Organizations of Knowledge about the Orient in German and British Romanticism 1780-1820

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Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
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Organizations of Knowledge about the Orient in German and British Romanticism 1780-1820

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the various literary modes in which German and British Romantic literature and culture organize knowledge about Islam and the Middle East. I explore how the Orient exceeds and troubles the “place” it is given in historical and geographical classification systems. I argue that many Romantic writers challenge the constructedness of the Oriental narrative during their time, thus questioning what really constitutes knowledge and the limits of knowledge. In this context, I re-evaluate Edward W. Said’s socio-historical generalizations regarding Orientalism as a form of Western control over the East. While studies on Romantic Orientalism have focused on representations of knowledge about India and Africa, little attention has been paid to the significance of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and Arabic language and poetry for Romanticism.

My literary corpus consists of Johann Gottfried von Herder’s Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (1784-1791), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s West-östlicher Divan and the Noten und Abhandlungen zu Besserem Verständnis (1819), Lord G. Byron’s Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage Canto II (1812), and the Giaour (1816). I also examine travelogues and philhellenic dramas of the 1820s, such as John Cam Hobhouse’s A Journey Through Albania (1813), and John Howard Payne’s Ali Pacha; or, the Signet Ring (1822), and their representations of an important but often neglected political figure, Ali Pasha of Yannina. In each chapter, I illustrate how the authors confront and question the (im)possibility of knowledge of the Other, and in turn criticize Western culture’s reception of the Orient and the practice of Orientalism.
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Finally, I am indebted to my family. I thank my husband Labeed for his patience and understanding. As this chapter closes, I cannot wait to open a new and fresh chapter together, and to embark on a new journey (wherever it may be) with our young family. Thanks to Fay and Jena who fill our lives with joy, tenderness, and dreams. The unconditional love and support from my in-laws deserves mention here; thanks to Dr. Muhsin Elbermani and Mrs. Soad for doing everything the can to ease the hectic working-load in our busy lives these past few years, and for tirelessly running after Fay and Jena.

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DEDICATION

الي ابي: لك الشكر على كل ما قدمته لي من فكر من ثقافة من قدرة
الي امي: أنك العطاء الذي يفيض بلا حدود ورمز يجسد الكفاح والخلود
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLJ  Byron’s Letters and Journals
CPW  Byron’s Complete Poetical Works
DKV  Herder’s Werke in Deutscher Klassiker Verlag
FA   Goethe’s Completed Works in Deutscher Kalssiker Verlag
HA   Goethe’s Completed Works Hamburger Ausgabe
SP   Lord Byron: Selected Poetry
SPP  Shelley’s Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism
SW   Herder’s Sämtliche Werke

A Note on Translation

In this dissertation, I have consulted primary works in their original language – Arabic, French and German. My translation practice throughout the dissertation is to cite the standard English translation of a text, should one be available. For example, in Chapter Two and Chapter 4 I cite sources that provide good translations of the original text. Chapter One is a bit problematic, as the complete English translation of the original German text dates from 1800 and is therefore a bit archaic for today’s reader. Nevertheless, I use this translation but also offer my own translation or alteration of the 1800 translation to ease the reading process. For the most part, unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
INTRODUCTION: Situating Romantic Orientalism

“This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while.”
George W. Bush

“The Romantics’ image of the East, which flourished and persisted for so long in the public imagination as a riot of colour, sumptuousness, and savage ferocity; harems and seragllos; heads chopped off and women thrown into sacks into the Bosphorous; feluccas and brigantines flying the Crescent banner, roundness of azure domes and soaring whiteness of minarets; viziers, odalisques, and eunuchs; cooling springs beneath palms; giaours with their throats slit; captive women subjected to the victor’s ravenous lust. Such highly coloured pictures provide inexpensive satisfaction to the deeper instincts, the murky sensualism, the unconscious masochism and sadism of the peaceful Western bourgeoisie […] even when Westerners actually went to the East, this was the image they sought out, ruthlessly selecting what they say and ignoring what did not fit with their preconceived picture.”
Maxine Rodinson “The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam”

In his essay “Byron’s The Giaour: Teaching Orientalism in the Wake of September 11,” Alan Richardson highlights the renewed pertinence and importance of Romantic Oriental texts to our world today. For Richardson, Byron’s poem begins “much as did the immediate public reaction to the horrors of September 11 by seeming to confirm a simplistically and remorselessly dichotomous view of the East and West, Europe and its Oriental Other” (215), and much as the viewer gets bombarded by the Western media’s polarizing discourse of “us” versus “them,” students will also first view the Oriental tale as a standard division of a democratic Greece and a despotic Asia. However, what is crucially important, Richardson suggests in his methodology of teaching Romantic Orientalist texts like Byron’s, is that Romantic Orientalism presents fissures, gaps and inconsistencies as it sets up these world binaries. As this dissertation will argue, Romantic Orientalist literature projects a disjointed picture of things, much like Byron’s disjointed and fragmentary voices in The Giaour; it dis-Orients our reading of the Orientalist narrative. Therefore, in today’s world where Western leaders seem to parrot each other’s antagonistic, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and to amplify the fear in the public body with slogans such as “you’re with us, or with the terrorists,” “multiculturalism has failed,” or that, simply put, “Islam hates us,” Romantic Orientalism and its response to a biased and rigid organization of
knowledge about the Other is, indeed, more relevant today than ever before.

This dissertation examines the organizations of knowledge and formations of the Other in British and German Romantic literature, and more specifically in Romantic Orientalism. I treat the term “Romantic,” a contentious and debatable term when it comes to defining German Romantic literature specifically, as a temporal concept extending from 1770-1830. My objective in this dissertation, however, is to examine how authors emerging out of this period dealt with their encounters of the Other, and how such encounters revealed the problems and concerns of this age. As the epigraphs to the chapter indicate, the Orient is either seen as a political and religious threat and requires the reemergence of a Western crusade, or the Orient is an amalgamation of images, objects and feelings that fit into an array of fantasies. My contention is that Romantic writers responded to these representations in a variety of voices, and in various literary modes and genres, as they questioned the possibility of knowledge and challenged the truthfulness of representation of the Other through cultural, symbolic and topographic references in their texts. Like most interpretations of Orientalism and literature since 1978, this dissertation engages with and relies, in certain respects, on the work of Edward Said, but it also diverges from some of Said’s views. To borrow Ian Almond’s phrase, “I critique the letter of Said’s work, not its spirit” (“Author’s Response”). In order to outline the objective of my thesis, it is important to engage with Said’s different notions of Orientalism, and to point out the concept’s polemics and limitations when examining Romanticism’s rich and complex encounters with the Orient and the Other.
I. Said and Formations of Orientalism

In his groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978) Said outlines the ways in which the West has historically perceived and, therefore, defined the East. He gives three designations to the term Orientalism. First, Orientalism (primarily) refers to the field of scholarship with a distinct academic genealogy and tradition based on the philological study of original Asiatic texts and the study of Eastern cultures; this includes scholars such as Sir William Jones and other members of the Asiatic society, and any other philologists who took it upon themselves to interpret the languages, and later the cultures, of what they considered the East, or the Orient: “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient is an Orientalist” (2). Second, Orientalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident (2). This general designation claimed to provide a total description of non-Western societies through the vast set of images in scholarship, painting, literature and other media where one encounters exotic landscapes, bathing nude harem women, mosques and caravans, slave markets and deserts; it was a “sprawling formation,” to use David Ludden’s description, “in which orientalist painters, Rudyard Kipling, and Henry Kissinger mingle in the multimedia text that conjures the essence of the East” (251). The third definition implies that there is a connection between knowledge and power, because Orientalism is “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient […] by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it” (2). Essentially, we are dealing with a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 2). Said then goes on to argue that there is no such “real thing” as the Orient. Drawing upon Foucault’s work on discursive formations, he explains that, retrospectively, Orientalists have “created” the Orient with their Orientalist discourse. “Texts,” he says, “can create not only
knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time, such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a ‘discourse’” (94; emphasis in original). Thus, while the “Orient” does not exist as a place, it does exist as a discursive formation, one which is subject to the whims and fancies of those exterior to it. In brief, Said argues that the discourse of Orientalism enabled “European culture […] to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” and that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). This perceived dichotomy between Europe and its other is central to the formation of modern European culture and to Europe’s colonial expression.

II. Knowledge, Power and Empire

There is therefore, according to Said, a fundamental relationship between knowledge and power, and an imbrication of knowledge with empire. However, I argue in this dissertation that many nineteenth-century writers dealing with the Orient respond to this complicated power dynamic, as they present in their texts anti-imperialist, culturally tolerant and inclusive ideas about the Other – a fact overlooked by Said. Michel Foucault’s work, a major influence on that of Said, saw Enlightenment sciences as deeply invested in the project of control. For instance, Foucault’s seminal works *A History of Sexuality* (1976) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977) explore how institutions like the prison, the school, the medical clinic and the asylum provided instances of how knowledge and power were fused in Enlightenment thought and practice. The focus on small measurements of prisoners’ and confessors’ daily lives is exactly the sort of ‘‘accurate’’ knowledge that is then fed into larger epistemes, contributing to not only an
epistemic violence but also a physical one. Using the example of Foucault’s emphasis on data collecting, Said was particularly interested in how the gathering of information helped empires to consolidate epistemic power and solidify certain interpretations. The organized and systematized knowledge produced was then used to subjugate and control the material bodies and lands of colonized peoples: “the use of knowledge to enact physical – and not just psychological – violence is a lacuna that can be too easily ignored by emphasizing the long-term processes of epistemic violence” (Guhin and Wyrtzen 7). For example, Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt in 1798-1799, which, despite its military failure, can be seen as a paradigm of the process of political and cultural appropriation, was encapsulated in the massive *Déscription de l’Egypt*, published in 23 volumes (1809-1828) – symbolic of the Western dominance that was founded in this period. This extraordinary publication, in ten volumes of explanatory text and thirteen volumes of engraved folio plates containing information, accurate and detailed, on archeology and antiquities, Egyptian society, demography, medicine, sociological issues and geography, was produced by 150 leading scholars, artists and engineers. Said notes that after Napoleon’s *Déscription*, the language of Orientalism changed radically; its descriptive realism became not only a style of representation, but a means of creation: “The *Déscription* became the master type of all further efforts to bring the Orient closer to Europe, therefore, to observe it entirely – and centrally important – to cancel or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and, in the case of Islam, its hostility. For the Islamic Orient would henceforth appear as a category denoting the Orientalists’ power and not the Islamic people as humans nor their history as history” (87). To go back to Foucault, what Napoleon was doing through his cultural excavation was essentially part of a “bio-power,” to use Foucault’s term, whereby the development of new cultural technologies for the control and domination of human populations, such as the gathering of social statistics,
public health and urban planning, became examples of how the modern state sought to exercise power and control. Information collection about other cultures ultimately increases revenue, establishes bigger governments and even bigger military. As Elizabeth Bohler observers, “Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo in 1815 left the British empire the world’s paramount military and naval power” (5). Indeed, the British Empire played a crucial role in forming a nationhood and a national identity, and gave the Romantics much to grapple with as they questioned their identity in their own world, as well as in the eyes of the Other.

However, ultimately, this dissertation argues that British and German Romantic literature offers richer, more complex and diverse organization of the Orient and the Other that are different from what Said’s Orientalism allows. On the one hand, I am in total agreement with Said’s Foucauldian paradigm about the institutional organizations of knowledge that imply the exercise of power (Said 5, 19). As such, I examine several literary modes that organize knowledge about the Other, such as philosophies of world history, miscellanies, appendices, footnotes and travelogues that were widely used during the nineteenth century. On the other hand, however, I argue that writers like Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Lord Byron use these different modes in order to question, challenge and even nullify the possibility of complete knowledge about the Other and, more specifically, knowledge about Islam and the Middle East. In so doing, I question Said’s overgeneralized and monolithic version of Orientalism, which argues that after the eighteenth century no one could approach the Orient “without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism” (3), and, therefore, I question his implication that all European constructions of the East are not only ethnocentric but racist. Moreover, Said claims that over the course of several centuries the West sought knowledge of the Orient as a result of imperial interests and had constructed a
fictitious Orient. It was, therefore, created and coded by the West as passive, stagnant and unchanging. However, as Nigel Leask persuasively argues, “Said overestimates the confidence and unity of purpose of European imperialists and writers, failing to register adequately the anxiety, not to mention the critical scruples, which often underwrite orientalist texts” (“Easts” 139). I do not refute the British Empire’s role in constructing a Romantic Orientalism; in fact, the next section will illustrate the importance of the two empires. However, like Leask, I argue that British Romantics grappled with questions of colonial expansion, exploitation of other cultures (as we will see shortly with the case of Warren Hastings) and the position of the Self in relation to the Other. The complexities of imperialism are, therefore, simply overlooked by Said.

III. British and German Romanticism and the Orient (1780-1820)

Britain’s encounters with other cultures began mainly due to imperialist and colonialist interests throughout history. I agree with Diane L. Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass who argue that “in order to understand Orientalism, it is necessary to realize […] there were ‘two British empires’” (“Mapping Orientalism” 1). Established in the seventeenth century, the first British Empire consisted of colonies in America and the West Indies, along with the four nations of the British Isles. The second British Empire dates from 1783 and resulted from the loss of America, which in turn forced Britain to formulate new ideas about approaches to its empire. The empire, therefore, shifted to the East, but its army ballooned as well. As C.A. Bayly explains, “forged in the crucible of war and imperial expansion, the British Empire at the end of two decades of victorious conflict differed in significant ways from that of 1789” (75). How were these two empires different? Bayly goes on to say that in the second empire, not only did the global conflict take place on “bloody battlefields, but also in the day-to-day struggle and negotiation
between colonizer and colonized, ‘a long process of political dialogue, of challenge and response, and of accommodation’” (75). By 1820, Britain ruled more than a quarter of the world’s population, prompting the infamous proverbial phrase, ‘the sun never set on the British Empire.’ Yet, the ruling of British India also had its own political complexities and regrets. On February 16, 1788, Edmund Burke rose to his feet in Westminster Hall and began the impeachment of the Governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings. Burke exposed to an audience of MPs and members of the public the brutal and violent acts done in the interest of East India Company’s profits. He had argued for a different and more effective colonial policy than that executed by Hastings, and had represented Indian society as a complex civilization bound by traditional institutions, social distinctions and laws. Hastings, on the other hand, had violated this traditional structure and humiliated Indians of power and wealth. In turn, Burke showed Hastings’s colonialism to depend purely upon the destruction of pre-colonial society and, in its place, the construction of an inherently tyrannical despotism. Hastings, according to Burke, was playing God:

the sea is between us. The mass of that element, which by appearing to disconnect, unites mankind, is to them a forbidden road. It is a great gulf fixed between you and them – not so much that elementary gulf, but that gulf which manners, opinions and laws have radicated in the very nature of the people. None of their high castes, without great degree to his situation, religion, rank and estimation can ever pass the sea; and this forbids, forever, all direct communication between that country and this […] If we undertake to govern the inhabitants of such a country, we must govern them upon their own principles and maxims, and not upon ours. We must not think to force them into the narrow circle of our ideas. (378-379)¹

¹ Edmund Burke’s “Speech Opening the Impeachment, first day, Friday February 15, 1788” at the Trial in Parliament of Warren Hastings, esquire, late Governor-General of Bengal, for High Crimes and Misdemeanor.
Burke’s speech (one of many on such a subject) and the impeachment being launched by him was the first powerful manifestation of colonial guilt at the centre of British eighteenth-and nineteenth-century politics and, as I will further elaborate, literature and culture.

Despite the above argument about empire, power and knowledge of the Other, and despite Said’s decision to omit German scholarship and literature from his analysis precisely because of the fact that Germans had no imperial interests in the region and their Orient was mainly a scholarly and classical Orient (19), I argue that this German Orientalism is just as crucially important to the organization of knowledge about other cultures. The vast interest of German scholars, historians, philosophers and writers is indicative of how valuable they regarded the East to be when searching for their own German identity and national consciousness; therefore, I suggest that the third formation of Said’s Orientalism is not necessarily identified in German Orientalism. As Muhsin Mahdi states in “The Study of Islam, Orientalism and America,” “if there ever was an idea that was not intentionally political, or at least whose intention was neither massively nor directly political, and was self-centered rather than directed to the domination of others, that was the image of the East in early German Romanticism” (151). Yet, Said claims that “what German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally ignored from the Orient by imperial Britain and France” (19), and as such he brushes aside German Orientalism as a study of fantasies and imaginations. Said’s dismissal of Germany’s relationship to the Orient remains polemical today and has been commented upon “with either regret or malicious delight” (465), as Leslie Marchand states. Indeed, to oversimplify, dismiss or simply ignore the contributions of Friedrich Schlegel, Goethe, Creuzer and Wilhelm von Humboldt is, in the words of Varisco, “a careless error” (90) on Said’s part, and my approach to German
Orientalism in the works of Herder and Goethe argues that the German Romantics’ interest in the East added a positive portrayal of the Other and aimed toward an open-minded cultural understanding. It is no minor fact that the first scholar of Sanskrit at Oxford (1861) was the German scholar Max Müller, and the prominence of Indology partly originated in nineteenth-century Germany.

By the early nineteenth century German Orientalist scholars had come to be seen as the Indians of Europe (Germana 1), and the great turning to the Morgenland not only covered the Romantic period, but extended over the whole of the nineteenth century into something resembling an intellectual revival, or an Oriental Renaissance to use the phrase Raymond Schwab coined. The study of Asiatic languages in general, such as Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, began as early as the eighteenth century. More specifically, the French and British imperial interests in South Asia led to the establishment of academic institutions dedicated to the field of Indology (the study of languages and literature, history and cultures of the Indian subcontinent). Rediscovered ancient manuscripts and translations of Sanskrit had an extraordinary influence on Western culture during the nineteenth century. For example, in France, Abraham Anquetil-Duperron translated the Persian Zend-Avesta (1771) into Latin and the Sanskrit Upanishads (1787) into French. Sir William Jones and Charles Wilkins had made important contributions to the field in their translations of the Bhagavad-Gita (Wilkins in 1785) and Sakuntala (Jones 1789). Both Jones and Wilkins were founding members of the Royal Society of Calcutta, an institution that was founded by the order of Governor Hastings in order to administer essentially all aspects of the empire in India. When German scholars became interested in these new findings, they had to go through the works of their French and English predecessors. In 1790 Georg Forster translated Sakuntala into German, accompanied by his own copious explanatory
notes. As Schwab remarks, “the publications of Indic scholars at Calcutta ignited a kind of fervid intensity in certain young Germans […] And among the greatest innovators of the new ideas that were to become Romanticism, a certain Herder passed the word to a certain Friedrich Schlegel” (53). This ‘certain Schlegel’ was among many other German thinkers who had high expectations that the Orient would provide the ultimate truth about Europe’s historical origins.

In 1802 Friedrich Schlegel travelled to Paris to study Persian and ended up studying Sanskrit under the British naval officer and Asiatic Society member Alexander Hamilton. Inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and his Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784-1791), the Early German Romantics (the Jena Romantics) believed the Orient, especially India, to be the real fatherland of language, poetry, culture and the human race in its infancy. In his “Rede über die Mythologie” (1800) Schlegel proposes: “Welche neue Quelle von Poesie könnte uns aus Indien fließen [...] Im Orient müssen wir das höchste Romantische suchen” (Gespräch über die Poesie 2: 318-319) [What new source of poetry could the flow from India [...] In the Orient we must seek for the most sublime form of the Romantic] (Dialogue on Poetry 69). In the winter semester of 1822 and 1823, the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) remarked in his Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (Lectures on the History of Philosophy) at the University of Berlin: – “[Indien] lebt seit Jahrtausenden allgemein, ohne daß man es genauer gekannt hätte, vor der Vorstellung der Europäer als ein Wunderland. Der Ruhm, den es immer gehabt hat in Ansehung seiner Schätze, sowohl der natürlichen, als auch besonders seiner Weisheit, hat die Menschen dorthin gelockt” (Vorlesung über die Philosophie 2: 344) [Without being known too well, [India] has existed for millennia in the imagination of the Europeans as a wonderland. Its fame, which it has always had with regard to its treasures,
both its natural ones, and, in particular, its wisdom, has lured men there] (quoted in Halbfass 2).

Another important figure in German Orientalism is Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858), who was appointed to a professorship in philology and ancient history at the University of Heidelberg. His interest in the mythology of India and Eastern religions and his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Voelker* were inspired by his encounters with Heidelberg Romanticists Joseph Görres, Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim. However, my dissertation offers a new reading of Romantic Orientalism, as it highlights the importance of a German Orientalism that advocated for a tolerance and understanding toward other world cultures and the importance of ancient languages in the making of a nation and a people. While much of the scholarship on Germany’s Orientalism focuses on India, as I have indicated above, I aim to make a new contribution to the field by highlighting the various ways in which German Orientalist texts use Arabic poetry and literature in theorizing a link between Germany and the Orient. In particular, my study of Herder and his interest in Arabic poetry and the Koran in his *Ideen* elucidates German Romanticism’s preoccupation with the making of a national identity; on the other hand, inspired by Arabic and Persian poetry, Goethe composes *West-östlicher Divan* and the accompanying notes to the poems, *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis*, in order to tie the Orient to the Occident and to advocate for a new national as well as world literature.

**IV. Current Scholarship in Romantic Orientalism**

The treatment of Orientalism and the literary and cultural relations between Europe and the East had appeared prior to Said in Norman Daniel’s *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (1960), and continued after Said with Raymond Schwab’s *The Oriental Renaissance*:

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2 See also Robert Brown’s translation: “India was always an object of desire for all people, above all the West. Hence early on India was a factor in commercial trade. Foreign peoples acquired for themselves Indian treasures.”
Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East 1680-1880 (1984), Maxime Rodinson’s Europe and the Mystique of Islam (1987) and Ronald Inden’s Imagining India (1990). These works cover much the same ground as Said and range in attitudes toward his line of argument. Daniel’s Islam and the West is primarily concerned with the Christian idea of Islam during the period of 1100-1350 A.D. and closely analyses the approaches used by medieval Christians to oppose Muslims and their beliefs. However, dismissive of any dialogue between the East and the West, Daniel simply concludes that “the most ironic of observers must accept that there are irreducible differences between non-negotiable doctrines […] the Christian creeds and the Qur’an are simply incompatible and there is no possibility of reconciling the content of the two faiths” (336).

Rodinson’s book argues that the image of Islam was not drawn simply from the Crusades, but rather “from the Latin Christian world’s gradually developing ideological unity” (7). For Rodinson, this happens roughly after the eighteenth century, when European imperial powers established their large-scale imperial and colonial projects in India and Africa. Like Said, Rodinson traces trends that stood out during the nineteenth century, some of which are Western superiority, imperialism and a Romantic exoticism. On the other hand, the works of Schwab and Inden focus specifically on India, its culture, literature and religion. Schwab’s ambitious book argues that the Oriental or Indic Renaissance was a second Renaissance fuelling the age of Romanticism, and that India was the first and essential Oriental influence to inspire a wide range of intellectual and artistic figures, from Chateaubriand to Schopenhauer. Yet, where Schwab regards Europe’s interest in India and Indology with enthusiasm, Inden is more sceptical. His work traces the Orientalist portrayals of India arguing that Indian society was explained by two Indian institutions, the caste system and Hinduism – two transcendent, static institutions. As such, his work critiques the “Indological branch of ‘orientalist discourse’” (1) and the historical,
anthropological and socio-political accounts it has produced, which ultimately portray India as a backward, traditional society unable to embrace individualism and rationality.

My work is mostly influenced by scholarship that focuses specifically on the question of Romanticism and Orientalism, and the effect of the imperialist project on the Romantic’s definition of himself in relation to the world around him. For the remainder of this section, I turn to a critical engagement with recent approaches to reading Romanticism’s relationship to colonialism, empire and “the East,” and the questions and concerns derived from this scholarship. Since Gary Kelly’s 1989 essay “Social Conflict, Nation, Empire: From Gothicism to Romantic Orientalism,” which adapts Said’s term to the Romantic period, many critics have turned to the Romantics’ relationship with the East and the use of Eastern elements in their texts. Less concerned by the “thorny elements of postcolonial theory” (Cass, “Interrogating Orientalism” 42), these international scholars turn to Romantic travel literature, opera, novels and poetry and analyze the manifold representations of Orientalism, but, more specifically, a British Orientalism. By focusing on the production of knowledge about the Orient as a discourse of power, these critics have turned their attention to internal debates about identity, nationhood and modernity, especially in the period following the French Revolution. Moreover, each critic accepts Said’s work as a foundation, but argues against a totalizing interpretation of Orientalism and instead emphasizes the concept’s heterogeneity, both synchronically and diachronically. Most notably, the aforementioned literary critic Nigel Leask focused on the works of British Romantic writers, especially Shelley, Byron and Coleridge, as examples of an ambivalence toward the East that points to conflicting images of British identity in the Romantic, post-Revolutionary era. In his British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (1992), Leask examines “the anxieties and instabilities of Romantic representations of the Ottoman
Empire, India, China, and the Far East,” and concludes that “these anxieties were not marginal
but central to the major concerns of British Romantic writers” (Anxieties of Empire 270). In his
Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s History of British India and Orientalism (1992), Javed
Majeed also addresses these anxieties, but he looks more specifically at the polemics of
utilitarianism and its emergence as a “political language in Britain […] and the complexities of
British imperial experience in India at the time” (Majeed 1). Furthermore, Timothy Fulford one
of the editors of a landmark collection of essays on Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and
Empire, 1780-1830 (1996), points to Romanticism’s consistent linking of the desire to imagine
and the desire to rule to “the exotic” (47). Saree Makdisi’s Romantic Imperialism: Universal
Empire and the Culture of Modernity (1998) contributes to this conversation by seeing the
exotic, like nature, operating as a “pre- or anti-modern” space from which British romantic poets
engage in a “critique of modernization” (10). Makdisi, like Leask, also examines the Romantics’
response to and critique of British imperialism as he analyzes the poetry of Wordsworth, Blake,
Shelley and Byron, and how they “try to imagine and hence to bring into being a genuinely post-
imperial world” (172). Most recently, Andrew Warren’s The Orient and the Young Romantics
(2014) points out three inextricably linked factors of the Romantic idea, which are the
imagination, the foreign or exotic, and the emergent nation state, and suggests that Romanticism
is, in fact, constructed “as a reaction to or appropriation of the foreign as much as it is a result of
dynamics within England” (5).

Recent publications on theatrical Orientalism have illustrated the importance of the field
in contributing to Western theatre, music, opera, and other forms of both high and low artistic
expressions on the British stage. Perhaps one of the most influential studies in the field, Daniel
O’Quinn’s Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London 1770-1800 (2005), examines
the role that eighteenth-century culture played in negotiating issues of race and empire, and in contributing to imperial and class identities. Beginning with the historical fact that Britain’s loss of thirteen American colonies created a national trauma, O’Quinn contends that the stage became a space in which national concerns, such as Britain’s imperialism, contemporary debates on the administration of India and the regulating of the East India Company, played out. Moreover, “London theatres, newspapers, caricatures and political dramas come together to shape powerful new fantasies of classed and racialized sexuality around traumatic questions of Britain's imperial identity” (O’Quinn 30). While O’Quinn focuses on India in his analyses of British drama and its representation of the Other, Edward Ziter, on the other hand, looks at a wide array of dramas and musicals portraying desert storms in Arabia, harem dances in Constantinople and war scenes on the Nile in his richly textured The Orient on the Victorian Stage (2007). Ziter’s remark that “Eastern cataclysm makes for great entertainment, as evidenced in plays, panoramas, and American television broadcasts” (60) is well taken. Indeed, the beautiful displays of panoramas, exhibitions as well as ballets, pantomimes and melodramas were highly attended and enjoyed by an eager nineteenth-century audience. Yet Ziter argues that such displays of a detailed and seemingly authentic simulacrum of the East, of the Other, in fact blur the real and the representational. Likewise, Fred Burwick’s Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting (2009) has significantly contributed to Romanticism and theatrical studies, as it addresses the dramatization and negotiating of paradigms such as nationhood, race and gender on the stage. Most important for Burwick’s overarching argument is, as is hinted by the title, the audience response and reaction. This argument is highlighted in my fourth chapter as well, as I examine the audience’s reaction to representations of Ali Pasha, and the extent to which their actions and reactions have contributed to the negotiation and manipulation of these representations. Ultimately, by the
middle of the nineteenth century, the tone of theatrical productions of the Other moved from a romantic, exotic Orientalism to an Imperial ideology of Victorian England.

Building on my reading of O’Quinn’s and Ziter’s erudite studies, and the implications drama and performance have for the construction of the Other, I examine less studied melodramas in Chapter Four that were quite popular on the London stage, particularly Philhellenic dramas of the 1820s. In my analysis of theatrical representations of Ali Pasha, I highlight several ‘War of Independence’ dramas that called for the freedom and liberation of Greece from tyrannical Ottoman Empire. While the London theatre presented, negotiated and interrogated the geopolitical, social and cultural transformations of its metropolitan society, as O’Quinn and Ziter tell us, I add to their trajectory that a major phenomenon unfolding in Romantic literature, culture and politics was Hellenism and Philhellenism. In my chapters on Byron and Ali Pasha, I argue that Greece was also regarded as Other by the Romantics, an imagined and idealized space, and a place that connoted past glories and future ideals, as we will see in Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and Philhellenic dramas such as *The Grecian Captive; or the Fall of Athens* and *The Grecians*. Moreover, just as the West was fascinated with the East, to paint, write about and visit Greece became *en vogue* for many Romantics: “the ideal of Greece gradually promoted a kind of myth as an accepted truth,” as Robert Eisner observes (115); studying ancient Greek democracy not only initiated ideas for a European revolution, it also generated guilt over modern Greek slavery – a Greece under the dictatorial rule of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the return to Hellenism, as I will elaborate in the last two chapters of the dissertation, and the ethical support for a liberal Greece (Philhellenism) became a major concern, and a much debated topic in Romantic literature and culture.
V. Islam, the Ottoman Empire and Romanticism

My approach differs from the above scholarship, however, as I focus specifically on Islam and Arabic culture and literature, and their influence on the ideas and thoughts of European Romanticism. My project is by no means a first attempt. In 1994, Mohammed Sharafuddin published *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*. This study focused in detail on four writers: Landor, Moore, Southey and Byron. But his analysis is, unfortunately, quite limited as he exhaustively argues how these poets engage in a “realistic” kind of Orientalism. With a particular focus on Byron, Abdur Raheem Kidwai’s *Orientalism in Byron’s Turkish Tales: The Giaour (1813), The Bride of Abydos (1813), The Corsair (1814) and the Siege of Corinth (1816)*, provides what Naji Oueijan also later provides, a compendium of Byron’s Eastern references. As with so many Middle Eastern scholars, Kidwai’s study places Byron on too high a pedestal. Naji B. Oueijan offers *A Compendium of Eastern Elements in Byron’s Oriental Tales* (1999); like Kidwai, Oueijan has a high opinion of “Byron’s advanced oriental scholarship” (12), as well as other “genuine Oriental scholars” (13). Ultimately, Oueijan’s is another book that is very useful for consultation, but does not engage at all in any critical and theoretical analysis of Byron’s poetry on the East. On the other hand, Emily Haddad’s book *Orientalist Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth-Century English and French Poetry* (2002) provides an insightful critique of literary Orientalism, with particular attention to poetry and poetics. The book argues that the nineteenth century’s Orient functions as an alternative aesthetic space in which poems play out a variety of responses to both contemporary and past trends in poetry, and shows more specifically how Orientalism functions “as a diffuse avant-garde, a matrix for the re-examination of both pre-existing conventions and contemporary expectations in poetry and poetics” (Haddad 8). Samar Attar’s recent publication
Borrowed Imagination: The British Romantic Poets and their Arabic-Islamic Sources (2014) suggests that major poetic developments have roots in Orientalism and offers a revisionist view of the literary history of the nineteenth century. For Attar, Arabic and Islamic sources were available and in vogue during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and have “been ignored, or insufficiently explored, or at best relegated to a position less important that it actually should hold” (17). However, the critical discussion of Romantic poetry is quite limited, and her tracing of Arabic and Islamic sources, while detailed and interesting, does not offer any new critical ideas to the discourse of Romanticism and Orientalism at large.

I have chosen to align myself with the recent approaches of Humberto Garcia, Ian Almond and Jeffrey Einboden who critically and lucidly explore issues pertaining to the reconstruction of Eurocentric narratives during the nineteenth century and tease out the diverse works of British and German writers who were sympathetic toward and saw universal values in Islam and the Middle East. More specifically, Garcia, Einboden and Almond trace the Romantic writers’ regard of Prophet Mohammed as a figure of rationality, tolerance and enlightenment who had much to teach European societies. While their general approach to Western Orientalism is similar in that they offer a post-Said “corrective addendum” (6), to use Garcia’s words, they each present a different point of departure in their arguments. In his cogent Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670-1840 (2012), Garcia examines how Islam is used in the support of Protestant and Deist causes, colonialism and feminism, by writers and thinkers such as Henry Stubbe, Percy and Mary Shelley, and Robert Southey, just to name a few. Not only were these authors impressed by the Prophet’s socio-political achievements in the seventh century, but they were using his ideas and the notions of “Islamic republicanism” in order to redefine Whig principles to challenge Anglican authority (Garcia 61), an authority which they saw as repressive
and corrupt. In another vein, Einboden’s eloquently narrated *Islam and Romanticism: Muslim Currents from Goethe to Emerson* (2014) focuses on the cultural encounters rather than the political exploitations of the Orient: “while Romantic participation in the dark legacies of Western colonialism has received significant notice, less attention has been given to the catalyzing effect which Muslim sources have exercised on Western creativity” (5). Einboden suggests that Islam as a creative catalyst influenced not only various Romantic works, but also the private lives of Romantic writers such as Goethe, Byron and Emerson. On the other hand, Almond’s *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche* (2010) deeply engages with the philosophy of nineteenth-century Germany through his examination of the works of Leibniz, Kant, Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, Goethe, Marx and Nietzsche, and their reception of Islam and the Ottoman Empire in history, literature and philosophy. Almond looks at how these German thinkers developed compartmentalized subjectivities and presented a “filtered Orient” (3), an Orient essentially comprised of a series of images that was produced as they “sifted through a variety of Orientalia, taking the nuggets they needed but either overlooking or consciously rejecting anything which conflicted with their requirements” (3). As I illustrated, scholarship on the relationship between the West and the Orient between 1750-1820 mainly dealt with geo-political encounters of India and Greece, and while the recent scholarship of Garcia, Einboden and Almond has greatly aided my research regarding the significant place of Islam and the Middle East in Romantic literature in general, my dissertation takes a different trajectory. By limiting my analysis to the part of the Orient that includes Turkey, Persia and the

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3 Einboden distinguishes his book from other previous studies on Islam and the West by analyzing intercultural exchanges and tracing a “transnational arc of Western dependence on Muslim sources, stretching from Europe’s earliest Romantic intimations, through the classic products of British Romantics, to the exhaustion of American Romanticism in the wake of U.S. Civil War” (6). With great span and scope, Einboden highlights particularly the deep encounters with the prophet Mohammed in as early as Europe in 1770s to America in the 1860s.
Arab world, and by examining the different ways in which knowledge about these different regions is organized in early nineteenth-century British and German literature, I bring attention to historical and socio-political circumstances that played a fundamental role in shaping the area – namely the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire is a crucial component of my discussion here, as it challenges some of Said’s notions of Orientalism and the systematization of power. I suggest that the power of the Islamic state and threat of the Ottoman Empire have been largely ignored as important issues in the scholarship of Romantic Orientalism. As I illustrate in Chapter Four, the Ottoman Empire posed a great military resistance and a powerful threat to Western invasion and expansion from the Crusades onward. One way of dealing with this threat was to undermine the political importance of key Ottoman leaders and rulers, such as Ali Pasha of Yannina, by systematically representing him as a despot in popular travelogues and melodramas. It is important to note that from the founding of Islam and the forming of Bedouin warriors into a unit in Arabia and their early military conquests, Europeans perceived the threat of the Orient and Muslims in a variety of ways, including moral, intellectual, religious, political and military. During the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks emerged as an important political and military power, and by 1055, they had conquered Baghdad and much of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine. After defeating the Byzantine emperor in 1071, the Turks finally expanded into Anatolia and became the official protectors of the sacred Islamic sites of Mecca and Medina, lasting for six hundred and twenty-six years as an Ottoman Empire (Curtis 23). Norman Daniel has argued that between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, a “medieval canon” of Islam became firmly established in Europe, as the attack upon the life of the Prophet was carried to great lengths. As I suggest in the first chapter on Herder and his response to the depictions of Islam and Mohammed, the political and
religious agenda of the Crusades was just the beginning of an Islamophobic campaign. For the West, Mohammed could not have been the bearer of true revelation, rather he was a man of war and, more so, was regarded as an assassin. He was lustful, deceitful and untrustworthy. Thus, criticism of Islam and its prophet continued throughout the centuries with titles such as Humphrey Prideaux’s *The True Nature of Imposture Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* in 1697 to entries on Mohammed in Barthelemy d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697) to Voltaire’s *Le Fanatisme ou Mahomet le prophète* (1742), all of which wrote of the prophet’s cruelty, fanaticism, sexual lust and political ambition. In the midst of this Islamophobic rhetoric, major thinkers ignored the fact that their Eastern neighbour was, in fact, a highly developed society comprised of a hybrid mix of different ethnicities (Turks, Arabs, Armenians and Greeks) and faiths (Muslim, Christians, Orthodox and Jews). Likewise, and as I will elucidate in my examination of Ali Pasha, Western representations of this Ottoman ruler tended to focus on his alleged insatiable sexual appetite, his despotic nature and savage treatment of the enemy, virtually ignoring the multiculturalism and intellectual advancement of his court. It is important to note, however, that by the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire was declining, as its economy and military were becoming weaker and weaker. As I illustrate in Chapter Four, the Sultan was losing power to the rulers of other provinces and confronting internal problems such as “the breakdown of authority, loss of control over manpower and revenue resources, lack of economic development, and incompetent sultans and minsters” (Curtis 29), all of which contributed to the final fall of the empire. Economically, the empire was losing its independence and as trade in the Mediterranean was taken over by Italian cities, the Ottoman Empire lost many European territories. No longer a political, economic or religious threat, the empire eventually became ‘the sick man of Europe,’ and this was, therefore, the opportune time for Greeks to revolt
through the Philhellenic Wars.

The Ottoman Empire was no longer a political threat and, as a result, British sea power continued to grow, resulting in more contact between the East and the West. Consequently, with the increase of global traffic came an outpouring of translated texts and an increased popularity of travel literature (two things that play a significant role in Goethe’s and Byron’s first encounter with the East, as well as in representing Ali Pasha, as I will illustrate). The British reading elite, therefore, had access to the world:

Military men on reconnaissance, naval men on patrol, scientific explorers, industrial explorers, travelling gentlemen, and Christian missionaries penetrated to ever more remote, previously unvisited lands, bringing home shiploads of art and antiquities, plant and animal specimens, and diaries which told of their adventures and their discoveries.

(St Clair, The Reading Nation 232-233)

This rise of modern scholarship resulted in an increased number of direct translations from Oriental languages, one of which is Arabic. From William Jones’ essays on Arabic classical poetry to Antoine Galland’s translation of The Arabian Nights to Friedrich Schlegel’s initial academic interests in the Arabic language, Eastern culture became widely accessible to the European intellectual elite more than ever before. As I point out throughout the chapters in this dissertation, two Arabic texts played a critical role in introducing Islam and the Middle Eastern world to the Western audience: The Koran and The Arabian Nights, also known as A Thousand and One Nights.

One of the first translations of the Koran appeared c. 1143, commissioned by the French Abbot Peter the Venerable. Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete was the earliest translation of the Koran into a Western language. Despite its inaccurate and pejorative view of Islam, the
translation was, nevertheless, frequently cited and imitated, and “polemical writings appeared in various forms, not only of refuting the Koran, but also of ridiculing it” (Shami 13). It was not until 1734 that accurate information about Islam percolated into the West with the translations of the Koran, first into Latin and then directly into English by George Sale. In Germany, Theodor Arnold translated George Sale’s English version into German in 1746 (Arnold’s Koran translation served later as an important source for Goethe’s *West-Eastern Divan*). However, the most influential work of Middle Eastern literature in nineteenth-century Europe remained *The Arabian Nights*.

Scheherazade and her woes introduced the Western reader to an entirely new and intriguing world, and despite the fact that Islam continued to be regarded with suspicion, fear and distaste, “its sublunary aspects as reflected in *Les Milles et une Nuits* produced a passionate desire for additional narrative of this kind […] the fascination with a make-believe location was contiguous to the penetration of real Eastern markets” (Kabbani 29). While Europe was expressing relentless economic interest in the Orient and as the eighteenth century would usher in the beginning of the imperialist presence in that region, *Arabian Nights* became part of a vast and rapidly growing literary market offering colourful and overwhelming flavours, from the North of Africa to India to the Near East, for the curious English reader; the collection of stories changed the view of educated Europeans who no longer saw the Islamic East as the home of the Antichrist and heresy (Fück 101). Antoine Galland’s French translation appeared in 1704, with the first English version recorded in 1706. Three major new English translations from Arabic sources were published in the course of the nineteenth century by Edward Lane (1838-41), John Payne (1882-84) and Richard Burton (1885-88). In Germany, the work was translated by Albert Ludwig Grimm (1820), Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1823/24), Max Habicht, Friedrich
Heinrich von der Hagen and Karl Schall (1825). The unparalleled popularity of *Arabian Nights* makes one wonder what made it so successful. As Galland points out in his preface, the tales are “agréables et divertissans par le merveilleux qui règne d’ordinaire” [pleasant and entertaining through the marvelous which appears ordinary] (xxx). In other words, the tales function as an escape from reality into a world full of fantasy and exoticism. However, I suggest that the fascination and engagement with Islam and the Middle East is much more serious than the lure of the fantastic and the exotic. In the following chapters, I turn to British and German Romantic literature to examine the complex responses to the above-mentioned geo-political, historical and cultural phenomena that played an important role in shaping our understanding of Romantic Orientalism. In each chapter, I address the following questions: How do the Romantics respond to their encounters with the Other? How do they organize their knowledge about such an encounter? More specifically, how does the Romantic’s encounter with Islam and the Middle East question renegotiate and condemn the hegemonic notions of the Other during the nineteenth century?

My first chapter begins with Herder’s use of a *hyper* mode of organizing knowledge. I argue that Herder uses the genre of philosophies of world history in order to advocate for a pluralism, tolerance and openness toward world cultures. While this genre has traditionally organized, compartmentalized and prioritized world civilizations in order to establish a historical narrative that ultimately ends in European progression and superiority, I suggest that Herder’s philosophy of history complicates these paradigms as it insists on a model of cultural relativism, a paradigm that has contributed to various disciplines such as anthropology, folklore and even socio-politics. In examining *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774) and *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-1791), I highlight
Herder’s historicized understanding of humanity and its interconnectedness to an organic universe. In this paradigm, the *Morgenland* plays a crucial role in the chain of Being, as Herder regards it as the source of all things pure, divine and inspirational. While scholarship tends to focus on India in examining Herder’s *Morgenland*, my analysis underscores the overlooked importance of Arabic culture and Islamic civilization, and suggests that Herder not only attempts to enlighten his reader’s view of Prophet Mohammed and his nation, but he also admires the role the Arabic language has played in establishing a nationhood. For Herder, and for German Romantics after him, the East kindled the spark for a national identity and consciousness.

Herder’s cultural relativism is also echoed in Goethe’s views on Islam, Mohammed, and Arabic and Persian Poetry. As his teacher and friend, Herder directed Goethe to translations of the Koran, shared his admiration for Mohammed, and highlighted the beauty and timelessness of Bedouin poetry. While Goethe does turn to the East as early as 1772 with his unfinished “Mahomets Gesang,” and a translation and live performances of Voltaire’s play *Mahomet* in 1799, a deeper and richer interaction with Islam and Eastern poetry takes place between 1813 and 1819 with the publication of his famous Oriental cycle of poems *West-östlicher Divan* and the accompanying text *Noten und Abhandlungen zu Besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans*. Like Herder, Goethe criticizes his culture’s views and perceptions of other cultures, and I argue that he reorganizes knowledge about the Other by emphasizing a relativism in understanding other cultures. While Herder emphasizes the fact that each culture should be judged according to its own climatic, cultural and historical environment, Goethe’s theory of translation and cross-cultural encounters also echoes this Herderian interaction with other cultures free of prejudice and biases. That is, just as each culture springs out of its own unique circumstances for Herder, for Goethe, translations of other texts should be evaluated according to
a culture’s own standards. In my analysis of Goethe’s organization of knowledge about the East, I specifically focus on the Noten, a text that is virtually ignored in the English-speaking scholarship on Goethe, and suggest that it is in this paratext, a miscellany, that one receives Goethe’s message on the richness of a globalized multicultural, open-minded world where the universality of the human experience is celebrated. My use of the term paratext derives from Gérard Genette’s theoretical model in his study of the book and its different elements – titles, forwards, epigraphs, appendices, footnotes. In his Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretations, Genette insists that the paratext is always ancillary, and that it is “only an assistant, only an accessory to the text” (410). Ultimately, we should “watch out for the paratext” (Genette 410). It is my contention, however, that in examining Goethe’s Noten as well as Byron’s work on the East, we should watch for the paratext and bring it to the fore, as not only does it deepen our reading of the text attached to it (in the case of Goethe, for instance), but it can also complicate, alter and reorganize the text (as in the case of Byron).

Thus, Chapter Three elaborates on the use of the paratext – specifically, appendices and footnotes – in Byron’s Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage (Canto II) and The Giaour (the first poem of the Oriental Tales). In the first part of the chapter, I closely analyse the Appendix to CHP and the ways in which Byron uses this space to challenge and renegotiate his readers’ expectations and conceptions of other cultures; as Byron examines Greek and Albanian language and culture, he not only alters the readers’ idealistic notions about Hellenism, but he also challenges feelings of superiority and prejudice toward Albania, its land and its peoples. The second part of the chapter examines the crucial role footnotes play in disorganizing knowledge about the Other in Byron’s The Giaour, and in questioning the dichotomy of the Self and the Other that is set up in the poem. The footnotes have a double function: on the one hand, Byron uses the footnote to
establish a sense of authority about his subject, and to emphasize the ‘correctness,’ and ‘realism’ of his source. On the other hand, when closely examining the ironic and sarcastic tone of the footnote, it becomes apparent that there is an important agenda for Byron. Read against a poem that depicts the conflict of two different civilizations, the footnotes destabilize these dichotomies and question the seemingly rigid construction of identity. Thus, Chapter Two and Chapter Three argue that the paratext is not only relevant to the main text, but also becomes essential to our understanding of Goethe’s and Byron’s organization of knowledge about the Other.

Chapter Four turns to travelogues and dramas as other modes of organizing knowledge about foreign cultures. In particular, I examine the representations of an important yet hardly studied figure, Ali Pasha of Yannina, in travel literature and dramas of the 1820s, and the ways in which they repeat the stereotypical image of the Oriental Despot, as is depicted in the medieval image of the Prophet. I argue that these genres, much like the genre of world history, control, contain and domesticate the image of the Other. While world history aims to establish a telos whereby Western societies and civilizations rule, the travelogues and dramas I examine attack the image of the Other in order to justify their Philhellenic sentiments at the time. Yet, what happens when the Other becomes aware of his or her own represented image? The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the historical and socio-political events in the 1820s, particularly England, Greece and Turkey, and their contribution in making the image of Ali Pasha. The second section turns to travelogues that were circulating at the time, while the third part of the chapter closely analyzes the representations of the Pasha on the British and American stage. Most fundamental to my argument, however, is that Ali Pasha mimics how the West sees him, thereby exposing the artificiality of his image. As the West attempts to define, contain, organize and systematize the Orient, it becomes apparent that there is no such thing as a
fixed, stable and concrete identity of the Orient, much like there is no such sure image of Ali Pasha. As the Pasha performs what the West want to see, he in fact strikes back at the West, and unorganizes knowledge about him as he mimics and manipulates his Orientalist image for his own political gains.

In this dissertation, I argue that Romantic Orientalism challenges Edward Said’s paradigm of Orientalism, more specifically his third formation of the concept that insists it is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (2). In my examination of various genres and texts dealing with the Orient, particularly Arabic, Persian and Turkish cultures, I suggest that authors like Herder, Goethe and Byron anticipate Said’s critique as they respond to the image of the Orient “as it has been Orientalized” (Said 104). As they grapple with and challenge their own set of questions and issues such as colonial guilt, cultural hegemony and Western superiority, writers like Herder, Goethe and Byron in turn advocate for an inclusive, humanistic and open-minded world view where cross-cultural dialogues rather than hostile confrontations rule. Sadly, it seems that Samuel Huntington’s highly contested theory of the clash of civilizations has found its ground in today’s social and political propagandas, as xenophobic, chauvinistic and Islamophobic rhetoric recently uttered by Western political candidates has trumped its way to the fore only to encourage more tension, fear and hate between cultures. This dissertation suggests, therefore, that a re-evaluation of Romantic Orientalism is more relevant than ever today, because of its message of hope, unity and universal humanity.
CHAPTER ONE

Hyper-Organization of Knowledge about the Other in Johann Gottfried Herder’s Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit


[What a magnum opus of the human species! on the human spirit! the culture of this earth! Of all regions! Ages! Peoples! Forces! Fusions! Forms! Asian religion! And chronology and polity and philosophy! Egyptian art, philosophy and government. Phoenician arithmetic, language and luxury. All of Greek! All of Rome! Northern religion, law, mores, war, honour! The papist age, monks, scholarship! Nordic-Asiatic crusaders, pilgrims, knights. Christian-heathen revival of scholarship! The French century! English, Dutch, German shapes! – The politics of China and Japan! The natural science of a new world! American customs and so on – grandiose theme: humankind will not perish until everything is realized, until the genius of illumination has passed through this earth. Universal history of the world’s formation.]

On May 17, 1769, Johann Gottfried Herder left his church community in Riga and boarded a ship bound for Nantes. Setting sail marked a drastic change in Herder’s life, as it meant leaving his quiet life as a preacher and teacher, exchanging “the fixed for the fluid, the sure for the unsure,” and gaining a sense of depth in his life (Safranski 3). While travelling on scant means and isolated on the high seas, Herder, gripped by wanderlust, was ready to generate a new world for himself, and to start thinking about the world and his position in it in a new way. As the epigraph above indicates, Herder jotted down comments about his excitement and grand world vision in his diary Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769, which appeared posthumously in 1846. Full of exclamations, Herder’s passionate writing style and voice would resonate throughout his entire oeuvre. From his first reflections on the history of the world in general and mankind specifically, Herder dreamed of a work that would set side-by-side “einer aus Judäa, und ein Hiob aus Arabien, und ein Beschauer Aegyptens, und ein römischer Held, und ein
Pfaffenfreund, und ein Kreuzzieher und ein Virtuose unsres Jahrhunderts” (DKV 9.2: 31) [a man from Judaea, a Job from Arabia, a seer from Egypt, a Roman hero, a friend of the clergy, a crusader, a virtuoso of our own society] each of whom will reveal the “spirit of his age, the nature of his mind, the manner his character is formed, and the way he conceived of virtue and happiness” (Barnard 76). As Herder contemplates the world’s formation, he compares history to a stream rushing to the ocean. That stream originates in the lands of the East (Morgenland) as it passes through the lands of the West (Abendland):

Ist Norden oder Süden, Morgen, oder Abend die Vagina hominum gewesen? […] Ist dies, so sehe ich zwei Ströme, von denen der Eine aus Orient, über Griechenland und Italien sich ins südliche Europa sanft senkt, und auch eine sanfte, südliche Religion, eine Poesie der Einbildungskraft, eine Musik, Kunst, Sittsamkeit, Wissenschaft des östlichen Südens erfunden hat. Der zweite Strom geht über Norden von Asien nach Europa (DKV 9.2: 17) [Was the North or the South, the Morn or the Evening, the vagina hominum? […] If so, I see two streams, the one coming from the Orient through Greece and Italy, softly penetrating Southern Europe, thus giving rise to a gentle, southern religion; to a poetry of imaginative power; to the music, art, morality, and learning of the easterly southern regions. The second stream takes the northern route from Asia to Europe.]

This passage from Herder’s journal draws out the intricate connection between Eastern and Western cultures; the East being not only the origin of poetry, but a source of life. As I outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, Herder’s interest in and fascination with the Orient, the East, the Morgenland, continued throughout his career. With the rediscovery of Persian and Indian literary sources in the 1770s and 1780s, Herder began to turn his attention toward Eastern countries – Persia, India, Arabia. For Herder, the cultures of the East were older, more original
and could play a major role in the making of a German nation and identity. This passage also highlights Herder’s organization of cultures within the natural world. The image of the two streams descending upon the different geographical regions and disseminating different elements of cultures throughout is essentially the thesis of Herder’s philosophy of world history; as he views the world and its elements, Herder sees a fundamental chain of being to things. The various parts and components that make up our universe come together to form an organic whole. There is a unity between nature, man and, ultimately, the cultures of the world.

In this chapter, I examine Herder’s organization of knowledge about the cultures, nations and civilizations of the Other in his philosophy of world history. By analyzing his two major texts on the philosophy of world history, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774) and his magnum opus *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-1791), I argue that Herder not only offers a new and alternative way of understanding world history, but also questions the Enlightenment ideas and conceptualizations of the Other in relation to European history and progress. As the title of this chapter indicates, I regard the genre of world history to be a hyper mode of organizing knowledge about the Other, as philosophers, theologians and logicians who have contributed to this genre seem to tightly organize cultures, historical events, and material circumstances and forces in order to offer a better understanding of oneself. In fact, Herder himself uses precisely the word “organization” as he titles the different chapters in his *Ideen* such as “Organisation der Völker des Nordpols,” “Organisation der Afrikanischen Völker,” and so on. However, I argue that the message of pluralism, tolerance and cultural understanding one reads in Herder’s philosophy of world history distinguishes him from other thinkers of his time. As Herder launches upon the world “virtually alone” (Berlin 177) with his notions of cultural relativism, he attempts to trace the influence of one culture on another as
they develop over time, and to insist that civilizations must be understood from within their own stages of development: “Herder was one of the very few who counseled another possible way of seeing the relation between the world’s various cultures and civilizations. In the history of Western philosophy, this is a lonely position, and an admirable one” (Sikka 260). In turn, as I will illustrate shortly, Herder responds to philosophies of world history before him by offering an historicized understanding of human nature, advocating the idea that human nature is itself an historical product, and thus setting the stage for the historicist philosophy of human nature one finds in the later works of Hegel and Nietzsche.

From his earlier works in the 1760s, Herder regarded the poetry of the *Morgenland* as a source for inspiration and the Orient was the divine place where humankind began its journey. Much of the scholarship on Herder and the East focuses on Herder’s interest in India and Sanskrit language and culture, and his major influence on comparative philologists in Germany such as Wilhelm von Humboldt and the Schlegel brothers. My focus in this chapter, however, will be on Herder’s organization of Islamic and Arab culture and civilization in *Ideen*, and the ways in which Herder represents Arabic language, Islam and Mohammed in his paradigm. We see a “dizzying array” (Almond 55) of references to the Muslim Orient throughout Herder’s oeuvre. From the praises of richness of the Arabic language and the idealization of the Arabs in “On the Effect of Poetry” (1778), to the middle chapters on Arabia and the Crusades in the *Ideen*, to a footnote on the Arab origins of European love poetry in the posthumous *Adrastea* (1803), Herder admired and was truly inspired by the traditions of that part of the world. Yet, while much scholarship is dedicated to Herder’s influence on the early Romantics with regard to language and nationalism, the example he set of looking to the East – and particularly Arabic Islamic traditions of language and poetry – has been largely overlooked.
For the English-speaking Herder scholar, the liberal interpretation of the philosopher’s work on nationalism, multiculturalism and pluralism has been largely due to Isaiah Berlin’s seminal essay “Herder and the Enlightenment” in his *Vico and Herder* (1976). The essay draws attention to three novel concepts that have, in turn, changed the way scholarship looks at Herder today. Berlin highlights the *populism* in Herder’s work, which is the belief in the value of belonging to a group or culture (what Herder terms as *Volk*); Herder’s second concept is *expressionism*, which refers to the relationship between language, human thought and culture; the third concept is pluralism, the belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability of the values of different cultures and societies, and, in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideas (Berlin 176). In his essay, Berlin essentially highlights Herder’s focus on language and literature, his sense that there is a common element running through the activities of a given people, and his belief that each culture should be appreciated for what it is rather than being judged by the standards of another culture.

The reception of Herder in socio-political and philosophical studies focused on precisely this multicultural, cosmopolitan dimension of Herder. For Charles Taylor, for instance, Herder’s work on language has had a tremendous effect on modern culture, for not only does language allow human beings to have a greater awareness about things, but it also transforms feelings, thereby giving a newfound expression of the self.4 Elaborating on Berlin and Taylor, F.M. Barnard’s most recent work *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History* (2003) reiterates Herder’s belief in the “uniqueness and incommensurability of national cultures” (6), while noting

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4 See Charles Taylor, “The Importance of Herder” in his *Philosophical Arguments*. For Taylor, “deeply innovative thinkers don’t have to be rigorous in order to originate important ideas, since the insights they capture […] can inspire other, more philosophical exigent minds to more exact formations.” This, he continues, is exemplified in Herder’s relation to Hegel, as well as his seminal role in the creation of post-Romantic thought and culture (79).
the element of universalism conveyed by Herder’s notion of “humanity” (77). Adding to Barnard’s study, Sikka’s insightful reading in *Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference* (2011) suggests that the crucial point for Herder’s work is that “all people are human, expressing distinct ways of being human” (85). She points out Herder’s strong critique of a Eurocentric universalism in which he criticizes his contemporaries “for the cultural partisanship and prejudice that underlie their unthinking Eurocentrism, and their ignorant condescension towards non-European peoples” (4). Vicki Spencer’s *Herder’s Political Thought. A Study of Language, Culture, and Community* (2012) elaborates on Herder’s critique of the Eurocentric universalism by highlighting his anti-imperialist stance, and goes so far as to suggest that his “opposition to European imperialism can also be seen as providing encouragement to postcolonial nationalist movements” (153). Adding to this discourse, John K. Noyes has recently argued in his *Herder: Aesthetics against Imperialism* (2015) that, while Herder’s opposition to imperialism has been commented on repeatedly in the recent literature, so far Herder scholarship has failed to understand why his anti-imperialism forms the necessary foundation for his entire philosophy and how it mirrors the central problems of his thought. My approach to Herder and the organization of knowledge has been influenced by this discourse, which highlights the pluralism, multiculturalism and the cultural tolerance of Herder’s philosophy of world history. My contribution to this discourse, however, is to look at how Islam and Arab culture and aesthetics are situated and organized in Herder’s encyclopedic endeavour of outlining a philosophy of history.

While Herder is considered the initiator of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, or to use the words of Hans Adler and Ernest A. Menze, “the father of German romanticism” (3), resources on him remain “insufficiently appreciated, excavated and utilized” (Sikka 2). The first and last
complete English translation of his major work *Ideen* dates from 1800, while only excerpts of his other works have just recently been translated.⁵ There is a sense of dualism and dilemma in Herder’s oeuvre; as Peter Hallberg points out, while on the one hand Herder’s works illustrate an “inspiring doctrine of cultural self-determination challenging the authority of universal laws,” on the other hand there is also the “destructive doctrine of nationalism and cultural – even racial – supremacy” (291). The reception of Herder’s work in Germany is similarly critical, but from a uniquely German perspective: “sympathetic analyses of strong theories of cultural identity within German tradition are exceedingly rare in Germany itself, for obvious historical reasons,” Sonia Sikka remarks (10). It is important to note that Herder’s concepts, which are fundamental to his view on cultural pluralism, are in fact double-edged swords, as history shows. Herder’s *Klima*, for instance, was later distorted into forms of social Darwinism, which apply natural selection and survival of the fittest to politics and sociology. But, where Darwin’s natural selection has arguably motivated ideas of eugenics, imperialism and racism, Herder uses the concept to argue that environmental factors contribute to the differences one sees in cultures. One also cannot ignore the fact that Herder’s understanding of *Volksgeist* has been linked to Nazism and fascism, despite the fact that Herder’s view of race was not predicated on an explicit biological world view. Ernest Renan’s inherently racist definition of nation is also another example where a Herderian concept takes a pernicious turn.⁶ Where Herder sees nations as a group of people sharing the same language and culture, Renan’s national typology argues that a nation is an amalgamation of people who share a common past, and have derived a strong bond in seeking a

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⁵ T. Churchill’s translation of *Ideen* is the only complete version. I have referred to this text when translating the German passages throughout the chapter. However, I have consulted other texts such as *Philosophical Writings* edited by Michael N. Forster and *On World History*, edited by Hans Adler and Ernest Menze. Unless indicated otherwise, translations are my own.

⁶ See his lecture “Qu’est-ce qu’une Nation?” (1882), *Histoire du Peuple d’Israël* (1887-1893) and “La Reforme Intellectuelle et Morale” (1929)
common identity and a desire to continue to live together. Renan’s rejection of the Herderian nation contributed to the sense of patriotism and unleashed a sinister element of Western identity that is still taking shape across North America and Europe today. It is easy to see, then, how the dualism and dilemma of Herder’s philosophy of history, and the concepts that make it up, begin to inform social policies and institutions of power. Nevertheless, this chapter argues that these very notions define the openness and liberal attitude of Herder.

I. Philosophies of History

By the time the young Herder anonymously published his philosophy of history in *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774) [Yet Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind], philosophies of history were already an established literary medium during the eighteenth century. From the works of Charles de Montesquieu, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Isaak Iselin, and David Hume, Herder had “plenty to lean upon” (Berlin 174). The specific term “philosophy of history” was coined by Voltaire in the years 1756 to 1765, between his *Essai sur les Moeurs* (1756) and his *Philosophie de l’Histoire* (1765). Using rationalistic and scientific principles to understand history and historical events, Voltaire writes in 1742 that “ce qui manque d’ordinaire à ceux qui compilent l’histoire, c’est l’esprit philosophique” (135) [what is usually lacking from those compiling history is philosophical spirit]. In viewing history, Voltaire suggests that writers should move beyond collecting and presenting meaningless or miscellaneous facts, and instead interpret history by offering a didactic message; a philosophy of history, therefore, “raises the possibility of ‘learning from

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7 See Montesquieu’s *l’Ésprit des lois* (1748), Turgot’s *Plan de deux discours sur l’histoire universelle* (1751), Hume’s *History of England* (1762), and Iselin’s *Geschichte der Menschheit* (1764).
history.'”9 In her *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon*, Karen O’Brien argues that the Enlightenment has often “been held responsible for generating giant interpretive myths, those ‘master’ or ‘meta-narratives,’ which, it is said, western Europeans still tell themselves in order to understand their past, their future, and their right to control other nations” (9). Indeed, their “metanarratives,” to use Jean-François Lyotard’s term, seek to establish a meaning for the entire sweep of history, from its origin to its end, not only to provide a totalized and comprehensive account of various historical events, experiences and cultural phenomena, but also to place themselves and others around them in the universe. As Larry Wolff observes, “if the Renaissance discovered perspectives in art, it is the Enlightenment that articulated and explored the problem of perspective in viewing history, culture and society” (Preface xi). Thus, the point of view one takes, or the paradigm one adopts in order to *narrate* narratives of history, were under constant debate and development during the eighteenth century.

In explaining and situating themselves in the world, and in measuring their own success and progress, many philosophers of history prior to Herder claimed that it was possible to assess the progress of different societies by common criteria. A type of methodology of knowledge about the Self in relation to and as opposed to the Other, philosophies of world history suggested serious engagement with anthropological concerns of the time. In a sense, encounters with the Other stimulated European intellectuals to reflect on the changes not only in their own local communities, but in the larger scheme of things as well. Questions such as how one measures individual progress, or how one’s society can continuously improve and reshape itself into more advanced forms became the centre of discussion. France took the first steps toward an establishment of the science of man and his history and progress in the world. Jean Le Rond

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9 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/history/]
D’Alembert and Denis Diderot, along with their encyclopedists, collected, classified and systematized as much knowledge as possible in order to advance reason, progress, science and technology (Erikson and Nielson 11), and their Encylopédie (1751-1772) contained detailed descriptions of cultural and social customs from all over the world, and surpassed all other dictionaries and encyclopedias of its time because of how it “combined a systematic thrust with the most ramified knowledge of details” (Behler 283). One could argue that this epistemic management contributed to other cosmopolitan and natural philosophies of history, as it engaged in and introduced new methods of historical analysis from the ancient world to modern day Europe.

Along with Voltaire’s above-mentioned texts that essentially argue that the rise and fall of civilizations is a necessary rhythm in history, theories conscious of the world also appear in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) and Johann Joachim Winkelmann’s *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke* (1755). For Voltaire, for example, the key component to his system is a Eurocentric teleology. Denying any unity and common descent of man, Voltaire argues in his *Essai sur les Moeurs* that not only do the White man, the Negro and the Indian spring from different soils (unlike the unity one finds in Herder’s philosophy as will be illustrated), but they also have different moral outlooks; for instance, because the native Indian’s physical nature differs from “ours,” he asserts, his morality must necessarily be different from ours as well. The founder of the genre of world history before the term first appeared by Voltaire was, in fact, the Swiss writer Isaak Iselin. His work *Philosphische Muthmassungen. Über die Geschichte der Menschheit* (1764) outlines three main ages in the course of world history: the state of nature, the state of savagery and the civilized stage. Like Voltaire, Iselin emphasizes the concept of a linear
progress of history that advances toward the present and, even more, toward a high degree of radiance and well-being. In his theory, Iselin divides the world into three levels. The first level is characterized by feeling and the simplicity of the childhood of the human race (the Orient). The second level is characterized by the imagination (Greece and Rome), and the third level entails Europeans who have reached this stage where reason overrules both feeling and imagination. For Iselin, ultimately the history of man is the gradual progression toward reason and morality and toward an ever greater perfection, a perfection that is found in the third stage.

At the same time, Scottish Enlightenment thinkers would pursue these questions in greater detail and with more studious empiricism (Wolff, “Discovering Cultural Perspectives”), by attempting to trace stages of the development of human society from savagery to civilization. For example, in 1766 Adam Ferguson published An Essay on the History of Civil Society, attempting to delineate the stages of primitive human society, from hunting and fishing to pastoral herding to agriculture, with emphasis on the idea of “progress” from one stage to the next. John Millar’s Origins of the Distinction of Ranks (1771) and Adam Smith’s The Wealth of Nations (1776) were similarly important for classifying and evaluating the stages of human development. What is common between such philosophies of world history, moreover, is that they are Eurocentric or, as O’Brien explains, they evoke “an intellectual investment in the idea of a common European civilization” (2). Later philosophies of history also see a similar progression of events in world history. G.W.F. Hegel’s Philosophy of History is perhaps one of the most developed philosophical theories of history. For Hegel, world history takes place in the realm of the Spirit.

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10 See Über die Geschichte der Menschheit. Volume 1 page 34.
11 Approaching a history of civilization through a fixed series of stages continues throughout the nineteenth century as it finds expression in Hegel’s philosophy in his The Philosophy of History as well as Marx’s materialist theory of the development of economic modes of production (Marx and Engels 1845-1848).
and the realization of the consciousness of freedom. Moreover, what is fundamental for Hegel is that world history travels from the East to the West, and Europe is the end of history whereas Asia is the beginning. Unlike Herder’s philosophy of history where each culture expresses its own happiness, progress within their own community, Hegel argues that, when certain cultures get stuck in their development, they are essentially no longer part of history. Ultimately, Spirit in the German world is most developed and perfect in its maturity and strength after having gone through many stages. Herder’s philosophy of history, on the other hand, argues against the impossibility of constructing a perfect society.

Herder’s philosophy of history is first developed in his _Auch eine Philosophie_ and _Ideen_. However, his approach differs from those described above, as _Auch eine Philosophie_ mainly throws relentless jabs at the Enlightenment thinkers’ approaches to history, is much shorter (in fact, Herder refers to it as a pamphlet), and merely lays out his theories on other cultures within a narrative of history. _Ideen_, on the other hand, is a much more developed text, longer in size (600 plus pages) and has a wider scope in its analysis, as I later illustrate. One may argue that _Auch eine Philosophie_ is quite concise in its argument and criticism of the _philosophes_. Herder’s real project of a “history of mankind” was not to trace the trajectory of “progress” of man over time, but, more importantly, it was to observe and comment on the different varieties of human excellence in the history of mankind. The notion that humanity is moving in the direction of better and more perfect civilization, and that such progress can be seen through the study of the history of civilization, was deeply criticized by Herder. Not only does he voice his opinion against the “Hume! Voltäre! Robertsons! Klassiche Gespenster der Dämmerung!” (_DKV_ 4: 38) [Humes! Voltaries! Robertsons! Classic ghosts of the twilight!] (_Another Philosophy_ 28), he critically questions the Encyclopedia project and its ‘development,’ and ‘enlightenment’ of
society. Sarcastically, and specifically writing in French, Herder acknowledges that “on commençait à penser comme nous pensons aujourd’hui: on n’était plus barbare” (DKV 4: 56) [one began to think as we think today: one was no longer a barbarian] (Another Philosophy 45). Why are we no longer barbarians? What major developments have taken place? For Herder, “keinen Zeitpunkt der Entwicklung des menschlichen Geistes hat man schöner beschrieben!” (DKV 4: 56) [no other point in the development of the human spirit has been described more beautifully!] (Another Philosophy 45; my alteration) than by the philosophes, and more specifically in their various philosophies of history, including the Encyclopédie, David Hume’s History of England and miscellaneous writings, Robertson’s History of Scotland and History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth, as well as Iselin’s History of Mankind (DKV 4: 57), as a footnote indicates. However, in the same footnote, Herder adds that such works and many others along their train are mere limps and babbles – “nachhinkt” and “nachlallet” (DKV 4: 57) – thus questioning the approaches and ideas that were fundamental to these historians, and undermining or mocking their message.

Auch eine Philosophie criticizes two related elements in this Enlightenment vision of human progress. First, Herder critiques the arrogance that places European civilization as the implicit or explicit telos of a human history. Second, he rejects rigid stadial theories that attempt to trace human society from savagery to civilization. Yet Herder too “wanted a sense of the whole, but resisted identifying the whole with the end or telos” (Zammito, “Herder and Historical Metanarrative” 68). Rather, throughout his pamphlet, and later in the Ideen, he argues that each historical formation had its own intrinsic perfection and thus each human culture had its own internal principle of happiness. As early as 1766 Herder argues in his essay “Ist die Schönheit des Körpers ein Bote von der Schönheit der Seele?” that the category of beauty can, in
fact, vary according to the social, geographical and cultural circumstances of a specific ethnic
group; each nation has its own standards of beauty. As Berlin observes, for Herder, “each culture
is a harmonious lyre – one must merely have the ear to hear its melodies” (216). Challenging the
idea of European superiority, Herder claims that each of the world’s many nations has a specific
and uniquely valuable character expressed in the various facets of its collective life, which
includes its language and literatures, religions, traditions and customary practices. Indeed,
cultures are autonomous in the sense that they arise at a specific time and place, and any desire
on the part of one culture to either emulate a foreign culture or to impose its rules and influences
on another is “inherently misguided” (Kontje 72). Responding to the various philosophies of
history during the eighteenth century, Herder insists that human society was not characterized by
a linear evolution from primitivism to civilization, and that every nation has “its own center of
gravity” (Evrigenis and Pellerin Introduction xviii).

Moreover, what is fundamental for Herder and fundamentally at odds with the
universalist impulse of the Enlightenment is his emphasis on the variety of human societies and
their connection to one another. As he reevaluates the philosophes’ systematization of other
cultures and the ways in which different groups are compared and judged, Herder stresses the
fact that every culture is indebted to another, as every culture develops out of the framework of
previous ones; it is intercultural in its very formation (Spencer “In Defense of Herder” 88).
Incompatible with the central moral, historical and aesthetic doctrines of the Enlightenment,
Herder’s philosophy is that each human culture is unique, almost incomparable to any other,
because the conditions of its development are unlike those of any other people:

*Keine zwei Augenblicke [sind] dieselbe – dass also Aegypter, Römer und Grieche auch
nicht zu allen Zeiten dieselben gewesen […] Griechland bestand aus vielen Ländern:*
Athenienser und Böotier, Spartaner und Korinthier war sich nichts minder, als gleich –
Trieb man nicht auch in Asien den Ackerbau? Haben nicht Aegypter einmal eben so gut
gehandelt, wie Phönizier? Waren die Macedonier nicht eben so wohl Eroberer, als die
Römer an Tapferkeit? (DKV 4: 34)

[No two moments are ever the same, and that, accordingly, the Egyptians, Romans, and
Greeks were also not the same at all times. […] Greece consisted of many lands:
Athenians and Boeotians, Spartans and Corinthians were anything but the same! Was not
agriculture practiced in Asia too? Did not the Egyptians once trade just as well as the
Phoenicians? Were not the Macedonians conquerors just like the Romans?] (Another
Philosophy 25)

Explicit in Herder’s pluralism, then, is the insistence that each community, society and nation
must be understood in its own time and by its own cultural standards. As such, Enlightenment
thinkers, according to Herder, failed to acknowledge the connection between different Völker,
which ultimately resulted in a distortion of historical reality.

II. Philosophy of History and the Ideen

Ten years later, Herder turns again to his philosophy of history, but with more elaboration
on his ideas and a wider scope to his analysis in Ideen; this much larger text includes chapters on
geology, climate, mineral, vegetable and animal life, and lessons in physical geography. The
work covers the earliest conceivable moment in creation, through the history of the planet and its
cultures, up until the European middle ages. Encyclopedic in its scope, one sees in this work “a
corresponding attempt to link all the arts and all the sciences, to represent religious, artistic,
social, political, economic, biological, philosophical experience as facets of one activity” (Berlin
177), as Herder shows his encompassing knowledge of many fields, such as aesthetics, physics, geography, anthropology, theology, mythology, psychology, botany, history and even astronomy.

The work is divided into four parts and written over a number of years, with the first volume published in 1784 and the fourth in 1791. A fifth volume was intended, but never materialized. The first two parts of the work (Book 1-11) focus mainly on the place of man on earth and in the cosmos, and on attempts to construe man’s emergence in terms of his geophysical placement; as Herder famously says in the title of his first chapter, “unsre Erde ist ein Stern unter Sternen” (DKV 6: 21) [our earth is a star among stars] (Outlines 1). In the second volume, Herder describes the concrete realization and manifestation of the human being in different places on earth. How are different cultures organized? What makes up their different characteristics in the various regions of the world? Herder organizes the globe into five climatic-geographic regions, which also correspond to five basic varieties of mankind: the Arctic belt in his chapter on the “Organisation der Völker der Nordpols,” the Asian landmass in “Organisation der Völker um den Asiatischen Rücken,” which he calls the region of the beautiful fully formed peoples (“Erdestrich schöngebildeter Völker”), Africa, the Tropical Islands, and the Americas. The farther away from the inclement climates of the North and closer to the temperate regions in the “middle,” the more beautiful the shape, the more oval the face, the lighter the skin and the more harmonious the peoples’ countenance. The third (Book 12-15) and fourth volumes (Book 16-20) turn to “history proper” (Beiser149), and focus on the progress of different cultures in their historical periods. In the third volume, Herder compares different myths and mythologies from all over the world, and scrutinizes ancient documents from different cultures in order to obtain information about the beginning of history. Human history, he argues, displays
comparable steps of development, so that humanity is similar, although not uniform, all over the globe. In discussing China, India, Hebrews, Slavic people and Greeks, he suggests that space, time and circumstance modify the appearance of humankind, and this process of modified individualization is at the core of world history. The last volume gives a survey of the history of theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence of Europe and other civilizations until the end of the Middle Ages. The last few chapters then make an historical jump by outlining the political, economic and cultural factors that have contributed to present day Europe. Book 20 (the last book of volume IV) examines the resurrection of Europe by the Crusades and the growth of world trade, then outlines the different components of the age of reason and its effects on Europe and the rest of the world, and all of this “was to be read against the backdrop of the revolution” (Noyes 265). It is important to note that Herder’s Ideen remained a “monumental fragment” (Adler and Menze 13), and the reason why Herder abandoned his project remains open for speculation. On the one hand, Kant’s devastating criticism of the first two volumes of Ideen could be a possible reason for discouraging Herder. In his review “Rezention zu Johann Gottfried Herder: Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit” (1784-1785), Kant argued that Herder’s model of a historical development interlinked with the natural and human world was inconsistent and lacked logic. Essentially, Herder’s whole “scientific” approach to history was too empirical and not philosophical enough. On the other hand, one can conclude that while Herder advocated for a unity in his totality of world history, by the time he reached the current state in Europe (volume IV published shortly after the French Revolution), he realized that the “totality of the world as such is not accessible to humankind” (Adler and Menze 13). Moreover, as Herder’s philosophy of history rejected a telos in its formation, his abandonment of the project suggests that we have not reached the “end of history,” and it is still in the making.
How can the sort of “brachiating history” (Zammito, “Herder and Historical Metanarrative” 83) that Herder outlines for humankind be possibly completed? Book IV’s publication date (1791) is also key to Herder’s divergence as history was truly in the making with the events of the French Revolution. Enthusiastic about the change of things in his neighbouring country, Herder revealed in his notes that he wanted to engage with the topic of the French revolution (SW 14: 648-51). In his outline, Herder aimed to discuss the political objectives and consequences of the revolution. He also considered the notion that revolutions do not simply occur because of the political or social situation, but that they are also environmental, economic and global events. Instead, Herder goes on to formulate his ideas in Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität (1793). Focusing on the present political situation of Europe, Herder not only comments on how, in such troubled time, humanity might triumph, but that art and philosophy will also join the struggle for humanity (Noyes 270). Where Ideen traces human progress through the organic relationship of one culture to the other, the Letters veer in a different direction by focusing on the cultural, social and political circumstances effecting the French revolution, and, in turn, Europe as a whole. Still, as in his philosophies of history, humanity remains his core concern.

What distinguishes Herder’s Ideen from his earlier Auch eine Philosophie is the fact that he specifically situates mankind in a history of nature, whereas the earlier text lacks this cosmic background and a narrative of historicism and naturalism. In Ideen, Herder traces a genealogy

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12 In using loaded concepts such as historicism and naturalism, I am particularly referring to Zammito’s argument which suggests that these two components are essential to the formation of Herder’s anthropology: “in order to warrant a philosophical – i.e. comprehensive – history of mankind one must simultaneously undertake a historicization of nature and a naturalization of humanity.” The concept of historicism for Herder implies an understanding of an aesthetic history, where language, folk poetry, culture as well as past historical developments contribute to a philosophy of history. Likewise, naturalism does not only imply the study of nature and origin of things in natural causes, but also human nature. For Herder, the advancements of the natural sciences of the day are fundamental to the progress of history and mankind. How a creature of nature becomes an artifice of culture is most fundamental. Natural developments and historical developments go hand in hand and create a “natural history of peoples” (DKV 9: 879). See Zammito’s paper: “Herder on Historicism and Naturalism” https://www.uio.no/forskning/tverrfak/culcom/nyheter/2006/docs/Zammito-Herder.pdf
of cultural development grounded solidly in natural history, whereby there is no categorical divide between nature and human history; man uniquely emerges, but within nature: “die Natur bei der unendlichen Varietät, die sie liebt, alle Lebendigen unserer Erde nach einem Hauptplasma der Organisierung gebildet zu haben scheine” (DKV 6: 67) [nature, amid the infinite variety she loves, seems to have fashioned all the living creatures on our Earth after one grand model of organization] (Outlines 39). Thus, for Herder, in all the variety of life forms, there is an underlying unity: “das Eine organische Principium der Natur, das wir jetzt bildend, jetzt treibend, jetzt empfindend, jetzt künstlichbauend, nennen […] im Grunde nur Eine und dieselbe organische Kraft ist” (DKV 6: 102) [the one organic principle of nature, which we now call forming, now driving, now sensitive, now artificially constructing […] is fundamentally only one and the same organic force] (my translation; see Outlines 62). Even more so, Herder envisions a kind of history that would combine cultural history with geography and natural history to create a natural history of peoples. In his 1784 essay “Von der Annehmlichkeit, Nützlichkeit und Notwendigkeit der Geographie” (1784?) [On the Convenience, Usefulness of and Need for Geography], Herder envisioned that:

Geographie und Geschichte (beide im wahren und würdigen Umfange ihrer Begriffe betrachtet) zuerst dazu beigetragen haben, eine Reihe träger Vorurteile abzuschütteln, Sitten und Menschen zu vergleichen, und das Wahre Schöne Nützliche zu suchen, in welcher Gestalt und Hülle es sich von Aussen zeige. Auf diese Weise dienen Geographie und Geschichte der nützlichsten Philosophie auf der Erde: sie schärfen den sensus humanitatis in allen Gestalten und Formen: sie lehren uns mit erleuchteten Augen unsre Vorteile sehen und schätzen, ohne dass wir dabei irgend eine Nation der Erde verachten oder verfluchen wollten. (SW 30: 100)
[Geography and history, (both viewed with the true and merited range of their conceptions) first helped him to shake off a number of untoward prejudices, to compare customs and human beings, and to seek the true, the beautiful, and the useful in whatever outer shape or dress it might manifest itself. In this way, geography and history serve the most useful philosophy on earth, that is, moral philosophy, science and art; they sharpen the sensum humanitatis in all shapes and forms; they teach us to see and to value with enlightened eyes our advantages, without thereby wanting to express contempt for or to condemn any other nation on earth.]

As Herder composes the fourth and last volume of Ideen, he moves beyond what he articulated in his earlier theories of the origin of language in relation to organizing knowledge about other cultures. As the short essay on geography illustrates, Herder sees an interlinking between the forces of nature and the forces of spirit. His philosophy of history in the Ideen, therefore, is grounded upon two principles: the environment’s effect on the organism, and the environment’s effect on the development of human cognition.

A central concept Herder uses to describe differences between nations, and their influence on individual cultures and communities, is Klima. For Herder, Klima not only means the prevailing weather conditions of a place, but it also connotes a people’s entire way of life, including their diet and their daily activities: “da unsre Erde eine Kugel und das feste Land ein Gebirge über dem Meer ist: so wird durch vielerlei Ursachen auf ihr eine klimatische Gemeinschaft befördert, die zum Leben der Lebendigen gehört” (DKV 6: 267) [As our earth is a globe, and the firm land a mountain raised above the sea, a climatic community, affecting the life of every thing living, is promoted on it by various causes] (Outlines 174). Even if human beings

13 See his award-winning Essay on the Origin of Language (1771).
are born with certain innate characteristics, *Klima* is also an external factor. Thus, just as certain climates produce certain plants and animals, they also produce certain kinds of peoples, as each nation, from one generation to the next, acquires its own way of thinking because it was born in a particular environment: “jeder Nation ist ihre Vorstellungsart um so tiefer eingeprägt, weil sie ihr eigen, mit ihrem Himmel und ihrer Erde verwandt, aus ihrer Lebensart entsprossen, von Vätern und Urvätern auf sie vererbt ist” (*DKV* 6: 298) [each nation has its own peculiar way of thinking that is impressed upon itself all the more deeply because it has sprung from its own way of life, is related to its sky and its earth and is passed down from one generation to the next] (*Outlines* 220). Each nation also has its own particular voice and identity as can be seen through its folksongs and myths: “die Mythologie jedes Volks ist ein Abdruck der eigentlichen Art, wie es die Natur ansah (*DKV* 6: 301) [the mythology of every people is an expression of the particular mode, in which they viewed nature] (*Outlines* 199). Of course, Herder was not the first thinker to incorporate environmental factors into his organization of other cultures. Comte de Buffon’s belief that the diversity of species needs a bio-geographical paradigm had quite a substantial influence on Herder (*Zammito, Kant, Herder* 332); more significant was Montesquieu’s *L’esprit des lois* (1748) that sketches a theory of climatic determinism whereby the physiological aspect of climate is based on laws, customs and manners. However, while Montesquieu’s view “led him to adopt a highly territorial view of human diversity” (Noyes 219), Herder argues that the natural expression of human diversity is constantly in flux in terms of man’s historical development, geographical interaction and even of the cross-fertilization with other cultures: “all sie gehören zum Gemälde des vielverändernden Klima” (*DKV* 6: 266) [they are all part of the climate that changes so many things] (my translation; see *Outlines* 174). Humans are constantly adapting to their environment and reflect critically on the appropriateness and suitability of their adaptive
strategies to that environment. This is explained by Herder in partly theological terms. In Book 7, Chapter ii, Herder states that: “aus dem Staube aller vier Weltteile, sagt die alte bildliche Tradition, ward Adam gebildet und es durchhauchten ihn Kräfte und Geister der weiten Erde. Wohin seit Jahrtausenden seine Söhne zogen und sich einwohnten: da wurzelten sie als Bäume und gaben dem Klima gemäss Blätter und Früchte” (Herder DKV 6: 259). [The ancient allegorical tradition say, that Adam was formed out of the dust of all the four quarters of the Globe, and animated by the powers and spirits of the whole Earth. Wherever his children have bent their course, and fixed their abode, in the lapse of ages, there they have taken root as trees, and produced leaves and fruit adapted to the climate] (Outlines 169).

While diversity in culture results from different interpretations of environment, these forms of diversity only cement the unity of the human species. Ultimately, there is one human race. For example, to see cultures of indigenous Americans or Africans as less developed than our own culture (a position that is implicit in historical progressivism as outlined by Voltaire or Iselin, for example) would be one reason for the colonization of one country by another; “it would justify any kind of interference that purports to shape another culture in the forms of the more dominant culture, ultimately providing the perfect ideological justification for military force and domination” (Noyes 215). Herder’s ideas are elaborated in a chapter appropriately titled “In so verschiedenen Formen das Menschengeschlecht auf der Erde erscheint: so ist doch überall Ein’ und dieselbe Menschengattung” [Notwithstanding the Varieties of the human Form, there is but one and the same Species of Man throughout the Whole of our Earth]. In this chapter, Herder argues that the scientist must recognize the common bond that unites all people, rejecting the concept of race and racial classification:
Rasse leitet auf eine Verschiedenheit der Abstammung, die hier entweder gar nicht statt
findet, oder in jedem dieser Weltstriche unter jeder dieser Farben die verschiedensten
Rassen begreift. Denn jedes Volk ist Volk: es hat seine National-Bildung, wie seine
Sprache; zwar hat der Himmelstrich über alle bald ein Gepräge, bald nur einen linden
Schleier gebreitet, der aber das ursprüngliche Stammengebilde der Nation nicht zerstöre.
Die Farben verlieren sich in einander. (Herder DKV 6: 255)
[Race refers to a difference of origin, which in this case either does not exist, or in each
of these countries, and among people of each of these colours, comprises the most
different races. For every people is a people, having its own national form just as it has its
own language: the climate, it is true, stamps on each mark, or spreads over it a slight veil,
but not sufficient to destroy the original national character. Colours run into each other.]
(Outlines 166)

This is not to suggest that all cultures of the Other are completely without fault. On the
contrary. For example, while Herder praises the accomplishments of the Greeks, especially for
their language, poetry and art, he is highly critical of the political state of Greece and its
oppression of those conquered (Book 13, chapter iii). Similarly, Herder is full of admiration for
the Brahminic idea of God, and for the Hindu respect and tolerance of other religions, yet he
does not hesitate to condemn certain Indian cultural practices such as the burning of widows on
their husband’s funeral pyre (Book 11, chapter iv). However, what Herder establishes in his
pluralistic view of cultures are two fundamental ideas that reoccur throughout his philosophy.
Firstly, even while comparisons and observations are made about the different facets of culture,
be they negative or positive, Herder insists that different cultures should be interpreted from their
own perspective, and in light of their own values, morals and ideas. Secondly, while each culture
has its own identity, Herder suggests that differences mesh into one another: “die Farben verlieren sich in einander.” While Churchill translates the verb verlieren as “run into,” a more correct translation would be to say that each culture loses itself in the other, or is absorbed by the other culture, only to formulate a new entity and new shades of the same great picture, “desselben grossen Gemäldes” (Herder DKV 6: 256). Indeed, there is no favourite or superior culture or race: “man habe keinen Lieblingsstamm, kein Favoritvolk auf der Erde” (DKV 7: 698).

The organic interrelation of everything is fundamental for Herder. Just as he emphasizes that race is not what distinguishes one person from another, he also argues that it is indeed possible for one civilization to have an effect on another. For example, Herder explains that Asian culture migrated from Kashmir to Greece, and then from Greece to Europe. Using an organic metaphor, he describes the Asian influence on Greece as a foreign seedling being planted in its land: “laue Westwinde fächelten das Gewächs, das von der Höhe Asiens allmählich herverpflanzt war und durchhauchten es mit Leben” (DKV 6: 226) [gentle winds fanned the crops that were gradually transplanted from the heights of Asia and breathed life into every part] (my modification; Outlines 144). What is fascinating here is that even though Herder considers the most perfect human form to be found on the coast of the Mediterranean – “die menschliche Gestalt ging in den Olympus und bekleidete sich mit göttlicher Schönheit” (DKV 6: 226) [the human form ascended Olympus, and clothed itself in divine beauty] (Outlines 144) – there is yet an organic link to that beauty as the gentle winds bring genetic traces from the East and impregnate them in the West.

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14 See Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität. Letter 116.
One reads of a similar image when Herder describes the European culture: “wir nordischen Europäer wären noch Barbaren, wenn nicht ein gütiger Hauch des Schicksals uns wenigstens Blüten vom Geist dieser Völker herüber geweht hätte, um durch Einimpfung des schönen Zweiges in wilde Stämme mit der Zeit den unseren zu veredeln” (DKV 6: 228) [we northern Europeans would still be barbarians if a well-meaning wind of fate had not at least carried blossoms of these peoples’ spirit over to us, so that by the implantation of beautiful branches among wild stems, ours too would be ennobled over time] (my translation; see Outlines 145). In this light, the progress of cultures always happens through the transfer of cultures. As Herder uses words like “implantation,” “blossoms,” “stems” and “ennobled,” he takes us back to nature at its most simple function and purity. The grafting of a foreign blossom onto the native stock suggests a hybridization, or to use Kontje’s persuasive description, an inoculation of “Europeans against their own cultural poison” (Kontje 78). Essentially, this grafting process leads to something more noble or refined (“veredeln”). Moreover, there is a sense of urgency to survive in these metaphors. Plants, blossoms, trees, crops and other organisms must adapt to their environment all the time; the process of assimilation is necessary to their survival. Likewise, cultures, languages and civilizations must adapt not only to their environment, but also to each other. As Herder states earlier in his Journal, “mit dem deutschen Fleiss suche ich die gründliche englische Laune, den Witz der Franzosen, das Schimmernde Italiens zu verbinden” (DKV 1: 26) [I seek to join the thorough English temperament, the wit of the French, and the resplendence of Italy with German diligence] “On Diligence” 32). Essentially, Herder’s organicism is cosmopolitan (Germana 23) and his cosmopolitanism is organic. His understanding of national cultures and organic growths of particular soils and climates not only highlights that there is a common ethnicity, but that the pollination, fertilization and the inosculation that take
place are essential and fundamental to the development of our humanity. As Noyes observes, “nature is never nature-without-humans […] and culture is an expression of an ongoing negotiation with nature” (Noyes 220).

III. Kultur, Sprache and the East

*Kultur* is another important component to Herder’s organization of knowledge in *Ideen* and is intrinsically linked to one’s surrounding material circumstances. In observing the Bedouin culture of Arabia, for example, Herder speaks highly of the influential environment of the desert and its effect on human psychology, imagination and fancy. In Book 8, Chapter ii entitled, “Die Einbildungskraft der Menschen ist allenthalben organisch und klimatisch; allenthalben aber wird sie von der Tradition geleitet” [The human fancy is everywhere organic and climatic; but it is everywhere led by Tradition], Herder asks: “bei welchen Völkern die Einbildungskraft am stärksten gespannt sein müsse?” (*DKV* 6: 300 emphasis in original) [among what people must the imagination be highly strained?] (*Outlines* 198). Proving that human fancy is organic and climatic, Herder goes on to say that one’s imagination is heightened “bei solchen nämlich, die die Einsamkeit lieben, die wilde Gegenden der Natur, der Wüste, ein felsigtes Land, die Sturmreiche Küste des Meers, den Fuss Feuerspeiender Berge oder andre Wunder- und Bewegungsvolle Erdstriche bewohnen” (*DKV* 6: 301) [among those namely, who love solitude, and inhabit the wild regions of nature, deserts, rocks, the stormy shores of the sea, the feet of volcanoes, or other moving and astonishing scenes] (*Outlines* 198). Appealing to the deserts of Arabia, specifically, and how they affect the human mind, Herder then turns to the prophet Mohammed and the crucial role his environment has played in the construction of an Islamic nation and civilization. Mohammed’s surroundings affected his “erregte Phantasie” [heated imagination], so that “seine
Seele nie entflammter ist” (*DKV* 6: 300; my modification) [his mind was never more inflamed]

(*Outlines* 198). Furthermore, in a lengthy section dedicated to the “Reiche der Araber”

[Kingdom of Arabs] at the end of *Ideen*, we read of an Arabian Peninsula that is:

Einer der ausgezeichneten Erdstriche, der, seiner Nation einen eignen Charakter zu geben, von der Natur selbst bestimmt scheinet. Jene grosse Wüste zwischen Ägypten und Syrien, von Aleppo bis zum Euphrat gab wie eine südliche Tatarei dem Räuber- und Hirtenleben vorzüglicher Raum, und ist von den ältesten Zeiten mit Stämmen ziehender Araber besetzt gewesen. Die Lebensart dieses Volks, dem die Sädte Kerker schienen, sein Stolz auf einen alten eingebornen Ursprung, auf seinen Gott, seine reiche und dichterische Sprache, sein edles Pferd, auf Schwert und Bogen in seiner Hand, nebst allem was es sonst als Heiligtum zu besitzen glaubte; dies alles schien den Araben eine Rolle vorzubereiten, die sie auch, da ihre Zeit kam, weit anders als jene nördlichen Tataren, in dreien Weltteilen gespielt haben […] sie bleiben frei, und stolz auf ihre Abkunft, auf den Adel ihrer Geschlechter, auf ihre unbezüngene Tapferkeit, und ihre unvermischte Sprache. (*DKV* 6: 831)

[one of the most distinguished regions of the Earth, apparently intended by Nature herself, to stamp a peculiar character on its nation. The great desert between Syria and Egypt, extending from Aleppo to the Euphrates, afforded, like a southern Tatary, ample room for the predatory and pastoral life, and has been possessed by tribes of wandering Arabs from the remotest periods. The mode of life of these people to whom a town appeared a prison; their pride of an ancient indigenous origin, of their god, their rich and poetic language, their noble horses, their sword and bow, with every thing else which they fancied sacred to themselves; seem to have prepared the Arabs for a part, which in
due time they performed in three quarters of the Globe, in a manner very different from
the Tatars of the north […] they remained free, and proud of their descent, of the nobility
of their families, of their unconquered valour, and their uncontaminated language.]

(Outlines 336)

There is a sense of awe and admiration for the Arab in this passage, as Herder limns a picture of
a culture that is rich and pure in its origin, poetry and values. It is interesting to note that, and as
Albert Hourani points out, Herder was writing at a time when a certain conception of the Arab as
a noble figure began to appear in European writing (Hourani 25). Accounts such as that of the
German explorer Carsten Niebhur’s in his Travels Through Arabia and Other Countries (1790),
for instance, saw the Bedouin as having preserved a natural goodness of mankind. Like Herder’s
“free” and “unconquered” Bedouin, Niebhur’s Bedouin embodied liberty, independence and
simplicity. Herder argues that such traits were the product of the Bedouin’s environment, and
that the desert encompasses much more than a solitary space as it becomes intrinsically linked to
the “genetic makeup” of its dwellers, of its Volk, and their culture.

It is important to note that Herder’s Kultur does not just translate into the English word
culture, but it rather encompasses an array of meanings that ultimately contribute to the notion of
civilization. The way in which Herder uses the term refers to all creative and human enterprises
such as art, commerce, science, political institutions, literature, customs, myths. These categories
were all recognized by him as constituent parts of a community culture (Spencer “In Defense of
Herder” 84). Kultur is not to be confused with just civilization, however (and English readers
may be misled when reading Churchill’s incorrect translation of Kultur as civilization), as Herder
rejects the approach of thinkers like Voltaire for whom the term “culture” was linked to notions
of civilization and good taste (Spencer “In Defense of Herder” 84). Rather for Herder, culture
signifies a way of life for an entire community, and he emphasizes the fact that within a community there coexist different cultures: “Man ist gewohnt, die Nationen der Erde in Jäger, Fischer, Hirten und Ackerleute abzuteilen und nach dieser Abteilung nicht nur den Rang derselben in der Cultur, sondern auch die Cultur selbst als eine notwendige Folge dieser oder jener Lebensweise zu bestimmen” (DKV 6: 304) [It has been customary to divide the nations of the world into hunters, fishermen, shepherds and farmers, not only to determine their level of cultural development, but also to imply that culture as such is a necessary corollary of a given occupation or mode of life] (my translation; see Outlines 202). Herder formulates these “segmental cultures” (Barnard 143) to illustrate the difficulty in the classification of different nations: “Der Beduine und der Mongol, der Lapp und Peruaner sind Hirten; wie verschieden aber von einander, wenn jener Kameele, dieser Pferde, der dritte Rente, der vierte Alpaka’s und Llacma’s weidet” (DKV 6: 305) [The Bedouin and the Mongol, the Lapp and the Peruvian are shepherds; but how greatly they differ from each other, with one pasturing camels, the other horses, the third reindeer, and the last alpacas and llamas] (my translation; see Outlines 202).

Ultimately then, all cultures need to develop in the manner that is most appropriate for their own particular environment, history, tradition and understanding of the world. Moreover, another concept that is central to a culture’s values is Bildung. For Herder, this word not only means education in the traditional sense of the word, but it also connotes formation and cultivation. Man is cultivated (gebildet) and, therefore, Herder emphasizes that human beings are “not wild shoots of nature, but the products of a society, and their character is profoundly shaped by their having been raised within a particular climate and environment” (Sikka 32).

The prophet Mohammed becomes an important symbol of Kultur and Volksgeist for Herder, as his Islamic movement not only “provided the ‘key’ pull in the liminal bridge to
nationhood” (Chew 81), but it also lifted the Arabian peninsula from its savage state to a state of civilization; his movement was “created and upheld by the virtues of the desert, courage and fidelity” (Hourani 25). More importantly, Mohammed’s Koran and his language become part and parcel of a powerful and united Arab and Islamic nation – a nation Herder praises and urges his own culture to emulate, as I will shortly illustrate. In the following section, I focus on the ways in which Herder offers an alternative image of the prophet than was depicted by thinkers before him. Moreover, I examine the importance of the Arabic language and Mohammed’s nation-building to Herder’s own philosophy of nationalism. It is important to note that Herder’s non-prejudiced and positive depiction of Mohammed throughout his works was quite liberal for its time, as Katharina Mommsen points out (Arabische Welt 15). For instance, Voltaire’s verse-tragedy Le Fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophète (1741), a play that would later be translated by Goethe and much disapproved of by Herder, as will be shown in the next chapter, depicted the prophet in negative views that were widely shared during Voltaire’s time. Following the lead of Pierre Bayle’s Dictionnaire Historique et Critique (1697) and Humphrey Prideaux’s Life of Mahomet (1698), Voltaire presents a man who is essentially a criminal, a fanatic and a demagogue (traits that will later describe the figure of Ali Pasha, as discussed in Chapter Four). I consulted several entries about Islam, Mohammed and Arabs that appear in the encyclopedias and dictionaries at the time. The often cited and consulted Bibliothèque Orientale (1697), D’Herbelot’s encyclopedia, included entries about Islam, about A’isha (the prophet’s wife), the

15 During the beginning of the fifth century, Mecca comprised of a number of Arabian tribes, the most powerful of which were the Banu Quraish. Mohammed belonged to one of the sub clans of Banu Quraish, the Clan of Hashim. As I will show in the next chapter, Mohammed was intrinsically linked to the desert of Arabia in several ways. He was a trusted caravan leader and merchant before delivering the message of Islam to his nation – he was given the epithet Al Ameen (the trustworthy) by his people; escaping to Mount Hira just outside of Mecca, Mohammed would go on extended retreats of spiritual meditation and contemplation, and would eventually receive the Divine revelations of the Koran.
Koran, names of kings and prophets from the Arab world, the prophet and so on. Not only was it a narrative that constructed the image of an Orient in the imagination of many of its readers, but it also became a fundamental component of Orientalist discourse for many years to come. As Said argues, the *Biblothèque Orientale* did not aspire to transform previous misconceptions about the Orient. It was part of a meditative effort that merely confirmed an already established Orient in the readers’ eyes: “what may have been a loose collection of randomly acquired facts concerning vaguely Levantine history, Biblical imagery, Islamic culture, place names and so on were transformed into a rational Oriental panorama, from A to Z” (Said 65). For example, in many of his entries, D’Herbelot repeated the recurring topos in Orientalist discourse of Mohammed as a false prophet, an impostor, who was entirely averse to reason and science, and who took advantage of the credulity of the masses to deceive them into following his religion. Under the entry Aiat (verses), he says:

Voilà de quelle maniere les plus habiles parmi les Musulmans se cervent eux-mêmes les yeux, pour ne pas voir l’imposture de leur faux Prophete, qui allege pour le plus grand de ses miracles, de n’en avoir point fait, & de vouloir faire passer un Ouvrage qui n’a aucun ordre, ni liason, plein de repetitions, d’obscuritez & d’ignorance grossieres, pour le chef d’oeuvre de l’éloquence & du bel esprit. (D’Herbelot 136)

[And so it is in this crafty manner that the Muslims are blinded and unable to discern an imposter in their false prophet who tries to pass off a work, which has no order, connection, and is full of repetitions, obscurities, and gross ignorance, as his greatest miracle.]
Similarly, the numerous articles of the *Encyclopédie* repeated the recurring topos in Orientalist discourse of Mohammed. In the entry “Sarrasins ou Arabes,” Diderot expanded on how Mohammed, “the fanatical enemy of reason,” imposed his will on the ignorant masses:

> Que Mahomet fut un fanatique ennemi de la raison, qui ajusta comme il put ses sublimes rêveries à quelques lambeaux arrachés des livres Juifs et des Chrétiens, et qui mit le couteau sur la gorge des ceux quie balancèrent à regarder ses chapitres comme des ouvrages inspirees. (52)

[Mohammed was a fanatical enemy of reason, who adjusted his sublime dreams to some scraps torn from the books of the Jews and Christians, and cut the throats of those who hesitated to regard those chapters as inspired work.]

In contrast to these images of the prophet, Herder’s portrayal of Mohammed not only depicts him as a solitary, romantic man whose portrait is infused with awe and admiration, but he also aligns him with the noblest and purest of men: “Kaufmann, Prophet, Redner, Dichter, Held und Gesetzgeber […] Aus dem edelsten Stamm in Arabien, dem Bewahrer der reinsten Mundart und des alten Nationalheiligtums, der Kaaba, war Mohammed entsponnen” (*DKV 6*: 832) [merchant, prophet, orator, poet, hero and legislator […] Mohammed was born of the noblest tribe of Arabia, the guardian of the purest dialect, and of the Caaba, the ancient sanctuary of the nation] (*Outlines* 583). Placed in the arid and incendiary space of the Arabian Desert, the prophet is depicted here as a “natural phenomenon” as Einboden puts it (26). Embodying the culture of Arabia, he is a complex synthesis of “merchant, prophet, orator, poet, hero and legislator,” but also a leader to one of the most powerful civilizations of the world. Mohammed’s religion is also praised as the passion for purity, the devotion to daily prayer, charitable deeds and the surrender to God’s will, as prescribed in the Koran, all of which endow Muslims with serenity of soul and
integrity of character: “die Religion Mohammeds prägt den Menschen eine Ruhe der Seele, eine Einheit des Charakters auf” (DKV 6: 844) [the religion of Mohammed imprints on the mind of men a degree of tranquility, an uniformity of character] (Outlines 592). Such open-minded and unprejudiced thinking about Islam and the prophet at the time during which Herder was writing his Ideen was rare. As Mommsen points out, “nur von wenigen Wortführern der Zeit kann man sagen, dass sie danach trachteten, engherzige Ansichten zu beseitigen und den Geist ihrer Landsleute aufzuklären, um Gesinnungen und Denkweise zu veredeln. Demgegenüber verhielten sich die meisten Zeitgenossen, soweit sie sich überhaupt mit dem Islam befassten, auch weiterhin noch lange zumeist verständnislos und intolerant” (Arabische Welt 165) [few leading intellectuals of the age actively sought to do away with narrow-minded ideas and enlighten their countrymen in order to improve their ways of thinking and their convictions. Most contemporaries, if they were concerned with Islam at all, did not seek to understand it and remained largely intolerant towards Muslims] (Poets of Arabia 73). For Herder, however, “Islam signifies life, energy, an explosion of power, and an expansion of force on a variety of levels – militarily, linguistically, culturally, theophanically” (Almond 63).

What the typical Orientalist depiction of Mohammed seems to underline, therefore, is the prophet’s political power and influence on the Arabian Peninsula, and his pivotal role in the rise of a forceful national consciousness. The teachings of Mohammed’s Islam “lifted the nascent nation-state above consciousness of race and colour, and for the first time in history, the nation-state enabled class, region, family, gender, and color to become irrelevant to citizenship” (Chew 83). The Islamic world united culturally and various parts of the Islamic world began thinking of themselves as belonging to an ummah (a community, or Volk to use Herder’s term). Geographically, this ummah was extensive. The region of the Middle East was practically all
Muslim, as well as the people of North Africa. Some states in the Levant that were founded by the Crusades were also eventually liquidated and their territories became part of the Islamic world:

we may summarize that a new cognitive map was already operational in the 7th century. There was a sense of idealism and purposefulness in belonging to a larger entity, hitherto unimaginable: Berbers, West African, Sudanese, Swahili-speaking East Africans, Middle Eastern Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Afghans, Pakistanis, millions of Indians and Chinese, most peoples of Malaysia and Indonesia. The Arab Empire, with Arabic as its lingua franca, had managed to convince its adherents to the practical realization that people of different creeds and origin need to coexist peacefully in a new world order. (Chew 89)

What held the ummah together are not only the belief in God and in Mohammed as his last prophet, but also, and equally important, the lingua franca of Arabic. The idealism and purposefulness of the Islamic nation Chew describes is recognized and emphasized by Herder himself as he points out that the religion and language of Arabs produced important effects on the “Völker dreier Weltteile” (DKV 6: 843) [on many nations of three quarters of the Globe] (Outlines 591). The intrinsic link between religion and language is important for a Muslim identity. Unlike Christian missionaries attempting to translate the Bible into native languages, Muslim missionaries persuaded their converts to learn the language of Arabic, which they believed “to be the mother of all tongues as well as the irreplaceable language of the Quran” (Chew 89). Therefore, the Arabic language, the language of Mohammed and the Koran, became an example of the power of language and its role in building and uniting entire nations.

Fundamental to Herder’s organization of world history, and particularly of other cultures, is Sprache. For Herder, languages express and shape the perspective of a people, and they
articulate specific forms of human consciousness that are then passed on from one generation to
the next: “language was an essential part of the natural process of the growth of consciousness
[…] for to be fully human is to think, and to think is to communicate; society and man are
equally inconceivable without one another” (Berlin 192). Moreover, what separates human
beings from animals is the fact that humans have the ability to reason, which implies using
language. That is what makes a community, a Volk, a nation. The state (an artificial
administrative organization) must be anchored in a linguistic community. While states may come
and go, the Volk, however, remains, as long as its distinctive linguistic traditions are still alive.
Therefore, a state that does not have an organic foundation, whose administrative power does not
coincide with those of the linguistic community, will easily be subdued. Using yet another vivid
organic metaphor, Herder compares such a fleeting government to a tree without roots: “der
Baum möge bis an den Himmel reichen und ganze Weltteile überschatten; hat er keine Wurzeln
in der Erde, so vertilgt ihn oft ein Luftstoss. Er fällt durch die List eines Einzigen treulosen
Sklaven und durch die Axt eine kühnen Satrapen” (DKV 6: 510) [though the tree lifts its head to
the skies, and overshadows whole quarters of the Globe, if it be not rooted in the earth, a single
blast of wind may overturn it. It may fall through the undermining of a treacherous slave, or by
the axe of a daring satrap] (Outlines 350). Ultimately, language functions as a mode of access to
culture, and is essentially a tool to gain consciousness of one’s self and one’s relation to others,
thus making a community life possible (Hallberg 292). From his early career, Herder was writing
about language and comparing various European languages, including German, to Eastern
languages, mainly Hebrew and Arabic “die älteste Sprache” (DKV 1: 194) [the most ancient
language.] In Über die Neuere Deutsche Literatur (1767), Herder argues that these two
languages are more concrete, as they have more references to objects in nature and everyday
objects like plants, livestock and many other things relating to pastoral life. For instance, Herder uses Arabic as an example of how ancient languages were rich in synonyms, in contrast to European languages that were more precise and knew far fewer words. Having five hundred words at his disposal to say lion, the Arabian poet “kann durch ein Wort malen, und durch diese mit einem Zuge entworfene Bilder vielseitiger sprechen, wenn er sie gegen einander setzt; als wir, die diesen Unterschied bloss durch dazu gesetzte Bestimmungen deutlich machen” (DKV 1: 196) [is able to paint with a word and thus is able to achieve, by means of these images captured in one sweep, setting them one against the other, more manifold expression than we, who are able to create distinct variations only by adding modifiers] (“On Diligence” 116). In On the Effect of Poetic Art on the Ethics of Peoples in Ancient and Modern Times (1778), Herder describes the rise of Islam as inextricably linked with the place of poetry in Arab culture and expresses his desire for “some of the incense of the Oriental kind to waft over toward Europe" ("ein Weihrauchduft von der Art der aus den Morgenlandern nach Europa hinüberwehete").

Herder describes Mohammed’s Koran as a work that embodies the aesthetics and politics of a nation:

Sein Koran machte solch einen Eindruck auf sie, weil er so erhabene Poetische Stellen [hatte]; er konnte also nicht anders als vom Himmel stammen. Mahomed berief sich darauf und forderte sie zum Wettkampf heraus: weil er sie in der Poesie überwand, ward er auch in der Religion ihr Sieger. So stark war in ihnen der Glaube an das Göttliche der Dichtkunst. (SW 8: 360)

[His Koran made such an impression on [the Arabs] because it contained so many sublime places; it could not, therefore, have been any thing other than heaven-sent. Muhammad appointed himself on this basis and challenged all to competition: because he
excelled [all around him] in poetry, he also became triumphant in religion, so strong was his belief in the divinity of poetry.]

However, what is most crucial for Herder is not only the beauty of the language, but the major effect it had on the geopolitics of the region. Arabic, the language in which the Koran was written, provided linguistic unity for an otherwise divided world of city states. It enabled a melting pot of learning, where the cultural traditions of India, Persia, Babylon, Egypt and the Byzantine Empire, ancient Greece and the Roman Empire were brought together under the patronage of one language, one way of life and one common faith. While the Assyrians, Copts, Syrians, Chaldeans and Egyptians are not Arabs, they all began to study Arabic and it became their “national” identity. They practiced a culture that was a “nationalistic” one, giving their allegiance to the principle of the Islamic state, bounded by faith and the laws of Islam, and ruled by a single sovereign, the Caliph.

The language of the Koran, with its poetic richness and sublimity, is used as an example by Herder to be emulated. As Almond points out, “as a student of history, combining the world’s cultures in search of exempla for great national/ethnic consciousness of the past, Herder was explicit in his belief that the rise of Islam was an event German nationalism could learn from” (Almond 65). In Ideen, Herder laments how the Germanic tribes of Europe never possessed a text such as the Koran:

Wenn die germanischen Überwinder Europas ein klassisches Buch ihrer Sprache, wie die Araber den Koran, gehabt hätten, nie wäre die lateinische eine Oberherrin ihrer Sprache geworden, auch hätten sich viele ihrer Stämme nicht so ganz in der Irrenverloren. Nun aber konnte diesen weder Ulfilas noch Kaedmons oder Ottfrieds werden, was Mohammeds Koran noch jetzt allen seinen Anhängern ist: ein Unterpfand ihrer alten
echten Mundart, durch welches sie zu den echtesten Denkmalen ihres Stammes aufsteigen und auf der ganzen Erde ein Volk bleiben. (DKV 6: 844)

[If the Germanic conquerors of Europe had had a classic book in their language, as the Arabs had their Koran, Latin would never have had sovereignty over their tongue, nor would so many of their tribes have gone astray. But now neither Ulfila nor Kaedmon nor Otfried could become what Muhammad's Koran still is to all his followers: a pledge to their old, genuine dialect, through which they elevated it to the most authentic monument of their tribe and through which they remain one Volk in the whole world.] (Outlines 592)

Thus, the fundamental issue for Herder here is unity. The Arabic of the Koran had beauty and power, written in the descriptive, flowing language of poetry. This kept Arabic from dying and maintained an everlasting spirit in its peoples.

Herder’s emphasis on a national identity, which in turn influenced German writers after him, was a result of the geo-political and cultural situation of Germany at the time. The idea of a unity of the German nations was not only new, but almost unimaginable for many Germans (Schulze 22). In a satirical epigram in their Xenien (1797), Goethe and Schiller sarcastically wondered about the very existence of Germany: “Deutschland? Aber wo liegt es? Ich weiß das Land nicht zu finden. Wo das gelehrte beginnt, hört das politische auf” (FA 1.14: 818). [Germany? But where is it located? I don’t know how to find the country. Where the scholarly knowledge begins, the political ends]. What Goethe and Schiller are alluding to is the Holy Roman Empire to which Germany belonged, as well as to the dualism between the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Prussia that dominated German states in the eighteenth
century.\textsuperscript{16} By that time, “Germany was a masterpiece of partition, entanglement, and confusion” (Ergang 13), as it had undergone a Reformation, a Counter Reformation and the Thirty Years War.\textsuperscript{17} Worse, for Herder, the German people had abandoned their own cultural forms: “andre Nationen mit den Jahrhunderten fortgegangen sind, und sich auf eigenem Grunde […] gebildet haben […] Wir arme Deutsche sind von jeher bestimmt gewesen, nie unser zu bleiben: immer die Gesetzgeber und Diener fremder Nationen, ihre Schicksalsentscheider und ihre verkaufte, blutende, ausgesogene Sklaven” (SW 9: 528) [other nations have progressed with the centuries and have developed on their own foundations […] We poor Germans have been destined from the beginning never to be ourselves, always the lawgivers and servants of foreign nations, the directors of their fate and their bartered, bleeding, impoverished slaves.]

Therefore, as Herder highly praises the Arabic language throughout his oeuvre and points out its effects on bringing a community together, he is essentially repudiating the use of Latin and French, and lamenting the fragmented and diminished cultural identity of his own nation. Herder was writing at a time when Germany was completely dominated by French culture. As I illustrated earlier, Herder’s attack on the philosophes in Auch eine Philosophie not only objected to their philosophy per se, but was also a testament to his growing resentment toward a French dominance in Germany. French was spoken at the Hohenzollern Court of Frederick the Great and the Akademie der Wissenschaften adopted French as its official language. Most scholarly publications were written either in Latin or in French, and whatever German literature was published imitated the styles of English, French, Italian or Spanish literature (Germana 25). What

\textsuperscript{16} German dualism refers to the conflict and rivalry between the two largest German states Austria and Prussia from 1740-1866 when Prussia eventually forced Austria out of the German Confederation (Deutscher Bund).

\textsuperscript{17} The amalgamation of 1800 states and territories not only created an impediment to the economic and social development of Germany, it was also obstructive to the prospects of German unity and a common national identity: “there was no unity in commerce and industry, and the air was rife with religious feuds” (Wilson 824).
Herder fought against was not just the fact that upper classes spoke French. Rather, with the aristocracy’s increasing adoption of the French language under Frederick the Great, the central issue was their use of their vernacular German solely to speak to servants. For Germans to speak their own language and identify as German was regarded as an inferior state of being, casting off the vernacular language of folk traditions as crude, boorish and embarrassing. Those who used the language would also pad it with many foreign words, so that it was scarcely understandable by the lower classes. For Herder, however, the neglect of the German’s own language and culture not only harmed his own community – by increasing class stratification – but also his self-esteem and sense of worth as an individual. Moreover, to elevate the vernacular culture, Herder declared that the German-speaking peasants were the true keepers of ancient Germanic values. Putting ideology into practice, Herder therefore undertook to record and preserve as much of the folklore as possible, because that would be the only way Germany could rediscover its lost soul. His *Fragmente über die neuer deutsche Literatur* (1764-1767) and his *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (1778-1779) initiated a flow of responses from other later Romantics like Ludwig Tieck’s *Minnelieder aus dem Schwäbischen Zeitalter* (1803), Clemens Brentano’s and Achim von Arnim’s three-volume folksongs *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: alte deutsche Lieder* (1805-1808), and the Brothers Grimm’s famous collection of folktales *Kinder-und-Hausmärchen* (1815). Herder’s ideas of turning to the origin of things, of looking at other cultures, their language and their poetry therefore inspired the Romantics to build a body of literature that would express the national soul, and inspire strength and resilience for a national identity.

In this chapter, I suggested that as Herder turns to the *Morgenland* for inspiration throughout his oeuvre, he not only inspires his fellow Romantics to advocate for a German nation, he also alters the way in which one considers the importance and value of other cultures,
languages and nations. Indeed, in *Ideen*, Herder uses the *hyper*-mode of world histories of the Enlightenment, a genre that used rationalism and sterile uniformity in order to organize a *telos* of history, to establish the superiority and progression of Western civilizations. Herder’s philosophy, however, offers what I suggest to be an alternative paradigm, as he advocates for pluralism, cultural tolerance and equality. If we accept the fact that each nation is naturally and historically a distinct organic unit with its own unique culture and that each culture is special in its own way, then there is no need for one culture to claim to be the model of all mankind. In particular, I illustrated that Herder’s turn to Islam, the Arabs and the “enviable” clear qualities of their national character (Kamenestsky 42) play an important role in forming his philosophy of world history, and yet this importance is often overlooked by today’s scholarship on Herder and Orientalism. As Herder turns to Bedouin culture and poetry, the powerful impact of the Koran and the Muslim nationhood, he inspires Romantics after him to reflect on the universal values and richness of that part of the world. From Novalis to Schlegel to Goethe and Hegel, the East became a creative catalyst for their ideas and philosophies.

Goethe’s curiosity and keen interest in Islam, Arabic and Persian poetry, and his imagined flight to the East in his *West-östlicher Divan*, have largely been due to Herder’s influence. As a young law student in Strasbourg between 1770-1771, Goethe met his future friend and mentor Herder who eventually introduced him to the Koran and Arabic poetry.18 Speaking about the *Moallaqat*’s “glorious treasures,” a collection of pre-Islamic Bedouin poetry that was brought to Goethe’s attention by Herder, Goethe thanks his former mentor: “erinnern wir uns nun lebhaft jener Zeit, wo Herder uns hierüber persönlich aufklärte, so gedenken wir eines hohen Genusses, dem reinen orientalischen Sonnenaufgang zu vergleichen” (*HA* 2: 128) [If

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18 See Katharina Mommsen’s *Goethe und die Arabische Welt* [*Goethe and the Poets of Arabia*] for Herder’s Islamic and Eastern influences on Goethe. See pages 34-35 in German edition, and pages 7-8 in translated edition.
I now vividly recollect the time when Herder enlightened me on this topic personally, I recall a sublime delight, comparable to a pure Oriental sunrise] (West-East 177). As the next chapter illustrates, like Herder, Goethe’s vision and notion of history go beyond the dichotomies of cultural superiorities and inferiorities as he celebrates the plurality of voices in his collection of Oriental poetry West-östlicher Divan. Moreover, similar to Herder’s use of philosophies of history, I argue that the Noten, a group of miscellaneous texts that accompany the poems, goes against the grain of rationalistic, encyclopedically encapsulated and categorized knowledge as it offers a rich perspective not only on Eastern culture and religion, but also on cross-cultural encounters, interactions and translations.
Chapter Two
Mediating the East: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Re-organization of Knowledge in West-Ostlicher Divan and the Noten und Abhandlungen zu Besserem Verständnis

The spring cloud cried one night,
as life is nothing but permanently crying;
The light-footed thunder appeared, said:
wrong – it is a momentary laughter.
I do not know who brought this message to the garden
as the rose and the dew are caught in endless conversation ever since.
(Mohammad Iqbal, [The Message of the East] 1923)


[With all of my strength and ability, I have turned toward the Orient, the land of faith, of revelations, prophecies, and predictions. In the way we live and acquire knowledge, we hear so much from every side and content ourselves with facts from encyclopedias and the most general ideas; but if we enter into such a land in order to grasp its particular situation, everything appears to be much more alive.]

Announcing the private performance of Mahomet, a translated drama adapted from Voltaire’s French version, Goethe sends a note to his dear friend Friedrich von Schiller dated December 17, 1799:

Der Herzog und die Herzogin werden heute den Thee bei mir nehmen und der Vorlesung des Mahomets ein, wie ich hoffe, günstiges Ohr leihen. Mögen Sie dieser Function bewohnen, so sind Sie schönstens eingeladen.19

[The Duke and the Duchess are going to take tea with me to-day, and, I hope, will lend a gracious ear to the recital of Mahomet. If you care to be present at this operation you will be heartily welcome.]

Six days after Mahomet’s private recital for Weimar’s Duke and Duchess, Goethe hosts another party at his home, previewing his drama for a broader audience – on this occasion, one of the

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19 See Der Breifwechsel zwischen Schiller & Goethe: http://www.briefwechsel-schiller-goethe.de/?page_id=528
honorary guests is J.G. Herder. Herder, who regarded Mohammed with much respect as we saw in the previous chapter, rejected Goethe’s (or rather Voltaire’s) presentation of the prophet as a “Betrüger, Mörder und Wollüstling” [brutal, banal charlatan], questioning whether one should move beyond “den alten Koth aufrühren, den Barbarei und Dummheit hervorbrachten” (Mommsen Arabische Welt 233) [stirring up all of the ancient filth produced by barbarism and stupidity] (Poets of Arabia 107). Even if the Duke and Duchess of Weimar found the original French play amusing and commissioned Goethe to adapt it for the German public, it was never performed. However, Goethe’s attention toward the East is ignited once more, almost fifteen years later, as he performs the Orient for his Western audience. This time, the performance is in lecture format to a small but welcoming group of Weimar ladies:


Yesterday I had a most enjoyable experience. We visited the Duchess with Goethe […] the company [was] small but congenial. We are pleased that Goethe is becoming conversant with the Orient, for he teaches us to know this strange world…We also want to hear something from the Qur’an. The Duchess is pleased with this reading, and we no less.] (Poets of Arabia 155)

I draw attention to Goethe’s performances and interaction with Islam and the East to highlight his curious experiments, and keen desire for learning and knowledge about the Other, an interest that spanned Goethe’s career as a poet and literary theorist. From encounters with the Arabian
Nights in his childhood to the conceptualization of Weltliteratur near the end of his career, Goethe was greatly influenced by the Orient, as is evident in his personal as well as intellectual work. This chapter explores the reorganization of knowledge about the Orient and Goethe’s non-dichotomous concept of the West-East through a close examination of the lyrical cycle West-östlicher Divan (1819) and the compendium to the poems, Noten und Abhandlungen zu Besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans [Notes and Essays for a Better Understanding of the West-East Divan]. I argue that, particularly in the Noten, Goethe confronts and reorganizes the knowledge of the Other and, in turn, criticizes his culture’s reception of the Orient and the practice of Orientalism. By focusing on the paratext of the Divan, I bring a new and important approach to reading the text, for while some critics see these loosely structured and lengthy notes as “best avoided as a kind of verbose irrelevancy” (Nicholls 2), I argue that the Noten are, in fact, an integral part in understanding Goethe’s philosophy about cross-cultural encounters and translations of other literatures and cultures; moreover, while the term is not mentioned per se, the Noten actually reveal Goethe’s important conceptualization of Weltliteratur, thus offering readers new insight on cultural tolerance and acceptance. In the previous chapter, I argued that in his philosophy of world history, Ideen, Herder uses a hyper mode of organizing knowledge about the East to criticize the precepts of cultural relativism that confronted Enlightenment epistemology. In this chapter, I suggest that Goethe’s loose, fragmentary and unsystematic supplementary text takes Herder’s discourse and further questions the philosophical organization of knowledge by focusing particularly on the Arab and Persian

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20 I explain the etymology of this Persian term further below in the chapter.
cultures. Just as Herder uses the popular genre of the philosophy of history, as outlined in the previous chapter, and Byron uses the paratext, such as appendices and footnotes as will be evident in the next chapter, Goethe also responds to the organization of knowledge about the Other through a literary mode. I regard the supplementary text of the *Divan* as a miscellany – an assortment of collected pieces of writing, ranging from poetry to songs to prose, that was a popular literary genre during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose behind the miscellany was typically to offer entertainment for the reader, but it was also marketed as an educative guide and a repository of useful information. Goethe’s is also a collection of detailed information that does not necessarily offer a single unified or explicit argument, but is rather a collage containing pieces taken from various sources – English, French, German and Latin translations of both Oriental literary texts and non-fictional narratives, as well as European history books and travelogues that have the Orient as their subject. Moreover, Goethe uses this genre didactically by including miscellaneous entries on Arab and Hebrew poetry, classical Persian poets, and theories of translations and cultural encounters, in order to give as much detail and clarification as possible to his portrayal of the East, and to enlighten his audiences’ views and misconceptions about Islam, as well as Arab and Persian cultures. In general, Goethe’s poetic vision and cyclical notion of history view historical spheres beyond the dichotomies of now/then, us/them, progress/regress; in fact, the *Divan* is anything but a regress, as the poems transcend nationalistic and hegemonic paradigms of cultural identity, and open new and alternative horizons for cultural transformation. Not only is this highlighted in the title of the book, as the adjective west-east marks a realm of poetic imagination that recognizes the plurality of voice as its central constituent element of its poetics, but I suggest that Goethe’s paradigms

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22 See Laura Mandell and Rita Raley’s *Anthologies and Miscellanies*: http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/rraley/research/anthologies/#miscellanies
are particularly laid out and theorized in the miscellany. Much like Herder’s organization of Islam and the Near East, we are dealing with an *imagined* place, one that has *not* been personally experienced (unlike what we shall see in Byron). In fact, I argue that neither the *Divan* nor the *Noten* aims to present an objective representation of the Orient as it really is, but rather the *Noten*, a text that goes against the grain of rationalistic, encyclopedically encapsulated and categorized knowledge, offers a self-reflection on the process of cross-cultural study, as it does information about the Orient. Most important to my argument, the *Noten* reveal Goethe’s literary theory about translation of languages and cultures, as well as his conceptualization of *Weltliteratur*, thus projecting the same tolerance toward pluralism and cross-cultural encounters as we saw in Herder’s philosophy of history.

**I. Elements of the Divan: A Background**

Throughout the chapter, I refer to two distinct texts that, together, make up the *West-östlicher Divan* as it was first published in 1819 and then republished in 1827. It is important to note that Goethe’s collection of poems was inspired by the Persian Divan of Hafiz. In 1814, Goethe read the translated poems in German and was stirred to write his own collection of poems. Goethe’s *Divan* is comprised of more than two hundred poems, loosely organized into twelve books, each of which exhibits a title in both German and Persian; for example, Goethe’s first book “The Book of the Singer” is simultaneously entitled “Buch des Sängers” and “Moganni Nameh” (in Persian: "مغانی نامه"). There is no unity *per se* between the books, as each portrays a different aspect of Eastern culture and poetry. The second book “Das Buch Hafis” is devoted to the characterization and admiration of the Persian poet, and in which Hafiz assumes the central role of interlocutor. The third book “Buch der Liebe” discusses love and
passion. The “Buch Suleika” takes the form of a dialogue between the Arab Hatem and the Persian Suleika. The final book “Buch des Paradieses” blends Islamic conceptions of paradise with those of the poet himself. Therefore, the poems interspersed throughout these bilingually designated chapters vary widely in form, and consist of a range of prosodic and stylistic models, including parables and historical allusions, as well as insights on politics and religion.

The full title West-östlicher Divan first appeared in a public notice announced in Cotta’s Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände on 24 February, 1816, and in the Taschenbuch für Damen auf das Jahr 1817.23 However, as Mommsen tells us, due to the illness and death of Goethe’s wife, Christine, the publication was postponed until 1819: “several poems did appear before then in magazines but the public were somewhat bemused by them” (Introduction xiii). Moreover, when the book of poems first appeared, it had little effect on its readers. In the “Literary Supplement for the Year 1820” of Cotta’s Morgenblatt, a reviewer writes: “kurz, die gelehrten Zeitungen mögen uns noch so viel vorpredigen von Vermittelung zwischen der morgenländischen und abendländischen Dichtkunst; das Buch ist eines der wunderlichsten, die Goethe jemals geschrieben hat, es ist sozusagen ein Rätsel ohne Schlüssel” (quoted in Unseld Goethe und seine Verleger 457) [in short the scholarly periodicals may preach what they like about mediation between occidental and Oriental literature; this book is one of the strangest that Goethe has written; it is, so to speak, a riddle without a solution] (Goethe and his Publishers 231).24

23 see HA 268-270 for Goethe’s announcement in its entirety.
24 For a detailed account of the publication process of the Divan and the Notes see Siegfried Unseld Goethe and his Publisher (Goethe and his Publishers 229-232). Unseld adds that “Der West-östliche Divan wurde im Grunde aber weder bei seinem ersten Erscheinen noch hundert Jahr später angemessen beachtet und richtig verstanden. Immer wieder wird darauf hingewiesen, dass man noch vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg die Erstausgabe des Divan in Buchhandlungen finden und bei Cotta beziehen konnte” (Goethe und seine Verleger 458) [the West-Ostliche Divan did not receive its due attention nor was it properly understood either when it appeared or a hundred years later. It has been pointed out over and over again that, up to the beginning of World War I, copies of the first edition could
Three years after the publications of the sample of poems, Goethe published the *Divan*, together with fifty-six miscellaneous notes and short essays, and entitled them *Besserem Verständnis*. In 1827, however, Goethe published an enlarged edition of the *Divan* (the “author’s definitive edition,” *Ausgabe letzter Hand*), in which he added forty-three new poems to the cycle and rearranged the order of some of the books. The number of supplementary texts remained the same, however Goethe changed the title to *Noten und Abhandlungen zu bessrem Verständnis* (Bohnenkamp and Bosse 311). The first section of the *Noten* is historical and consists of twenty-nine essays on the reciprocity and political and sociopolitical development of Oriental culture, including analysis of certain religious and cultural groups like “Hebrews,” “Arabs,” “Old Persians,” as well as concepts like “Regiment,” “Kalifen” and “Dichterkönige.” Goethe also discussed ancient Islamic history, the Prophet Muhammad’s life and personality, and the differences between Oriental and Western poetry. In the second part, where Goethe treated research on the Orient, he dealt with the question of intellectual authority, and commented on other scholars and travellers interested in Islam and the Middle East, such as Sir William Jones (1746-1794), Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1786-1817) and Joseph von Hammer (1774-1856).

Despite the fact that the *Noten* were specifically assembled to familiarize the reader with foreign concepts and images, readers still found the poems too strange. The audience could not understand what Goethe was trying to say, “die Ratlosigkeit war allgemein, selbst unter denjenigen, die die Geistesprodukte der Goetheschen Jugendepoche liebten und die Werke seiner klassischen Zeit aufs höchsten schätzten” (Mommsen *Arabische Welt* 329) [the bafflement was general, even among those who loved the works of Goethe’s youth and esteemed greatly those of
his classical period] (Poets of Arabia 156). Many could not decide whether the poems were translations, imitations or original works. The Divan’s positive attitude toward Islam also aroused misunderstandings, and Orthodox Christians felt provoked and believed that Goethe’s praise of Islam went too far (Mommsen, Arabische Welt 329; Poets of Arabia 156). As early as 1834, two years after Goethe’s death, the first commentary on the work appeared by Christian Wurm. For Wurm, the ‘problem’ with the text was as follows:

Die Gedichte im West-Östlichen Divan sind ihrer Entstehung nach von zweierlei Art: entweder sind es Originale, auf morgenländischem Boden vom westlichen Dichter hervorgebracht, oder Kopien vom Morgenlande nach dem Abendlande verpflanzt, woher den auch die Sammlung ihren Namen bekommen. (Wurm iv)

[the poetry in West-East Divan has a dual formation: either it is original poetry about Eastern lands brought forth by a Western poet, or copies of Eastern poems transplanted to the West, which is from where the collection got its name.]

Wurm’s confusion – are these poems Western or Eastern? Translations or originals? – sets the standard attitude for much of the nineteenth century and even, I would argue, most of our own today. For instance, Said’s views on Goethe and the Orientalist project have ignited controversy among postcolonial scholars, Germanists and Islamic studies specialists. Said’s analysis of the text wavers between categorizing Goethe as an Orientalist and Goethe as multicultural advocate, as can be seen in the 1978 edition of Orientalism and the 2003 edition. In the first edition of Orientalism, Said denies, on the one hand, that Goethe belonged to “the guild of Orientalists” marked by “a specific history of complicity with imperial power” (341); on the other hand, he contends that the poet regarded the East like everyone else around him, with a sense of the superiority of his own European culture. For example, in his brief discussion of Goethe and the
Orient, Said cites a few clichés from the *Divan* to demonstrate continuity with the British and the French colonial Orientalism. That is to say, while Goethe did not construct an outwardly imperialist vision of the East, like his neighbours, he nevertheless added to the clichéd images of its exoticism and allure. Indeed, the *Divan*’s talk of flying to the purest East, a place characterized as the mythic *Ursprung* (original) of all cultures, abounding with shepherds and oases, caravans in the desert, shawls, coffee and musk, bathhouses and taverns, songs, veiled lovers and houris, fits well with Said’s claims.

Despite the fact that Germany had no colonial interests (mainly because it itself did not even exist as a unified nation state until 1871), Said argues that it was still part of the growing intellectual community that compared different cultures to its own: “what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient […] Middle East experts can still draw on the vestiges of Orientalism’s intellectual position in nineteenth-century Europe” (18). Interestingly, however, Said alters his reception of Goethe’s representation of the East in the preface of his 2003 edition:

As a humanist whose field is literature, I am old enough to have been trained forty years ago in the field of comparative literature, whose leading ideas go back to Germany in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries […] They belong to the era of [J.G.] Herder and [F.A.] Wolf, later to be followed by [J.W.] Goethe, [Alexander] Humboldt, [Wilhelm] Dilthey, [Friedrich] Nietzsche, [H.G] Gadamer, and finally the great Twentieth Century Romance philologists Erich Auerbach, Leo Spitzer and Ernst Robert Curtius […] It is exemplified for me most admirably in Goethe’s interest in Islam generally […] a consuming passion which led to the composition of the West-Östlicher Divan. (xviii) Goethe’s ‘consuming passion,’ which seems to be objective and without a colonialist agenda in
Said’s altered view, does not go unanalyzed and un-criticized by today’s Germanistik and Anglophone scholarly communities who explore such questions as: what exactly was Goethe attempting to do in the *Divan*? Should we read the text and accept Goethe’s love for everything Oriental, or should we read it with a critical and postcolonial eye? Such questions have come to the foreground in recent German scholarship for example, led by Turkish German Zafer Senocak and Syrian German Rafik Schami. As Kontje observes: “at stake are questions of how to represent alterity at a time of increasing global homogeneity, how to discuss allegedly national characteristics in a postnational era, how to speak as an Oriental in the Occidental metropolis” (119). In Schami’s works (see for example *Der geheime Bericht über den Dichter Goethe* [The Secret Report about the Poet Goethe]), Goethe is viewed as a seeker of respectful, mutual understanding between the self and Other; to some extent, he resembles the relatively positive Orientalist image attributed by Said. That is to say, while recognizing Goethe’s debt to academic scholars such as Sir William Jones who helped underwrite European imperialism (I will further discuss Jones’ influence on Goethe), he essentially absolves Goethe of the charge of Eurocentrism and considers not only the poetry in the *Divan*, but more importantly the essays in the *Noten*, as an effort in good faith to mediate between East and West as equal partners. However, in contrast to Schami’s image of Goethe as a politically correct advocate of multicultural understanding, Senocak sees him as “a purveyor of destructive clichés for Western Europe’s imperialist imagination” (Kontje119), and criticizes in particular his *Noten* as a chief example of Orientalism in its most negative sense. He asks why there is even a need for a supplementary text that *explains* the Orient? Does this position not instinctively set up the East as something mysterious? To be figured out? Is this not the axiomatic principle that underlines Orientalism. Senocak, therefore, sees the *Noten* as metaphor for Goethe’s Orientalist project.
Furthermore, whether the *Noten* are indeed necessary or ancillary, and whether they reveal an Orientalist agenda, are other debates surrounding the *Divan*. Most recently, Anke Bosse and Barbara Stemmerich-Koehler\(^{25}\) noted in their reception histories of the *Noten* that the main issue has been “whether they should be viewed as being thematically integrated within, and therefore as totally inseparable from, the poetic component of the *Divan*, or whether they are effectively a separate publication which sheds only some limited light on particular poems” (Nicholls 3). Konrad Burdach, one of the most influential and authoritative Goethe scholars during the twentieth century, dismisses the notes deeming them “halb historisches, halb geschichtsphilosophisches Gesamtbild der Kultur des Orient” (431) [semi-historical, semi-philosophical overall impression of the Eastern culture], as they fail to reveal anything about Goethe’s psychological thinking. Likewise, Erich Trunz, whose edition of the *Divan* and the *Noten* I use in my analysis, simplifies the objective of the *Noten* and suggests that the notes are “kleine Literaturgeschichte im Rahmen einer allgemeinen Kulturdarstellung” (564) [small pieces of literary history providing general cultural representations]. While there is truth to Trunz’s observation, I argue that the final product of the notes is anything but a plain, tour-guide pamphlet for the unacquainted reader. Rather, like critics such as Wolfgang Lentz, David Bell, Yomb May and Todd Kontje, I consider the *Noten* as crucial to our understanding of the *Divan*, as well as to Goethe’s own understanding of how to organize and process knowledge about other cultures, people, languages and national literatures.

An expert in Persian, Wolfgang Lentz suggests that the *Noten* show a compositional technique that is distinctively non-western, and recognizes a didactic as well as aesthetic

component of the *Noten* that has been ignored or overlooked by scholars. For Lentz, the compendium contributes profoundly to the epistemology of cross-cultural study, as it makes us aware of the “sozial-psychologische Reflexion […] nach Kategorien, die Eigen – und Fremderfahrung” (153) [socio-psychological reflections about categories such as the Self and the Other]. Building on Lenz’s persuasive argument, Todd Kontje and David Bell both point out that not only is reading the compendium necessary to understanding Goethe’s views on the East, but the notes also reveal a sense of irony about the roles Goethe takes on and the limitations of knowledge he attempts to bring forth. For Kontje, what makes [Goethe’s] Orientalism particularly interesting is the balance he maintains between empathy and irony, because he has a highly developed “ironic awareness that he is only playing a role, adopting a new masquerade” (132). Like May, I suggest that “scholarship has to move beyond apodictic assumptions as to the exemplary nature of the dialogue between cultures in the Divan, particularly between Occident and Orient and examine instead the nature of that dialogue” (90). That is to say, Goethe’s ‘poetische Orientreise’ and the accompanying notes set up a dialogue that does not simply lead to a universal conclusion about how cultures do or should interact, but the text also offers insight into the ambivalences and limitations that lie at the heart of such encounters. Before I turn to an examination of the poetry in the *Divan* and the prose text in the *Noten*, I will provide a quick overview of Goethe’s engagement with Islam, and the Islamic world in particular, and Germany’s interest in Islamic studies and Middle Eastern languages during the nineteenth century in general.
II. Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the University

It is important to note that as Goethe conducts his own campaign of Biblical/Oriental research and as he studies the languages of the ancient Near East, his interests in poetry, language and religions of the East strongly reflect the scholarly and exegetical context of Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century: “Goethe’s newly taken up studies of Arabic and Persian in particular are effected in reference to the lingua sacra of the biblical traditions: Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac” (Einboden 244). As Goethe consults the works of Orientalist critics such as J.G. Eichhorn, H.E.G. Paulus and J.G. Kosegarten, his studies during this time reflect the strong and growing interest in Oriental languages that had been taught at German universities well before the first half of the nineteenth century. In her illuminating book German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945, Ursula Wokoeck examines how Eastern Language Studies as well as Islamic Studies developed in various university departments throughout the nineteenth century, and ultimately gained a sense of autonomy as they stood on their own as departments. Wokoeck explains that many Chairs for Oriental languages, for instance, were usually located at the faculty of theology or philosophy. Given the requirements of Biblical studies, Hebrew stood at the centre of the attention as sacra philologica, while Arabic tended to be seen as a Hebrew dialect. Until the eighteenth century, these traditions were shown to have usually been part of a “Christian agenda” facing and fighting Islam, the rival religion. However, that state of affairs changed by the end of the eighteenth century and especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for several reasons: Sir William Jones (1746-94) and the Asiatic Society of Bengal giving inspiration to the rise of Indian studies; the British East India Company’s language college of Fort William in Calcutta (1800-1854) teaching mainly Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali; and the
establishment of École spécial des langues orientales vivantes (1795) where Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) was appointed to teach Arabic. Ultimately, a broadening of the spectrum took place where the requirement to take Biblical studies was no longer necessary, and Arabic became the focus of attention, while Hebrew was sidelined. Wokoeck further remarks that at sixteen universities, twenty-six new chairs (Grundausstattung) were established and forty scholars taught Oriental languages at German universities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, as Indo-European languages, Semitic languages, Assyriology, Egyptology and Islamic studies became well established in different universities, this made research and the circulation of information readily available for many an Oriental scholar, armchair traveller and enthusiast, such as Goethe.

III. Goethe’s Influences

Since the beginning of the 1960s, Katharina Mommsen has conducted extensive research on Goethe’s remarkable interest in the Islamic world, and his fascination with Arab and Persian cultures, all of which had a great influence on his life and oeuvre. In her writings, Mommsen indicates that Goethe’s knowledge about the Orient originated from a variety of sources such as travel books, and historical as well as philosophical treatises. For example, the diverse studies of Eastern cultures Goethe pursued since his student days in Strasbourg (studying law) were comprised of translations of the Koran, such as the 1647 version produced by the French

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26 See her impressive appendix on university appointments which traces the fields of Eastern languages, philology, art and archeology, as well as Religion, Law, and Islamic Studies in German, Swiss, and Austrian universities between 1800-1950. See pages 235-287
businessman Andre de Ruyer, and the encyclopedias of the time, including *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697) by Pierre Bayle. Other influential impulses came from historical-philosophical and philological writings of contemporaries such as J. G. Herder (whom he had met in Strasbourg) and J.C.F von Schiller. Interestingly, in her *Stranger Magic* (2014), Marina Warner suggests that it took Goethe only a few encounters with Arabic and Persian poetry for him to realize he is to start an important project that would take him over twenty years to complete (Warner 313). For example, in 1813 Goethe received a page of the Quran in both Persian and Arabic, which had been brought from Spain by a soldier during the Napoleonic wars. He also attended a deeply moving Islamic prayer service, held in a Weimar auditorium by Bashkir soldiers who had arrived from Russia, that “left a permanent impression” (Bidney “Introduction” xxxi) on him. Shortly after that, a valuable bundle of manuscripts was offered to the Ducal library and Goethe became absorbed in them, “filled with admiration for their Arabic calligraphy, remarking that no other language existed perhaps in which ‘spirit, word, and script were so primordially embodied together’” (Warner 313). However, and as I illustrated earlier in this chapter, one of the most important influences on Goethe’s conception of the *Divan* was, undoubtedly, the encounter with the fourteenth-century Persian classical poet Shamsuddin Hafez (1326-1390) whose *Divan* was translated for the first time in German between 1812 and 1813 by the Austrian Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856). Hammer’s two-volume translation and commentaries played a major role in acquainting Germans with the East and inspired Goethe to compose a *Divan* of his own. The word *Divan* was, of course, a novelty in German at that time. Originally a Persian word adopted as “diwaan” in Arabic, it was first used for the process of recording, collecting and collating all kinds of information in
writing, but usually poetry (Almaany). It was then applied to other forms of assembly: the muster of soldiers in early Muslim armies, the departments of government under the Caliph and the branches of administration under the Ottoman rulers. From this use, it was transferred to the chamber where such offices were conducted by the ruler. Its contemporary usage also means a piece of furniture or a cushion. Warner remarks that this connotation is mostly Western, as witnesses of Ottoman business may have been the first to apply the word to the rooms’ characteristic furnishings, cushions and couches, which come to be called ‘divan’ in English in 1702 (Warner 314). So, when Goethe’s publisher, Johann Friedrich Cotta, sent “einige Neuigkeiten seines Verlags” (quoted in Unseld Goethe und seine Verleger 432) [a few novelties from his publishing house] (Goethe and his Publishers 218) to Goethe in 1814, a year before he started to work on the Divan, he ignited the interest and curiosity in Goethe: “und wenn ich früher den hier und da in Zeitschriften übersetzt mitgetheilten einzelnen Stücken dieses herrlichen Poeten nichts abgewinnen konnte, so wirkten sie doch jetzt zusammen desto lebhafter auf mich ein” (HA 10: 514) [though I had previously not been able to get anything out of individual translations of this magnificent poet’s poems…they now produced an all the more lively effect upon me].

Travel literature also formed a significant part of Goethe’s library, and the list of travel and related titles mentioned in his letters and diaries is even more extensive. In Dichtung und Wahrheit, Goethe, a student in Liepzig at the time, reports that:

87
bei immer wachsenden Sprachkenntnissen, gar natürlich jene Art des Studiums
[entwickelte], dass man die orientalischen Lokalitäten, Nationalitäten, Naturprodukte und
Erscheinungen genauer zu studieren und sich auf die Weise jene alte Zeit zu
vergegenwärtigen suchte. Michaelis legte die ganze Gewalt seines Talents und seiner
Kenntnisse auf diese Seite. Reisebeschreibungen wurden ein kräftiges Hülfsmittel zu
Erklärung der heiligen Schriften und neuere Reisende, mit vielen Fragen ausgerüstet,
sollten durch Beantwortung derselben für die Propheten und Apostel zeugen.31
[as my knowledge of the languages [grew], I directed my studies toward Oriental locales,
peoples, natural products, and events in order to better visualize those ancient times.
Michaelis pursued this aim with the full force of his talent and knowledge. Travel
descriptions aided powerfully in explicating the Bible, and he plied contemporary
travelers with numerous questions whose answers would bear witness to the prophets and
apostles.]

In the Noten themselves, Goethe pays tribute to the many travellers, philologists and historians
whose works greatly influenced his writings on the East, as he comments extensively on Western
travellers such as Marco Polo, John Mandeville and Pietro della Valle.

As Goethe becomes acquainted with the Near East, its places, spaces, language and
religions through the travelogues and historical accounts of Western travellers and thinkers, he
also takes on that role when he writes his own ethnographic travelogue presented as the Noten.
In Der andere Orientalismus, Andrea Polaschegg points out that the Noten belong to an
autobiographical period in Goethe’s writing in which his Selbstinszenierung (self-staging) is a
key element to understanding the text. The self-staging metaphor Polaschegg can, in fact, apply

to Goethe’s relationship with the East in his earlier encounters, as I illustrated earlier in this chapter, for not only is Goethe a lecturer and a mediator, as it were, in the intellectual hub in Weimar, but he also assigns himself a few strategic roles throughout the compendium. For the remainder of this section, I will focus on two roles Goethe takes on in the Noten: one being a traveller and the other a merchant.

**IV. Goethe’s Self-Staging in the Divan**

In the introduction to the Noten (Einleitung), Goethe informs the reader that he considers himself a traveller:

> Am liebsten aber wünschte der Verfasser vorstehender Gedichte, als ein Reisender angesehen zu werden, dem es zum Lobe gereicht, wenn er sich der fremden Lebensart mit Neigung bequemt, deren Sprachgebrauch sich anzueignen trachtet, Gesinnungen zu teilen, Sitten aufzunehmen versteht. (*HA* 2: 228)

[What I would like best, though, is to be regarded as a traveler who will be worth hearing if he eagerly assimilates the ways of life of a strange country, tries to appropriate its forms of speech, and learns how to share views and comprehend custom.] (*West-East* 175-176)

The traveller in this passage comes with an open mind, full of curiosity about *Sitten* and *Lebensart*, but also fully aware of a strange land, “fremd,” whose language and ideas need to be appropriated. As we will see, the first poem in the cycle takes the reader on an intriguing sensuous journey as he or she ‘flees’ to the East led by the speaker in the poem. This is no ordinary tour however, as Goethe titles his trip a “Hegire,” which is the French of the Arabic word هجرة (*hijrah*) meaning *escape* or *emigration*. In Arabic, the term usually refers to an important event in Islamic history that depicts the emigration or escape of Prophet Mohammed
and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, thus marking the beginning of the Muslim era in the history of Islam and the beginning of the Islamic (Hijri) Calendar. It is interesting to note that while Goethe sets up his trip to the East as a pilgrimage in the *Divan*, this is not the first time for him to do so. In a letter to the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach written in 1786, Goethe also called his trip to Italy “meine Hegire.”32 However, where Goethe’s first *hijra* to Italy had mainly to do with the constraints he felt with respect to his ‘public duties’ in the court as Privy Councilor, his announcement of his second figurative *hijra* to the East in 1814 comes with a variety of socio-political and historical turbulence in Europe after the French Revolution. In a letter to Christian Gottlob von Voigt dated mid-January 1815, Goethe confesses that “Genau gesehen sind solche Studien [. . .] eine Art Hegire, man flüchtet aus der Zeit in ferne Jahrhunderte und Gegenden, wo man sich etwas Paradiesähnliches erwartet” (*Weimarer Ausgabe* 154) [frankly, becoming more immersed in such new investigations is a kind of hegira; one flees from this age into distant countries and lands, expecting to find something like Paradise]. The first book “Hegire” narrates the following:

Nord und West und Süd zersplitten
Throne bersten, Reiche zittern,
Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
Patriarchenluft zu kosten,
Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen,
Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen.

Dort im Reinen und im Rechten

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32 See *Italienische Reise* volume 2, page 1392.
Will ich meschlichen Geschlechten
In des Ursprungs Tiefe dringen,
Wo sie noch von Gott empfingen,
Himmerlslehr’ in Erdesprachen,
Und sich nicht den Kopf zerbrachen.

[...] 
Will mich unter Hirten mischen,
An Oasen mich erfrischen,
Wenn mit Krawanen wandle,
Schal, Kaffee and Moschus handle;
Jeden Pfad will ich betreten
Von der Wüste zu den Städten. (HA 2: 7)

[North and South and West are quaking,
Thrones are cracking, empires shaking;
You must flee; the East will right you,
Patriarch’s pure air delight you;
There in loving, drinking, singing
Youth from Chiser’s well is springing.

Seeing rightly, seeing purely,
There I’ll penetrate most surely
To the origin of the nations,
When on earth the generations

Heard God’s words as earthlings use them,

Did not brain-rack and confuse them.

[...] With the herdsmen I’ll go questing,

In oasis-freshness resting.

Roam with caravans far-ranging

Coffee, shawls and musk exchanging;

Every track my footstep traces

Through the sands to market-places. (*Poems of the West 5*)

In this introduction of the cycle of poems, the Orient is seen as a place of purity and refuge from the turmoil of the day where thrones crack and empires shake. Indeed, shaken himself by the horrid years of the German Campaign\(^{33}\) (1813-1815), and as delegates meet at the Congress of Vienna and Napoleon plots his revenge on the island of Elba, Goethe, unable to physically remove himself, strives to get away from grey postwar realities, flees to the East and “sips at Chiser’s well”\(^{34}\) in order to escape, as it were, to the land of purity and delight, of love, wine and song: “he conjures up an ancient and timeless Oriental world of spiritual presence, poetic immediacy and seductive power that contrasts with the political turmoil and partisan strife of modern Western society” (Kontje 122). We are swept on a journey that seems to contain all the Oriental clichés that Said, Senocak and others criticize Goethe for using, as we encounter

\(^{33}\) The German Campaign, also known as *Befreiungskriege* (Wars of Liberation) or *Freiheitskriege* (Wars of Freedom), ended the War of the Sixth Coalition, itself part of the Napoleonic Wars. It took place in Germany during Napoleon’s retreat from Russia.

\(^{34}\) Chiser was the old guardian of the spring of life, the Fountain of Youth, who promised the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz immortal fame (Berliner Ausgabe 715).
stereotypical Eastern images of “caravans,” “coffee, shawls and musk,” “sands” and “market-places.” As Bell rightly points out:

the motifs, images, landscapes, and cultural and religious references that inform the poems of the *Divan* and which Goethe culled from his prodigious reading of Orientalists and their translations of Oriental poetry and other sources are consistent with the tendency to view the Orient as exotic, mysterious and pure: there is arguably a display in Goethe of what Said calls ‘Orientalizing the Orient.’ (201)

While the *Divan* does seem to project an Orientalized Orient, I wish to point out a few issues Goethe establishes through his portrayal of the *hijra*, which in turn foreground his self-assigned roles in the *Noten*.

Goethe’s choice to use a caravan is quite strategic to his role as a traveller, but also, as we shall see below, a merchant. A caravan (from the Persian کاروان) is a group of people travelling together, often on a trade expedition. Historically, caravans connected commercial trade between East Asia and Europe, and often carried luxurious and lucrative goods such as silks or jewellery. Moreover, the Prophet Mohammed was a caravan leader before his prophecy. Raised by his uncle, Abu Talib, a prominent merchant of Mecca, Mohammed’s early years were spent helping his uncle in the caravan trade. When he was about twenty years old, he accepted employment by the wealthy widow Khadija (who later became his wife) whose caravans traded with Syria. As Goethe uses the image of the caravan in his pilgrimage, he brings together an amalgamation of images and concepts that link the East and West together in multifarious ways. As he travels, he brings us a world of wealth and luxurious goods. Not only does Goethe use the East as a space to which one escapes, he is also a merchant coming back from the exotic trip and showing his newly acquired wares.
Having established his role as a traveller earlier in his introduction, Goethe sets up his second role:

Damit aber alles, was der Reisende zurückbringt, den Seinigen schneller behange, übernimmt er die Rolle eines Handelsmann, der seine Waren gefällig auslegt und sie auf mancherlei Weise angenehm zu machen sucht; ankündigende, beschreibende, ja lobreisende Redensarten wird man ihm nicht verargen. (HA 2: 127)

[Also, to let his countrymen enjoy, more readily whatever he brings back, the traveller takes on the role of a merchant who displays his goods appealingly and tries in many ways to make them pleasing. Readers will not object to a variety of verbal presentations: stating, describing, praising.] (West-East 175-176)

The use of a “traveller” and “merchant” as tropes is quite pointed here, because Goethe brings to mind the two types of activities that have been the main vehicle for purveying knowledge of the East to the West, as I indicated in the introduction. Explorers, colonialists and traders were the first to go out and bring back those accounts of the Orient – rugs, spices, silks, etc. – and, along with travelogues, the European mind basically formed its image of the Orient. Goethe foregrounds not only his labour, but also the acceptance of the fact that he, the poet as ‘trader,’ wants to sell his “Waaren,” ie. Divan. Goethe’s designation of the Divan in terms of ‘goods,’ therefore, highlights his awareness of the commodity character of his work and of his role. The double entendre of “auslegen”, to lay, is especially worth noting here. Just as the merchant lays out his wares for sale, so this metaphorical trader in ideas interprets these exotic cultures and makes them pleasing for the buyer. Moreover, his self-designation as a Handelsmann not only means merchant, trader or seller, but the verbs related to handeln, verhandeln and abhandeln, also connote a negotiation and a dealing with something. In fact, Abhandlung (the word in
Goethe’s title) connotes a treatise, a way of ‘dealing’ with or ‘handling’ something. As Goethe consciously uses tropes that highlight commercial interactions and mercantile interests when describing the East, one cannot help but see Goethe’s *Divan* as the criticized Orientalist text. However, Goethe’s message is much more complex.

In the “Buch der Betrachtungen” (Book of Observations), the image of the merchant is at play, as the speaker in the poem lures the reader into his market:

*Märkte reizen dich zum Kauf;*  
*Doch das *Wissen* blähte auf.*  
*Wer im stillen um sich schaut,*  
*Lernet, wie die Lieb’ erbaut.*  
*Bist du Tag und Nacht beflissen,*  
*Viel zu hören, viel zu wissen* (*HA* 2: 36; my emphasis)

[Market purchases compel;  
But with *knowledge* you will swell.  
Who in silence contemplates,  
Learn the way love elates.  
All the day and night you strain  
*Words and knowledge to obtain.*] (*Poems of the West* 65; my emphasis)

The wares and goods the market offers are not just material objects to fill our eyes, but also knowledge that will overwhelm us or, to use Goethe’s imagery, knowledge that will *swell* us up: “*viel zu hoeren, viel zu wissen.*” While these stanzas suggest that we contemplate (“*im stillen sich schauen*”), the *Noten* also emphasize that now is the time for communication: “Betrachtung und Mitteilung” (*HA* 2: 126). Where one could argue that Goethe’s uses of market, buying and
selling render the idea of appropriation, as territorial appropriation of many parts of the world were as a consequence of European colonialism, I argue that Goethe’s process of appropriation is very different. As Shamel observes, “Goethe’s poetic appropriation is based on the recognition of alterity whereas territorial appropriation, as the history of colonialism shows, is based on the displacement – and even annihilation – of the Other” (234). As lines from the “Book of Observations” show, Goethe’s East is not merely a commodity that traders transferred to the European market, but there is rather something to be learned from that part of the world as the word knowledge implies. Thus, while Goethe sets himself up as traveller and merchant, he is not only able to bring that world and its ‘goods’ to the reader, but he can also alter the typical colonialist depiction of his role as he morphs into yet another role, which is what I call a cultural mediator: “Ich entschliesse mich daher zu erläutern, zu erklären, nachzuweisen, und zwar bloss in der Absicht, dass ein unmittelbares Verständnis Lesern daraus erwachse, die mit dem Osten wenig oder nicht bekannt sind” (HA 2: 126-127) [I decided to clarify, explain, and illustrate, in every way I could think of, what would help readers attain immediate comprehension, even if they had little familiarity with the Orient] (West-East 175). As Goethe explains, clarifies and illustrates information about the East, he in fact brings that culture to the fore or even translates it to us.

V. Translation, Transferre, Übersetzung

Goethe identifies translation as the key mechanism driving a recognizable progression of cultural relations. As the translator is at the centre of cultural exchanges, he in fact transfers over samples of that culture into his own. The word translation itself connotes this idea (in Latin, transferre), which is roughly to ‘transfer’ or to ‘carry across.’ And, just as Hammer proposes to
“carry across” his reader to new climes and cultures in his translation of Hafiz’s *Divan*, Goethe’s *Divan* also seeks to import, or even transport, its European audience into Muslim lands. In order for this cultural encounter to be fruitful and productive, Goethe proposes a crucial element to his project – that of tolerance.

In a letter to Thomas Carlyle written in 1827, Goethe outlines the important role of tolerance in translation:

Eine wahrhaft allgemeine Duldung wird am sichersten erricht, wenn man das Besondere der einzelnen Menschen und Völkerschaften auf sich beruhen lässt, bei der Überzeugung jedoch festhält, dass das wahrhaft Verdinstliche sich dadurch zurzeichnet, dass er der ganzen Menschheit angehört. Zu einer solchen Vermittlung und wechselseitigen Anerkennung tragen die Deutschen seit langer Zeit schon bei. Wer die deutsche Sprache versteht und studiert, befindet sich auf dem Markte, woll alle Nationen ihre Waren anbieten; er spielt den Dolmetscher, in dem er sich selbst bereichert. Und so is jeder Übersetzer anzusehen, dass er sich als Vermittler dieses allgemeingestigen Handels bemüht und den Wechseltausch zu befördern sich Geschäfte in dem allgemeinen Weltverkehr. 35

[A truly universal toleration would certainly be reached, if the special characteristic of distinct persons and peoples were laid to rest, and by the conviction that the most truly deserving quality that reveals itself thereby belongs to all humanity. The Germans have for a long time been contributing to this sort of meditation and many-sided acknowledgment. Whoever understands and studies the German language finds himself

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35 See his *Briefe.*
in the marketplace where all nations sell their wares: he plays the translator who enriches himself.

And so should every translator be seen as someone who tries to be at the centre of this universal culture business and manages its mutual exchanges. For no matter what one tries to say about the inadequacies of translation, it remains one of the most important and worthiest businesses in global commerce.

Moreover, tolerance also goes hand-in-hand with trying to stay as true as possible to the original meaning. In the *Noten*, Goethe presents a tripartite model of the “epochs” of translation. In a section appropriately titled “Übersetzungen” Goethe outlines his theory of translation:

Es gibt dreierlei Arten Übersetzungen. Die erste macht uns in unserm eigenen Sinne mit dem Auslande bekannt; eine schlicht-prosaische ist hiezu die beste. Denn indem die Prosa alle Eigentümlichkeiten einer jeden Dichtkunst völlig aufhebt und selbst den poetischen Enthusiasmus auf eine allgemeine Wasserebne niederzieht, so leiste sie für den Anfang den grössten Dienst, weil sie uns mit dem fremden Vortrefflichen mitten in unserer nationellen Häuslichkeit, in unserem gemeinen Leben überrascht und, ohne dass wir wissen, wie uns geschiet, eine höhere Stimmung verleihend, wahrhaft erbaut. […]

Eine zweite Epoche folgt hierauf, wo man sich in die Zustände des Auslandes zwar zu versetzen, aber eigentlich nur fremden Sinn sich anzueignen und mit eignem Sinne wieder darzustellen bemüht ist. Solche Zeit möchte ich im reinsten Wortverstand die parodistische nennen. […]

Weil man aber weder im Vollkommenen noch Unvollkommenen verharren kann, sondern eine Umwandlung nach der andern immerhin erfolgen muss, so erlebten wir den dritten Zeitraum, welcher der höchste und letzte zu nennen ist, derjenige nämlich, wo man die
Übersetzung dem Original identisch machen möchte, so dass eins nicht anstatt des andern, sondern an der Stelle des andern gelten solle. (HA 2: 255-256)

[There are three kinds of translation. The first acquaints us, in our own mode of understanding, with a foreign country: a simple prosaic rendering is most appropriate here. For a prose wholly obliterates all distinctive features and brings poetic enthusiasm down to the general low water level, it initially does the greatest service because in the midst of our customary national domestic life, our common daily round, it startles us with something splendidly new. […]

Next comes a second mode of translation, where you are trying to place yourself in the context of the foreign country but are able to assimilate unfamiliar material only by representing it your own way. Such a mode I want to call the parodistic one, in the purest root meaning of that word. […]

But we cannot long remain in any state, whether perfect of imperfect: things keep changing. So we have witnessed a third phase of translation, the last and highest, where we seek to make the translation identical to the original, not a substitute but a replacement.] (West-East 280)\(^{36}\)

For the first epoch of “prosaic,” domesticating translations, Goethe suggests that Luther’s Bible would be an example. As for the second epoch, he remarks that Wieland’s translations are of this kind and that the French use this method in their translations of all poetic works. Most importantly, for the third epoch (which is Friedrich Schleiermacher’s ideal, later taken up by Walter Benjamin), Goethe names Johann Voss, the celebrated translator of Homer into German

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\(^{36}\) A closer translation of the last sentence would be “so it is impossible to linger too long either in the perfect of in the imperfect and one change must of necessity follow another, we experienced the third epoch, which is to be called the highest and the final one, namely the one in which the aim is to make the original identical with the translation, so that one would not be valued instead of the other, but in the other’s stead”
hexameters, who was highly regarded by Goethe as an authority on Classical meters.

Why is the third epoch so integral to Goethe’s theory of translation? In the Noten, it becomes apparent that Goethe values translation as a means not only to enrich his national culture with outside influences, but also to promote respect for other nations as equal contributors to Europe’s confederation of distinct yet interconnected national literatures. As Antoine Berman puts it, for both Schleiermacher and Goethe, translation works to “montrer l’œuvre ‘telle qu’elle est,’ est telle qu’elle peut être ‘pour nous,’” such that “la fidelité à l’individualité de l’œuvre est immédiatement productrice d’élargissement linguistique et culturel” (L’épreuve de l’étranger 70) [The work must be shown ‘such as it is,’ and such as it may be ‘for us,’” such that “the fidelity to the individuality of the work is the direct productive agent of linguistic and cultural expansion] (Experience of the Foreign 41). In order to bring together “seinen Schriftsteller und seinen Leser,” remarks Schleiermacher, the translator has only two paths, “entweder der Übersetzer lässt den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den Leser ihm entgegen; oder er lässt den Leser möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den Schriftsteller ihm entgegen.”37 [Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him]. Like Schleiermacher, Goethe prizes translation that moves readers as close as possible to the foreignness of the translated text:

Eine Übersetzung, die sich mit dem Original zu identifizieren strebt, nähert sich zuletzt der Interlinearversion und erleichtert höchlich das Verständnis des Originals, hiedurch werden wir an den Grundtext hinangetführt, ja getrieben, und so ist denn zuletzt der ganze

37 Fridrich Schleimacher “Methoden des Übersetzens.” Schleimacher read the essay first on June 24, 1813 at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin.
Zirkel abgeschlossen, in welchem sich die Annäherung des Fremden und Einheimischen, des Bekannten und Unbekannten bewegt. (HA 2: 258)

[A translation that tries to identify with the original finally approaches an interlinear version and greatly eases our understanding of the original. As a result, we are led, in fact driven, back to the basic text. So at length we close the whole circle in which the nearing of the foreign to the familiar, of the known to the unknown, has taken place.] (West-East 281)

Goethe’s vision of translation in world literature also values movement back and forth between cultures translating each other’s works; as Strich explains, “Goethe’s idea, as new as it was stimulating, was that translations confer benefits in both directions; on the people into whose languages the works are translated, and on those from whose language they come” (21). There are two issues that stand out in Goethe’s commentary. First, he does not think about translation in technical terms and he does not consider it on a purely linguistic level (Shamel 198). Rather, translation is discussed in the context of coming to know or get acquainted with the foreign country. The activity of translation thus involves not only encountering another language, but more importantly coming in touch with another country, another people and other customs as well. The second issue is that retaining foreignness and otherness of a text in translation, which is actually one way to describe what could be meant by ‘fidelity’ of translation, should, according to Goethe, constitute the final goal of translation. The concept of fidelity is, of course, contingent upon cultural tolerance where one looks at the culture and its people as it is without comparing, or Germanizing, the culture in question.
VI. Comparing Cultures

In the *Noten*, Goethe works through this problem in the section entitled “Orientalischer Poesie Urelemente,” where he challenges the standards used by the West to evaluate Oriental poetry, suggesting they should be different than those evaluating Western forms of writing. In the following section, “Admonition,” Goethe investigates a specific habit of thought the West uses to understand, translate and rationalize the East by criticizing the methods of one of his influencers, William Jones. Before taking his post in Calcutta, Jones had promoted Middle Eastern poetry by translating it into Latin and by writing essays about it in English. In his Preface to *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772), and as he explains the translation methodology of one of the Arabic poems, Jones says “the ode of Petrarch was added, that the reader might compare the manner of the Asiatick poets with the Italians” (iv), and in his comments about a Turkish poem, he adds “it is not unlike the *Vigil of Venus*” (vi). As Jones makes comparisons between Eastern and Western poetry, he ultimately hints at the superiority of the classics, stating that:

> it must not be supposed from my zeal for the literature of Asia, that I mean to replace it in competition with the beautiful productions of the Greeks and Romans; for I am convinced, that, whatever changes we make in our opinions, we are always returning to the writings of the ancients, and to the standard of true taste. (vi)

In turn, Goethe reproves Jones for the extent to which he compares Oriental poets with the classics of Greece and Rome. He recognizes the factors that led Jones down this route, but goes on to point out the dangers and harmful aspects of such an approach:

> Jedermann erleichtert sich durch Vergleichung das Urteil, aber man erschwert sich’s auch: denn wenn ein Gleichnis, zu weit durchgeführt, hinkt, so wird ein vergleichendes

[We all make judgments easier for ourselves by using comparisons, but this, at the same time, makes things more difficult. For since a comparison carried too far is a lame one, a comparative judgment turns out to be all the more inappropriate the more closely it is scrutinized. I do not want to go too far afield but will state briefly only this: if the superb Jones compares the Oriental poets to the Romans and Greeks, he has his reasons: his position in England and the classical critics there formed him to do so. Educated in the strict classical school himself, he understood quite well the exclusive prejudice that nothing was of value unless it had come down to us from Rome and Athens. He knew, esteemed, loved his Orient and wanted to introduce, really to smuggle, its creation into Old England, something that was possible in no other way than under the hallmark of antiquity. All that is nowadays utterly needless, even harmful. We are able to appreciate
the poetic art of the Orientals; we see in them the highest merit. But they should be
compared with each other. We must honour them in their own right by forgetting that
there once were Greeks and Romans.] (West-East 223)

Offering an alternative to Jones’ comparative method, Goethe argues that we should only
compare the Orient with itself, and in fact the role of the Greeks and the Romans becomes
irrelevant. As such, Goethe refutes the notion that it is in classical antiquity that one finds
standards of all truth and beauty. Therefore, Goethe uses Jones to illustrate and warn against the
Western habit of conceiving foreign poets as versions of familiar poets. Indeed, we may be
reminded of *Vigil of Venus* when reading a certain Turkish Ode or reading Hafiz may remind of
Horace, but the unavoidable danger of this for Goethe is that when comparing these two
traditions, we are inadvertently adopting the European standard as the norm and, in turn, making
value judgments that will reduce the value of a Fredusi when set against a Homer. In this light,
Goethe’s comparison of culture through the theory of translation, is, to borrow Bell’s description,
“genuine cosmopolitanism and deserves, if anything does, the epithet ‘multicultural’” (201). This
is not to suggest that comparisons are futile in Goethe’s paradigm. On the contrary, comparisons
are necessary to promote understanding between nations; however, those comparisons must
never be reduced to relative value judgments, and verdicts of inferiority and superiority.

A telling example of this paradigm is Goethe’s discussion of the concept of authority. In
the section entitled “Zweifel” [Doubt], Goethe observes that Oriental literature will never be
understood by Western readers, unless he or she suspends preconceived notions about certain
elements about the Orient. Such notions, Goethe argues, are misunderstandings that are based on
apparent differences between Western and Eastern cultures, and are, in fact, the results of
inadequate methods of comparison. The differences are not grounded in religion nor in a
theocentric view of life: “es ist aber nicht die Religion, die uns von jener Dichtkunst entfernt” (HA 2: 169) [it is not religion that keeps us at a distance from the poetic art] (West-East 211), nor are there differences grounded in folk culture: “in die Märchen jener Gegend, Fabeln, Parabeln, Anekdoten, Witz – und Scherzreden sind wir längst eingeweiht” (HA 2: 169) [we are already long since acquainted with the fairytales of that region – the fables, parables, anecdotes, witty and jesting speeches] (West-East 211). Rather, the misunderstanding is attributed to the refusal to accept the Eastern concept of authority and its role in ordinary as well as literary life: “was aber dem Sinne der Westländer niemals eingehen kann, ist die geistige und körperliche Unterwürfigkeit unter seinen Herren und Oberen, die sich von uralten Zeiten herschreibt, indem Könige zuerst an die Stelle Gottes traten” (HA 2: 169) [But what never will enter the mind of an Occidental is spiritual and physical submissiveness to one’s master and overlord, which is derived from time immemorial when kings took the place of God] (West-East 212). The talk of sultans, caliphs and shahs as cruel and despotic is nothing new for his Western reader. Indeed, bowing down and putting one’s face on the ground before one’s ruler, or offering one’s head as the ball in a polo match, as Goethe mentions further in this passage – these are the horrors of submissiveness the Westerner can never comprehend or appreciate. So what does Goethe propose is the best way to negotiate these cultural differences?

First, Goethe emphasizes that it is necessary on the reader’s part to understand subordination as part of Oriental society, including customs such as bowing, kowtowing, and various forms and signs of reverence for authority. According to Goethe, it is this custom of submission that has frustrated many Western diplomats, but also, more specifically, Western understanding of Oriental poetry: “Die persische Dichtkunst aber und was ihr ähnlich ist, wird von dem Westländer niemals ganz rein, mit vollem Behagen aufgenommen werder; worüber
wir aufgeklärt sein müssen, wenn uns der Genuss daran nicht unversehens gestört werden soll” (HA 2: 169) [Persian poetry and what resembles it will never be received by the Occidental as entirely pure, with complete ease – a fact we need to be aware of if we are not to be suddenly disturbed in our enjoyment] (West-East 211). To further illustrate his point, Goethe focusses on panegyric forms of poetry, which are praises sung to individuals from within the ruling classes, often magnifying the most notable character of a man so as to show them as representatives of an entire culture. Moreover, panegyric poetry was more than simple laudatory praise exercised by the poet for personal favours. Rather, it is the essence of Eastern literary life, for it was founded in the people’s attitude toward its leaders and in the interpersonal relations of their everyday life, “it was an attitude that nurtured the poet’s abilities to identify and magnify those qualities of man worthy of exaltation. It was the respect for authority and its long tradition which fascinated Goethe” (Fink 322).

In the following essay, “Gegenwirkung,” [Counteraction], Goethe argues that it is not the forces of authority, but rather man’s response to authority that is more important. It is persistence against the exteriority of authority that is of interest to Goethe in his cross-cultural comparison. The will of the individual balances out the omnipotence of the singular and allows the inherent, intrinsic qualities of life to come forth: “[in der Orient] finden wir denn überall, dass der Frei- und Eigensinn der einzelnen sich gegen die Allgewalt des Einen ins Gleihgewicht stellt; sie sind Sklaven, aber nicht unterworfen, sie erlauben sich Künhnheiten ob ngleichen” (HA 2: 176). [In the Orient we find everywhere that in their love of liberty and autonomy individuals maintain themselves in equilibrium against the omnipotence of an autocrat. They are slaves, but not subdued; they take unheard of liberties] (Bideny 217). However, while ordinary people may react to authority in forms of persistence and even resistance, the poet has less freedom and, as
such, he must dedicate himself to that level of authority. In anticipation of the reader’s attitude toward the poet’s submissiveness, Goethe argues that Western poets are not that much different, for here the poet also writes and sings praises to a variety of cultural and social institutions: “auch unsern westlichen Dichter loben wir, dass er eine Welt von Putz und Pracht zusammengehäuft, um das Bild seiner Geliebten zu verherrlichen” (HA 2: 178) [we also laud our Western poet when he accumulates a world of enhancement and splendor to glorify the image of his beloved] (West-East 219). Thus, for Goethe, panegyric poetry was more than simple praises exercised by Oriental poets for personal favours, but rather an attitude that nurtured the poet’s abilities to identify and to magnify those qualities of men; the respect for authority and its long tradition is found in both Eastern and Western cultures. The different ways in which each culture deals with it is relative for Goethe.

VII. Weltliteratur

The fusion of West and East, as in Goethe’s title West-östlicher Divan, presupposes a fundamental bond between two equals. Such view is the epitome of Weltliteratur, which is essentially one of the clearest manifestations of Goethe’s multiculturalism. An epigraph appears at the very beginning of the Noten, which, I suggest, introduces the agenda of his cross-cultural study:

Wer das Dichten will verstehen,
Muss ins Land der Dichtung gehen;
Wer den Dichter will verstehen,
Muss ins Dichters Lande gehen. (HA 2: 126)

[Poetry if you would know,
To its country you must go;
If the poet you would know,
To the poet’s country go.] (*West-East* 175)

The two couplets are almost an exact repetition, yet with a subtle, but semantically significant, difference. The rhyme, the repetition of verstehen and gehen (to understand and to go, although Bidney loosely translates verstehen as to know), and the conditional wollen and müssen (want to and must) establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the verbs at the end of each line. To understand, one must go; one must leave behind the familiar and tamed in order to attain knowledge of the unknown. The aforementioned role of the traveller and the merchant does just that, it facilitates our experience of the foreign and walks us through this process of acculturation. Like Jones, Goethe realizes that what he is presenting in the *Divan* and the *Noten* is unfamiliar and needs to be made more intelligible. His approach, though, wants us to expand our horizons in new directions and to change our Western assumptions by “Orientalizing ourselves:”

> Wollen wir an diesen Produktionen der herrlichsten Geister teilnehmen, so müssen wir uns orientalisieren, der Orient wird nicht zu uns herüber kommen. Und obgleich Übersetzungen höchst löblich sind, um uns anzulocken und einzuleiten, so ist doch aus allem Vorigen ersichtlich, dass in dieser Literatur die Sprache als Sprache die erste Rolle spielt. Wer möchte sich nicht mit diesen Schätzen an der Quelle bekannt machen! (*HA* 2: 181)

[If we want to acquire an insight into all these works of splendid spirits, then we will have to orientalize ourselves; the Orient will not come to meet us. And though translations are highly welcome to allure and introduce us, it is obvious from our
observation that in this kind of literature it is language as language which plays the main role. Who would not want to acquaint himself with these treasures at their source?]

(West-East 222)

Goethe’s notion of *sich orientalisieren* here implies the possibility of a real understanding; however, this requires an intellectual and imaginative effort on the Westerner’s part, and a willingness to put aside our preconceptions and presuppositions. In so doing, we can have positive results without assuming a position of superiority, control and domination, and a true appreciation of the Orient. Through this crucial cultural exchange, nations not only become more comprehensible to each other (*Dichter* and *Dichten* verstehen), but also to themselves: ‘the idea is not that nations should think alike’, Goethe emphasized in *Über Kunst und Altertum* (1828), ‘but rather that they should simply become aware of and understand one another and, though they may have no affection for one another, at least learn to tolerate one another’ (*HA* 2: 363):

Wer sich selbst und andere kennt,

Wird auch hier erkennen:

Orient und Okzident

Sind nicht mehr zu trennen.

Sinnig zwischen beiden Welten

Sich zu wiegen, lass’ ich gelten;

Also zwischen Ost und Westen

Sich bewegen sei zum Besten! (*HA* 2: 121)

[Who knows himself and others well

No longer may ignore:

Occident and Orient dwell
Separately no more.
‘Twixt two worlds I love the way
Back and forth a man may sway;
So between the East and West
Moving to and fro’s the best. (*West-East* 167)

In these unpublished lines of the *Divan*, Goethe sets up an important intercultural paradigm that is at the heart of his open and cosmopolitan world. He presents two distinct cultures merging into one another, as they dwell “separately no more.” The notion of “sich bewegen” implies liberation, and a break from laws and borders as the poet moves back and forth between the two worlds. Earlier in the *Divan*, the poet declares “Gottes ist der Orient!/Gottes ist der Okzident!/Nord-und südliches Gelände/Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände” (*HA* 2: 10) [To God belongs the Orient!/To God belongs the Occident!/The Northern and the Southern lands,/Resting, tranquil, in His hands] (*West-East* 5). As these lines suggest, there is a covalency and equal validity of each culture, both co-existing in the hands of God.

While the term *Weltliteratur* itself was not coined until 1827, it becomes apparent that the ideas for this concept were beginning to materialize in the *Divan* and *Noten*. Goethe does not define the term in any cohesive manner. Instead, the term makes a number of random appearances in letters written toward the end of his life, diary entries, references in his journal *Über Kunst and Altertum*, and in a number of conversations with his secretary Johann Peter Eckermann who edited and published these colloquies under the title *Gespräche mit Goethe* in 1836. For instance, in a letter to Sulpiz Boisserée written in 1827, Goethe writes: “dasjenige was ich Weltliteratur nenne, dadurch vorzüglich entstehen wird, wenn die Differenzen, die innerhalb der einen Nation obwalten, durch Ansicht und Urteil der übrigen ausgeglichen werden” (*HA* 2:
what I call world literature will arise when the differences that prevail within a nation are balanced by the outlook and judgment of the other]. As Nicholas Halmi rightly observes: “surveying western Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the restoration of the old monarchies, Goethe conceived Weltliteratur not as an established field of data to be analysed by critics, but as an unfolding task to be undertaken by writers and readers, a collective effort to which individual nations would contribute in their individual ways towards the goal of mutual understanding and tolerance” (Halmi). As I suggested, this mutual understanding and tolerance is enhanced through translation activities that were partly facilitated by the “increasing rapidity of literary traffic” (Halmi), and the personal contract and interchange among translators and authors. For Halmi, the possibility of Weltliteratur was historically conditioned, as Goethe’s era witnesses an “increasing efficiency of international communication such as the postal services that delivered works by and about Byron to Goethe within a month of their publication in London” (Halmi).

Thus, the Divan seeks, as Goethe told his publisher in 1815, “auf heitere Weise den Westen und Osten, das Vergangene und Gegenwärtige, das Persische und Deutsche zu verknüpfen, und beiderseitige Sitten und Denkart einander greifen zu lassen” (HA 2: 540) [to connect the West and the East, past and present, Persian and German, and to let their morals and mindsets mutually overlap]. As these national literatures come together, they bring to themselves greater balance and insight, and a new world – this betweenness – emerges. The West-östlicher Divan presents a world that belongs to a third non-exclusive category, as is marked by the hyphen between the two worlds that is outside of the apodictic dichotomy of us/them, West/East. In fact, throughout the Divan and the Noten, Goethe is constantly playing with the indefiniteness of Eastern and Western space – a space that is quite unstable and
ambiguous. In his article on “From the Desert to the City and Back,” Kamaal Haque offers a very interesting interpretation of space in the Divan through the lenses of Deleuze and Guattari, and suggests that “the instability of space typical in West-östlicher Divan results in a polyvocal East, one that is neither purely the Persia of Hafiz nor the Arabian Peninsula of Mohammad and the Bedouin” and that “the poets’ travels […] help to create an open, incomplete and labile space that is neither East nor West” (Haque 233). If in his Ideen Herder criticizes Enlightenment historiography for neglecting the empirical diversity of human cultures and for remaining blind to its own historical formation, then Goethe not only points out and celebrates this diversity, but his cyclical notion of history set up in the Divan and in the Noten turns the dichotomies of past and present, us and them, upside down. For May,

it is precisely this central concept of the Divan phase of Goethe’s writing that shows us that we must read Goethe’s engagement with the Orient as pars pro toto for his universal thinking. This universalism, not free of contradictions, is predicated on a call for mutual recognition between cultures and for the overcoming of the intellectual paralysis exhibited by national literatures concerned only with themselves. (103)

In a way, then, we can take the Divan together with his concept of Weltliteratur as Goethe’s most informative response to an increasingly globalized world during the 1820s, as well as today.

Yet, Goethe’s conceptualization of World Literature, and his efforts to bring to the fore the humanity of other neighbouring nations has undergone a major transformation since its inception in the 1820s. While in theory Goethe’s concept of Weltliteratur advocates for a mutual cultural interchange, and while Goethe spoke specifically against the imposition of cultural hegemony by one nation over another in order to foster harmony between cultures, today’s
concept seems to have adopted this very notion of hegemony, and perhaps Goethe’s optimistic concept did not anticipate the economical, historical and political forces that would shape the West’s imperialist expansion throughout the world today. Nowadays, the term is used in three distinct ways: firstly, we use the term to designate international and trans-historical literature from *Gilgamesh* onwards, and this is typically included in pedagogical media such as anthologies. Secondly, world literature includes colonial and postcolonial literature written or translated into English. Finally, and as defined by Franco Moretti, the term is used to designate literatures of other cultures that are peripheral to European consciousness, and that can be encountered and understood through a “distant reading” (56), essentially. Indeed, one cannot overlook Eric Auerbach’s pessimistic vision of world literature in the middle of the twentieth century as he bemoaned the hegemonization of all distinct cultural traditions by the dominating Euro-American and Russian traditions. As D’haen, Damrosch and Kadir rightly point out, today’s concept of world literature is “largely restricted to literatures in European languages and even primarily in a few European languages, foremost among them French, English, and German often connected to Latin and to classical (but not modern!) Greek. Italian, Spanish, and Russian typically come in as distant runner-ups” (xix). Nor can one ignore Gayatri Spivak’s equally harsh evaluation of the concept as she criticizes the global marketing of English-language world literature anthologies. Such anthologies not only attest to the invasion of English across the disciplines, but they also reduce cultures into brief excerpts printed and published in the United States. Thus, it seems that our definition of world literature today only hints at a superficial cultural understanding and questions the seemingly multicultural dynamic of our world.

Particularly the Eurocentric approach to reading world literature, as is seen in world anthologies for instance, becomes “truly a contemporary exploration for the reader-tourist-consumer with a
short attention span and thirst for exotic commodities. Reading and teaching world literature become a leisurely stroll in a global literary mall that is structured at once to satisfy and to reinforce Western modes of consumption and interpretation” (Hassan 8). Despite the cynical state of world literature today, one must remain hopeful for the future of this tradition by adapting Goethe’s model that tells us to pay attention to cultural particularities, nuances and different dimensions of other literatures. Not only would this focus highlight the Herderian *Volksgeist* of each nation, as Goethe shows us, but it would elucidate the universality of the human experience between cultures.

In conclusion, I would like to return to Goethe’s performance of the Orient. While I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that Goethe takes on different roles as he works through his theoretical and literary representations of the East, he performs an Oriental identity once again as he spends days scripting the Arabic alphabet and practicing Persian calligraphy. As early as 1814, Goethe was researching Biblical and Oriental material in preparation for his *Divan*, and the study of languages became an important activity. As he invests his time in learning Persian, Arabic and Hebrew, he wants to physically experience another culture, since he never travelled to the East. As Goethe performs knowledge of the Other, as he ‘feels’ his way into the world of the Other, he ultimately overcomes the geographical and historical distance to the ancient Orient by entering, as if by magic, to use Mommsen’s description (*Arabische Welt* 46; *Poets of Arabia* 15), into the depths of the past, and experiences the language and the culture with great immediacy. Goethe’s fascination with the Arabic script is present throughout the *Noten*, as he includes a dedication to Silvestre de Sacy in Arabic and German, and another small poem in Persian (see Figure I).

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38 Said also uses this analogy to criticize anthologies.
However, one does not need to consult the Noten to witness this multilingual dialogue, but rather if the reader were to pick the 1819 edition of the Divan, this experience is immediate. Readers of this edition would first be confronted with the very title of the poem, as the frontispiece proclaims unity and also duality of languages (see Figure II). On the left side of the page, the Arabic title appears in beautiful calligraphy, while on the right side we see the German title. While it may appear as if these two texts are translations of each other, they are, in fact, not. The Arabic title reads [The Eastern Divan of/by the Western Author], whereas the German title West-oestlicher Divan von Goethe is the well-known West-Eastern or West-Easterly Divan by Goethe. Obviously, this is not a correct translation of the title in German, but there is rather a double title here. Whether or not this is a “conscious mistranslation” of itself, to borrow Einboden’s word (66), is impossible to prove nor is this of significance, but what is most telling, however, is that at the very inception of the work, we are reminded that we are entering not one, but rather two works. One text bears an “Occidental” title of synthesis, of amalgamation; the other text bears an “Oriental” title of separation and of distinction. In the language of Europe, the poem is a mixture of East and West, but in the language of the Near East, the ‘Collection’ is itself wholly Eastern and the Author is wholly Western. The Divan is Eastern and the Author is Western. There is no hyphen to suggest that the two cultures are in direct contact with one another or even that they are no longer an “other” to the other. The message of the frontispiece (which is not necessarily included in all of today’s editions) is, therefore, at odds with the Divan.

While Goethe immersed himself in translations and scholarship of Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry in his Weimar library, Lord Byron had also immersed himself in Eastern cultures by actually travelling to Turkey, Albania and Greece. As illustrated above, the global dynamics
of the post-Napoleonic period not only opened up the national borders of Europe, but they also reshaped the lives of Romantic poets, their nations and their views of the world. As Byron ventured into untrodden lands, for travel to Albania, Constantinople and the Ottoman parts of Greece was rare at the time, he encouraged his readers to think beyond national boundaries and borders, to think globally and to see beyond simple global perspectives that form the “us” vs. “them” mentality. In this chapter, I have argued that Goethe engages in a dialogue with the East and reorganizes knowledge about the Other through the accompanying notes to his *Divan*. Through these miscellaneous notes, this paratext, Goethe aimed to teach, guide and enlighten his reader’s perception about Islam, Arabic poetry and Persian classical culture. More so, in the Noten one reads Goethe’s theory of translation and the nascent conceptualization of his *Weltliteratur*, concepts that not only affirm the value of cross-cultural engagements and advocate for a sympathetic appreciation of foreign cultures (echoing the pluralism, and cultural tolerance and understanding of Herder as we saw in the previous chapter), but also question the prior assumptions about other cultures, nations, and identities during the post-Napoleonic era. The next chapter elaborates on the fluidity and unfixedness of cross-cultural encounters as echoed in the works of Lord Byron that were published immediately after his Eastern travels between 1810-1811. Byron uses the paratext, mainly the appendix in his *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Canto II and the footnote in his *Turkish Tales*, to critique, question and even demolish existing notions of a homogeneous and inferior East. Like Goethe, Byron examines the important role of the translator in bringing other cultures to the fore. Moreover, like Goethe’s Noten, Byron’s ironic footnotes contest the presumptive organization of knowledge about the Other and instead highlight and celebrate, in the words of Don Juan, “life’s infinite variety” (*CPW* 5: 146).
Figure 1. Poems in German, Arabic and Persian in *Noten*

Figure 2. Frontispiece of the 1819 Stuttgart edition of Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan*
CHAPTER THREE
The Printer’s Devil: Byron’s Paratext and the Dis-organization of Knowledge

“It is my story & my East.”
(Byron, BLJ 2: 168)

“The theoretico-descriptive or constative secondarity [features] are common to annotation and to many other similar practices that are not annotation: commentary, criticism, exegesis, gloss, interpretation – that is, a certain kind of secondary interpretation, because there is an interpretation of the interpretation, or at least of the hermeneutic, that situates the hermeneutic act beside the primary text as a productive, poetico-performative act.”
(Derrida, “This is not an Oral Footnote” 195)

In a famous letter to Tom Moore written in 1813, Byron strongly urges his friend to:
stick to the East; – the oracle, Staël told me it was the only poetical policy. The North, South, and West, have all been exhausted; but from the East, we have nothing but Southey’s unsaleables […] the little I have done in that way is merely a ‘voice in the wilderness’ for you; and, if it had done any success, that also will prove that the public are orientalizing, and pave the path for you. (BLJ 3: 101)

Often quoted to reveal Byron’s fascination with and admiration of Eastern culture, this letter also highlights other important questions for Byron and his relationship with the East: his awareness of the public’s fascination with the exotic, his heavy involvement in this lucrative business (he had just published Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage Cantos I and II a year earlier and found himself a star overnight), and his anxiety about his country’s imperialist interests in that part of the world.

Byron did of course enjoy great fame and success early in his career (1812-1816) as he set much of his poetry in a non-Western environment – namely Greece and Albania – but I want to pose the same question with which Andrew Warren begins his book The Orient and the Young Romantics (2014): why do the young Romantics stage so much of their poetry in the East? Is it simply because everyone was doing it (3)? Indeed, even if Byron deems them as unsaleables, Robert Southey’s epics Thalaba the Destroyer (1801) and The Curse of Kehama (1810)
generated a flow of interest in the Orient during the Romantic era, although interest already existed (albeit quietly) one hundred years prior, as I have outlined in the Introduction.

While Europe was expressing relentless economic interest in the Orient, and as the eighteenth century would usher in the beginning of the imperialist presence in that region, the Arabian Nights, as I have illustrated in the Introduction, became part of a vast and rapidly growing literary market offering colourful and overwhelming flavours from the North of Africa, to India, to the Near East, for the curious English reader. Such a plethora of Oriental tales catered to a variety of reader tastes from the imaginative, to the moralistic, to the philosophic and satiric, and included popular works such as Samuel Johnson’s The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia (1759), William Beckford’s Vathek, an Arabian Tale (1786), and Montesquieu’s Lettres Persanes (1721). Like many of his contemporaries, Byron had a fascination with the Eastern world: a fascination that can be traced through his interest in stories and songs obtained mainly through fictional and historical sources, among them Paul Rycaut’s late seventeenth-century writings on Ottoman history, Beckford’s Vathek, Barthelemy d’Herbelot’s Bibliotheque Orientale (1697), and Demetrius Cantermir’s standard work The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire (English edition 1734). Byron’s passion and enthusiasm for this part of the world inspired him to travel through Albania and Turkey between 1810 and 1811 while on his Grand Tour; it was the East that left a significant impression on him at the time – “with all these countries, all my poetic feelings begin and end” (BLJ 1: 29).40

39 In fact, Byron claims to be indebted to Beckford’s tale that he calls “most Eastern” and in his last footnote to The Giaour he says, “I do not know from what source the author of that singular volume may have drawn his materials […] but for correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination, it far surpasses all European imitation; and bears such marks of originality, that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation. As an Eastern Tale, even Rasselas must bow before it; his ‘Happy Valley’ will not bear a comparison with the ‘Hall of Eblis’” (SP 208).
40 Byron wished to expand his trip to Jerusalem and Persia, but nothing came out of this. He also planned to go briefly to North Africa – ‘Barbary’ – as he refers to it, before heading to Turkey via Malta. Three letters refer to the
Returning to Warren’s question, then, Romantic writers did not simply write about the East because everyone else was doing it, per se. Rather, as with many of the young Romantics – Byron, Shelley, Keats – the East became a site at which these poets wrestled with many pressing and overlooked problems in an age dominated by colonial expansion, the explosion of human sciences and the relation of the Self to the Other. One major concern the politically conscious Romantic had was Britain’s imperialist agenda toward other nations.

A number of influential studies have contributed to the discussion of Byron’s Orientalism, offering various insights into Romanticism and its concerns with imperialism. From McGann’s Fiery Dust (1968) onward, scholars developed and refined a set of quasi-allegorical readings that interpreted the narratives of Byron’s Orientalist works as a superimposition of concerns about British society and politics onto the Orient. For instance, Marilyn Butler’s essay “Orientalism in Byron’s Giaour” (1988) suggests that Romantic writers manipulated the East more or less consciously according to their own Anglocentric point of view and that, to be understood, Byron’s Orientalism must be placed in the historical context of imperialism and the controversies surrounding it in his own day. As I have outlined in the Introduction, Tim Fulford points to Romanticism’s consistent desire to rule the exotic, and for Nigel Leask that desire translates into an imperial expansion that was not merely cultural, but also economic and material. In his British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (1992), Leask argues that Byron’s Eastern poetry “formed part of a broader cultural engagement with the question of imperialism, productive of so much stimulation and anxiety in Regency England” (13), and that in Oriental Tales, “Byron reduces the imperialistic Self to a level with its Oriental Other; but in so doing he in effect perpetuates the prejudice of the East/West binary planned Barbary excursion and its failure to take place. See his letters of August 11 and August 15, 1809. See BLJ 5.1 page 221.
opposition while attacking the ideology of empire which it empowers” (Leask 4).

Saree Makdisi’s *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (1998) adds to this discourse by suggesting that Byron’s use of the Orient engages with questions exceeding the British politics of the day:

> The old discourse of Orientalism was radically transfigured as it merged and productively fused with the modern discourses of evolution, racism, industrial capitalism. This fusion marks the emergence of the Universal Empire of modernization – that overall cultural process which would rise to dominance into the 19th century – into which Orientalism was assimilated during this period as one discourse among others. (117)

Makdisi locates Byron’s anxiety about his experiences with the Orient in the fact that Byron realizes he is inevitably stuck into a double bind: while he views the East as a birthplace of Europe’s greatest cultural heritage, he, at the same time, uses it as a “blank screen” (Barrell 8), a site through which to critique Western, European and mainly English norms, standards and taboos, whether they be political, social, sexual, economic or cultural. Andrew Warren’s most recent contribution to this conversation suggests that while images of the East are often strategically employed to undercut the West’s stance toward the East, more importantly the East “provides a setting in which to explore and critique the epistemological, existential, and above all political limits of their own [the Romantics’] solipsistic imaginations” (3; my emphasis). For

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41 Peter Cochran makes an interesting opposing point to Leask’s thesis in suggesting that there is hardly any evidence for this anxiety relating to imperialism. According to Cochran, “the main focus of the country’s anxiety until 1815 was either how to defeat Bonaparte, or how to come to terms with him. After 1815, it was how to deal either with the defeat of internal insurrection, or the threat of liberty which the Tory government posed, crazed as it appeared to be by the imagined threat of internal insurrection” (75). Yet, if one looks briefly at Byron’s Oriental tragedy *Sardanapalus*, for example, one can perhaps consider a different kind of imperialism that Byron is criticizing. The tragedy is set in the heartland of Asiatic imperialism in an empire created by Nimrod and Semiramis. The tragic colonial ruler, Sardanapalus, seeks to divest himself of this empire (in vain perhaps), recognizing that ‘we must love one another or die.’ His love for the enslaved Greek woman, Myrrha, may be read as an allegory challenging Ottoman imperialism for instance. However, monarchs and slaves cannot escape from the exigencies of history, and the individual remains trapped in the imperial system (Western or Eastern).
Warren, the Romantics understood the ricochet effect of projecting their politics and political anxieties onto the East, as this process became not just an escape from the self, but also an inevitable return to it.

Building on this scholarship, while Byron does use the East to work out his ideologies and concerns about Britain’s political agenda, I further suggest that his self-conscious and ironic treatment of the East anticipates Said’s critique *avant la lettre*. Byron sees the Orient, “not as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized” (Said 104), and critiques the Orientalism practiced by writers before him. By taking an anti-Orientalist position in his poetry, he demolishes the notion of a homogenous East as defined by the West and presents a more complex interplay between cultures – Albanians, Greeks, Turks, Arabs and Europeans. For Byron, as Warren rightly put it:

the Orient is a haphazard aggregation of ‘facts’ (an empty signifier whose signified is a confluence of human fear, greed, and desire: a fantasy), and Orientalism is merely a deft strategy for organizing those facts for the benefit of particular individuals and nations. Any relationship between systems of human knowledge, such as Orientalism, and the fantasy of a divine organizing mind is itself pure fantasy. (114)

In this light, my approach to Byron’s texts is through an examination of the ways in which he organizes knowledge about the East, yet at the same time calls attention to the “constructedness of his own narrative” (Warren 114), thereby making us question what really constitutes knowledge and the limits of knowledge. This chapter focuses on Byron’s early Orientalist work, mainly the second Canto of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (*CHP II*), published together with the first Canto in 1812, and the first tale of *The Oriental Tales* (*OT*), *The Giaour* (1813); it aims to shed a new light on the discussion of Byron, Romanticism and Orientalism from a paratextual
perspective. My choice to align these two works together is twofold: one being that CHP is the first work in which Byron introduces the East to his audience, having just come back from his Grand Tour; The Giaour follows shortly thereafter and paves the way for the success of the rest of the Oriental tales. Most significantly, however, both texts have some form of paratext attached to them: in CHP II, the paratext has a much more dominant presence than in any of Byron’s earlier works and the Appendix functions very similarly to what we observed in Goethe’s Noten. Moreover, The Giaour is the only tale in which footnotes were included on the same page as the text in the first seven editions of its publication. Not only that, but the symbiosis and synergy of the text and paratext are more interesting and complex than in the tales that follow.

The first part of this chapter examines the Appendix of CHP II, while the second part offers a close reading of The Giaour and accompanying footnotes. I suggest that the Appendix of CHP II, a text often neglected by both editors and critics, not only functions as an apparatus through which Byron can represent himself as an authentic, keen observer and traveller, and a thorough recorder of information, but it also reveals Byron’s critical stance on cultural encounters and the role of the translator, or to use Goethe’s term Vermittler, as he introduces a new culture to his readers. While the notes in the Appendix provide an ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological account of new communities, they also reveal Byron’s political stance on and advocacy of such communities imperial Britain was seeking to absorb. The ironic tone of the footnotes in The Giaour also functions to challenge the power dichotomy and contest identities, traditions and presuppositions set up in the poem. Despite the fact that they are either heavily edited or completely left out in many of the modern editions, I suggest that the Appendix and the footnotes are quite crucial to our understanding of Byron’s philosophy about knowledge of the Other, as they offer an empirical extreme from the large Idealist organization of knowledge I
outlined in the introduction of this dissertation. Besides their role as autobiography, self-reflexivity and self-disclosure, the paratexts in Byron’s work maintain a double existence in relation to the text, as they are affixed to it but may not necessarily be subordinate to it. They elaborate on the text, and yet they also adopt a new line of rhetoric that questions the text itself: “collectively, these […] notes radically influence any careful reading of the poem and complicate the generic character of the book” (Webb 136). Most significantly, the aim of the paratext or the marginal text in Byron’s *CHP* II and *The Giaour* is to enable the reader to see past hegemonic constructions of cultures and to understand things from the point of view of those marginalized. No longer at the margins, the paratext becomes an integral and central part of Byron’s own organization of and philosophy about the Orient.

I. Publication History of the Paratexts in *CHP* II and *The Giaour*

Before I discuss the use of the paratext generally and Byron’s epistemic objective in using them specifically, I will briefly comment on the complex publication history of the annotations in Byron’s work and highlight a few points with respect to the market in nineteenth-century print culture. It is important to note that our reading experience of Byron’s *CHP* II and *The Giaour* differs from the way his readers experienced these two texts. For example, published at the same time as Canto I and II of *CHP*, the Appendix comprised 78 pages of topographical, ethnographical and historical notes, as well as a facsimile of Romaic extracts (the vernacular language of modern Greece). However, as Timothy Webb points out, some notes in the Appendix in *CHP* have been “completely ignored by most later editors, and even the usually meticulous Oxford edition presents a severe challenge to any readers who hope to reconstruct the original” (127). In fact, many passages are left out from the Appendix, as editors found
supplementary notes simply unnecessary to the poetic text. The same complex process applies to The Oriental Tales. The Giaour was started in London between September 1812 and March 1813, first published by John Murray in late March 1813 and finally completed in December 1813, after having, in Byron’s words, “lengthened its rattles” (BLJ 3: 100) from 407 lines in the first draft to 1334 lines in the twelfth edition.

In today’s scholarly editions of Byron’s works, the footnotes’ positioning varies from edition to edition, depending on the editor’s decision and preference. Jerome McGann’s Byron: The Complete Poetical Works (1980), for instance, ignited much controversy among literary critics, mainly because he published the footnotes to the OT and the Appendix to CHP at the end of the volume, tucked in between his own commentaries on the texts. For McGann, this is the most clear and reader-friendly method; by including his own commentary notes directly after Byron’s, McGann is able to supply certain information that, for him, seemed necessary “to elucidate passages whose meaning might be obscure because of unfamiliar reference contained in them” (Introduction CPW 1: xlv). The problem with this method is that it not only complicates the perusal of the notes, but also distorts Byron’s authorial intentions and undermines the paratexts’ effect on the text. As Roger Poole remarks, “McGann fell into an important error of execution by including the Poems as separate lyrics in two totally different volumes of CPW; including only a part of the Appendix […] thereby depriving Childe Harold of its highly significant political context, and ultimately changing its original mode of perception” (160). On the other hand, Susan J. Wolfson and Peter Manning’s Byron: Selected Poems (1996), the edition I cite throughout this chapter, alongside much consultation with McGann’s version of the complete edited works, includes the footnotes on the same page as the main text, and the Appendix and long prose notes at the end of each Canto of CHP; this presentation follows John
Wright’s edited seven-volume *The Works of Lord Byron: With his Letters and Journals and his Life by Thomas Moore Esq. (1832-1834)* in which Murray printed Byron’s numerous notes on the same page as the poetic text, following the way these works were first published in 1812 and 1813. For this reason, I use Wolfson’s and Manning’s edition when citing passages from *The Giaour* and *CHP*; however, Wolfson and Manning do not include all passages from the Appendix, as they consult the seventh edition of *CHP* II. Therefore, I will cite the source when examining the Romaic passages not available in McGann or Wolfson and Manning.

**II. Footnotes, Endnotes, Appendices and the Market**

While beyond the scope of this chapter’s objective, as publication history and (para)textual layout merit an entirely separate scholarly study, I wish to briefly mention the marketability of the paratext and the significant role it played in making Byron’s Orientalist works bestsellers upon publication. To give a sense of how popular these poems were, William St Clair reports that the bestselling of Byron’s poems was *The Corsair*, which sold rapidly in 1814 and 1815, closely followed by *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*, both of which sold briskly over the same period. St Clair estimates that fifteen thousand to twenty thousand copies of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* I and II sold before 1818, putting the volume in the same range as *The Corsair*. Although it was twice as expensive, the poem sold very briskly from 1812 right through 1816.42 The sale figures were extraordinary. *The Giaour* sold nearly as many as *Childe Harold* I and II; *The Bride of Abydos* sold 6,000 copies in its first month of publication, *Lara* 10,000 between its publication in August of 1814 and the end of that year. Nor were these editions inexpensive: for example, the first edition of *CHP* is a beautifully produced quarto.

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42 For more details, see St Clair’s article “The Impact of Byron’s Writings: An Evaluative Approach.”
volume. Typically these volumes were sizable, heavy books with wide margins and large type: “at a time when much reading was done by candlelight, it was more comfortable on the eye” (St Clair “The Impact of Byron’s Writings” 2). Moreover, the poem was printed on heavy paper, in a clear, highly readable type, and was considered a luxury because of its high price. A reviewer in the *Satirist* comments on the expense of such a format:

My good Lord Byron, while you are reveling in all the sensual and intellectual luxury which the successful sale of Newstead Abbey has procured for you, you little think of the privations to which you have subjected us, unfortunate Reviewers; compelled as we have been to subsist for a week on half our usual allowance of “broth and bullock’s liver,” in order to enable us to purchase your lordship’s expensive publication. (Reiman 2134)

Despite the first two Cantos of *CHP*’s presentation and price, Murray was able to successfully sell, and fast. Yet, how did Byron suddenly find himself a star after the publication of *CHP*? What made the poem such a desired item for everyone’s coffee table? Among the more illuminating studies about Byron and the nineteenth-century readership market, Nicholas Mason’s “Building Brand Byron” considers the story of *Childe Harold* I and II “not so much one of a text reflecting the issues of its own age as one of a marketing-savvy publisher and a poet with a flair for self-promotion who come together at an ideal moment in literary advertising history” (425). Mason further suggests that it was John Murray’s carefully and subtly thought-out advertising strategies that contributed to the breadth of Byron’s readership. In the following

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43 St Clair gives a very detailed analysis of the cost of Byron’s *CHP* I and II, as well as the *OT*. For instance, a bound copy of *CHP* cost half of the weekly income of a gentleman. See pages 3-4 for detailed figures.

example, it is particularly interesting to note what Murray considers to be the poem’s most marketable features. The *Times* advertisement of March 5 reads:

Lord Byron’s new Poem. – In a few days will be published, handsomely printed in 4 to. CHILDE HAROLD’S PILGRIMAGE; a Poem: written during the Author’s Travels in Portugal, Spain, Albania, and some of the most interesting parts of Greece; with Notes. To which are added a few miscellaneous Poems, and Translations of modern Greek Songs, written chiefly abroad: and a short Appendix, containing Observations on modern Greek Literature, with a short catalogue of Romaic Authors. By LORD BYRON. Printed for John Murray, 32 Fleet-street.

While Mason considers Byron’s name to be a highlight in this advertisement, as Murray prints it twice, I also suggest that because Murray adds “with notes” adjacent to the poem’s description and mentions the cultural catalogue offered in the Appendix, he implies that the notes could be considered as a ‘treat’ or a ‘bonus’ read for the buyer. Indeed, a quick perusal of book announcements included in later editions of *CHP* proves that almost always the description highlights components such as “explanatory notes,” “autobiographical notice,”45 and “historical illustrations,”46 even twenty years after the publication of *CHP*.

These marketing strategies also extend themselves to the ways in which Murray published the *Oriental Tales*. For example, as I mentioned, *The Giaour* was the only poem from the tales that appeared with footnotes in the first seven editions. The poem’s 453 lines in the first fifteen copies was struck for private circulation in late March 1813. The poem then grew from 684 lines of the first edition to the 1334 lines that constitute the seventh edition. Moreover, the

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45 See the compilation of book announcements under the section “publication of Henry Carey Baird” included after the poem in an 1854 edition of *CHP*. This advertisement announces the book *Modern Chivalry; or, the Adventures of Captain Farrago and Teague O’Regan*. Page 117.

46 This announcement is for the historical illustrations of Canto IV of *CHP* 1818 edition. Page 259.
suspenseful content and fragmentary form of the poem contributed significantly to its popularity, for not only are the killings, dismemberments, vampirism and chase scenes narrated by ambiguous and layered voices, but the poem was also in fragments that required assembly and offered a stimulating challenge to the reader (McGann, *Fiery Dust* 91), and, as Mole rightly points out, kept the reader anxiously wanting and waiting for more (92). This savvy marketing strategy continued edition after edition, as Byron kept on extending and digressing with verses and footnotes. The first edition had 30 footnotes for its 684 lines that appeared in the same number through the sixth edition. It is important to note that by the seventh edition of *The Giaour*, all footnotes were replaced by 43 endnotes. Pragmatically, as the poem went through frequent proofs and various editions, the choice to turn footnotes to endnotes made more financial sense, as endnotes were much easier to handle by the printers. What is of importance for my argument, however, is that when the footnotes are changed to endnotes, this creates a different reading response and a different interpretation. Printed at the very end of the poem, the endnote was essentially remote and would have been consulted only by the curious or scholarly reader, becoming essentially a supplement to a text that could spatially exist independent of the notes. The footnote, on the other hand, printed at the bottom of the page, not only fragments the poem, but also our own vision. What we get, therefore, are bits and pieces of Hassan and the Giaour, a collage of different voices; such a presentation, I will argue, offers a rich and more complex interpretation of the text.

Like the composition process of *The Giaour*, *CHP* was sent to Murray with the definitions, explanations, etc. to be included directly after the poetic text. In her recently published article, “Lord Byron: Paratext and Poetics” (2014), Ouorania Chatsiou makes a valid

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47 See Robinson: “Byron’s Footnotes” for a detailed outline of the printing process.
point when she suggests that the ink consistency on both Cantos reveals that Byron did, in fact, intend them to be printed on the same page. No draft manuscripts exist of Canto I and II; however, by looking at the first fair copy, Chatsiou remarks that “by comparing […] the ink consistency between the main text and the paratext, we may infer that he probably composed poem and notes at the same time. More specifically, it seems likely that he often wrote a note directly after finishing writing the stanza which included the line to which he wanted to append the note” (654). Thus, Byron’s composition process is just as important as the main text, and it contributes equally (if not more) to his philosophical and epistemic project: “the dynamic symbiosis and ironic interplay [in the footnotes] begin at the composition stage” (652). Having established that the paratext does very much matter when reading Byron’s work, I now turn to the various functions of annotations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary traditions.

III. Paratexts, Authenticity and Correctness

On the one hand, footnotes appear to be used to voice objective scientific observations. Like many eighteenth-century historical and literary scholars, Byron is able to demonstrate a research characterized by factual accuracy and empirical rigour. Therefore, a straightforward and simple, logical answer to the question of why Byron adds the footnotes would be that as he ventures into countries where his English audience is less likely to be familiar, he would need to ‘explain’ certain elements and references pertaining to ‘that part of the world.’ On this level, the footnotes define terms: they translate foreign-language words and phrases (mostly Islamic, Albanian, Greek and Turkish), cite historical sources, provide background information for evidence, and even answer cultural and religious questions for the curious reader. Moreover, paratexts can signify a scientific objectivity and are generally regarded as an “objective tool”
rather than a “rhetorical device;” they are a vehicle for the presentation of “veritable objective 
fact” that is offered as evidence for the beliefs, actions and states of mind represented in the text, 
demonstrating that the poem is “grounded” and “founded” upon fact (Cosgrove 134).

Historically speaking, not only did seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers like Jonathan 
Swift, Alexander Pope and Henry Fielding use the multi-faceted function of the footnote, nor 
was it only historians and scholars like Edward Gibbon who found footnotes essential and crucial 
to the ‘truthfulness’ and ‘authority’ of their arguments, but many nineteenth-century poets and 
novelists continued to use footnotes for explanation, elaboration and emendation. For instance, 
Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Walter Scott all enriched their verse with the 
information contained in the footnote. Similarly, when Byron, perhaps like Robert Southey, 
attempts to domesticate the foreign in CHP and make it legible to a British audience (Porter 1), 
he uses footnotes and appendices to grant authority and credibility to his findings, and, much like 
eighteenth-century literary and historical scholars such as Gibbon and Pope, Byron is able to 
demonstrate a research characterized by correctness and attention to detail.

The fact that Byron has travelled to these remote places in the East is constantly 
mentioned in many reviews, and in a comment on The Giaour a reviewer remarks that Byron 
“speaks, indeed, as an eye-witness of scenes the most remote and disunited from each other […] 
The picturesque costume and glowing scenery of the East are no longer drawn for the portfolio, 
like a series of pictures: but they fix in a local habitation, and stamp with the most striking 
characters, the drama which is performing on the stage before us.”\(^{48}\) The fact that Byron was one 
of the few British Romantics who had actually travelled through the region (Southey, Beckford 
and Moore only used their vast encyclopedic knowledge and mastery of note-taking when

\(^{48}\) Monthly Review (June 1813), in Reiman volume 4, p.1741.
writing about the Orient) distinguishes him from others, and presumably grants more authority and authenticity to his texts. Over a two-year period between July 1809 to July 1811, he and his travel companion John Cam Hobhouse sailed from Falmouth to Lisbon, then rode overland to Cadiz, sailed on to Gibraltar and Malta, and finally to Preveza on the northwest coast of Greece (Eisner 105). He boastingly writes in a footnote in *CHP* Canto II that “circumstances, of little consequence to mention, led Mr Hobhouse and myself into that country before we visited any other part of the Ottoman dominions, and with the exception of Major Leake, then officially resident at Joannina, no other Englishmen have ever advanced beyond the capital into the interior; as that gentleman very lately assured me” (*SP* 130). As Stephen Cheeke observes, “there is a sense of authority and meaning invested in the notion of direct knowledge and experience of *place* in the period during the years which Byron traveled in the East, and became famous for doing so in the West” (13). Not only do *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and the *Oriental Tales*, and the paratexts attached to them, reflect Byron’s vast knowledge and keen eye for detail about the countries through which he travelled, but some of the plots are inspired either by actual historical events, or were episodes in which Byron participated or witnessed. Moreover, numerous comments in his letters to John Murray reveal his obsession with the *correctness* and *realism* of the world he is depicting, as he repeatedly demanded that his publishers correct, add, delete or change the various notes as the texts went through many proofs, revisions and editions. For instance, when the second of the tales, *The Bride of Abydos*, was in its first stages of production, Byron sent to Murray what he called a “note for the ignorant” and added, “I don’t care one lump of Sugar for my *poetry* – but for my costume – and my *correctness* on those points…I will combat lustily” (*BLJ* 3: 165). In turn, he asks Murray to
look out in the Encyclopedia article Mecca, whether it is there or at Medina the Prophet is entombed – if at Medina the first lines of my alternation must run – ‘Blest- as the call which from Medina’s dome/Invites Devotion to the Prophet’s tomb,’ if at ‘Mecca’ the lines may stand as before. You will find this out either by Article – Mecca – Medina – or Mohammed – I have no book of reference by me. (BLJ 3: 165)

This point is pressed home in a subsequent correspondence when Byron asks again: “Did you look out? Is it Medina or Mecca that contains the holy sepulcher? – don’t make me blaspheme by your negligence – I have no book of reference or I would save you the trouble” (BLJ 3: 191).

Ultimately, Byron’s Orientalist oeuvre not only encounters the other place, and the strange regions of unfamiliar customs and traditions through the transports of the imagination, but it does so with an asserted authenticity and a rich ethnographic experience.

More specifically, the footnotes in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writings imply the writer’s complete grasp of history, botany, science and culture. They become part of an antiquarian discourse in which they highlight the author’s experiential knowledge and discoveries. As Noah Heringman suggests in his introduction to “Romantic Antiquarianism” (2014),

where historians like David Hume and Edward Gibbon charted grand narratives of nations and empires, antiquaries like John Woodward and Samuel Pegge were thought to have buried themselves in the most pedantic depths of the archive—not only in documents, but also in images and above all in artifacts. Not quite a connoisseur, then, and not quite a historian, the antiquary lingered somewhere in between, acquiring, classifying, and explicating "old things."

49 See Jacqueline Labbe’s article “‘Transplanted into more congenial soil:’ footnoting the Self in the poetry of Charlotte Smith.”
Whether it was the description of fossils, decaying churches or ancient artifacts, this phenomenon was demanded of illustrators, authors and publishers, and by “the mid nineteenth century antiquity […] supported an unprecedented range of new and emerging disciplines” (Heringman Sciences of Antiquity 2). One may argue that Byron’s CHP and OT participate in an archeological project, as they present a collage of travelogues and antiquarian interests such as the fascination with Roman and Greek architecture and ruins, as well as a reminiscence of a classical past. The substantial commentaries in these works not only pointed out historical events, legends and folktales, but they also provided encyclopedia-like entries about the regions Byron visited. Moreover, we read opinions on Greek art, samples of Greek poetry, anthropological observations on Albanians and samples of their War Songs. For instance, in Note [B] Byron comments on Albanian costume, climate and countenance: “the Albanians in general […] have fine cast of countenance; and the most beautiful women I ever beheld, in stature and in features” (SP 133). Note [C] offers a specimen of popular Albanian folk songs in translation (something I will turn to in the ensuing pages) and comments with an expert’s eye about the traditional rituals of Albanian folk dances. The OT continued to do this as well and, in fact, many early readers shelved The Giaour, for instance, under the category of antiquarian verse narrative. As Ravelhofer points out:

Byron's tales were initially sold as octavos in unassuming drab wrappers. Often, however, buyers had them bound with other 'related' works, such as the verse narratives The Battles of Talavera by J.W. Croker, W. Drennan's Giendalloch, and The Legend of Cathleen and Kevin, a work of 'poetical' as much as 'antiquarian' merit (The Legend of Cathleen and Kevin boasted foot- and endnotes). (28)
Therefore, anyone “interested in travel books and topographical poems…with a classical education and a taste of antiquarian lore and the philosophical musings of a young English lord” (McGann, *The Beauty of Inflection* 259) would be drawn to Byron’s Oriental works. Yet, I draw attention to paratexts, generally, and the organization of knowledge through the footnote and supplementary notes more specifically, because I want to suggest that Byron’s annotations are not just a marketing tool nor cosmetic, narrative commentary on the status of various parts of the world; nor are they just an objective, scientific and impressive list of works cited. Rather, I will illustrate the various ways in which the paratext actually complicates our reading of Childe Harold’s narrative of his failed Grand Tour. As the poem tries to project a narrative of world history and civilization, we realize that a formulation of a systematic worldview fails and instead we sail with Childe Harold toward a world of uncertainties. I suggest that the Appendix also reflects these uncertainties as it breaks the cultural dichotomies and boundaries that are seemingly set up in the poem.

**IV. Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage and the Failure of History**

Divided into four Cantos, Byron’s poem describes the reflections of a weary young man who, unsatisfied with his life at home, and in need of a distraction, decides to travel to foreign lands. Leaving England, he first travels to Portugal and Spain (Canto I), then continues to Greece and Albania (Canto II). In the third Canto, we find Childe Harold in Belgium and Switzerland, and finally the journey ends in Italy where we read of the lost glories of Venice and Rome. The more we follow Childe Harold on his pilgrimage, the more we are exposed to a satiated, passive and tormented figure “who ne in virtue’s ways did take delight” (*SP* 11) and who seems to be embarking on an aimless quest to flee himself but only in vain. His journey is nostalgic,
sentimental, semi-picaresque, offering the reader fragments, and bits and pieces of history only to make him or her realize that there is no particular logic or narrative structure to this history. Unlike the eighteenth-century world narratives that we saw earlier in the dissertation, where the ultimate goal is to reach progress in Western civilizations, the Childe’s narrative heads towards a world of decline, chaos and regress.

The erosion of Childe Harold’s worldview continues from one country to the next as he sarcastically recounts Spain’s past and laments the devastating consequences of senseless wars. The tone of melancholy over the ruins of landscape and loss of glory is also heard in Greece. There, he decries those who spoil and plunder Greece’s treasures, and mourns the loss of true heroic men. Perhaps the decline of history is shown most vividly in Rome, as Harold wanders “amongst decay,” (SP 218) and is himself a “ruin amidst ruins” (SP 219). In this worldview, therefore, Byron denies a hierarchy of world order, as all the places he visits have had the same fate – moving from being places of freedom and glory to being places of barbarism and corruption. As Childe Harold realizes, “history, with all her volumes vast/Hath but one page” (SP 968-69): all the civilizations visited in his journey seem to be falling into decay. The paratext to this poem, therefore, and particularly the Appendix to Canto I and II, enlightens the reader about this regressive world history. For instance, Byron uses the margins as a space in which to reveal his political views about and contestations of his country’s imperialist policies, as he makes political jabs particularly at Lord Elgin for removing and transporting overseas a large number of antiquities from Athens – “may Lord Elgin boast of having ruined Athens” (SP 128). Furthermore, not only does the Appendix provide extensive descriptions of the people

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50 See Angela Esterhammer’s article “Translating the Elgin Marbles: Byron, Hemans, Keats” for a more detailed account of Byron’s critical stance on Lord Elgin’s excavation of the marbles and imperialism.
and places Byron visited during his tour of the Iberian Peninsula and the Turkish Levant, but the notes also demonstrate a “militant and richly informed philhellenism” (Webb 141):

The Greeks will never be independent; they will never be sovereigns as heretofore, and God forbid they ever should! [...] They are so unused to kindness, that when they occasionally meet with it they look upon it with suspicion, as a dog often beaten snaps at your fingers if you attempt to caress him. ‘They are ungrateful! – this is the general cry […] for what are they to be ungrateful? They are to be grateful to the Turks for their fetters […] for the artist who engraves their ruins, and to the antiquary who carries them away… This is the amount of their obligations to foreigners. (SP 140)

Yet, in his “Additional Note – on the Turks,” Byron observes that, “the Ottomans, with all their defects, are not a people to be despised. Equal, at least, to the Spaniards, they are superior to the Portuguese. If it be difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are not: they are not treacherous, they are not cowardly” (SP 151). In this light, while the Appendix ostensibly provides supplementary information to Byron’s travels through foreign lands, it also functions to alter the reader’s presuppositions and preconceptions of the foreign Other, thereby challenging the colonizer’s prejudiced ideas about the colonized. In the ensuing pages, I argue that in the Appendix, Byron problematizes the hegemonic construct of the Other by emphasizing the impossibility of truly knowing a foreign culture, and by assigning a new role to the translator or mediator of that culture.

V. Cultural Translation, Mediation, (Re)Negotiation

Thus far, I have emphasized that, at first glance, the supplementary notes of CH P II fulfill the requirements of a travel narrative, deepening the reader’s view and understanding of the
lands Byron describes. However, at times, these remarks are quite different in tone from the poem they supposedly augment, and so different in voice from the narrator’s voice that the effect is not to deepen the reader’s vision, but to divert it by involving the reader in a completely different piece of writing. Therefore (just like the footnotes in *The Giaour*, as we shall soon see), the footnotes in *CHP* are at odds with the content of the poem, disrupting the hermeneutics of the text. For instance, when reading through the Canto, the reader may ask: do we need so many definitions? This particular stanza received four footnotes alone:

- Dark Mukhtar his son to the Danube is sped,
- Let the yellow-haird* Giaours* view his horse-tail* with
dread;
- When his Delhis* come dashing in blood o’er the banks,
- How few shall escape from the Muscovite ranks! (*SP* 685-688)

Does a stanza require so much translation? The abundance of foreign terms in the poem not only adds local colour but, as Mole argues, by glossing the foreign terms he inserts into his poem, “Byron reduces the frisson of alterity” these terms produce (92). But, like Emily Jackson, I would counter this argument and suggest that, in fact, such glosses increase the frisson because they emphasize that alterity, and while Byron uses this “frisson as a deliberate means of fostering confusion” (18), as Jackson rightly adds, they also say much more about the limits of knowledge of a culture.

This confusion is established through the collection of Romaic texts scattered throughout the Appendix. In McGann’s edition, we are only able to see a small sample of the Romaic sections, as he includes the following texts: List of Romaic Authors, Romaic Extracts, and a scene from a Goldoni play translated from Italian into Romaic (then Byron offers his English
translation). Although they are not included in the McGann edition, Webb informs us that the first edition also includes a phrase book for the traveller titled ‘Familiar Dialogues,’ and six passages from St John’s Gospel (in modern and Classical Greek). There are also more inscriptions and translations in Romaic and classical Greek that mainly deal with religious texts (Webb 129). In the final section of the Appendix, titled conclusion, Byron tells his reader that “the foregoing selections from the Romaic are, of course, offered to the scholar only; and I trust that the critic will not quarrel with that part which is intended for his sole perusal, and for the faults of which I am not responsible.”

Webb also points out that Byron included a facsimile of a letter in Greek from a Nuri bey of Corinth (the letter is written by his secretary Sotirakis Notaras) and signed in Arabic by the bey (see Figure II). In the letter, the bey is apologizing for his supposed inhospitable behaviour while Byron was seeking lodging during his stay in 1810. However, unlike the other Romaic texts in the Appendix, this letter was not translated by Byron, because its “contents merely regarding private business are not worth a translation” (quoted in Peteinaris).

So why does Byron include this letter? If, as Byron suggests in his conclusion, the Romaic texts are for the “scholarly only” (CPW 2: 217), then why highlight the fact that the letter is included in his notes: “I have in my possession about twenty-five letters, amongst which some from the Bey of Corinth, written to me by Notaras […] The reader will find a fac simile of the handwriting of a good scribe, with specimens of the Romaic, in an appendix at the end of the volume” (quoted in Peteinaris). Is it merely to showcase it in the antiquarian manner? Was it an

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51 This section is included in the McGann edition page 217, but not in the Manning and Wolfson as they end the Appendix with “Additional Note, on the Turks.”

52 This quote is not included in the McGann edition, or in any present collection I have consulted. Both Webb and Peteinaris use the first edition of CHP published by John Murray. As Webb points out, by the seventh edition of the poem (what McGann relies on in his edited text), the letter is no longer printed in the Appendix.
example of contemporary Turkish manners and of the beauty of contemporary aristocratic Greek calligraphy?

In his article “The Bey Apologises,” Petros Peteinaris presents us with the letter in translation and problematizes Byron’s description of it:

But we may wonder how successful his pro-Turkish ambition for it was, because although the calligraphic beauty of its Greek is clear at once, it is very difficult to transcribe and translate […] some of the words in the letter are loanwords from Turkish, some of the Greek words (though not many) are misspelled, and the grammar is not always perfect […] what has most baffled scholarship, however, is the handwriting, which seems to have proved until now an insurmountable barrier to reading the letter.

(14)

Perhaps Byron wanted to enlighten the antiquarian enthusiast or boast of his linguistic abilities, or even to alter the reader’s mind about the misconceptions of Greeks and Turks by including this letter. However, I suggest that the letter highlights our limits of experiencing a culture and alters our idealistic notions about a particular culture. By not being able to decipher the script, the reader experiences a feeling of linguistic, social and even cultural exclusion that would, in turn, challenge any feeling of superiority readers may come with as they approach Byron’s text. By causing most readers to reflect on how little they know of a nineteenth-century Greece to which the Canto is devoted, the reader is “painfully aware of the way in which linguistic ignorance excludes them from richly imaginative worlds” (Webb 131). Moreover, this is a world the antiquarian reader thought he/she knew and the letter challenges this entirely. Albania in particular was not a land written of either in chivalric tales nor in the classical literature with which the British reader would be familiar, as Byron’s Harold passes “from the dark barriers of
that rugged clime/.../o’er many a mount sublime/Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales” (406-409, 109). When reading the Greek script and the short specimen of Arabic calligraphy in the letter, the reader is struck “by the cursive flow, its loops and curves, and the recurrent staccato marking of its accentuation” (Webb 131), which in turn makes him or her realize that this is a culture embedded with a mysterious otherness; not only that, but this is a multicultural, cosmopolitan world of which they are not aware (much like the cosmopolitanism world one encounters in the courts of Ali Pasha, as I point out in the next chapter). The reader’s idealized Greece is, indeed, no more, as Turks, Greeks, Albanians and Europeans interact with one another, and the letter’s undecipherable and enigmatic bilingualism attests to the Greek’s present reality: “instead of considering what they have been, and speculating what they may be, let us look at them as they are” (SP 142), Byron urges his readers. Certainly, the notes in the Appendix and the poem bring the reader’s attention to the challenging character of contemporary Greece, and while footnotes and supplementary texts may typically serve to recuperate “historical events lost to classical historiography” (Cheeke 32), and to (re)discover classical places and spaces, the Appendix in CHP tells us more about how much we do not know about present-day Greece.

If Goethe suggested that “wir müssen uns orientalisieren,” then Byron knew, as he told Moore in his letter, that his public was already doing just that. And, like Goethe for whom the notion of Orientalizing requires more than just being fascinated by the world of Arabian Nights, houris, musk and spices, Byron hints that there must be an intellectual and imaginative effort on the West’s part, and a willingness to put aside his or her preconceptions and presuppositions in order to truly Orientalize. It is important to note that despite the fact Romaic script was illegible to most of Byron’s readership, he was able to read, decipher and translate these texts, thus highlighting his linguistic ability and authority. In fact, Byron was familiar with a range of
languages, such as Turkish, Albanian, as well as ancient and modern Greek, and unlike other
travellers in his age, he rejoiced in the linguistic plurality and cultural diversity and complexity
his travels offered. In a letter to his mother, he states:

I am so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about
them, and of the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an
Islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to set our young men abroad for a
term …. Here I see and converse with French, Italians, Germans, Danes, Greeks, Turks,
Armenians, &c. &c. &c. and without losing sight of my own, I can judge of the countries
and manners of others. (*BLJ* 2: 34-35)

If in the second Canto Byron attempts to introduce his audience to Albania, then the notes in the
Appendix deepen this engagement and present him as an unbiased, objective mediator: “Albania
comprises part of Macedonia, Illyria, Chaonia, and Epirus. Iskander is the Turkish word for
Alexander […] born at Pella in Macedon” (*SP* 130). Not only does this note highlight the
historical importance of such a marginal place like Albania, but it also demonstrates that Byron
is speaking from within a culture he represents, breaking any boundaries between a British
observer such as himself and the foreign place he is observing. For Cheeke, the notes on Albania
represent a “radical challenge to the hegemony not only of the Ottoman Empire, but to the
cultural hegemony represented by philhellenism in the West because of their insistence that
Albania is a country in its own right with a distinct national identity and culture” (32). Therefore,
for Byron, the Appendix and the footnotes in *CHP* allow him to explain and bring into the centre
the unknown and strange, thereby celebrating the heterogeneity and fluidity of the world he
encounters.
The hybridity of the Appendix and the role of Byron as a cultural mediator are underscored through the transliteration of two Albanian folk songs. Byron explains that “as a specimen of the Albanian or Arnaout dialect of the Illyric, I here insert two of their most popular choral songs, which are generally chanted in dancing by men or women indiscriminately” (SP 134). A brief example of how the songs are laid out in the Appendix is as follows:

I.

Bo, Bo, Bo, Bo, Bo,
Naciurura, popuso.

Lo, Lo, I come, I come; be thou silent.

2.

Naciurura na civin
Ha peh derini ti hin.

I come I run; open the door that I may enter.

As correctness and authenticity are integral to Byron’s representation of the Other in his works, he highlights the fact that the lyrics are “copied by one who speaks and understands the dialect perfectly, and who is a native of Athens” (SP 134). Naturally, Byron reveals these details in order to ascertain the translation’s scholarly authenticity and credibility, but like Alex Watson, I suggest that these translated songs, “highlight a mobile attitude towards engaging with the foreign Other” (125). There are many collaborations taking place in these cultural encounters: the collaboration of the dancers and the viewer (Byron), the collaboration of the dancers and the translator, and the collaboration of Byron and the translator. As Byron includes these songs in the Appendix, he showcases cultural encounters and negotiations between a British writer and an oral Albanian tradition in as authentic an approach as possible. Moreover, Byron tells his reader that “the Arnaout is not a written language; the words of this song, therefore, as well as the one
which follows, are spelt according to their pronunciation” (SP 135), which suggests that his translation is, in fact, an approximation of the Arnaout original, rather than an exact translation, thus avoiding any distortion of the new culture he encounters: “by highlighting the poem’s status as a synthesis of different cultural elements, Byron places it on the boundary between Britain and abroad. As a result, the poem comes to embody the cosmopolitanism and mobility espoused by its author” (Watson 124).

Most importantly, there are affinities between these different cultural elements, as Byron includes the songs not only to display the richness and beauty of Albanian folk culture, but also to stress that many of the perceivably foreign elements in the song are also seen in British culture. For example, he explains that words such as “Bo Bo Bo” are “merely a kind of chorus without meaning like some in our own and all other languages” (SP 134). Even if such elements of a culture may appear as nonsensical at first, Byron points out that if we contextualize them, we come to realize that they actually do possess meaning and significance. Ultimately, the paratext in CHP II acts as a site in which Byron surreptitiously challenges and renegotiates his readers’ cultural values and expectations, as he presents an anti-imperialist text in that he refuses to allow the traveller or reader to occupy a superior position toward the foreign culture he or she encounters. To use Chatsiou’s words, as Byron uses the paratext, he allows it to “break its previous bonds of servitude to the dominant poetic text and turns into a rebellious slave that aggressively interrupts and subverts the poem” (643). I suggest that this rebellious slave disrupts the reading process of the poem in order to question the organization of knowledge about the Other, and that this paratextual disruption continues in Byron’s next popular publication about the East, the first of tale of The Oriental Tales, The Giaour. In this section, I suggested that the Appendix in CHP Canto II challenges the reader’s preconceived notions about Greek and
Albanian cultures and traditions. Moreover, the tone of these supplementary notes is at times at odds with the main text thus altering our reading and interpretation. In the next section, I will illustrate how the footnote in *The Giaour* also brings out an interesting hermeneutic to the poem. While in *CHP* we encountered the complexities and richness of cultures and the various effects of cultural translations, in *The Giaour* East meets West through a feud between a Grecian and a Muslim. In the following section, I argue that like the paratext in *CHP*, Byron uses the footnote to question cultural dichotomies, to complicate the notion of otherness, and to deconstruct systems of organizing knowledge about the Other.

**V. The Giaour and the Limits of Knowledge**

In his *Plague of Fantasies*, Slavoj Žižek exposes the ‘emptiness’ of what a society forms as good or as evil, and as such, he considers these categories as mere Symbolic constructions. In the same vein, I use Žižek’s term to identify the construct that is at play in *The Giaour*. The Symbolic system that is manifested through the two main characters, Hassan and the Giaour, and the opposing forces they “seem” to represent are East/West, Muslim/Christian, evil/good. In one of the beginnings of the fragment, the dichotomy is set up through the following events: “Black Hassan,” guard of a Turkish harem, discovers that Leila, his Circassian wife and favourite harem slave, is having an affair with a renegade Venetian, the Giaour (the word means foreigner or infidel). In accordance with the socially approved punishment for adultery, Leila is tied in a sack and thrown into the sea. Vowing revenge for his lover’s death, the Giaour joins a band of

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53 Žižek is discussing Kant’s formulation of radical evil here and he deconstructs Kant’s notions of good and evil via Lacan. Zizek argues: “the Kantian Law is thus not merely an empty form applied to a random empirical content in order to ascertain if this content meets the criteria of an ethical adequacy – rather, the empty form of law functions as the promise of an absent content (never) to come” (226). See Appendix III in *The Plague of Fantasy* pages 213-242.
Albanian brigands, chases downs his enemy, Hassan, and eventually kills him. Typical of the Byronic hero is his narcissistic heroism, that is to say the world-weariness that is symptomatic of his character always gathers itself into a reluctant form of heroism in moments of crisis. The hero of this tale is the lonely and tormented wanderer, only named as the Giaour, who apparently had a justifiable reason to kill Hassan:

I lov’d her, friar! nay, adored –

But these are words that all can use –
I prov’d it more in deed than word –
There’s blood upon that dinted sword –
A stain its steel can never lose:
T’was shed for her, who died for me,

It warmed the heart of one abhorred. (SP 1029-1035)

Yet that key word ‘hero’ is uttered once and only once at the very beginning of the poem, as the narrator mentions the tomb of Themistocles and wonders “when shall a hero live again?” (SP 6), making us question and reflect upon the torturing ambivalence toward the Giaour’s own heroism. Even at the most climactic point of the poem where the enemies face one another at the battle scene, and in which good will overpower evil as one would assume, the hero is not so apparent:

With sabre shiver’d to the hilt,
Yet dripping with the blood he spilt;
Yet strain’d within the sever’d hand
Which quivers round that faithless brand;
His turban far behind him roll’d,
And cleft in twain its firmest fold;
His flowing robe by falchion torn,
And crimson as those clouds of morn
That, streak’d with dusky red, pretend
The day shall have a stormy end;
A stain on every bush that bore,
A fragment of his palampore. (SP 655-666)

While this scene hinges on a moment of world-historical victory of West over East, with the two major characters standing in as Hegelian “national geniuses” or collective subjects typifying the historical conflict between Greece and Turkey, it also enacts in the seeming fusion of opposed forces, the establishment of binary relations of hegemony that emerge from the visual and the textual field. What is most richly telling, textually, is that upon a first reading, the poem is quite ambiguous about who is striking whom, who is winning and who is losing the battle; the pronouns lack a subject for most of this passage. It is only at the end that we find out that “His breast with wounds unnumber’d riven/His back to earth his face to heaven, Fall’n Hassan lies” (SP 667-669; my emphasis). The reader is denied the actual moment of death. When the narrator explains that “his turban far behind him roll’d”, one automatically wonders whose turban he is talking about; there follow another eight lines of description before the narrator at last names the dead man: “Fall’n Hassan lies.” Until then, the reader does not know which of the two combatants has been slain.

Visually (see Figure I), this scene has fascinated one of the most popular Orientalist French painters, Eugène Delacroix, who is best known for his innumerable paintings and drawings of scenes based on the life of the people of North Africa, and for his depictions of some of the scenes in Byron’s work (eg. the capture of the King in Sardanapalus). His painting of this
crucial scene in the poem (repeated in various versions) aptly limns the blending of the two characters into one another. For instance, the flying dagger that appears between the two men is noteworthy for, at first glance, it is difficult to see whose hand is striking. Perhaps the man with a turban (mostly likely one of Hassan’s men) foreshadows the fate of Hassan himself, but the central focus is on the two antagonists; they have eyes for each other, just as they do in the poem. The horsemen are put into a finely tuned relationship: each is at one with his horse, and the edges of the horses blend together, they fold in upon each other, collapsing into a single space and “condensing the energies of encounter in the pressures of the final moment” (Garber 96).

Delacroix’s passionate brushstrokes and his use of brilliant colour technique express the tension between the two combatants and the confusion one feels when reading the scene. Something is to be said about the darkness of Hassan’s appearance and the Giaour’s dark horse, in opposition to the whiteness of the Giaour’s dress and the whiteness of Hassan’s horse creating a chiasmus, which emphasizes not only the blurring but the curious meeting moment of the two cultural representatives. The Giaour and the Pasha are alone with each other; they share a single form in a lethal coupling. This is unification through violence. Textually, this unification continues, for after the slaying of Hassan, the Venetian gradually takes on the physical characteristics of the Turk himself, as is pointed out by the two narrators (the Muslim fisherman and Monk): “Once young and pale” (SP 194) with “sallow front” (SP 194), the Giaour, becomes instantly “dark as [him] who bled below” (SP 674). Moreover, the fisherman can recognize him by his “dark spirit” (SP 796), and the monk later on refers to his “dark and unearthly…scowl” (SP 832). However, the poem’s Symbolic system is further deconstructed and the blurring continues with the footnotes, particularly through their ironic tone.
“It were to be wished” grumbled Thomas Denman in the *Monthly Review* “that the noble author had omitted all the notes…except those which are absolutely necessary to render the text intelligible; since they are in a style of sprightliness which ill accords with the narrative” (Reiman 207). Yet, the ‘sprightliness’ of the notes is the least one can say to describe them. These notes are witty, inappropriately humorous and often manipulative. To give a few examples, in one of the leading passages, which prepares the reader for the battle between the two main characters, Hassan and the Giaour, we read the following:

Stern Hassan only from his horse

Disdains to light, and keeps his course,

Till fiery flashes in the van

Proclaim too sure the robber-clan

Have well secured the only way

Could now avail the promised prey;

Then curl’d his very beard with ire,

And glared his beard* with fiercer fire.

(*SP 587-594; my emphasis with asterisk to indicate footnote)

The reference to Hassan’s beard is explained in the following footnote:

A phenomenon not uncommon with angry Mussulman. In 1809, the Capitan Pasha’s whiskers at a diplomatic audience were no less lively with indignation than a tiger cat’s, to the horror of all the dragomans; the portentous mustachios twisted, they stood erect of their own accord, and were expected every moment to change their colour, but at last were condescended to subside, which probably saved more heads than they contained hairs. (*SP 186)
Byron gives an historical date in his discussion on whiskers here, which somehow seems to legitimize his comment, and yet the comical content of the footnote contrasts the passage to which it is referring, thus undermining the seriousness and climactic moment of the battle between Hassan and the Giaour. Perhaps this is disruptive for the reader – if the reader manages at all to look to the bottom of the page and notice this ‘ill-timed(?)’ remark, or perhaps this comic moment makes us question the seriousness of this antagonism and the legitimate ‘motives’ of the battle. Furthermore, if this poem is about the battle of religions, as categorizing terms such as “infidel,” “Mussulmen,” “Christian crest” and “Othman’s son” throughout the poem, then that distinct divide is also ridiculed and, in fact, obscured through the voice of another footnote. As the fisherman describes Leila’s fate in the afterlife, he says:

\begin{quote}
Yea, \emph{Soul}, and should our prophet say \\
That form was nought but breathing clay \\
By Alla! I would answer nay; \\
Though on Al-Sirat’s* arch I stood, \\
Which totters o’er the fiery flood, \\
With Paradise within my view, \\
And all his Houris beckoning through. (\textit{SP} 480-486)
\end{quote}

The narrator in the footnote explains:

\begin{quote}
Al-Sirat, the bridge of breadth, narrower than the thread of a famished spider, and sharper than the edge of a sword, over which the Mussulmans must \textit{skate} into Paradise, to which it is the only entrance; but this is not the worst, the river beneath being hell itself, into which, as may be expected, the unskillful and tender of foot contrive to tumble with a
‘facilis descensus Averni,’ not very pleasing in prospect to the next passenger. There is a shorter cut downwards for the Jews and Christians. (*SP* 182)

The narrator makes a reference here to one of the most important chapters in the Quran, Al-Fatiha (the beginning), and quite rightly explains its significance to Islam and Muslims. However, not only does the description attempt to make fun of the dramatic Quranic description of this bridge, what lies beneath it, and the fate of the believers who stay on the right path in their life on earth and non-believers who have strayed from it, but he also brings the Christians and Jews in on the joke. While the Muslims go through this fearful experience before reaching the gates of Paradise, the rest have apparently an easy way of arriving at this destination – although he never really tells us the reason. More jabs at the Islamic philosophy of the afterlife appear three hundred lines later, as the narrator’s comments seem to illustrate an admiration for the warlike qualities taught by Mohammedanism and the courage instilled into warriors before going off to battle (not to mention the beautiful houris who will welcome them in paradise). However, this becomes an object of some scepticism as the narrator, in yet another idiosyncratic note, describes Islam’s belief about the afterlife as follows:

Monker and Nekir are the inquisitors of the dead, before whom the corpse undergoes a slight noviciate and preparatory training for damnation. If the answers are none of the clearest, he is hauled up with scythe and thumped down with a red hot mace till properly seasoned, with a variety of subsidiary probations. The office of these angels is no sinecure; there are but two, and the number of orthodox deceased being in a small proportion to the remainder, their hands are always full. (*SP* 244)

But, just as the Muslim afterlife is sarcastically criticized, absolution in Christianity is completely problematized, as the Giaour does not necessarily confess to relieve himself of his
past sins – “but never at our vesper prayer/Nor e’er before confession chair/Kneel he” (SP 802-803); rather he confesses only to relieve his psyche. Even when the Monk gives a sermon after the Giaour finishes his monologue, the narrator omits it entirely because “it seems to have had so little effect upon the patient, that it could have no hopes from the reader. It may be sufficient to say that it was of a customary length (as may be perceived from the interruptions and uneasiness of the patient), and was delivered in the usual tone of all orthodox preachers” (SP 204).

Ultimately, Hassan’s Islam and the Giaour’s Christianity are no different.

**VI. Battles and Feuds**

The battle of the gazes constructed in the poem also breaks the power dichotomy of the Self and the Other. Indeed, there are many battles: the melancholy that haunts the poem is particularly manifested through the ‘battle of the gazes,’ as one reads of cursed looks, relentless gazes, gaze of wonders and haunting glances between the characters. The Giaour’s linkage with the evil eye is established at the very beginning of the poem when one of the narrators, the fisherman, declares, “I know thee not, I loathe thy race,/But in thy lineament I trace/What time shall strengthen, and efface” (SP 191-193); what the fisherman automatically associates with the Giaour’s race is “[his evil] eye” (SP 195), which dooms the Giaour to be slain and shunned by the “Ottoman’s son” (SP 199). This is repeated once again in the poem, as Hassan spots the Giaour in the chase and exclaims,

Tis he – ‘tis he – I know him now,
I know him by the pallid brow;
I know him by the evil eye
That aids his envious treachery;
I know him by his jet-black barb,

Though now arrayed in Arnaut garb,

Apostate from his own vile faith,

It shall not save him from the death; (SP 610-619)

In a footnote to this passage, Byron explains that the evil eye is but a “common superstition in the Levant” (SP 186), but then adds “the imaginary effects are yet very singular to those who conceive themselves affected.” What does this imply, exactly? The Giaour’s evil eye functions as a threatening trope, and constructs a power struggle between the gazer and the gazed upon. In his article, “I know thee not, I loath they race, Romantic Orientalism in the eye of the Other,” Eric Meyer suggests that “this scene serves as a mise en abyme of Byron’s text to show the power of the colonialist’s gaze, which is covertly backed by the direct military force it focuses on and reflects” (665) and, very soon after this scene, the Giaour, perhaps quite predictably, wins the battle against Hassan. Yet, this is not such an easily won battle after all, as Hassan’s retaliation is quite a tormenting one, and while the narrative refers incessantly to the Giaour’s gaze of evil, fear and terror, there is, nevertheless, a crucial episode that breaks and reverses that power dynamic:

His breast with wounds unnumber’d riven,

His back to earth, his face to heaven,

Fall’n Hassan lies – his unclos’d eye

Yet lowering on his enemy,

As if the hour that seal’d his fate,

Surviving left his quenchless hate;

And o’er him bends that foe with brow
As dark as his that bled below. (*SP* 667-676)

If Hassan strikes back at all in this poem, he does so by the unclosed eye that fiercely pierces and penetrates through the Giaour. True, the Giaour’s killing of Hassan does not result in any feeling of guilt at all, but Hassan’s dying image remains in the Giaour’s memory to the end: “much in his visions mutters he” (*SP* 822), “of sabers clashing – foreman flying, / Wrongs aveng’d – and Moslem dying” (*SP* 824); as Meyer suggests, “in this scene of dramatic cultural (role) reversal, the implicit distance that separates the colonizer from the colonized, the imperial from the colonized subject seems to collapse” (*SP* 664). If the “gaze” serves as the medium of exchange for the transaction of opposed powers and control, then the text clearly deconstructs such a notion (and again, this gaze is deconstructed in Delacroix); thus, the dichotomies of subject and object, viewer and viewed – or more specifically, curser and cursed – become interchangeable. The Oriental despot with his paralyzing gaze, and the Napoleonic conqueror with his panoptic world-historical vision, merely reflect, in inverse mirrors, a singular specular structure from which the mutually mesmerized protagonists find it impossible to extricate themselves (Meyer 675). Besides the haunting metamorphosis of our hero, his language changes too: “Yet did he but what I had done/ Had she been false to more than one” (*SP* 1063); the Giaour’s code and Hassan’s code do not exactly reduce to the same thing, and yet these lines suggest Hassan’s code of conduct can be re-written in the Giaour’s language. Codes are incessantly broken in this poem, language changes from fragment to fragment. Furthermore, the way in which the poem is told is perhaps most psychologically frustrating, because the events come to us repeatedly out of a multiplicity of voices, each of which necessarily colours what we see, and none of which can do more than contribute its own reading of the scene and what it means to it. This poem is a series of beginnings, disjointed, scattered, published and republished, explicated, annotated and
still surrounded by more fragments; its radical dislocation and killings, dismemberment, vampirism, and numerous scenes create a work that needs to be assembled and reassembled, much like selves are presented, misrepresented or underrepresented. Text-making and self-making have essentially the same texture, and together they contribute to the poem this sense of unfixedness that is so essential to its character. Moreover, this unfixedness affects the reader’s experience as well. Emily Jackson offers an interesting insight on the disruptions these footnotes produce and considers them as disrupting the reader, literally. That is to say, the footnote actually forces the reader into a bifurcated reading, as he or she “must shift the gaze to the bottom of the page and then return to the texts” (18).

While it appears that Byron grounded many of his Oriental Tales with notes attesting to the veracity of his imagery, thereby setting out the rationale for his plot devices, his notes can also misguide and mislead, or even manipulate the reader’s pre-established ideas. In the very first note, in the form of an epigraph and titled Advertisement, the narrator’s voice says the following: “the tale which these disjointed fragments present is founded upon circumstances now less common in the East than formerly” (SP 167). In the middle of explaining the poem, the voice abruptly changes the trajectory, focus and even purpose: “the story, when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave, who was thrown, in the Mussulman manner, into the sea for her infidelity, and avenged by a young Venetian, her lover.” Then again in the middle of the sentence, the narrator changes course and we get historical and political information:

[A]t the time the Seven Islands were possessed by the Republic of Venice, and soon after the Arnauts were beaten back from the Morea, which they had ravaged for some time.

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54 There has been much critical discussion about the number of narrators in “The Giaour.” The poem has four voices: a bardic narrator, a Muslim fisherman, a monk of the order of St. Basil and the Giaour himself. Which of them speaks when has been the subject of considerable study. I simply indicate which of them I believe speaks the lines.
subsequent to the Russian invasion. The desertion of the Mainotes, on being refused the plunder of Misitra, 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. (SP 167)

As we plunge into the introduction to this myrrh-scented Oriental tragedy, we find that we have been thrust into a political tale of considerable and elaborate confusion, full of Mainotes and Arnauts, Misitras and Moreas, and the complex ins and outs of recent Greek history. Finishing the poem, we cannot tell what we are about to move on to: a story of love lost and revenge, a political screed, a military history or some combination of all three? Who is this story really about? In the poem’s final couplet, the narrator concludes that “this broken tale was all we knew/Of her he lov’d, or him he slew” (SP 1333-1334). But this is not necessarily so, because – contrary to what one might expect from the title – the poem and even the monologue do not tell us anything directly about the Giaour when he concludes, “such is my name, and such my tale” (SP 1319), but rather we know much about Hassan and Leila. Initially, much can be concluded about the self-consuming and brooding Giaour, as he is represented through the infamous suicidal scorpion metaphor:

[his] Mind, that broods o’er guilty woes,

[that] is like the Scorpion girt by fire,

In circle narrowing as it glows,

The flames around their captive close,

Till inly search’d by thousand throes,

And maddening in her ire,

One sad and sole relief she knows,
The sting she nourish’d for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Give but one pang, and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain;
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like Scorpion girt by fire*;
So writhes the mind Remorse hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoom’d for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death! (SP 422-438)

The self-extinguishing scorpion, trapped from all sides, foreshadows the fate of the Giaour himself, as he is cursed to live his last days with haunting memories: “much in his visions mutters he/Of maidens whelm’d beneath the sea;/Of sabers clashing, foemen flying,/Wrong avenged and Moslem dying” (SP 822-825), despair, “I’d rather be the thing that crawls/Most noxious o’er a dungeon’s walls/Then pass my unvarying days,/Condemn’d to meditate and gaze” (SP 990-993) and depression, “my memory now is but the tomb/Of joys long dead; my hope, their doom” (SP 1000-1001). By the end of the tale, he sits alone, isolated from the monks in that monastery, and “broods within his cell alone” (SP 806) and, ultimately, expires alone.

As the Giaour turns into his deep self, he finds that he is locked into a structure that permits no outlet for himself. The Giaour’s “slow” and “aching time” in his retreat brings him nothing but claustrophobia and suffocation, as he reflects on “a life of pain, an age of crime” (SP 263-264); like Manfred, he cannot get out of that structure till death. His recognition, “so did he but what I had done” shows an understanding not only of what one or the other is, but what both
are when they come together, and he spends the rest of his life brooding over that recognition. As he delves into his otherness, he encounters Hassan, whom he can never get rid of, carrying him around at all levels of consciousness until his own demise. However, one cannot ignore the footnote that appears underneath the scorpion metaphor:

Alluding to the dubious suicide of the scorpion, so placed for experiment by gentle philosophers. Some maintain that the position of the sting, when turned towards the head, is merely a convulsive movement; but others have actually brought in the verdict ‘Fel de se.’ The scorpions are surely interested in a speedy decision of the question; as, if once fairly established as insect Catos, they will probably be allowed to live as long as they think proper, without being martyred for the sake of an hypothesis. (SP 181)

The metaphor of the suicidal scorpion in the poetic text and in the footnote associates self-harm with the Byronic hero; yet, the ironic tone of the footnote undermines the seriousness of such an act. The image of the scorpion trapped between fire, darkness and despair is indicative of the Giaour’s present suffering and brooding thoughts. However, the footnote interrupts the sympathetic image that the poetic text is building up, as it sarcastically explains the scientific experiment of the suicidal scorpion. In so doing, the heroic act of suicide is reduced to insect proportions as the footnote mocks and parodies the Giaour’s state of mind: “the philosophers, the characters of the footnote’s stage, look like caricatures when compared with the Giaour, yet endow his agony in their own turn with a sense of insignificance and a sort of comical lightness” (Chatsiou 648). The footnote is also mocking the question of suicide at large, as the speaker alludes to the “gentle philosophers” conducting the experience (and perhaps alluding to Locke, Hume and Rousseau, all of whom have written on the topic), uses law terms such as “Fel de se” (Latin for suicide), and mentions Cato (Cato Uticensis, an ancient Roman hero who chose death
over the tyranny of Julius Caesar) in juxtaposition to the caricature of the trapped and desperate scorpion. In her article “Romantic Suicide, Contagion and Rousseau’s Julie,” Michelle Faubert explains that the topic of suicide during the eighteenth century was “considered to be a dangerous foray” (40), and many feared that if the topic was indeed discussed, this would influence the reader to commit the act (such as the suicide-mania ignited by Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werthers). The suicide argument continues into Byron’s time, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, James Hogg and Mary Shelley write about the topic (Faubert 41). Yet, despite the social prohibition about suicide during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the footnote not only openly discusses the topic in a Swiftian way, thus revealing Byron’s own thoughts about the ‘much heated’ debate, but it also uses it as a comic interlude to undermine the narrative of the poem.

Even as the Giaour makes his touchy confession, another footnote (the longest in the entire text) interrupts the Giaour’s monologue with what seems to be endless chatter about a Dervish with whom the narrator had had the opportunity to meet in his travels through Albania and Greece. The narrator here is enticed into a judicious digression on the Dervish’s superstition about hearing, the various conversations between them and so on; the nonchalant tone is completely detached from the Giaour’s mournful tone in the body of the poem. This effect is one of extreme bathos created by intervention of this random travel account when our sensibilities toward the Giaour are perhaps most aroused. It becomes apparent, then, that at yet another crucial and climactic moment of the poem, the footnote is not merely a digression, but, and I borrow Cosgrove’s term here, rather a “structural contestation” (Cosgrove 147) in which another voice actually interferes with the narrative, and competes for its autonomy and independent authoritative existence.
Earlier in this chapter, I proposed that the Symbolic system at play is mainly manifested through Hassan and the Giaour. In pushing this idea further, I suggest that the ‘emptiness’ of this system is not only staged and deconstructed by the blurring of the two characters, but also by the way the footnote explains the dichotomy that is set up throughout the text. Instead of providing closure on the poem’s problems (it does do this, only to the extent of giving definitions and translations), these footnotes open up a line of new discourse and raise many other questions about the poem. Yet, if the footnotes participate in this organization of knowledge about the Orient, if they attempt to supposedly present a studied and grasped idea of the Orient, then why is the poem still a series of fragments? Indeed the form of The Giaour, unlike the rest of the poems in the Oriental Tales, is perhaps one of the most important elements that contribute to the unsettling process of both reading the poem and to any possible conclusions a reader might draw about the narrative’s plot and resolution. As a fragment, the poem allows for an endless range of interpretive practices, none of which will be cancelled by a final reading, “it offers no final or complex text to refer to for an authoritative reading and thus the reader is presented with a deliciously open set of interpretations limited only by the individual’s imagination” (McGann Fiery Dust 91). The footnote plays an interesting role here, as it inserts pieces of information missed in the gap between fragments, and while the information may seem insignificant, it in fact complicates our interpretation of the poem.

For Derrida, “annotations or notes say something; they “state” or add something, they answer a potential question by the reader” (197). At the very beginning of the poem, which deals with the death of Greece and her heroes, we read the following: “So fair, so calm, so softly seal’d/The first – last look – by death revealed*/Such is the aspect of this shore/Tis Greece, but living Greece no more” (SP 88-91). The footnote says:
I trust few of my readers have ever had an opportunity of witnessing what is here attempted in description, but those who have will probably retain a painful remembrance of that singular beauty which pervades, with few exceptions, the features of the dead, a few hours...after ‘the spirit is not there.’ It is to be remarked in cases of violent death by gun-shot wounds, the expression is always that of languor, whatever the natural energy of the sufferer’s character: *but in death from a stab the countenance preserves its traits of feeling or ferocity, and the mind its bias, to the last*” (SP 170; my emphasis).

A thousand lines later, we read of Hassan’s death:

I gazed upon him where he lay,  
And watched his spirit ebb away [...]  
I search’d but vainly search’d to find,  
The workings of a wounded mind;  
Each feature of the sullen corse  
Betrayed his rage, but no remorse. (SP 1085-92)

As the note tells us, the Giaour could not see remorse in Hassan’s features; of course they would reveal only rage as he meets his “death from a stab,” so the note is not inappropriate at all nor is it a mere digression. It has a recognizable purpose, which is to reveal what the text does not. Moreover, as one of the fragments describes Hassan’s tombstone, the note informs the reader that: “in the mountains, you frequently pass similar mementos; and on enquiry you are informed that they record some victim of rebellion, plunder, or revenge” (SP 190). Up until this moment, the text made it clear that Hassan was the villain of the piece, but upon close examination of the footnote’s language and mention of what seems to be at first slight detail, we realize that perhaps Hassan has been a victim of all three. There is then a way of “scattering allusive fragments of
knowledge throughout his text, proleptic seeds that sprout understanding only hundreds of lines later” (Jackson 66); the narrator constantly makes insertions of a seemingly simple detail only to have its complexity revealed and its meaning challenged many lines later. As such, the reader is encouraged to believe that he or she must pay scrupulous attention even to the seemingly unimportant for, at any moment, it may be revealed as vital. Indeed, the fragmentary form of the poem opens up, on the one hand, “gaps” or “blanks” that stimulate the reader’s curiosity, desire for knowledge and active response (Mole 90); on the other hand, it creates yet another battle between author, text and reader, for the writer alone cannot claim authority over the pages as the reader also has rights over the text, and the footnote in the poem becomes a text unto itself, “rather detached, relatively decontextualized [and] capable of creating its own context, such that one can read it quickly and directly for itself” (Derrida 194).

One may argue that in critical texts, footnotes address no one in particular and if they are directed anywhere, they are directed toward the text – they do not necessarily invite the reader to participate in the critical act. On the other hand, footnotes in fiction take on a different role as Shari Benstock suggests – they belong to a “fictional universe, stem from a creative act rather than a critical one” (206). Footnotes offer different voices. Generally, the footnote has a textual voice of its own and embodies several distinct features like the superscript numeral, the location at the bottom of the page, the format, the abbreviated syntax, the reduced type size – these are visual signs that make them recognizable as footnotes. But more than that, this textual voice tells us that it differs from the inscribed voice in other portions of the text itself and that “even though it identifies the speaker, it creates for him a new context and something of a new voice” (Benstock 209). As such, the footnotes in The Giaour allowed the author to step outside the
critical discourse and comment on it from a perspective that may be different in form, and in a
voice different from that of the established one in the text.

In *Narrative Discourse* Gérard Genette suggests that the narrator maintains a relationship
not only with the narratee, but also with himself, and supposes an “extradiegetic narrator,”
separate from both the narrator in the fiction and the author. This narrator aims at an
“extradiegetic narratee, who emerges with the implied reader and with whom each real reader

can identify” (260). In the combat between reader, writer and text, the notes, which are
essentially part of the outside of the text they enhance, not only allow the writer to speak in at
least two voices at once, but they also, as Labbe remarks, “force an author into conflict with him
- or herself, with what is spoken in the main body and what shadows or hovers outside it” (79).
In a way then, Byron’s notes prefigure Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadology, allowing him to
wander away from, around and deeper into the topics chosen and more visibly dealt with in the
poem-proper. Christopher Miller writes that “Deleuze and Guattari’s footnotes are […] the
footprints in the sand of their nomad intellectual wanderings, enabling readers to follow their
steps” (9). In the same vein, Byron’s notes allow the reader to attend to his display of
knowledge and to wander, themselves, from poem to note to poem, constructing our own (and
his) nomadic path. The contract between writer and reader may well be open for renegotiation.

Most importantly, the nonchalant comedy in the footnotes gives the reader room to
wonder where the real Byron is. Does he endorse the high rhetorical enthusiasm of the poem or
the irony of the note? As Mole rightly remarks, “Byron seems to be everywhere and nowhere in
the poem, always sticking his head over the parapet to make a facetious comment about
Muslims, or scorpions, but never revealing himself for long” (93). He constructs a multiplied

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55 See his “Postidentitarian Predicament in the Footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus*: Nomadology, Anthropology, and Authority.”
sense of self in these poems; he is aware of the tone, the various voices, self-construction, self-placement and even self-promotion. For instance, at one point, one reads a footnote in *The Corsair* that questions the existence of certain lines in the poem; the voice in the footnote says, “the opening lines as far as section II have, perhaps, little business here, and were annexed to an unpublished (though printed) poem; but they were written on the spot in the Spring of 1811, and – I scarce know why – the reader must excuse their appearance here if he can” (*SP* 287). In the *Siege of Corinth*, Byron is very adamant about his innovation, “I must here acknowledge a close, though unintentional, resemblance in these twelve lines to a passage in an unpublished poem of Mr Coleridge, called ‘Christabel’ […] the MS. of that production I never saw till very recently, by the kindness of Mr Coleridge himself, who, I hope, is convinced that I have not been a plagiarist” (*SP* 375). Therefore, Byron splits himself between text and footnote, inviting his readers to look closely for the real ‘him’ (Mole 95). But even that is tricky, for just as *The Giaour* demonstrates ways in which knowledge may be influenced, altered and, ultimately, undermined, we are also made aware of the malleability of the Giaour’s character.

In this chapter, I have suggested that Byron uses the paratext systematically to carve out a skeptical epistemology with overarching ontological, as well as political implications, which are intrinsic to both the structure and the effect of his early writings about the East. The organization of knowledge I outlined in previous chapters, is, in fact, turned upside down through the use of the notes and, by the end of these texts, we arrive at nothing with Byron save for the vicissitude of knowledge and the inevitability of uncertainty. The footnotes produce epistemological destabilization; they plant doubt in everything, even doubt itself (*DJ* 9 17). Furthermore, Byron’s first-hand experience of the East is crucial to our understanding of his cross-cultural encounters. By using the marginal text, Byron brings the marginalized he has encountered into the centre of
the text, thereby making the reader aware of the versatile nature and fluidity of identity. Indeed, empirical observation is fundamental to Byron’s epistemic project.

As I have suggested in the previous chapters, the nineteenth century was a period during which many political and cultural borders across the continents were being negotiated and redrawn, and more specifically the borders between Europe and the Muslim world. As Byron experiences that part of the world, his first-hand encounters allow him to offer his reader an alternative perspective on other cultures close to and far from home. His writings on the Orient indicate that he understands humankind via first-hand observations and rational comparisons devoid of any biases or prejudices, and much like Herder’s and Goethe’s organizations of knowledge about the Other, Byron’s paradigm refuses to set forth fixed boundaries and identities. Instead, like the Herderian philosophy of world history, and Goethe’s Divan, Byron’s Orientalist texts and paratexts celebrate the heterogeneities and fluidities of nations, cultures and peoples, while at the same time questioning and contesting Western culture’s organization and systematization of the Other.

For Byron, travel is crucial to his experience, as it becomes an “open-ended process” (Watson 136) where observation and conversation take place (at the bottom of the page or at the end of the text itself). As Byron wanders in and out of various cultural places and spaces, the literary depictions of his adventures become “set pieces, poetic fragments to be excerpted, quoted, [and] imitated” (Esterhammer 35). But more than that, texts such as CHP become travel guides for many nineteenth-century tourists, as they literally follow Byron’s footsteps to exotic and untrodden locales such as Ottoman-ruled Greece and Albania, and where they encounter the strange and the foreign such as the infamous Ali Pasha of Yannina.
Figure 1. *Le Combat du Giaour et du Pacha* (1835)
Figure II. Letter written by Sotirakis Notaras, reproduced in facsimile in the first edition of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage Canto I and II.
In Timothy Webb: “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage: Annotating the Second Canto”
CHAPTER FOUR

Un-organizing Knowledge: Ali Pasha’s Manipulation of Orientalism

Funny, that is how I think of Ali.
On the one hand, the power and the gory
details, pigeon-blood rages and retali-
ations, gouts of fate that crust his story;
And on the other, charm, the whimsically
Meek brow, its motives all ab ulteriori,
The flower-blue gaze twining to choke proportion,
Having made one more pretty face’s fortune.
(James Merrill, “Yannina” 28)

I look around for soap. My hands are sticky with
honey from hand-held pastries, as sticky as
the deep glass tanks in which captive eels
swim their final laps in the open air café
in the public park next to the lake where Ali Pasha,
the Butcher of Ioannina, in 1787, tied Kyra
Phroseni up in a bundle and carried her into his
caique. They say he attached a cannonball to
the rope round her waist, rowed himself and his
ladylove into the center of the lake, gave her
a sticky, mournful kiss and shoved her overboard.
She was among his favourite wives.
(Kathryn Starbuck, “Ali Pasha, the Butcher of Ioannina” 7-18)

The European traveller’s encounter with the Ottoman Vizier, Ali Pasha, took place
because of two factors: the first being necessity and the second being sheer curiosity. During the
1820s, travel to Greece, Turkey and the Levant was the thing to do for many European travellers,
young and old, student, archeologist or diplomat, and a meeting with Ali was more often than not
inevitable. Out of necessity, travellers met with officials of these foreign lands in order to obtain
a ferman (a royal mandate or decree), which would enable them to travel freely within a certain
area, and entitle them to acquire post horses and free lodging. On occasion, if the Vizier liked
you, you would be ordered a guard to attend to you or even obtain a pass to ride on one of his
navy boats as Lord Byron and his travel companion Hobhouse once did. Out of curiosity,
travellers desired to see for themselves what all the fuss was about surrounding this ruler. On his
way back to Denmark following a nearly six-year tour around Europe and the Balkans, Danish archaeologist Peter Oluf Brønsted admits that “the first approach to this extraordinary man, whom I had so long desired to behold, was very interesting for me” (77) and, indeed, Ali Pasha never seemed to disappoint, for he knew how to impress his guests from far and near, always giving them something to report home.

In this chapter, I examine the figure of Ali Pasha of Yannina through the lens of Romantic travellers and dramatists. I argue that Ali Pasha’s powerful political, larger-than-life persona challenges the ways in which his Western audience has constantly tried to contain, organize and domesticate him. I also problematize Said’s notion of the representation of the Orient, as I suggest that Ali Pasha responds to popular depictions and representations of him through the manipulation and mimicry of his image. On the one hand, I am concerned with the West’s assessment of Ali Pasha through travelogues, and on the other hand through theatrical depictions of him on the stage. I bring attention to travel accounts and dramas of the 1820s and read these repeated episodes as cultural texts that ultimately reflect more the anxieties and fears of Romantic culture in the wave of Philhellenism than the Despotic figure as portrayed by Ali. Where Byron and Goethe can be read against Said’s concept of Orientalism, I suggest that the questions of Orientalism in Ali Pasha are more a matter of mimicry, to borrow Homi Bhabha’s term. Ali stages himself as the West sees him, thereby exposing the superficiality and arbitrariness of the manner in which he is defined.

When reading diplomatic and travel narratives of Ottoman Greece, I argue that we encounter two experiences of Ali Pasha and Greece – the diplomatic and the cultural – at odds with one another. On the one hand, European diplomatic knowledge of Greece was bound up with qualms about Ali’s political and economic strength, and his geographically strategic
position: “he is a remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties, very brave & so good a
general, they call him the Mahometan Bonaparte” (Byron BLJ 1: 228). On the other hand, the
cultural impulses of Philhellenism and Orientalism cast him as weak, depraved, pathetic and
even inconsequential. Despite the fact that many of these travellers were hospitably entertained
in the Pasha’s court, they nevertheless published wildly popular travel accounts, many of which
provided sensational portrayals of the cruel and sensuous Ali, and tragic depictions of an
enslaved and oppressed Greece. I argue that European travellers who visited his lands were
greatly invested in seeing him in the most alien terms possible. Ali had to be weak and
inconsequential, and he had to be other, and only in seeing him as such could Europeans fully
feel their imagined affinity with Greece; ultimately mocking the Pasha became a form of support
for the Philhellenic Wars and the Hellenic cause.

This chapter consists of three sections: First, I outline the historical and political events
that played a pivotal role in constructing and manipulating the image of the Pasha; I then
examine European travelogues that were being abundantly sold and circulated about him, and
highlight the inherent tension in the West’s diplomatic and cultural understanding of Ali Pasha.
By analyzing the common themes and images in Romantic Eastern travelogues, I consider these
cultural texts as sources of insight into the West’s systematic method of organizing knowledge
about Islam and the East, particularly in relation to Hellenic Greece. I then turn to the literary
representations of Ali on the European stage in the 1820s. Focusing on two Philhellenic dramas,
I examine the ways in which the Pasha has been represented, contained and domesticated. The
third part of the chapter shows how the Pasha strikes back as he understood the workings of
Western European Philhellenism and Orientalism, and manipulated them to his benefit.
I. Ali Pasha in European Travel Accounts

Before I discuss the travel narratives about Ali, I wish to include a brief biography of the Pasha in order situate him socio-politically in Europe during the early 1800s. Ali Pasha was born in Tepelenë, a small village in southern Albania, between 1740 and 1750, to a family of ‘well known brigands’ that eventually fought and robbed its way into Albanian aristocracy. After his father was assassinated, Ali was brought up by his mother Kamko. He spent much of the early part of his life as a robber chief attacking his rivals in Albania and Thessaly. Eventually, in 1785, at the age of about forty, he was rewarded by the Ottoman government for his military services and given the title of Pasha. After hard experiences on several Balkan battlefields, he was able to conquer Yannina in Epiros, Greece – a city rich with artisans and merchants, and an important meeting place for feudal rulers of the region. He was then appointed as quasi-independent governor of Yaninna from 1787 until his dismissal by the Ottoman Porte in 1820. At the peak of his power in 1812, he was the de facto ruler of an area with a population of one and a half million, which, combined with the neighbouring districts of his sons, covered almost the entirety of the southwestern Ottoman Balkans, what today is Albania and mainland Greece (see Figure I for territories under Ali’s control). Only Athens and the surrounding portions of Attica were free from his control. He was, by far, one of the most powerful men in an already powerful empire (see Figure II for territories under the Empire’s control up to 1800). Indeed, by 1517 the Ottoman Empire was invincible, encompassing the entire eastern Mediterranean. The Ottoman Turks not only conquered their fellow Muslims in the Middle East and Africa, thus unifying Islam, but they

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56 Historians debate the exact date of Ali’s birth. While most accounts record 1740 or 1741 as the birth date, others calculate it to be 1750. See Dennis N. Skiotis’ comprehensive article on the Pasha’s early stages of his political career “From Bandit to Pasha: First Steps in the Rise of the Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750-1784.”
57 The word Porte, a French word meaning “door,” is used to refer to the government of the Ottoman Empire. More specifically, Sublime Porte is a translation of Turkish Bâbîâli, “High Gate,” referring to the block of buildings in Constantinople that housed the state departments. The term usually refers to the real centre of government.
also continued to plunge into the heart of Europe. As early as the Renaissance, the empire had been an economic and military centre of power, posing a great threat to Western powers.\(^{58}\)

In the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ottoman control over the Balkans was purely nominal. Any real power had slipped out of the hands of the Sultan and the central administration at the Porte into the eager grasp of men of daring ambition in the provinces who carved out personal domains for themselves and their families. Regional governors, like Ali in Yannina and Mehmet Ali in Egypt, presented a great threat to Ottoman absolutism, and when Turkey’s power declined dramatically following Bonaparte’s campaigns, Ali took the opportunity to expand his authority as he continued to pursue his own ambitious goals, independent of the central authority in the Porte, conquering lands from France, seizing power from Albanian notables and taking over control from Ottoman officials. Moreover, of all the various and widespread territories of the Ottoman Empire, Albania had a particularly unique relationship with Western Europe. Perched on the westernmost borders of the empire, the lands of Albania, Epirus and Morea were geographically closer to France, Malta and Italy than they were to their central government in Istanbul. This gave Ali Pasha the necessary distance from Constantinople to establish his power. In *A Journey Through Albania*, John Cam Hobhouse observes the following:

> At present, his dominions extend (taking Ionnina for a centre) one hundred and twenty miles to the north, as far as the pashalik of Ocrida; to the northeast and east over

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\(^{58}\) Within a narrative of world history, the Ottoman Empire was not only a huge threat, but a military rival of the Crusaders. As Thomas Madden observes, “by the 15\(^{th}\) century, the Crusades were no longer errands of mercy for a distant people but desperate attempts of one of the last remnants of Christendom to survive. Europeans began to ponder the real possibility that Islam would finally achieve its aim of conquering the entire Christian world.” Whether the reason behind the Crusades was to repossess the Holy Land of Jerusalem or to unify a scattered community throughout Europe is something historians grapple with to this day; I merely wish to point out the tensions that had been present between the West and the Ottoman territories by the time many Europeans encountered Ali Pasha.
Thessaly, and touching the feet of Mount of Olympus; to the south-east the small district of Thebes, and part of that attached to the Negroponte, bound his territories; which, however, on this side, include the populous city of Lividia (Lebadea) and its district, and will soon, it is expected, comprise Attica, and afterwards, the above-mentioned country. To the south, he commands as far as the gulf of Lepanta, and the Morea belongs to his son.

Throughout the whole of the country so bounded, the imperial firman is but little respected; whilst a letter with the signature of Ali (of which, as a curiosity, I send you as a fac-simile), commands unlimited obedience. The vizier is now absolute lord, as a Greek in Ionnina told me, of fifty small provinces; and should his projects of aggrandizement succeed, the countries which ancienly composed the southern part of Illyricum, the kingdom of Epirus, part of Macedonia, the whole Thessalian territory, Euboea, and all the Grecian States, will be under the dominions of a barbarian who can neither write nor read. His tyranny is complete; although the form of subjection to the Porte is still preserved, and he furnishes his contingent of men to the Ottoman armies, and pays besides a certain part of his tribute to the Grand Signor. (109)

As Ali expanded his power over neighbouring territories, he also strengthened his ties with the British, approaching Russia with his political schemes, and even wanting to join with the Greek nationalists and members of the Philiki Hetairia, a political group that was preparing to rise against the Ottomans. As the principal defender of the Western portion of the Ottoman Empire during the Napoleonic Wars, he corresponded on equal terms with the crowned heads of Europe. Therefore, the European powers, France and England, found it advantageous to establish consulates in Yannina. For example, England had sent diplomats like Morier (1804-1805) and
Leake (1807-1810) to Yannina to strike a deal with Ali in case Istanbul lost its European lands and Ali would declare total independence and not side with the French. On the other side, the French were also secretly negotiating with Ali in the hopes of gaining his support against the Ottoman government. Therefore, Ali was quite comfortably positioned, as all sides needed him for their economic and territorial plans. However, Ali’s decline was precipitated by the policy of centralization undertaken by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) and the changes in international relations after the fall of Napoleon. In 1820, the Ottoman troops besieged Yannina and a warrant for Ali’s death was issued. Nevertheless, it took a siege of seventeen months to reduce Yannina into submission, and because most of the Ottoman forces in Europe were engaged with the siege, this ultimately contributed to the success of the Greek revolt and the establishment of the first independent successor state in the Balkans. In 1822, Ali was finally assassinated and his head delivered to the Porte.

II. Ali’s Balkanism

Ali’s Balkan background is worth commenting on, because it complicates a few issues with regards to how the West viewed and categorized him. As I suggest in the ensuing discussion, Ali provided a ready and easy target for blame for many of the European travellers who encountered him: linked as he was to the Ottoman regime and to the Muslim faith, he was described as the source of all contamination and degeneration of ancient Greece. However, the Pasha’s background is often encountered with ambivalence: Is he Ottoman? Is he Muslim? Why does he speak Greek and only words of Turkish? As the most immediate eastern neighbour to the nations of Europe, Ali was an appealing and a relatively accessible source of information on the Ottomans. His territories were entirely situated within the borders of the European continent, and
his subjects were predominantly Greek Orthodox – two factors that contributed to the general impression of his lands being somehow more familiar, less wholly Other, than those of other regions in the Ottoman Empire in which most of the citizens were either Turks or Arabs, and their religion predominantly Muslim. His lands were, in fact, perceived as simultaneously European and Oriental, Christian and Muslim – a complicating dualism that is also implied through the discourse of Balkanism. Tatiana Kuzmic explains that the Balkan peninsula – neither East nor West – and “its proximity to the Orient and its five-centuries long occupation by the Ottoman empire have placed it in the ambiguous position of being viewed as insufficiently Western or European as well as insufficiently Eastern or exotic” (52). The name ‘Balkan,’ designating the area of Europe that today encompasses Albania, the European part of Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania and the republics of what is now the former Yugoslavia, was first coined by the German geographer August Zeune in 1808. It is a local Turkish word for “bare cliffs” (Kuzmic 52), but before Western travellers learned the indigenous name, their common designation for the region was, in fact, a sign of its conflicted identity: ‘European Turkey,’ ‘Turkey in Europe’ or ‘European Levant.’ A mixture of the beginning and the end of Western civilization, the Balkans constitute an ambiguous geographical space, and travellers had some difficulty deciding the actual physical boundaries of Albania and Greece (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 105).

Moreover, while the West and the Orient are usually presented as binary opposites, the Balkans, as Maria Todorova suggests in her influential *Imagining the Balkans*, have been characterized by the prefix ‘semi’ – semi-developed, semi-colonial, semi-civilized, semi-Oriental: “unlike orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity” (17). The Western traveller’s typical encounter with
Greece and the surrounding Balkan nations was very much like Said’s claims for the Orient, as these areas were “less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origins in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on [it]” (Said 177). During Ali Pasha’s rule over parts of Greece, the Grand Tour adventurer saw himself as heir of the Classical tradition, and he expected Ottoman-ruled Greece to be reflective of his identity; naturally the disappointment was great when this imagined country did not measure up to his expectations. As most parts of Greece were encompassed by the Balkan Peninsula, it came to be regarded as too “polluted” by this Otherness to be properly “European” and, in turn, this “racial ambiguity” of the Balkans, as Todorova calls it, caused much more discomfort than an encounter with the clearly separate Ottoman rulers. Ultimately, the simultaneous proximity and distance Ali represented created much ambiguity, confusion and even fear for the European reader. As Katherine Fleming aptly remarks, “just as Ali was technically European yet wholly Other by dint of his connection to the Ottoman imperial system, so too was he both similar and dissimilar to the West in this (albeit nominal) adherence to Islam, a religion that was once considered akin to and freakishly different from Christianity” (151).

To say that Ali acquired a place in nineteenth-century European literature that is probably unrivalled by any other figure in Ottoman history is no exaggeration. The reports from the travellers stimulated a remarkable outpouring of biographies, novels, poems, pamphlets, periodical articles, theatrical plays and operas that deluged the reading audience of Europe.

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59 As Angelomatis-Tsougarakis notes, “all these Muslim officials can scarcely be distinguished from one another in the travellers’ accounts. The only exception is the Albanian Ali Pasha and his sons about whose prosopography there is plenty of interesting material in travel books” (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 18).

60 Because of Ali Pasha’s political situation and proximity to the West, the media of the 1820s also paid him much attention. Numerous articles on his political upheavals, cultural interactions and reviews of biographies appear through a simple skimming of various journals. For instance, in 1820, the *New Monthly Magazine* published “Conjectures on the Political Situation of the Turks in Greece and Egypt” July 1st, 1820, pg. 40-41, as well as “Ali Pacha and the Sulliots” November 1st, 1820, pg. 484-485. In 1823, *European Magazine* published a review on “The
Indeed, the Pasha inspired many poets, painters, novelists and musical composers who cast him as a villain and a dangerous figure, or as a brave and courageous political ruler. Besides the Philhellenic dramas I turn my attention to in the second part of this chapter, in literature Byron leads the way in his portrayal of Ali in the second Canto of his *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. Ali and a fictitious character “Haydee” find their way into the *Count of Monte Cristo*, and Victor Hugo’s *Les Orientales* goes as far as to suggest that he was “le seul colosse qui est à Napoleon ce que le tigre est au lion” [the only giant who is to Napoleon as the tiger is to the lion] (Hugo 10). Furthermore, the paintings of William Davenport and Louis Dupré, among others, depict the grandeur and importance of the Pasha as they feature him in his luxurious courts surrounded by his pupils, or taking boat rides with an entourage, or focus on certain events in his life that have been repeated in literature, diaries, travelogues and reports, thus continuing the circulation of a mysterious and even fictitious character (see Figures 3-5). When examining representations of the East and Islam in Romantic literature and culture, one is bound to read about or encounter the Pasha. Yet, how did he become so popular and why was Western culture so interested in this figure? To answer these questions, one needs to first explore a few issues: the initial reasons behind the encounters with Ali, and the socio-political relationship between the East and the West.

**III. Ali and the European Encounters**

A major source about Ali Pasha’s personal and political life derives from the abundant travel accounts of Greece and the Levant. In this section I explain the reasons why travel to the Levant became so popular and why Ali Pasha in particular was so intriguing to the Western
traveller between 1800 and 1820. I also argue not only that the travel literature about Ali Pasha becomes a way in which to market the Orient (much like the marketability we saw in Byron’s work), but also that travel literature is, in fact, a form of Orientalism, and the philhellene impulse underlying such travel narratives can be seen as representative of a different form of colonialism in which the history and ideology, rather than Greece itself, have been claimed, invaded, studied and represented.

The Napoleonic Wars (1796-1815) were one of the main reasons why so many European travellers were able to meet Ali Pasha during their travels. Because the wars had terminated all bookings of the traditional Grand Tour, Englishmen were forced to plan alternative routes beyond the well-beaten paths in France and Italy. The British had a long fascination with Western civilization and touring the ancient ruins of the Mediterranean was a traditional feature of the education of the European upper-class gentleman. Thus, the “Grand Tour” – France, Switzerland and especially Italy – had become, particularly, a requisite chapter in an Englishman’s cultural development. However, because of the wars, travel by land to the greatest part of the continent was completely forbidden; even by sea, the places a British ship could visit were limited to Portugal, Gibraltar, Malta, Sardinia and Sicily in the Western Mediterranean. Hence, the Englishman’s inherent love for travel was subsequently rerouted to the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. Lands that were part of the Ottoman Empire were visited by more Britons than ever before at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and travels to Greece, Albania and Turkey became quite fashionable at that particular time (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1). In one of his letters from Athens, Hobhouse reports that:

Until within a few years, a journey to Athens was reckoned a considerable undertaking, fraught with difficulties and dangers; and at the period when every young man of fortune,
in France and England, considered it an indispensable part of his education to survey the monuments of ancient art remaining in Italy, only a few desperate scholars and artists ventured to trust themselves amongst the barbarians, to contemplate the ruins of Greece. But those terrors, which a person who has been on the spot cannot conceive could ever have been well-founded, seem at last to be dispelled: Attica at present swarms with travellers, and several of fair countrywomen have ascended the rocks of the Acropolis […] A few more years may furnish the Piraeus with all the accommodations of a fashionable watering-place. (301-302)

Not only were European, and specifically British, tourists swarming many parts of Greece as Hobhouse indicates, but also, to use Byron’s term, the “Levant Lunatics” were the emerging young crowd of travellers setting out to Turkey, Albania, Greece proper, and the islands of the Ionian and Aegean Sea, as well as Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

Travelling to Greece and Turkey was, of course, not new, but the numbers had gradually increased with the expansion of national commercial concerns, changing political circumstances and, most importantly for the Romantics, the development of classical studies. While the traveller’s main attraction to Greece had been antiquarian interest, during the nineteenth century, travellers became more intensely excited by the prospect of serious scholarly research and the desire for the actual acquisition of antiques themselves. And so “the great age of travel to Greece – to paint it, loot it, write about it – had begun” (Eisner 89). As I suggested in the previous chapter on Byron and antiquarian focus in his CHP II, there was a renewed interest in the art and literature of ancient Greece for the Romantics, and as I noted with regard to the controversial Elgin Marbles, Greek artifacts were being excavated and brought back in unprecedented

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61Byron’s letter to Hobhouse written on October 8, 1810 in BLJ 2, page 23.
numbers. What initiated this movement? An influential text on Hellenism, Johann Joachim Winkelmann’s *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* [“Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture”] (1764) changed the way in which Greek sculptures were evaluated by Europeans and brought the critic’s attention to the “stille Grösse, edle Einfalt” [the quiet grandeur and noble simplicity] (Winkelmann 29) of Greek art. Moreover, the Hellenic Ideal made it possible for Europeans to feel that they “knew” the lands of Greece historically and geographically, and that they understood their cultural habits, origins and inhabitants. Therefore, the Romantic traveller was full of expectations as he prepared to set foot in the country that could evoke “past glories, to recognize a landscape described by Pausanias, to wander in the Arcadia of their dreams, or identify long forgotten towns for the existing ruins” (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 25). However, where Hellenism denotes an idealization of an ancient Greece (an aesthetic conceptualization), Philhellenism is the idealization of a modern and free Greece (a political conceptualization).

This nineteenth-century phenomenon not only meant a love for Greece and Greek culture, but also an advocacy and support for Greek independence (*OED*). As Jonathan Sachs remarks, “the idealization of Greece and Greek life thus has political consequences in its evocation of alternative possibilities and in its rejection of dominant literary, religious, and political positions” (320). It is important to note that besides studying the classics, art and sculpture, nineteenth-century travellers also studied ancient Greek democracy that had essentially fuelled European revolutions for over a generation. Many felt guilty about the state of Greece under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and “the libertine temperament of the Romantics sought an ethical support in declaration of political liberty” (Eisner 115) for Greece. Byron, of course, was the most celebrated Philhellene and ultimately became canonized as a martyr for the
Philhellenic cause. His death in 1824 prompted some to financially contribute to the War of Independence, while other “hardy souls” persisted in travelling to Greece, “accruing the panache of Byronic warriors” (Eisner 122). As argued in the previous chapter, throughout the OT and CHP II, Greece is depicted as a ‘lost source’ of European civilization that has been hopelessly smothered beneath the blanket of the Ottoman Empire (Leask 23). While The Giaour laments that this is a “living Greece no more” (SP 91), Canto II of CHP cries for the revival of Greece:

Ancient of days! august Athena! where,
Where are thy men of might? thy grand in soul?
Gone – glimmering through the dream of things that were:
First in the race that led to Glory’s goal,
They won, and pass’d away – is this the whole? (SP 10-14)

And later when Harold describes a carnival in Constantinople, he says:

And whose more rife with merriment than thine,
Oh Stamboul! once the empress of their reign?
Though turbans now pollute Sophia’s shrine,
And Greece her very altars eyes in vain. (SP 747-50)

This is an Ottoman-ruled Greece that is met with much disappointment by Byron’s traveller, presented as an inevitable “victim of the cyclical nature of history” (Kuzmic 55); as Childe Harold wonders about its ‘men of might’ and its ‘grand in soul’ (SP 10), he, in effect, wavers between a nostalgic longing for Greece’s glorious past and a cynical view of its present state. Greece has lost its place and this Christian Greece, the supposed cradle of Western civilization that has the misfortune of being corrupted by Turkish rule, must be freed. After all, as Percy
Bysshe Shelley famously states in the Preface to *Hellas* “we are all Greeks,” (SPP 431) and, so, to go to Greece was to visit an ideal that needs to be saved in many meanings of the term.

The fact that Ali Pasha was in control of part of this ‘ideal place’ up to 1821 meant that he played charming host to a huge number of these travellers who visited Epiros in the course of their itinerant education. Indeed, Ali’s territories were immensely popular with numerous European travellers, many of whom not only passed through Yannina, but spent a good deal of time there, either taking up part-time residence in Ali’s capital or exploring the surrounding areas accompanied by the Pasha’s guards. Hobhouse went on to write *A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople During the Years 1809 and 1810* (1813), adding to the library of other travelogues about the Pasha such as William Davenport’s *Historical Portraiture of leading events in the Life of Ali Pacha, Vizier of Epirus, Surnamed the Lion, in a Series of Designs, Drawn by W. Davenport* (1823); F.C.H.L. Pouqueville *Voyage en Moree, a Constantinople et en Albanie et dans plusieurs autres parties de l’Empire Othoman* (1805); Guillaume Vaudoncourt *Memoirs on the Ionian Islands including the life and character of Ali Pacha* (1816), Henry Holland’s *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia & c. during the years 1812 and 1813* (1813), and William M. Leake’s *Travels in Northern Greece* (1835), to name just a few. These travel accounts, and many like them, have substantially contributed to the various representations, even myths, of Ali Pasha in Romantic literature and culture.

**IV. The Myth of Ali**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term *myth* can mean several things: 1) a traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides
an explanation or justification for something as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon. The story, according to OED, can also be erroneous, a misrepresentation of truth or a widely held misconception. 2) A person or thing held in awe or generally referred to with near reverential admiration on the basis of popularly repeated stories (whether real or fictitious). Both definitions of the word can be applied to the myth of Ali, for not only does the literature offer repeated misrepresentations of his character, but it also exaggerates them. As such, he becomes a superficial entity, a two-dimensional character one sees in the popular and widely circulated *Arabian Nights*. Indeed, the epithets attached to his name, the “Lion of Jannina,” the “Diamond of Jannina,” the “Mahometan Bonaparte” or the “Butcher of Jannina,” render him a legendary figure, the “stuff of myth” to use Broers’ words (161).

In his highly influential work on cultural criticism, *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes refers to the process of “mythologisation,” or myth-making, as a socially constructed notion, a narrative and an assumption that become eventually naturalized and taken unquestionably as given within a particular culture. While Barthes’ essays focus by and large on political messages and pop culture images that are transmitted and reinforced by French media in the 1950s, I argue that his conceptualization of myth can be appropriated to the ways in which the West saw, organized and compartmentalized the East during the time of Ali Pasha. A myth shapes public perceptions of current events, it presents an ethos, an ideology or a set of values, as if they are a natural condition of the world; myth transforms history into nature, even if this history is questionable: “the reader lives the myth as a story at once true and unreal” (Barthes 127). Without actually using the word, Barthes presents the theory that myth is a kind of culturally sanctioned propaganda, using images with universal resonances and commonly understood meanings to tell individuals what and how to feel about themselves and things around them. Myths, therefore,
express the intentions of their teller: “the mystical signification […] is never arbitrary; it is always in part motivated, and unavoidably contains some analogy” (Barthes 124). In this light, using images of the Arabian Nights to depict Ali Pasha establishes two things. One, we do not really know who the real Ali Pasha is, but we do know that he embodies everything Other and Oriental. Therefore, it is only natural that this figure resembles a character coming out of yet another myth, The Arabian Nights, in which the East becomes synonymous with the fabulous and the magical.

Besides the myth of Ali, there is also a prejudice toward him that is repeated throughout travel accounts. Angelomatis-Tsougarakis points out that travellers had their own prejudices about certain places, and these were essentially passed on from one travel account to the other: “this phenomenon is partly due to opinions created by their readings of the earlier travel literature and their mental predisposition to see and interpret people, things, and situations according to the currently dominant ideas, whether social or political, religious or literary” (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 13). I find Angelomatis-Tsougarakis’ observation pertinent to my research, as many of the travelogues I examined make it abundantly clear to the reader that their opinions do not necessarily form from a personal encounter with the Pasha, but rather from hearsay. In a telling footnote on Manzour Effendi (to whose travel accounts I turn shortly), Reverend Thomas Smart Hughes states that:

Manzour […] published an account of his residence, with a life of Ali, compiled chiefly from Mr. Pouqueville’s work, and the French edition of my own. His details respecting the state of Albania and Ionnina are multifarious, and though frequently overlaid with exaggerated statements (which however are easily discerned by those acquainted with Ali and his country) yet they afford much curious information. I have accordingly extracted
Moreover, Hobhouse admits that “of the natural disposition of Ali we had no opportunity of forming a judgment, except by hearsay” (110). What is remarkable here is that even if travellers were aware of the fact that many of the accounts of Ali Pasha might be a bit embellished or exaggerated, they nevertheless recounted them as Hughes admits. Moreover, the travelogues seem to circulate amongst other travellers who read them before or while on their travels, only to come home and copy from other books or fill in imaginary adventures and details. F.C.H.L Pouqueville, whose prejudiced stories appear in many subsequent travelogues, including Manzour Effendi’s, attests to this phenomenon. Appointed French consul to Ali’s court after the 1805 victory of Napoleon at Austerlitz, Pouqueville was the primary go-between in Ali’s negotiations with the French. But the Pasha imprisoned Pouqueville in a moment of anger because of what he perceived as the betrayal of the French. According to Fleming, “one cannot but suspect that Pouqueville’s florid and unflattering portrayals of Ali are in some way the Frenchman’s revenge. This floridity has to a large extent set the tones for all biographies of Ali, which linger in great details on his physical appetites, atrocities, and scheming” (21). Indeed, virtually every travelogue I have come across narrates Ali Pasha’s life using the following pattern: his political power in the land of Albania and parts of Greece, the massacres he has committed in villages and towns in vengeance for his mother, the drowning of random women and children, and the luxury and excess in his court. However ‘curious’ these images are, as Hughes calls them, I suggest that they represent unreliable sources and Ali becomes, in turn, the stuff of gossip.

While Hobhouse admits that “it would hardly be fair to believe all the stories of the

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62 See Fleming page 21 note 9. Ali Pasha was in negotiation with the French about gaining control of some Ionian islands. When the control reverted to French powers, Ali took revenge on the “hapless Pouqueville.”
Greeks, who would represent him as the most barbarous monster that ever disgraced humanity” (110), the stories about beheadings, impaling and roasting are nevertheless passed down from one travel narrative to another. Even if “such cruelty shocks your human feeling,” Hobhouse continues, “but ‘voilà comme on juge de tout quand on n’est pas sorti de son pays’” (110). [this is how we judge everyone when we are not from their country]. In the ensuing pages, I highlight two representations of Ali – the fantastical and the despotic – and suggest that these typical Orientalist tropes simply offer a public pattern of images the West used as a way of controlling and containing the threatening image of the Pasha.

V. Representations of Ali

Many diarists mention the story of Ali’s finding a fortune beneath his feet, and this story (though it is still unclear whether it is fact or fiction) is repeated in various forms by the different sources, including the Pasha himself.63 French diplomat and historian Guillaume de Vaudoncourt recounts the following:

[Ali’s] first battle was again unsuccessful to him, and he was obliged to retire with loss. Having encamped the remnant of his troops in the vicinity of a deserted chapel, not far from Valera, which was shown to the Author during his abode in Albania, he entered into the solitary pile to repose, as well as meditate on his bereft situation. There, says he, (for it was from himself that the whole of this narrative was obtained,) reflecting on the fortune by which he was persecuted, calculating the enterprizes he was still able to attempt, and comparing the weakness of his means with the forces he had to combat, he remained a long time in a standing posture, mechanically furrowing up the ground with his stick […]

63 See also Figure III in the appendix. Louis Dupré paints this particular episode.
The resistance of a solid body, and the sound which issued from it, recalled his attention from the objects with which he had been so long absorbed. He bent down and examined the hole he had made, and having dug further into the ground, he had the happiness to find a casket [...]. The gold which the casket contained enabled him to levy 2000 men [...]. From this period fortune has never abandoned him during a lapse of near fifty years of war and enterprise of every kind. (226-227)

The same plot (or one almost like it) appears in the popular story of “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.” Ali Baba discovers a secret thief hideout, for which the phrase Open Sesame is the entrance password. Ali Baba kills the forty thieves and he and his family members enjoy the treasures and “live in great splendor being held in honour as the leading dignitaries in the city” (The Arabian Nights 960).

Alternatively, according to the memoirs of Ibrahim Manzour Effendi, the Pasha’s acquiring of fortune occurred under different circumstances. Effendi’s account reads much more like the typical Arabian Nights tale about a poor boy whose life is transformed by a stranger with occult powers, and who is befriended in a house that is plunged into sadness and poverty. Manzour Effendi’s version is as follows: Ali, a poor adolescent of fifteen received in his home an African dervish from Morocco. The offering of hospitality is generally an Oriental virtue, but when Ali’s mother Kamko saw how poor the dervish was, she anxiously told her son that they had no meat to offer their guest. As there was no money in the house, “Ali prit la résolution de vendre son unique bon vêtement, afin de traiter du mieux qu’il pourrait l’hôte que Dieu avait envoyé dans sa maison” (Effendi 271). [Ali decided to sell his only good clothes in order to treat as best as he can the guest whom God had sent to his mother’s house]. The dervish eventually

64 A French renegade who had converted to Islam and worked in the Pasha’s service. He later returned to France and published Mémoires sur le Grèce et l'Albanie pendant le gouvernement d'ali Pacha, (Paris, 1827)
fell ill while there and Ali, unable to get any money, was forced to sell various items little by little to cover the sick man’s expenses. At the moment of bidding farewell, the Moroccan dervish informed Ali that he was aware of all the sacrifices that had been so generously made for him. As a reward, he gave him a ring, saying that he should always wear it as it would bring him “un bonheur extraordinaire, et le conduirait rapidement au plus haut degré de grandeur, de richesse et de puissance” (Effendi 273). [an extraordinary happiness, and lead him rapidly to the highest degree of grandeur, wealth and power]. What is interesting about this version of Ali’s fortune is that not only is Ali Pasha Ali Baba, but he is also Aladdin or even Sinbad – a character from legends or myths. Because of the popularity of the Arabian Nights at the time, this storyline is predictable. Boy treats old man well, widow mother is kind, and therefore they meet with good fortune that comes from a magic ring. The story is exotic but also somehow expected and familiar, and it is only fitting to portray Ali Pasha as such.

While I agree with H.T. Norris who suggests that “the introduction of a Moorish dervish (astrologer), a hospitable widow and her son, and lastly a magic ring looks suspiciously like an acquaintance with the opening pages of ‘The Story of Aladdin and the Magic Lamp’” (233), I want to add that not only is the Pasha represented as a make-believe character from many a fairy tale (and indeed, before narrating this story, Effendi tells us that he aims to address the superstitious trait of Ali Pasha “un trait de superstitions”), but that the source of Effendi’s story is also quite ambiguous. Norris suggests that “the source of Manzour Effendi’s information was allegedly ‘Ali Pasha himself,’” yet Effendi clearly states at the beginning of his tale that “l’histoire de cette bague me paraît assez singulière; je vais la narrer telle qu’elle m’a été racontée par des personnes à portée d’être informés de ces particularités” (271). [the story of this ring seemed quite peculiar to me. I am going to narrate it as it was told to me by people who had
been informed of its peculiarities (my emphasis)]. In other words, we are in a he-says-she-says scenario, as indicative of the double passive in his sentence. Just as the gossip Hobhouse questions about Ali Pasha, Effendi’s narrative also implies that the story was merely passed on by word of mouth without a reliable or authoritative source. Perhaps to authenticate his account, Effendi assures his reader that “j’ai vu cette bague, il la portait suspendu à son cou; il me l’a montrée, lui-même en 1817” (Effendi 273) [I have seen this ring. He wore it around his neck; he showed it to me himself in 1817]; yet it is not the Pasha who tells him about the origins of the ring, but rather the popular and circulating stories.

Another major representation of the Pasha, besides the fantastical, is the myth of the Oriental despot. I will give a brief summary of this trope, which has produced folk tales, folk songs and folk poems about the Pasha (many of which are still popular today amongst Greeks and Albanians). I also mention this often-recurring trope because, as we will see in the second part of this chapter, it reappears on the stage and plays an important role in forming the character of Ali in popular Philhellenic dramas of the 1820s. It is worth noting that many accounts explain the Pasha’s despotism, his villainous, treacherous and amoral behaviour as the result of the difficult and brutal childhood he had to endure. Hobhouse outlines this “genetic” depiction of Oriental treachery that was widely circulated and accepted at the time:

Ali’s father, Veli, was a Bey of Tepeleni, but, being the youngest of three brothers, he was driven from the place by the other two, but returned at the head of a band of klephites, took Tepeleni, and burnt his brothers alive. He was created a pasha of two tails, but was again driven from Tepeleni, and died soon afterwards when Ali was only fourteen years old. The mother of Ali was named Kamko […] the founder of all his fortunes, and with whose milk he seems to have imbibed his cruel and ferocious propensities. Kamko
poisoned the other widow and the child of her deceased husband, and commenced a warfare upon the neighbouring chiefs and clans, carrying her son Ali and her daughter Chainizza with her to the field. (101)

Echoing the unstable and ever-shifting image we see of Ali, representations of his mother Kamko also vary from one story to another. For instance, the kind and generous widow we saw in Effendi’s account is in stark contrast to the image presented in other narratives (eg. Hobhouse, Davenport, Jókai). It was widely believed that Ali had inherited his cruelty from the combination of his mother’s and father’s blood lineage, and as Hobhouse adds, “the mother of Ali was named Kamko […] the founder of all his fortunes, and with whose milk he seems to have imbibed his cruel and ferocious propensities” (101). After establishing the ‘biological’ reason behind Ali Pasha’s despotic actions, narrators would then bring the reader’s attention to two episodes that have been included in almost every account, biography and literary representation I have examined: the random drowning of a large group of Greek women and the fate of Lady Frosine (or Zofreni, according to Hobhouse). Indeed, Hobhouse, Holland, Leake, Pouqueville, Vaudoncourt and Effendi offer various versions of these two episodes, all of which portray Ali as a cruel monster, and none of which verify their sources and correctness of facts. I suggest not only that these stories were used as a lens through which Ali’s merciless and despotic nature was hyperbolized, but that the mass drowning of the women and the martyrdom of

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65 Móri Jókai, a Hungarian novelist and dramatist, also depicts a grim picture of the Pasha’s mother in his *Janicsárok végnapjai* (1854) [The Last Days of the Janissaries] (in English: *The Lion of Janina* - translated by R. Nisbet Bain, 1897). In his novel, Jokai conjures up a scene of domestic violence in which Khamko beats a young Ali for selling his sword to an Armenian and shames him by making him spin, “learn to spin the thread and turn the bobbins quickly; thou shalt not eat idle bread at home, I can tell thee. A man who can sell his sword is fit for nothing but to set beside a distaff” (108). Jokai further narrates that “Dame Khamko lived a long time after this event, and ruined her son’s soul altogether by urging him to kill and slay without mercy, till one fine day her son murdered her likewise, and thus added her blood also to the blood of those whom, at his mother’s instigation, he had cruelly murdered” (108). While the Hungarian author was interested in presenting Ali Pasha as a literary character, he nevertheless used the circulating stories and myths about him. Moreover, Jokai’s interest in Ali Pasha as a subject, even after thirty-two years since Ali’s death, is indicative of the Pasha’s popularity in European culture.
Frosine (at least that is how she is depicted in contemporary folk tales and folk songs) heightened the nation’s sentiments for Greek independence. Indeed, as I outline in the second part of this chapter, these two episodes are also adapted in the dramas about Ali Pasha, and become part and parcel of this packaged archetypal plot of ‘Ottoman’ villain standing in the way of Greek liberation: “the long-standing Orientalist biases against the Oriental type [are] augmented by this portrayal of Ali as anti-Greek, and the European philhellenic sentiment is distilled into an out-and-out hatred of Ali” (Fleming 170).

The narratives about the drowning of the women essentially offer the same premise: Ali’s sister in-law, Pasho, suspected her husband of paying attention to other women and visited the Pasha in tears complaining about her marital woes. Ali then asked her to write down the names of the women she suspected. Pasho selected the names of fifteen “of the most beautiful women, some Greeks, some Turkish, in the city of Ioannina. The same night they were all seized in their houses, conveyed to the palace in the fortress, thence carried in boats on the lake, and after being tied up in sacks, were thrown into the water” (Hobhouse122). Whether these women were murdered because of Lady Frosine’s affair with the Pasha’s son or simply because Pasho wanted to take revenge for her husband’s infidelities is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Lady Frosine becomes an important symbol for Greece and its independence. I draw attention to two varying accounts of Frosine. According to Hobhouse:

The fate of the beautiful Zoarfani is still the subject of a lamentable ditty, which we heard at Ionnina, and afterwards at Athens. The story goes that it was the misfortune of Zoarfani, a Greek lady of Ionnina, the most lovely of her sex, to be admired at the same time by Ali and by one of his sons; and that she contrived to conceal this double attachment from both her lovers, till the Vizier recognized upon her finger, a ring which he had given to
his son’s wife. Upon this discovery, the angry father left her abruptly, and gave the fatal 
orders. Zofreni was drowned the same night. She was only seventeen years of age. (123) 
The error Hobhouse makes about Frosine’s name does not go unnoticed, as William Leake 
succinctly comments in the appendix to his *Researches in Greece* (1814): “Zofreni should be 
Frosini” (410). Most importantly, Hobhouse’s phrase ‘the story goes’ suggests to us that he is 
merely passing on information he has heard, and the error he makes in the pronunciation and 
subsequently spelling of her name attests to the lack of attention to detail on his part. Leake 
进一步 adds: “it is hardly necessary to throw any doubt upon this romantic tale, as Mr. H. himself 
prefaces it with the words ‘the story goes’” (410). Leake’s pithy statement here not only 
highlights the fact that many of the travel accounts are susceptible simply to conveying the 
wrong information, but also that these travel accounts do not even mean to provide an objective 
narrative for the reader. Moreover, dubbing Hobhouse’s account of Lady Frosine as a ‘romantic 
tale’ is quite an insult to Hobhouse’s authenticity, as the term romantic suggests that Frosine’s 
story is overblown, fictitious or even “having no foundation in fact” (*OED*). 

Manzour Effendi’s account of Lady Frosine is also as euphuistic. For him, Frosine was 
not a lover of the Pasha, but a victim of Pasho’s wrath, and upon taking revenge for his daughte-
in-law, the Pasha commits the murder himself. According to Effendi’s account, “la malheureuse 
Frosine” [the unfortunate Frosine] “était célèbre par sa beauté et son esprit; c’est ce qui causa son 
Malheur” (181) [was famous for her beauty and disposition which is what caused her 
misfortune]. Ali Pasha, “se rendit lui-même, accompagné de quelques-uns de ses coupe-jarret, 
auprès de la belle Frosine; il l’accable d’injures, et, sourd à ses gémissements, insensible à ses 
pleurs, il la fit conduire au lac, dans lequel on la précipita” (182). [Ali Pasha went with some of 
his bandits to the beautiful Frosine; he heaped her with insults, and deaf to her pleas, and
indifferent to her tears, he dragged and threw her into the lake. Besides recounting the cold-blooded murder of Frosine, Effendi’s narrative also suggests that the victim’s six-year-old son was in the room as she was dragged out by the Pasha, “Il était couché dans la chambre de sa mère; lorsqu’ Ali-Pacha y entra. Il se souvient encore cofusément de cette scène” [He was sleeping in his mother’s room when Ali Pacha entered. He still vaguely remembers this episode] (183). Effendi’s account of Lady Frosine renders the event more affective, more tragic and even more disturbing for the reader as Effendi depicts a traumatic murder of a mother in front of her child. However, if Hobhouse’s story is hearsay, then Effendi assures the reader about the validity of his narrative as his source is the brother of Frosine and the son, “c’est deux que je tiens ces détails sur une catastrophe qui fit une sensation extraordinaire à Janina” (183). [it is from these two from whom I obtained the details about a catastrophe that made an extraordinary sensation in Yannina]. While this extraordinary event made it all the way to Athens, as Hobhouse tells us, it has also inspired contemporary literary representations as recent as Starbuck’s 2014 poem where Lady Frosine gets the last word as “[s]he crosses herself three times in the Greek Orthodox/fashion. She praises God while cursing Ali Pasha, the Butcher of Ioannina, whose legend gives her/succor: she laughs and says she laughs last” (119). Alternatively, in James Merrill’s “Yannina,” (1970), Frosine’s terrifying image becomes an emblem for Greece’s oppressed past:

And in the dark gray water sleeps
One who said no to Ali. Kiosks all over town
Sell that postcard, 'Kyra Frossini's Drown,'
Showing her, eyeballs white as mothballs, trussed
Beneath the bulging moon of Ali's lust.
A devil (turban and moustache and sword)

Chucks the pious matron overboard—

Wait—Heaven help us—SPLASH! (17-24)

The random drowning of the women and the martyrdom of Frosine confirms two things about the copious events read in the travel accounts about Ali Pasha. One, these two events succeeded in portraying Ali’s cruelty, barbarity and Oriental despotism. Two, the systematic repetition of certain events in the travelogues and the spread of Frosine’s drowned image from Yannina to Athens to the London stage, as we shall see, verify what the Orient represents for the European reader, and Ali served as a quintessential embodiment of anything Oriental.

I do not suggest that Ali is innocent of these crimes; on the contrary, Ali was indeed a dictator of his lands and people as is clearly evidenced by historical accounts. However, as I have demonstrated, the travelogues about him take these events and either blow them out of proportion by embellishing and sensationalizing certain aspects in the plot, or they simply repeat gossip and hearsay without verification. Despite the fact that these travel narratives and literary portrayals of Ali Pasha were widely circulated, quoted, copied and embellished from hand to hand, can they actually be considered reliable? I suggest not. The colourful and juicy episodes that are constantly repeated in accounts of Ali function essentially as tropes through which the West simultaneously verified and fed its imaginings about its eastern neighbour, the Ottoman Empire. Such unselfconscious storytelling distorts and falsifies what little historical information it may include; the biographers’ insistence that their accounts of Ali epitomize the Islamic Ottoman despot completely mangle the truth of Ali. Myths, for Barthes, function to naturalize that which has been socially constructed; they make historical values, beliefs and attitudes seem entirely normal, self-evident and timeless. Myths are true reflections of the way things are.
ways in which Western travel accounts present Ali to readers back home render him an object not to be deciphered or demystified. Like myths, he simply goes without saying. The escapades of this Muslim Bonaparte did not just circulate in the plethora of travel narratives and journals, for the 1820s stage also indulged in these wide-ranging representations of Ali Pasha in order to raise the West’s spirit about Britain’s involvement in the Philhellenic Wars.

VI. Ali Pasha and Philhellenic Melodrama

In this section, I argue that Philhellenic melodramas of the 1820s played a significant role in sensationalizing Ali Pasha and strategically used him not only to reap profits at the box office, but also to generate national sentiments for Britain’s intervention for the Greek cause.66 I first outline the significant socio-political events that contributed to the phenomenon of Philhellenism on the stage; I then briefly examine the presence of the East in theatre, and the significance of melodrama in particular, and where the dramatists situate Ali. Finally, I suggest that while the travel writer controls the Pasha’s image by focusing on embellished events in his life, the dramatist depicts a typical despot and a hyper-sexualized Pasha who becomes the stuff of farce, thus stripping him of any agency and authority. I have narrowed my analysis to dramas in which Ali Pasha is one of, if not, the major character. In my research, I have located only five dramatic pieces about him, specifically: Mordecai Noah’s The Grecian Captive; or, the Fall of Athens (1822), John Howard Payne’s Ali Pacha; or, the Signet Ring (1822), Mrs. Vaughan’s The Grecians (1824), C.E. Walker’s The Revolt of the Greeks; or, the Maid of Athens (1824), and

66 The plays about Ali Pasha, much like travelogues, were quite popular at the time and attracted many viewers. For instance, both Payne’s and Noah’s productions produced favourable reviews and profited generously. A playbill for the third performance of Payne’s Ali Pacha announced that “having been received with the utmost enthusiastic expressions of delight, [the play] will be repeated every evening till further notice” (quoted in Muse “Encountering Al Pasha” 340). And, in a review on American dramatists in The London Magazine, we read that Noah’s profits from The Grecian Captive were “considerable” (469).
John Baldwin Buckstone’s *The Maid of Athens; or, The Revolt of the Greeks* (1829). I have chosen the first two plays on this list, because Ali Pasha plays a major role in the plot: in *The Grecians*, for instance, he appears very briefly and does not say anything of significance. In *The Maid of Athens*, he is not even a character, but is eulogized by the character of Lord Byron. Moreover, the fact that these plays were performed in the same year but on separate continents (Noah’s *Grecian Captive* was first performed at Park Theatre, New York on June 12, 1822 and Payne’s *Ali Pacha* was first performed at Covent Garden Theatre on October 19, 1822) shows the influence of Philhellenism on the Romantics, and its significant contribution to the sociocultural and political developments of the 1820s.

Diego Saglia recently suggested that the 1820s are becoming increasingly recognized as a “crucial turning point in cultural and literary history” (369) in which drama and theatre have emerged as primary sites of reflection on and intervention in the changes that were affecting the nation. Not only was there an intense reflection on liberty and liberal ideas during the 1820s, but the decade also saw a “crop of ‘War of Independence’ dramas” (Hall and Macintosh 270) being staged all over Europe. As I pointed out in the first section of this chapter, Philhellenism was an underlying theme for many of the travel narratives about the East. However, by 1821 Philhellenism no longer denoted only the valuing of classical Greek culture, but also a positive attitude toward the political aspirations of the contemporary Greeks: “we are too familiar with the history of that country, with those illustrious events which mark the pages of her history” writes Noah in his preface to *The Grecian Captive*, “not to feel a deep interest in the success of

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67 In her article “Encountering Ali Pasha on the London Stage: No Friend to Freedom,” Amy Muse also confirms these five plays about Ali. I am indebted to her invaluable input throughout the writing process of this chapter. Amy and I have had several email correspondences about Ali Pasha’s representations on the stage and have occasionally discussed and shared our research findings.

68 What is interesting about the portrayal of Ali Pasha in Buckstone’s play is that he is remembered as an *advocate* for the Greek cause and not as the opponent to it. For a detailed discussion of the play, see Muse, “Encountering Ali Pasha,” pages 346-348.
that people, and the cause of freedom generally” (v). If the discourse of liberal ideas and liberty was prevalent in the 1820s, then Greece was the ideal place to unbind oneself and fully experience freedom. Shelley’s *Hellas*, the most famous and enduring of Philhellenic dramas, immortalizes and idealizes Greece like the above dramas, albeit much more aesthetically and complexly. However, *Hellas* evokes an *imagined* land, a mere idea of Greece that is simply not allowed to die:

Within the circuit of this pendant orb
There lies an antique region, on which fell
The dews of though in the worlds’ golden dawn
Earliest and most benign, and from it sprung
Temples and cities and immortal forms
And harmonies of wisdom and of song. (*SPP* 31-36)

For Shelley, Greece is built on a transcendent, eternal thought and the Greeks are spirits of history, shades of a great past who inspire the present: “the world’s great age begins anew/The golden yearns return […]/A brighter Hellas rears its mountains/From waves serener far” (*SPP* 1060-1061, 1066-1067). The language and imagery of this play, then, present a mythological vision of a revived ancient Greece, a triumphant Greece. What lingers in the reader’s mind is a utopian place, or even “no place” to use Muse’s term (“The Great Drama” 142).

In contrast to Shelley’s vision for Greece, the melodramas about Ali Pasha provide a space in which the nation unites for a common cause, and the British come to “protect the Greek colours” (Ziter 72) following the footsteps of Lord Byron who died in 1824 in Missilonghi before he had the chance to fight for Greek liberation. Their Greece is a more tangible one where the audience can see it, feel it, experience it and cheer for it: “O Greece! Greece! How lovely
thou art even in captivity! how splendid are thy ruins! how soft and balsamic thy air! how rich and fruitful are thy vallies! – How long shall it be ere liberty dwells in thy temples, and the song of Freedom is heard on thy mountains!” (Noah 2). As Muse aptly observes, “the sight of Ottoman-occupied and war-torn Greece, then, ignited gratitude for the traveller’s own freedom, and awakened a spirit of sympathy, generosity, and superiority toward the Greeks while it provoked righteous anger towards the occupying power for having degenerated the land” (“Encountering Ali Pasha” 341). Indeed, fulfilling the spectators’ desires for world adventures generally, and for experiencing a Greece in its former glory more specifically, these melodramas allowed them to become armchair travellers, anthropologists and even, to a certain extent, classical scholars – much like contemporary travelogue writers – as they watched the battles between Turks and Greeks, or lifted the veil on the titillating life of the Seraglio.

VII. Staging the East

While the encounter with Ali Pasha was en vogue during the 1820s, representations of the Turk, the Arab or the Muslim drew heavily on the Christian polemical tradition established in the Middle Ages as I have illustrated throughout the previous chapters. As Rana Kabbani remarks: “that polemic was the product of hostility and hatred and consequently sought to construct Islam as a negation of Christianity” (23), with Mohammed depicted as “an imposter, a sensualist and an Antichrist” (23). Christopher Marlowe’s Tambourlaine the Great (1590), for example, employed these themes. In this early modern drama and one of the huge successes of its time whose hero Tambourlaine is based on the ancient Emperor Timur, Marlowe depicts the rise and fall of a savage and ruthless ruler who kills his way to power and fame. The proliferation of Eastern tyrants and figures continues throughout the history of British theatre, from
Shakespeare’s classic treatments in *Othello* (1604) and John Dryden’s *Aurengzebe* (1690) to George Coleman the Younger’s adaptation of *Blue Beard* (1798) and the Royal Coburg’s staging of William Beckford’s *The Caliph Vathek* (1823). There was also the widespread genre of abduction plays of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and its adaptation to the British stage entitled *The Seraglio: An Opera in Three Acts* by William Dimond in 1827, and Isaac Bickerstaff’s *The Sultan; or, A Peep into the Seraglio* (1847), among many others. Moreover, interest in the East on the stage moved beyond drama and opera as more media came to present the Orient, including panoramas, ballet and pantomime. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such productions and their classical treatment of the East had become almost dominant, and as Edward Ziter points out, with many theatres, optical entertainments and exhibition halls, “London’s entertainment industry was well equipped to absorb the volume of detail generated by orientalist travelers and scholars. In the process, the entertainment industry became – and remains – a primary site for the formulation of modern conceptions of race, gender, and nation” (21). Melodramas, in particular, became increasingly popular on the over-sized stages of patent theatres, which were rebuilt on a grander scale thus attracting a mass audience.

Such modes of entertainment depicting the East and Islam have more often than not been considered to be of high commercial value but of little “nutritional value to the consumers” (Kuti 341). That is to say, much like the Hollywood Blockbusters we get at an IMAX, the melodramas I take up in this chapter are, to use Amy Muse’s words, “timely but not timeless” (“Encountering Ali Pasha”140). In her influential article on Oriental drama, Elaine Hadley aptly describes the value and longevity of melodramas during and since the nineteenth century:
Although it would have been historically possible that an early melodrama could share billing – and thus the same place on a patent theatre stage – with Wordsworth’s *The Borderers*, more likely than not, […] melodramas would have filled these theatres with boisterous audiences long after *The Borderers* had closed. And while *Prometheus Unbound* might have taken up space on a bookseller’s shelf for years and is – at times – bought by scholars and students today, the initial printing of *Ali Pasha* pretty much encompasses its publishing history, making it extraordinarily unlikely that Prometheus and Ali would share the same shelf space. (330)

Indeed, a simple search in the Worldcat catalogue shows that virtually all of the Oriental melodramas written in the 1820s are not restaged nor are they reprinted for today’s audience and academic scholarship. Very rarely does the reader encounter a monologue with a possibility of meaningful agency that would move the audience of Hamlet or Manfred. Rather, lines are usually empty and short, with a focus on the actions, costumes and elaborate stage sets. In all five plays about Ali Pasha, for instance, we see a reiterated image of an Oriental despot who has seized control of his domain through physical force, and who possesses or destroys the heroes and heroines coming to repossess his land. The despotic figure depicted in the melodramas about Ali Pasha and elsewhere is uncomplicated, simplistic even. He often possesses an unexplained and insatiable appetite for land, women, lavish costumes and décor; moreover, his character lacks any conscience or philosophical conundrums. The plot also constantly repeats itself from one production to another: “after many spectacular crises […] the heroes and heroines of these dramas always manage to overcome the villain’s evil plans, even if by magic device, and conclude the plays by stepping into an ordered tableau of right rule, mutual love, and revitalized social society” (Hadley 336). Even if one were to argue that these copious melodramas do not
provide rich sites for textual analysis, I believe that they merit critical attention for what they say about the national sentiment of the time: Greece must be liberated, “A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine,” (SP 95) Byron reminds us in his “Isles of Greece.”Additionally, melodrama reveals the way in which the Orient is represented, treated and contained on the stage. Ali Pasha is a threat to liberty in that land that gave the Western audience the concept of freedom. He must be terminated.

VIII. Depictions of Ali Pasha on the Stage

The melodramas I examined narrate the last events leading to the fall of Ali. Payne’s production takes liberties with the way in which the Pasha dies. Instead of being beheaded by an emissary of the sultan, Ali blows himself up along with the entire citadel. On the other hand, Noah has an emissary kill Ali Pasha, but the Greeks still achieve their victory with the help of America. Moreover, the dramatis personae in the plays are divided into three groups: Greek men, Greek women and Turks. The Greek characters are generals and freedom fighters, and the women are typically held captive in Ali Pasha’s seraglio awaiting rescue. The Turks are janissaries, soldiers and guards defending Ali to the end. The setting is usually strange and exotic, depicting the territories under Ali’s control, and the plot invites little ambiguity as the Greek characters almost always celebrate the “glorious termination of all our painful struggles” (Noah 48) and the audience is charged with patriotic sentiments:

And thus let all surrounding nations know,

What we for liberty will undergo;

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69 It is worth noting that Byron’s poetry (and in the case of Buckstone’s play, Byron’s character) appears in many of these Philhellenic plays. Mrs. Vaughan’s The Grecians, for instance, includes a stanza from Don Juan, and Payne sets a scene in which a chorus sings the Tambourgi passage from CHP II and slaves dance the War Dance (see Payne 19).
Unaided, struggle for our country’s peace,
And liberty again shall smile on Greece.
Our noble patriots still for freedom die,
Or hail the goddess, glorious Victory! (Mrs. Vaughan 56)

The depiction of Ali Pasha, however, varies from one play to another. In Mrs. Vaughan’s production, Ali sporadically appears throughout the five-act play, only to command or direct his troops for battle with the Greeks and the Ottoman Porte. By the end of the play, Ali realizes he will be defeated by the Greeks and retires to his citadel with his troops: “Bravery is of no avail; those Grecian dogs employ some demon; but Alla is great, the children of his Prophet he protects […] retire, brave soldiers, to my fortress on yonder island – though we are conquer’d, we are not subdued” (50-51). While Mrs. Vaughan’s production highlights the Greek troops, Payne’s and Noah’s plays closely follow Ali Pasha’s last steps before his defeat and set his character up in the typical Orientalist fashion: In *Ali Pacha or the Signet Ring*, Payne focuses on the violent, cruel and despotic Ali, and Noah’s *The Grecian Captive or the Fall of Athens* depicts a Pasha who is desperate, desperately in love and vulnerable to his sexual desires. For the remainder of this section, I focus my analysis on these two dramas.

While the 1820s travelogues mentioning Ali Pasha focused on his despotic characterization, as I have previously outlined, Payne’s *Ali Pacha, or the Signet Ring* repeats this representation at the rise of the curtain, “whither do you fly? What danger threatens you” (9); the young Suliot chief Zenocles asks his fellow soldier, who in turn answers “Ali! The execrable Ali” (9). The play takes place in the present and the plot follows the last day in the Pasha’s life. It tracks his cunning schemes to ward off both the army of the Ottoman sultan approaching from Constantinople, and the Greeks who have come to take revenge on him. In this typically
Orientalist depiction of the East, the audience is prepared to enter a world of danger and unease that is ruled by a “merciless” man (10). A cruel despot, hatching conniving political schemes and ordering regional massacres, Ali Pasha’s personal exploits set him up as the epitome of the Oriental tyrant. Payne gets right to the point as he shrewdly and quite efficiently conjures up and throws at his audience all the popular depictions and myths about Ali Pasha in one character’s history and from the very beginning of the play. We learn that Zenocles was the son of a “murdered” Greek leader, that his race was entirely “massacred,” and that his mother and sister were “plunged […] into the waters of [Ali’s] very lake” (10). Recall that these misfortunes of the Greeks have also been repeated in the stories and travelogues about the Pasha. After Ali’s exploits have been sufficiently narrated to the audience, thereby embedding a certain bias against him, the Ali character does even more damage as the plot unfolds. His rhetoric throughout the play is filled with hatred and vindictiveness toward the enemy, thus pre-empting any feeling of empathy toward or redemption for his character. His actions are dubious and conniving. He makes promises to one character and then gloats over his treachery. He tries to convince Zenocles that he is actually working against the Ottoman Porte and will be the saviour to the Greeks, destroying the Ottoman cities in order that the Greeks may rebuild their ancient glory. However, in the typical style of the melodramatic villain who riles up the audience, the Pasha retaliates and declares, “What? I forgive the Greeks? I deceive thee! I was born to be their scourge…T’is I who in the heart for their cities have kindled discords, which shall consume them; while alone, towering in this citadel, I live to see that traveler seek, on the wrecks of ancient Greece, the ruins of the new” (25). What his discourse establishes is the urgent need for the audience to save both the land of Greece and the Greek people. Everything is completely and exclusively blamed on Ali. Therefore, the play’s main focus is revenge: “death to the race of
Ali!” the Greek fighters declare as they march off the stage, “liberty and vengeance” (10). Ali Pasha does not belong in the lands that uphold freedom, autonomy and civilization, and his very presence is the primary obstacle to Greek liberation.

The female figures in these melodramas are either harem slaves or European captives locked up in the Pasha’s seraglio, for what would an Orientalist drama be if it lacked a despot’s seraglio? In Noah’s *Grecian Captive*, the depiction of Ali Pasha as a love-sick puppy is established from the first scene of the play: “so,” announces the court painter Roberto, “these preparations are to paint the portrait of a female captive, with whom Ali Pacha is desperately in love – so desperately that I think he is even ready to renounce his religion for her” (1). Throughout the play, besides trying to ward off his enemies who eventually kill him in a sword duel, the Pasha also attempts to capture the heart of his Grecian captive, Zelia. Zelia, however, would rather sacrifice herself to the Greek cause than succumb to the Pasha’s desires: “Greece requires from her children every sacrifice for glory and freedom – we will not survive our shame, yet Greece will be free” (31). The heroic jingoistic actions and speeches of Zelia are juxtaposed with the desperately pleading speeches by Ali, “you perceive, fair Zelia, how anxious I am to do all, to tranquilize and gratify you. If for my reward I can obtain your love, the glory of Ali is complete” (18). This is not the “Lion of Yannina,” but rather a weak and pathetic, inconsequential character. By depicting him as such, Noah essentially ‘domesticates’ the Pasha and destroys any hint of power and agency in his character.
IX. More Drama to the Drama

Both Ali Pacha and The Grecian Captive end with the freeing of Greece. Indeed, this is a therapeutic freedom achieved through spectacular, violent events and an end, not just of the Eastern despot but also of his entire civilization. Noah brings American soldiers to the rescue as they “assist the cause of liberty in Greece” (47). Payne satisfies the audience’s thirst for good action as he has the Pasha and his entire citadel blown up, for this “blowing up was more dramatic” (1). In the preface to Payne’s play, George Daniel admits that, in order to satisfy the audience’s taste for an Oriental spectacle with all its fantastical, exotic elements in general, and the sight of Ali Pasha in the flesh, in particular, Payne would have to exhibit the “old tiger,” like “his brother Bajazet in a cage” (Payne 2). The drama attached to Ali’s character then made an easy and natural subject for the Philhellenic stage, and it is befitting to turn our attention here to Said’s notion of representation as a theatrical one:

the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe…In depths of the Orientalist stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual terms evoke a fabulously rich world: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Nineveh, Prester John, Mahomet, and dozens more. (63)

I would add Ali Pasha to Said’s list of names, as I consider him part of the cultural repertoire of 1820s drama. Not only that, but in drama his character is more fluid, easier to manipulate and mold according to the sentiments of the time. One question that bears asking is: how different is
the depiction of Ali in the written texts as opposed to dramatic texts? What does it mean to read about him in a novel or newspaper report, and how is the experience different when one sees a dramatization of him on stage? Noah partially answers this question, as he states in his preface that:

this privilege of imagination is the peculiar property of the dramatist, who is not bound to wait for the tardy movements of armies, or the cold progress of cabinet negotiations, he is only to know that war exists in Greece, the cradle of the Arts, where Homer sung, where Themistocles conquered, and his fancy and invention must supply the rest; therefore, if eventually the Greeks should not recover Athens, it will not be my fault, it was necessary to my play, and so I gave them possession of that interesting spot with a dash of my pen, being too far removed from the scene of action to take any part in fighting for it. (iii)

In his influential study on Romantic drama, Fred Burwick offers the following observation:

what is important is that ‘elsewhere’ on the stage, from the conquest of Peru to the remoter ranges of the Orient, provides a matrix for authorial manipulation of levels of reference and representation, and brings into play a complexity of social and cultural interaction that explores, exploits, explodes audience fears and desires. (169)

Moreover, Burwick adds that unlike the experience of the “arm-chair traveler” who vicariously encounters the foreign and strange in her reading of travelogues, “the drama of the period enhanced such encounters through the vivid impact of theatrical setting and action, […] often replicating the images familiar as book illustrations” (151). Like Burwick, I suggest that staging Ali Pasha in these Philhellenic dramas not only contributes to the myth of Ali Pasha, but also heightens the jingoistic sentiments toward Greece, and hate and repulsion toward the Eastern
figure. For one thing, the costumes, music and décor play an important role in creating this intimate and yet exotic experience of the East: “the East offered opportunities for stunning set design by artists who sometimes travelled in the Mediterranean and Levantine worlds [...] Exotic architecture, plants and animals were all used to convey the sensation of spectacular novelty through which the audience could identify difference and potentially confirm their own supposed uniqueness in appearance, moral values and power” (MacKenzie 180). Payne transports us to the lands of Ali as he sets “on the right of the audience the city of Yanina, stretching out in perspective along the borders of a large lake. On the left a chain of rocks. In the center of the lake, an island, with a fortress upon it” (7). The focus here is on the fortress of Ali and a feeling of the Gothic as we enter dark corridors, caves, esplanades and battlements. On the other hand, the world of Noah’s Ali is of luxurious opulence and decadence as we move from one rich quarter to the next in each scene. In Act II, the scene is described as follows: “the hall of a rich palace, at the bottom Colonades before which curtains are drawn – A throne is on the right. – All is prepared for a fete. Slaves place cushions and carpets and retire” (19). The décor in Act III, moreover, specifically and meticulously sets up the exotic and sensuous:

an apartment in the palace – a sofa and rich cushions are placed on one side of the stage. This apartment represents all the luxury and splendor of east. The only light in the room is from casolets of incense – the night is dark – through the lattices a long gallery is seen terminating with the garden of the palace. (34)

Music is also played throughout the scenes in both plays, mainly to announce the entrance of Ali Pasha who is surrounded by slaves, singers, musicians and janissaries. Noah even throws a ballet with black and Greek slaves dancing, and Payne delights the audience with a chorus singing Lord Byron’s “Tambourgi, Tambourgi” from CHP. The audience is, of course, marvelled and
indulged in this “spectacular realism,” (9) to borrow Gillen D’Arcy Wood’s term, and the theatre industry increasingly offered it to them. As Ziter remarks, “throughout the nineteenth century, British audiences marveled at depictions of desert storms and harem dances as well as Nile steamers and colonial armies at theaters, panoramas, and exhibition rooms” (3). As the audience is taken on a tour through a pre-liberated Greece in these pre-packaged tourist dramas, they also encounter exotic creatures, dark villains and harem women along the way. Ali Pasha, then, becomes part of this landscape and décor. Not only is he a threat to the traveller’s security and mobility, but also to the political freedom of Greece. The sensation of threat is immediate, resulting in the spectator’s immersion into the action.

Experiencing Ali Pasha on the stage allows the audience to participate in and feel part of the liberation of Greece from the perceived tyrannies of the Ottoman Empire. Melodrama during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was an interactive space where the audience “did not simply wallow passively in spectacular effects, since melodramatic conventions require more active participation from the audience” (Hadley 337). Further, the actors in these melodramas directly address their audience and the audience would, in turn, respond (Hadley 337). In the Preface to Ali Pacha, George Daniel notes the effect of witnessing the exotic Other live on stage: “a turbaned Turk, or bashaw with three or more tails, are formidable enough in history; but when they march forth, surrounded by their ebony ministers, with bowstring and scimitar, we feel our heads instinctively shake, as if they sat with tremulous on our shoulders” (Payne 4). The heads of the audience shake in fear that they might be cut off by the Turk (just like Ali’s head). Daniel describes an immediate experience of fear and oppression sensed by the audience; only the termination of Ali would bring relief and a feeling of safety in them. As Jeffrey Cox points out, melodramatic plots were organized by a “welding together of individual moments of threat and
fear into an engine hurtling towards an anticipated moment of moral, domestic safety” (176). The way in which Ali Pasha is staged in these Philhellenic melodramas allowed the audience to experience the same fear and oppression their fellow Greeks had to endure. Seeing the ‘Pasha’ in action physically, they experienced “a tightening of the body and constriction of breath, followed by a deep intake of air and the sudden awareness of loosened muscle and physical mobility – accompanied by emotional ones such as a warm wave of gratitude for having narrowly escaped an oppressive situation” (Muse, “Encountering Ali Pasha” 342). Such a physically and emotionally involved experience of Ali Pasha not only establishes an immediate antagonism toward his character, but also brings the point of the play home – patriotism for Greek Independence.

X. Ali Pasha’s Manipulation of Orientalism

While the travelogues and the Philhellenic dramas depict Ali Pasha according to their own social or political biases, I suggest that there are accounts that remain quite ambivalent about his character. Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Canto II is perhaps one of the few pieces of literature that has a truly undecided disposition toward the Pasha:

In marble-paved pavilion, where a spring

Of living water fro the centre rose,

Whose bubbling did a genial freshness fling,

And soft voluptuous couches breathed repose,

Ali reclined, a man of war and woes:

Yet in his lineaments ye cannot trace,

While Gentleness her milder radiance throws
Along that aged venerable face,

The deeds that lurk beneath, and stain him with disgrace. (SP 550-558)

In this typical Oriental, soft voluptuous setting, Byron combines these two opposing qualities – Ali’s cruelties are belied by the female face of “Gentleness,” by the mild lines of his face. His crimes and atrocities, however, efface any respect and honour one may see in him. However, while one imagines a court of absolute oppression and despotism, Byron also depicts a utopian world in which all kinds of races, religions and classes interact in the Pasha’s court:

Amidst no common pomp the despot sate,

While busy preparation shook the court,

Slaves, eunuchs, soldiers, guests and santons wait,

Within, a palace, and without, a fort:

Here men of every clime appear to make resort

[…]

Some high-capp’d Tartar spurr’d his steed away:

The Turk, the Greek, the Albanian and the Moor,

Here mingled in their many-hued array,

While the deep war-drum’s sound announced the close of day. (SP 500-504, 510-514)

While Philip Martin considers this “conspicuous mixture” (88) of people as superficial and an ironic statement on the Pasha’s violent nature, I regard this as cosmopolitanism par excellence, where diversity of class and race intermingle in this political court. As Brøndsted observes:

I own that this extraordinary man made a great impression upon me […] Ali was one of those volcanos of a hundred aspects, which providence makes use of in its moral
administration as in the physical world, to execute its designs. But these volcanos do not always throw out torrents of fire, and I know of delightful gardens on verdure, close to those horrible heaps, which have borne on their burning weaves death and destruction.

(76-77 emphasis in original)

The man of a “hundred aspects” has set up a special world in his court in which no identity can be fixed, and in which origins and roots are ambiguous and ambivalent. Undeniably, he is a hybrid character in every aspect of the term: his nationality, as I suggested earlier in the chapter, his language and his behaviour. Drawing on the postcolonial discussion of the term *hybridity*, I want to suggest that Ali’s hybridity plays a crucial role in problematizing the West’s typical conception of him. Just as the hybrid can deconstruct boundaries within race, language and nation, Ali Pasha also deconstructs any bounded labels assigned to him by the travel writer or the playwright, and redefines this “exclusionary system of labeling” (Yazdiha 36).

Two questions immediately arise for the academic writing on Ali Pasha. Why was the literary, musical and artistic interest in Ali so persistent that it continued for several decades, even more than a century beyond his death? Moreover, why has there concomitantly been such a striking paucity of scholarly, biographical research on Ali? I suggest that Ali attracts so much attention to this day because he somehow marks the quintessence of the most potent and long-held assumptions about the East, particularly the Ottoman Empire. But the Oriental trope is much more dangerous than simply describing a foreign exotic character; while European writers and their readership simultaneously verified and fed their imaginings of the Orient through these tales, they also made Ali seem less threatening, insignificant and ridiculous. While I agree with

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70 Save for Katherine Fleming and Dennis Skiotis, not many studies on Ali Pasha, historical or literary have been published recently. See also Amy Muse’s two recently published articles “Encountering Ali Pasha on the London Stage: No Friend to Freedom?” and “The Great Drama of the Revival of Liberty: Philhellenic Drama of the 1820s.”
Skiotis that the tales and accounts do not necessarily provide us with the “truth” and they may not represent historical facts, they are, however, invaluable in demonstrating the process of historical representation at work and are a reflection of European concerns about Ali; as Fleming suggests, “what the numerous biographers, travelers, historians, and novelists have produced is something other than historiography. Instead, it is a vast body of representational literature, a literature that sheds much light not on Ali in his own time and place but on the Ali as the West would have him” (124).

The political implications Ali had for his Western audience were a major factor controlling these representations. As the audience became engulfed by the endless personal anecdotes of Ali and his family, they forgot the fact that he was a very intelligent political and military leader. In fact, diplomatic material dating from the height of Ali’s career demonstrates that he was in a position of relative strength vis-à-vis both the French and the British, and both were constantly asking for his support. Therefore, while the portrayals of Ali were Orientalist ones, when one considers the political ties between the major European powers and the Ottoman Empire, it becomes apparent that this is an Orientalism that is informed by feelings of insecurity and inferiority as much as by a sense of superiority and control. Whichever way Ali Pasha is imagined, these imaginings reveal much more about their imaginers than about Ali Pasha himself; the assumption of Western familiarity to and with the Ottoman Empire were, in Ali’s case, challenged by the unavoidable fact of his strength, and of his potential strategic and geographic superiority. Thus, as a response to their sense of insecurity, the West amplified the tone of belittlement, which becomes the backbone of their cultural representation of Ali; these representations “functioned almost as a compensatory device with which the British swept away their insecurities in relation to Ali and heightened his otherness, portraying him in increasingly
pejorative, Orientalist terms” (Fleming 117). Ultimately, these works constitute a form of self-bolstering and an inchoate commentary not just on Western superiority, but also on Western weakness and loss of control. And while Ali was insinuating himself into the heart of the European politics of the day, the European elite culture was positing Ali as the quintessence of the “mysterious Orient:” sensual, cruel, illogical, irrational and, above all, unintelligible. The Pasha, however, was quite nonchalant about these representations.

Said’s Orientalism criticizes Western forms of experiencing the Orient; for him, “all Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient” (21), and there never was such a thing as a pure or unconditional Orient. He continues, “we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate, but because it is not even trying to be accurate” (71). Said’s review of the failures of Orientalism as a form of knowledge and a discourse of power depends in an essential way on what he diagnoses as the representational function of this discourse. Orientalism is said to rely not only on a set of “various Western techniques of representation” (22), but to be constituted by representation as such:

The value, efficacy, strength, apparent vivacity of a written statement about the Orient, therefore, relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced any such real thing as ‘the Orient.’ (22)

Ultimately, Orientalism as a representation and any written statements on the Orient are necessarily wrong. Yet, what happens when the Orient itself becomes aware of its representation and begins to participate in its very own making? Was Ali aware of his own popularity in the West? “Did you ever hear of me in England?” (Hobhouse 103), he asks Byron and Hobhouse.
Hobhouse states that, “we assured him that he was a very common subject of conversation in our country; and he seemed by no means inaccessible to the flattery” (103). But what does it mean that Ali made a point of sharing his exploits with his European visitors? Why highlight the atrocities he had committed and his Oriental nature of cruelty and irrationality? Was he simply boasting?

Of course, writers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel accounts and drama understood that such lurid tales of Ali’s cruel and senseless tactics were an important and saleable feature, and travelogues and melodramas were well established as popular genre in Western Europe. Including samples of the finest whimsical and colourful Orient, and the inscrutable and grotesque exploits attached to it, made these diaries all the more intriguing. Ali Pasha was very much aware of this and he deliberately satisfied the Western appetite for Orientalia by bragging about his conquests, cruelties and rapaciousness – a quintessential Oriental for the European writer’s and reader’s imagination. He performed. For instance, throughout his account, Brøndsted mentions the disturbing laugh of the Pasha, which apparently made him quite nervous: “This immoderate laughter recurred often, it was one of his singularities, and never did I hear any other man laugh in such a manner. Turning again towards me he said. ‘If you are come here to see me, I hope you will perceive that I am not quite so bad as they describe me in the French newspapers’ – another burst of laughter” (59). Besides reporting on his bizarre behaviour, many travellers also questioned Ali Pasha’s literacy, taking up the debate and weighing in with evidence: “I believe him, from good authority, never to have received even the education usually given to the Albanians. Besides his native tongue, he talks Greek fluently, but of the Turkish language he knows very little […] he has raised himself to his

71 The Pasha’s sudden bursts of laughter are also mentioned by Hobhouse, and they are also emphasized in the plays.
present power, without perhaps knowing the letters of any alphabet” (Hobhouse 113). Essentially, Ali pretended and acted backward by disseminating tales, and by behaving in a bizarre, irrational and illogical fashion. He performed what they wanted him to be: “what the Orientalist weltanschauung could not accommodate, was the possibility that Ali was intentionally meeting his visitor’s expectations, tailoring his behaviour so as to give precisely the desired impression” (Fleming 176). To admit to this would imply that Ali was not oblivious to Europe’s representational fantasies of the East.

Even as Ali gave the performance of a civilized, modern and progressive Western ruler, his audience still found faults. Copying Pouqueville’s wholesale descriptions of Ali’s manner, Plomer narrates that, “Poqueville now noticed […] that when not indulging in his famous guttural laugh he knew how to say things not without a certain charm” (129); here, Plomer suggests that Ali is not actually charming, but rather he knows how to give the impression of being charming. The charm he puts on in front of all his guests is simply one of thinly veiled backwardness and boorishness. For instance, Byron was completely fascinated and enthralled by Ali Pasha’s paternal treatment of him and he mentions this several times (at least three instances) in his letters, “He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, & said he looked on me as his son. – Indeed he treated me like a child, sending me almonds & sugared sherbet, fruit & sweetmeats 20 times a day” (Byron BLJ 1: 227). Brøndsted reports on a group of curious English visitors who were most graciously received by the Pasha (the gentlemen came to purchase corn from the Vizier); before leaving, the Pasha presented jewels to the ladies:

He made these presents with much grace, and rose from the Divan (a rare instance of politeness in a Turk of high rank) in wishing them a good voyage, and in
repeating – that it would be much more in his power to amuse the ladies, if they would one day make him a visit at his residences at Joanina. They were enchanted, as they had reason to be with the politeness of Ali Pacha […] I asked Mrs. E. – what she thought of the Vizier – she answered me “I assure you I look upon him indeed, as the most amiable gentleman I ever saw.” (68)

Besides playing the charming, civil and hospitable host, Ali made sure to have opulent and luxurious surroundings as well. His house and garden décor were as much emphasized and meticulously described as his personal characteristics by all the travellers and dramatists.

Hobhouse describes the infamous pavilion that Byron uses in his setting for Ali Pasha:

[it] has one large saloon […] with small latticed apartments on every side. The floor of the saloon is of marble, and in the middle of it there is a fountain containing a pretty mode, also in marble, of a fortress, mounted with small brass cannon, which, at a signal, sprouts forth jets of water into the fountain, accompanied by an organ in a recess, playing some Italian tunes. The small rooms are furnished with sofas of figured silk. (59)

Vaudoncourt notes the magnificence of the Pasha’s environs while questioning his taste:

he is his own architect, upholster and decorator; hence are his palaces the most brilliant assemblage of magnificence and bad taste. One traverses obscure hovels in order to arrive at magnificent saloons, in which velvet, gold and embroidery are displayed in profusion, even on the floor. (277)

So, what does one make of the Pasha’s feigned politeness or his extravagant, albeit bad, taste in décor? I suggest that these performances by Ali Pasha are intended not only to give a good “impression” before the Western guest, but they aim to give the specific impression of Ali being a ruler – a cultured, civilized and powerful ruler. The way in which Byron and Hobhouse were
viewed paternalistically, treated with overprotectiveness, and the extreme civility and
consideration that Ali Pasha paid his many visitors is, in fact, a form of control. Moreover, those
were visitors in *his* lands, and not the lands of the Sultan nor the Ottoman Empire. In his visits
with the French and British travellers to his court, Ali was participating in an ongoing
performance of every aspect that was designed to give certain impressions to those who came.
He performed the role of an equal and civilized ruler – much like his European peers. At other
times, he performed the non-western characteristics his visitors expected to see. Essentially, Ali
was not merely an object of representation, but also a practicing subject in the representational
process surrounding him. By mimicking how the West saw him, he in turn challenges those
representations, deeming them arbitrary and banal.

Studied closely, representations of Ali Pasha suggest that Ali knew very well how the
West saw him, and responded through his manipulation and strategic performances of
Orientalism. He understood the European fascination with him as an Oriental, he knew what was
expected of him as an Oriental and he acted the part of the Oriental Other accordingly.
Therefore, the Orientalist depictions of Ali are actually entwined with Ali’s own depictions of
himself, and his performances are intentionally heightened and designed by Ali himself to
confirm the West’s view of him as the quintessential Muslim Ottoman despot. In his essay “Of
Mimicry and Man,” Homi Bhabha suggests that the “menace of mimicry is its double vision
which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (88).
Mimicry, for Bhabha, is a kind of performance that exposes the artificiality of all symbolic
expressions of power. It is subversive and empowering for Ali Pasha. Why? We must remember
that Ali is not Turkish; in fact, he spoke perfect Greek and barely any Turkish, nor was he a
practicing Muslim. Moreover, these performances are not merely to entertain this curious
Western audience, rather they function as a façade behind which Ali was able to develop and grow his own diplomatic and military strategies. In fact, if the anecdotal tales served as tropes through which European writers and their readership fed their imaginings of the Orient and by which they made Ali seem insignificant and even ridiculous, the better it was for Ali Pasha, because while it appeared that Ali was incapable of formulating a clear foreign policy and should, therefore, not be taken seriously on the world stage, such an interpretation was to his advantage, as he was able to negotiate secretly with several powers at the same time, even if that meant that he had to forego the hope of being regarded as the political equal of the rulers of France and England. As long as the central focus was on the anecdotal accounts describing his childhood, his idiosyncrasies and countless episodes of treachery, Ali was able to work on his strategic and political relationships without anyone being aware of his growth and self-conscious evolution as a ruler.

In his essay “The Psychological Structure of Fascism,” Georges Bataille describes the heterogamous leader as follows:

Opposed to democratic politicians, who represent in different countries the platitude inherent to homogenous society, Mussolini and Hitler immediately stand out as something other. Whatever emotions their actual existence as political agents of evolution evokes, it is impossible to ignore the force that situates them above men, parties, and even laws: a force that disrupts the regular course of things, the peaceful but fastidious homogeneity powerless to maintain itself. (70)

The force behind such a heterogeneous figure, he continues, is that of “a shock” (70). For Bataille, marginalized political figures (and in the above passage he is referring to the fascist leader specifically) disturb conventional modes in order to change the ills of society (ideally).
Moreover, unlike the homogeneous political figure (a dynastic leader) whom Bataille sees as slow-moving, weak and fastidious, heterogeneous leaders (who typically come from a lower-class society, and spring out of nowhere, like Napoleon Bonaparte) are significant because their unruly force signifies “a solution to the problem posed by the contradictions of homogeneity” (86). In this light, perhaps like Bataille’s unruly leaders, or to be more current, like former Middle Eastern dictators such as Saddam Hussein, and Muammer Kaddafi, Ali Pasha also possesses a palpable force that hypnotized his people, be it as a result of a paralyzing fear or a bewildering awe. For the West, Ali Pasha was unplaceable (was he Turkish? Albanian? Muslim?), and ungraspable (was he performing or were his actions genuine?). His energy is not revolutionary per se (unlike that of a Nelson Mandela or a Che Guevara, for instance), but it nevertheless left a deep and strong impression on many who left his territories, and told many a story about him in travelogues, newspaper articles, reviews, novels and plays.

This chapter has suggested that while such literature attempted to control, contain and organize the persona of Ali Pasha, in other words to Orientalize him, it becomes apparent that such a Saidian discourse fails as Ali Pasha contributed to and participated in his own process of representation to the West. Scholarship on Ali Pasha in European Romanticism and Romantic literature is, unfortunately, lacking. While Western chroniclers focused on him anecdotally, thus providing entertainment for the young travel enthusiast or the armchair traveller during the nineteenth century, today’s scholarship on British Romanticism and Orientalism virtually ignores him. Indeed, as I have illustrated in this chapter, the figure of Ali Pasha plays an integral part in Romantic socio-political history, particularly Romantic Philhellenism, as he becomes the perfect target to use for the West’s pro-Hellenic, anti-Muslim sentiment. The racially-charged Romantic narrative of Ali Pasha not only reveals the fissures in the organization of knowledge paradigm
that I outline, but this chilling narrative still resonates in today’s political encounters between the East and the West.

At the outset of my investigation, I stated that while the dissertation engages with Said’s Orientalism paradigm, the heart of my argument suggests that his critical work is limited when one examines Romantic Orientalist literature. I analyzed Foucault’s paradigm of knowledge and power, fundamental to Said’s model of Orientalism, which suggests that the gathering of empirical information about different cultures, nations and peoples contributes to control and domination of the Other. Ultimately, knowledge about the Orient is power over the Orient. In this light, my dissertation examined various literary modes that organize and disseminate knowledge about other cultures, societies and worlds, such as philosophies of world history, poetry, travelogues and drama. In my investigation of these modes, however, it becomes apparent that notions of knowledge, or rather the *possibility* of knowledge, are questioned, criticized and turned upside down to suggest the *im*possibility of epistemic formations about the Other. As the dissertation focuses on cultural encounters and how authors such as Herder, Goethe, and Byron deal with such encounters and complicate the dichotomies set up by their cultures, it aims to stimulate and facilitate a dialogue on the significance and complexity of the “stranger” to use David Simpson’s description,\(^72\) in Romantic culture, geopolitics and literature. There is still room for debate about how questions of the stranger or foreigner, Islamophobia, and the War on Terror have also been issues of contention in 1790s France, Britain and Germany. With Europe’s fluid notions of statehood and citizenry, and with the expansion of a global economy, the Romantics’ world was inextricably linked with the Other’s world. While my dissertation has focused mainly on a positive and open-minded encounter with the Orient and has

\(^{72}\) See Simpson’s *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger*. 
hinted at other issues that were of concern (imperialism, colonialism, nationalism), further investigation about literary responses to fear, terror and the image of the ‘terrorist’ (an ambiguous yet a ubiquitous one) would bring new contributions to the field of Romanticism and Orientalism. Perhaps such an investigation would suggest, as I have suggested in my dissertation, that Romantic Orientalist literature confronts, challenges and responds to such encounters with hopeful and peaceful (re)solutions. Or, such scholarship would reveal that, just like today, the Romantic Age of Terror holds the Other hostage in the clash of civilizations paradigm. Either way, as this dissertation has argued, the “troubling,” enigmatic presence of the Other remains an important and relevant subject of discussion in the field of Romanticism and beyond.
Figure I. Territories under Ali Pasha’s rule

Figure 2. The Ottoman Empire c. 1683-1800
Figure 3. Ali Discovers the Chest of Treasures

Figure 4. Ali Pasha, with his Brave officers, Resisting the Turkish Generals, Sent with the Death-Firman to Demand the Vizier's Head

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