortcomings lie in

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<sup>18</sup> Knoepfmacher, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> J. Ruskin, *Praeterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*, Vol. 3 (London: George Allen, 1907), p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> J. M. Filstrup, 'Thirst for Enchanted Views in Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*', *Children's Literature*, Vol. 8 Issue 1 (1980), pp. 68-79. P. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Knoepfmacher, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Knoepfmacher, p. 22.

two tales from *The Thousand and One Nights*: 'The Story of the Fisherman' and 'The Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister'.

Gluck is depicted from the beginning of the story as a male Cinderella who is incapable of understanding let alone reacting to his two older brothers' meanness and abuse toward him and has to passively wait until the fairy-like Squire of the Western Wind arrives and sets the story in action by punishing the inhospitable Schwartz and Hans and turning their Treasure Valley to a desert. The brothers are forced to move to a nearby town afterwards and work as goldsmiths, but they cheat their customers and dilute gold with copper and spend all their income on drunkenness - a typical Victorian evil and one on which Ruskin wrote elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> It gets to the point when the only gold left to mould is Gluck's mug which Gluck has received previously from an old uncle and cherishes most. His evil brothers nevertheless force him to throw it in the furnace, order him to mould it into products and go out to squander their last pennies on drinking. Here is the first striking link to the *Nights*.

In 'The Story of the Fisherman' in the *Nights*, the fisherman frees a genie from a bottle, in which it has been locked by King Solomon for thousands of years. Ruskin reproduces this in his story by turning the bottle into a mug and the genie into some sort of a river deity. Nevertheless a similar process to the original story takes place and Gluck frees the king of the golden river by melting the mug in the hot furnace, under the command of his brothers. Like the genie, the king admits he has been put into this state for some time by a more powerful king, but unlike the genie he does not say who this other king is. It is also worth noting that both the

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<sup>23</sup> J. Ruskin, *Unto This Last and Other Essays on Art and Political Economy* (London: Dent, 1907), p. 186.

fisherman and Gluck's approaches to their visibly inanimate findings are commercial at first: one is compelled by the need to feed his family, the other by his brothers' addiction to alcohol, until they discover the supernatural life of their findings and everything changes. In addition, the king of the golden river seems to behave like the genie. The genie's exit from the bottle is described in these terms, 'smoke mounted as high as the clouds, and extending itself along the sea [...] formed a great mist' (ANE, 32). The king of the golden river departs in a similar fashion, 'The colours grew faint; the mist rose into the air; the monarch had evaporated'.<sup>24</sup>

In 'The Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister', the envied queen gives birth to two sons and a daughter (Parizade), who through the malice of the two sisters are lost and found by a childless favourite of the king's. He raises them like his and leaves them a good fortune after his death, including a beautiful house and a garden which all the neighbourhood admire and marvel at. The three siblings live together lovingly, priding themselves on their admirable possessions until a mysterious old lady informs them of the fountain of golden water and other marvellous things. The two brothers go on a quest for the golden water, but one after the other they fail and turn each to a black stone, until Parizade successfully finishes the quest, attains the golden water, saves her brothers and they all go home. Gluck is more of a princess Parizade figure, and his femininity also reminds us of Prince Gulchenrouz in *Vathek*. His innocent and rather overly 'kind' nature is highlighted in Ruskin's text by describing him 'as completely opposed, in both

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<sup>24</sup> J. Ruskin, *The King of the Golden River or The Black Brothers; a Legend of Stiria* (Boston: L. C. Page & Co., 1898), p. 53. Further referencing to the story will be put between brackets as *KG* followed by page numbers.

appearance and character, to his seniors as could possibly be imagined or desired' (KG, 4). On various occasions in the story we encounter glimpses of Gluck's femininity in contrast with his brother's vulgar masculinity. For instance, 'when it came to the mug's turn to be made into spoons, it half broke poor little Gluck's heart; but the brothers only laughed at him, tossed the mug into the melting pot, and staggered out to the ale house [...]' (KG 35). In addition, 'when Gluck sat at the window [...] the river brighter than all, fell in a waving column of pure gold [...]. 'Ah!' said Gluck aloud after he had looked at it for a little while, 'if that river were really all gold, what a nice thing it would be?'" and when he heard the voice of the king of the Golden River responding, he exclaimed, 'Bless me!' 'what is that?' (KG 37). In stark contrast, Hans and Schwartz are described in masculine terms, such as in 'came roaring into the house' (KG 44), and when they argued they 'drew their swords, and began fighting' (KG 45).



Figure 10: Ruskin, John, *The King of the Golden River*, illustrated by Richard Doyle. Kent: George Allen, 1890s, p. 36.

Gluck's baffling femininity in this seemingly Germanic fairy tale is recognizable to Knoepfmacher who comments on Doyle's illustrations of Gluck in Ruskin's manuscript: 'The femininity of Ruskin's boy-Cinderella is evident in these [...] renditions of Gluck'.<sup>25</sup> Knoepfmacher is not alone in recognising Gluck's conspicuous femininity. Elizabeth Bowen is also baffled by it: 'In *The King of the Golden River* we have three brothers, but no princess. And the fairy personages are neither gauzy nor pretty: on the contrary they are decidedly comic – an odd-looking, fussy, bossy pair of old men'.<sup>26</sup> Bowen then digresses toward Ruskin's accepted expertise on art, 'How came John Ruskin to write us this fairy story? He is famed for work of a totally different kind'. Then she states, 'No, there is no princess'. Bowen attempts to compensate for this shortcoming by foretelling Gluck's life beyond the end of Ruskin's text: 'when he [Gluck] does take a bride, she will be more fair than any who ever wore a crown'.<sup>27</sup> Of course this is impossible, not only because the story ends before this point, but also because Gluck himself is the fulfilment of the princess's role in Ruskin's indebted tale.

Both Hans and Schwartz, like Parizade's brothers, go on the quest of the golden river but both fail and are turned into 'black stones' (*ANE*, 876). Only the boy-Parizade successfully and altruistically passes the trials and gets rewarded by completing the quest and gaining his treasure as promised by the genie-like king. He is less successful than Parizade, however, in convincing the king to turn his brothers back and they remain stones forever, to be known by the neighbourhood

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<sup>25</sup> Knoepfmacher, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Bowen, Elizabeth, 'Introduction to King of the Golden River' in *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 290-303, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Bowen, p. 296.

as 'the Black Brothers' (KG, 55). Unlike the German tale, Gluck does not win a princess, because he fulfils the role of princess Parizade in the *Nights* tale. There is also no father to cure here, unlike in the 'Water of Life', because Ruskin's story is a sheer imitation of two of the *Nights* tales, where in one ('The Story of the Fisherman') there is no mention of father, and in the other ('The Story of the Two Sisters who Envied Their Younger Sister'), the father is non-present and unknown to the siblings at this stage. It is worth mentioning here that Jeffrey L. Spear notes briefly in a dedicated section to Ruskin's fairy tale in his work, *Dreams of an English Eden* (1984), that the *Nights* and the 'German Popular Stories of the brothers Grimm [...] had been among the delights of Ruskin's childhood' and that Ruskin had blended 'motifs from the tale of 'The Golden Water' ('The Two Sisters who Envied their Cadette') with [...] an imitation of the Grimm narrative mode'.<sup>28</sup> This is the beginning and the end however of Spear's interest in Ruskin's sources. He does not explain why Ruskin selected these two particular sources nor does he explore any of Ruskin's other debts to the *Nights* or *The Brothers Grimm*. As I have explained earlier and as I will continue to demonstrate, Ruskin's debt to the *Nights* is far more than just the motifs of a single story; and I shall continue my analysis here by examining the motif of gold.

The motif of gold, with its variant yellow, runs throughout Ruskin's fairy tale. First, we get told that the brothers 'had heaps of gold lying about on their floors' (KG, 15). Second, when the South West Wind Esquire first visits the three brothers' house, he notices 'Gluck's little yellow head jammed in the window' (KG, 19). The

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<sup>28</sup> J. L. Spear, *Dreams of an English Eden: Ruskin and His Tradition in Social Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 51-4, p. 52.

recurrent reference to gold is an emphasis on its meaning of innocence or goodness. Thus Gluck is singled out from the beginning as good, while his brothers are doomed at the end by turning into black stones. They had the opportunity of becoming good but instead they stock their gold around them on the floors, which is of course in stark contrast to Gluck's symbolic gold on his head. When the brothers are stripped of their fortunes by the South West Wind Esquire, they curiously try their luck at becoming 'goldsmiths'. Their enterprise is doomed from the moment of its conception however due to the Hans and Schwartz failure to see beyond the monetary value of gold. They agree to 'put a great deal of copper into the gold, without any one's finding it out' (KG, 33). Their decision as well as action spoil the purity of their gold on the physical as well as the spiritual level, foreshadowing their spoiling of the holy water they acquire later on in order to turn the Golden River into real molten gold - whereas Gluck on the other hand, is more successful at preserving his holy water through the goodness of his heart as well as by responding to the calls of the thirsty. He subsequently gets rewarded by the turning of the river into gold for him, which is the advice of the power of goodness in the story, the king of the Golden River: 'Whoever shall climb to the top of that mountain, from which you see the Golden River issue, and shall cast into the stream at its source three drops of holy water, for him, and for him only, the river shall turn to gold' (KG, 48). Gold in this sense has both a monetary as well as a spiritual value, and its monetary value cannot be unlocked without the correct spiritual attitude. In terms of imperial acquisition, this is a view which Disraeli shares. Tancred's acquisition of the Near East is tied to his spiritual motives as we will see in the next chapter. It is worth noting here that Ruskin, though groomed by his parents for an Evangelical career, had a paradoxical fascination with Catholicism



from a young age, apparent here in the story by the recurrence of number three and the emphasis on the spiritual value of gold: three brothers, three drops of holy water, three tests on the way to the source of the river. Ruskin's over-protective parents always accompanied him on his trips to Italy, France and Switzerland. When Ruskin insisted on asserting his independence by travelling to his three favourite countries alone, 'his mother, anxious about his spiritual fragility and worried that he might drift towards Catholicism, secretly slipped a copy of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* into his baggage'.<sup>29</sup>

It is not unusual for Victorian authors to use the motif of gold to emphasise innocence and goodness as well as money. George Eliot in particular deploys it in her work. In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) for instance, the chapter where Maggie passes from childhood to adolescence is titled 'The Golden Gates Are Passed' (208-18). Ruskin's fairy tale is remarkable, nevertheless, for borrowing direct images from the *Nights* to emphasise goodness through the motif of gold. In 'The Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister', yellow and gold are used interchangeably to refer to the golden water which is one of three prizes Princess Parizade attains for successfully completing her onerous challenge. At times the two adjectives are used together, as in when princess Parizade pours all the 'yellow golden water' she collected from beyond the mountain into a 'marble basin' in her garden, 'and afterwards formed a fountain twenty feet high' (ANE, 881). We encounter a mirror image of this 'twenty feet high' fountain in Ruskin's Golden River. The reason behind the river's name is that it has a waterfall which glimmers in the sunlight making it look 'like a shower of gold' (KG, 14). Furthermore, in the

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<sup>29</sup> Jackson, pp. 43-49.

*Nights* also gold stands for ultimate beauty, innocence and nobility; sometimes for the three combined, at other times just a single attribute. Expressions like as beautiful as 'daylight' (*ANE*, 820), and 'as fair as the day' (*ANE*, 280), occur in the *Nights* in reference to women of great beauty and social status. Such metaphors reflect on one level the power of sunbeams and daylight to render something extraordinarily beautiful, and on the other the supernatural power of daylight which could turn something into gold. Both are fulfilled in the Golden River.

The series of three tests leading to attaining the 'golden water' in the *Nights* as well as in Ruskin's tale is failed by Prince Bahman and Prince Perviz in the *Nights* and Hans and Schwartz in the King of the Golden River. The four of them turn into black stones; comparing two passages of failing the supernatural tests, and eventually turning to black stones, highlights further elements of similarity or more appropriately debt of one story to a much older one:

the voices increasing their noise both behind and before him, at last he [Prince Bahman] was frightened; his legs trembled under him; he reeled, and presently found that all his strength failed him: He [...] turned about to run down the hill and was that instant turned into a black stone [...]. (*ANE*, 874)

The roar of the Golden River rose on Hans' ear [...] Their sound came mightier and mightier on his senses; his brain grew giddy with the prolonged thunder [...] an icy chill shot through his limbs: he staggered, shrieked and fell. (*KG*, 53)

We encounter first an element of supernatural noise, then failing courage, and afterwards failing strength in the head and limbs, before a final collapse into black

stones. Besides this step by step similar transformation between Prince Bahman in the *Nights* and Hans in the *King of the Golden River*, we also encounter an almost exactly-matching pattern of punctuation: semicolon, semicolon, colon, full stop in the *Nights*; semicolon, colon, full stop in Ruskin's tale. This is far-removed from an accepted unconscious or even semi-conscious influence of one literary text over another, but a rather direct adaptation by a deliberate author. Ruskin read the *Nights* as a child, as he states in *Praeterita*: 'the Arabian Nights had told me of thieves who lived in enchanted caves, and beauties who fought with genii in the air'.<sup>30</sup> The version Ruskin refers to is more than likely Galland's Grub-Street version of the *Nights* as it remained in print at least until the Victorian fin de siècle, despite the publication of several new nineteenth-century translations by prominent Orientalist figures, like Edward William Lane (1838-40) and Richard Burton (1886). I have located two Grub-Street major nineteenth-century editions, which were published in the old tradition of the first English text, without a translator's name.<sup>31</sup> Upon comparing them to the Oxford reprint of the Grub-Street edition, it became apparent that they are different editions of the exact same translation: the very first Grub-Street one (1706-21). Perhaps the first English translation remained in print due to its easy and non-archaic language, or possibly for its free copyrights, making it commercially more appealing for publishers than new current translations. Nevertheless, the two editions I refer to in my footnote, alongside the 1995 Oxford

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<sup>30</sup> J. Ruskin, *Praeterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*, Vol. 1 (London: George Allen, Sunnyside, Orpington, 1899), p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. (Reprint of the eighteenth-century first edition). *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1869. (The original Grub-street translation which has remained in print anonymously until the late nineteenth-century, in spite of the emergence of new nineteenth-century translations by eminent translators). *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1890.

reprint, are sufficient to highlight the ongoing success of the first English translation of the *Nights*. In addition, Ruskin read the *Nights* as a child, before becoming one of Edward William Lane's 'artisans' of the second major translation in English (1836-40). This leaves little doubt in regards to whether Galland's Grub-Street translation was the version he read and was influenced by as a child.

Further to the above, John Ruskin deployed other schematics to conceal an apparent debt. The two main stories from which Ruskin borrowed his story were selected carefully from the *Nights*. The 'Story of the Fisherman' is one which takes place very early in Galland's *Nights*, whilst the 'The Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister' occurs at the very end. This not only reflects Ruskin's conscious selection of the stories, but also his intention while writing his fairy tale to distract firstly his beloved Euphemia Grey from his main source, and secondly, ten years later, his public readers.

## II. A Concealed Source

It is surprising how the evident similarities I demonstrate here between Ruskin's tale and the above discussed two tales from the *Nights* have not been explored until now. Knoepfmacher alludes to it in his article, and Spear only briefly mentions some similarities between the golden river and the fountain of golden water.<sup>32</sup> It seems that Ruskin's trick in hiding his story, which would have been recognised by his contemporaries as pseudo- Oriental, within the shell of a *Brothers Grimm* tale has been very successful at deflecting the attention from its true source for over a

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<sup>32</sup> Knoepfmacher, p. 23 & Spear, p. 52.

century and a half. Even though he initially wrote it in his teens to his beloved, when he published later on he kept it under the same Germanic framing for his wider audience. He states in his autobiography: '*The King of the Golden River* was written to amuse a little girl; and being a fairly good imitation of Grimm and Dickens, mixed with a little true Alpine feeling of my own, has been rightly pleasing to nice children, and good for them'.<sup>33</sup>

More surprisingly, 'The Grimms themselves identified the *Nights* as the ultimate source of eight of the tales they had been told', but this has not drawn any critical attention to the actual source of Ruskin's tale.<sup>34</sup> The question this discovery raises, however, is why did he conceal his true source? The easy answer would be that he did not want the majority of the credit for the creativity of the story to be taken from him. This is not true as he himself claimed to have based it on the Brothers Grimm, in an obvious attempt at burying his true source in the German forests of folk tales. To explain his real reason behind disguising his true source I have to reveal first the actual sources of the *Nights* as opposed to the accepted false ones during Victorian times.

Like the majority of Victorians, the vast majority of the readers of the *Nights*' today and like Galland himself, and Dickens, Ruskin believed it was Arabian. It is very evident within Galland's *Nights* that there is great confusion in terms of the language, geography, religion and races of what is today referred to as the Middle East, as discussed in Chapter Two. The term 'Arabian' is not just used to refer incorrectly to the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean but also to the official lingua franca of the region, combining the meanings of both 'Arabic' and 'Arab' as

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<sup>33</sup> Ruskin, *Praeterita* Vol II, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Irwin, p. 101.

they are used today, as discussed in Chapter One. One of the princes within the *Nights* says, 'I applied myself to geography, to chronology, and to speak our Arabian language in its purity' (*ANE*, p.89). Further on, the narration is interrupted by Galland to make the point that, 'Beder, in the Arabian language, signifies the Full Moon' (*ANE*, 499). In addition, Galland chooses the subtitle, *Conte Arab*, or Arabian fairy tales for his text. The English Grub-Street translator of Galland's text, accepted Galland's confused notes as facts. Finding the title *The Thousand and One Nights* unfavourable, perhaps for commercial reasons, he chose instead *The Arabian Nights Entertainment* - a title which has remained popular along with the English text for three centuries, in spite of its incorrectness as well as the anonymity of the translator. As I highlighted in Chapter Two, the *Nights* as a compilation of folkloric stories date much earlier than the Arab conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean. Galland's source, though lost today, was a translation/adaptation to Arabic from an older Persian manuscript which is itself based on a much older translation. As Irwin asserts, it is impossible to date it back to a particular historical point in ancient history.<sup>35</sup> In regards to its Folkloric nature the *Nights* is only comparable to 'those other great narrative miscellanies from the eastern Mediterranean, the Bible and the *Odyssey*'.<sup>36</sup>

Based on my close analysis here, I have established that the actual reason behind Ruskin's concealment of his true sources is his Euro-centrism; there is little to be embarrassed about if his story is inspired by Germania, but much to be ashamed of if borrowed from what was imagined to be the Bedouins of Arabia. In lecture II of *Unto This Last*, which was published in 1860, nearly ten years after he published

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<sup>35</sup> Irwin, p. 4

<sup>36</sup> Arata, p. 1.

his story, Ruskin addresses the English community in an authoritative tone and declares:

Your first and proper standing is not as churchwardens and parish overseers in an English county, but as members of the great Christian community of Europe. And as members of that community (in which alone, observe, pure and precious ancient art exists, for there is none in America, none in Asia, none in Africa), you conduct yourselves precisely as a manufacturer would, who attended to his looms, but left his warehouse without a roof.<sup>37</sup>

Art only exists in Europe, Ruskin claims, after borrowing directly from a work of art produced and developed over centuries in Asia and Africa.

On a different level, 'The Story of the Two Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister' in the *Nights*, like the rest of the stories in the *Nights*, is a tool of survival devised and narrated by Scheherazade, the newly-wedded 'sultanness'. Her husband, Sultan Shahriar, who has developed a prejudice against all women due to the betrayal of a former wife, takes it upon himself to wed a new wife every night and have her killed in the morning to avoid any potential future betrayal. Scheherazade's tales leave the Sultan on a cliff-hanger every night to avoid being executed in the morning, a fate many a new bride before her has met. The importance of this particular story is in its being the final one in Galland's edition; it is the one through which Scheherazade has bargained on all along, the story which would either save her for good or ruin her forever. In it she depicts two fates: the younger sister's fate which met an unjust banishment by her husband the king, for

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<sup>37</sup> Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 55.

no fault of hers; and the fate of Princess Parizade who through kindness, cunning and courageousness restores her brothers from their metamorphosis into black stones, successfully attains the three treasures, and ultimately restores herself and her brothers and her mother to their rightful royal positions in the Sultan's heart and at the royal court. Schaherazade's survival-narratorial design works exactly as she must have intended it to and upon finishing her story:

I see, lovely Scheherazade, said he, that you can never be at a loss for these sort of stories to divert me; therefore I renounce in your favour the cruel law I had imposed on myself; and I will have you to be looked upon as the deliverer of the many damsels I had resolved to have sacrificed to my unjust resentment. (ANE, 892)

Schaherazade's narrative saves her life as well as the lives of all the future 'damsels' who would have married the Sultan and met the same fate. In this sense, Ruskin's fluid transformation of Parizade into Gluck defeats the intention of the original story and devalues its moral. The accepted moral of Ruskin's tale, according to its reviewer in *The Morning Chronicle* (1850), is as follows: 'His brothers for their wickedness were made black stones; he for his goodness is rewarded with the Treasure Valley; and so the "inheritance which had been lost by cruelty is regained by love"'.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, Gluck who is depicted to be meek, femininely caring and unmaterialistic in comparison to his brothers' loses these qualities by the end of the moral tale and is rewarded. As I mentioned, before the King of the Golden River emerges out of the 'golden' mug to give him the recipe to turn the river water into gold, Gluck repeats his sincere wishes for the river to really turn into gold, 'If

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<sup>38</sup> *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Friday, December 27, 1850; Issue 26231.



that river were really all gold, what a nice thing it would be' (KG, 36). Later after both Hans and Schwartz perish and Gluck gets short of money, we are told, 'Gluck grew tired, and made up his mind to go and try his fortune with the Golden River' (KG, 60). Moreover, Gluck disappointingly never tries to save his brothers from their metamorphosis, unlike Princess Parizade who successfully attains the 'golden water' as well as discovers a method for de-metamorphosing her brothers and bravely following it through.

### III. Why a particularly Germanic framing for the Story?

This leads into the question of why there is a particularly a Germanic framework, since Ruskin could have chosen any other European setting. For instance, Italy and particularly Venice, was one of his fascinations and on which he wrote one of his great works, *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53). He did not, however, choose it as a setting for his story. The answer lies mainly in the popular imagination of the mythical Anglo-Saxon foundation of the English nation:

How, in the fifth century, Hengist and Horsa, the English Romulus and Remus, the Pilgrim Fathers of the English, led the way for the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, to come from the forests of Germany and the heaths of Jutland to settle in Roman Britain, replacing Latin with English and Christianity with Heathenism. How in the sixth century Gregory the Great saw English boys for sale in the slave market of Rome, declaring 'Non Anglii, sed angeli', and becoming Pope, sent St Augustine to convert the English to Christianity. How in the eighth century, the heathen Danes invaded England; how King Alfred defeated them and made them accept

Christianity; and how his heirs united England. And how in 1066, the Normans, as their name implies, of Viking descent, invaded England from France, and Harold, the last English king fell at Hastings, and, Hereward, the last English freedom fighter submitted to William the Conqueror, and we fell under the Norman yoke. This is the foundation myth of the English nation.<sup>39</sup>

The myth, summarised well by J. A. Hilton in a discussion of Ruskin's Anglo-Saxonism, is one which favours a monolithic origin of English culture and identity. It neither acknowledges the natural hybridity of diverse historical settlements in the English isles, nor the fact that the favoured ancestors were themselves, like the Romans, invaders and colonisers of multi-origined inhabitants. Nevertheless Ruskin favoured this monolithic mythology of English ancestry and within it the conception of Gothic/Germanic/Anglo-Saxon art and architecture as the epitome of the real and genuine in art and architecture, a framework which in the words of *The Critic* makes it worthy 'to be printed, as a pleasant Christmas book'.<sup>40</sup> At times Ruskin even promulgated his own version of the myth:

Since first the dominion of men was asserted over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set upon its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the First of these great powers only the memory remains; of the Second, the ruin; the Third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> J. A. Hilton, 'Ruskin's Anglo-Saxonism: Constructing and Deconstructing The Pleasures of England', *Ruskin Review and Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2005), pp. 38-55, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> *The Critic*, 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1851, p. 10. (*British Periodicals*, p.16)

<sup>41</sup> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (Boston: Aldine Book Publishing Co., 1890), p. 15.

The Venetian and Italian styles and modes were also favoured but only perhaps due to their being the children of the Roman Empire, the role model of Imperial Britain.<sup>42</sup> More importantly and beyond their apparent artistic value, Italian and Venetian architecture and art are European and, as highlighted in a previous section, in Ruskin's point of view art only exists in Europe. Though he spent on average six months per year travelling, Ruskin never ventured outside Europe, and 'smilingly declined any number of kind offers of hospitality from his admirers in the United States, on the grounds that he would not wish to visit a country so sad as to have no castles'.<sup>43</sup> His eccentric hierarchical view of the world placed Europe as the top continent, England the top country, and the aristocratic/feudal English man as the leading human of the world by divine right, a view which he shared with Disraeli, as we will see in the next chapter. He writes in *Sesame and Lilies*:

[...] a Lord has legal claim only to his title in so far as he is the maintainer of the justice of the Lord of lords; and a Lady has legal claim to her title only so far as she communicates that help to the poor representatives of her Master, which women once, ministering to Him of their substance, were permitted to extend to that Master Himself; and when she is known, as He Himself once was, in breaking of bread.<sup>44</sup>

In regards to the British Empire and its non-European citizens Ruskin holds similar views to those on art and the world. The Eyre incident is one of great importance in illustrating his views on the matter. The British governor of Jamaica, Edward Eyre, took the side of the white planters when he received a petition from the local black

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<sup>42</sup> Hilton, p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> Jackson, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, p. 43.

population requesting the improvement of their condition by allowing them to 'cultivate some Crown lands'. He responded by claiming that their 'desperate' condition was 'due to their own indolence, improvidence and vice'.<sup>45</sup> His actions and insulting response incited the Jamaican Rebellion of 1865. Governor Eyre crushed the rebellion by butchering and executing '439 blacks', 'viciously' whipping 'around 600 more' and burning down 'over a thousand homes'.<sup>46</sup> Champions of 'law' such as John Stuart Mill and John Bright called into question Eyre's unlawful actions. In contrast and irony, Eyre's defenders included prominent cultural icons, such as Charles Kingsley, Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, as well as both Charles Dickens and John Ruskin.<sup>47</sup> Dickens's racially-prejudiced letter to a friend summarises the perspective of the pro-Eyre team:

The Jamaica insurrection is another hopeful piece of business. The platform – sympathy with the black – or the native, or the devil – afar off, and that platform indifference to our own countrymen at enormous odds in the midst of bloodshed and savagery, makes me stark wild. Only the other day, here was a meeting of jawbones of asses at Manchester, to censure the Jamaica Governor for his manner of putting down the insurrection! So we are badgered about New Zealanders and Hottentots, as if they were identical with men in clean shirts at Camberwell, and were to be bound by pen and ink accordingly [...] But for the blacks in Jamaica being over-impatient and before their time, the whites might have been exterminated,

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<sup>45</sup> Ian Herson, *Britain's Forgotten Wars: Colonial Campaigns of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. (Stroud: The History Press, 2008), p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> Herson, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Herson p. 98 & Andrew Sanders, *Authors in Context: Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 65 & David Stainwright, *John Ruskin (1819-1900): A Man for Our Times* (Ely: Melrose Books, 2013), p. 198.

without a previous hint or suspicion that there was anything amiss. Laissez  
allez, and Britons never, never, never!<sup>48</sup>

This passage from Charles Dickens's defence of governor Eyre's actions puts his pro-colonial passage in *Dombey and Son* in perspective. For Dombey's 'earth' or empire was built on the wealth accumulated by the slave labour of the 'blacks' of the Jamaican plantations whom Dickens despised. Like Charles Dickens, John Ruskin had no issue with governor Eyre's massacres of whole Jamaican villages, including children, as long as he kept them in order.<sup>49</sup> Even when it came to English London, Ruskin had a great problem with the clearly non-European non-white communities whose ethnic roots came from British colonies and who disturbed the racial purity of 'the best northern blood'.<sup>50</sup> To him they were as threatening to the English Anglo-Saxon race as 'the iron veins' of the railway threatened and disrupted 'the frame of our country'.<sup>51</sup> Even populations of white English country folk looked ugly to him as they abandoned their ancestral 'Anglo-Saxon' towns and villages to slum together into the city's ghettos and he could only liken them to 'the Arab', the lowest of the low; 'The crowded tenements of a struggling and restless population [that] differ only from the tents of the Arab or the Gipsy by their spot of earth; by their sacrifice of liberty without the gain of rest'.<sup>52</sup> As Ian Baucom explains, 'the racial alterity of the working classes and the poor is expressive primarily of a cultural primitivism that manifests itself in a predisposition to wandering, to unsettlement, to intentional homelessness'.<sup>53</sup> Along similar lines, Karen Sayer

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Saunders, p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> Kiernan, pp. 200-201.

<sup>50</sup> Hilton, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 59.

<sup>52</sup> Baucom, p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> Baucom, p. 62.

states how the revolutionised countryside became viewed as ‘potentially alien and corrupting, like the colonies’<sup>54</sup>:

The Children, who should have been England’s pure and innocent future, were described as having been warped and made into near savages; they became the other, alien and fearful to the English bourgeoisie.<sup>55</sup>

It is this ‘cultural primitivism’ and ‘intentional homelessness’ that Lewis depicted in his desert paintings, and it is also this same nomadism and near-savagery that Ruskin viewed the imaginary signified of the ‘Arab’ within, something which the multi-ethnic *Nights* was wrongly associated with. Hence he would have never linked his fairy tale to such a figure or setting, even though he chose to borrow from a work he and others imagined to be also ‘Arab’.

As demonstrated above, Ruskin’s *The King of the Golden River, or The Black Brothers; a Legend of Styria* is a Germanised *Thousand and One Nights* Tale. The King of the Golden River is an incarnate *Nights* genie, the golden river is the golden water of the fountain, the black brothers are the princes who get turned into black stones and Gluck himself is princess Parizade. Even ‘Styria’ in the subtitle, which is a carefully selected state in Austria, is a clever play on Syria, the homeland of Galland’s original manuscript. This discovery not only asserts the infinite possibilities of the *Nights*’ influence on English literature but also the double standards through which its rich pool of ancient diverse folkloric creativity was often approached. The deeming of African, Asian and American cultures as devoid of the capability to obtain art, let alone produce it, and the claim that art exists only

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<sup>54</sup> Karen Sayer, *Women of the Fields* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> Sayer, p. 104.

in Europe are hypocritical and xenophobic as well as divisive. Nevertheless Dickens's and Ruskin's Anglo-Saxonism was not by any means exclusive to them but 'was part of a wider Anglo-Saxonist project, an attempt to understand England's present and to discern her future by reading the runes of her Anglo-Saxon past'.<sup>56</sup> They are not responsible for a whole social movement, but their social views can be understood and condemned within it. Similarly, their ambivalence towards the *Nights*, whether in subverting its imagery or borrowing from its tales without acknowledging it are symptomatic of how its stories were received and Anglo-Saxonised. The culture the *Nights* was perceived to represent would also be later claimed in a similar fashion, albeit with military as well as literary might this time. We will see in the next Chapter how Disraeli will continue to draw on its stereotypes in his novel *Tancred* and how Gladstone will make his decision to invade Egypt in 1882 after being influenced by the rhetoric of the *Arabian Nights'* discourse.

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<sup>56</sup> Hilton, p. 55.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Empire as a New Crusade

Disraeli's literary success upon the publication of *Tancred* in 1847 coincided with his political successes in parliament as he usurped Peel's hegemony over the Conservative party, with editions running up until he became prime minister and beyond.<sup>1</sup> The coincidence was less spontaneous than it seems to be, for *Tancred or The New Crusade* completed Disraeli's political trilogy, a trilogy the main purpose behind which was to gain public backing to his political ideology and career.<sup>2</sup> Locating this within the Gladstone–Disraeli rule, I will explore below how it is that in Disraeli – and specifically *Tancred* – literary romanticism about the Orient of the *Arabian Nights* or the Near East, starting from Galland, meets political and historical romanticism about the empire. Through a close examination of *Tancred* I will highlight the imperial agenda within it which appears in line with the Oriental stereotypes discussed in the previous chapters. I will, moreover, explore the role of two Disraeli-appointed public servants in disseminating *Nights*-discourse stereotypical views about Egypt in the period leading up to the invasion in 1882, which is the culmination point of my thesis and this chapter.

The subtitle of *Tancred* makes the purpose of the book no secret and though at first it seems irrelevant to the first two novels of the trilogy, a closer examination of the novel puts everything in its place. As a post-Romantic, like Ruskin, Carlyle, Dickens and Arnold, Disraeli believed in the aristocratic paternalistic mission and

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Disraeli *Tancred* (London: Frederick Warne, 1866).

<sup>2</sup> D. Bivona, 'Disraeli's Political Trilogy and the Antinomic Structure of Imperial Desire', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 22 Issue 3, (Spring 1989), pp. 305-25, p. 306.



responsibility towards the common people. In *Coningsby*, the aristocratic hero civilises the new and emerging middle classes. In *Sybil*, Egremont finds a solution to the country's division into 'two nations' by uniting them under aristocratic paternalism. His novels were written to educate the aristocracy, the natural leaders of the nation in his view. Throughout his trilogy, all aristocratic characters are named by their titles. According to Borgstede, 'The aristocracy was to take the lead. The younger sons/the new generation had to be educated by the Jew Sidonia/Disraeli and by studying the conditions of work and life and listening to the demands and visions of working-class people as Egremont/Disraeli did.'<sup>3</sup> The themes of both *Coningsby* and *Sybil* fit very well with what is expected from a Conservative party member, but it is in *Tancred* that aristocratic paternalism is extended to appropriate the East and its holy lands. There are several reasons for this.

First, in Disraeli's Crystal Palace speech, Disraeli asserts that it is the empire that will make the English youth 'rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world.'<sup>4</sup> Second, as Europe is the leading continent of the world and England is the leading country of it, then England or Tancred in this case bears the responsibility of civilising the peoples of the world as Coningsby bears the responsibility of civilising the middle classes: a concept which is also very similar to Ruskin and Dickens's writings. In many ways, 'the image of the noble aristocratic crusader, stepping boldly into an alien land to reclaim a legacy and affect a benevolent reunification of world cultures was a resonant one in the 1840s, the decade of Puseyism, Young England

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<sup>3</sup> Borgstede, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Bivona, p. 324.

[which was founded by Disraeli], and the Carlylean Hero.<sup>5</sup> Like Gluck in Ruskin's tale, Tancred is portrayed from the beginning of the novel as meek and 'too tender for malice'.<sup>6</sup> For instance, when Lady Bertie raises with Tancred his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his reaction is described thus: 'his heart trembled; he was about to give utterance to some wild words, but they died upon his lips' (*T*, 157). At the same time he is also gallant and brave and does not hesitate to draw 'his sword' at times of danger and lead his companions to glorious death, charging them with the brave words of a real knight, 'Let us sell our lives dearly!' (*T*, 235).

Tancred's responsibility also stems from his racial nobility. Sidonia states in the novel: 'All is race; there is no other truth' (*T*, 149). As a young Englishman, he belongs to a race 'so proud', 'so wilful', 'so obstinate' (*T*, 242). He is determined to fulfil his racial responsibility as a leader in the leading country of Europe and claim the East as his own. Edward Said's statement on Disraeli's ethnography leads also to the third reason for the present argument; 'His novel *Tancred* is steeped in racial and geographical platitudes; everything is a matter of race, Sidonia states, so much so that salvation can only be found in the Orient and amongst its races.'<sup>7</sup> Yet Disraeli's racial 'platitudes' combines all semitic races under the term 'Arab' and raises the Jew/Arab - Sidonia - in this case to the level of the educator of the noble Anglo-Saxon. In this sense, the Anglo-Saxon Tancred needs spiritual and moral guidance from the peoples he is destined to conquer in the name of Christianity. This ambivalence in regards to the Anglo-Saxon mission disturbs what would be perceived as a power relationship between the conquering and the conquered, and

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<sup>5</sup> Bivona, p. 324.

<sup>6</sup> B. Disraeli, *Tancred* (London: Longmans, Greens and Co., 1880), p. 12. Further referencing to the story will be put between brackets as *T* followed by page numbers.

<sup>7</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 103.

allows the conquered nations the spiritual upperhand in the process. Nevertheless, Tancred's racial and aristocratic responsibility to crusade is also a religious duty, for the holy land is the means of communication with the deity. Recalling the old crusades, and his ancestor's pilgrimage nearly seven centuries ago, Tancred justifies his decision to abandon travelling to Europe in favour of having his own crusade to the holy land: 'It is time to restore and renovate our communications with the Most High' (*T*, 55). In this sense, crusading is as noble and pious as praying, and claiming the East in such a manner is a holy mission justified by Christian values. As we have seen in Chapter Five, tracing the roots of Christianity in the Near East is a purifying act, and a return to a truer faith. In addition, the new crusade is much needed to cure modern England's lack of spirituality; 'enlightened Europe is not happy. Its existence is a fever, which it calls progress.' (*T*, 224). Fourth, it is a filial duty to the early crusaders who did not succeed in their religious quest due to not having the modern sciences and technology which distinguish Europe and specifically England today. One of these early crusaders is Tancred's direct ancestor; 'a Montacute' who 'saved the life of Cour de Lion at the siege of Ascalon' (*T*, 40). Thus Tancred has an ancestral claim to the land as well as a patriarchal, moral and religious one. The Near East belongs more to him, the bearer of the beacon of Christian Civilisation, than to the decayed races who inhabit its deserts (*T*, 150). After all 'we should never have heard of the Pharaohs, of Babylon the great and Nineveh the superb, of Cyrus and of Xerxes, had not it been for Athens and Jerusalem', Classical civilization and Christianity. (*T*, 229). Ironically, however, the Near Eastern origin of Christianity is not enough for saving the region from suffering this new crusade.

In stark contrast to Tancred's chivalry, the dwellers of the Near East are depicted

collectively in Disraeli's 'loosely defined [...] racial classification' as Arabs (but who could be Greek, Bedouin Arabs, Syrians, Egyptians or Jews) in noble-savage terms.<sup>8</sup> Fakredeen, for instance, who is the quintessential Arab of the novel is a less supernatural version of Beckford's *Vathek*. First of all he is a prince, therefore according to Disraeli's racial ideology, he is the best his race could produce.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he is cunning, and like *Vathek*'s eye his manipulative plans evoke 'terror' in Eva's heart (*T*, 241). Furthermore, he does not follow a particular creed, but in his words: 'I am of that religion which gives me a sceptre' (*T*, 174). He descends from the Islamic prophet, but he and his ancestors have adopted Christianity to appease the French (*T*, 269). Like Richard Marsh's Beetle, he changes form as expedient. A few pages later, to appeal to Eva, his Jewish foster sister, he tells her: 'I am a Hebrew' (*T*, 207). Eva's response to Fakredeen sums him up as a ruler and a representative of his Arab race according to Disraeli: 'Thou son of a slave! [...] thou masquerade of humanity!' (*T*, 207). This shape-shifting image of Fakredeen is foreshadowed in the beginning of the novel when he is introduced in serpentine terms:

This person was apparently lying on his back, his face hid, his form not to be traced, a wild confusion of shawls and cushions, out of which, like some wily and dangerous reptile, glided the spiral involutions of his pipe. (*T*, 11)

This image of an invisible person, hiding under the cushions, with his pipe extending from him like a snake is one that associates him with Satan from the start. It is worth noting here that the snake was vilified in Christianity due to its association

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<sup>8</sup> R. Schweller, "'Mosaic Arabs': Jews and Gentlemen in Disraeli's Young England Trilogy", *Shofar*, Vol. 24 Issue 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 55-69, p. 58

<sup>9</sup> Bivona, pp. 305-25.

with paganism and polytheism.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the Arab prince who was descended from the Islamic prophet was not only depicted as an untrustworthy figure but was also associated with paganism and consequently in need of civilising. This is an implicit justification for Tancred's crusade.

Eva is depicted in a rather better light, for she is after all Jewish, and Disraeli has gone to great lengths in his novels to explain the intellectual superiority of the religion of his ancestors. Nevertheless Eva is still in many ways inferior to Tancred, for she is the 'the human embodiment of the East', the 'angel of Arabia', and Tancred's 'terrible fascination' with his mission.<sup>11</sup> She is described in the following sensual imagery:

But it was in the eye and its overspreading arch that all the Orient spake, and you read at once of the starry vaults of Araby and the splendour of Chaldean skies. Dark, brilliant, with pupil of great size and prominent from its socket, its expression and effect, notwithstanding the long eyelash of the desert would have been those of a terrible fascination had not the depth of the curve in which it reposed softened the spell and modified irresistible power by ineffable tenderness. [...] The nose was small, slightly elevated, with long oval nostrils fully developed. The small mouth, the short upper lip, the teeth like the neighbouring pearls of Ormuz, the round chin, polished as a statue, were in perfect harmony with the delicate ears, and the hands with nails shaped like almonds. (*T*, 187-88)

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<sup>10</sup> Haythem Bastawy, 'The Snake Who Was God', *Nile*, No. 12 Feb/March 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Clausson, N., "'Picturesque Emotion" or "Great Asian Mystery"? Disraeli's Tancred as an Ironic Bildungsroman', *Critical Survey*, Vol. 16 Issue 1 (2004), pp. 1-19, p. 15.

Eva is the 'East' Tancred crusades for and claims all to himself, after proving his worth in his encounters with the Arabs in the desert who, of course, are no match for Tancred, a descendant of the 'saxon race' (*T*, 148), like Eliot's *Adam Bede*. Here the Orientalist/imperialist agenda of the novel is plain; the European male aristocrat deems the sensual female East his own. Tancred's claim upon Eva is justified by his being 'a son of Europe and of Christ' and a true 'Christian in the land of Christ' (*T*, 486). None of the inhabitants of the land are truer or worthier than himself of its ownership: 'talk not to me of others, of those who have claims on you' (*T*, 486). Then after Eva's surrender, 'suddenly it had become night' (*T*, 486), and Tancred's possession of the Near East and the fantastic *Arabian Nights* Orient is complete. For his story from beginning to end has been an *Arabian Nights* one in many names and colours. In the beginning of the novel the celebrations of his coming of age are described as 'a business of the thousand and one nights; the whole county to be feasted (*T*, 5). Yet Tancred is claiming the Near East to help save his imperial homeland from moral degeneration. As Borgstede explains in her brief discussion of the novel:

In Jerusalem, Tancred fell in love with the proud, beautiful and wise Jewess Eva. When Eva called Asia unhappy, and asked him what Asia could do against 'Europe, that has conquered Hindostan', he suggested, 'save it'. Europe needed a 'great thought' again. At Mount Sinai, 'the angel of Arabia' assured him that 'power is neither the sword nor the shield... but ideas, which are divine'.<sup>12</sup>

Tancred's spiritual purpose is reflected from the beginning of the novel when he

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<sup>12</sup> Borgstede, p. 201.

confronts his father about his plans for an 'expedition'. To his father's shock Tancred was not going to embark on a leisurely trip to Rome or Paris but to the Holy Land:

When I remember that the Creator, since light sprang out of darkness, has deigned to reveal himself to His creature only in one land, that in that land he assumed a manly form, and met a human death, I feel persuaded that the country sanctified by such intercourse and such events must be endowed with marvellous and peculiar qualities [...]. (*T*, 70)

Tancred then tells his father that it is these spiritual 'qualities' of the 'Holy Sepulchre' that attracted Europe to the Near East in the age of the crusades, and it is these qualities that he seeks (*T*, 70). The Near East, or in Disraeli's Lane-influenced terminology 'Arabia', can save England and Europe from its moral degeneration. England is in an 'age of movement, but of confused ideas; a country of progress but too rich to risk much change' (*T*, 94). By subduing the Near East, England can learn once more to be a true empire and respect its rightful leaders, the aristocracy. Tancred is seeking to fulfil his role as a leader of his nation by claiming the Near East with all its history, religions, fairy tales, angels and genies as part of the British Empire, and consequently establish spiritual order within a 'confused' but 'progressive' England. Disraeli only suggests the marriage between Tancred and Eva after he makes them fall in love, but he does not fulfil it and the novel is left open-ended. Ultimately, the marriage is left for the English reader, more likely the aristocratic one, to fulfil. Disraeli, like Sidonia, is showing the way things need to be done but the marriage, the acquisition of the Near East is left for the English aristocrat to complete.

Tancred's story in addition is littered with echoes of Lane's version of *The Thousand and One Nights* such as 'the apple of mine eye' (T, 244), and 'our Arabian nights bear balm' (T, 308). In addition the various references to Napoleon's empire in the early domestic part of the novel also prepare the reader for the novel's imperial agenda. For instance, the cook who prepares *The Thousand and One Nights* feast tells his son about his past experience: "'It is something to have served under Napoleon,'" added Prevost, with the grand air of the Imperial kitchen' (T, 6). He also adds: 'Had it not been for Waterloo, I should have had the cross. But the Bourbons and the cooks of the Empire never could understand each other' (T, 6). Furthermore, Napoleon's imperial experience in the Near East is referred to later in the novel: 'even Napoleon regretted that he had ever re-crossed the Mediterranean. The East is a career' (T, 141). In the last third of the novel, Napoleon is mentioned again, albeit this time along with 'Mahomet' (T, 378). Both are depicted by the author to the British readers as the two 'conquerors' of the East, and from their experiences 'an important moral' is 'drawn': 'we should never lose an occasion. Opportunity is more powerful even than conquerors and prophets' (T, 378). Suez would be one of those opportunities as I discuss below.

In his favourite novel of the political trilogy, Disraeli seeks to create a public atmosphere for accepting his political policies of imperial expansion – particularly in the Near East.<sup>13</sup> Bivona suggests, 'To Disraeli, novel-writing was a very expedient act of political ambition'.<sup>14</sup> Borgstede also affirms 'Disraeli held together the two main platforms he was using for change, novel-writing and parliamentary politics.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ward & Trent, et al. "Benjamin Disraeli", *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21; New York: Bartleby.com, 2000), <<http://www.bartleby.com/223/1103.html>> [accessed 20 June 2014], para. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Bivona, p. 305.

<sup>15</sup> Borgstede, p.116..



His novels were to his career what the *Arabian Nights* was to the empire; a literary endeavour which developed into a 'terrible fascination' with political advancement, reminiscent of the tale of Vathek's ambition of which Ruskin was 'a great admirer'.<sup>16</sup>

So far, I have demonstrated the development of a certain conception of the Near East as a violent, wild and timeless place ruled by Schahriar-like despots and inhabited by passive, helpless peoples in popular literature over the Victorian period. The awe and the magic of the different world offered by the *Nights* created a fascination with and a loathing of and a desire to own/appropriate this world. In Said's words, 'The modern Orientalist was, in his view, a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished.'<sup>17</sup> I will demonstrate below how the above stereotypes, which were originally generated by Galland's *Nights* and developed over time, were used to explain and justify the need to invade Egypt in 1882.

According to Harvey Sicherman, 'Disraeli's writings and speeches evince an interest in two nationalisms. The first was English', he 'preferred aristocratic rule'. 'His novels advocate a return to Zion and the re-establishment of ancient glories, the latter infused by his peculiar reading of the Bible and convenient belief that Judaism and Christianity complemented each other.'<sup>18</sup> The second nationalism 'was the Jewish sort'. We see both kinds of nationalisms combined in *Tancred*, where an aristocratic Englishman claims his right to the Near East in a new crusade

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<sup>16</sup> J. Watt, 'The Peculiar Character of the Arabian Tale', in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, ed. by S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 195-211, p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 121.

<sup>18</sup> Sicherman, p. 50.

and falls in love with a Jewish/Arab princess. In the 1830s, while the SDUK was publishing its *Pictorial Bible* and *Modern Egyptians*, Disraeli - like Tancred - was on his grand tour around the Levant and the Near East. As a junior politician in the 1840s, Disraeli also admired Lane's *Nights* and witnessed the Egyptian crisis. He even 'supported Britain's balance-of-power habit: no continental power or group of powers should become strong enough to threaten Britain or its "permanent interests"'.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, 'Disraeli was a worshipper of Byron', one of the pioneers of the pseudo-Oriental tale.<sup>20</sup> This is the policy which Lord Russell followed and propagated under Palmerston in the 1830s first and as a prime minister in the 1850s, as discussed in Chapter Four. As a member of Parliament, Disraeli 'developed a tendency to address Britain as an empire in nearly every context as a member of the House of Commons and his impatience with his parliamentary colleagues for not grasping the importance of foreign and imperial politics.'<sup>21</sup> Disraeli seems to have also had a notion of a grand imperial parliament after the Roman model. Borgstede explains:

Already in 1849 [...] Disraeli had suggested in a letter to Derby they should make the colonies "integral portions of the United Kingdom" and lamented that it was "too late to introduce thirty Colonial MPs into St Stephens" which would have made the imperial parliament truly a representation of the empire as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

Later as prime minister, he would draw on his imperial vision to unify the 'two

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<sup>19</sup> Harvey Sicherman, 'Disraeli's Secret', *The National Interest*, Spring 2002, pp.46 – 57, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Sicherman, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Simone Beate Borgstede, *All is Race: Benjamin Disraeli on Race, Nation and Empire* (Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2012), p. 101.

<sup>22</sup> Borgstede, p. 184.

nations' of society, the rich and the poor, as one 'imperial race'. Borgstede explains, 'As leader of the Conservative Party in 1872 he put the emphasis on the maintenance of the empire and explained that this demanded a strong and healthy population – an imperial race.'<sup>23</sup> In 1872, as a prime minister Disraeli addressed a large crowd at the Crystal Palace and urged them to go back to their homes and raise awareness of the importance of the empire:

When you return to your homes, when you return to your counties and your cities, you must tell to all those whom you can influence that the time is at hand, that, at least, it cannot be far distant, when England will have to decide between national and cosmopolitan principles. The issue is not a mean one. It is whether you will be content to be a comfortable England, modelled and moulded upon continental principles and meeting in due course an inevitable fate, or whether you will be a great country, - an imperial country - a country where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world.<sup>24</sup>

The empire, in this sense, was key to Disraeli on the national and the international fronts.

Disraeli publicised his imperial ideology through *Tancred or The New Crusade*, but he did not get a full chance to practically apply them until he became a prime minister in 1867. One of the first things he achieved was crowning Victoria as Empress of India, and Britain as an empire.<sup>25</sup> He was caricatured in *Punch* as an

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<sup>23</sup> Borgstede, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, ed. by T.E. Kebbel, *Selected Speeches of the Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. II (London: Longman, 1882), pp 529-534.

<sup>25</sup> P. Adelman, *Gladstone, Disraeli & Later Victorian Politics* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1997), p. 23.

Oriental figure, perhaps Abanzer from *Aladdin* handing over the new crown to Queen Victoria.<sup>26</sup> He was still far from the Near Eastern dream he expressed in *Tancred* in the words of the Arab prince, Fakreddin, who welcomingly envisaged the invasion:

Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet, let her stow away all her treasure, bullion, gold plate, and precious arms; be accompanied by all her court and chief people, and transfer the seat of her empire from London to Delhi. There she will find an immense empire ready made, a first rate army, and a large revenue. In the meantime I will arrange with Mehemet Ali. He shall have Bagdad and Mesopotamia, and pour the Bedouin cavalry into Persia. I will take care of Syria and Asia Minor. The only way to manage the Afghans is by Persia and by the Arabs. We will acknowledge the Empress of India as our suzerain, and secure for her the Levantine coast. If she like, she shall have Alexandria as she now has Malta: it could be arranged. (*T*, 263)

In the above passage, which prophesies to a large extent his plans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in terms of imperial expansion, Disraeli expresses his own dream of a romantic British Empire ruling over the ancient lands of the Near East, in 'his favourite of all his novels',<sup>27</sup> and calls Victoria empress twenty years before he managed to officially grant her the title. As Simone Borgstede explains in '*Tancred* Disraeli had developed the idea of making the Queen Empress of India.'<sup>28</sup> At the first sign that the Khedive of Egypt was planning to sell his shares in the new Suez Canal to pay some of his debts, Disraeli struck a

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<sup>26</sup> *Punch*, 15 April 1876.

<sup>27</sup> R. O'Kell, *Disraeli: The Romance of Politics* (London: Toronto University Press, 2013), p. 321.

<sup>28</sup> Borgstede, p. 2014.

deal and completed a quick purchase in 1875.<sup>29</sup> There were a lot of British investors in the Khedive's debts - the gradual result of British-imposed collapse of Mohamed Ali's monopolies system and the granting of a privileged status to British merchants in Egypt - Disraeli's deal however was the British government's first official stake in Egypt, an investment which proved useful for invasion apologists and lasted for nearly a century afterwards. The element of French rivalry over the sale may have also played a part in the swiftness of Disraeli's reaction, but his main motives were his self-asserted dream of a British empire ruling over the 'Asiatic races', and the Suez Canal as well as Egypt would form its corner stone and link it to the 'crown jewel', India. In addition, Disraeli's government seriously 'considered occupying Egypt in 1877 in anticipation of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire'.<sup>30</sup> Disraeli even sought a 'secret cabinet agreement for military action' to occupy Alexandria during the Russian war with the Ottomans in 1877, but the sick man of Europe held his integrity together a little longer.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, Disraeli had to divert his *Nights*-inspired imperial ambition to South Africa, but the seed for Egypt had been sown. Borgstede refers to how 'in 1879 he [Disraeli] explained it would not be more difficult to occupy Egypt than Ireland, if it were necessary.'<sup>32</sup> It was only a matter of time.

Unsurprisingly, it was this passage to India which was used by mainstream historians to justify Britain's baffling invasion of Egypt in 1882. Robinson and Gallagher, in their iconic *Africa and the Victorians*, have asserted that it was the disorder in Egypt which forced Britain to reluctantly invade the country in order to

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<sup>29</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 235.

<sup>30</sup> A. G. Hopkins, 'The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2 (1986), pp. 363-91, p. 381.

<sup>31</sup> Sicherman, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Borgstede, p. 203.

protect the Suez Canal.<sup>33</sup> Robinson and Gallagher's conclusions seem to be held as concrete by recent scholarship on the subject. Luisa Villa, for instance, adopts a strictly politico-economic approach in her discussion of the crisis: 'In the Egyptian crisis, the free and safe' passage of goods and capital 'was powerfully emblematised by the Suez Canal and forcibly guaranteed by the British control on the Egyptian budget.'<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Hicks, in addition, makes similar points even though he acknowledges that it is Disraeli's activity which ultimately led to the invasion of Egypt:

The eastern Mediterranean, with its Suez route to India, was a concern to British politicians and merchants as they watched the financial and political decay of the Ottoman empire, which it had been British policy to uphold since the 1830s.<sup>35</sup>

I return to Hicks's point on Disraeli's activity further below. I have demonstrated here however how recent scholarship on the subject continues to treat the Suez Canal as the main reason for British imperial interest in Egypt. While the Suez Canal could have been an element which played a part in directing British interests towards Egypt, Disraeli's *Nights*-inspired vision and work were what really put Egypt on the British imperial map. As Harvey Sicherman explains in his discussion of Disraeli's activity in Europe, Disraeli had his own plans either way and 'Suez had been a lucky circumstance'.<sup>36</sup> Hicks, in addition, affirms in his conclusion that 'the

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<sup>33</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse, 'Review of Africa and the Victorians by R. Robinson; J. Gallagher; A. Denny', in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 14 No. 3 (1962), pp. 574-576.

<sup>34</sup> Louisa Villa, 'A "Political Education": Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the Arabs and the Egyptian Revolution (1881-82)', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 17 Issue 1, (March 2012), pp. 46-63.

<sup>35</sup> Geoffrey Hicks, 'Disraeli, Derby and the Suez Canal, 1875: Some Myths Reassessed', *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 2012, pp. 182-203, p.182.

<sup>36</sup> Sicherman, p. 49.

purchase of the Suez Canal shares was a piece of *ad hoc*, mid-Victorian policy-making. It takes on a symbolic value only in hindsight'.<sup>37</sup> In his view, Disraeli had his own 'notions', but his government acknowledged the purchase as a continuation of British policy 'to prop up the Turkish empire and prevent any other power from gaining predominance in Turkish dominions', a balance of power tradition which has been in action since the first Egyptian Question in the 1830s.<sup>38</sup>

In his survey of scholarship on the subject, Hopkins discovers that Robinson and Gallagher's long-accepted Suez Canal justification is not a valid one, for 'the admiralty did not think that the canal was in danger, and [...] continued to base its strategy on the Cape route until 1890s.'<sup>39</sup> Quoting from D. A. Farnie's *East and West of Suez*, Hopkins continues, 'there was no imminent danger to the waterway in any form when the cabinet sanctioned the invasion.'<sup>40</sup> Ironically, it was the inauguration of the invasion itself, in the form of the bombardment of Alexandria, which caused 'the threat of a retaliatory strike against the Canal', not the opposite.<sup>41</sup> Even in 1882, the Suez Canal was seen as an implausible justification for claiming Egypt by informed members of the public. In a pamphlet titled *The Crisis in Egypt* and published by the Anti-Aggression League, the author argues:

When Palmerston and Thiers fought the old Egyptian Question in Mehmet Ali's time, there was no Canal. The French, at times, have been just as eager to dominate Egypt as we are, and so have the Italians and the Russians, and yet neither power has any special concern with the Canal. The Canal is a

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<sup>37</sup> Hicks, p. 203.

<sup>38</sup> Hicks, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> Hopkins, p. 373.

<sup>40</sup> Hopkins, p. 374.

<sup>41</sup> Hopkins, p. 374.

miserable excuse, just as the Bosphorus was, or Cyprus was or is! The Egyptian people live miles away from the Canal; the possession of Egypt is in no way necessary to the free use of the Canal.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, after the invasion the construction of a Euphrates railway was considered, owing to the unsafe passage of the Red Sea, side-lining the whole Suez route. Charles Dilke states, 'Between rocks and pilgrim-boats, Red Sea navigation is hard enough for steamers'.<sup>43</sup> It is apparent here then that the Canal was not as significant as it is often made to seem, but Disraeli's imperial vision was.

Furthermore, Gladstone himself recognised in 1878 that Disraeli 'introduced the wild dreams and projects of his Eastern heroes into the practical politics of the West'.<sup>44</sup> In 'The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield', which initially were published anonymously in the *Fortnightly Review* but have been identified by Robert O'Kell to be Gladstone's,<sup>45</sup> Gladstone makes a direct connection between *Tancred* and Disraeli's policies. Directly referring to the passage quoted above from *Tancred*, Gladstone asserts, 'The only difference between the scheme to which Lord Beaconsfield has given effect, and that which Emir Fakredeen propounded to Tancred is the difference between reality and bold caricature.'<sup>46</sup> Sichertman explains how Gladstone's rivalry against Disraeli was reflected in the pamphlet:

Partisanship was laced with anti-semitism and personal insult. Gladstone [...] believed Disraeli a "crypto Jew" with a "race antipathy" toward the

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<sup>42</sup> Frederic Harrison, *The Crisis in Egypt: An Address Given at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1882), p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Charles, *Greater Britain: Record of Travels in English Speaking Countries 1866-67, with Maps and Illustrations*, Vol. II (London: The British Library, 2010), p. 396.

<sup>44</sup> W. Gladstone, *The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield* (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1878), p. 187.

<sup>45</sup> O'Kell, p. 493.

<sup>46</sup> Gladstone, *The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 187.



Eastern Christians. Disraeli, for his part, privately called his opponent an “unprincipled maniac ... never a gentleman!” He regarded the famous pamphlet as “ill-written”.<sup>47</sup>

At Gladstone’s Library, another pamphlet titled ‘The Eastern Question and the Political Situation at Home’, by a member of Parliament called Thomas Brassey and dedicated in pencil to ‘the right honourable William Gladstone’ but with Gladstone’s annotations. Along other points, the part where Brassey discusses his views on Egypt seems to have caught Gladstone’s attention which he lined in the margin and pencilled ‘Egypt’ next to it:

I have been one of those who were of opinion that Egypt if the Turkish Empire were broken up, England should put in a claim to Egypt. Further consideration has changed my views. While we could not allow Egypt to fall into the hands of any other of the European powers, our occupation of the country would add seriously to our responsibilities, without increasing materially our strength [...] As a guarantee to our communications with the East, the possession of Egypt would be nothing without the command of the seas: and with the command of the seas the possession of Egypt is unnecessary.<sup>48</sup>

Bearing in mind that this pamphlet was published in 1877, the year of the purchase of the Suez Canal shares and during the ongoing festivities of crowning Queen Victorian Empress, the pamphlet bears a timely significance to the situation in Egypt. The author in addition seems to be in agreement with Gladstone’s views in

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<sup>47</sup> Sichertman, p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> Brassey, Thomas, *The Eastern Question and the Political Situation at Home* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1877), catalogued at Gladstone’s Library under 10/B/4.

regards to avoiding claiming Egypt. Even if England's communication with India was in question, 'the possession of Egypt' is 'unnecessary' as the 'command of the seas' would allow for this communication via the Cape route if not through the Suez Canal. Nevertheless, Gladstone went ahead with the invasion – Disraeli's vision as he recognised it in *Tancred* – two years after Disraeli's death. Gladstone's decision may seem baffling at first, particularly in light of his liberal and anti-expansionist government, but a closer look at how the situation was reported back to him from Egypt would explain how Disraeli's tactics and vision continued to be at work posthumously.

In the months leading to the bombardment of Alexandria, two people played a major role in swaying Gladstone's liberal government to initiate the invasion: Charles Dilke and Auckland Colvin. In 1881, as 'Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office' of Gladstone's new government, Dilke who shared Disraeli's vision, began to think of Egypt, on which the British government had kept its imperial eye since 1875, as more accessible now since the integrity of the Ottoman Empire has been breached by the French invasion of Tunisia. 'In July - almost one year before the bombardment of Alexandria - he formed a committee of like-minded colleagues' of which Hartington, Gladstone's deputy, was one 'to monitor Egyptian affairs and to secure a forward policy in opposition to Gladstone's internationalism.'<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, there was Colvin, the Disraeli-appointed British Controller-General in Egypt and the financial adviser to the Khedive, 'both shaped and interpreted events to hasten and justify intervention'.<sup>50</sup> As Hopkins explains:

the *Pall Mall Gazette*, said by Blunt to be the only paper that Gladstone

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<sup>49</sup> Hopkins, p. 382.

<sup>50</sup> Hopkins, p. 383.

read attentively, had as its correspondent in Egypt none other than Colvin himself [In 1881 and 1882];” while *The Times*, which expressed similar views, used as its main source C. F. Moberly Bell, who had considerable business interests in Alexandria and whose opinions on policy were shaped by a well-informed friend - Colvin.”<sup>51</sup> Colvin, the guardian of British-imposed debts on Egypt, was the maker of the news delivered not only to the British public, but also to their prime minister. He ‘saw no anomaly in the fact that in 1882 Egyptians banded round Urabi Pasha to resist the British occupation. ‘They were hopelessly ignorant as Lane deemed them forty years earlier, politically blind, they followed blind leaders.’<sup>52</sup> Colvin used disorder as a way to scare both the British public and the prime minister into action. Disorder was a most credible justification to mislead the British public, for the fantastic Orient had been depicted as such in pseudo-Oriental as well as main stream literature. We encounter this Near-Eastern lack of order in the description of Fakredeen as ‘a wild confusion of shawls and cushions’ (T, 11). Timothy Mitchell puts it in these terms: ‘The Orient was backward, irrational, and disordered, and therefore in need of European order and authority.’<sup>53</sup> Colvin begins his account of the British *Making of Modern Egypt*: ‘In the course of the year 1882 an outbreak of anarchy in Egypt led to British occupation.’<sup>54</sup> This was his imposed official version of events, a point which I shall come back to shortly. The lack of order Colvin depicts perfectly fits with the Orientalist discourse. Edward

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<sup>51</sup> Hopkins, p. 383.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human kind* (London: The Cresset Library, 1988), p. 120.

<sup>53</sup>T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (California: University of California Press Ltd., 1991), p. 166.

<sup>54</sup> A. Colvin, *The Making of Modern Egypt* (London: Seeley & Co. Limited, 1906), p. 1.

Said's words apply themselves well to Colvin's imperial scheme: the West 'has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort.'<sup>55</sup> This is something which Galland textually did much earlier in aiming to restore order to the *Nights*, by removing the disrupting passages of Scheherazade's narrative frame as discussed in Chapter Two.

In *The Making of Modern Egypt*, the point Colvin makes, as may be easily guessed from the title of his book, is that Egypt was never really modern and it is the British (like the good genie in *Vathek*, Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, the king of the Golden River in Ruskin's tale or the aristocratic Tancred in Disraeli's) who are making a modern Egypt, saving it from its Schahriar-like tyrant and safeguarding the victimised fellaheen, 'who attracted a great sympathy'.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, P. J. Vatikiotis asserts that after a long Ottoman seclusion, it is Mohammed Ali who 'laid the foundations of a modern Egyptian state.'<sup>57</sup> Colvin's version of events was so influential however, that even newspapers which he did not directly supply with information, like *The Spectator*, also joined in the new hype of encouraging a British 'guardianship' of Egypt 'to protect and raise the fellahin' and restore the lost order which allegedly put European lives at risk.<sup>58</sup> These fellahin were depicted in the passive victimised image of Oriental peoples which Beckford created in *Vathek*, and Disraeli developed in *Tancred*. Urabi, the leader of the revolt against the khedive and commander of the army in the fight against British invaders, was 'characterized as a self-seeking tyrant whose oppression of the Egyptian people

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<sup>55</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. xviii.

<sup>56</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 236. Fellaheen is the plural of Fella, and fellah is an Egyptian peasant.

<sup>57</sup> P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 240.

still left him enough time [...] to massacre Christians'.<sup>59</sup> Like Disraeli's Fakredeen, Urabi became the epitome of the inferior Arab leader, who does not hesitate to kidnap or murder those who are superior to him. In the 'Unmaking of a Patriot', the author discusses the British press's handling of the news and asserts:

On a political level, the movement was attacked by showing that Egypt risked plunging into chaos and that, therefore, the consequences of the revolt were undesirable for Britain. In parallel, however, specific episodes in the escalation of the crisis were employed to insinuate into the mind of the British readers the idea that the political mayhem generated by the emergence of the movement was primarily due to the inherent viciousness of its leaders. The main achievement of such a campaign was therefore the degradation of the public discourse over the crisis, which was reverted towards a range of standard anti-Arab prejudices that provided the British public and politicians with a simple interpretative framework for navigating into the complexity of the crisis, and predicting its future developments.<sup>60</sup>

Thus this kind of rhetoric allowed for political handling of the crisis along the same lines.

Weighing Urabi's side of the story shows that the allegations both against Urabi and the Egyptians were untrue. 'In a signed and sealed letter of 1882' addressed to the Ottoman Sultan 'Urabi Pasha complains of the influence of foreign powers and asserts the dependence of Egypt on the caliphate. Egypt must not be allowed to fall in foreign hands. [...] The Supporters of the Caliphate in Egypt would fight to

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<sup>59</sup> Hopkins, p. 384.

<sup>60</sup> Marco Penfari, 'The Unmaking of a Patriot: Anti-Arab Prejudice in the British Attitude Towards the Arab Revolt', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2012), pp. 92-108, p. 97.

the last.’ As H. Adali explains in his examination of Ottoman documents on the Egyptian question, ‘Urabi Pasha and his confederates wanted the deposition of the khedive because of his pro-British policy.’<sup>61</sup> Urabi detected the British imperial plans before the invasion, which was encouraged by the khedive’s incompetence, and decided to rise against it; he did not want to see Egypt reduced ‘to a dependency like India’.<sup>62</sup>

British officials had been intentionally misleading the public for some time now, as is apparent in the *Hamilton Papers*. Being shocked by the popularity of Urabi and Egyptian nationalism, Gladstone’s private secretary, Eddie Hamilton, wrote in 1880, ‘We have been kicked out of Egypt [...] and all for what? . . . Compare our aims with those of the new Ministry accepted by Arabi [Urabi] . . . and they will be found practically identical. But by the policy we pursued we have landed ourselves in this dilemma.’<sup>63</sup> How Urabi was often referred to as Arabi, by Hamilton and other officials also reflects how he was perceived in person as well as in name as the epitome of the ‘Arab’ leader with all its stereotypical connotations of despotism and lack of order. The aims of Urabi and the ministers who supported him, which Hamilton is referring to, were to rid the country of the dictatorial Khedive who brought upon the country European intervention in its internal affairs.<sup>64</sup> Hamilton continues in another entry, ‘Our plea must be to rid the country. from a military dictatorship.’<sup>65</sup> He stresses here the fact that the dictatorship, the British

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<sup>61</sup> H. Adali, ‘Documents pertaining to the Egyptian Question in the Yildiz Collection of the *Basbakanlik Arsivi*, Istanbul’, in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic*, ed. by P. M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 52-58, p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> Adali, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> Deighton, ‘The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion’, p. 245.

<sup>64</sup> Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, pp. 154-160.

<sup>65</sup> Deighton, ‘The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion’, p. 245.

government should declare as their enemy, is a 'military' one, not the Khedive's. Otherwise they would fall into the dilemma of being on the same side as Urabi against the Khedive and would have to answer to a confused British public. Hamilton was not alone in advocating the fabrication of a false moral justification for the occupation. In 1891, Lord Cromer, Consul-General of Egypt during the occupation, explains the reasons for misleading the English public: 'foreign policy is pre-eminently a matter about which the crowd not only should but need to be guided. I am sure that as regards Egypt and other matters the only plan is [...] to go on drumming the same thing over and over again.'<sup>66</sup> Cromer's words apply themselves very well also to the Orientalist stereotypes developed through the *Nights* into English literature, which influenced, and were adopted by, politicians as a most credible mirage to justify the occupation in 1882 and its continuation in the twentieth century.

One of the many things that politicians like Cromer were 'drumming',<sup>67</sup> from the specifically *Arabian Nights* Orientalist discourse, was what Disraeli coined as 'The New Crusade'. Whereas Urabi, the Egyptian nationalist leader, was depicted as a murderer of Christians, Cromer, the British Consul-General was hailed as a heroic crusader upon publishing his *Modern Egypt* (1908), in which he canonised himself as 'the model' of benevolent British imperialism.'<sup>68</sup> Surprisingly, only two years earlier Cromer had been caught up in controversy over hanging fellaheen without trial and other lawless punishments,<sup>69</sup> but this did not stand in his way of becoming a Tancred, a Gluck or a good genie. As part of the new crusade, one of the main

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 247.

<sup>67</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 247.

<sup>68</sup> Deighton, 'The Impact of Egypt on Britain: a Study of Public Opinion', p. 248.

<sup>69</sup> Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, p. 205.

false motives was ‘to uphold Christianity in the face of militant Islam’.<sup>70</sup> Even ‘Gladstone came to believe [...] that the hostilities in Egypt constituted an upright war, a Christian war’.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the British army was praised for fighting ‘the battle of all Christendom.’<sup>72</sup> *In Egypt and the Wonders of the Land of the Pharaohs* (1884), Ben Oxlen also discusses several of these points and justifies claiming Egypt through the stereotypes of the despotic ruler, the good genie/European as well as for Christianity itself. In a chapter titled ‘From Osirianity to Christianity’, the author goes into great detail to demonstrate that many of the church rituals whether in Roman Catholicism or the Church of England, were in origin ancient Egyptian. Moreover, according to the author, ‘Egypt’ is ‘the birthplace of the British nation, and consequently its inheritance.’<sup>73</sup> This is due to a ‘vast number of hieroglyphics, names (not even omitting the Deities), customs and folk-lore, still extant amongst us that can be clearly traced to Egyptian sources.’ In his long list, he also includes ‘nursery rhymes and vernacular slang’ and claims that ‘The ancient Land of Egypt is the Mother of them all.’<sup>74</sup> Such claims may seem wild to us but to the author and perhaps his readership this was perfectly logical, for Egypt’s ancient past was being claimed in a tradition which stretched back to the SDUK’s *Pictorial Bible* in the 1830s, through Eliot’s *Adam Bede* in the 1850s and now just as the invasion took place to justify a full occupation. The author drums the narrative of claiming Egypt in the name of Christianity by drawing an image of the majority of Egyptians converting back to Christianity after their ancestors had converted to Islam in the seventh

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<sup>70</sup> Hopkins, p. 384.

<sup>71</sup> Hopkins, p. 384.

<sup>72</sup> Hopkins, p. 385.

<sup>73</sup> Ben William Oxlen, *Egypt: and the Wonders of the Land of the Pharaohs* (London: Trubner and Co., 1884), p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Oxlen, p. 4.



century AD after the Arab conquest:

The Egyptian proper are not Moslems, except under fear and compulsion, and once let the British Power be established, it were as easy to transform them into Christians as it was to turn the English People to turn from Catholics to Protestants, by a royal edict of Henry VIII.<sup>75</sup>

The stereotype of the despotic Oriental ruler as opposed to the good genie/European is also deployed here:

Egypt itself is our Inheritance by birthright; and that no violence will be done, except the ousting of an alien race (now only in nominal possession), by taking to ourselves that which belongs to us, especially as such action on our part could have none other than a beneficial result to the natives themselves by delivering them from a barbarous rule, and thus give them the opportunity of developing the resources of their country (which now they cannot do), and enjoying the benefits arising therefrom without fear of molestation and robbery from their cruel and selfish rulers.<sup>76</sup>

The author goes even further by claiming that the occupation of Egypt would not only be of benefit to Britain and Egypt but also to the rest of the world which would be happy to receive a newly-invigorated Egypt under British auspices and in its full ancient glory, and he urges Britain not to waste time in doing so: 'Now is Britain's opportunity: let her seize it, for her own good, and above all, for the good and happiness of millions of human beings, who will only be too glad to welcome her presence and her power.'<sup>77</sup> The 'Christian' cause was one of the reasons that swayed

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<sup>75</sup> Oxlen, p. 292.

<sup>76</sup> Oxlen, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Oxlen, p. 293.

Gladstone's opinion towards the invasion as I elaborate below. Blunt campaigned heavily against the invasion and sent numerous letters on the subject to Gladstone, but in the end he had to content himself with his *Secret History of the British Occupation of Egypt*, which he published as the true account of events in opposition to the current falsifications in the press. Gladstone went ahead with the invasion nevertheless. Besides the misinformed media and advice through the snaky *Nights-Orientalist* route, Lane's Victorian *Nights* may have also influenced Gladstone's decision. Gladstone was influenced in 1881 and 1882 by Dilke and Colvin - who were developed politically in Disraeli's reign as demonstrated above - to authorise the invasion of Egypt, both directly through communication and indirectly through the media. His susceptibility to their influence however was developed over time through his readings of Lane's Victorian *Nights*, Dickens, Disraeli and possibly Ruskin's fairy tale and Beckford's *Vathek*. According to H. Matthew, 'Gladstone read prolifically', and as well as the *Nights*, his reading lists included Dickens, Walter Scott and surprisingly, Disraeli.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Morley asserts that out of his numerous reading, Gladstone received 'a strong impression' from *The Arabian Nights* and a pseudo-Oriental tale called *Tales of the Genii*.<sup>79</sup> Gladstone's familiarity with the *Nights* had been manifest since 1869. In a letter to one of the prostitutes he was allegedly leading back to the straight path, he described her sad childhood as 'a story from the *Arabian Nights*, with much added to it.'<sup>80</sup> Ironically, and in spite of his recognition of *Tancred's* similarity to Disraeli's policies, Gladstone was fulfilling Disraeli's ambition, as expressed in the above passage from *Tancred*, by bombarding 'Alexandria'. Furthermore, the anti-imperialist Wilfrid Blunt 'saw the occupation of

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<sup>78</sup> H. C. G. Matthew., *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 528.

<sup>79</sup> J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1903), p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> A. Isba, *Gladstone and Women* (London, Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 160.

Egypt as illustrating a new form of imperialism, which he attributed to a change of policy by Disraeli.<sup>81</sup> According to Villa, 'Blunt and some of his contemporaries [...] were sorely taken aback by the military attack on Egypt and felt that Gladstone had betrayed the principle for the territorial integrity of nations' which was a 'cornerstone' for his election campaign and 'political thought' throughout.<sup>82</sup> In spite of his disappointment in Gladstone, Blunt believed that it was Disraeli's single-minded purchase of the Suez Canal shares which led 'six years later' to the occupation of Egypt.<sup>83</sup> Referring to Lord Derby's anti-interventionist policies of the mid-Victorian period, Hicks makes also a similar point linking Disraeli to the invasion:

Ironically, in the wake of the Egyptian occupation of 1882, it would be Derby who would have to take the helm at the Colonial Office under Disraeli's old nemesis, Gladstone, but by then Disraelian activity had taken Britain in very different directions from the Derbyite [non-expansionist] policies of the mid-Victorian era.<sup>84</sup>

Had Disraeli won the 1880 elections and lived a couple of years longer, he would have done exactly what Gladstone did, maybe sooner, since he had put the mechanisms for the invasion in place (including the moral justification and the debt observers) and waited patiently for the slightest reason to invade.

After the occupation had taken place, British Orientalists did not waste any time. They began immediately 'encouraging and financing the spread of Orientalist ideas in Egypt', the ideas they developed over the course of a century and a half about the Egyptians – and everybody else to whom they referred as 'Arabian' through an

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<sup>81</sup> Hopkins, p. 366.

<sup>82</sup> Villa, p. 58.

<sup>83</sup> Blunt, W. S., *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1922), p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (California: University of California Press Ltd., 1991), p. 168.

ancient book of fiction.<sup>84</sup> These ideas, now forced upon the Egyptians to accept about themselves, shocked members of the Egyptian public. We encounter an example of this here: "How have we come to be regarded as part of the Orient?" asked a reader who wrote to the Egyptian journal *al- Muqtataf* in 1888. "Are we not closer to Europe than to China or North Africa?" It had happened, replied the editor, because those who study us "call themselves Orientalists."<sup>85</sup> Clearly this Egyptian reader did not view him/herself as Arabian or Oriental. It was something completely alien to him/her until it was imposed upon the Egyptian public mentality by the new invaders as I previously discussed in Chapter One. Building on Harmer's study and Al-Jabarti's historical accounts of pre-nineteenth century Egypt, Haim Gerber elucidates on Egyptian nationalism: 'The available documents show a well-established concept of Egypt reaching back for centuries before the full-fledged onset of Egyptian nationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.'<sup>86</sup> Quoting an official of the Levant Company in the seventeenth-century, H. S. Deighton remarks, 'If it rayned gold [at Alexandria] [...] wee should not think it worth the while to go and fetch it.'<sup>87</sup> This was the British imperial attitude towards Egypt nearly two hundred years before the invasion; there was no interest either economically or politically in Egypt. This attitude began to change however from the arrival of Galland's *Nights* in 1721 onwards and its influence on English literature, and afterwards through Lane's focus on Egypt and the Egyptians in his *Nights*. In Disraeli, literary romanticism about owning and subduing the nomadic

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<sup>85</sup> Mitchell, p. 169.

<sup>86</sup> Gerber, p. 257.

<sup>87</sup> H. S., Deighton, 'Some English Sources for the Study of Modern Egyptian History', in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic*, ed. by P. M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 59-67, p. 59.

Near-Eastern Orient met its political counterpart, and under his influence Britain was elevated to the status of an empire, and the mechanisms for occupying Egypt had been put into place. Gladstone, ironically, completed the process and ushered in the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, which was the beginning of subsequent British occupations, in what Lane deemed forty years earlier the one and the same 'Arabian' world.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of its iconic place in modern English literature for over three centuries, there has been no study associating *The Thousand and One Nights* directly with nineteenth-century British imperial politics. My PhD thesis deals with this gap by assessing the influence of the *Nights* on English literature and culture and how this influence was reflected in the justification of the invasion of Egypt in 1882. The Near-Eastern, referred to by the signifier 'Saracen' in medieval times with all its connotations of villainy, was transformed into the 'Arab' after the publication of *The Arabian Nights* (1706-24). Stereotypes, stemming from the *Nights'* Orientalist discourse, were developed in the pseudo-Oriental Gothic tales before they were absorbed into mainstream nineteenth-century literature and Orientalist painting. Lane's *Modern Egyptians* (1836) and translation of the *Nights* gave a new emphasis to these stereotypes, particularly under the signifier 'Arab', with the 'modern Egyptian' as the representative of this figure. These stereotypes mainly included the tyrant sultan, the lewd sultana, the ineffectual people in need of help, and the good genie who intervenes with supernatural powers to save them. In Disraeli, cultural fantasising about the 'Arabian' Near East was intertwined with its political counterpart. His novels, particularly *Tancred, or the New Crusade* (1848), paved the way for his policies which he introduced later as a prime minister and ultimately led to the invasion of Egypt under Gladstone in 1882.

My research has been framed as the lead up to the year 1882 for two main reasons. First, this was the first concrete step for redirecting British imperial policy

towards the Near East and the African continent. The invasions of Sudan and Palestine and other countries in the regions followed from this point and stemmed from Egypt. Second, politically as well as culturally the situation gets much more complex than it was before the invasion of Egypt in 1882. On the international level, Europe embarks on the scramble for Africa in the late 1880s and 1890s, with a symptomatic rivalry between European empires which was to culminate in WW1 in 1914. Arabism, and Pan-Arabism take hold within the Near East as the British and French forces annex one country after another. On the literary level, the emergence of new adventurer Orientalists such as Richard Burton and T. E. Lawrence further complicates the situation. Burton's new translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* in 1886 adds an archaic flavour to the *Nights* which had its own influence on fin de siècle literature and remains resonant today with Burton's pilgrimage to Mecca behind it. On the other hand, Lawrence's translation of the *Odyssey* (1921) mixed the bitterness of the Great War and the thrill of his Arabian adventure with classical literature. Both Burton and Lawrence worked for, and had aspirations within, the British government, but their public reputations were established as adventurer Orientalists, eclipsing and outliving the other aspects of their careers.

The newly-emerging decolonial theory would be potent in discussing the impact of British colonialism on movements such as Arabism and Pan-Arabism, owing to its focus on analysing current structures and practices. Nevertheless, there are two main risks to decolonial theory which Noxolo mentions. First, when decolonial theory 'is transported beyond grounded struggles over the experience of

colonisation, decolonial theory runs a serious risk of dilution and domestication'.<sup>1</sup> Noxolo gives her article as an example of this kind of transportation 'beyond grounded struggles', since her article deals primarily with decolonial theory within UK research institutions. On the domestication and dilution aspect of this risk, Noxolo mentions how 'processes through which theories and concepts that began with Indigenous scholars get repackaged and disconnected from the struggles and concrete experiences in which they were originally grounded, and become instrumental to academic privilege'.<sup>2</sup> This leads to the second risk she discusses: 'decolonial theory can become yet another instrument for time-honoured colonialist manoeuvres of discursively absencing, brutally exploiting and then completely forgetting Indigenous people'.<sup>3</sup> In the promise of these early days of decolonial theory, there are more risks than two however. In December 2017, I took part in a multi-disciplinary panel on decolonialism at the International conference for Archaeology in Cardiff. Colleagues from development, biology and archaeology were on the same panel, and their expertise ranged from the contexts of Israel and Palestine to Latin America. Some of the main arguments that were raised revolved around the concept of indigeneity and how it needs to be applied in terminology as well as in practice to the Near East, particularly to the Israeli-Palestine conflict. This is a plausible argument and such application of indigeneity will certainly arm the disadvantaged parties within the conflict - but at the risk of creating further rifts and amplifying existing divides when applied for example to something like the two-state solution. Each state will claim indigeneity over the other in one form or

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<sup>1</sup> Noxolo, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Noxolo, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> Noxolo, p. 343.



another, in spite of the relative recentness of the situation in historical terms. The other challenge is the fact that such conflicts are not isolated and neighbouring countries are affected in one way or another. Applying the concept of indigeneity to a country like Egypt for instance, would reignite the old conflict of Copts vs Muslims, which is based on indigenous principles, as will be discussed in the first chapter. For neither were the Muslims in large part new comers, nor the Copts completely descendants of racially “pure” ancient Egyptians. The Muslims were mainly local converts, the Copts were local converts and both groups were mixed and descended from racially mixed ancient groups. Indigeneity, if not applied carefully, however, would run the risk of bringing back these colonisation-induced debates and divisions instead of creating counter narratives to them. Lastly, decolonial theory faces the challenge of creating a new rhetoric. Traditionally within Native American indigenous studies, there is a culture and practice of creating new terminology to describe indigenous experiences, a practice which may provide key terminology for replacing and deconstructing misleading signifiers including the ‘Arab’. Doxtater explains that ‘Indigenous scholarship challenges Western authority to interpret knowledge, so in North America decolonizing theorists create neologisms’.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst this holds the promise of exporting this innovative culture within decolonial theory to the post-postcolonial sphere, there is a high risk for it to get lost or forgotten about in the process of this new application within a new context. Most of the recurrent terminology used within postcolonial theory and analysis in reference to entities and cultures, including the all too familiar terms of ‘East’,

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<sup>4</sup> Doxtater, p. 628.

'West', 'Near East', 'Middle East', 'Levant', 'Christendom', 'Arab world', 'Islamic world', 'third world'...etc., are terms either created by Orientalist/colonialist rhetoric or have been repackaged to suit Orientalist/colonialist perspectives. Raymond Williams explains that using terms such as 'East' and 'West', First, Second and Third Worlds is a 'culturally identifiable way of seeing others'.<sup>5</sup>

Decolonial theory runs the risk of recirculating such terminology, in the same way postcolonial theory has done, with all the binary struggles within it. Doxtater himself is an example of how easy it is to fall into this trap. Doxtater uses the term 'Western' repeatedly in his article in a quasi-postcolonial fashion. As this is being deemed the 'decolonial era',<sup>6</sup> one demands a new rhetoric and caution when approaching unfamiliar territories to avoid running into the risks discussed above. The promise of decolonial theory nevertheless is immense, especially after a postcolonial stagnation that has arguably lasted for decades.

Due to the complexities named above, and in order to keep my research focused on the *Nights*-influenced change of British imperial policy, I concluded my research at the invasion of Egypt in 1882. Several of the topics I named above could be the subject of future research, a comparison between Richard Burton and T. E. Lawrence may arouse particular interest, and the subjects of Arabism and pan-Arabism are rich enough for a separate thesis. Decolonial theory, moreover, would benefit from particularly theoretical focus. Nearly two centuries ago, William Blake wrote: that 'Empire follows art not vice versa as Englishmen suppose'.<sup>7</sup> My research here demonstrates this by establishing a connection between the *Arabian Nights*,

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Doxtater, p. 629.

<sup>7</sup> W. Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 447.

British culture and the steering of the British Empire towards the occupation of Egypt in the late nineteenth century.

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