REPRESENTATIONS *of* ISLAM IN WESTERN THOUGHT

Ian Almond

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Representations of Islam in Western Thought

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The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard
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Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians across Europe 's Battlegrounds
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History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche
(Routledge, 2009)

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Foreword

Ian Almond (1969) is a professor of British origin currently teaching English literature at Georgia State University in Atlanta, USA who spent almost half of his life outside of the United Kingdom living in Italy, Germany, Turkey, and now in the United States of America. He is author to four extraordinary and particularly provocative books:

1. *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn 'Arabi* (Routledge, 2004),
2. *The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* (I.B. Tauris, 2007),
3. *Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians Across Europe's Battlegrounds* (I.B. Tauris, 2009), and
4. *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche* (Routledge, 2009).

Ian Almond is mostly teaching South Asian and postcolonial literature at the Department for English of Georgia State University in Atlanta. He received his master's and doctoral degrees from the British Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh, and before joining GSU he taught in Italy (Universita di Bari), Germany (Freie Universität), India and Turkey where he spent six years at Bogazici University and also taught at others. Along with this, he published

numerous articles in the following journals: *PMLA*, *New Literary History*, *ELH*, *the Harvard Theological Review*, and *Radical Philosophy*.

In his book *Sufism and Deconstruction* Ian Almond is making a connection between the Islamic philosophical tradition, particularly Ibn 'Arabi-like Sufism on one side, and Western modern and postmodern philosophical tradition on the other, namely between Derrida's hermeneutics and overwhelming Sufi rhetorics. He is presenting us with the thesis that the process of deconstruction similar to Derrida's can be found in Ibn 'Arabi's works. In fact, he is bringing the Islamic philosophical tradition in collusion with the attempts that Derrida achieved through the project of deconstructive strategies i.e. offering the critical comparison between Ibn 'Arabi's interpretative strategies and Derrida's work on some fundamental issues like the critique of hegemonic reason, the aporetic value of perplexity, the hermeneutics of the text and secrets of uncovering mystery, while concurrently building on the results found in the Ian Netton's book *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*, published in 1989 in which the author concludes that Ibn 'Arabi's theological discourse and hermeneutics of the text are entirely reminiscent of post-structuralist, deconstructionist reading. In this regard, with the comparison of their strategies, this Almond's work is instigating us to enter the reconsideration of our own conceptual schemes. Doubtlessly, this is an interesting attempt to establish communication among Ibn 'Arabi's ideas through the prism of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). Although for the ones not familiar with this kind of texts this might seem as an intricate reading, it is indeed worthwhile investing additional efforts towards something that might serve as a possible cure to exaggerated self-confidence of Muslim orthodoxy and equal secular liberalism.

In his book *The New Orientalists*, through the re-examination of Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Slavoj Žižek and post-modernist writers from Borges to Salman Rushdie and Orhan Pamuk, Ian Almond presents us with post-modernist representations and 'uses' of Islam, and instigated fears and hysteria in the post-modernist project of the second phase. Therefore, this is an impressive text questioning some of the main post-modernist figures for some of whom Islam has had a prominent significance due to its geopolitical position.

Finally, *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche* represents a abridged review of the perceptions of Islam with eight most important German thinkers of 18th and 19th century (Leibniz, Kant, Herder, Goethe, Schlegel, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche) and offers a fascinating study on the importance of Islam in the very history of German way of thinking and about the manner in which these thinkers often adopted contradictory ideas on Islam and their closest Muslim neighbors. This is therefore a history of the reception of the Muslim world in the works of these thinkers. The book itself starts with Leibniz's plan to conquer Egypt (1671) and is accordingly ending with Nietzsche's praise to Islam in his *The Antichrist* from 1888. As the author states in his Introduction the original plan for this book was to write the history of demonization of Islam in the mainstream German thought and that therefore this history of Islam in German thought could be entitled *the anatomy of prejudice*. Still, this book is presenting us with each of these thinkers respectively, without judging or defending them, only truthfully presenting and analyzing their ideas.

In fact, by bringing his works in collusion, particularly philosophy and literature, Ian Almond tries to reverse this certain form of collective amnesia that is present in the modern world, namely the collective amnesia that is making people believe that Islam is deeply

non-Western and hostile to Christian West and, according to him, the first thing we need to do is to stop with this manner of Muslim and Jewish portrayal (the use of phases like: "war against terror", "war against drugs", "clash of civilizations", etc.) and this has been the subject of debate in his book *Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians Across Europe's Battlegrounds*, where in Europe, in the very heart of the Western world, Muslims and Christians were often comrades-in-arms, building alliances again and again in order to fight their countrymen together. In this regard, Ian Almond is in fact making us aware of the times when Christians and Muslims often fought on the same side during determining moments of European history, offering us at the same time the Islamic history of Europe from Andalusia, to Sicily, Turkey, Crimea... of mostly wrongly set facts of this rich, complex, and above all, common history. Therefore, the offered insights have deep consequences for our understanding of global politics and current contentious issues, as well as religious history and the future set up of the EU.

Questioning the work of these pronounced thinkers in his project of provocative analysis of consequences and implications of such "uses" of Islam in post-modernist context, Ian Almond is in fact clearly indicating his belonging to the constellation of thinkers whose time is only bashfully appearing on the horizon of a growing cooperative conversation instigating thus our encouragement for at least one of these four of his extremely intellectually inspiring studies to appear shortly in its Bosnian edition aside from this series of public lectures held at the University of Sarajevo comprising of the following five chapters.

1. Deconstructing Luther's Islam: The Turk as Curse or Cure?

The paper examines Luther's attitude towards Islam and, in particular, towards the Turk, whose success against the Catholic Habsburgs Luther appropriated in some interesting ways, effectively seeing the

Ottomans as the divine schoolmaster's rod. The ambiguities inherent in Luther's treatment of Islam, not just the paradoxical logic of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', but also the kinds of problems Luther runs into when trying to account for some of those points on which Islam bears some resemblance to protestant Christianity (predestination, mistrust of icons/images, refutation of pope). Ultimately, what emerges is that the figure of the Turk is both a poison and cure, an enemy but also a possible source of (worldly) succor.

2. Nietzsche's Peace with Islam: My Enemy's Enemy is my Friend

This article examines the many references in Nietzsche's work to Islam and Islamic cultures, and situates them in the general context of his thought. Nietzsche's praise of Islam as a '*ja–sagende* semitische Religion', his admiration for Hafiz, his appreciation of Muslim Spain, his belief in the essentially life–affirming character of Islam, not only spring from a desire to find a palatable Other to Judaeo–Christian–European modernity, but also comment on how little Nietzsche actually knew about the cultures he so readily appropriated in his assault on European modernity. Nietzsche's negative comments on Islam – his generic dismissal of Islam with other religions as manipulative thought systems, his depiction of Mohammed as a cunning impostor, reveal in Nietzsche not only the same ambiguities towards Islam as we find towards Christ or Judaism, but also a willingness to use the multiple identities of Islam for different purposes at different moments in his work.

3. Tales of Buddha, Dreams of Arabia: Joyce and Images of the East

This article attempts to examine and compare the presentation of the Orient in two separate texts by Joyce, the short story "Araby" and *Ulysses*. Whereas the attitude towards the 'East' in the young Joyce is essentially Romantic and almost transcendental (the Orient as a kind of afterlife where everything will be better), in *Ulysses* we see a more

intelligent awareness of the Orient as a Western construct – a gallery of exotic images which has little to do with reality. Where the semantic emptiness of the Orient in "Araby" produces a sense of woe and melancholy, the author of *Ulysses* affirms the emptiness and appears unpertubed by the absense of any reality behind the various Buddhas, camels and bellydancers that appear in the novel.

4. Muslims, Protestants and Peasants: Ottoman Hungary 1526-1683

The chapter basically examines the kinds of inter-faith strategies which Muslims and Christians embarked upon - in this case, in a common Protestant-Turkish struggle against the Habsburgs. In particular, it focuses upon the whole question of Ottoman Hungary, and how the Ottomans made use of Christian divisions in order to assist their own fight against the Catholic Austrian Habsburgs. Most striking is the example of Imre Thokoly, the Hungarian prince who helped lay siege tothe city of Vienna with the Turks in his own struggle against Austrian imperialism.

5. Two Versions of Islam and the Apocalypse: The Persistence of Eschatology in Schlegel, Baudrillard and Žižek

This brief article deals with the persistence of a single motif — the medieval Christian association of Islam with the Apocalypse — in the vocabulary of an early modern thinker (Schlegel), and its reappearance in the geopolitical mindscapes of two postmodern philosophers (iek and Baudrillard). The medieval motif has two variants: a thirteenth-century Franciscan version (one which sees Muslims as unconvertible signs of the Apocalypse to come) and a seventeenth-century Protestant millenarianism (in which the Muslim becomes an anti-Papist ally whom Protestant Christendom can form a coalition with, convert and ultimately march together with onto Rome). Essentially, the author argues that in his essay on the first Gulf War, Baudrillard reveals himself to be a

Franciscan, whilst Zizek's approach in his treatment of both 9/11 and his book on Iraq is that of a Calvinist.

Finally, we would like to express our special gratitude to the British Council in Sarajevo and its director Mr. Michael Moore without the support of whom this project and the visit by Mr. Ian Almond in the period from 23 to 30 May 2010 would not have been possible. Also, we would like to pay our due respect to the team of translators who invested additional efforts so that these five lectures would be available in our language before his arrival, so that we would have them in our language and available for wider audience of the region.

And last, but not the least, we would explicitly like to express our due gratitude to the organizer who in this time of Bologna 'exam fever' at our Faculties still managed to organize and motivate our professors and students to take active part in the implementation of this valuable and inspirational project entitled "Representations of Islam in Western Thought", which for now we will have in its original English version, but shortly hopefully in its Bosnian counterpart as well. Not least worth mentioning is the fact that our colleague, thanks to the British Council in Ljubljana, previously visited Ljubljana (Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Ljubljana and Averroes Institute), supporting thus additionally the intercultural exchange among the communities of Ex-Yugoslavia.

Mojmilo/ Sarajevo, May 9th 2010
Nevad Kahteran

Author's Preface

What do we understand by the term 'representation of Islam'? What does it mean to investigate the depiction of the Muslim world – be it the faith, the cultures, the believers, the literature – in non-Muslim discourse? How would studies of the representation of Muslims by non-Muslims differ from their logical inverse – Muslim representations of Christians and Christianity in texts from Turkish or Arabic literature?

The term has, by now, practically established a genre of its own. Academic books and articles abound in the study of the Muslim world's portrayal in areas as different as sixteenth century French literature, contemporary cinema, British children's education syllabi, German drama, medieval thought, many of them preceding Edward Said's landmark investigation of French and British Orientalist portrayals of their subjects. As a consequence, I'd like to consider some of the things I understand such studies to entail.

First of all, to examine the depiction of the Muslim in Western discourse is to examine the West. To consider the scimitar-bearing Turks and veiled women of Western Oriental landscapes is to consider the anxieties and desires of the gazer, not the gazed upon. This is not to say the Muslim is merely a blank screen upon which the West simply projects whatever facet of itself it happens to be

displaying ; the relationship, particularly in those cultures (such as the former Yugoslavia) where non-Muslims have direct experience of Muslims on an everyday basis, is much more symbiotic than a mere case of projection. However, if desire is built into the representation of the Other, then the constitution of that Other will tell us, to some degree, exactly what the Same desires. Whether it is terror or titillation, the kind of Muslims we encounter in a society's culture reveals a great deal about what that society fears and yearns for.

A fact which explains the almost ubiquitous Good Muslim/Bad Muslim paradigm, the Muslim 'we' can talk to and the Muslim we cannot. Almost every film about the Middle East, both past and present, seems to supply some version of this dualism – the moderate and the fanatic, the haters and the lovers of the West. The possibility that the real Muslim may well be an unthinkable mixture of both – someone who watches MTV, but also resents the economic dominance of foreign capital over his country; someone who drinks Coca Cola and reads Dan Brown, but also despises the worst elements of US foreign policy – such a possibility is seldom allowed to overturn the Good Muslim/Bad Muslim paradigm, which like all such paradigms exists to enable the society in question to deal comfortably with its opposites. A newspaper like the New York Times has adopted this approach as a standard way of dealing with Palestinians – the Good Palestinians who 'simply want peace', and the Bad Palestinians who insist on resistance rather than co-operation. To drop this method of representation would be simply unthinkable, as a consequence of such a disavowal would be to radically re-think the entire terms of the situation being addressed. In the case of Israel, this would mean understanding that what the 'Bad' Palestinians are unhappy with today is what they have been left with - 22 percent of the original British Mandate of Palestine.

The paradigm of the Good/Bad Muslim allows the Western mainstream media to avoid this unpleasant truth.

Secondly: if to study the representation of Muslims in a culture is to study, indirectly, that culture itself, then this also means to see how that culture – or author, or readership – is fragmented within itself. Nothing reveals the fissuring of a subject more than the different ways with which it addresses the same region or faith. The two words we have for the country of Hafiz and Ahmadinejad – 'Persia' and 'Iran' – belong to vastly different landscapes, so that some people will doubtless be unaware that they refer to the same nation. 'Persia' is a word which symbolises carpets, Oriental architecture, ghazals; "Iran', today, a name which in the West invokes a whole panoply of associations – oppression, despotism, dictatorship, nuclear threat. What the study of Islam's representation in the West inevitably reveals is how multiply centered and multiply voiced our own cultures, societies and even individual subjects are.

Another version of what the 'representation of Islam' might mean or at least be able to show us, concerns the future. It is curious the extent to which Islam, in both the past and the present, has been involved in Western discourse about the future. This has either been apocalyptic – the Franciscans using exegesis in the Middle Ages to calculate, from the Prophet's birthday, the date of the Last Judgement, or Spengler and the Turks and Tartars who will ultimately overrun civilized Europe – or collaborative (the Protestants who thought the Turks would join with them to overcome the Papal Antichrist, the various business models today which sees the Muslim world as a 'global player'). Islam has always helped to situate Europe not merely in terms of its boundaries – an obvious use – but also more subtly in terms of its time. Europe is the 'now' – Muslim countries, we are told, have to come up-to-date. They have to reach our 'now'. Oddly enough, this still means they

concern our future. Nothing has provoked more self-reflection in the European Union on its own future than the possible membership of Turkey. Agonizing, self-tormenting debates over what kind of future EU we want to live in has been the consequence of allowing a Muslim country to join our Christian club. Islam belongs to the future of Europe not merely in the guise of an Ankara MEP, but also in the form of the millions of Pakistani/Algerian/Turkish immigrants who, by 2040, will have been living in Europe for well over a hundred years.

The study of Muslim representations in Western literature also means, implicitly, the study of non-representation. For it is in the silences of Western discourse concerning Islam and the Middle East that its complex relationship to such entities as 'Islam' and 'Arab' becomes most evident. In many ways, the scholar embarked upon the study of such representations has to work almost mystically – trying to intuit, from what is not, what is; trying to gauge, from what is not being said, the deep, invisible discursive forces at work which silently sift and filter the phenomena which finally arrives – for us, the Western reader – on the page, on the screen, in the news bulletin. The Muslim poets, Turkish communists, Islamic feminists, Arab Christians, Palestinian secularists, Syrian Catholics... the entire range of problematic phenomena which necessarily must disappear from a mainstream version of the Muslim world, so that the West can continue to 'understand' it. Goethe was doing this almost two hundred years ago, reading books about Ottoman poetry and thought, whilst simultaneously producing Turks in his poetry which were little more than bloodthirsty animals. When it comes to representing the Muslim Other – or, for that matter, the Greek/Armenian/Orthodox Other – the cliché is as true as ever: what we leave out is as important as what we put in.

Chapter One

Deconstructing Luther's Islam: The Turk as Curse or Cure?

This monk, all the vindictive instincts of a failed priest in him, fulminated in Rome against the Renaissance…Instead of grasping with profound gratitude the tremendous event which had taken place, the overcoming of Christianity in its very seat – his hatred grasped only how to nourish itself on this spectacle. The religious man thinks only of himself.

The Antichrist, p. 197

The possibility that all significant moments in the history of thought find their expression in instants of extraordinary hate, rather than love or understanding, is certainly a dark one; in both Luther and Nietzsche's case, at least, a very specific sense of odium seems to supply a driving energy for their world-views, a dynamo of abhorrence – the hatred of self in Luther's case, the hatred of those who would *teach* us to hate the self in Nietzsche's – which paradoxically links not only two very different diatribes but ultimately two opposite ends of the German tradition. Luther's hatred of Islam, with all its eschatological ambiguities, helps us to understand why Nietzsche, three hundred and fifty years later, will see it as a religion which says 'yes' to life. Luther's contempt for Frederick the Second

and his alliances with the heathen makes clearer Nietzsche's designation of the emperor as "that great free spirit".[1] Invariably, the objects of Luther's ire – from the luxurious excesses of popish Italy to the freethinking views of his emerging Renaissance peers – was always going to dictate Nietzsche's preferences and idiosyncratic admirations; Islam, we shall see, was no exception to this.

There are three reasons for beginning a history of Islam in German thought with Luther, even if the first one is conventional and somewhat superficial. Whether it is out of devotion, irritation or simply childhood acquaintance, there is no German thinker who has not read Luther and not had to deal with (or in more modern times, make some kind of reference to) his Reformative shadow. LEIBNIZ, KANT, Hegel's modernizer of medieval social norms, Feuerbach's proto-anthropologist, Nietzsche's failed priest, WEBER, MARX, Spengler's Gothic reformer…this continual flow of reference to Luther, central or peripheral, laudatory or defamatory, turns his writings into a useful litmus paper, one which can test the acidity of a thinker's view on a range of issues from religious difference to humanism and the Renaissance.

Luther's function in this study, however, is not merely that of an ideological barometer. Luther is significant because, in many ways, his diatribes against the Turk constitute the last non-European voice against Islam in German thought. Unlike Leibniz, Luther will never attempt to draw on the idea of a Europe united in Christianity; in all of Luther's copious objections against the Turks as "a wild and barbarous people"[2], in all of Luther's references to their holiness as "the very dregs of abominations and errors"[3] and their "stinking Koran", territorial or regional political considerations take a poor second place to doctrine. Luther's profound and cultivated fundamentalism, a dedication to the letter which leaves little room for any notion of *Realpolitik* to slip through, separates him most visibly from the other

figures in this study. In this sense, a conjunction of the medieval and the modern also makes Luther a curious moment in the chronicling of Western responses to Islam; on the one hand, a figure whose extensive reliance on Nicholas of Cusa's Koranic commentary and a thirteenth century friar's polemic will render his view of Islam irreducibly medieval, but whose own antagonism towards Catholicism, aversion to allegory, selective mistrust of scholasticism and unwillingness to speak of a single Church will colour Luther's Islam in a very different way from that of Cusa or Brother Ricardo. "Paradigm shift" is, admittedly, a term which has suffered much abuse of late, and yet it does seem to be a fact of undoubtable significance that Luther's works find themselves on an erratic fault line between the constantly shifting plates of the medieval and the early modern.

The third, and perhaps most subtle reason why our history begins with Luther stems from his singular emphasis on the part Islam's success has to play in a sovereign God's general plan for mankind. As early as 1518, Luther had written that "to fight against the Turk is the same as resisting God, who visits our sin upon us with his rod".[4] Luther's consistent conviction of the instrumental function of Islam as a tool to punish Christians for their transgressions, even to the point of equating the Turks almost unequivocally with the will of God ("It is the Gospel which is the Turk"[5]) not only marks Luther's Islam as indelibly medieval, but also introduces a strange and irresolvable tension into his work. Islam, sometimes our "schoolmaster", sometimes "Satan's army"[6], enjoys a status of undecidability in Luther. The term is intentionally Derridean; just as the author of *Dissemination* discerned an indeterminate play of oppositions in the Greek *pharmakon*, a term which can mean both 'poison' and 'cure', Islam itself will perform an equally ambiguous role in Luther's meditations, both diabolical and divine, cleansing and corrupting, the epitome of blasphemy and – simultaneously – the restorer of the sacred.

In the following pages, we are going to riddle Luther's texts with a variety of different interrogatives, in an attempt to understand not simply how Islam and the Turk are represented in his commentaries, tracts and remarks, but also the subtler mechanisms within Luther's theological positions which enabled such views of Islam to take place. What were Luther's sources – and more significantly, what motives guided his selection of the various Islams presented to him? Exactly what internal consistencies and contradictions lay in the compendium of phenomena Luther associated with Islam – from Münzer and the Ninevites to allegory and Catholic Spain? What precise function did Islam have for the Reformer – what kind of identities did it affirm for him, what sort of oppositions did it facilitate? How did Luther deal with the aspects of Islam which ran in close proximity to his own faith – such as predestination or iconoclasticism? What effect did Luther's Islam have on his own understanding of Christian culture – did it socially or geo-culturally locate his faith? Does Luther's Germanness ever colour his treatment of Islam? Finally, and perhaps most intractably, what does Luther leave out in his myriad of references to Turks and Mohammedans? What is absent in his discourse – and what is the significance of such lacunae?

The Choice Between Diatribe and Dialogue: Luther's Sources for Islam

> *I have read this book of Brother Ricardo's several times, but couldn't believe there were reasonable people in the world who could be persuaded by the Devil to believe in such shameful things, and I had always thought it had been made up by the Walachian scribes…I would gladly have read the Koran myself, and was surprised…that no one had translated the Koran into Latin for a long time…so that even though Mahomet had*

reigned for over nine hundred years…no one felt themselves compelled to find out what Mahomet's belief was…
-from Luther's 1542 preface to his own translation of Brother Ricardo's Confutatio Alcorani (own trans.)[7]

As the Luther scholar H. Barge points out, two principal texts formed the general basis for Luther's knowledge of Islam: the *Confutatio Alcorani* of Brother Ricardo of Montecroce (first written around 1300 and translated by Luther in 1542) and Nicholas of Cusa's famous commentary on the Koran, the *Cribratio Alcorano* (DATE?). Luther's desire to obtain concrete information about "Mohammedanism" – even if cynically interpreted as more of a manifestation of instrumental reason rather than communicative – is striking, and foreshadows Leibniz's own seventeenth century scramble to find a reliable translation of the Koran. And yet, we will see how Luther's indebtedness to the fourteenth century polemicist over the distinguished Christian Neoplatonist indicates a very specific and meditated choice. To a large extent, the pitch and tone of Luther's diatribes against Islam will draw on Ricardo rather than Cusa, will see Islam as an opposite pole rather than a corrupt (yet partially salvageable) version of Christianity, and ultimately will allow a strategy of abuse and utter alterity to override a search for resemblance and proximity.

Although Luther translates into German what can best be described as Ricardo's 'summary' of the Koran in 1542, he had been acquainted with the Latin text at least twelve years earlier. Luther's introduction to the German version is curious for a number of reasons. From the above passage, one can discern an anxiety concerning the original meaning of the Koran – and a very Protestant suspicion that church scribes have exaggerated or corrupted it. As the author of one of the most significant vernacular translations of the Bible, Luther's anxiety at not obtaining the *real* Koran does

implicitly place the infidel's text in the same position as the Holy Scriptures. Luther's concern for textual authenticity, be it Biblical or Koranic, unwittingly runs along parallel lines.

Luther's amazement that "reasonable people" (*vernunftige Menschen*) could actually believe the "shameful" things he had found in the Koran is also worth noting, as Luther's views on the relationship between Islam and reason are often inconsistent. There are frequently moments where he defends Christian practices such as communion against "Turks, Jews and our reason"[8], whilst in the 1529 text "On War Against the Turk" the Judaeo-Islamic rejection of the divinity of Christ is seen as "extraordinarily pleasing to reason".[9] Whenever the word *irrationalis* comes up to describe Islam in Brother Ricardo's treatise, however, Luther throws himself into mistranslating the term with remarkable gusto, producing an interesting range of variants – 'foolish', 'ridiculous', 'against God and all reason' and even 'bestial' (*viehisch*).[10] A curiously triangular oscillation of uncertainties is set up here between mind, body and faith; because Luther's *fide*, being doctrine alone, can have nothing to do with the world, the Mohammedanism which Luther forever seems to associate with worldliness and worldly things has to oscillate between a fleshly, animal, insensate creed and a false, pagan, Sophist-icated version of Judaism. Naturally, Luther's own deep reservations concerning the limitations of Aristotelian philosophy as a foundation for theology meant he had to be careful in his vilification of Islam as 'irrational', trying to ascribe to Islam all the negative aspects of the word (animal-like, bestial, etc) whilst avoiding any positive, anti-rationalist connotations.

As Barge's critical introduction to the text amply demonstrates, Luther's translation of Brother Ricardo's polemic is not merely loose but *selectively* flexible. Whole passages are missed out, phrases are condensed, ideas Luther found difficult to agree with are simply

omitted, or replaced with Luther's own thoughts. Luther's conviction, for example, that Turks and Saracens were unconvertible (*können nicht …bekeren*) causes him to leave out Ricardo's Latin expression to the contrary at the end of the second chapter[11]; overtly Catholic phrases such as *splendore miraculorum* are rendered more palatable for a Protestant tongue (Luther writes "wonderful clarity" instead). All of which suggests a profoundly pragmatic approach towards the tract on Luther's part; the Reformer's care and concern to preserve the original in the case of the Bible and the Koran are not reflected in his translation of Ricardo – rather than the work of reference it is introduced as, the more immediate function of Luther's translation appears to be that of ammunition.

Ricardo's medieval tract offers a stark contrast to Nicholas of Cusa's commentary on the Koran. Even if the principal raison d'etre of both texts are the same – to illustrate the deficiencies of Islam viz a viz the Christian faith – Cusa's text distinguishes itself from that of Ricardo's in its caution, its paucity of abuse, its inclination towards the ignorance rather than the malevolence of Mohammed and, most significantly, its greater degree of philosophical sensitivity towards the difficult epistemological issues of revelation. From the very outset, we find the author of the *Cribratio* contemplating the question of how one can know a Good which does not belong to "the region of this sensible world"[12] ("for example" says Cusa, "a man blind from birth has no knowledge of colour" p5). In place of Brother Ricardo's obsession with the deficiencies of the Koran, what we have in Cusa is a delicate attempt (probably of Neoplatonic origin) to pick out some shattered fragments of Christian truth from the general debris of Islam. Of course, this still involves a brutalization of Islam[13], but the difference in tone between the two sources is plain to see. Brother Ricardo's style does not require a Luther to augment its venom:

> *At the time of Emperor Heraclius came a man, indeed a Devil, a true, first born child of Satan (diabolus primogenitus sathanae), against the truth and against the Christian church, who was driven by fleshly desires (in libidine proclius) and with black magic and who went by the name of Mahomet…*[14]

One only has to compare this with the opening lines of Cusa's Prologue to his *Cribratio*:

> *As best I could, I made a careful attempt to understand the book of law of the Arabs, a book I obtained at Basel…together with a debate among those noble Arabs, wherein one of them, a follower of Mohammed, attempted to win over another of them – who, being eminent among the Arabs and quite learned, showed that the Christian faith ought rather to be accepted.*[15]

Above all else, Cusa's book begins in dialogue. Where Ricardo's text tries to cram as many terms of abuse as possible into its opening lines (underlining thereby its exclusively Christian audience), Cusa's text is on the whole more open and "careful" towards the potential convert, more sensitive in its treatment of the "noble Arabs" – Ricardo, in contrast, refers to them later as thieves and robbers (*maxime aliorum Arabes, gulam videlicet, rapinam et intemperantiam*).[16] If Ricardo's tract ultimately constitutes a defensive reinforcement of the Christian faith, Cusa's commentary takes on the more subtle (though no less single-minded) aim of showing how the Koran itself unwittingly reveals the truth of Christianity.[17] The point is not to foolishly proffer Nicholas of Cusa as some kind of late medieval beacon of tolerance and multiculturalism in contrast to Ricardo – Cusa provides enough references to the Koran's "turpitude, flagrant lies and contradictions" (p13) in the *Cribratio* to make this in

itself a silly idealization. What should be emphasized, rather, are the two ways in which Luther actively chooses Ricardo's approach to Islam over that of Cusa's as a model for his own – firstly, in seeing Mohammed as intentionally perverse and mendacious (in contrast to Cusa's belief that "ignorance was the cause of Mohammed's error and malevolence" p6) and secondly, by adopting the form of Ricardo's critique – essentially a rhetorical strategy of derogatory labeling, dark sarcasm ("…these wise, yes, wisest people the Turks"[18]), extensive outrage interspersed with sections of half-informed, explanatory analysis. Standing at the forked path of the Other and the Same, Luther chooses Ricardo's way of radical polarization, transforming Islam theologically, culturally, ethnically into the *totaliter alter* of Christianity – and passes by Cusa's more moderate route of comparison, reduction and ultimate absorption of the apparently alien into an overwhelmingly Christian framework.

Flesh, Falsity and *philosophia*: What Luther Associates with Islam and the Turk

In the profusion of things Luther associates with the faith, figure and followers of Mohammed, three or four basic themes emerge, interconnected if not always harmonious, and interdependent, if not always mutually justifying. In order to fully grasp their subtleties, one has to recall Luther's most basic juxtaposition of doctrine against life:

> *We must be careful to distinguish between doctrine and life. Doctrine is heaven; life is the earth. In life is sin, error, uncleanness and misery…But in doctrine, since there is no error, there is no need of pardon; therefore, there is no comparison*

> *between doctrine and life. One little point of true doctrine is more valuable than heaven and earth…our doctrine, blessed be God, is pure.*[19]

Borges has already written on how every writer creates his predecessors; certainly, without Nietzsche's version of Luther as a hater of life this passage, tucked away in the middle of a commentary on Galatians, would not stand out as it does. The purity of doctrine – kept apart from everything else, to follow the original Hebrew meaning of holy (*qadosh* or 'separate') – renders the world impure; moreover, the reductionism implicit in Luther's gesture is ontologically comprehensive. All things – good works, luxury, art, greed, ethics, positions of power – stand as naught against the word of God. Scripture, insuperably divine, levels everything which does not belong to it to the same base line.

So it comes as no surprise that one of the standard attributes which Luther constantly associates with "Mohammedanism" is worldliness, often in the positive sense of worldly wisdom and material success:

> *Observe how the Turks are adorned with power and wisdom. The pope, too, and the cardinals are very wise men. Similarly Plato, Cicero and Socrates are also very great men.*[20]

In "On War Against the Turk", this synonymy of the Turk with the world is seen as a indirect cause of his military superiority:

> *The Turk has people and money in abundance; he defeated the Sultan twice in succession, and that took people! Why, dear sir, his people are always under arms so that he can quickly muster three or four hundred thousand men.*[21]

It is a calculation Luther is fond of repeatedly making: Scripture hates the world, the Turk hates scripture, therefore the world loves the Turk. In an almost perfect inverse of the prosperity Gospel, Luther interprets the success of the Muslim armies as indicative of their Godlessness. To be successful in this world is proof that one belongs to it – for, as scripture says, the world loves those who are its own; the "power and wisdom" of the Turks and the Pope stands in inverse proportion to their faith, it belongs to the Godless conviction that "men are to rule and bear the sword and get ahead in the world"[22]; the more worldly success and virtues they enjoy, the farther they lie from scripture, which is antithetical to the world. If the Turk and the Pope wanted to join the true church, their high status in the world would first "have to be reduced to nothing before God".[23] Luther uses this argument to facilitate – though not completely to explain – the perceived military and economic superiority of the Turk in his time. This equation of wealth, success and wisdom with worldliness, nevertheless, does not displace the chastising function of the Turk as Luther's primary explanation for the success of the Ottomans.

What is most interesting about this repeated linking of the Turks with the world is that it subsequently makes any qualities one might attribute to them theologically irrelevant. If even good works and wisdom are not enough to win God's grace – only belief in the Gospel can do this – then it doesn't really matter whether the Turks are good or evil, selfish or generous, black or white, as wise as Socrates or as cruel as Timur. The fundamental, all-deciding fulcrum of faith – to believe that Christ is God – makes Luther's descriptions of Turks of merely anthropological interest. This may explain why Luther gives us such inconsistent versions of the level of culture of the Turks – sometimes they are linked with "wisdom", Cicero and Socrates[24], at other points in Luther's writings they are presented to us as a "wild and barbarous people"[25], are compared to Tartars[26] and portrayed as essentially backward and nomadic:

> *Similarly, the Turks, too, boast that they do not build magnificent structures, as do we, who adorn our cities with magnificent buildings and erect castles as though we were going to live forever. The Turks laugh at this ambition of ours, and they regard it as a point of saintliness not to dwell in stately houses. Hence they lay waste to vineyards and demolish stately buildings. The northern peoples whom we call the Tartars follow a similar way of life; for they also dwell in huts…*[27]

A teasing ambiguity runs through these lines. Luther seems almost torn between demonizing the Turks as mindless Goths and lauding them for their ascetic indifference to the treasures of this world. His paraphrase of the Turk's boast becomes so extended ("as do we") that one begins to doubt who is really speaking, and what the value of those "magnificent buildings" actually is. What begins as a moment of Christian self-congratulation on how civilised and splendid "we" are almost ends on a note of self-admonishing *vanitas*. The sense is unclear – are stately buildings a good thing or a bad one? The biblical context of the comment – Luther is talking about the offspring of Noah (Genesis 10:2) – offers little help, apart from the lesson of how God rewards pride and unbelief with destruction; Luther sees Magog as an ancestor of the Scythians, whom he later associates with the Turks. Nevertheless, whether a contempt for worldly structures is spiritually healthy or barbaric savagery remains ambiguous.

This ambiguity persists in many other associations Luther makes with Islam and the Turks. Although Luther mocks their monadic asceticism, and in rare moments even acknowledges their "pious" reputation and "abstemious life"[28], the faith and its followers are generally seen as the epitome of carnal desires and excess. Following an already well-established medieval tradition of fleshly

Mohammedanism[29], Luther tells us repeatedly of "the Turk's dissolute life", how the Koran is "a bed of harlotry", how it is "customary among the Turks for one man to have ten or twenty wives".[30] Islam's worldliness inevitably takes on an abiding association with flesh and carnality, a propensity for appetite which, for Luther, soon brings his references spilling over into Roman Catholicism:

> *Both the pope and the Turk are so blind and senseless that they commit the dumb sins shamelessly…I hear one horrible thing after another about what an open and glorious Sodom Turkey is, and everyone who has looked around a little in Rome and Italy knows well how God revenges and punishes the forbidden marriage [homosexuality].*[31]

A few points need to be made here. First of all, Luther's use of Catholic Italy as a kind of local Orient itself belongs to a long tradition in German thought, one which figures such as Goethe, Nietzsche and Thomas Mann will draw on more positively, seeing in Italy and Spain the nearest thing to an exotic, sensual 'East' one can find in Christian Europe.[32] Of course, Luther's use of this motif here is not Romantic but doctrinal – the Mediterranean is Mohammedan because of its Catholics, not its climate. Secondly, the association Luther makes of Islam with Catholicism – Luther's constant refrain "The Jew, the Turk and the Pope" becomes almost formulaic in its repetition – affects the ontological status of both Islam and his own faith in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, the various points on which Luther sees Islam and Catholicism as different heads on the same apocalyptic beast – the 'inventedness' of their faiths, their belief in works, their common, dogmatic styles of exegesis[33] - enacts his critique in an exclusively theological context, draining his words of any cultural colouring, bringing a purely spiritual transparency to his objections.

In this sense, Luther's criticisms of Turk and pope take place on an other-worldly plane, in the silent, apolitical, heavenly realm of theological dispute, far above the noise and mess of mere worldly affairs. At the same time, however, even in the very act of other-worldly, scriptural disputation, Luther's diatribes against Islam and Catholicism are also words against Italy and Turkey, against Spaniards and Turks, against Suleiman the Magnificent and Pope Clement VII. In other words, Luther's doctrinal stance against Turk and Pope, however biblical in nature, also implicitly *locates* Luther's universal message, colouring it with German Protestantism as a *topos*, distinct from places such as Spain and Turkey. In geo-culturally locating Islam and Catholicism not merely as false doctrines but also as real places and peoples which have fallen from God ("…if we are to die…may we be killed in the profession of our faith, and not become Turkish or Spanish!"[34]), Luther unwittingly finitizes his own true Church as essentially German. Islam's fate in Luther's writings is to oscillate between these two versions of a spiritual threat and a military one.

Thirdly, this repeated linking of Islam with the flesh does suggest that Luther's anxiety and disgust towards Islam is an anxiety and disgust towards the body. Both of them are perceived to be threats – either military or spiritual; both need to be checked and controlled; neither can be defeated unless we begin by cleansing our own hearts in prayer. That Luther's most venomous remarks concerning Islam employ sensuality as their main device – the Koran always "smells" or "stinks"[35] – underlines this subtle projection of self-hatred, of a hatred of the flesh and fleshly desires, onto Islam in Luther's Islamophobia.

On a related note of subversion, Luther seems to associate Islam with revolutionary figures such as Thomas Münzer, and more generally with a radical threat of displacement, structural change and loss of control. Münzer, the social revolutionary and contemporary of Luther's who was executed for his role in the Peasant's Revolt

of 1525, is explicitly compared to Mohammed as one who becomes possessed by the devil to wage war with worldly means for his own worldly goals ("What was Münzer seeking in our own times, but to become a new Turkish Emperor?"[36]). Luther's own ambiguities towards hierarchy and class notwithstanding, "Mohammedanism" finds itself linked with the threat of social unrest and hierarchical disruption; in this sense, not merely an anxiety over the intrusion of the alien (a concern for "our" girls, "our" culture, "our" women which Luther, in his more German moments, certainly reveals) but a much deeper worry about the *internal* disruption of the familiar. This *Angst* over social stability has largely to do with the egalitarian, or at least non-aristocratic ideas about Ottoman society which Luther had already encountered second hand from sympathetic Christian accounts of the government of the Turk[37]; Luther was clearly perturbed by the thought of Christian peasants, already oppressed and long-suffering under the feudal lords of their own faith, electing to side with the Turk out of hope for a better deal. There are several occasions in his work where Luther warns against the folly of such betrayal – and how "preachers must diligently impress upon such people" the sinfulness of siding with the Turk.[38] Reinforcing this specific belief of Luther's is a more general conviction that Muslims, be they Arabs or Turks, are inherently a-structural and somehow nomadic. Commenting on Genesis 16:12's description of Ishmael as a "wild man", Luther helpfully informs us:

> *Strictly speaking, this description applies to the Arabs, who do not stay in a definite place, but carry all their possessions with them in carts and live mostly on plunder.*[39]

More a foreshadowing of Renan's "tent and tribe"[40] than a reflection of Cusa's "noble Arabs", this aversion to stasis and stability is

extended to the Turk by Luther as a warning against those peasants who think life might be better under a different lord:

> *For it is characteristic of the Turk not to let those who are anything or who have anything stay in the place where they live, but to put them far back in another land, where they are sold and must be servants.*[41]

Luther's subtext beneath this warning to the serfs is fairly clear: "Side with the Turk and he will treat you like Jews, selling you into captivity and sending you into Egypt". The hierarchy of mind/body, thoughts/feelings, will/appetite which Luther saw Islam threatening to overturn is replicated on a political level: not merely personal hierarchies but also social ones are threatened by the Turk. Not only control of our bodies, but also control of our societies will be disrupted by their arrival – the Turk will turn everything upside down. This psychologically interesting fear of disruption and displacement which Muslims inspire in Luther does lend Islam an aura of dynamic energy, possibly anarchic but at the same time radically transformative. Slightly problematically, Luther's Christianity as a consequence becomes associated with stasis, permanence, society and tradition – a preserver of place and stasis, a respecter of position and custom. In other words, Luther finds himself in the strange position of defending the value of something he has been trying to reform, of arguing for the existence of something which, biblically, is nothing more than soil and flag, town and pasture, use and custom. Whenever Luther comes to and realises this – that without scripture, everything in the world , everything that is sacred in German culture and tradition, is not worth "one little point of true doctrine"[42] – then the theological immediately reasserts its primacy over the merely territorial in his work, and we encounter some of his most surprising statements:

> *If we are not going to make an adequate, honest resistance… it would be far better not to begin a war, but to yield lands and people to the Turk in time, without useless bloodshed.*[43]

Of course, part of the motivation behind this remarkable advice is worldly – Luther's conviction of the Turk's military superiority, as we have already seen, prompts this reluctance to embark on a campaign one cannot win. However, by far the most significant factor in this contemplation of a German surrender to Turkish forces is Luther's belief that Christians are not so much militarily but above all spiritually unprepared for the conflict – "our unrepentant life makes us unworthy of any grace, counsel or support, we must put up with it and suffer under the devil" (ibid). It is impossible to imagine Leibniz, who would be faced with a similar Turkish advance on Vienna a hundred and fifty years later, advocating the same spiritual advice. In these moments Luther's world drains magically of any importance; faced with the idea of the Turk not as radically evil, but rather as a consequence of our own greater evil, crowns, kingdoms and pride take second place to scripture.

Luther, Language and Islam

Thus Islam, unruly signifier that it is, threatens to disturb three kinds of Christian order – spiritual, bodily and social, even if Luther appears to shift emphasis from one to the other at different points in his work. However, this pairing of Islam with worldliness does lead to another feature of Luther's "Mohammedanism" – that of falsity and pure appearance. The semantic emptiness of Islam, the spiritual hollowness of the Turk is what emerges here, a signifier without any real signified to boast of, all *zahir* with no *batin*.

Luther's Muslims 'look' like Christians – they pay lip service to Jesus and believe in the same prophets – but in substance they are not, for they deny Christ's divinity. The fact that they "boast" of their "godliness"[44] only serves to emphasise how much they belong to the world of *Schein* and surface. Interestingly, this conviction of the Muslim's inherent superficiality is extended to their hermeneutics. Luther's mistrust of allegory as "pernicious" and misleading is already well-known, a mistrust which he displayed even towards the fathers of the early Church ("In all of Origen there is not one word about Christ"[45]). Luther, according to his own confession, realised very early on as a monk that "allegories are nothing, that it's not what Christ signifies but what Christ is that counts" (ibid). A rejection of the phenomenological Christ in favour of the ontological one is what takes place here; a desire for solidity and substance permeates this frustration with the allegorical, the same desire which no doubt pushed Luther to look for a reliable translation of the Koran. Not surprisingly, many of Luther's more derogatory references to allegory invariably involve the Turk – in his commentaries on Genesis 30:9-11, Luther mocks the way medieval commentators interpreted Rachel to be the contemplative life and Leah that of the active. If Christians persist in reading the Bible in this way

> *they will become like the Turks and the Tartars, not like Leah or Rachel. For in Turkey there are also many religious who make it their one aim to interpret the Alcoran of Mohammed allegorically in order that they may gain greater admiration. For allegory is like a beautiful harlot who fondles men in such a way that it is impossible for her not to be loved…*[46]

In this passage, falseness, fleshly pleasure, shallowness, allegory, textual flexibility and Islam are all blended together in an eclectic

defense of scriptural fundamentalism. If Turks and their faith are shallow, then certainly their exegesis is going to be equally lacking in substance. The allegorist's sin is the same as the fornicator's: to fall in love with the body instead of the soul, to be deceived by the outward instead of paying proper attention to the inward, to employ a fantastic hermeneutics of *eros* instead of a proper exegesis of *agapeia* – ultimately, to have foolishly overlooked the fact that the Truth does not *signify*, it simply *is*. Scripture (with apologies to the poet Macleish) should not mean, but *be*.

Luther's description of Islam as "a patchwork of Jewish, Christian and heathen beliefs" and elsewhere, as a work of "self made spirituality" (*eigen Geisterey*) coming out of "their own heads and dreams"[47] goes hand in hand with this rejection of allegory. Because Islam is empty, because it lacks depth, the Mohammedans do what they want with their texts, just as they have done what they wanted with the Bible. In this sense, Luther's reference to the Koran as "a bed of harlotry"[48] is not simply a condemnation of its perceived 'lewdness', but also a comment on its multiple interpretability – the harlotry of allegory lies precisely in the fact that the allegorist does not have to remain faithful to just one thing. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to see in Luther's words against allegory and the scribes of the "Alcoran" a very Derridean fear of the loss of textual control. Luther is already irritated at the monks who, reading Ovid, can turn Apollo or a laurel tree into Jesus and Mary.[49] If the signs in God's universe are not necessarily linked to reality, then we can rearrange them in whatever way we wish, even to the extent (as Cusa did) of finding the Bible in the Koran, or the Gospel in Ovid. Once again, Islam represents a subversive threat, not so much political or spiritual this time but lexical.[50]

Given the fact that Luther did employ allegorical interpretations from time to time – he certainly follows a long tradition in

associating Islam with the apocalypse, and quite explicitly draws on Revelations 13 and Daniel 12 to justify this[51] - we find a qualification in the same commentary on Genesis. Although Luther admits he "hate[s] allegories", on the rare occasions one has to use them, first of all a "historical sense may be sought", one which is "genuine and pure" and which gives us "correct and solid instruction".[52] Once more, solidity and substance is opposed to fantasy and empty speculation. The fact that any allegory which results from this "historical sense" cannot become a "monastic allegory", one which suggests devilish fancies such as the *vita contemplativa*, but an allegory which "is in agreement with history …and embraces the doctrine of the cross" (ibid), confirms Luther's desire to keep scripture as a *vehicle*, rather than an expression, of God's holy word. It is important to see how Luther's understanding of Islamic exegesis lay outside this domain of interpretative stability. Luther's hatred of Islam, like his hatred of allegory, of the body, of the fanciful imagination of the monks, is ultimately a hatred of that which upsets the natural limits God has laid down for us.

In speaking of Luther and language, one final, related point. It is worthwhile noting that both Luther and Leibniz, as we shall see in the next chapter, were at times attracted by the idea of creating a completely new language. Towards the end of his life (as Graham White has pointed out[53]) Luther considered the idea of a radically new language to convey more clearly the intricacies of faith:

> *We will, then, do better if we leave logic or philosophy in its own sphere, and learn to speak new languages in the kingdom of faith (novis linguis in regno fidei) outside of every sphere.*[54]

This projected, future language, "outside of every sphere", would be more adept at expressing not merely a Christian reality, but more

importantly the (occasionally non-rational) complexities of faith. The verse "The word became flesh" (John 1:14), Luther insisted, was true in theology and false in philosophy. Moreover, the language of theology conveys meanings that *philosophia* (keeping in mind the original Aristotelian sense of the term, with all its echoes of non-contradiction) cannot discern:

> *"Mother" in philosophy means an impure woman; in theology it means someone who is pure and virgin. And thus the words used in philosophy become new [in theology].*[55]

Given Luther's repeated linking of philosophy with Turks, Jews and Catholics, his constant emphasis on the fact that all three sects cannot accept certain non-rational facets of the Christian truth, it is not surprising to find Luther's project for a new language to be a language somehow beyond philosophy, a new language of faith unspeakable to Muslims and Catholics, a *lingua nova* essentially Protestant in nature.

The Turk and the Jew: Semitic Brothers, Racial Foes

Luther's remarks on Jews in the context of Islam bring to light, more than anything else, how ambiguous Luther's own attitude to Judaism was. Given the controversial nature of texts such as *On Jews and their Lies*, Luther and Judaism is in itself a well-researched area; Amy Newman has already formulated how Judaism's persistence in eighteenth and nineteenth century German society provided an ongoing problem for the Protestant narrative, which could not accommodate the Jewish faith as an actual and still valid phenomenon – on the contrary, German Jews provided "an apparent discrepancy

between Protestant discourse and historical reality".[56] Moreover, Newman correctly discerns three versions of the death of Judaism in Luther's writings – the first as the death of Christ on the Cross (i.e. the cessation of Judaism's validity with the birth of Christianity); the second as the death of Judaism in a contemporary sense, understanding the present Jew as one amongst the many enemies of Christ in our society; finally, the demise of Judaism is also interpreted eschatologically by Luther as a necessary condition of the Final Coming.[57]

Certainly, this can result in the kind of 'Good Jew/Bad Jew' investigations one finds so often in Nietzsche scholarship; Luther follows a standard tradition in Christian anti-Semitic thought of distinguishing between 'good' pre-Christian Jews and 'bad' post-Christian ones. It comes as no surprise to find Luther, even in the midst of his vituperative invective against Judaism, heaping unambiguous praise upon the Jews for being a "remarkable people".[58] Nor is it surprising to find this ambiguity reflected in the relationship between Judaism and Islam in Luther's work. Particularly in the commentaries on Genesis, Turks and Arabs are clearly seen as the inherent enemies of the Jew, through a semi-racial/semi-scriptural understanding of their genealogy. If Turks and Tartars are seen as "Scythians"[59], then Arabs are "Ishmaelites" or "sons of Ishmael".[60] Luther consistently refers to Ishmael as being somehow related to the "Hagarenes" or "Saracens", essentially making use of the Old Testament, of a pre-Islamic text, to foretell the emergence of Islam. The gesture is an interesting one, if not without precedent – tracing Mohammed's lineage back to Ishmael and the Moabites is a familiar, though by no means standard motif in medieval apologetics.[61] Locating the origins of Islam in the figure of Ishmael, however cynically intended, attributes an extraordinary significance to the faith, even if that significance is ultimately adversarial and

derogatory. Not only does it replicate the kind of Scholastic typology Luther would often grow impatient with, but associating Islam with Ishmael allots the faith an important position in an essentially tri-polar scheme – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All of which serves to emphasise how Luther's Islam is no strange, lunatic sect or minor heresy, but rather a significant and elementary force in the Christian world.

In these Old Testament contexts, the Muslim (Scythian/Moabite/sons of Hagar) emerges as the tribal enemy of the Jew; what is most curious, however, is the sympathetic gloss Luther the commentator offers on Ishmael. Having just connected, somewhat emphatically, Ishmael and his descendants to Arabs and Mohammedans, immediately in the following lines Luther emphasises both the carnal (worldly) *and* spiritual blessing of Ishmael, who "lived in the true faith and in godliness".[62] The contiguity of the two descriptions is problematic: one minute Ishmael, Luther's pre-Islamic Muslim, is said to have received a physical blessing from the Lord, with the Ottoman conquest of Arabia being given immediately as a contemporary example of this. The next moment, we learn (contrary to what Luther has said elsewhere about God's exclusively worldly blessing of the Turk with power and wisdom) that Ishmael also received a spiritual benediction – indeed, his death is redescribed by Luther as being "gathered to the people of the saints" (ibid). Luther's overt positivity towards Ishmael does not quite match the Biblical description as "a wild donkey of a man" who "will live in hostility towards all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12). The exact status of Ishmael in Luther's Christian ontology, like that of Islam in general, remains uncertain.

Apart from this slightly ambiguous juxtaposition of Ishmael against the Old Testament Jew, Luther is almost always equally negative towards Jews and Muslims whenever he links them together.

As was the case with Catholicism, Luther chooses a number of points on which he finds a common abhorrence of both Islam and Judaism; unlike Luther's Pope, however, who is occasionally seen to be 'even worse' than the Turk ("he has done more harm to the Kingdom of Christ than Mohammed"[63]), both Muslim and Jew emerge as equally valid enemies of Christ. Neither profits at the expense of the other within the general scheme of Luther's hate. Both (as we have already seen) are blinded by Reason against the crucial doctrine of communion and Christ's divinity[64]; both fast, in vain, believing it to be pleasing to God[65]; both smugly and confidently assume that they are the chosen people of God (a remark to be echoed by Kant – even if Luther later qualifies this with the admission that "all men are people of this kind"[66]); both refuse to accept any belief which is not in their books (a hermeneutical obstinacy which Kant, once again, will remark upon, choosing to explain such an attitude as "pride" in the case of Mohammedans and "misanthropy" in the case of the Jews[67]). On the common feature of treachery, however – both faiths being literal/metaphorical betrayers of Christ – Luther finds himself in the situation not so much of a conflict of sympathies but a conflict of antipathies when writing about the Jew who has to live under Muslim oppression:

> *They are a people scattered here and there, oppressed in various ways, and all but held in captivity wherever they live. They fancy they have great prestige …among the Turks. And it is true the Turks favour them because of their traitorous activities. For whatever secret plans the Jews are able to fish out from all the courts of the Christian princes, they immediately bring to the Turk…But if you consider the actual situation, the Jews are prey for the Turks themselves…*[68]

Although Luther clearly states that "usury is contrary to nature… and actually a sin" (ibid), he significantly omits any mention of this parallel conviction in Islam (even though he would have known about the Islamic prohibition of usury as *haram* through Cusa[69]), nor does he cite it as a reason for the "wealth and prestige" of Jews in Ottoman cities. Moreover, the general section from which the passage is taken is problematic in its position on the Ottoman treatment of the *Yahudi*: does the Turk oppress the Jew or not? First Luther says no, then he says yes, followed by an elaboration on how relatively better off Jews are under Christian governments than Muslim ones. Luther has to struggle with two contradictory prejudices here (the Turk's despotism and his own desire to see the Jew's oppression as deserved), trying to keep one in play without canceling out the other. The author has to simultaneously preserve the idea of Jews and Mohammedans being traitors to a Christian Europe, without allowing the reader to forget in this Judaeo-Ottoman friendship the despotic merciless nature of the Turkish government, which oppresses the Jews more than Christian governments do. On the other hand, Luther has to be careful not to present the Ottomans as being *too* despotic to their fellow traitors – whom Luther has no sympathy for and who, after all, are "in error" and oppressed as a consequence of their disbelief ("What sort of a name have the Jews today? Are they not the reproach of all human beings?"). Turkish despotism, in this case, becomes an unknowing tool of God's anger upon the Jews. The result of all this is a strange passage, marked by a slightly Byzantine logic, where Luther's anti-Jewish and anti-Islamic sentiments coincide on one point (the Turk favours the Jew because both are traitors, allied against Christ) but conflict

with each other in a wider sense. If the Turk favours the Jew, can he still be a despot? And even if we decide that he is, Luther's contradictory desire to depict such oppression as divine retribution robs any relative tolerance of the *Yahudi* by Christian governments completely of its value.

The kind of ambiguities we find in Luther concerning the precise image and function of the Turk – friendly to the Jews or despotic? a dissolute life or a pious one? civilized or barbaric? rational or raving? sensuously attached to this world or fanatically obsessed with the next one? – reflect, in part, the most fundamental and problematic association Luther makes with Islam: that of the divine will of God, a moral lesson for fallen Christendom engineered by a ruthlessly educative deity.

One could argue there is little problematic with Luther's interpretation of the Ottoman military successes as divinely assisted: the gesture has many medieval precedents – the idea of God using the armies of his enemies to spiritually correct a people clearly has a plethora of examples in the Old Testament – and was supported by a considerable number of Luther's contemporaries (including Melancthon and Calvin[70]). And yet, Luther's theological position on the Turkish advance towards Vienna causes a number of interesting fault-lines in his work to tremble: his own ambiguous relationship to German language and German culture, the strangely personal way in which Luther will even see the Turks as fighting for him, not to mention the difficult theological question of the status of an evil which is used to correct the sinner…all of these complications are introduced into Luther's theology by his own persistent association of the Turk with the Word of God.

Although Luther had been asserting God's approval of the Turkish advance as early as 1518, his position became increasingly controversial with the successes of Suleiman's campaigns – culminating in

1540, when the Sultan finally occupied Hungary, taking advantage of a convenient power vacuum to bring his armies to the banks of the Danube. Criticisms of Luther and his perceived encouragement of passivity against the Turkish foe were already numerous, and Luther responded to them with only slight modifications, basically arguing that the only soldier who can fight the Turk successfully is one who fights with a clean and prepared heart. Although some commentators interpret the late 1541 text "Appeal For Prayer Against the Turk" as an attempt to more sensitively rectify Luther's politically uncomfortable position, what we find is an essentially unrepentant text, one which gives some nominal attention to the need to fight outside foes, but really focuses on the (for Luther) larger spiritual issues of why "God has sent the Turk to thrash us".[71] The scholastic theme implicit in this expression is one Luther often made use of:

> *The Turk, you see, is our schoolmaster. He has to discipline and teach us to fear God and pray. Otherwise we will do what we have been doing – rotting in sin and complacency.*
>
> *…if we do not accept God's counsel, there is no help for us. It will be all in vain to scream that the Turks are terrible tyrants. It does not help a naughty child to scream when he feels the rod. If the child were obedient, the rod would not be used.* [72]

The Turk is a rod, a cane, a stick; embodying pure symbol, bereft of any *humanitas* or possibility for conversion (Luther will never really doubt the inconvertibility of the Turks[73]), the Turk is reified into a monstrous yet somehow awesomely divine punishment. Their inhumanity helps us to explain why they do not disappoint God as much as we do – for Luther, Christians who fail to follow God's law are "worse than Turks".[74] That which has

no soul cannot be accused of sin – in this sense the functionality of the Turk does not simply replace his humanity, it becomes a cause of its removal. The abstract, faceless image of the Turk as schoolmaster lies a world away from the moments in Luther where the preacher will dwell upon the carnal qualities of the Turk, his dissolute life, his faith in predestination, his superficial praise of the Gospels. When reminding us of how superior Christianity is to Islam, the Turk becomes flesh and blood, so that we may see how filthy, lewd, cruel and despotic Mohammedans are; when Luther wishes to chastise Christians, however, he employs a hollow Turk, faceless, attributeless, whose only quality is that of divine retribution, a Turk stripped of any semantic depth. The implicit contradiction here only emerges when, as we saw in the remarks on Ottomans and Jews, Luther tries to use both vocabularies at the same time – defaming the Turk for his cruelty, yet simultaneously justifying his tyranny of the Jew.

The implicit approval of the Turk's advance lurks beneath Luther's "schoolmaster" metaphors – an unspoken, incomplete endorsement which angered his critics.[75] Certainly, it is not uncharitable to see an element of self-justification at work here – in "On War Against the Turk" we read:

> *Although…I could keep quiet and look on while the Turk avenged me upon tyrants (who persecute the Gospel and blame me for all kinds of misfortune) and paid them back for it, nevertheless, I shall not do so…*[76]

The Turk *avenges* Luther; the righteous injustices Luther and his followers have suffered because of their devotion to the Gospel are directly related here to the success of an Islamic army. The juxta-

position is a curious one, unwittingly bringing Islam in as an ally of Luther in a strange, unintentional alliance of interests. Luther will never take this farther – unlike Nietzsche, Luther's enemy's enemy is not necessarily his friend – but the language is striking, particularly when Luther argues that the Turk will teach the Germans what his articles mean (ibid). In this sense, the two functions of Luther's Turk combine – the Turks supply not only a providential justification of Luther on a purely individual level, vindicating him against his enemies, but also emerge in the guise of an external correction to the Church, a divinely-administered reprove and readjustment of the Church's mortal errancy. Not just a rod, then, but also a salve, a brace, an instrument of correction and healing. In this sense, Luther's notion of the public and the private spill over into one another – because "Germany is ripe and bursting with sin" [77] (elsewhere we read, in an ironic repetition of Luther's description of the Jews, "There is no nation so despised as the German"[78]), a national self-improvement is implicit in the Turk's defeat. This also counts on an individual level – until the Christian cleanses his heart, no salvation from the Turk can be expected. In both cases, the presence of the Turk brings spiritual self-correction.

It is also interesting to see how Luther employs the Turk as a vehicle of social criticism. In the middle of "Appeal for Prayer", we find him bitterly lamenting the price of eggs ("…in times past… you could get fifteen eggs for three groschen"[79]), a resentment of inflation which Luther clearly sees as part of Germany's sinful state. Although Luther sees this as an essentially spiritual problem – "that great god Mammon or avarice"[80] – the objects of his criticism are socially specific: not just the humble peasant, but the nobility, lawyers, small farmers and bankers are all responsible for the adverse conditions, "stealing from the poor and needy" and thereby provoking the wrath of God.[81] Luther's words against bankers ("cursed

money-lenders"), it should be said, mask a stifled anti-Semitism, even though the principle concern is the dominance of their avarice: "I almost forgot to mention the banker. Oh, how complacent he is, as if he were God and master of the country…either the Turk or some other instrument of God's wrath will teach you that Luther understood well enough what the money lending business is about".[82] In describing Münzer as a Turkish emperor, Luther employed the Turk as a threat to social stability; in his own social criticism, however, the threat of the Turk is actually a means to better social cohesion. Far from destroying society, the Turkish threat in these moments reforms it, redressing its worst abuses, amending its most visible excesses. Even if this oscillation between the two images of the Turk – an imminent menace to social order, and a vehicle of social reform within that order – is not wholly contradictory, it does illustrate not only how quickly Luther's Turk can change his identity to fit the required mould, but also how plastic and shifting Luther's own relationship to Germany is, at times something to be defended and preserved, at others something to be despised, forcefully corrected and, failing that, destroyed or handed over "bloodlessly" to the Turk.

These two aspects of Islam – curse and cure – pervade Luther's work. They manifest themselves, at different times, to answer different needs – a need to defend 'our' culture and faith against the outside, or a need on the contrary to criticize and reform the familiar. In other words, although Islam was always "wholly other" for Luther, it represented an alterity he made use of in different and sometimes contradictory ways. We see how the faith and followers of Mohammed threaten to subvert Christian order – the order of the body, the order of society, the order of the text; we also see how precisely their un-Christian qualities – their worldliness, their despotism, their zeal – serves implicitly to reinforce and reaffirm

this order. Ultimately, it is in this desire to reform that Luther finds himself unwittingly drawn into a relationship of problematic intimacy with his own enemy's enemy:

> *What do our dear lords do? They treat it as a joke. It is a fact that the Turk is at our throat…Meanwhile, our princes consult us about how they can harass Luther and the gospel: It is the gospel which is the Turk! Force must be used against it! The gospel must be put to rout!*[83]

In many ways, Luther illustrates one of the classic dangers of ironic paraphrase: that in the moment of repetitive mimicry, the shifting of register and perspective to imitate the voice of the mocked, we may end up speaking the words of truth in somebody else's mouth. Certainly, Luther's sarcastic paraphrase is mocking the lords and their paranoid attitude towards him. There is even something subversively self-deprecating about the way Luther imagines himself vilified as the Turk , one of the many moments of odd solidarity we find with heretics in the *Werke*. And yet, even if the subtext of Luther's mockery is clear – 'Instead of fighting those who would reform the Church, the Empire should busy itself with the infidels who lie outside it' – there is an ulterior sense in which Luther's mimicry also rings quite true. The gospel *is* the Turk, insofar as the Turk will cause the gospel to be read; the Turk represents the gospel, insofar as he is an (unwitting) tool of its restoration. The curious echo of this secondary meaning lingers on in the passage: the lords should forget Luther and fight the cursed Turk, who nevertheless will play a key role in their necessary spiritual renewal. In short the Turk, to use Luther's own paradoxical description, is both "God's rod and the devil's servant", both poison and antidote, both curse and cure.[84]

'Othering' Islam: Overcoming Resemblances, Sustaining Alterity

Having gone to some lengths to show the variety of associations Luther makes with Mohammed and 'Mohammedan' cultures, two points of significance remain which need to be dealt with, if we are to understand at all the intricate mechanisms within Luther's 'Othering' of Islam: the kinds of strategies Luther will resort to in order to disqualify those aspects of Islam which problematically resemble his own beliefs, and secondly the omissions and circumventions Luther makes in his hundreds of references and remarks on Islam.

Unlike Nicholas of Cusa, Luther was no Neoplatonist. Despite the profound influence of Augustine and Luther's own fascination with a number of Eckhartian ideas (as mediated through his reading of Tauler), the idea of Truth as a long-shattered vase, amongst whose fragments we now live here in the fallen, transient world of the multiple, never really makes itself felt in his attitude towards difference. If Cusa's strategy towards Islam follows a theological policy of recovery and absorption – following the standard Neoplatonic motif of a return to the One through the Many – Luther's approach is rather one of clear and distinctive delineation, a polarisation of Islam which pushes the faith outside the boundaries of any holistic henology. This makes interesting reading when Luther encounters ideas similar to his own in the very ideology he is trying to 'other'. Three common features in particular stand out between what Luther perceives to be 'Mohammedanism' and his own understanding of the Christian faith: a belief in predestination, an aversion to images and, most obviously, a historical recognition in Islam of Jesus, Mary and most of the prophets from the Old Testament. Luther deals with these obstacles in different ways. On the question of free will and predestination, one which recalls Luther's own

famous debate with Erasmus, the Reformer has to deal with the familiar stereotype of Mohammedan fatalism – and the fact that Luther's own theology placed a strong emphasis on predestination and the sovereign will of God:

> *Beware of the Turkish, Epicurean philosophy [hüte dich fur dem Turckischen, Epikurische Glauben] which says "What can I do? What is the use of praying? What does it help to worry? If it is predestined, it will happen." It is the belief of the Turks that no-one may die until their fated hour has come. This is the reason for their fanatical courage and their assurance that what they are doing is right. Yes, of course it is true: if it is predestined, it will happen. But it has not been given to us to know what is predestined.*[85]

It would be too much of a digression to examine how this passage prefigures both Nietzsche and Benjamin's remarks on the relationship between fate and nihilism.[86] Scripturally, at least, Luther's ironic paraphrase of "Turkish philosophy" is half-true once again – "What does it help to worry?" (*Was hilft viel Sorgen*?) comes straight out of Matthew 6:24-35. Faced with this superficial resemblance, Luther distinguishes Christian predestination from its flawed Muslim equivalent by drawing on two familiar features of Luther's Islam – pride and fanaticism. Even though everything is preordained, the 'good' fatalist acts as if he still possessed free will; significantly, Luther does not trouble himself to wonder whether the Koran or its commentators have also made this logically inevitable reservation.[87] Mohammedan pride pushes the Muslim to assume he already knows the will of God (the Muslim arrogance of claiming to be the last religion, of replacing Christ with their Mohammed as the last prophet, etc). Thus Luther circumvents the problematic

resemblance by distinguishing between an authentic belief in fate (God has preordained everything but we don't know how, we still act as if we had free will) and the Turk's inauthentic belief (God has preordained everything and we know he will give us victory). Instead of citing the Koran or providing a textual source, he justifies this difference by appealing empirically to the behaviour of its adherents – their "fanatical courage", how they "rush furiously at the foe at great risk" in battle, is supplied by Luther as a proof of this distinction.[88] The proof is slightly problematic not simply because of its positivity – adding intense devotion to their God as a factor in Turkish military success – but also because the other-worldly fanaticism which underlies it does not square well with the worldliness of the Mohammedan (their sensuality, their power, wealth and wisdom) Luther has seen fit to emphasise elsewhere.

The question of the image – and how Luther treats a prohibition in Islam of representation as *shirk* – also creates a difficulty, as one would imagine Luther actually having something positive to say about Islamic proscription of the icon, given his own belief in images as "worthless and despised"[89]. To some extent, Luther grudgingly acknowledges the validity of this position, before going on to develop his argument in a very different direction:

> *It is also a part of the Turk's holiness to tolerate no images or pictures, and they are even holier than our iconoclasts. For our iconoclasts tolerate and are glad to have images on gulden, groschen, rings and ornaments; but the Turk tolerates none of them and stamps nothing but letters on his coins. He is entirely Münzerian, too, for he exterminates all rulers and tolerates no gradations of government such as princes, counts…*[90]

"The Turk's holiness"…in attempting to cordon off the more Christian aspects of Islam from any conciliatory comparison, Luther tries

to show how "their" holiness and "their" iconoclasts are different from "ours", just as he had with "their" belief in predestination. This strategy this time does not involve locating the devil as the source of the practice concerned (as Luther does with the Turks' eagerness for martyrdom and devotion to their scriptures[91]), nor showing how the apparently similar belief is actually based on wrong or incomplete foundations (as was the case with Mohammedan fatalism); rather, the Turk's problem this time is *excess*. The Islamic distaste towards images in not 'really' holy because it is taken to extremes – a point Luther emphasizes by bringing in Münzer once more. What in Christianity is essentially a sound and thoroughly biblical gesture becomes, in Islam, an anarchic and destructive feature, a 'false' holiness of force and excessive fanaticism, rather than a 'genuine' spiritual distaste for the graven image. In both cases, a valid belief found in Islam is disqualified and rendered 'Other' by an appeal to the character of the Mohammedan. Since Turks are fanatical and cruel, their aversion to images becomes obliterative and chaotic – just as the pride and arrogance of the Turk renders their belief in predestination invalid, turning it into complacent self-congratulation. In all of these maneuvers, Luther never allows the circles of Christianity and Islam to overlap. Whenever a problematic proximity occurs, some wholly external information – a racial characteristic or a traveler's observation – is brought in to keep the two spheres righteously separate.

In dealing with Islam's acceptance of many figures within the Judaeo-Christian tradition ("I cannot deny that the Turk esteems the four gospels"[92]), not to mention moreover the commonsense proposition that no religion or race can be wholly bad – even the Turks must have some qualities akin to Christian virtues – Luther adopts a tactic which implicitly contradicts his previous two strategies, that of ascribing such similarity to diabolical inspiration:

> *It is said that among themselves the Turks are faithful, friendly, and careful to tell the truth. I believe that and I think that they probably have more fine virtues in them than that. No man is so bad that there is not something good in him. Now and then a woman of the streets has more good qualities than do ten honorable matrons. The devil would have a cloak and be a handsome angel of light, so he hides behind certain works that are works of light. Murderers and robbers are more faithful and friendly to each other than neighbours are, even more so than many Christians. For if the devil keeps the three things – lies, murder and disregard of marriage – as the real foundation of hell, he can easily tolerate, even help, carnal love and faithfulness being built upon it…*[93]

What Luther supplies here is an early, pre-modern, diabolical hermeneutics of suspicion. The more 'Christian' the Turk looks, the more suspicious we should become; the closeness of the resemblance only counts as an act of inverse interpretation to show how far apart the two faiths really lie. The superficiality of Islam, as we had already seen in its relation to allegory, facilitates this deception, even if here Luther develops the idea by attributing not merely emptiness to Islam, but Satanic mendacity. Islam pretends to signify Christ, but actually represents the devil. Instead of trying to convince us how an initial impression of resemblance is, upon closer inspection, actually false (or valid but misapplied), Luther's strategy this time is to epistemologically call the entire act of signification into question. Of course, the suspicion that the manifestly holy may conceal a diabolical reality is as old as 2 Corinthians 11:14 ("For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light") – what is interesting is that Luther employs this to rebut a contiguity he would otherwise have to accept. Whereas Cusa would Neoplatoni-

cally attribute such similarities to the work of God, Who moves even amongst the most pagan religions, Luther's inverse hermeneutics and theology of polarity has to see the Islamic sign, no matter what it signifies, as coming from the opposite direction.

When the phenomena are negative – cruelty, lechery, fanaticism – then no problem arises for Luther, and the observer may trust the signs they perceive. When the phenomena are positive – faithfulness, friendliness, truthfulness – then a potentially nihilistic situation emerges, where any reliable link between signifier and signified is necessarily severed, and human reality loses all hope of contact with the divine realm of truth. As a result, an implicitly contradictory picture emerges in Luther's determination to keep Islam 'other': first of all, for Luther most resemblances between Christianity and Islam are actually illusory, when one examines them closely. Secondly, those resemblances which are genuine do not count, for they acquire within Islam a different and ultimately unsound character. Thirdly, even those few resemblances of belief and character which are incontestably identical cannot be trusted, for they have been created as snares to seduce the gullible. In striving to keep Christianity *qadosh* (holy, separate) with regards to Islam, Luther is driven into a valueless, epistemological vacuum, one where (to use Luther's own words) "all that God speaks and does, the devil has to speak and do first".[94] Given that we already have a God who can use evil to do good, alongside a devil who can disguise darkness as light, the arbitrariness of Luther's gnoseology is surprising but not completely unexpected. For our own study, at least, the most significant point is that Luther's skeptical epistemology plays an essential part in keeping a Semitic, book-based, monotheistic faith with a Judaeo-Christian morality safely away from the unsullied truth of Christianity.

In concluding, some note should also be made concerning the kinds of absences we find in Luther's texts, the various lacunae

which emerge in his treatment of Islam – particularly when one considers the sources he had to draw on. Although this gesture may seem excessively apophatic – the idea that what Luther doesn't say about Islam is somehow more significant than what he does – it does give us some useful information on the *selective* 'othering' of Islam, of how the alterity of the Muslim Other was shaped and located just as much by the unsaid as well as the said.

Certainly one of the first things that Luther says strikingly little about is the Christian Orient. Luther was definitely aware of the Christian (Armenian/Syrian Orthodox/Nestorian/Maronite) tradition in the Middle East; as we have already seen, Cusa begins his *Cribratio* with a discussion amongst "wise and noble" Christian Arabs, whilst Ricardo's own treatise draws on the various groups of Nestorians and Syrian Monophysites (Jacobites) in some detail to argue against Mohammed's claims concerning the falsification of the Holy Scriptures.[95] Given Luther's frequently racial understanding of Islam – his conviction of the Arab's descent as being traceable to Ishmael, his description of Turks as "a wild and barbarous people"[96] – it is not too surprising that Luther has little to say concerning Christian Arabs. A racial understanding of Islam inevitably becomes a geographical understanding of Islam: Islam as *topos*, as a region or boundary, a place where Islam 'lives'. The absence of any Protestant Christianity in the Middle East, moreover, most Arab Christians being either Catholics or Monophysites, would hardly encourage Luther to discover an empathy with a creed he at times considered to be worse than Islam. A third and final reason for Luther's paucity of references to Christian Arabs may well be a belief that Christians cannot live under Turkish (Ottoman) rule without becoming 'polluted'. In "On War Against the Turk", Luther makes a brief reference to the praise which came from some quarters for the Ottomans' tolerance of minorities, before dismissing it as false:

on the contrary, the Turk "does not allow Christians to come together in public, and no-one can openly teach …against Mohammed".[97] Luther's words are to some extent true – our critique of the European reification of the Muslim should not lead us into idealizing the darker aspects of Ottoman rule and their infamous 'gavur' tax; what is interesting, however, is how Luther goes on to argue a rather different point:

> *Since faith must be…held in secret among this wild and barbarous people…how can it exist in the long run? ….Therefore it happens that those Christians who are captured or otherwise get into Turkey fall away and become altogether Turkish, and it is very seldom that one remains true to his faith, for they lack the living bread of the soul and see the abandoned carnal life of the Turks and are obliged to adapt themselves to it.*[98]

For Luther, Christians who live under Turkish rule "become Turkish" for three reasons. Firstly, because of the Turk's own despotic restrictions; secondly, because they have no access to the living word (because they no longer live within a Christian society); thirdly, because they are won over by the seductive carnality of the Turks' practices. Although Luther is probably talking not just about Turkey but also the conquered Balkan territories here, and not the Christian traditions of Palestine and Aleppo, it does give us an idea of how essentially Muslim Luther's East is. Islam is no separate faith but, foreshadowing Leibniz's own description of *la peste de mahometanisme*[99], a contagious disease, one which sooner or later affects all who dwell near it. Luther makes comparatively little mention of Arab Christianity not just because his own understanding of Christianity was so unconsciously German, but also because his understanding of the Orient – and the Ottoman's occupation of it[100]

- was an intrinsically Islamic one, a place where genuine Christianity was simply impossible.

Other omissions are, perhaps, more obvious. Luther seldom speaks of love or forgiveness concerning the Turk. Christ's injunction to love one's enemies (Matthew 5:43-7) Luther cites on several occasions, but only once makes the briefest mention of the Turk: "The Christian ought to…include all men in his prayer… 'all men' includes Turks and Tartars. For these we must also pray".[101] Although the Christian is scripturally obliged to love his/her enemy, Luther seems unwilling to consider this verse very often in a Turkish context. Luther's conviction that the Turk was no normal, human enemy but rather a supernatural foe is certainly of consequence here ("What you are fighting against is not flesh and blood, or just human beings…The Turk's army is really Satan's army"[102]). We have already seen how Luther's Turk, in its primary chastising/apocalyptic function, is nothing more than a shallow caricature of humanity, paradoxically a tool of both diabolical and ultimately divine will. The inhumanity of the Turk, in this sense, would have rendered the question of forgiveness, let alone love, quite irrelevant.

With regards to the subsequent history of representations of Islam after Luther, another significant absence in the Reformer's treatment of "Mohammedanism" is the omission of any real dismissal of Islam as a 'fossilized', 'obsolete' or 'insignificant' faith. In contrast to the categorization of later centuries – where, as we shall see, Islam shrinks to the status of a rather strange footnote of Western progress, an idealized, ontologically frozen *topos* whose growth stopped somewhere around 1400 – Luther sees Islam as a living, dynamic and vibrant faith. Of course, the proximity of the Ottoman threat is the clearest factor in this – 100,000 Turkish soldiers across the Danube would make it difficult to dismiss 'Mohammedanism' as a minor, antiquated heresy; this acknowledgment of Islam's contemporaneity,

however, does offer an interesting contrast with the way Luther talks about Judaism – his references, in particular, to "the destruction of Judaism", and his description of the faith as "withered and decayed in all the world".[103] Luther's Islam, on the contrary, appears to evoke a faint but definite sense of inferiority in his writings – evidenced not simply by his constant complaints that Islam "mocks" and "humiliates" us, but also by an uncannily sensitive awareness of the way in which Islam metaphysically 'boxes' Christianity:

> *We Christians acknowledge the Old Testament as divine scripture, but now that it is fulfilled and is, as St Peter says, too hard without God's grace, it is abolished and no longer binding upon us. Mohammed treats the Gospel the same way. He declares that the Gospel is indeed correct, but that it has long since served its purpose and that it is too hard to keep…*[104]

The passage is remarkable for a number of reasons. First of all, Luther says, somewhat explicitly: 'Islam treats Christianity as we treat the Jews; Mohammed does to Christ what Christ does to Moses'. The remark, for all its intended hostility, is implicitly empathetic. Although Luther is trying to make Islam's attitude towards Christianity clearer, he inadvertently justifies their gesture as a replica of the Christian one. Secondly, the intellectual flexibility here is also worth comment, as Luther decentres his viewpoint not once but *twice* – first to imagine how Jews feel redescribed by Christians, and then to reflect on how Muslims view Christians. The observation is epistemologically subtle, and light years away from Luther's diatribes against the "stinking" Koran. Thirdly, Luther's analogy is problematic, as it ultimately reinforces Islam's incorporation of Christianity as a second stage. The two reported (and for Luther presumably false) reasons we are give for the redundancy of the Gospels in Islam – that they have been rendered obsolete by a subsequent revelation, and were in any case

too difficult to follow – are structurally identical to the (true, sound) reasons Judaism is no longer necessary for Christians. Read in isolation, one might be forgiven for thinking Luther was trying to justify Islam, rather than condemn it.

The subtleties and inner mechanisms of Luther's general attitude towards Islam – with all its repressed sympathies, omissions and circumventions – leave us with a number of reflections. Luther's sincere desire to obtain a reliable knowledge of Islam, not to mention his frequently stated awareness of the fact that it was unjustly defamed to some extent[105], certainly emphasise the limitations of a critical will to truth. Moreover, in the manifold spray of different characteristics Luther projects onto the vacuous "Mohammedanism" he constructs – irrational animals and slaves of reason, well-disciplined governments and ruthless despots, pious-living ascetics and carnal hedonists – the Protean flexibility of Islam appears to be less of a consequence of Luther's strategies and more a condition for them. Perhaps his conviction of the superficial hollowness of Islam, to some extent, was able to facilitate these multiple, often conflicting characteristics.

A study of Luther's approach to Islam also shows how a loyalty to scripture – in the case of a fundamentalist such as Luther, the ontological primacy of a particular text over all over facets of socio-political reality – does not conform to but rather complicates more 'worldly' agendas of cultural identity, regional allegiance and political economy. Luther's understanding of the Turk as divinely assisted always threatens, but never quite overturns, the regional rootedness of his own religious context, in particular an implicit belief, always present in the *Werke* but never quite expressed, in the essential Germanness of Christianity (his satisfaction, for example, that "we Germans should call God by the ancient name (finer and more appropriate than any other), 'Good'…"[106]).

In this sense, what the fundamental ambiguity of Luther's destructive/restorative Turk reveals, more than anything else, is the ambiguity of hatred itself; the fact that hatred, like love, is a relationship of intimacy, an act of negative devotion. Hatred, like love, requires attention and energy; it brings the object of hatred into the world of the hater, accords it a privileged place, imbues it with an incontestable (if unenviable) significance. In reading Luther's response to Islam, one can't help feeling the rather Nietzschean lesson implicit in Derrida's *pharmakon* – that what can kill us may also cure us – finds a structurally similar counterpoint in Luther's *Turcken* and the *Teuffelsdreck* of Islam; the paradox that our ultimate salvation may lie in the obstacle, the enemy, the curse (and implicitly, our corresponding damnation may come in the form of our comforts, our allies, our aid) belongs to the mysterious ways of a hidden, unpredictable, enigmatic God.

Endnotes

1 *The Antichrist*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990) p196

2 "On War Against the Turk", p175 – found in Jaroslav Pelikan (ed), *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) vol 46. All references to Luther, unless otherwise stated, will be from this edition.

3 ibid, p182

4 *Luther's Works* 31:91-22

5 ibid, 46:202

6 "Appeal for Prayer Against the Turk" in *Luther's Works* 43:224, 237

7 *Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi, Prediger Ordens*. ed. H. Barge. Found in *Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883-1986) vol 53. pp260-385

8 *Luther's Works* 23:99

9 ibid, 46:177

10 "narrisch", "lecherlich", "gegen Gott und alle Vernunft" - see *Gesamtausgabe*, 53:268.

11 quod saraceni debent suscipere evangelica testimonia, similiter et quae sunt veteris testamenti. *Gesamtausgabe*, 53:267

12 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, trans. J. Hopkins (Arthur J. Banning Press: Minneapolis, 1994) p4

13 See Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960) pp276-8. Although acknowledging the sophistication of Cusa's apologetics as being "polemically, even speculatively superior to anything that had gone before in the West", he still sees a gesture which is in the end "petty" and "rambling and repetitive" (278).

14 *Gesamtausgabe*, 53:277

15 *Cribratio*, p2

16 *Gesamtausgabe*, 53: 283, line 21

17 see in particular *Cribratio*, pp35-37

18 *Luther's Works* 15:340 – cit. in Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2000) p131

19 taken from Luther's commentary on Galatians Chapter 5 – in Alistair McGrath and J. I. Packer, *Galatians* (London: Crossway Books, 1998) p259

20 from the commentary on Genesis 21:15, 16 – in *Luther's Works* 4:54

21 *Luther's Works* 46: 200

22 ibid, p176

23 *Luther's Works* 4:54

24 ibid

25 *Luther's Works* 46:175

26 Commentary on Genesis in *Luther's Works* 2:189

27 *Luther's Works* 2:188

28 *Luther's Works* 22:333, cit. in Johnathan C. Naumann, "Luther, Lutherans and Islam" *Concordia Journal* (2002) 28:1 p66

29 Precedents for this association of Islam with sexual laxity are too numerous to list – Roger Bacon, for example, was convinced Islam was a continuation of a form of Venus love-worship (*lex venerea*), whilst Guibert of Nogent insisted the Koran taught "a new licence of promiscuous intercourse". For a medieval survey of these responses, see Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp144-6.

30 Respectively *Luther's Works* 46:176, 15:340, 46:179

31 *Luther's Works* 46:196

32 Mann's Venice and Nietzsche's Naples spring most immediately to mind. One should also add FORSTER'S QUOTE

33 see *Luther's Works* 4:124, 221

34 *Luther's Works* 54: 269

35 see *Luther's Works* 15:340, 4:29

36 *Luther's Works* 46:178

37 In an introduction to one of the early editions of Georg von Ungarn's *Türken-Traktaus*, Luther himself had made some positive comments on the merits of the Ottoman system of government. For more on the debate concerning the influence of the Ottomans on European political thought of the period, see Tahsin Görgün, "The Ottoman State as a Factor in the Socio-Political Formation of Europe" in *Ottoman Philosophy, Science and Institution*, pp61-71. In a French context, Clarence Dana Rouillard offers an impressive survey of the widespread admiration of Ottoman social and military order in sixteenth century travel accounts such as those of Nicolas de Nicolay, Busbecq, Belon and Postel. See Rouillard's *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature 1520-1660* (Paris: Boivin, 1938) pp291-306.

38 *Luther's Works* 46:192

39 *Luther's Works* 3:66

40 cit. in Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995) p105

41 *Luther's Works* 46:193

42 McGrath and Packer, *Galatians*, p259

43 *Luther's Works* 46:199

44 *Luther's Works* 4:53, 2:60

45 *Luther's Works* 47

46 5:347

47 46: 177, 13:277

48 15:340

49 5:347

50 See Susan E. Schreiner's article on "Appearances and Reality in Luther, Montaigne and Shakespeare" in *Journal of Religion* (2003) 83:3, pp345-80. Schreiner presents a Luther who steadily sank into a solipsistic paranoia, surrounded by a world of diabolically-inspired phenomenae, difficult to distinguish from the truth: "Because of the tension between the real and the nonreal, faith places the believer outside the realm of the rational, the ordinary, and the visible. Faith, therefore, is a supremely alienating experience. Luther was very adept at describing the loneliness and, at times, nightmare-like qualities of the life now lived by the believer" (355)

51 *Luther's Works* 54:46 – for more background on this motif, see David Burr's "Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis" and Philip Krey's "Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos on Islam" in John V. Toran (ed), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (London: Routledge, 1996) pp131-174

52 *Luther's Works* 5:347

53 Graham White, "Luther's Views on Language", *Journal of Literature and Theology*

3:2 (July 1989) pp188-218

54 WA 39, II. 5:35 ff – cit. in White, p212

55 cit. in White, p203

56 Amy Newman, "The Death of Judaism in German Protestant Thought from Luther to Hegel" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61:3 (1993) p455

57 ibid, pp456-7

58 *Luther's Works* 54:418

59 ibid 1:188-9

60 ibid 3:66, 4:328

61 Pope Gregory, for example, can call the Saracen colonists of Lucera "the sons of Hagar" in 1236 (see J.P. Lomax, "Frederick II, his Saracens and the Papacy" in Toran, *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam,* p185); William of Auvergne, San Pedro and William of Tripoli all make use of this strategy in their polemics – see Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp127-8.

62 *Luther's Works* 4:329

63 ibid 8:187

64 ibid 23:99, 46: 176; 1:59

65 ibid 5:71

66 ibid 4:52.

67 ibid 4:221. Kant's remarks can be found in his 1793 essay *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason Alone,* trans. Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 6:184

68*Luther's Works* 2:262

69 see *Cribratio* I: 6, 42 (p23)

70 Calvin, in his *On the Reformation of the Church*, wrote: "The fuel of the Turkish war is within us, shut up in our bowels, and must first be removed, if we should successfully drive back the war itself." (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958) 1: 233. For more on Protestant punitive/ apocalyptic interpretations of the Turkish advance, see W. Schmidt-Biggemann section on Melancthon in his *Philosophia Perennis*, pp635-645. Indeed, the entire notion of a 'Calvinoturkish' alliance would persist well after Luther – see Schmidt-Biggemann's "Salvation Through Philology" in P. Schäfer and M. Cohen, *Toward the Millenium:Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998) especially pp267-8.

71 *Luther's Works* 43:240

72 ibid 43:224

73 In the preface to his translation of Ricardo's *Confutatio*, Luther goes into some detail describing how Turks stop their ears and close their eyes whenever Christians try to reason with them. *Gesamtausgabe* 53:276

74 *Luther's Works* 46:172

75 Luther defends himself against these charges in "Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors" in *Luther's Works* 40: 305-6

76 ibid, 46: 168

77 ibid 43:221

78 ibid 54:151

79 ibid 43:222

80 ibid 43:220

81 ibid, p223

82 ibid, p221

83 *Luther's Works* 46:202

84 ibid 46:170

85 *Luther's Works* 43:235-6 (Werke 51:614-5)

86 Benjamin's assertion that the Protestant claim to salvation through grace alone emptied the sixteenth century world of meaning and provided, in many ways, the first modern basis for European nihilism, was the *Grundthese* of his work *The Origin Of German Tragic Drama* (trans. John Osborne, London: Verso, 1998). In his *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche speculated on the essential nihilism of the Assassins (the Islamic warrior-sect mythologised throughout European for their daring, ruthless murders) whose secret maxim, Nietzsche claimed, was "Nothing is true. Everything is allowed" – see *Genealogie der Moral*, III.24, p152.

87 FOOTNOTE WITH MUSLIM REFERENCES

88 *Luther's Works* 6:102

89 "Against the Heavenly Prophets" in *Luther's Works* 40:85

90 *Luther's Works* 46: 181

91 ibid 46: 181, 4:221

92 ibid 46: 194

93 ibid 46: 180

94 ibid 14:31-2 cit. in Schreiner, "Appearances and Reality", p355

95 *Gesamtausgabe*, 53:286

96 *Luther's Works* 3:167, 46:175

97 ibid 46: 175

98 ibid

99 See Leibniz's *Reflexions sur la guerre* (1687) in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923-) vol. 4:3 p776

100 Luther was well aware of the Ottoman occupation of the Saudi peninsula - see *Luther's Works* 4:329

101 Commentary on 1 Timothy in *Luther's Works* 28:258

102 *Luther's Works* 43: 237

103 *Luther's Works* 26:101 (cit. in Amy, p457); 19:104 (cit. in Amy, 471)

104 *Luther's Works* 46:195

105 See, for example, 46:176 on Luther's awareness of the "outrageous lies" which have been invented about the Turks "to incite us Germans against them".

106 cit. in Van A. Harvey, "Feuerbach on Luther's Doctrine of Revelation" in *Journal of Religion* (1998) 78:1, p12.

Chapter Two

Nietzsche's Peace With Islam: My Enemy's Enemy is my friend

> *Still one final question: if we had believed from our youth onwards that all salvation issued from someone other than Jesus, from Mahomet for instance, is it not certain that we should have experienced the same blessings?*
>
> *-letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, 11 June, 1865*

Nietzsche is twenty-one years old when, in this letter to a sister more convinced of the Lutheran faith than himself, he defends his reasons for abandoning the study of theology at Bonn. The letter, like most of Nietzsche's work, has nothing to do directly with Islam. And yet, in groping for an alternative metaphor to express what he felt to be the *provinciality* of Christianity, Nietzsche reaches for the name Mahomet. It is a gesture which cannot but have provoked the nineteen year-old Elisabeth: the suggestion that their lives would not have been radically different had they been *Mohammedaner* must have had, at the very least, some intended shock value. This use of Islam as a tool for provinicializing and re-evaluating the "European disease" of Judaeo-Christian modernity was to be repeated in Nietzsche's works with surprising frequency.

To those unfamiliar with Nietzsche's work, the words "Nietzsche" and "Islam" appear initially incongruous. Despite well over a hundred references to Islam and Islamic cultures (Hafiz, Arabs, Turks) in the *Gesamtausgabe*, not a single monograph exists on the subject; in comparison with the wealth of attention devoted to studies of Nietzsche and the 'high Orient' (Buddha, Hinduism, Japanese and Chinese philosophy), not a single article on Nietzsche and Islam can be found in any volume *Nietzsche Studien* up to the present day. The 'low Orient', to use Said's term, does not appear to have stimulated any significant critical interest.

This is a strange state of affairs, when one considers how important Islam was to Nietzsche as an example of "an affirmative Semitic religion". Islam forever hovers in the background of Nietzsche's writing, both published and unpublished; whether it's a remark about the Assassins or a reference to the Prophet's alleged epilepsy, a desire to live in North Africa or a pairing of Goethe with Hafiz, the praise or Moorish Spain or a section on "Turkish fatalism", Nietzsche's interest in Christianity's combatative Other appears to increase as the years pass by. "The Antichrist", Nietzsche's last finished work, devotes more attention to the enemies of the Crusades than any of his other books.

Nietzsche's fervent reading of Orientalist texts seems to underline this interest in Islam: Palgrave's "Reise in Arabien" in German translation (1867-8), Wellhausen's *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* (1884), Max Müller's *Islam in Morgen- und Abendland*, Benfrey's *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie* (1869)…even when we encounter books in his notes which have no immediate relevance to anything Muslim - such as Schack's book on Spanish theatre - we find an interrogative "über den Islam?" scribbled after it.

Nietzsche's interest in Islam and Islamic cultures and his striking consumption of Orientalist scholarship was certainly driven by

a resolve to employ such cultures as a barometer of difference - a ready at hand store of alternative customs and values to undermine the universalist claims of both European Christianity and modernity. This yearning to acquire what Nietzsche called (in somewhat Emersonian tones) a "trans-European eye" - one which, presumably, would save him from the "senile shortsightedness" (*greisenhaften Kurzsichtigkeit*) of most Europeans - finds its most convincing expression in a letter written to a friend, Köselitz, in 1881:

> *Ask my old comrade Gersdorff whether he'd like to go with me to Tunisia for one or two years…I want to live for a while amongst Muslims, in the places moreover where their faith is at its most devout; this way my eye and judgment for all things European will be sharpened (own trans.).*

There is, it should be said, nothing exclusively Islamophilic about this desire to leave Europe behind and live in a radically different culture - four years later, Nietzsche is saying the same thing about Japan in a letter to his sister. What is interesting, however, is not just the considerable length of Nietzsche's proposed stay, but also the resolve to experience the most conservative environment Islam has to offer. There is a typically Nietzschean fascination with extremities here which the Islam of North Africa, Nietzsche feels, is able to provide - a desire to push one's homegrown European sensibilities to the limit, so that their overall rupture in an alien context might enable a radically new kind of knowledge. Not so much a better understanding of Islam, then, but Islam as a means to better understanding oneself. Nietzsche's attitude to Islam - indeed, to most of what he calls the "Orient" or "Morgenland" - almost always retains this ulterior, epistemological function.

A final reason for Nietzsche's inordinate and generally sympathetic interest in Islam may well spring from Nietzsche's own

somewhat notorious discomfort with German culture, a form of ethnic and cultural *Selbsthass* (self-contempt) which in the closing pages of the *Antichrist* becomes a definite rant ("They are my enemies, I confess it, these Germans: I despise in them every kind of uncleanliness of concept and value…"). This would certainly not be the first time in the history of German letters that an intense critique of one's immediate cultural environment and background moved a writer to exaggerated sympathies with a more distant culture. Heine comes to mind as the most obvious example of how such cultural claustrophobia can metamorphose into a longing for the Orient:

> *I find all things German to be repulsive…everything German feels to me like sawdust.*
>
> *Actually, I'm no German, as you well know…I wouldn't really be proud, even if I were a German. Oh they are barbarians! There are only three civilised peoples: the French, the Chinese and the Persians. I am proud to be a Persian.*

Of course, Heine's Judaism is of critical significance here and facilitates the repugnance he felt, at least in these epistolary moments, to all things German. Despite Nietzsche's claims of Polish lineage, his sense of being an outsider to German culture had to take another form - whereas Heine calls the Germans "des barbares" and deems Persians to be a "zivilisierte[s] Volk", Nietzsche's favourable disposition towards Islam stems from the fact that it is less 'modern', emancipated and democrat, and not more so. It is interesting, nevertheless, that Nietzsche's two favourite German poets (Goethe and Heine) both happened to be writers who dedicated significant sections of their *oeuvres* to the Islamic Orient.

The fact that Islam traditionally occupied the peculiar place of historical opposition to both European Christianity *and* modernity means that Nietzsche's positive remarks concerning Islam usually fall into four related categories: Islam's 'unenlightened' condition viz a viz women and social equality, its perceived 'manliness', its non-judgementalism and its affirmative character - one which says "Yes to life even in the rare and exquisite moments of Moorish life!". In all these remarks, a certain comparative tone is forever present, as if Islam was a kind of mirror in which the decadent, short-sighted European might finally glimpse the true condition of his decay.

In Nietzsche's various tirades against "the Christians of 'civilized' Christianity" and the so-called 'progress' of Europe "over and against Asia", Nietzsche's sarcasm often enlists non-European or pre-European instances of a 'purer', pre-Enlightenment attitude to society. Muslims and Arabs, not surprisingly, often find themselves cited favourably alongside other ethnic groups and religions for not having succumbed to pitying and improving the lot of the masses (*das Gesindel*):

> *Earlier philosophers (among them Indians as well as Greeks, Persians and Muslims, in short people who believed in hierarchy and not in equality and equal rights…*
>
> *At the base of all these noble races is the predator…Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings…on this essential point they are all the same (own trans.)*

It is interesting to see what kind of part Islam and Islamic cultures play in Nietzsche's history of *ressentiment* - where the weaker, life-

denying, non-Aryan values of chastity, meekness, equality, etc were successfully substituted by the "rabble" in place of the stronger aristocratic (*vornehmen*) values of aggression, sexuality and hierarchy. Islamic societies, lumped together bizarrely with samurai, Norsemen, centurions and Brahman, represent a purer and, one feels, a more *honest* understanding of what human beings are. This idea of 'honesty' as being a distinguishing feature between Islam and the "mendacity" of Christianity will be repeated in Nietzsche again and again.

This inclusion of Islam in the Nietzschean catalogue of more 'honest', pre-, non- or even anti-European societies offers two further points of interest: firstly, that Nietzsche's remarks do not greatly differ from the kinds of observations a whole century of European Orientalists were making about Arabs and Muslims in general - that Islam is incapable of democracy, that it is fanatical and warlike, that it is *Frauenfeindlich* and socially unjust, etc. Nietzsche's only difference, ironically, is that he affirms these prejudices instead of lamenting them. Nietzsche, who had never visited a Muslim country and whose closest brush with the 'Orient' was never going to be farther than the 'southern' sensuousness of Naples, had to rely on an extremely unreliable canon of Orientalists for his information about Islam and Arab culture. The fact that Nietzsche's opposition to 'progress' led him to react positively to the kind of racial and generic defamations attributed to the Middle East by these 'experts' leaves us with an interesting dilemma: how do we interpret Nietzsche's anti-democratic, misogynistic but nevertheless positive characterization of Islam? Do we condemn it for conforming to a whole set of nineteenth century stereotypes concerning these cultures, or do we interpret it as an anti-colonialist gesture - turning around the heavy machine of European Orientalism and using it to launch an ironic assault on the very modernity which produced it?

A second and by no means unrelated point lies in the fact that

Nietzsche's Islam (like that, as we shall see, of Borges and Foucault) is medieval. Partly because of the figures and events Nietzsche associates with it - Hafiz and the Assassins, feudal Arabs and Moorish Spain - and partly because of the feudalism and social structure which Nietzsche praises for being so untainted by any stain of European 'civilization'. At times, this association of Islam with the Middle Ages can even be quite explicit ("In Morocco", writes Nietzsche, "you get to know the medieval".). Islam, in other words, is not just geographically but also chronologically outside Europe: it is an idea, one which belongs outside history, hovering immutably in an almost Platonic way on the edges of the Mediterranean, denied any notion of development or *Geschichte*.

Nietzsche's characterization of Islam as a masculine or "manly" religion falls in line with this train of thought. That Nietzsche approved of a perceived Oriental subjugation of women is fairly well-known - an attitude most famously expressed in the observation (from *Beyond Good and Evil*) that a "deep man…can think about women only like an Oriental". Not surprisingly, "Mohammedanism" is also praised for knowing the true position of women:

> *Mohammedanism, as a religion for men, is deeply contemptuous of the sentimentality and mendaciousness of Christianity - which it feels to be a woman's religion.*

The most obvious reasons why a Westerner might call Islam a "man's religion" - because of the perceived attitude towards women in Islamic society, and the famously-documented references to women in the Koran - are never really examined by Nietzsche. Instead, Nietzsche appears to link Islam with masculinity for two different but connected reasons - because it *fights* and because, in contrast to 'womanish' Christianity, it *affirms*. Through scattered remarks,

one can detect a militaristic perception of Islam on Nietzsche's part - an appreciation of the readiness of Islam to extol the defense of the faith (*jihad*) as a righteous deed. These remarks increase in number towards the end of the eighties, when Nietzsche's desire to understand exactly how the slave morality of Christianity came to triumph in Europe (essentially how the weak managed to transform their limitations into virtues, and the assets of the strong into vices) inevitably involves the fight against Islam and the *reconquista*. Thus we encounter remarks in the notebooks praising the proximity of the sacred and the sword in Islam, such as : "Comradeship in battle means in Islam fellowship in faith: whoever worships in our service and eats our butcher's meat, is a Muslim". This conjunction of the holy and the bellicose appears to have fascinated the Nietzsche who, at least in some passages, seems to have seen war as the highest affirmation of life. It comes as no surprise therefore that the Assassins - Hasan ben Sabbah's twelfth/thirteenth century Ismaili sect of elite religious warriors who fought again the Crusades in Syria and the Abbasids in Iran - attract Nietzsche's attention for their combination of other-worldly devotion and "this-worldly" affirmation:

> *When the Christian Crusaders in the Orient came across the invincible order of the Assassins, those free spirits par excellence, whose lowest rank lived in a state of obedience which no order of monks has ever reached…(own trans)*

These words, it should be said, belong to a passage in which Nietzsche is admiring not so much the readiness of the Assassins to go to war, but the secret liberty of their esoteric doctrine: "Nothing is true. Everything is allowed". Nietzsche's derogatory comparison of the Assassins with an order of monks emphasises his Islamophilic rejection of Christianity; the virility of these Persian warrior-monks,

unchained to any principle or ethic, are proffered over and above the 'womanish' Christian monks, trapped within the narrow walls of their ascetic, life-fleeing dogmas. Nietzsche seems to have been interested in the possibility of Islam possessing a secret, fundamentally amoral premise - the idea recurs again in the *Gay Science*, this time not with a medieval militant group but an eighteenth century Arabian sect, the "Wahhabis":

> *Thus the Wahhabis know only two mortal sins: having a god other than the Wahhabi god, and smoking (which they call "the infamous way of drinking"). "And what about murder and adultery?" asked the Englishman who found this out, amazed. "God is gracious and merciful," replied the old chief.*

The astonished Englishman is Palgrave - Nietzsche had lifted the story out of the 1867 German translation of his *Travels in Arabia*. It is not difficult to see what caught Nietzsche's imagination in both these cases of fundamentally esoteric nihilism: the paradoxical absence of values at the very heart of a faith built on rituals, a moral vacuum which (certainly in the case of the Assassins) does not paralyze action but on the contrary instigates and condones it. These Islamic warrior-monks, insists Nietzsche, are the true "free spirits" and not their cowardly European versions, who "haven't been free spirits for a long time, for they still believe in Truth". It is difficult to think of any nineteenth century thinker who would rate a medieval Muslim sect as more advanced than the *crème de la crème* of the European Enlightenment. "Has any European, any Christian free-spirit ever lost themselves in this sentence and its labyrinthine consequences?" (ibid). Nietzsche's Islam, in other words, is a source of free spirits, a belief system which can produce cultures of moral and ethical flexibility. Nietzsche's generosity towards these

knights of Islam does not extend towards their Christian counterparts, the "Switzers" of the Church, whom Nietzsche considers to be nothing more than noble, Nordic animals who prostituted their aristocratic strength for pure material gain. Nietzsche's bias towards Islam is unashamed here, and clearly just as driven by a hatred of German Christianity as by a love of Shi'ia Islam or Moorish Spain; if Islam's advocacy of war is seen as characteristically affirmative and noble, medieval Christianity's equally strenuous advocation of the *Heiliger Krieg* is merely a 'trampling down' of stronger values by weaker ones, the victory of the *Chandala* and the rabble, so that "the whole ghetto-world [is] suddenly on top". Evidently, what is war for an "affirmative Semitic religion" such as Islam counts only as the trampling of a herd for a "negative Semitic religion" like Christianity.

Nietzsche, in whose works not a single quoted line from the Koran is to be found (particularly not such familiar Koranic descriptions of the world as a "plaything and a distraction"), clearly felt there to be something essentially *life-affirming* about Islam. Never appearing even slightly troubled by the core meaning of the word 'Islam' (meaning "submission"), Nietzsche saw Islam more often than not as a faith which refuses to be ashamed of 'manly' instincts such as lust, war and the desire to rule over others (Islam is, after all, "the product of a ruling class"). This resolve to extol the advantages of the Muslim faith at the expense of Christianity culminates in probably the most significant passage on Islam Nietzsche ever wrote - section sixty of *The Antichrist*:

> *Christianity robbed us of the harvest of the culture of the ancient world, it later went on to rob us of the harvest of the culture of Islam. The wonderful Moorish cultural world of Spain, more closely related to us at bottom, speaking more directly to*

> *our senses and taste, than Greece and Rome, was trampled down (-I do not say by what kind of feet-): why ? because it was noble, because it owed its origin to manly instincts, because it said Yes to life even in the rare and exquisite treasures of Moorish life!…Later on, the Crusaders fought against something they would have done better to lie down in the dust before - a culture compared with which even our nineteenth century may well think itself very impoverished and very 'late'.*
> *[…]The German aristocracy is virtually missing in the history of higher culture: one can guess the reason…Christianity, alcohol - the two great means of corruption…For in itself there should be no choice in the matter when faced with Islam and Christianity, as little as there should be when faced with an Arab and a Jew[….]One either is Chandala or one is not…*
> *"War to the knife with Rome! Peace and friendship with Islam!": this is what that great free spirit, the genius among German emperors, Friedrich the Second, felt, this is what he did.*

In this brief but extraordinary passage, Nietzsche basically declares Muslims to be 'one of us'. The *jasagende* culture of Islamic Spain is bundled together with the Renaissance as a late, doomed flourish of life-affirming thought, a kind of Nietzschean Prague Spring before the slumbering, suffocating weight of Christianity rolled in over it. The closeness of Nietzsche's own association with Islam in this text is particularly striking - closer even "than Greece and Rome", remarkable when one considers Nietzsche's Hellenophilia. Islam, in this context, almost has an Eden-like air about it, a last pocket of Nietzschean innocence before the "corruption" of Christian values. Even Nietzsche's familiar rejection of alcohol (a position reiterated several times throughout his work) seems to give an impression of Islamic sympathy, even if Nietzsche's antipathy

towards alcohol has more to do with its metaphysical proximity to reality-denying Christianity rather than any perceived loosening of one's inhibitions.

'War on Rome, Peace with Islam' - when one reads such assertions, remarks which exalt the status of Islam almost to a point of utter solidarity, it is difficult to resist the tempting hypothesis: had Nietzsche's breakdown not been imminent, would we have seen a work dedicated to Islam from his own pen - bearing in mind the steadily increasing number of references from the early eighties onwards, to Islam and the desire to see Eastern lands? If the answer to this question must lie in the negative, it is probably because Nietzsche says very little about what Islam *is*, but only what it is *not*. Nietzsche's Islam is ultimately vacuous: a constructed anti-Christianity, admittedly associated with some figures and places, but fundamentally built on a certain *Gefühl*, one which feeds on anecdotes lifted out of Orientalist texts or gropes for symbolic figures like the Assassins or Hafiz in order to justify its assertions. Nietzsche's Islam never loses this combatative, antagonistic function: Islam is incorporated into Nietzsche's vocabulary, adapted and utilised as a key motif in his argument, but never emerges as an object of interest in itself.

Islam As Just Another Religion.

In the closing pages of his excellent study *Nietzsche and the Jews*, Siegfried Mandel concludes that "in choosing between…Jews and Arabs and between Islam and Christianity, [Nietzsche] chose Islam and the Arab". Although many of the ideas Nietzsche criticised in Christianity could also be found in Islam, "it did not suite Nietzsche's argument to note Mohammed's syncretic adaptations" of

these Judaeo-Christian borrowings. Whilst this conclusion is true to a large extent, Mandel does not really investigate the many moments in the *Gesamtausgabe* where Nietzsche does appear to categorize Islam unproblematically as just another offshoot of Judaism, alongside Christianity. In contradiction to the spirit of Nietzsche's positive remarks concerning Islam, what we find in these passages is rather a religion just as judgmental, manipulative, life-denying and dishonest as the Christianity it is compared alongside.

The first characteristic which appears to link Christianity with Islam for Nietzsche is the fact that one does not *choose* such faiths, but is rather born into them: "People become Protestants, Catholics, Turks according to their native country, just as one who is born in a wine-growing land becomes a wine drinker". Protestants, Catholics, Turks - like its close relations, Islam is first and foremost a system of imposed beliefs one inauthentically adopts. The remark is early (October 1876) and orientates Nietzsche's general feelings about religion as a clever means of controlling and redescribing daily actions. Most of Nietzsche's derogatory or ambiguous remarks concerning Islam approach the faith from this premise of subtle control, even if the placing of Islam alongside other religions is not always consistent. In considering, for example, philosophers "from the Ural-Altaic linguistic zone" (by which Nietzsche presumably means Japanese as well as central Asian thought systems) "Indo-Germans" and "Muslims" are rather strangely categorised together as having a more developed "concept of the subject" than their 'Far Eastern' counterparts. Nietzsche's point here is grammatical: the presence of a regularly used first and second person singular in Indo-European and Semitic languages facilitates the notion of *personal* obligation just as much in Stoicism and Kantian idealism as it does in Islam and Christianity. This idea of a common, unquestionable morality - an "unconditional obedience" - in Western belief-systems as different as "Stoics, the

Christian and Arab orders…the philosophy of Kant" is often reiterated in Nietzsche. Stoicism, we should not forget, was considered by Nietzsche to be the "work of Semites" - which is why we find the definition of the Stoic as "an Arabian Sheik wrapped in Greek togas and concepts". Neither Islam nor Arabs are exempted from this blanket vilification of Semitism's God-centered imperative ("thou shalt"), which Nietzsche saw as no different in structure from the moral imperative of Kant ("I can therefore I must").

If Nietzsche feels religions - and their founders - to be of a fundamentally manipulative nature, neither Islam nor Mohammed enjoy any special allowances. Sometimes Islam is dismissed generically against a backdrop of world religions - in *The Gay Science*, for instance, where the subject is the "wisdom of all founders of religions" in the construction of prayer:

> *Let them, like the Tibetans, keep chewing the cud of their 'om mane padme hum' innumerable times … or honor Vishnu with his thousand names, or Allah with his ninety-nine; or let them use prayer mills and rosaries: the main thing is that this work fixes them for a time and makes them tolerable to look at.*

Nietzsche's cynicism here extends just as much to the Sufi with his *tesibe* as it does to the Hindu chant and the *Ave Maria*. Prayer as no spiritual vehicle but rather a clever tactic to keep the attention of the simple-minded from wandering away from their day-to-day practices and onto the deeper *raison d'etre* of what they do. In this passage, there is no temporal chart to show *how* these religions gradually used the quotidian habits of the common people to justify and strengthen their hold on them. Towards the end of the Eighties, however, Nietzsche seems to have felt that Christianity was the sole cause of a certain *metaphysical* corruption in Islam:

> *Mohammedanism in turn learned from Christianity: the employment of the 'beyond' as an instrument of punishment.*
>
> *What was the only thing Mohammed later borrowed from Christianity? The invention of Paul, his means for establishing a priestly tyranny, for forming herds: the belief in immortality - that is to say the doctrine of 'judgment'…*

As Orsucci has shown, Nietzsche stumbled upon this idea of the Islamic *jennet* and *jehennem* (heaven and hell) as a Christian borrowing in Wellhausen's *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. Two points are of interest: firstly, Nietzsche once again replicates in part the Christocentric assertions of European Orientalism which always depicted Christianity as the *fons et origo* of Islam - the only difference being that instead of crediting Christianity with a central influence on Islam, Nietzsche *blames* it. Which suggests, secondly, that Nietzsche believed in the existence of an Ur-Islam which was originally uncontaminated by the 'womanish' (*weibliche*) metaphysics of Christianity and its obsession with the other world. An earlier Islam, perhaps, which was even more radically affirmative than the Islam Nietzsche sees in its current state. It is also interesting to note that the Apostle Paul preserves his role in Nietzsche's work as the epitome of *chandala* corruption and deceit - not simply as the polluter and falsifier of Christianity, but the polluter of Islam as well. In this case, at least, the "syncretic adaptations" (Mandel) of Judaeo-Christianity Nietzsche is forced to admit to within Islam are redescribed as the corrupting forces of Pauline theology - leaving Islam as something higher and fundamentally different from its Jewish and Christian predecessors.

Nietzsche does not always talk about Islam in this way, however. In the frequent associations Nietzsche makes between Mohammed and Plato, associations which were to make such an impression

on Foucault, no suggestion is made that the former learnt anything from the latter. Both figures are seen as original and rather cunning law-givers - gifted moralisers who knew how to use concepts such as 'God' or 'eternal values' to control people's consciences and acquire power. That Plato should be compared with Mohammed is hardly surprising: Nietzsche had always considered Plato to be an "instinctive Semite" (*Semit von Instinkt*) and a "symptom of decadence" (*Verfall-Symptom*), even if in some places the comparison does seem to be stretched to a peculiar extent:

> *What wonder is it that [Plato] - who, as he himself said, had the 'political drive' in his body - tried three times to stage a coup, where a collective Greek Mediterranean state had just appeared to form itself? In this and with his help Plato thought to do for all the Greeks, what Mohammed did for his Arabs: namely, to control the day-to-day living and traditions, great and small, of everyone…a couple of coincidences less, a couple of coincidences more, and the world would have experienced the Platonisation of southern Europe (own trans.)*

If Nietzsche offers the Prophet Mohammed to us here as an Arab Plato, it is for three reasons. First of all, both figures have a talent for redescription - a singular ability for supplying a different, more attractive set of metaphors to describe the world of the common man. This does, of course, move somewhat nearer to the kind of eighteenth-century, Voltairesque stereotype of Mohammed as a cunning and manipulative impostor - even if Nietzsche had elsewhere dismissed Voltaire's assessment of the Prophet as a resentment against "higher natures". Once again, Nietzsche seems not so much to be disagreeing with European Orientalism, but rather affirming and celebrating the very aspects of Islam they purport to deplore.

There seems to be with both figures a common emphasis on rhetorical imagination - the founder of Islam and the pupil of Socrates both achieve success (like all "great reformers") by a certain understanding of the world as a constantly describable collection of circumstances. Secondly, both figures are interested in power - in 'truth' as a means to power. There is nothing exclusively Islamic or Platonic about this idea of concepts such as 'will of God' or 'truth' as a way of controlling the existences of lesser natures; on the contrary, Nietzsche often remarks how "these concepts are to be found at the basis of all priestly organizations". Although Nietzsche most famously applied this cynical use of such beliefs to Christianity, neither Islam nor the Law book of Manu (Nietzsche's example of an "affirmative Aryan religion") are exempt from this understanding of religious language as pure *Machtpolitik*.

Finally, and most subtly, there lies in this passage the implicit association of Nietzsche's imagined *Platonisirung des europäischen Südens* with the spread of Islam. Plato's attempt to found a "Mediterranean state" in Sicily acquires all the overtones of a Greek Mohammed, attempting to unite and control his fellow Hellenes in the same way the Prophet, nine centuries later, would bring together and forge an identity for the Arabs. The fact that Islam gained a brief foothold in Sicily underlines the proximity of the analogy, even if Nietzsche fails to comment on this directly. This implicit association of the Islamic expansion with the historical success of Platonism appears at odds with Nietzsche's later depiction of Moorish Spain as a bastion against the life-hating dogmas of a reality-slandering belief system. That Islam is virtually re-described here as an 'Arab Platonism' underlines the genuine ambiguities towards Islam in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche, as we have seen, considers Islam to be "an affirmative Semitic religion"; it remains difficult to say which of the two adjectives has the most importance for him. When Nietzsche needs a

positive example of a Semitic faith to show by contrast how weak and malign Christianity is, Islam is invoked as a paragon of life-affirming values. When, on the other hand, a post-Platonic example of a cunning manipulator of the masses is required, Mohammed is presented as someone who uses the idea of an afterlife to control and subjugate his weaker brethren.

Taken all in all, Islam emerges in Nietzsche's work not as an affirmation of life in itself, but certainly the closest thing to a *jasagende* affirmation the Semitic religions have to offer. It is in this tone of unexpected merit, of comparative accolade, that Nietzsche lauds Islam - as a monotheistic metaphysics which, at least, is more life-embracing and 'manly' than its Judaeo-Christian sister faiths. This attitude of relative commendation is replicated in Nietzsche's praise of Hafiz, the fourteenth century Persian poet. Just as Islam is a Semitic religion - but nevertheless an *affirmative* one, so Hafiz is presented to us not just as a Romantic, but as an affirmative example of Romanticism. Nietzsche's own definition of Romanticism as the "consequence of dissatisfaction with reality" is, in part, a response to Schopenhauerian pessimism. The Romantic is someone whose gaze is constantly averted elsewhere, usually backwards, away "from himself and his world". Nevertheless, as late as 1886 we find Nietzsche discerning two ambiguous elements within Romanticism - a desire for destruction and change, and a parallel desire for eternity and being. To this second category belong Rubens, Goethe and Hafiz, artists for whom art stems "from gratitude and love". The vein in which Nietzsche speaks of Hafiz here is the same in which he speaks of the "rare and exquisite treasures of Moorish life"; Hafiz is associated with a this-worldly joy, a deification of the mundane, the transformation of the here-and-now, without succumbing to the Romantic weakness for deferral and postponement. In other words, Hafiz forms the 'acceptable' face of Romanticism,

just as Islam forms the acceptable face of Semitism.

The question, however, remains: which Islam is Nietzsche's Islam? Epileptic prophets or manly warriors? A carbon copy of Judaeo-Christian mendacity or a wholly positive, life-affirming faith? An Islam based on control and submission, or one of joy and celebration? The absence of any real substance to Nietzsche's understanding of Islam renders such questions superfluous; what we see in works such as *The Antichrist* is an interest in Islam which is ultimately semantic. Insofar as he saw Islam as a pool of signs and motifs to dip into and make use of for his own philosophical aims, Nietzsche differs from his Orientalist predecessors and their use of such imagery only in an exaggerated sympathy for Islam - a sympathy he expressed in his own unique and ultimately self-serving terms. It is precisely this sympathy which we will now examine in two of Nietzsche's inevitable heirs, Derrida and Foucault.

Endnotes

1 Cit. in R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1965) p39. This article first appeared in *German Life and Letters* 55:1 (Blackwell) January 2003.

2 *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld, 1967)p145

3 Nietzsche's use of both these titles is examined more fully in Andrea Orsucci's excellent *Orient-Okzident: Nietzsche's Versuch einer Loslösung vom europaischen Weltbild* (Berlin, 1996)

4 For a fuller list of the books Nietzsche read in his days at Basel, see Luca Crescenzi's "Verzeichnis der von Nietzsche aus der Üniversitätsbibliothek in Basel entliehenen Bücher" in *Nietzsche Studien* 23:1994, pp388-443

5 letter to Paul Deussen, 3rd January, 1888

6 *Fragen Sie meinen alten Kameraden Gersdorff, ob er Lust habe, mit mir auf ein bis zwei Jahre nach Tunis zu gehen …Ich will unter Muselmännern eine gute Zeit leben, und zwar dort, wo ihr Glaube jetzt am strengsten ist: so wird sich wohl mein Urtheil und mein Auge für alles Europäische schärfen* - taken from a letter to Köselitz, 13 März, 1881 - found in G. Colli and M. Montinari (eds), *Briefe* (Berlin, 1975), III:1, S.68 - cit. in Orsucci, *Orient-Okzident*, pviii

7 see Graham Parkes' "Nietzsche and East Asian Thought" in B. Magnus and K.M. Higgins (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (London: Cambridge

University Press, 1996) p379

8 *The Antichrist*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990)p198

9 *Alles, was deutsch ist, mir zuwider…Alles Deutsche wirkt auf mich wie ein Brechpulver* - taken from a letter to Christian Sethe, April, 1822 - cit. in Christiane Barbara Pfeifer, *Heine und der Islamische Orient* (Wiesbaden, 1990) p4

10 *Eigentlich bin ich auch kein Deutscher, wie Du wohl weisst …Ich würde mir auch nichts darauf einbilden, wenn ich ein Deutscher wäre. O ce sont des barbares! Es gibt nur drei gebildete, zivilisierte Völker: die Franzosen, die Chinesen und die Perser. Ich bin stolz darauf, ein Perser zu sein* - taken from a letter to Moser, 21 January, 1824 - cit in Pfeifer, ibid, p6

11 Nietzsche declares Goethe and Heine to be his two favourite poets in a late fragment - see the *Gesamtausgabe* VII.34 Juni 1885 no 10210

12 *The Antichrist*, p196

13 *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 26, p48

14 ibid, section 30, p30

15 *Auf dem Grunde aller dieser vornehmen Rassen ist das Raubthier …römischer, arabischer, germanischer, japanesischer Adel, homerische Helden, skandinavische Wikinger - in diesem Bedürfniss sind sie all gleich* - taken from *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, I.11, p31

16 see *The Will To Power*, II.191, p113: "The profound and contemptible mendaciousness of Christianity in Europe - we really are becoming the contempt of Arabs, Hindus, Chinese."

17 William Robertson Smith, for example, whose trip to the Hejaz in 1880 produced the conclusion that "the barbarous and obsolete ideas of the Arab… have their roots in a consensus which lies deeper than his belief in Islam" (*Lectures and Essays*, p412 - cit. in Edward Said, *Orientalism* [London: Penguin, 1978] p236). Neither should we forget Schopenhauer's remark in the *Prologomena* that "Islam ist der Zivilisation nicht guenstig" (II.424)

18 Aphorism 12814 - from the *Gesamtausgabe*, VIII: 2.352. Own translation.

19 *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 238, p126

20 *Will to Power*, section 145, p93

21 *Schlachtgemeinschaft ist noch im Islam Sakralgemeinschaft: wer an unserem Gottesdienst theilnimmt und unserer Schlachtfleisch isst, der ist ein Muslim* - taken from the *Gesamtausgabe*, Aphorism no 11654 - Autumn 1887. Own translation.

22 See the *Gay Science*, p283, "Live in conflict with your equals and with yourselves!". Or the famous words from *Zarathustra*: "…it is the good war that hallows every cause" Part I, p10

23 *Als die christlichen Kreuzfahrer im Orient auf jenen unbesiegbaren Assassinen-Orden stiessen, jenen Freigeister-Orden par excellence, dessen unterste Grade in einem Gerhorsame lebten, wie einen gleichen kein Mönchsorden erreicht hat…* - taken from *Genealogie der Moral*, III.24, p152. Nietzsche probably obtained his knowledge of the Assassins from the Austrian translator of Hafiz, Joseph von Hammer, who had published his *History of the Assassins* in 1818. For more on the history of Western responses

to this esoteric warrior sect, see Bernard Lewis' *The Assassins* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1968).

24 *sind noch lange keine freien Geister…denn sie glauben noch an die Wahrheit* - taken from *The Gay Science*,trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1974) I.43, p109

25 see Orsucci, *Orient-Okzident*, p201

26 *Zur Genealogie*, III.24

27 *The Antichrist*, p196

28 ibid, s.59

29 *The Will to Power*, p145

30 Siegfried Mandel, *Nietzsche and the Jews* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998) p324

31 *Die Menschen werden je nach ihrer Heimat Protestanten Katholikern Türken, wie einer, der in einem Weinlande geboren wird, ein Weintrinker wird* - Aphorism no. 2718 - October 1876

32 *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 20, p20

33 *The Will to Power*, IV: 940, p495

34 ibid, II: 195, p115

35 *The Gay Science*, III:128, p185

36 *The Will to Power*, II:143, p92

37 *The Antichrist*, section 42, p167

38 Orsucci, p339

39 *…was Wunders, dass er [Plato] - der, wie er selber sagt, den 'politischen Trieb' im Leibe hatte - dreimal ein Versuch im Sicilien gemacht hat, wo sich damals gerade ein gesammtgriechischer Mittelmeer-Staat vorzubereiten schien? In ihm und mit seiner Hülfe gedachte Plato für alle Griechen das zu thun, was Muhammed später für seine Araber that: die grossen und kleinen Bräuche und namentlich die tägliche Lebensweise von Jedermann festzusetzen. …Ein paar Zufälle weniger und ein paar andere Zufälle mehr - und die Welt hätte die Platonisirung des europäischen Südens erlebt* - taken from the *Gesamtausgabe* V:1.296

40 "Voltaire, als er Mahomet missverstand, ist in der Bahn gegen die hoeheren Naturen" - from Aphorism no. 8925, *Gesamtausgabe* VII: 2.60

41 ibid, V.2.347

42 *The Antichrist*, section 55, p187

43 *The Will to Power*, p445

44 ibid, p445

45 ibid, p446

46 *The Antichrist*, 60

47 see *Morgenröte*, V:549

Chapter Three

Tales of Buddha, Dreams of Arabia: Joyce and Images of the East

I have seen Mankind in various Countries and find them equally despicable, if anything the Balance is rather in favour of the Turks.

- Byron, "Memorandum", May 22nd 1811

Perhaps it is unwise to begin any study of Joyce and the East with Byron - a figure who, despite some common factors of antipatriotism, apostasy and general xenophilia, differs from Joyce in so many ways. Byron had visited his 'East' at least a year before writing about it in his "Turkish Tales", whereas Joyce - whose own *Ulysses* contains over one hundred and fifty references to Middle and Far Eastern cultures, practically an allusion to some form of the 'East' every seven pages - had never set foot outside the boundaries of Christian Europe. Joyce's year-long spell as a teacher in Pula, now Northwestern Croatia, was probably the closest the author came to the old borders of the ageing Ottoman Empire, even though in Trieste Turkish and Albanian national costumes on the street would have been a fairly commonplace sight. In one sense, however, the irony inherent in Byron's words uses the same technique as Joyce does - it juggles with images, finally selecting Europe's Infidel, Heathen Other ("Turko the Terrible" as Joyce will later write in *Ulysses*) as the only example of humanity actually worth caring about.

For *Ulysses* is, amongst all the other things it has been called, a compendium of images about the East, arranged in no particular manner and with no apparent purpose. In barely ten pages we can read of Hindu widows, Turkish graveyards and Chinese poppy-fields, so dense and incongruous are the proliferating images of Islam and Buddhism, Arabs, Hindus and Jews, empires Ottoman and Mongul. Joyce's 'East' - sometimes serious, often trivial, occasionally sober, more often wild and exotic - permeates *Ulysses* like a musical theme, forever appearing at the strangest of moments to startle or mock, amuse or delight. Such an 'East' - being an East Joyce had never travelled to, but only read about - has no real location, unlike Byron's Golden Horn; there is no source of concrete experiences from which this stream of confusing images flows, no event which would account for the camels, Turks, buddhas and dancing-girls which populate his novel. As if Joyce wasn't so much interested in the East itself, but in why we have the word in our language - why 'Westerners' feel or think the things they do, however clichéd, when they think about the East. Of course, there is little novel in the idea that the 'East' fulfills a metaphysical need for Europeans - a handy synonym for 'elsewhereness', something to distract them from the banality of the actual - but its manifestation and development in Joyce has its own interesting history, one which begins not with *Ulysses* but with a story Joyce wrote nine years earlier.

I) "Araby" and the Illusion of the East

> *I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange - in Persia, I thought.*
>
> *- "The Sisters", p12*

The Romantic promise of the East which the young Joyce exposes in "Araby" has a rich genealogy, one which scholars such as Said, Lewis and Sharafuddin have charted extensively. It is a promise so

prevalent that even the most non-oriental of poems seem to make use of it - one thinks of Keats' "manna and dates…from Fez" and the "spiced dainties" from "silken Samarcand" in his "Eve of St Agnes" (269-70). Wordsworth, standing with his sister behind a waterfall in Grasmere, Cumbria in 1799, offers an interesting example of this readiness of the provincial to embrace the oriental in order to assist its self-description:

> *The rock in the centre of these falls where the water was most abundant, deep black, the adjoining parts yellow white purple violet and dove-coloured; or covered with water plants of the most vivid green, and hung with streams and fountains of ice…I cannot express to you the enchanted effect produced by this Arabian scene of colour as the wind blew aside the great waterfall behind which we stood and hid and revealed each of the faery cataracts…*

Some points need to be underlined here: first of all, Wordsworth associates his 'Arabia' with colour, unreality and magic. In trying to describe how un-local the extraordinary sight of this waterfall is, how unlike the bright, vivid colours inside the cave are from the rest of green, wet, rural Cumbria, Wordsworth reaches for another continent. And yet the poet's displacement isn't purely geographical - Wordsworth hasn't simply stumbled upon a hidden pocket of Arabia buried in the middle of North West England. The "Arabian scene of colour" which brother and sister encounter, with the "enchanted effect" of its "faery cataracts", offers a place of magical seclusion: it removes them from the mundanity of their own reality for over an hour, allowing them to wallow "in the luxury of [their] imaginations" (ibid). A fantastical retreat from the colourless "everyday common life" which Wordsworth, only slightly paradoxically, had vowed to celebrate.

Critics such as Said have probably said all there is to say on this transition of the East in the (secular) European mind from

Christendom's medieval, threatening Other to Romanticism's post-Industrial escape route. All of a sudden, it didn't seem to matter anymore that the East didn't know Christ as their Saviour - indeed, didn't even know who Christ was; the 'East' became a non-place, taking on a secondary role as a pool of metaphors, a reservoir of foreign, exotic images, a ready-made collection of *unheimliche* effects to be used whenever (as in Wordsworth's case) an author wanted to communicate a radically new or alien experience to the reader. As early as the 1780's, Orientalists such as Sir William Jones were advocating a new poetic function of the East:

> *I cannot but think that our European poetry has sustained too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables…if the principal writings of the Asiaticks, which are reposited in our public libraries, were printed …and if the languages of the Eastern nations were studied…a new and ample field would be open for speculation; we should have a more extensive insight into the history of the human mind; we should be furnished with a new set of metaphors and similitudes and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain and future poets might imitate.*

The East, therefore, can offer three things in addition to seclusion from the tedium of the quotidian: novelty, self-knowledge and development. It would be easy, of course, to paraphrase Sir William's words in blander terms: the West is bored, it doesn't know what to do; "European poetry" keeps saying the same old thing, using the same old stock of similes since Homer - rosy dawns, dark seas, loves like roses, etc. It would also be easy to overlook the essence of what Sir William is saying - in effect, that Europe should *use* the East artistically in order to develop and improve its own creative capacities. Nevertheless, in re-describing a cave in Cumbria as "Ara-

bian", Wordsworth does what Sir William is asking all European poets to do; he orientalises the local, defamiliarizing (to use the Formalists' term) a waterfall in Grasmere by connecting it to a pool of utterly alien images. A relocation of the extraordinary within the ordinary which was, after all, Wordsworth's most famous aim.

Thus, for Sir William, if the West is tired and clichéd and metaphorically exhausted, the East is something fecund, reinvigorating, life-giving, a potential for transformation as yet unrealised - a hope, almost. And it is precisely this idea of the *promise* of the East - 'promise' in the most Messianic sense of the word, as the arrival of something that will radically change everything for the better - that the young Joyce deflates so perfunctorily in "Araby".

Joyce's tale, written in the October of 1905 when he was twenty-three years old, is the brief story of a schoolboy who falls hopelessly in love with his friend's adolescent sister. On first reading, one might be forgiven for thinking "Araby" to be her name; in actual fact, we never learn the girl's name, simply that she is "Mangan's sister". 'Araby' is the name of a travelling Eastern bazaar which has come to town (which really *did* come to Dublin in May 14-19,1894) and from which the boy-protagonist promises to buy something for the girl as a courtly token of his undying love. As the week before the opening of the bazaar passes, the boy's dreamy infatuation with the girl becomes confused with the oriental allure of the bazaar *Araby*:

> *I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work at school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me.(p32)*

Like Wordsworth, the young boy opposes the East to tedium; like Wordsworth, he associates it with "luxury", "enchantment" and

"imagination". The East, being a place outside reality, is also a place outside work - a place where you don't have to work, blissfully located outside the world of school and household chores. Most importantly for the boy, however, the East represents the romantic possibility of requited love; if he can only reach the bazaar and buy the gift, he will surely win the girl's heart.

Of course, not everyone's idea of the East is the same. When the boy's uncle discovers his nephew is going to the bazaar, his only response is to try to sing him the opening lines of "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed". What represents holy, enchanted love for one person, reminds another of a music hall song. If the boy's East is exotic and magical, the uncle's version is farcical and buffoonish - bearded sheikhs and racing horses. In a sense, such unintentional mockery is a warning of how the story will end - because of the uncle's own tardiness, the boy arrives late at the bazaar, which by now is almost empty and about to close:

> *I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call out from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark. Gazing up into the darkness, I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and with anger. (p36)*

"Vanity", as one critic has already pointed out, is etmylogically 'empty'. The peculiar melancholy of closure, as the huge, empty bazaar slowly folds up around the boy in the darkness, provides an effective contrast with the overpowering joy of the boy's exotic expectations. One of the most Chekhovian of Joyce's stories, "Araby" shares the Russian's fascination with the structure of disappointment; the epiphanic moment at the end of the story is the acquisition of a certain gnosis - the secret mendacity of all our

hopes, the illusory conviction that our dreams may actually come true. Of course, disappointment is a common theme to practically every story in *Dubliners* - Gabriel's discovery of his wife's childhood love, the death of Parnell and its consequences for Ireland in "Ivy Day", Mrs Sinico's suicide in "A Painful Case". What is interesting about "Araby" is the way Joyce introduces the East into his examination of disillusionment - how he *uses* the East as just one amongst many synonyms for an empty promise. A use of the Orient which, perhaps, was not quite what Sir William Jones had in mind. There is no East, Joyce's narrator almost seems to be saying, no magical place which will fill our lives with all kinds of colours and passions and sensations - just an empty bazaar. A cynical, embittered response to the Orient which, as far as *Ulysses* is concerned, we will not see in Joyce again.

II) Moorish Eyes, Chinless Chinamen, Turkish Slippers: *Ulysses* and the Affirmation of the Depthless East

> *We can't change the country. Let us change the subject.*
> *-Ulysses, p748*

Insofar as the myth of Odysseus concerns a journey in the East - a man who travels to the East and returns, ten years later, to find everything changed, including himself - the basic metaphor of Joyce's book is of some relevance. For the attentive reader, Joyce's book is itself one such encounter with the East - from the oriental brothel Bloom visits to the "handsome Moors" Molly recollects in her final monologue, *Ulysses* is peppered with Eastern names, places and allusions which baffle the reader not simply because of their frequency , but also for their incongruity with the rest of the text.From the scene of Bloom ogling women in the butcher's, we move surreally to money-making plans concerning eucalyptus trees and the Turk-

ish government (p72). In the middle of the trip to Paddy Dignam's funeral, the image of Martin Cunningham's drunken wife suddenly appears, singing "And they call me the jewel of Asia/ Of Asia" (121). The hardy English sailor, with an anchor "tattoed in blue Chinese ink" on his chest (729), declaring for no reason his favourite book to be "*The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*"(768); inbetween talk of the Linenhall barracks and "Armagh the splendid", the mention of Lebanese cedars and "Rangoon beans" (378-9); above all, Joyce's exaggerated insistence on qualifying numerous Eastern products and substances with their place of origin - "Chinese tea" (459), "Turkish slippers" (497), "Chinese ink" (729), "India paper" (820), "Japanese screen" (839), "Turkish cigarettes" (861), "Indian god" (917)…adjectives which often stand out as the only capitalized words on the page. Something was clearly pushing the author of *Ulysses* to make repeated references to cultural contexts well outside the milieu of turn-of-the-century Dublin. What exactly is the function of such a flood of images in *Ulysses*? What is their effect? How does the wave after wave of exotic personages - Sinbad, the Queen of Sheba, Grand Viziers - change our reading of a novel whose plot never strays more than a mile from Dublin's city centre?

Perhaps the first thing to note about Joyce's Eastern images is their frequent superficiality. There are more references to belly-dancers and bazaars than philosophers; symbols chosen to represent a national culture are usually the most obvious - Japanese screens, gatebells and kimonos. Stereotypes, when cited, are rarely called into question - Turks are terrible, Chinese have pigtails, foreign English is openly parodied ("Him makee velly muchee fine night" 589). Such a surprisingly *tabloid* representation of the East, betraying Joyce's own far from shallow knowledge of Islamic and Far Eastern cultures, clearly carries on something of Joyce's realist project in *Dubliners* - that of depicting the thought-trains (both

erudite and populist) of a city's inhabitants as accurately as possible, of (as Joyce said) giving the Irish "one good look at themselves".

However, the profusion of Eastern images in *Ulysses* seems to point to a more subtle project of Joyce's - the faintly NeoPlatonic aim of an all-encompassing Book of All Things. One can't help thinking of Mallarmé here: "I will go even further and say: the Book, for I am convinced that there is only One, and that it has been attempted by every writer, even by Geniuses…". *Ulysses* would be the Book of all books, the accumulation of every image, the single volume gathering together the errant and the multiple, the Neoplatonic reconciler of opposites. Such a book would bring together opposite poles of a divergent globe - East and West, high and low, sinner and saint: "Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet." (622). "Jewgreek" here is not simply the famed meeting in *Ulysses* of Ireland and Israel, of Hebrew and Irish, of Stephen's intellectual Hellenism and Bloom's gutsy Hebraism; "Jewgreek" could easily be re-read as "eastwest", the "eastwest" Kipling thought could never meet - Averroes as an Islamic Thomas Aquinas, Buddha an Indian Christ, Sinbad an Arab Ulysses. Through its repeated references to an East magically removed from a Dublin world of barrooms, pubs and brothels, Joyce's novel brings together a myriad of different cultures in a single book, gathering within nine hundred and thirty pages a semantic Noah's Ark of non-European cultures, languages and histories. Which is why, in Said's terms, *Ulysses* is simultaneously the most orientalist and anti-orientalist of books. In one sense, *Ulysses* is indeed (to use Said's own words) "a bin called 'Oriental'… into which all the authoritative, anonymous and traditional Western attitudes to the East [are] dumped unthinkingly". And yet, it would be naïve to believe the images Joyce presents us with are presented for our approval - so finely and evenly interspersed are such images throughout the book, so easily do we slide from West to East as

we read, that the distinction itself begins to be called into question. The orientalizing of a Dublin brothel, Molly's "Moorish eyes" (492), Bloom's imaginary re-description of himself in a red fez as cousin of "von Bloom Pasha" (582), not to mention Molly's final confusion of kisses on Howth Head and "under the Moorish wall" (933)… throughout Joyce's novel, in more ways than one, "extremes meet".

This desire to fuse so many differences into the unity of a single text feeds Joyce's internationalism and probably accounts, in a smaller way, for the unusual number of references in the book to Islamic Spain, that famed episode in the history of Europe where three faiths managed to co-exist in relative peace and harmony. "Union of all, jew, moslem and gentile" cries Bloom the politician, "Mixed marriages and mixed races"(610-11). Bloom, like Joyce, has grown tired of differences, has learnt to see through their arbitrary pretensions. Of course, Father Farley is indignant: "He is an episcopalian, an agnostic, an anythingarian seeking to overthrow our holy faith" (611). And yet, Bloom's 'anythingarianism' reflects a familiar truth about *Ulysses* - that it has no real, overarching agenda, no "holy faith" to protect, that it simply displays the endless, bewildering variety of its contents as they are, without trying to shape or deliver them in any ideological fashion. Molly's recollections of her Gibraltar experiences probably show this most memorably:

> *…the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls…and the auctions in the morning the Greeks and the jews and the Arabs and the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe…(932)*

Joyce's shower of Eastern imagery facilitates this affirmation of differences, encouraging a process which slowly turns Christian Europe from an eternal source of universal values to just another part of the planet. Many of Joyce's references to the East in *Ulysses* seem to have this decentering of Europe in mind - the year the last time Bloom weighed himself , for instance, which is given as "one

thousand nine hundred and four of the Christian era (jewish era five thousand six hundred and sixty four, mohammedan era one thousand three hundred and twenty two)" (780). Europe is localized not merely geographically, but also chronologically. All four references to the Buddha in *Ulysses* seem to suggest this reminder, sometimes gentle, sometimes forceful, that Father Farley's "holy faith" is by no means the only one on the planet:

> *…like that Indian god he took me to show one wet Sunday in the museum in Kildare street all yellow in a pinafore lying on his side on his hand with his ten toes sticking out that he said was a bigger religion than the jews and Our Lords both put together all over Asia imitating him…(917)*

The East becomes a mode of expression for Joyce's animosity towards the Church and its exclusivist truth-claims. At the beginning of the book, Bloom has already been thinking about the very reverend John Conmee J.J.'s plans to "Save China's Millions" ("Wonder how they explain it to the heathen Chinee" thinks Bloom (98)). The East has its Christs too, however, and Joyce's inclusion of them plays a part in his sustained belittlement of the West in *Ulysses*.

Set in an Ireland which in 1904 is still under British dominion, *Ulysses'* representation of the East is also a comment on the Empire - on the fact that a large part of the East actually belongs to the West. Macabre images such as "Chinese cemetries with giant poppies growing produce the best opium" (137) not only illustrate the British grotesque use of opium in its attempt to subdue the Chinese, but also convey graphically how the Empire is able to exploit its subjects, both dead and alive. Just as Joyce uses the East to belittle the West, at the same time he can draw on a store of images to paint and mock the Occident as a pompous tyrant:

> *…Victoria her name, Her Most Excellent Majesty, by the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and*

> *of the British dominions beyond the sea, queen, defender of the faith, Empress of India, even she, who bore rule, a victress over many peoples, the well-beloved, for they knew and loned her from the rising of the sun to the going down daily thereof, the pale, the dark, the ruddy and the ethiop. (387)*

Joyce is clearly having fun with British misconceptions of Eastern attitudes towards the Empire - Imperialism as a gift, an expression of care and affection, bestowed maternally upon the "dark, the ruddy and the ethiop" for their own benefit. In this very limited sense, Ireland itself forms a part of Joyce's East - an imperial East, struggling with and subject to a military power, a status Joyce refers to in *Finnegan's Wake* as "semicolonial" (p156). Insofar as Ireland itself was one such 'dominion', Joyce could probably feel some sympathy for the Indian, Chinese and Arab peoples he writes about - although even this logic of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' was not enough to push the author himself to any outright display of nationalism, a fact already underlined in *Portrait*: "My ancestors threw off one language and took another…They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them." In *Ulysses*, Bloom seems to echo the young Stephen's ambivalence towards such Irish anti-imperialism; even as John Wyse is cursing "the great empire they boast about" as a pack of "drudges and whipped serfs", Bloom still finds time to be irritatingly objective: "But isn't discipline the same everywhere? I mean, would it be the same here if you put force against force?" (427). Once again, Bloom's cannier optic sees through differences other people can't, muddling pat, simplistic differences between conqueror and conquered in the same way he muddles the differences between "moslem, jew and gentile". Joyce's references to the East, be it "Gordon at Khartoum" (897) or the "Grand Turk" who sent Ireland "his piastres" during the famine (428), are never far away from their colonial echoes.

In one sense, *Ulysses* does not escape Western naiveties about the glamour and exotic allure of the East - the "southern glamour"

which Bloom, elsewhere, attributes to Italian (717). "I'm sick of my country, sick of it" Gabriel says in "The Dead"; Ireland the drab, the grey, the repressively catholic necessitates the same introduction of Eastern opposites as Wordsworth's Arabian waterfall - opiate images of luxury, strangeness and indulgence. Towards the end of *Ulysses*, we learn from the overtly analytical narrator Bloom's own fears of future unhappiness, not to mention their dual solutions: "death (change of state)…departure (change of place)". (856). The list of Bloom's desirable destinations abroad include "Ceylon (with spice gardens…)… Jerusalem, the holy city (with mosque of Omar and gate of Damascus, goal of aspiration)" and "the forbidden country of Thibet (from which no traveller returns)"(857). It is no surprise that Joyce considers death and travel to be near-synonyms - the desire to be elsewhere appropriating, after all, an even deeper desire to be nowhere. Joyce's by now familiar 'flight' from his culture, beyond the nets of nationalism and religion that would trap and ensnare his soul, is a flight towards this East - not just the Orient, but anywhere East of Ireland, Paris or Peking, Trieste or Trebizond, London or Lahore.

Imagination has a large part to play in all this. For *Ulysses* is, if anything, a book which brings the East into the West, via the imagination of Leopold Bloom. Probably the most obvious example of this is Molly's 'apparition' as a Turkish dancing girl:

> *He looks up. Beside her mirage of datepalms a handsome woman in Turkish costume stands before him. Opulent curves fill out her scarlet trousers and jacket slashed with gold. A wide yellow cummerband girdles her. A white yashmak violet in the night, covers her face, leaving free only her large dark eyes and raven hair. (570)*

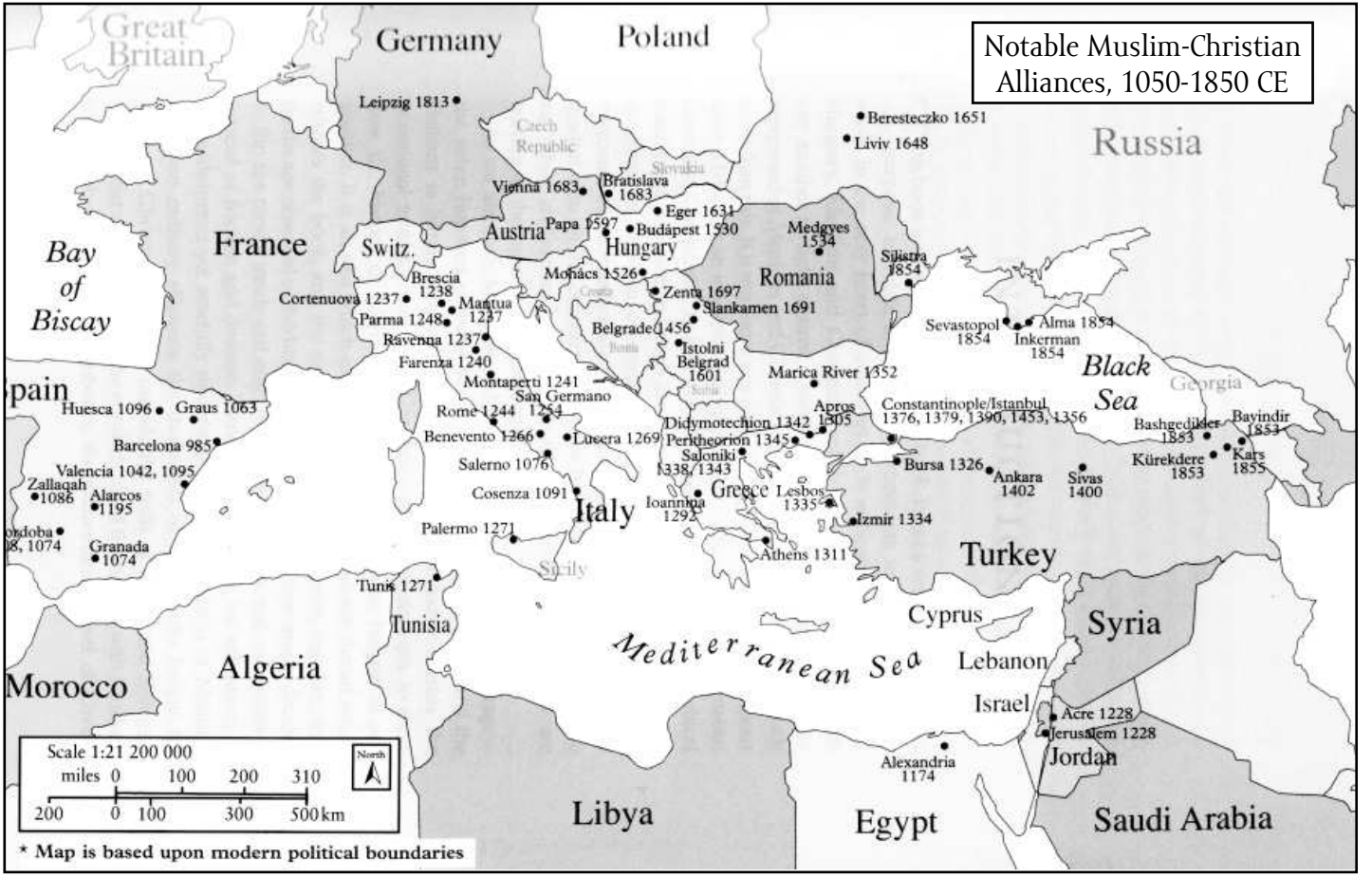
The adjectives abound: "handsome", "opulent", "scarlet", "gold", "raven hair". This lush redescription of the girl Bloom kissed on Howth Head takes full, uncynical advantage of all the sensuous cli-

chés of the East. Such a gesture orientalizes Bloom's Irish wife, redescribing her in terms of an alien culture and thereby removing the familiarity which is the death of sexual attraction. Strangeness, as Schiller said, is the condition of beauty, although in *Ulysses* it is also the condition of forbidden desires. No surprise, therefore, that the brothel Bloom visits has "oriental music" playing as he walks in (600), and that when Bello (the masculine prostitute whom Bloom chooses as his brutalising mistress) chastises Bloom , she rides him "ottomansaddleback", like "the Nubian slave of old" (645). The East, via Bloom's orientalizing of the Dublin brothel, is imported into the heart of conservative, Catholic Ireland, a pocket of the Ottoman Empire where the sensual can be given full freedom to express itself.

If Joyce can be accused of deliberately stereotyping the East in *Ulysses*, he can hardly be said to glamourise it. Joyce's satirising of Irish traditions and Western religion is keenly replicated when it comes to their Eastern counterparts: having parodied , in King James-style English, the biblical arrival of a messenger four pages earlier ("And lo, as they quaffed their cup of joy, a godlike messenger came swiftly in…" 385), Eastern transcendental mysticisms are subsequently mocked with Sanskrit versions of Western appliances ("tãlãfãnã, ãlãvãtãr, hãtãkãldã, wãtãklãsãt" 389). If Father Farley's plans to save China's heathen hordes is satirised, then so is Buddha, "lying on his side in the museum. Taking it easy with his hand under his cheek… Not like Ecce Homo" (98). If the European names of the delegation sent to witness Bloom's execution are ridiculous ("Vladinmire Pokerthankertscheff"), then the Eastern diplomats' titles are no less so: "Ali Baba Backsheesh Rahat Lokum Effendi [lit. Ali Baba-Tip-Comfort-Turkish Delight-Mister]…Hokopoko Harakiri, Hi Hung Chuang" (397). Joyce, whilst no friend of Western imperialism or Irish nationalism, certainly shares none of the Yeatsian idealizations concerning the East found in "Lapis Lazuli". Joyce, in a sense, fires

his cannons on all sides - the virtue of being 'Eastern' is not enough to qualify for exemption from the satire of his pen.

Amidst the Libyan eunuchs, Saracen gunners and handsome Moors of *Ulysses'* nine hundred pages, the East loses its tragic possibilities for Joyce. In both "Araby" and *Ulysses*, the East is seen to be empty, nothing more than a mosaic of images, with no reference to any concrete reality. If the discovery of this unpleasant truth in "Araby" crushes the schoolboy narrator, in *Ulysses* the superficiality of the Orient is more a cause for amusement and distraction than any kind of Schopenhauerian *Weltschmerzen*. In the narrowest of senses, the presentation of the 'East' in both texts tells us more about Joyce than it does about the East; it acts as one more convenient indicator of Joyce's own evolution from the Chekhovian author of *Dubliners*, with its melancholy themes of disillusionment and loss, to the Nietzschean author of *Ulysses'* closing pages, with its life-affirming *Jasagen* to the bewildering and exotic multiplicity of the world. In *Twilight of the Idols* we read: "The world of appearances is the only world there is; the 'true' world has merely been mendaciously added". Molly's blending together of her two kisses - one from Blazes Boylan "under the Moorish wall", amidst the Arabs and Jews and "handsome Moors" of Andalusia, the other from Bloom on Howth Head - illustrates not only her refusal to succumb to nostalgia, but also a refusal to idealise her Andalusian moment at the expense of Bloom's present ("I thought well as well him as another" 933). In the same manner, without becoming cynical or heartless, *Ulysses* refuses to surrender itself to the weaknesses of romanticism - of *any* romanticism, oriental or otherwise. Content to live with such images of the East without chaining herself to something they cannot promise, the spirit of Molly's acceptance of appearances, untroubled by any depth, is a fitting end to such a book.


Notable Muslim-Christian Alliances, 1050-1850 CE
Great Britain
Germany
Poland
Russia
Leipzig 1813
Beresteczko 1651
Liviv 1648
Czech Republic
Slovakia
Vienna 1683
Bratislava 1683
Eger 1631
Papa 1597
Budápest 1530
Austria
Hungary
Medgyes 1534
Silistra 1854
Bay of Biscay
France
Switz.
Romania
Monács 1526
Zenta 1697
Slankamen 1691
Brescia 1238
Cortenuova 1237
Mantua 1237
Parma 1248
Ravenna 1237
Farenza 1240
Belgrade 1456
Istolni Belgrad 1601
Sevastopol 1854
Alma 1854
Inkerman 1854
Black Sea
Georgia
Marica River 1352
Montaperti 1241
San Germano 1254
Rome 1244
Benevento 1266
Lucera 1269
Salerno 1076
Huesca 1096
Graus 1063
Barcelona 985
Valencia 1042, 1095
Zallaqah 1086
Alarcos 1195
Granada 1074
Cosenza 1091
Italy
Palermo 1271
Sicily
Didymotechion 1342
Pertheorion 1345
Saloniki 1338, 1343
Greece
Ioannina 1292
Lesbos 1335
Apros 1305
Constantinople/Istanbul 1376, 1379, 1390, 1453, 1356
Bursa 1326
Ankara 1402
Sivas 1400
Izmir 1334
Athens 1311
Turkey
Bashgedikler 1853
Bayindir 1853
Kürekdere 1853
Kars 1855
Tunis 1271
Tunisia
Cyprus
Syria
Mediterranean Sea
Lebanon
Israel
Acre 1228
Jerusalem 1228
Jordan
Alexandria 1174
Algeria
Morocco
Libya
Egypt
Saudi Arabia
Scale 1:21 200 000
miles 0 100 200 310
200 0 100 300 500 km
North
* Map is based upon modern political boundaries

Chapter Four

Muslims, Protestants and Peasants: Ottoman Hungary 1526-1683

The story, for some people, goes like this: in 1526, the Turks marched into Hungary and held its free, Christian peoples captive for over a hundred and fifty years. The country was laid waste, its people either starved or massacred, held under the rule of the despotic Turk despite all the attempts of their Christian neighbours to free them. On two occasions the Muslim hordes even tried to march on Vienna - the shadow of Islam was about to fall on the heart of Europe itself. On the second attempt, Christendom finally united itself before the Mohammedan foe and repelled the invaders, before going on to liberate Hungary from their Turkish foe and even drive the Ottomans back to Belgrade. Christian Europe had been saved, the Balkans practically reconquered (in the most Spanish sense of the word), and the Turkish threat finally put to rest. All of Christianity- Protestant and Catholic, peasant and noble, Slav and German - rejoiced.

The memory of the Turkish siege of Vienna (1683) arises from this landscape of symbols - a Muslim army, bristling with crescents, scimitars and turbans, laying siege to a Christian city at the gate of

Europe. Woodcuts from the period show camels and elephants in the camps of the Turk, Orientals smoking their water pipes or tethering their animals, as the spire-dotted city of Christendom waits helplessly in the background. The memory of the Turkish siege was not merely visual: even a hundred years later, Grimm's dictionary tells us, the word 'Turk' still had negative, warlike connotations, even though the Ottoman threat had long since faded. People called their dogs 'Turk', churches still had *Turckenglocken* or 'Turkish bells' where people had gathered to pray for help against the Ottomans.Words such as *türkenzen* (to act like a barbarian) or *turkeln* (to stagger drunkenly) were still widely used, taverns with names like 'The Turk's Head' were commonplace.Vienna was quite simply the closest the Turks had ever come to their dream of conquering Europe ('On to Rome! On to Rome!' had been their cry). The encounter was a traumatic one for German-speaking Christians at that time, particularly those unfamiliar with Muslim cultures. The philosopher Leibniz was shocked when he heard the news of the arrival of the Sultan's armies on the other side of the Danube. He was not alone - although the Habsburgs had known of the Turkish plans for over a year, no-one seems to have quite realised that the two hundred thousand-strong army which set out from Istanbul in the spring would eventually arrive.

Even today, over three hundred years later, the memory of the *Belagerung von Wien* has not quite gone away. According to some political commentators, Austria's late attempts to block Turkey's entry into the European Union - and the large segment of public opinion in agreement with this strategy - sprang not merely from anxieties concerning the present-day Turkish population, further immigration and dissolution of Austrian national values, but also owed some minor influence to the memory of the Terrible Turk, and their near capture of the city three centuries earlier.

The whole point of this chapter will be to dismantle some of the myths concerning the Turkish march on Vienna, especially the manner in which it is enrolled into some form of East-West conflict between a Christian Europe and a Muslim Orient - an interpretation which is, in the end, nothing more than a Disney version of history. On a variety of levels - from international and diplomatic to local and military, from ambassadors and treaties to footsoldiers on the ground and peasants in the villages - we shall see how Christians and Christian countries were directly involved alongside the Turks in the attempt to take Vienna. From Louis XIV's alliance with the Sultan to the hundred-thousand strong army of Hungarian Christians who assisted the Ottoman attack; from the thousands of Greeks, Armenians and Slavs in the Ottomans' own armies who loyally fought for the Sultan to the Transylvanian Protestants and disaffected peasants who, tired of the Catholic Habsburgs' yoke (or of their own Hungarian aristocracy) moved over to the Turkish side; and culminating in the figure of Imre Thököly, the Hungarian Protestant prince who first persuaded the Grand Vizier to try and take the city - and whose army of Kuruzen fought alongside the Turks and the Tatars as far north as present-day Slovakia.

Our intention, it should be stressed, is not to paint the Ottomans as an army of angels (no army, Christian or Muslim, has ever merited the term 'angelic'), nor to sell a picture of their empire as some oasis of tolerance and justice (imperialism is imperialism, be it Turkish or Austrian), nor even to pretend religion had no place in the conflict - on the contrary, words such as 'unbeliever', 'infidel' and *giaur* (Turkish for 'non-believer') were consistently thrown about as common currency. Instead, we will have two more modest aims: first of all, to show that the Ottoman presence in the Balkans was not the inferno of absolute tyranny and despotism many Cardinals tried to paint it as - in some periods, many Hungarians appeared to have

preferred the pragmatic tolerance of Ottoman rule to the Catholic fervour of Habsburg domination. Secondly, we shall try to point out that beneath the religious wars of propaganda provided by both sides, an extraordinary level of Muslim-Christian collaboration took place, alliances historians of both faiths were not always willing to acknowledge.

As the events which brought about the 1683 Siege of Vienna really took place in Hungary, our story is, to a large extent, the story of Ottoman Hungary. The story of a country caught, for a century and a half, between two empires, three religions and well over a dozen ethnic groups. The first thing to be said here, for the uninformed reader, is that the seventeenth-century Hungary of this chapter - *Ungarn* in German, *Maceristan* in Turkish - was about three times the size of the smaller country we know by that name today. The country called 'Hungary' we will be reading about covered Slovakia and parts of Austria on its northern border, a long slice of Romania to the south, and a whole stretch of present-day Yugoslavia to the west. It was an enormous realm, rich in pasture and arable land, and throughout the 1400's had enjoyed the status of being a Christian bulwark against the encroachments of the Turks - Hungarian kings were called "champions of Christ" (*atleta Christi*) and their land was seen as the Eastern gate of Christendom. After the fateful date of 1526, of course, all this was to change.

An awareness of the different linguistic and ethnic background of what we generically term 'Hungarians' is important in order to understand some of the difficulties they later had with their Christian neighbours. The language, notoriously difficult to learn, is an Uralic (central Asian) language, and has practically nothing in common with any Germanic, Slavic or Latin tongue. The Hungarians (*Magyars*) arrived in the plains surrounding Budapest in the late ninth century - more or less the same time the Anglo

Saxons were converting to Christianity; they brought with them a nomadic steppe culture, and a whole mixture of Turkic and Finno-Ugric influences from the regions of Western Siberia.

Although it would be unwise to see this Turkic element in Hungary's past as facilitating any kind of collaboration with the Ottomans - by the time Suleiman the Magnificent arrived in Hungary, the Hungarians had been Christians for over five hundred years - it certainly was a factor in some of the cultural reservations they had towards Germans. Moreover, we have records of at least one Hungarian ruler - King Matthias (d.1490) - who developed the idea of a Hunno-Hungarian relationship, calling himself a "second Attila" and even proposing an alliance to Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror on the basis of a common blood.

Whatever we might think, the fact remains that, centuries before the Ottomans ever set a foot in Europe, Hungary was already a place where the very different streams of Latin Christendom, Greek Byzantium and the nomadic cultures of the Asian steppes were beginning to mix. The non-European origin of the Magyars, at least one historian has suggested, may have been the reason why Turks did not seem as alien or as threatening to Hungarians as they were to Germans or Latins - and why, as a result, some Hungarians found it easier to collaborate with them and invite them into their wars.

Islam in Hungary Before the Turks (1000-1300)

Since our chapter is concerned with Ottoman Hungary, we shall take a moment to look at the presence of Hungarian Muslims in the centuries before the Turks appeared on the horizon. The number of Muslims living in early medieval Hungary was, in any case, tiny (barely five percent), and these disappeared (either through conver-

sion, massacre or deportation) almost completely by 1300, a good two hundred years before the Turkish conquest. We know Muslim villages existed in Hungary around 1100 - one has even been excavated - and since there are records of Muslim merchants travelling to Prague and the cities of southern Poland as early as 965, it seems likely there were Muslim communities existing in Hungary at this time. No one seems really sure where the Muslims of Hungary first came from - sources are so scarce; since there were only Byzantines south of the Balkans, many scholars seem to feel Islam first arrived in Hungary from the east, along a trade route which connected the German empire with Kiev. If this is true, the first Muslims to settle in Hungary might have been Khazar Turks travelling from across Georgia and the Ukraine.

We certainly know that by 1200, a small but well-established population of Muslims had settled in Hungary, adopting Hungarians customs and speaking the language of their 'new' land. A Spanish Muslim traveller met some of them in the 1130's, and complained that they did not dress like Muslims but like Hungarians, even to the point of shaving off their beards. They knew little Arabic, says our traveller, and were quite happy to fight against the Byzantines in the armies of the Hungarian king, even when they knew that there were Muslims fighting in the Byzantine armies, too. "The enemies of Hungary are the enemies of Islam," they told him. The word in Hungarian for 'Mussulman' (*böszörmény*) appears around this time, and by 1217 there are reports of Hungarian Muslims travelling to Jerusalem and Aleppo to study Arabic. We know this because a Hungarian noble, captured by the Saracens whilst in the Holy Land, is freed thanks to the intervention of some Hungarian Muslims who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time.

Hungary's Muslims ultimately met the same fate as that of Sicily's, and more or less around the same time. After 1300 - the year of

the destruction of the Saracen colony in Lucera - Hungarian Muslims also drop out of the historical records, apart from the occasional reference to a conversion. Unlike Hungary's Jews, who managed to persist as an autonomous and semi-protected group, Muslims simply disappeared. As they were a tiny, mercantile minority, their demise did not have the kind of effect it had on Sicily. Nevertheless, another two hundred years would have to pass before any mosques were built again on Hungarian soil.

The Hungarians: Caught Between Two Empires

Hungary has been called a nation squeezed between two pagans (the German and the Turk). However nationalistic that may sound, it is difficult not to have some sympathy for the lot of the Hungarians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as they found themselves struggling to maneuver between the two juggernauts of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. In fact, a history of Hungarian diplomacy from this period is a history of necessary duplicity, a shuttling between Istanbul and Vienna, as one monarch after another had to develop dual personalities in order to whisper different things into the ears of the Sultan and the Kaiser. Often rulers such as King Janos Zápolyai or insurgent princes such as Bocskai had to hedge their bets until the last possible moment between 'German' and 'Turk', even switching sides as the power struggle developed.

To the north of Hungary lay the Habsburgs - an energetically Catholic, Spanish-German dynasty, originally springing from a Swiss castle, flourishing on Austrian soil and moving, through a series of stunningly-engineered marriages, into the position it was enjoying by the late 1520's - one of the most dominant forces in Europe. Hungarian history - and their countless collaborations with the Turks - simply cannot be understood without grasping the

truly colonial attitudes the court of Vienna was sometimes able to foster towards the 'Magyars' - and the hatred which, in turn, many Hungarians bore for the Imperial insignia of the Austrian troops. "All the laws of the Hungarians should be burned upon their very heads" was a standard phrase amongst Habsburg diplomats; indeed, when the Austrians finally reconquered Buda from the Turks in 1686, one of the first laws they drew up was that only Germans and Catholics could have houses in the vicinity of the castle. The Habsburgs' occasionally fanatical Catholicism drove them to murder and terrorise Hungary's Protestants, forcing conversions upon thousands and sending hundreds of pastors either to the gallows or to work as slaves. Unsurprisingly, even in their struggles against the Ottomans, many Hungarians saw the Habsburgs as another problem, not part of the solution - as the great Miklós Zrinyí (d.1664) wrote, "if help comes from the Habsburgs at all, it will come slowly, like a cancer".

To the south of Hungary, of course, lay the Turks. This is hardly the place to idealise the Ottoman empire, whose soldiers, stationed in most parts of Hungary, would probably have been about as loved as a garrison of British paras in a Belfast suburb or French police in an Algerian village. As we shall see, however, some lesser extent of cultural exchange and mutual influence was still possible between Turks and Hungarians. Moreover, the Ottoman empire we shall be examining in the following pages is a very different one from the growing regional power we saw Kantakouzenos dealing with in the last chapter. Two hundred years on from the early days of Sultan Orhan and his hill-tribes, the army which marched into Hungary in 1526 was truly that of a world empire. It was an empire which belonged to one of the most famous names in Turkish history - Suleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1520-1566), called 'Magnificent' partly because of his conquests, partly because of his radi-

cal re-structuring of the Ottoman state, and partly because of the breathtaking sweep of his building program - mosques, medrese, bridges - across the empire. Hungary had the misfortune to be invaded by an empire at the very peak of its power.

Of course, the vast expanse of Suleiman's empire was also one of his problems - a series of wars on the Persian front would forever keep the Ottomans from establishing themselves fully in the northern Balkans. Political revolts, coups and large-scale insurrections in Anatolian Turkey at the turn of the sixteenth century would also distract the Ottomans from their northward push into Europe - their quest for the 'Golden Apple', the mythical European city which, once captured, would signify the end of history and the coming of the (Muslim) messiah or *mesih*. Probably the most interesting developments, in contrast with the Ottomans we saw in the previous chapter, was the establishment of the Janissaries (in Turkish *yeni ceri* or 'new soldiers'), an elite class of soldiers, originally young Christian boys taken from Balkan families and raised as Muslims to become soldiers and statesmen in the very highest echelons of the state. An empire, essentially, built on the education and cultivation of a small class of orphaned apprentices. The institution, originally devised to avoid tribal or family conflicts, by the sixteenth century had formed one of the most powerful political classes in the Ottoman state - one which, from time to time, even had the power to dethrone a Sultan or two.

The lot of Hungary was to try and steer a path between these two entities. To begin with, the Hungarian aristocracy was divided on who to side with; some chose the Habsburgs, others more pragmatically opted for a modus vivendi with the Ottomans. The diverse mix of Hungary's own population, and its history as a point of intersection between a variety of different cultures, made this difficult task even more complicated. The immigration of Ger-

man-speaking settlers during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries accounted for a large number of 'Saxons' in Hungary. Even today, many Hungarian and Romanian cities have alternative German versions of their names - Budapest is called 'Ofen', for example, and Sibiu 'Hermannstadt'. To the west in Transylvania, now a part of modern Romania, significant populations of both Romanians and Székely (another Hungarian ethnic group) colour this mosaic even further. Finally, the question of religion - and the conversion of large areas of Hungary to the Protestant faith - brought further division to the kingdom of Hungary, particularly when the Ottomans chose, rather cleverly, to privilege Lutherans and Calvinists over Catholics.

Hungary's Peasants: "The Serf Hates his Lord"

Before we get too carried away with all this talk of nations and peoples - Hungarians, Turks, Habsburgs - another factor has to be brought into the equation. It is a factor which is all too often overlooked, and yet it complicates any simplistic version of the Ottoman conquest: namely, the lot of the peasants.

Hungarian aristocrats were very good at speaking on behalf of their peoples - when looking for soldiers to help the Habsburgs stop the Turkish advance at Rabaköz, the two local counts generously offered to send their own subjects in, begging Emperor Leopold to "let the Hungarian nation express its firm devotion". Exactly what the 'Hungarian nation' felt about it was a different matter. The lot of the sixteenth century Hungarian peasant was an acutely miserable one. Hungary itself, for a variety of reasons, had not experienced the kind of political and economic trends Western European monarchies were going through at that time - trends

which produced, more than anything else, a growing and healthy mercantile middle class in countries like France and England. On the contrary, at the time of the Turkish conquest Hungary was still in a state of late feudalism, one characterised by an increasing enslavement of the poor. One of the reasons the Turks were able to take and retain control of Hungary so easily was precisely this social tension between the serfs and their 'Christian' masters; peasants who had been beaten and starved by their local betters were immediately expected to answer patriotic calls of Christian unity against the oncoming infidel. As documents from the period show, many serfs understandably concluded things under the Turk couldn't possibly be worse than the atrocious conditions they suffered under their own count or baron - one 1561 letter, from the commander of a Hungarian border fortress to his aristocrat superiors, warns the following:

> *I have an additional fear which I wrote to you, Sir, and told you…the serf hates his lord. With reason, too, and there is no one in the peasantry to learn the word of God from; they indeed believe the Ottomans are the people of God and the true faith is theirs, and so God is on their side. I am afraid they will not run against the Ottomans but turn against their lords, as they shouted at many places on their way from Hegyesd. "The barons dare not ask us to fight" they shouted, "because they are afraid of us, in case we do to them what Székely did [a leader of a peasant revolt in 1514], and they are right to be afraid!".*

The belief that the poor might unite with the approaching Turks against their own Christian landlords was no paranoid aristocratic fear, but a tried and tested Ottoman strategy, one which the Turkish forces had often employed in their lightning-conquest of the Balkans - as early as 1461, a century earlier than the passage above,

we find one Bosnian king complaining to the Pope about the faithlessness of his own peasants:

> *The Ottomans are very friendly to the peasants. They promise that every peasant who joins them will be free. The small-minded peasantry are unable to realise the deception and believe that this freedom will last for ever...the magnates, abandoned by the peasants, will not be able to persevere in their castles for long.*

Although we should not become too enamoured of the Ottomans' thirst for social justice - as we shall see, they were more than happy to do deals with rulers who notoriously oppressed their serfs - there was a sense in which, once the serf converted to Islam, he often had a better chance at social improvement. The historian Fodor offers us the example of a Hungarian who helped the Turks take the town of Orahovica and, after converting and acquiring the new name of Mustafa, recieved a piece of land and an income of 5,000 akce a year. Such incidences were no strange events but regular occurrences - the Ottoman army, with its enormous Christian influx, grew precisely from such strategies.

It was not simply the aristocrats, but also the Hungarian soldiers who were responsible for the unwillingness of the peasantry to 'fight for king and country'. As the soldiers themselves were poorly paid, they regularly molested and plundered the local peasantry to supplement - or even replace - their own incomes. No surprise, then, to learn about the widespread tensions between the border infantry and the peasantry they were supposed to 'protect'. As one 1633 source put it, the two groups "hate one another so much that when they should be fighting together against the Turk, they end up fighting one another". In many ways, the soldier class bore noth-

ing but contempt for the peasants, and looked down upon them as inferior creatures whose goods and property they had every right to appropriate as their own. We should remember that many soldiers had, themselves, originally been peasants, and had seen a military career as the only way of escaping the misery of serfdom. With such social tensions present, it was no surprise that the Turks were able to establish their *pax ottomanica* in the Balkans as quickly as they did. An old Hungarian peasant song from the fifteenth century puts it best: "When the soldiers come into our village/it doesn't matter where they're from/ they are our enemy".

The seething anger and discontent of Hungary's peasants, in other words, had three possible consequences. First of all, many peasants - and even some of the poorer paid soldiers - simply refused to fight against the Ottoman advance. According to one historian, out of the entire sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can only find one large-scale peasant movement which had clearly anti-Turkish sentiments (the Karácsony uprising of 1570). Peasant organisations sprang up all over Hungary, but primarily with the aim of protecting themselves against attacks either from their own soldiers, or from the ravages of the Imperial (Habsburg) troops. On many occasions, their activities actually hindered anti-Turkish campaigns - in 1660 in Croatia, for example, unrest between the border infantry and the serfs disturbed a military offensive against the Turks.

A second consequence was - as we saw in the previous chapter with the Byzantines - that the authorities were too frightened to arm the serfs against the Ottomans, for fear of provoking an uprising they would not be able to quash. In the region of Transdanubia, during the 1540s, the military command did not dare employ the locals in a defence of the area against an Ottoman incursion, because the idea of arming the local population was considered to be simply too dangerous.

Thirdly, it sometimes happened that peasant groups actually took up arms with the Ottomans - either recieving help from them indirectly (in 1631, a peasant uprising in East Upper Hungary turned to the Pasha of Eger for help), or even going out to fight on their behalf; one incident illustrates this quite clearly. In 1660, Romanian peasants from the towns of Bihar refused to pay anymore taxes, or indeed observe any allegiance to the local nobility. They moved through village after village in a fanfare of trumpets and flags, gathering together in such numbers that the nobles finally fled to the nearby town of Várad for their lives. A local Turkish commander, clearly a man well-tuned to the sensitivities of alliances in war, offered the peasants a year's freedom from taxes for every village that sent three men to the Sultan's armies. The trick worked wonders for the Ottomans: the peasants went on to conquer three towns for the Turks, and unsuccessfully laid siege to a fourth.

The Battle of Mohács (1526) and the Beginning of Ottoman Rule

Mohács is, quite simply, the single most important battle in the history of Hungary. For most Hungarians, it has the status of a Hastings or a Gettysburg, a confrontation which decisively changed the history of a nation. The battle, located today in the far south of the country, signified the beginning of over 150 years of Ottoman rule. Seriously outnumbered by the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent, compelled into battle by a mixture of military pride and ineptitude, and (most crucially) duped into a clumsy, suicidal forward advance through the Ottomans' own clever shielding of their troop movements, the near-entirety of Hungary's military, aristocratic and clerical elite, alongside twenty thousand soldiers, were annihilated in just under two hours.

The Hungarians were not even aware the Ottomans had artillery until it opened fire on them. The Hungarian king was slain, as was most of his court. Three bishops left the battlefield alive.

Not everyone was *that* unhappy. It is a fact that the first thing many Hungarians did was celebrate getting rid of Queen Marie of Habsburg. At the vanquishing of the Habsburg-Hungarian army by the Turks, a kind of chaos immediately followed, as Hungarians resentful of their Viennese rulers plundered royal palaces and courtiers, whilst a whole stream of priests, Habsburgs and German Saxons made its way north, fleeing the oncoming Turks. The capital was reportedly empty within days.

At first, Suleiman the Magnificent appeared to have no desire to colonise the country - partly because he was already looking ahead to the first (ultimately unsuccessful) siege of Vienna, but also because Hungary was too far north for him to adequately control. Instead he found a king from Transylvania - King János Szápolayi - to put on the throne as a not-quite-vassal. The newly-defeated Habsburgs immediately insisted on their own rival claim to the King of Hungary - Ferdinand I, Spanish-born, clever, modest, never quite able to step out of the shadow of his illustrious brother (the Christian champion of Europe Charles V), but certainly better than some of the mentally-unbalanced grandchildren who were to follow him. What followed, until the death of King János in 1540, was fifteen years of tense, low-level warfare, as the Ottomans carefully supported the relative autonomy of their Hungarian king against the Habsburgs, who had been driven out to the upper edges of Hungary. When the Austrians sent a general to take back Buda in 1530, the Ottomans sent a few thousand troops to help the Hungarians keep it. King János was, in other words, as free as any king dependent on a foreign power can be.

The defeat at Mohács, and the Ottoman annexing of Hungary it precipitated, was seen by many in Europe as another Muslim

encroachment upon the sacred lands of the Holy Roman Empire. One way of refuting this Cross-versus-Crescent mythologizing is to emphasize the Hungarian collaboration, willing or not, in the Ottoman annexing of Hungary. Another factor, however, which has to be taken into account, is the high number of Christians in the Ottoman armies themselves.

Of the Turkish garrisons which came to occupy and eventually take over Budapest, well over a *third* of the soldiers and administrative staff were Greek Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman state. This fact will only come as a surprise to readers unfamiliar with the history of the Ottomans and the enormous military machine they ran to control and consolidate their sprawling, multicultural empire. The extent to which Greeks were successfully integrated into the Ottoman project can hardly be overlooked, and is worth a few words if we are to understand anything at all about the part they played in the Turkish military.

This "Ottomanizing" of Greek-speakers had a long history, beginning in the very early centuries of the Empire, and culminating in the 'Phanariots' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - Greek citizens from the Phanar (Fener) district of Istanbul who formed one of the most powerful and influential administrative classes in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans took the Greek Orthodox with them wherever they went on their conquests - even to Persia and the Holy Land (the German poet Goethe would consider them 'slaves' of the Turks). Although many Greeks quite naturally hated Turkish rule, it was not uncommon to find a large degree of cultural assmilation to the type of *homo ottomanicus*. By the middle of the seventeenth century, colloquial Greek had a large number of Turkish words within it - even the Ottoman Sultan was referred to, in the Greek fashion, as *basileus*. We encounter priests who appear to express genuine admiration for their local Pashas - and also

genuine mourning at the death of Mehmet IV (there were even scandalous cases of Orthodox priests converting to Islam - usually because they had fallen in love with a Turkish girl). The significant Greek presence in the Turkish garrisons sent to Hungary clearly reflect this assimilation of Greeks into the Ottoman state.

The Christians who fought in the Ottoman armies were not simply Greeks, but also Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians. If we take a look at the roll-call registers of Ottoman soldiers stationed on the banks of the Danube in the 1550's, about twenty years after the Battle of Mohacs, the presence of Christian-Slav soldiers amongst the lists of names is quite striking. Out of over 6,200 soldiers listed, well over 1,200 are Christians. In Pest two artillery companies were under the command of Christians, mostly Eastern Orthodox Serbs who had passed into the service of the Ottomans after the fall of Timisoara.The mix of Christian and Muslim names in the registers is quite revealing - an "Ali from Bosnia" next to a "Dimitri Diragas", a "Murad Abdullah" next to a "Nikola Manoylo" - and suggests that soldiers from both faiths fought quite closely together, in very small companies (rarely more than a dozen were found in an Ottoman *oda*). Slav names such as Vuk, Petri and Lazar abound, and can be found in the same small companies as Muslims - even though, it should be said, the general tendency seems to have been to have Muslim soldiers in their own companies, and Christians together with new Muslim converts.

We know who the fresh converts to Islam are in the registers, because they are usually called "Abdullah" or "son of Abdullah". Ottoman clerks were reluctant to write down the Christian names of converts' families in their registers, so they simply wrote 'son of Abdullah'. Their number is enormous - practically over a *quarter* of the so-called 'Muslim' soldiers listed were recent converts, probably from Bosnian or Serb Christian families. Although we regularly use

the word 'Turkish' to describe these armies stationed in Hungary, the number of actual ethnic Turks in these garrisons is very low - perhaps as little as five per cent. As the historian Dimitrov puts it, Ottoman rule in Hungary was established mainly through Balkan and Bosnian Christians, Islamized Christians and the immediate descendants of these newly-converted Muslims.

Certainly, different kinds of Christians served in the Ottoman armies at a variety of different levels, and in a variety of different ways. The Ottoman *voynuks* - one of the largest military formations within the Ottoman empire - almost completely consisted of Bulgarian serfs. Some Christians worked as artillerymen (*topcilar*) or with the heavy cannons (*humbaracilar*). Most Christians could be found fighting as unattached soldiers (*martolos*) alongside the official regiments of the Sultan, as soldiers in castles or in the Ottoman fleet on the Danube. Thousands of Christians also served as raiders (*akincilar*), troops recruited mostly from the northern Balkans who carried out slash-and-burn raids on pre-selected areas before a campaign. The greater part of the back-up for an Ottoman army - the Ordnance corps who supplied the gunpowder, provisions, repairs, etc - were mostly local Christians: carpenters, armourers, smiths. The shipbuilders of Pest, for example, were almost exclusively Christian. Finally, there were the least-privileged 'helpers' of the Ottomans - the *cerehor* or common labourers, an enormous subgroup of usually poor Christian peasants who assisted in the construction or transportation of the army's infrastructure.

Today's international trade in arms and weapons technology, the reader may be depressed to learn, also had its mirror image in the Ottoman sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A surge in the development of military technology was taking place in the Ottoman empire, most of it driven by both Western and Ottoman Christians. Foreign military experts, particularly those with artil-

lery expertise, were regularly employed or, in some cases, captured. During the Siege of Belgrade (1456), for example, many of the cannons were operated by Germans, Italians or Hungarians. Western travellers to Istanbul often remarked upon the striking number of Christians and Jews working in the foundries - in 1510, twenty of the eighty workers from one foundry were said to be of Christian or Jewish origin. The work of the historian Ágoston reveals Istanbul to be a hive of technological innovation, where Venetian shipwrights, Persian blacksmiths, Jewish iron-workers, Dutch engineers and Armenian and Greek miners and sappers would all have rubbed shoulders with one another to provide teeth for the Ottoman war-machine.

The Story of Lodovico Gritti

I have been trying to emphasise the complexity of what is viewed as the Muslim conquest of a Christian country - how the infamous and much-demonized armies of the 'Terrible Turk' were actually a fused coalition of extremely diverse Muslim and Christian groups, a compact and impressive amalgamation of very different religious identities, only superficially 'Islamic'. If there is a single story which illustrates this complexity more than any other, it is the tale of Sultan Suleiman's right-hand man and negotiator, the Italian Lodovico Gritti.

Gritti's story - and the last four weeks leading up to his violent death - says a great deal about the complicated developments within the Ottoman conquest of Hungary, and the volatile, unpredictable relations between the powers and various ethnic/social groups involved. Although Gritti was a merchant, his father was none other than the Doge of Venice, and had lived for twenty years in Istan-

bul as a diplomat; as a result, Gritti had grown up in the Ottoman capital, speaking Turkish and Greek as fluently as Italian. Gritti was both a merchant and a socialite: he pursued the life of a Turkish nobleman in Istanbul, dressing in silk like an Ottoman courtier and giving enormous dinners for European and Turkish dignitaries in his lavish house (one guest-list from 1524 records a banquet given for three hundred Christians and Turks). Clearly a born networker, Gritti used his pseudo-aristocratic standing in Istanbul to generate enormous revenues for himself as a merchant, striking up a close friendship with the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha - so much so that, when the Ottomans captured three Venetian galleons in 1533, Ibrahim gave them to his friend Gritti (complete with the prisoners-of-war) as a gift from the Sultan.

At this point, we should interject a note of caution: for all Gritti's cosmopolitanism and multi-faceted identity, we should be wary of elevating him to some idealistic status of free-spirit and universal soul, conversing with Christian and Turk alike, a brother to all mankind. Gritti was greedy, cruel and egoistic; although his friendship with the Grand Vizier was probably genuine, his loyalty to the Ottomans was not - when the Habsburg envoy met him at the Sultan's court in 1534, Gritti took him to one side and secretly shared with the amazed diplomat a wild, fantastic plan to unite the European powers and re-capture Istanbul from the Turks.

In a way, the Venetian's success as a social climber in the upper echelons of Turkish society also brought about the circumstances of his eventual death. Gritti acheived such a position of respect within the Ottoman court that, in negotiations with the Hungarians and the Habsburgs, the Sultan and the Grand Vizier began telling both parties that they would send Gritti into Hungary on their behalf to draw up the frontiers of all three parties' territories. Gritti, who was reluctant to leave Istanbul, did not relish the idea of leav-

ing behind his money-making enterprises in the capital to embark upon a diplomatic mission in extremely hostile circumstances. The Hungarian territories were a low-level battleground, replete with skirmishes, abductions and roving mini-armies. As it was, many figures around Suleiman the Magnificent were already jealous at the Italian's financial success and his intimacy with both the Sultan and the Vizier. One Ottoman noble allegedly told Gritti before he left, in no uncertain terms, that if anything were to happen to him in the Balkans, he would not come running to help him. Another - the Chief interpreter at the Sultan's court - asked an Austrian diplomat in disgust why no Hungarian had been found "to do away with that son-of-a-bitch".

And so, in the July of 1534, Gritti set out north as the official emissary of the Sultan, an Italian invested with the incredible powers of dealing with the Austrian and Hungarian Kings - Ferdinand and Janos - on the Sultan's behalf. His destination was the distant town of Medgyes, where King Janos was supposed to reach him. With him went an army of around two thousand Ottoman cavalry and infantry. Unaware of the dangers which were waiting in store for him, Gritti also took his twelve year old son along. He imagined he would be returning to his mini-palace in Istanbul within six months, at the very latest. He had no idea he would never see the city again.

His first stop - at the town of Tirgovişte (now in present-day Romania), to visit a particularly unpleasant *voivode* or Ottoman vassal - immediately plunged him into the intricate web of tensions and power-struggles of the Ottoman Balkans. The Sultan had ordered the *voivode* to lend Gritti a thousand Romanian mercenaries. As Gritti approached the city, seventy-five local rebels - enemies of the *voivode* - joined his army and asked him to help them overthrow the local ruler. When they were quickly recaptured, Gritti had to

watch on as the *voivode* cut off the ears and noses of all seventy-five and then had their eyes gouged out, before finally executing them. Once he obtained his extra men, Gritti moved quickly on.

The next stop was another Romanian town, Braşov. Here we should dwell a moment on the army which Gritti took with him into the town, as it offers an illuminating insight into the nature of most military conflict in this period: first of all, there were two thousand Ottoman cavalry, mainly Turkish and Greek. Next came the thousand or so Wallachian (Romanian) horsemen the *voivode* had lent to them (the Romanians, as Greek Orthodox subjects, had little love for their Catholic Hungarian neighbours, who did not even consider them as a minority in Transylvania). Finally, a contingent of about a thousand Hungarian soldiers which had joined them on the way, led by Gritti's eldest son, Antonio. An army, in other words, of Turks, Greeks, Romanians and Hungarians, led by Italians on behalf of the Sultan. Some Jewish merchants also accompanied them.

When Gritti reached Braşov, he made a clumsy and ultimately fatal mistake. Amongst the moderately sympathetic elements who recieved him in the town was a sworn enemy, the Bishop of Várad. A Hungarian bishop who also happened to be a soldier and a general, and whose anti-Ottoman sentiments Gritti was fully aware of. If we are to believe the accounts, Gritti had the poor bishop stabbed and decapitated barely one week after they had arrived in Braşov; even worse, the assassins brought the bishop's head to Gritti just as he was in conversation with two of the Bishop's former colleagues, Maylád and Kun. A strange moment must have passed as the two men absorbed, in shocked silence, the sight of the severed head of their old friend. Gritti immediately claimed he had nothing to do with the crime and vowed to find the murderer. The bishop's colleagues, terrified, politely took their leave of Gritti and fled the

camp as quickly as they could, fearful of the same fate.

The Venetian, it was said, had in his possession a whole shopping-list of people he wanted to do away with. And yet Gritti's cruelty here ultimately rebounded on himself. The murder of the fiercely patriotic bishop, instead of frightening the Hungarians, emboldened them to remove the Italian as quickly as possible. When his army moved on to their final destination, Medgyes (today a town in the exact middle of Romania), they found themselves locked outside by the frightened townspeople. Neither of the kings Gritti was supposed to negotiate with were anywhere to be seen. After much cajoling, including a charming threat from Gritti's Hungarian henchmen to blow up the city's walls, the reluctant magistrates of the town agreed to let the army enter, and emptied dozens of houses to provide shelter for the troops.

The situation was quickly growing chaotic, as no sooner were Gritti's troops inside, then a force of Transylvanian rebels (Hungarians, German-speaking Saxons as well as Széklers) magically appeared outside to besiege the town. There were thousands of them. Amongst the troops could be found some of the *voivode*'s soldiers, who had decided to change sides in the meantime. Gritti wrote off letter after letter to King Janos, asking him to come and provide assistance. The Hungarian King was well aware of the events as they developed - he pretended to march as far as Várad, to show Suleiman the Magnificent he had tried to help his emissary. Although he had recieved every one of Gritti's letters, he chose not to reply, reporting instead to the Sultan that Gritti had tried to take hold of power for himself in Hungary, and was betraying the Sultan with his own designs. Medgyes, in the words of one historian, was a mousetrap - and Gritti, the Sultan's emissary, was the mouse.

To make matters worse, during the siege Gritti fell seriously ill with colic, and could not leave his bed as the surrounding army began

to bombard the walls of the town. His Hungarian auxiliaries were desperate: "What shall we do?" asked one of them. "What shall we do?" roared Gritti. "Do what you have promised and for what you have been given so much treasure. 'What shall we do?'! Keep fighting! You're asking me what to do?".

Gritti's Hungarians were clearly uneasy about the situation - trapped in a Hungarian town alongside Turkish, Greek and Romanian mercenaries, besieged by a large army of their own compatriots. When the Transylvanians finally stormed the city walls, it was because they had done a deal with the Hungarian soldiers guarding the gates. "Hungarians, do not fear, no harm will befall you!" they cried to the townspeople as they rushed inside, attacking only the Turkish and Greek soldiers they found, as well as the unfortunate Romanian mercenaries who had not already fled. Gritti and his sons tried to ride out of the city with a small escort of Turks and Italians, but eventually fell into the hands of the Hungarian besiegers - who handed them over to Maylád and Kun, the two men Gritti had been talking with when the head of the bishop arrived in a bag. The soldiers who brought Gritti shouted angrily: "Let's just kill him, kill this Turk". Gritti begged for a quick, painless death, and by bribing his executioner with a diamond brooch hidden in his boot recieved it - his head was lopped off by the side of the road. The Hungarian who had killed the bishop for Gritti was less mercifully dispensed with: he was, we are told, "beaten to death while sitting, like a dog". The Greek and Jewish merchants who had travelled with Gritti were relieved of the burden of their wealth, whilst out of the two thousand Ottoman troops who marched into Medgyes, barely two hundred made it back to Istanbul alive.

The murder of Gritti at Medgyes is just one small moment in the tumultuous history of Hungary as it moved through that grey, violent, sixteenth/seventeenth century No Man's Land between Ot-

toman and Habsburg domination. It tells us, however, three things: first of all, how little use terms such as 'Muslim' and 'Christian' are to describe the almost hopelessly complex web of shifting power-relations, feudal alliances, ethnic sympathies and historical grudges that moved not just amongst the various peoples of Hungary, but also within the court and power-apparatus of Istanbul. Secondly, how scheming the various parties could be - and how the needs of the moment and the allure of *Realpolitik* were quite capable of overturning an individual's sense of his own ethnic or religious identity. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly,the Italian's story shows how easily non-Muslims such as Venetians, Greeks and Jews could be subsumed into functioning parts of the Ottoman project; for non-Ottoman outsiders, naturally, there was little difference between a Turk and a Greek - both were travelling under the standard of the Sultan.

The Division of Hungary (or, How the Turks helped the Reformation)

Personal feuds, ethnic differences, class struggles...all of this seems convoluted enough; unfortunately, we have yet to introduce another complication into the Hungarian context - that of denominational strife. In a word, the Reformation.

In the years after the death of Gritti, Hungary's fate was to slide quite literally in three directions. There was a failed attempt by the Habsburg King Ferdinand to take advantage of King János' death in 1540 - Suleiman the Magnificent, in a supreme act of international childcare, swept in to claim the dead monarch's infant son as the true successor...and himself as its true guardian. What followed was effectively the tripartite division of Hungary: the most western third of it retained their Habsburg lords, and belonged to Vienna. The eastern third - essentially the realm of Transylvania -

became an autonomous principality, with their Ottoman masters applying a more-or-less laissez-faire policy to its own internal affairs. The middle chunk of Hungary, however, became part of the Ottoman empire itself. A golden crescent was planted on top of the city of Buda which would only be knocked off a hundred and fifty years later.

What had Hungary's division into three sectors - Habsburg, Ottoman, Hungarian - to do with the Reformation? Turkish antipathy towards the Habsburg-friendly Roman Catholic Church, particularly throughout the 1550's and 60's, enabled the newly-established faith of the Protestants in Hungary to breathe and grow. In fact, the Ottomans helped the Hungarian Protestants so much that some historians interpret the Turkish victory of the Battle of Mohács as a phase of the Reformation. By 1540, the shock-waves of Luther's Wittenberg declarations were rippling out into every corner of Europe - in Hungary, and its unique political situation, Protestant and Calvinist missionaries found in the Ottomans an unexpected protection against the defensive might of the Catholic counter-reformation. A rapid rise of Protestants - and a plummeting number of Catholics - took place in most of the Hungarian territories under Ottoman control. In some Turkish areas, the quota of Catholic priests fell by 70%. To put it bluntly, the Ottomans and the Protestants both arrived in Hungary at around the same time - a fact both parties appeared to have enjoyed to their mutual advantage.

The main factor in this flight of Catholics from Turkish-controlled areas does not appear to have been any physical oppression of Hungarian Catholics, but rather a consistent legalistic prejudice against them on the part of the Ottoman authorities. When Protestants and Catholics argued in Ottoman Hungary, they usually took their problems to be resolved before the *kadi* or Turkish judge. What

we see, especially in the period between 1540 and 1560, is a repeated Ottoman sympathy for Protestant complaints over Catholic ones, and a clear bias when it came to protecting Protestant communities over Catholic congregations.

The Protestants were delighted. "The Good Lord has protected us miraculously through the Sultan and the Turkish nobles!" wrote one pastor in 1542. Everywhere else, Lutherans and Calvinists were being persecuted and imprisoned - under the Turks, they were not merely allowed to preach, they were protected,and in some areas (of high Catholic concentration) even actively encouraged. The Hungarian town of Debrecen experienced so many Protestant conversions that it quickly became known as 'the Calvinist Rome'. Great Reformers such as Melanchthon (Luther's right-hand man) recieved such positive news about developments that he even considered visiting Hungary to see for himself. Abroad, 'Turkish tolerance' quickly became a classic propaganda instrument in Protestant criticisms of Catholic oppression - one German writer, in 1550, hoped the Christian monarchs of the free countries "would shame themselves, when they hear how the Turks tolerate and protect the true servants of Christ". This idea that Christians should feel ashamed at the superior religious tolerance of their Turkish neighbours became a standard and familiar refrain - as one 1676 English pamphleteer put it, the Turk was "the Common Enemy" of Christians, and yet "to our endless shame, he lets Christians live under him with more ease and freedom than Christians do".

Why were the Ottoman authorities so tolerant, and even hospitable, towards the aggressively missionary-minded Protestants? Let's start with the least cynical reasons first. To begin with, it was fairly standard practice within Ottoman empire to preserve local laws for the local communities - Ottoman shari'a law, in any case, had to respect the status of the Christian and the Jew (the *rum* or

gavur and the *yahudi*). This meant that, in many cases, the Bible was seen as a legal code to be used in all Christian disputes - in towns such as Mohács and Tolna, the Pasha declared that any Christian who contradicted the Bible would have their tongue cut out. So the idea of 'Turks protecting Protestants' was only amazing to those Europeans who had no knowledge of Ottoman legal practice.

Secondly, there was certainly a reserved fascination and tacit sympathy on the part of Ottoman Muslims for these new Christians called 'Protestants'. The Calvinist hatred of icons and pomp would have found some resonance with Turkish Muslim observers - Islam, we will recall, also prohibits representation, and features a central belief in pre-destination which some theologians would consider 'Calvinist'. In the Hungarian town of Szeged in 1545, we are told, the Pasha regularly attended Protestant services and visited schools. The same Pasha also appears, in local disputes, to have sided with the Evangelicals against the Franciscans. Curiousity was doubtless a factor - Muslims tended to see Protestants as followers of a new religion. There were frequent reports of groups of Turkish Muslims who would silently file into Protestant churches and observe proceedings until the communion host was handed out - at which point they silently crept outside again.

For all such curiosity, conversions on either side were rare, although they did take place. We know of one Turkish Muslim who converted to the Protestant faith and studied theology in Debrecen, before finally becoming a pastor in Szepsi around 1563. Going in the other direction, there was the famous case of the German Adam Neuser, an anti-trinitarian Protestant from Heidelberg who, after various diplomatic adventures, moved from being a Transylvanian church pastor to finally converting to Islam at the Sultan's court in Istanbul. There was even a belief, amongst many Protestants inside and outside Hungary, that the developments which were taking place

in areas such as Transylvania would be the beginning of a gradual 'Christianization' of the Ottoman empire, as the seeds of the Protestant faith made its way downwards through the Balkans, into Constantinople - converting the Sultan - and then out throughout the Muslim world.

However, one of the most compelling reasons why the Ottomans tolerated, even encouraged Protestants in Ottoman Hungary was the same reason why the United States, in the 70's and 80's, financed American evangelical missionary activity in Latin American countries - to dissolve political solidarity. Catholics, with their Rome-centered faith forever looking Westwards, were untrustworthy Ottoman subjects. If the conversation in 1541 between a Protestant missionary and the Pasha of Buda is anything to go by, it seems the Ottoman-friendly substance of the Protestants cannot be overlooked as being helpful to the Sultan's control of a newly-conquered (and predominantly Catholic) country. The Pasha, having never met a Protestant before, asks him what the main principle of his new religion is. The missionary replies (displaying a genius for tact) "to remain obedient to worldly-temporal authority and to discourage the people from rebellion and uprising". The Pasha, not surprisingly, is delighted to hear this, and sends the missionary away with a blessing, reminding him to pray daily and not to keep company with Catholics.

We should not paint too rosy a picture of Protestant life under the Ottomans - in the town of Tolna, one writer tells us he didn't know of any Protestant minister who had not been manhandled by Turkish soldiers. The Ottoman strategy of conquest-through-cultural-tolerance, as well, does force us to view the religious freedoms they offered with a more cynical gaze. Although religious freedom in Transylvania continued until the re-conquest of the Habsburgs in 1689, the special favouritism shown towards Protestants over

Catholics only really enjoyed a period of time leading up to the 1560's. After this, the judgements of the *kadi* had more to do with moods and bribes than foreign policy from the Sultan. Nevertheless, when we see some of the things the Habsburg did to Hungarian Protestants, it is not too difficult to understand the energy with which the latter took the Ottomans' side. In 1674, when 700 Protestant ministers are dragged in chains towards a court in Pressburg, the Catholic Bishop tells them: "We have drawn up a rope for your necks here, so that when we finally place it over your heads, the evangelical's religion will never walk again". Given the behaviour of such 'Christians', it is hardly surprising Protestants developed a multi-cultural pragmatism so quickly - next to Habsburg absolutism, the cleverer sensitivities of the Ottomans must have seemed like Paradise.

Life in Hungary Under the Ottomans

So what was life like for everyday Hungarians living under Ottoman rule? How far did Muslims and Christians - Othodox, Protestants, Catholics - live and share a common culture in the *pax ottomanica* of sixteenth/seventeenth century Hungary? The Ottoman period has always been a sensitive and controversial subject for Hungarian historians, with striking disagreements on exactly what effect Turkish domination had on the region. The initial view - that of complete catastrophe, with an absolute rejection of Ottoman culture on every level, accompanied by a conviction that the Turks were responsible for Hungary's deforestation, economic stagnation and massive population loss during the period 1526-1683 - began to be contested in the late nineteenth century, as a generation of nationalist Hungarian historians (the so-called 'Turkophile' school), resentful

of Austrian rule, began to re-examine the Ottoman legacy. Subsequent scholarship has begun to show that, contrary to the previous demonizing of the Ottoman centuries, no massive population loss actually took place, that Turks were not solely responsible for the region's large-scale deforestation, and that Hungary had already been in a phase of economic and political decline well before Suleiman ever set foot in the country.

Most significantly, the picture of absolute non-cooperation between Hungarians and Turks has, thanks to the research of several historians, significantly changed. This last sentence should not be misunderstood: the Ottoman period has not been transformed into some previously undiscovered Eden of mutual respect and cultural tolerance. However, it is becoming clear that there was certainly a level of co-existence between Hungarian Christians and Ottoman Muslims in this period which was not previously recognized. It is most definitely a lower level of cultural exchange than we find elsewhere in the Ottoman Balkans. Ottoman Hungary did not really offer, as in Bosnia, towns and cities where mosques, synagogues and churches were hopelessly, wonderfully mixed together on the same streets; we will seldom come across the kinds of stories we can find in Macedonia - of Christians who knew their Muslim neighbours so well that a Christian merchant could imitate an imam, his language and gestures, so that even other Muslims were taken in by the trick.

The practical needs of daily life were shared by both faiths. As the scholar Fekete tells us, Muslims and Christians in Budapest had shops next to one another; Turkish butchers of mutton would have sold their meat next to Christian butchers of pork. There were usually two different kinds of bakery, confectionery and barber - a Turkish and a Hungarian one. Hungarian taverns sold their alcohol alongside Turkish sellers of *boza* or fermented grape juice. Both kinds of bread, both Turkish and Magyar, were consumed by the

local population. With the Ottoman conquest, it was not simply new foodstuffs that were brought in, but also new products and clothes. That they were worn by both Christians and Muslims is clear from the fact that many Turkish words - such as those for 'slipper' (*papucs*) or 'boot' (*csizma*) - passed into modern Hungarian. Turkish craftsmen abounded - not just carpenters and shoemakers, but also many of the more skilled trades. The clock of the city of Buda, built into the spire of a converted church-mosque, was fashioned by Muslims, and operated in 1638 by a certain Hüseyin *Usta* (Master Hüseyin).

Most of the so-called 'Turks" (*török*) in Hungary at this time, we should recall, would actually have been Bosnian Muslims, and the Ottoman conquest would have meant a massive change in the administration and infrastructure of the country, as the ruling social class was replaced, practically overnight, with an entirely new elite - Bosnians, Albanians and Greek Orthodox Serbs. After the Ottoman conquest, the majority of Buda's churches were almost immediately converted into mosques, transforming it into the first 'Oriental' city a Western traveller would see coming from Europe. The first impression which greeted a traveller from the North would be a skyline filled with church spires and minarets - it was a vista which featured in many travel accounts, and for most Europeans would have been the first Ottoman city they had ever seen. Although many Ottoman buildings have not remained, it was the famous Sokollu Pasha who was responsible for one of the city's largest building programmes, which left Budapest over thirty public buildings - four great mosques, six (normal) mosques, two schools and over sixteen public baths. The city also had two Jewish synagogues, it seems, one Spanish and one Polish, whose communities did not have much to do with one another - their respective *mahalle* or districts were in different parts of the city. The Greek orthodox

who came with the Ottomans also had their own church and diocese in Buda, and were largely looked upon by the Hungarians as an extension of the Ottoman hierarchy.

A reciprocal influence in the realm of Hungarian literature and the arts took place between Muslims and Christians; although quite meagre in comparison with the Golden Age of Muslim Spain, it was certainly far from negligible. Probably the finest Hungarian poet of the sixteenth century, Bálint Balassi, was an accomplished imitator of divan poetry, and appears to have translated a number of Turkish poems into Hungarian. From the other side, there were a small number of Turkish writers and poets interested in Hungarian culture - most notably the great Turkish historian Ibrahim Pechevi (d. 1650), whose extraordinary curiosity and open-mindedness led him outside the confines of his own culture to investigate Hungarian historians such as Gáspár Heltai (Pechevi, it has to be said, was one of the few Turkish writers who was willing to delve into the sources of the 'infidel' as well as the Muslims). We also have a number of Turkish ghazals and lyrics declaring their love of Buda and their adoration of the city, which suggests it did not take long for Ottoman poets to see the newly-conquered town as their own.

The Fifteen Years' War (1591-1606) and after

And so, whilst England was warding off Spanish fleets, hiding its priests in washing cupboards and accustoming itself to a new Queen, the three mini-states of Hungary on the other side of Europe - Habsburg and Ottoman Hungary, as well as the semi-independent state of Transylvania - moved through a difficult period of barely-concealed war. A long line of fortresses and castles ran along the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier, a porous and disputed

border which experienced a constant level of small-scale military skirmish. It was a strange period, a Balkan free-for-all, where serfs, Catholics, Ottomans, Protestants, nobles, Habsburgs and even foreign (Dutch and French) mercenaries struggled with one another over an expanse of unclear and shifting territories.The Germans even had a word for this so-called period of peace - the *Kleinkrieg* or 'little war'. The fact that the Habsburg emperor could deliver the annual tribute to the Turks every year, whilst simultaneously keeping the level of hostilites going, serves to show how unwilling both sides were to enter into a full-scale military conflict.

And yet a full-scale war is what eventually took place. In 1591 a Turkish offensive on the Croatian stretch of the Ottoman-Habsburg border provoked what became known as the 'Fifteen Years' War'. For our own story of Muslim-Christian alliances, the war offers a number of interesting points. Most superficially (and also most spectacularly), there is the unusual episode of an entire regiment of French soldiers who deserted the Habsburg side they had been sent to support and took up arms with the Ottomans. In the middle of the war (1597), in the castle of Papa on the Hungarian-Croatian border, a fight had broken out between a regiment of 1,500 French troops and a much smaller number of their Austrian fellow-combatants. The French troops, who had not been paid for many months, massacred the smaller Habsburg contingent and then, upon learning that a larger Habsburg force was approaching to 'discipline' them, made an offer to the Ottomans to come over to the other side and fight for the Turks. The Ottomans quickly welcomed them, not merely for propaganda value but also for their military skill - the majority of the Frenchmen were experienced musketeers, and immediately distinguished themselves in the Ottoman siege of Kanije (1600) and in the Turkish defense of Istolni Belgrad (1601). If we are to believe the sources, some of the ren-

egades even converted to Islam, with one of the French captains eventually becoming an Ottoman adminstrator in the district of Semendre. They were extremely well treated - one could even say pampered - by their new employers: in the first year alone of their service, the Sultan's treasury spent over twelve million *akce* on their salaries and upkeep. Whether they were worth their special treatment remains debatable - although some of them returned home to France after the war, others remained in employment, apparently causing the French ambassador no end of problems with their unruly behaviour.

A more substantial aspect of the Fifteen Years War , and the period leading up to it, was the way it revealed an increasing willingness on the part of the anti-Habsburg Hungarians to look on the Ottomans as a potential ally in their struggles against Vienna. The infamous alliance of Imre Thököly with the Grand Vizier in their march on Vienna, as endless historians point out, was no eccentric coalition of the impious (to use the Vatican's phrase) but the last in a very long series of collaborations. Three precedents can be found for Thököly before and around the time of the Fifteen Years' War - all of them, usefully, beginning with the letter 'B': Báthory, Bocskay, Bethlen.

Báthory - not just a Transylvanian prince but also a future king of Poland - fought against a Habsburg-supported rival at the Battle of Kerelőszentpál in 1575. The Ottomans were extraordinarily eager to help him, offering him all the troops he could wish for against Vienna's candidate. The Pashas of Temsvar and Buda were ready to rush to his aid, the Sultan promised him; the Grand Vizier even told Báthory before the battle began that, if he didn't feel his forces were strong enough, he should remain within his fortress until the Ottoman/Wallachian reinforcements arrived. The Turkish participation in this battle, interestingly, was also downplayed: out of an estimated

army of 4,000 soldiers, it was said, Báthory only recruited two hundred Ottoman cavalry to help him. We now know this claim to be complete fiction: the historian Fodor, from other sources, has shown how somewhere between 1,000 to 1,500 Ottoman cavalry and infantry were present at Báthory's 'Hungarian' victory. Mingled in with the *Realpolitik*, some personal factors were also involved here: the leader of the Ottoman auxiliaries was a Muslim called Receb Bey, a man who appears to have been on unusually good terms with Báthory. Báthory had asked the Sultan to promote his Muslim friend to the governorship of a nearby province, and had also provided a recommendation for one of his chief officers. All moving testament to the truth that cronyism, in the purity of its essence, knows no sectarian or ideological bounds.

Bocskay was an even stranger case of collaboration, having been a sworn Protestant ally of the Holy Roman emperor (the Habsburg King Rudolf II, mad as a hare) until his *volte-face* in 1599. The increasingly anti-Protestant policies of Vienna eventually catapulted him into the leadership of one of the most widespread anti-Habsburg insurrections of the period; after a successful campaign of ambushes against Imperial (Austrian) troops in 1604, a whole spate of attacks took place against Habsburg outposts all over Western Hungary. They were attacks which enjoyed full support from all levels of society - even serfs and villagers joined in, clubbing soldiers with sticks and breaking up supply-lines. The vigour of the uprising was hardly surprising - the pathologically brutal behaviour of the Austrian General Basta, who murdered, burned and tortured his way through most of northern Hungary, left memories of Habsburg atrocities that would endure for decades to come. The Ottomans, pleased to see their former enemy so successful against the Habsburgs, initially gave indirect support to Bocskay's efforts, and then later official recognition (in 1605 the Sultan Ahmed I gave

him, as prince of Transylvania, a crown made in Persia). The support is all the more ironic, given that Bocskay had driven the armies of the Grand Vizier Sinan back across the Danube ten years earlier.

Bocskay's gesture - that of a Hungarian prince who changed from a Habsburg to an Ottoman saddle in mid-stream - was not the first of its kind, and certainly would not be the last. Common political and material needs clearly dictated how 'unbelieving' an unbeliever was; in struggling against a hated enemy, the temptation to enlist the aid of the ever-present Ottomans, along with their enormous resources of cannon and manpower, must have been irresistable. For Bocskay, this all turned into a Christian solidarity - but an anti-*Catholic* version, not an anti-Turkish one. One local poem, written by a grateful Protestant pastor, thanked Bocskay for liberating them from "the neighour-beating, country-wasting, cruel henchman" (i.e. the Habsburgs) and prayed that "God, through your hand ...may send the skullcapped, chanting priests back to Rome!". Ecumenical harmony was hardly in full swing.

Our final 'B' stands for Bethlen. It is a comment on the instability of Hungarian politics that Bocskay had the rare misfortune to be poisoned by his own chancellor. The man who eventually followed him, in 1613, was Gábor Bethlen, a Calvinist who managed to walk a skilful path between Vienna and Istanbul, deftly using one to mollify the other. His career as monarch - essentially a vassal imposed upon the Hungarians by Ahmed I - had an embarrassing start, insofar as one of the conditions for Turkish support was the return of a fortress in Lipova. Bethlen actually had to besiege his own castle, defended by his own soldiers, in order to be able to hand it over to the Turks - after which he was known as "Gábor the Mussulman". However, another Transylvanian prince was to follow who would recieve this notorious title not merely in Hungary, but throughout all of Europe: let us finally turn to Imre Thököly.

Quitting Cross for Crescent: Imre Thököly (1657-1705) and the Vienna Campaign.

Although we are about to relate the story of how a Hungarian prince (Thököly in Hungarian, although often called 'Teckely' or 'Teckeli' in English) struck an alliance with the Turkish Sultan to attack the Austrian empire together, we shall begin on a Scottish note - an angry poem written by an Edinburgh poet in 1685, two years after the failed siege of Vienna:

Base Apostate Rebel, Count Teckely by Name,
All Christendom's scandal, the Protestants' shame;
To find his imperial Landlord new work
Divorced all Religion, strikes match with the Turk;

Quits Cross for a Crescent, the Sun for the Moon,
The Truth for a Turban; takes Mecca for Rome.
Pawns his Grace and his God, and each glorious thing
For the Nickname and noise of a Titular King.

The poem is worth mentioning because it gives an idea of how famous (or infamous) Thököly was. In the cities of Edinburgh, Warsaw, Amsterdam and Paris, Thököly's name was known as the ally of the Turk. What many people saw as Thököly's act of 'betrayal' was reported on widely in Poland, France, England and Germany; intellectuals such as Leibniz, Swift and Daniel Defoe (author of *Robinson Crusoe*)

all took an interest in him. Caricatures of the Protestant prince dressed in Turkish costume, with a devil whispering in his ear - or in one case, even with the face of Oliver Cromwell - appeared all over Europe. In England there was a group of Whig politicians who, as

Protestant admirers of the Hungarian, were known as "Teckelites" for a time.

Even the most sympathetic reports - those coming from writers who were aware of how much the Habsburgs had abused their Hungarian subjects - basically depicted a Christian rebel who had, so to speak, put his money on the wrong horse. And yet few commentators asked themselves how it came to pass that a devout Protestant such as Thököly, and tens of thousands of his equally devout followers, could accompany Turkish and Tartar troops as far as Bratislava and the Polish border, under the Ottoman banner of the standard of Islam.

A knowledge of Thököly's childhood, and the events which took place during it, would have helped. Thököly's family was rich and Protestant; they came from the very far north of the country (from the now Slovakian town of Kezmarok), barely fifty miles from the Polish border - the very region Thököly would return to, decades later, with a Turkish army behind him.

Although wealthy and privileged, Thököly's childhood was definitely troubled. His father was a leading conspirator against the Habsburg regime they were living under, and in 1670 the thirteen year old boy saw him killed by Imperial troops on the walls of his castle in Orava. The boy fled south to stay with his relatives in the Turkish-controlled, relatively safer state of Transylvania. Here he would grow up, in an Ottoman *dar-el-sulh* or 'land of peace' (basically a state the Ottomans chose to oppress only economically, not militarily), mingling with other refugees and nurturing a fervent anti-Habsburg nationalism against the murderers of his father.

The 1670's were particularly oppressive times for Hungarian dissenters - especially Protestants. A small group of politicians and administrators, which would become known thereafter as the Wesselenyi Conspiracy, had been planning to retake their land back

from the Austrians for several years, with secret help from a collection of foreign powers - Turkey, France, Poland and Venice. The conspiracy, it has to be said, had some slightly ludicrous elements in it; the collaboration of the Habsburg's own Archchancellor, an alleged attempt on the Emperor's life in the form of a poisoned tart, and a distinctly unprofessional level of secrecy - a Turkish interpreter blabbed the whole thing to the Austrians at the Viennese court so that, by the end, it seems the only people who didn't know the conspiracy had been uncovered were the conspirators. Thököly's father had been involved in this plot, whose discovery prompted an oppressive backlash of legendary proportions.

To begin with, practically all of the participants were executed after a series of unconvincing show trials - the exception being Prince Rákóczi, whose Catholic mother intervened and, promising the conversion of her son, managed to save him from the gallows. The Hungarian constitution (what little of it there was) was immediately suspended; Lutheran and Calvinist pastors everywhere were arrested and imprisoned, or even sent to work as slaves in galleys. Books were burned, churches closed, Protestants from all classes (both aristocrats and serfs) were dragged into Catholic chapels and forced, with their arms bound to their sides, to take the Catholic host. Unscrupulous German officials took full advantage of the crisis to 'confiscate' enormous amounts of Hungarian money and property (a tactic, it should be said, also employed by Protestants when the Reform was sweeping through Hungary). Hungarian Catholics complained bitterly about the hypocritical use of 'religion' to justify what was, for them, essentially a tightening of colonial rule.

To be fair to the Habsburgs, we know from court records in Vienna that there were elements within the Emperor's hierarchy who were arguing for a more lenient treatment of the 'Magyars'.

The Habsburgs were not stupid - many of them were well aware the new absolutism would only work against them in the long run. Unfortunately, the Habsburg doves in this case were less influential than the hawks in turning Emperor Leopold's ear. Greed appears to have been an oft-recurring motivation: the temptation to appropriate a noble's palace or a pastor's church in the cause of a time of 'crisis' or 'threat' was simply too irresistable. There is little doubt that, if Habsburg rule in Upper Hungary had been more interested in justice than control, the Turkish-Hungarian army would not have been able to sweep through it so quickly on its way north, annexing one town after another with little resistance.

Events Abroad: Louis XIV's Turkish alliance

What was happening outside the Balkans? Like Thököly, the French King Louis XIV was also the subject of a 'media war' in the same period. Although Franco-Turkish alliances were hardly a new phenomenon - the Habsburg annihilation of Francis I's forces at the Battle of Pavia (1525) had sent the French king running to Suleiman the Magnificent for help against Charles V - Louis XIV became the subject of many venomous satires and polemics, both in France and outside, for his support of the Ottomans against a Christian European state. In particular, his decision to attack Strasbourg, in the Habsburg West, just as the armies of Kara Mustafa were laying siege to Vienna symbolized for many an especially nasty example of military opportunism. One tract considered the French monarch " a Christian Turk and as great an enemy to Europa as the Mahometan one", whilst a 1683 pamphlet featured the French secretary for State telling the Prophet Mohammed how excellently the French and the Turks understood one another. Inside France,

however, a climate of Turcophilia certainly seemed to prevail in some areas of society - when an aristocrat and socialite such as Madame de Sévigné can write to her daughter of "our friend the Turk", it seems clear that even for French Catholics, the choice between the rising power of an Austrian neighbour and the more distant rumblings of their Ottoman enemy was no longer a question of religion.

Louis XIV's support of the Ottomans was as close to pure, undistilled *Realpolitik* as any other alliance to be found in this book. As late as 1664, French troops helped the Habsburgs defeat an Ottoman army - composed largely of Christian and Romanian vassals as well as Turkish troops - at St Gotthard, a 'Christian' battle organized by the Pope in which the Habsburg emperor himself had said French help was not welcome. Louis XIV had sent French troops to help his hated enemy against the Ottomans mainly to have a foothold in German affairs, not out of any sympathy for Habsburg territory (indeed, the very general who won the battle would, eight years later, be leading armies against France itself on the River Rhine). Louis secretly promised, but did not deliver, an army of 1,500 men to assist Hungarian rebels in 1666; in the Wesselenyi Conspiracy France was a major component, until the plot was discovered - at which point, to save his own ambassador's neck, Louis congratulated the Habsburg emperor at having foiled the dastardly and malicious plans made against him.

Not surprisingly, France only officially began to support the Ottomans after the Austro-French war broke out in 1673 - after which point it threw itself into the affair with unbridled passion, promising benevolent neutrality to any Hungarian-Ottoman attacks on the Habsburg border, financing Hungarian insurrectionists, even using its ambassadors in Berlin to persuade the Prussians from coming to Vienna's assistance as the Grand Vizier's army drew nearer. This

long-standing French antipathy towards the Austro-Habsburgs didn't go away in a hurry - even into the 1700's, as Hungary was involved in its independence wars against Vienna, French diplomats in Istanbul were busy trying to persuade the Ottomans to launch another attack on Austria.

Poland here is also worth a mention. Its armies - as we shall see - effectively saved Vienna from the Ottoman besiegers in the very last moment, as the Polish King Jan Sobieski stormed the Turkish camp and drove them from the Kahlenberg. And yet, the history of Poland's relations with the Ottoman empire was far from hostile. No other foreign state sent as many envoys to Istanbul as Poland. Some common military campaigns had even taken place between the Poles and the Turks - in the 1560's, there were serious attempts to set up a Polish-Ottoman coalition against Moscow, whilst in the 1630's a Polish-Ottoman force was sent out against the Cossacks. Antagonistic feelings between Poland and the Habsburgs had often led to a sympathy with some Ottoman strategies - the Ottoman vassal states of Moldovia and Wallachia (today in Romania) were looked on by the Poles as buffer states against Habsburg expansion. Like France, Poland was mistrusting towards its aggressive Habsburg neighbour; unlike France, it eventually opted to help it at the last minute - for a carefully-agreed price.

Thököly's Rise to power

And so, in the slow build-up to the Siege of Vienna, we see a gradual coming together of different forces: a rising tension between the ascendant Habsburg power and its neighbours - Poland and France on either side, and the German states to the north; a pragmatic willingness, on the part of France, to help its enemy's enemies, up to the

very edge of Europe and beyond; a growing dissatisfaction on the part of the northern Protestant states with the Habsburg's treatment of its non-Catholics; friction in Hungary between nobles, soldiers and serfs; the beginnings of a whole series of new insurrections in the Hungarian territories, fomenting a mood of revolution the Ottoman court would ultimately decide to make the most of in its own designs on central Europe. This near-chemical mixture of disgruntled Protestants, humiliated peasants, ambitious Viziers, insensitive Kaisers, greedy nobles and meddling Cardinals provided the basic elements for a reaction which would bring one of the largest Ottoman armies ever seen (over 120,000 men) into the very middle of Europe.

For a certain time, Thököly played a central part in this reaction. His fate was to be a melancholy one, and it is difficult not to view the early, enthusiastic, explosive years of his life with some degree of wistful irony - everything went right for Thököly up to the year 1683, and practically everything went wrong after it. Young, charismatic, full of confidence and patriotic fervour, he cast a spell over his contemporaries which perhaps blinded them to his faults - a lack of political foresight and a less-than-impressive grasp of military planning. That he was gifted is beyond doubt; by the age of 23, we find him appointed general of the *Kurutzen*, and already forming a reputation for himself as a rebel leader.

The Kurutzen (in Hungarian *Kurucsok*, literally 'cross' or 'crusader') were tough, often unruly Hungarian fighters, sometimes former outlaws, sometimes former soldiers, who became one of Thököly's most valuable assets in the struggles which followed. Responsible for storming, raiding and plundering villages and small towns in Habsburg territories, sometimes in collaboration with Turks or Tartars (so much so they were sometimes called not Kurutzen but 'Kruzitürken'), Thököly somehow managed to exact an

extraordinary level of loyalty and obedience from them; it was a key factor in his emergence as the outstanding leader of the rebel movement. In Turkish Thököly was even known as *Kurus Bey* or 'the Prince of the Kurutzen'. Both Paris and Istanbul recognised him as the only candidate for a future Hungarian king.

In 1678, five years before the final assault on Vienna, Thököly declared open war on the Habsburgs, and moved with his army of Kurutzen - and an Ottoman blessing - through the mountains of Austrian-controlled Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia), capturing town after town with remarkable success. By 1681, the larger part of the region was under his control. With 10,000 Kurutzen and now an Ottoman army belonging to the Pasha of Oradea on his side, he was able to force the Habsburg emperor into an armistice. The following year, to conclude this astonishing rise to power, he was crowned King of Upper Hungary by the Pasha of Buda, and married - at the age of twenty-five - the love of his life, Ilona Zrínyi, a woman thirteen years his senior. The gods were clearly smiling on Imre Thököly.

There is a debate amongst historians about who first had the idea to try and take Vienna; popular opinion at the time widely blamed Louis XIV for inciting the Turks to march into Europe. Others have insisted it was the Grand Vizier - Kara Mustafa - who persuaded the Sultan to lay siege to the 'Golden Apple', the mythical European city whose fall to Islam would bring about the end of the age. Many people, however, have claimed it was Imre Thököly who, in conversation with Kara Mustafa, first gave him the idea of capturing the Imperial capital. The historian Köpeczi takes this view, partly because Thököly wanted the vast army of the Ottoman advance to move on as quickly as possible through Hungary, and partly because an Ottoman presence in Vienna would have strengthened his own position in Hungary.

Thököly had problems because his own nobles were not wildly happy about his close liason with the Ottoman court. Eager to protect their own social status and perturbed at the growing intimacy with which Thököly was consorting with the Pashas, they demanded to know exactly what kind of documents the 'Kurutzen Prince' had signed with the Sultan. Thököly refused, at first diplomatically ("It is just not done, to make such documents available before they have even been ratified" he told them). The nobles insisted if they did not see the documents, they would withdraw their support. "So God help me," Thököly raged, "if you do not join me, you'll pay for it not just with your gold and property, but with your lives".

Was Thököly a Turcophile? Exactly how friendly was he to Kara Mustafa and the Ottomans he was in such close collaboration with? The allegation that the Hungarian-Turkish alliance was one based on a mixture of fear and opportunism certainly has some truth to it. Thököly quite simply saw the Ottomans as the only means of driving the Habsburgs out of his country - "independence under the emblem of a crescent", as one historian has put it. However, the murder of his father, the material assistance of the Pashas in reconquering towns such as Kassa, not to mention his own Protestant faith - which, against the background of Catholic Habsburg persecution, should not be underestimated - would also have played a part in his collaboration with the Ottoman side. It is difficult not to be struck by a visible sense of unity and resolve when reading the accounts of Thököly and his meetings with the Grand Vizier. When Kara Mustafa recieves Thököly at the Hungarian town of Essek (now in Croatia), there are the usual official formalities: Thököly kisses the Vizier's robe, exchanges gifts, etc. But it is the smaller details which stand out - the large number of Pashas and dignitaries who ride out to greet Thököly as he arrives, the various Hungarian flags which are intermingled amongst Turk-

ish ones in the procession of soldiers which goes by, or the way many of Thököly's officers are seen leading Turkish cavalry. From the Ottoman side, it is also interesting to read - in Muslim reports of Thököly's part in the campaign - how derogatory, insulting remarks to Christians as 'unbelievers' (*gavurlar*) are found on the same page, sometimes in adjacent sentences, as highly respectful references to the 'Kurutzen prince' (*Kurus Beg*). Quite clearly, there were two kinds of Christian for the Ottoman Muslim: the Christian who was against them (the *gavur* or infidel), and the Christian who was on their side - in which case, their allies' Christian faith simply faded out of view and ceased to be a matter of interest.

The Siege of Vienna (1683) and its Aftermath

On May 3rd, 1683, the Ottoman army which was to set forth for Vienna finally gathered in Belgrade. Its nationalities and races, as the historian Barker points out, were legion: apart from the Muslim contingent - Turks, Arabs and Kurds - there were Greeks, Armenians, Serbs, Bulgars, Rumanians, Hungarians, Szeklers and a whole host of Western renegades.The actual size of the legendary army is hard to verify, although estimates seem to average around somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000 men - including an estimated 12,000 Moldovian/Wallachian (Christian) auxiliaries. Thököly's army lay much farther to the north, and would undertake a separate operation for most of the campaign, moving through Upper Hungary towards Bratislava in a joint-advance with Turkish troops under the command of Kör Huseyin Pasha. If we are to accept the rough figure of a 100,000 for the number of Kurutzen and other partisans Thököly had gathering to join him, then one fact becomes clear: well over half of the 'Turkish' army marching against the Habsburgs were Christians.

In Vienna, understandably, the atmosphere was tense. The Sultan's army - essentially the contents of two packed football stadiums, shuffling forwards from town to town - moved with the speed and efficiency the Ottomans were famous for. By June 14th, they had reached the town of Essek. Emperor Leopold, listening to his advisors, fled the city by sneaking out of the walls in the middle of the night - an unpopular action he would never really live down (what we would probably term today a 'bad PR move'). As news arrived in Vienna of each Hungarian town which, due to poor relations with the Habsburgs, capitulated without resistance to the Turkish army, a mixture of anger and panic pervaded the capital. All along the way to Vienna, events told the same story: towns such as Keszo and Rábaköz quickly came to terms with the invading army - a process, as more than one Austrian commentator acknowledged, made easier by the level of Hungarian resentment towards the retreating Imperial forces. At Keszo the locals refused to help the Habsburg army destroy their bridge as part of a defensive stratagem. One local noble wrote to Emperor Leopold telling him everyone in his district had gone over to Thököly and the Turks. Hungarian aristocrats loyal to Vienna were not spared: Sopron Protestants helped Thököly's partisans, for example, loot Count Esterhazy's palace as the army passed by.

It is interesting to see how, even in 1683, people were more than willing to hold their superiors accountable for a flawed foreign policy. In Vienna, ordinary people expressed their anger at the Catholic church, whose treatment of the Magyar Protestants was widely held to have brought the Turkish army and Hungarian Calvinists upon them. On the 5th July, a mob inside the city smashed the windows of Bishop Sinelli's house. It quickly became difficult for priests to walk outside on the streets, so frequently were they subject to first verbal abuse, and then actual physical violence. In

the countryside around Vienna, things were even worse - with the clergy eventually having to disquise themselves in ordinary clothes to avoid assault.

Peasants coerced into manning road-blocks outside Vienna were particularly unhappy and non-cooperative. For many years now they had been forced to pay a *Türckensteuer* or Turk-Tax, whose purpose was to defend them precisely against the threat which was now here. The warning system of fires had failed and the aristocrats who should have been leading them, including the Emperor himself, had all fled. Not surprisingly, corruption abounded, as serfs and labourers exacted bribes through passage of the road-blocks they were supervising. Priests, in particular, were often forced to pay for the use of such roads, frequently being cursed and abused as they passed through.

Although, from the point of view of our book, the Vienna Campaign of 1683 was one of the largest single Muslim-Christian military collaborations in the history of Europe, co-operation between the different faiths was not always harmonious, despite having a common enemy. Thököly and the Pasha he was advancing on Bratislava with, Kör Huseyin, do not appear to have enjoyed the highest regard for one another (at one point the Grand Vizier had to publicly step in and force the two to make peace). The operation was an important one - 6,000 Turkish troops, alongside 15,000 of Thököly's soldiers were involved in the attempt to take the small Slovakian city. Thököly seems to have negotiated the peaceful surrender of the town with the (largely Protestant) administration, and the resulting reluctance to enter into combat appears to have caused disagreement on tactics between the Hungarian and Ottoman officers. In fact, if we are to believe one (extremely hostile) Muslim account of Thököly's collaboration, the Kurutzen Prince was worried on more than one occasion that his Christian soldiers, fighting

their co-religionists, would go over to the other side. There is also a moment where Thököly has to remind his fellow Ottoman officers that the local inhabitants are going to be future Ottoman subjects once the war is won - and therefore more valuable alive than killed.

The end of the Siege of Vienna is well-known, and by now has passed into legend. The Grand Vizier's army lay camped outside the city for just under two months, mining and bombarding the outer walls, whilst the Pope finally managed to persuade the Polish king Sobieski to join a coalition to defend the city. Kara Mustafa had made the fatal mistake of leaving his siege-camp practically open to attack; on September 12th, seven weeks after the Siege had begun - and as the Ottoman forces were on the verge of breaking through the city walls, a relieving army led by the Polish king arrived behind the besiegers and drove them out of their own camp, scattering them in a defeat which, for the Ottomans, turned into a rout southwards all the way back to Buda.

For the Ottomans, the failure of the Siege was a defeat which would ultimately result in the loss of the Balkans. For Thököly, who had burned practically all of his Habsburg bridges to side with the Ottomans, it was the worst news he could have heard. He would fight a further three battles for the Turks in a struggle to win back Hungary from Habsburg rule - Zernest (1690), Slankamen (1691) and Zenta (1697). Although he fought bravely and with distinction, leading the Turkish horse alongside his own smaller number of still-loyal Kurutzen against the Imperial forces, all three conflicts were minor moments of resistance against the inevitable. The Austrians were back in Hungary to stay: Buda had already fallen in 1686 - Turks, apparently, were skinned and their skins used as medicines in apothecaries. The Jewish population of Buda also appears to have been drastically reduced with the Habsburg 'liberation'. Catholic persecution of Protestants intensified - Cardinal Kollonich's

Einrichtungswerk project of 1689 was largely a scheme for the colonization and assimilation of Hungary into the Habsburg empire. In other words, Hungary had slipped from one master into the hands of another, with little cause for rejoicing amongst everyday Hungarians. Platitudes from Western historians about how 'Christendom was saved' tend to overlook this renewed subjection of the Hungarian people necessary in order to enjoy such a moment of European self-congratulation.

As for Thököly, his was the melancholy lot of exile. First to Istanbul, with his wife, where living as an exiled monarch-of-sorts, he still entertained the faint hope of a return to his homeland. They lived in the European quarter of Galata, with a small yet reliable retinue of servants. As Ottoman influence in the Balkans decreased however, so did his chances, and in 1701 the influence of Vienna's powerful lobbies in the Sultan's court forced him to be moved even further out - to a small provincial town called Izmit (today an hour's drive outside Istanbul). It is strange to think of the former Hungarian prince and his glamourous wife, the correspondent of Leopold I and Louis XIV, once the proprietor of thousands of square miles of Hungarian estate, ending his days in a Turkish village where (if reports are to be believed) they even tended a small garden and relied on Hungarian visitors to give them news of developments at home. Thököly's wife died in 1703 and, after a further two years of living alone, the would-be Prince followed her in 1705. He was forty-eight years old.

In the end, it is difficult for us - whether as human beings or as historians - to live with truths that are simply too uncomfortable. Nobody wants a series of facts, or a narrative, which constantly makes us doubt our own goodness. The hundred and fifty years of Ottoman-Habsburg conflict was a disaster for Hungary - no one can deny this. Nor can anyone deny the extraordinary amount of

misery inflicted upon ordinary people during this period - the burnings, rapes, murders, torture and breathtaking levels of cruelty (the flaying-alive of prisoners, for example, practised by both sides).

What can and should be questioned, however, is how far one of the most traumatic events of the seventeenth century can be understood using words like 'Muslim' and 'Christian', or even 'European' and 'Turk'. The Habsburgs - and, even today, the Western historians who are sympathetic to them - used these words because they had a certain function. In constantly talking about the Terrible Turk, they were able to remove some of the more uncomfortable factors from the discussion: their own ruthless exploitation of the poor, the unjust treatment of other denominations, the unscrupulous appropriation and control of another country's resources. The Ottomans, too, played a similar game: the ridiculousness of an 'army of Islam' which relied upon the collaboration of enormous numbers of 'infidels' was an absurdity seldom acknowledged except by the most radical '*ulema*. Perhaps the lesson in all of this is that the decision to give up words such as 'Islam' and 'Christendom', 'infidel' and 'Turk' requires a certain courage, a willingness to open oneself and one's culture up to unreserved criticism. In many ways, the myth of a Christian Europe, attacked by an army of Islam, persists because we have not yet found this courage.

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Chapter Five

Two Versions of Islam and the Apocalypse: The Persistence of Eschatology in Schlegel, Baudrillard and Žižek

This brief essay deals with the persistence of a single motif – the medieval Christian association of Islam with the apocalypse – in the vocabulary of an early modern thinker (Schlegel), and its reappearance in the geopolitical mindscapes of two postmodern philosophers (Žižek and Baudrillard). As the apocalyptic overtones of Islam for the West are far too numerous and diverse to catalogue here, we will be dealing with two specific varieties of the motif: one belonging to the Franciscan twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the other to certain Calvinist thinkers of the 1600s. In the first version, Franciscans such as Nicholas of Lyra and Alexander Minorita tried to include Islam in their calculations to find the exact date of the Day of Judgement – Minorita, for example, understood 666 to be the number of years of Islam's dominion, at the end of which the Messiah would appear. This use of the Muslim as an eschatological omen, to warn us how close we were to the end of Time, carried with it one important consequence: their unconvertibility. Luther continues this tradition three centuries later, when he writes how

the Turk cannot be converted: they are a sign of the end of the Age.

This Franciscan insistence on the non-participation and non-conversion of Muslims distinguishes them from the second version of the Islam-Apocalypse association we are studying – namely, the seventeenth century Protestant Millenarianists (Boehme, Kuhlmann, Comenius) who saw in the Ottoman Turks an anti-Catholic ally, one who would ultimately convert to Christianity, join forces with the Protestants in vanquishing the Catholic Habsburgs and then march on together to Rome to slay the Papal anti-christ. Comenius' *Lux in tenebris* (1657) had prophetically envisaged the Turks (alongside the Swedes) as fundamental in bringing down the House of Habsburg – for which the Muslims would be rewarded with "the light of the Gospel" (*mercedisque loco reportaturos Evangelii lucem*). In 1675, Kuhlmann even took a copy of Comenius' tract to Istanbul to try and persuade Mehmet IV in person of the validity of his vision. In this version, the Muslim, far from being a passive, apocalyptic signpost, would be active participants (albeit ultimately Christianised) in the struggle. The gist of this essay will show that, with regards to the place of Islam within today's politics, Baudrillard reveals himself to be a Franciscan, whilst Žižek's approach is that of a Calvinist.

Friedrich von Schlegel's Franciscan Eschatologies

> *History is the centre of everything.*
>
> *-Notebook on Philosophy (1806)*

There is a sense in which history, more than any other discipline, offers the best key to understanding the essence of Schlegel's many

literary, philosophical and philological endeavours. His oft-quoted definition of the historian as a backwards-looking prophet, with its Hebrew connotation of someone who sees clearly not just in the future but also in the present, underlines the intimate link between the past and the future in his work. An understanding of the past, for Schlegel, did not merely reflect an obsession with the *arche* of mankind, but gradually also came to indicate a search for the *telos* of that same humanity. Particularly within Schlegel's final, apocalyptic phase, this mutual relevance of past and future explains how the history of the Muslim world, and Europe's encounters with it, played a not inconsiderable part Schlegel's own historical project to map the provenance, and implicitly the trajectory, of a Christian Europe.

Novalis' own essay on Europe and Christianity (*Die Christenheit oder Europa*), which exerted such an influence on the 28-year old Schlegel, was itself an essay in history. Novalis' medieval vision of "those beautiful, gleaming ages past" when a common Christianity "bound together the furthest provinces of this wide spiritual kingdom" was a lament for the lost unity the Reformation had destroyed: "From then on...Catholics and Protestants were further apart from oneanother ...than they were from pagans or Mohammedans" (ibid, 42). Of course, scholars such as Hellerich have already shown us how Schlegel's subsequent Catholicism was neither whole-heartedly pious nor simplistically ever-present. Nevertheless when Schlegel pleads, as he frequently does, for "the whole of Christianity to be re-united in one body", Novalis' idealised landscape of a harmonious, spiritually pure and socially stable Christian Europe remains an important store of images.

This powerful fantasy of a medieval Christian continent, at one with itself, worshipping the same true faith from St James to St Petersburg, accounts for some of the reductions, adjustments and

ommissions the Muslim world underwent in Schlegel's historical reconstructions. Particularly in moments where "Mohammedan" history came too close to its Christian counterpart - either literally, in terms of an alliance or collaboration, or metaphorically, in terms of a similarity of values or goals - Schlegel screened and sifted his information to prevent the emergence of any inconvenient proximity or parallels. The alliances and peaceful co-habitation of Spanish Muslims and Christians we find in even in a conservative historian such as Krause (whose *Begebenheiten* Schlegel had read in 1806) were simply left out by Schlegel, who scarcely makes mention of such cross-cultural relationships in his description of the *reconquista* as a "war of liberation". Muslim-Christian alliances in general, unsurprisingly, did not go down too well with Schlegel, who would forever express anger and disgust at the unnatural union of Turk and Christian against a European foe. Even though an increasing empathy with Catholicism enabled him to accommodate, without too much disappointment, Protestant versions of such alliances (such as that of the Reformist Hungarians with the armies of Suleyman in their march on Vienna) Schlegel appeared to be continually upset at the historical decisions of Catholic states such as France, Venice and Austria to side with the Ottomans. The Pope, writes Schlegel in 1807, should have excommunicated Franz I the moment he made an alliance with the Turk. Although at least one critic has quite rightly posited Schlegel against Kant as a "dissolver [of] boundaries" in terms of irony, Schlegel's desire, we may infer, to blur the linguistic boundaries of Europe, or the semantic boundaries of language, did not necessarily spill over into his political thought.

When we foreground Schlegel's devotion to *Geschichte* as a means of discerning the precious pattern of the universal within the bewildering mass of the particular, then Islam's primary significance emerges not as an aesthetic project or *Volkswanderung*,

but rather as an unignorable world-historical force. The watershed years of 1802-4 provide both positive and negative versions of this function. Before his turn to Catholicism, Schlegel's interest in Islam as a possibly incomplete and unactualised "progressive religion" reflects the centrality of Mohammed and Arab history in Schlegel's early attempts to write a history of the world; plans abound to write dramas of Ali, Omar and even devote the middle stages of a planned cycle to Arab history. A typical remark (1800) runs as follows:

> *From Leonidas to Alexander - from Scipio to Trajan - from Charlemagne to Frederick the II; and then the history of the Caliphate; these are definitely the highlights in cosmopolitan attention.*

In the jigsaw-puzzle world of the early Schlegel's many teleologies, Islam *fits*. Massive, millennia-stretching ideas such as the novel, cultural openness or the concept of mythology appear to connect the Muslim world to its nearest neighbours with little or no difficulty; Alexander the Great is found in the same *epos* as Mohammed; a history of the "Romance from Moses to Mohammed" is given brief consideration, whilst Islam, Judaism and Christianity are endowed with "a systematic unity". History, in this sense, lends a chronicler's homogeneity to Islam, gives it a certain compatibility with other cultures and civilizations, one which admittedly drains it of uniqueness and limits it to a specific function within a specific design, but at the same time frees it from traditional prejudices and allows it to be re-configured in relation to fresh, different reference points - German monarchs, Greek heroes, figures in the Bible, Portugeuse poets and even Scottish kings. When we find, on one page of Schlegel's 1802 notebooks, Mohammed in the very middle of a host of

names to include in a series of "epics"(featuring, amongst others, Christ, Macbeth, St Sebastian and Richard III), it is difficult not to wonder what radically different approaches to Islam might have developed if the trajectory of Schlegel's thought had not taken such a Catholic, conservative turn.

In a curious way, the historical importance of the Muslim world in Schlegel's early notebooks persists in his later research, even if this centrality has now acquired a diabolical significance - Islam no longer as an important *telos* in the unfolding of human development, but rather as a species of apocalyptic signpost, warning of the end ahead. In terms of historiography, it is interesting to see how the *form* of Schlegel's historical exegeses remains the same, but this time filled with a very different content. The Arabs are still seen as a transitional point "from the old world to the new", a key moment in the mutation of human history, even if this epochal hinge is now a step not in the development but rather in the devolution of the human spirit. In this sense, Islam's function as an epoch-demarcator still remains intact - even in 1812, Mohammed is still considered to have "begun a new age in Asia" - but now operates within a history of error and gradually encroaching darkness, a melancholy chronicle of how the present-day catastrophe of reformation, revolution and disbelief came to be. Unsurprisingly, Schlegel's later remarks tend to link together Mohammed, Luther, Robespierre and Napoleon as key sequential figures in this cumulative subversion of the one true order. His description of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt as a "relapse back into the Turkish" - an essentially Oriental spirit of revolution finally returning to its 'Mohammedan' origins - shows, perhaps more than any other remark, how a vein of subversion running through Mecca, Wittenberg, Paris and Istanbul eventually came to dominate Schlegel's later understanding of history as a series of temporary, diabolically-inspired setbacks.

The persistence of medieval Christian tropes of Islam in Schlegel's historical vocabulary did not merely manifest itself in an age-old association of Mohammed with social and political disturbance, but also in an even older tradition: an eschatological, at times even numerological response to the Muslim world as one of the signs of the end of the Age. In the last decade of his life, Schlegel's work reveals a curious obsession with the calculation of the exact place of Muslims in world history. In contrast to Kant and Hegel's Enlightenment diminution of Islam on the stage of world history, Schlegel followed medieval scribes such as Nicholas of Lyra and Alexander Minorita (d. 1271) in attributing an apocalyptic centrality to 'Mohammedanism' and its followers. Already in 1813 we are told "the anti-christian state is the Turkish one" with Ottomans emerging as the clearly dominant pole of evil in Schlegel's Manichaen description of a Christian Europe struggling to roll back the frontiers of barbarism surrounding it. By 1821, Schlegel is wondering whether the Greeks and Turks, "melted together", might not be the seventh nation mentioned in the Book of Revelations. From then on, a glut of calculations follow - columns of numbers, dates, battles and reigns, a profusion of plus and minus signs, even tables of population figures - as Schlegel wades through a sea of historical digits, trying to discern an esoteric symmetry in the numerical fabric of history, and thereby geometrically ascertain at what point in the near future the various projected lines will meet. A typical remark, taken from 1826, reveals this Franciscan fervour on Schlegel's part for the hidden unity of time:

> *From the Hegira 622 AD until the first conquest of Jerusalem in 637 is 15 years.*
> *The Christian conquest of Jerusalem by Gottfried is 1099 AD. - Take this from 1832 and we get 733 years. 622 from 1831…are*

1209 years; up to 1832 makes 1210, and up to 1834 is 1212 years. 637 taken from 1832 is 1200 (minus 5 years).

The flight of Mohammed, the fall of Jerusalem, the First Crusade's capture of the city and the Fourth Crusade's sacking of Constantinople are all woven together by Schlegel in an attempt to find out what the next five years of European history will bring. The scholar who, many years earlier, had once praised Lessing's "infinite contempt for the letter", was now devoting himself to an equally infinite worship of the number. The medieval echo of Schlegel's maneuvers is striking; just as figures such as Alexander Minorita interpreted 666 to be the number of years of Islam's dominion, Schlegel adds the number of the Beast to the year of the second Turkish conquest of Jerusalem (1187) to arrive at the date for a *third* possible conquest of the city by the Antichrist - 1853. What differentiates Schlegel from thirteenth century predecessors such as Joachim of Fiore or Nicholas of Lyra is the familiarity he had with the cultures he was effectively reducing to a sequence of Satanic co-ordinates. Schlegel had spent a good number of years absorbing endless books on Persians, Arabs and Turks - works by Jones, de Sacy, d'Herbelot, Reiske, Eichorn and Wahl. The degree of metaphysical violence the former Persian scholar had to inflict upon the Muslim world he had read so much about in order to make it fit its apocalyptic co-ordinates constitutes a remarkable victory of eschatology over philology.

This may be a naive remark, given the way Schlegel was able to draw on his command of different disciplines to justify his political intentions (the way, for example, Schlegel's Aryan ethnology would serve his more explicitly colonialist/imperialist designs). Surely the whole point of Edward Said's critique, it might be argued, was to show how European philology, particularly its Oriental branches, constantly assisted such eschatologies and teleologies. Within such

a reading, knowledge forever re-affirms power, just as power creates the conditions for knowledge. Schlegel's apocalyptic calculations, rather like his description of a German conquest and colonisation of Turkey as a "return to Asia", would have taken place *because* of Schlegel's scholarship, not despite it. And yet there are enough strange moments within Schlegel's historical texts to suggest at the very least a tension between his philological, Christian and political commitments.

One such moment lies in Schlegel's wholly ambiguous feelings about the Greek independence war against the Turks, a conflict which (as we have seen) produced strong anti-Turkish sentiments from figures such as Goethe, but which Schlegel's catholic mistrust of liberalism led to view with a much cooler air. Although Schlegel certainly saw the contemporary Ottoman state as ruled by "the unmediated presence of Satan himself", and was never in any doubt about their necessary exclusion from a Christian Europe, he refrained from viewing the Greek-Turkish conflict symbolically as a struggle between believer and infidel. For all of his talk elsewhere of a Europe united in Christianity against the Saracen might, Schlegel had little good to say of the Greeks and appeared to see both sides as resembling one another in their revolutionary tendencies - by 1824, Schlegel even goes so far as to describe the Turks as "belonging to the liberal party, because of the foreigners in their Egyptian army", a remark which seems to suggest on Schlegel's part a persistent belief in the essentially cosmopolitan nature of "Mohammedan" cultures.

Another strange moment lies in the bizarre use of the Islamic calendar in Schlegel's otherwise wholly Christian calculations to find the beginning of the new Christian epoch, a gesture which seems to suggest something far from conventional in Schlegel's very catholic histories:

> *The year 945 is 900 years (minus 14) before 1831.*
> *The year 1264 is 600 years (minus 33) before 1831.*
> *The year 1573 is 300 years (minues 42) before 1831.*
> *With the number 945 there is a remarkable disintegration of the actual caliphate or of the anti-Christian empire, right there in the 330th year of the Hegira; a year whose number of 330 here is also very significant.*

To give significance to the number of the year in the Hegiran calendar is to view the continuum of history, however momentarily, from a Muslim perspective. Schlegel was by no means averse to such notions of decentering - even in his later years, he often insisted on the necessity of immersing oneself in Arab culture in order to understand it. What is interesting in this passage is how a standard Orientalist reflex - that of quoting dates from Islamic history in the Hegiran calendar as well as the Christian one - finds its way into a Christian exegesis of history, with the "Mohammedan" number itself even being given a Christian significance. Schlegel does not comment on whether the manifest will of God in world history can be decoded using Hegiran dates in addition to Christian ones, or even on the divine wisdom of using a Muslim calendar to encode the cryptic symmetry of a Christian time frame. What this use of a Muslim chronology does show is how Schlegel's Orientalist background, despite his religious convictions, would sometimes produce a problematic empathy with the Muslim world, and lead him to strategies a more conventional Catholic thinker would shy away from.

The problems Schlegel's unquestionable erudition and uncommon familiarity with 'Oriental' cultures would cause for an approach to history which was clearly intended to privilege Christianity as the *arche* and *telos* of *Weltgeschichte*, also arise in Schlegel's highly perti-

nent awareness of the proximity of Arabic and Hebrew. Although occurring after his turn to catholicism, most of these remarks are relatively early; nevertheless, they offer an illuminating glimpse into how Schlegel's historical gaze, bereft of rhetoric and bias, would allow a more sober treatment of Islam to emerge. In a passage from Schlegel's private 'Oriental' notebooks (1806) we find the following:

> *If the thought is correct, that the Prophet (nabi) was not merely a seer but also a man, who gave himself over as a tool of God and who put himself forward as a symbol and sign of God, exposing himself to misjudgement and abuse; so is this highly illuminating [erklärend] for Christ.*

Naturally, Islam here acquires the role of an illuminating footnote to Christianity, a peripheral source of information which might enhance and augment our knowledge of the Christian tradition. The idea, however, that the Arabic term *nabi* - moreso than its Hebrew equivalent, *na'vim* - may explain (*erklären*) for us more fully the mission of Christ does bring Christianity into an *historically* dependent relationship to Islam. Although the positivity of this gesture should not be exaggerated - Islam is still, in the end, primarily a database of desirable etymologies - it does reveal Schlegel's private awareness of the historical incompleteness of Christianity, and the many different linguistic registers he was able to use when talking about this. Schlegel's sober consideration of the Arabic word for 'prophet' is all the more striking when one considers the public lectures on Islam he was giving around the same time (1806), and the "intolerant, bloodthirsty, oppressive" religion he was discussing within them.

This idea that a sound historical understanding of Christianity may require a knowledge of Islam to complete it emerges again, two years later, in an introduction to a publication whose purpose,

we are told quite simply, is "Christianity" - that is, to represent "the holy tradition of divine love amongst the human race from the very beginning". Schlegel comments on the usefulness of Islam in this project:

> *...the Old Testament has a secret meaning, which is enclosed within the hard shell of what people usually understand it to mean. Where should one look for all the key to these riddles and mysteries? Partly in the commentaries of the Hebrews themselves, be it in the legalistic habits of the Talmud...or in the secret interpretations of the Kabbala? Should one not also take into consideration the view of a closely-related people with a not wholly dissimilar [nicht ganz unähnlicher] religion? I mean Mahomet and the Mohammedans' views on the Old Testament; a perspective, which seems all the more important, the more one feels justified in assuming that the religion of Mahomet borrows not simply out of the Old Testament and the Gospels, but also, at least in part, out of a local source of older, albeit very distorted traditions of the Church fathers.*

It is not exaggerated to claim that, as far as this passage is concerned, the secret of the origins of Schlegel's Christianity lay partially in Islam. Although it is a dependency which in one sense confirms the precedence of the Christian faith and Islam's reliance upon it, Christian commentators are still unable to provide us with the whole picture concerning the Old Testament. The Islamic tradition, insinuates Schlegel, possesses something Christianity does not - access to this 'deeper' meaning of the Old Testament, to this mysterious (albeit distorted) source of *Ur-christentum* which our present Christianity has somehow missed out on. This incomplete self-knowledge of the Christian faith - and the superior epistemo-

logical edge Schlegel's suggestion gives "Mohammedanism" - not only exemplifies the kind of difficulties Schlegel would have in reining in his keen sense of philological inquiry, but also partially undermines the standard refrain Schlegel employed to explain away Islam's similarities to Christianity as mere loans, an absence of "originality". Suggesting the Koran may help us better understand the Bible certainly upsets this one-way relationship somewhat, positing a Christian religion which actually requires illumination from "Mohammedan" sources, instead of vice versa; most ironically, Schlegel's suggestion actually resembles, in form if not in content, the standard Muslim description of Christianity as a valid but incomplete faith, whose cryptic verses can only be understood by reference to the final revelation of the Koran.

Baudrillard, Capitalism and the Signpost of Islam

Like Schlegel, Baudrillard seems to display a belief in the symbolic unconvertibility of Islam, not to mention a very Francsican conviction of Islam's catalytic role in the end of the West. Baudrillard concludes his work *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* with a gesture that, perhaps, most definitively separates himself and Foucault from the kind of attitudes towards Islam found in Derrida and Nietzsche: juxtaposed against the *Nouvel Ordre Mondial*, Baudrillard emphasises the radical, uncompromising, unconvertible Otherness of Islam. Unlike Nietzsche, who saw in Moorish Spain a species of culture "more closely related to *us* at bottom", the Nietzsche who glimpsed in Islam a Semitic version of the *jasagende* affirmation of life he himself espoused, Baudrillard makes no visible attempt at kinship with the alien faith; unlike Derrida, who at times is certainly able to formulate Islam in terms of a fellow monotheism, a

biblocentric sister faith, a "People of the Book" alongside Christianity and Judaism, Baudrillard finds it necessary to assert Islam's "irreducible and dangerous alterity and symbolic challenge". Standing at the forked path of the Other and the Same, Baudrillard takes the Foucauldian option of clinical, non-partisan, pseudo-anthropological observation intermingled with tacit sympathy, rather than any explicit expression of solidarity in the manner of Nietzsche's "Peace and friendship with Islam! War to the knife with Rome!":

> *The crucial stake, the decisive stake in this whole affair is the consensual reduction of Islam to the global order. Not to destroy but to domesticate it, by whatever means: modernisation, even military, politicisation, nationalism, democracy, the Rights of Man, anything at all to electrocute the resistances and the symbolic challenge that Islam represents for the entire West…*
>
> *All that is singular and irreducible must be reduced and absorbed. This is the law of democracy and the New World Order. In this sense, the Iran-Iraq war was a successful first phase: Iraq served to liquidate the most radical form of anti-Western challenge, even though it never defeated it.*

Although it is not difficult to discern an underlying *Mitgefuhl* for Islam (one which will become more explicitly stated in Baudrillard's later writings on the Twin Towers), the tone of the passage still affects the neutral observer of a contest between two opposing, unequal forces. What is most striking about Baudrillard's concluding thoughts is the almost complete absence of any characteristics or qualities Islam might have, other than that of pure disruption. Defined in terms of what it is not ('Islam is that which does not fit the New World Order'), the central quality of the faith becomes

its anarchic energy, its wild potential to subvert, its unpredictable alterity. The strength of Islam is what comes through most clearly in this passage, even if the strength is the strength of the fanatic, of the mentally unstable. When Baudrillard speaks elsewhere of the "virulent and ungraspable instability of the Arabs and of Islam, whose defence is that of the hysteric in all his versatility", we realise that his approval of Islam's resistance to the New World Order is more mischievous than Nietzschean. Even in correctly ascertaining some of the real, underlying reasons for the Gulf War, Baudrillard cannot reinforce his assertions without resorting to age-old metaphors of irrational Arabs and hysterical mullahs. Once again, we have a critique which paradoxically challenges modernity whilst making explicit use of its vocabulary.

Two further points need to be made concerning Baudrillard's use of Islam as a final bastion of resistance against an increasingly unilateral world order – the first concerns the place of Islam in the end of the West, the second concerns Islam and Baudrillard's theories of ecstasy and excess. As we have already said, the apocalyptic tones Baudrillard associates with Islam draw on a long medieval tradition, one which interpreted the coming of the Moors as a precursor to the Day of Judgement. The Turks were unconvertible, Luther wrote in 1542, they were a sign of the end of the Age. Equally, Arabs are also described as "unconvertible" in Baudrillard's book; like Luther's Turks, they are hopelessly beyond redemption, utterly incapable of being re-integrated into the Protestant-capitalist world order. Part of the attraction of the Islamist for Baudrillard throughout *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* is this ideological obstinacy of the Muslim, the dialogue-proof impenetrability of their dogma. That their advent signifies in some way the imminent self-destruction of the West is a point which Baudrillard goes on to make ten years later, in an essay on the events of September 11th,

"Hypothèses sur le terrorisme". In this piece Baudrillard quotes the remarkable letter of Philippe Muray, "Dear Jihadists" in which the writer re-inscribes the terrorism of Islamic extremists within a darker, Occidental destiny as a symptom of Western decay ("We made you, you jihadists and terrorists, and you will end up prisoners of our resemblance…You cannot kill us, because we are already dead"). The mood of Islam as a pseudo-divine judgement upon the morally/intellectually bankrupt West is already introduced – what Baudrillard goes on to suggest is not simply that Islamism is a symptom of the decline of the West, but also that its manifestation has become a tool of Occidental suicide:

> *When Western culture sees all its values extinguished one by one, it spins inwardly towards the worst. For us, our death is an extinction, an annihilation, it is not a symbolic exchange – that is our misfortune…The singularity, in killing itself, suicides the other with the same blow – one could say that acts of terrorism have literally "suicided' the West.*

For Luther, and for the Franciscan exegetes who preceded him, the Turks had no value in themselves, no intrinsic worth, no potential for salvation. Their principal significance was semiotic – the value of a signpost, warning of the end ahead. Baudrillard's "unconvertible" Arabs and "irreducible" Islamists, one can't help feeling, perform a similar ontological function. Their disruption, extremism, radical incompatibility are all symptoms of the end of what Fanon called "the European game"; their utter alterity announces, perhaps not apocalyptically, the philosophical (if not economic or military) collapse of Western hegemony. Nevertheless, for all Baudrillard's lip-service to the "irreducible" otherness of Islam, the supposedly uncontrollable alterity of its followers does become re-inscribed

into the destiny of the West; by re-describing the extremities of Islam as the "suicide" of the West, Baudrillard repeats Luther's gesture in a much deeper sense – not simply by linking Islam with some form of end-of-millennium eschatology, but also by turning Islam into a peripheral consequence of the West, a side-effect of the Occident, an *a posteriori* hiccup of modernity.

Žižek, Capitalism and the Possibility of Islam

If Schlegel and Baudrillard belonged to a tradition which saw Muslims as signposts, Žižek sees them as possibilities. In *The Ticklish Subject*, he recalls American media coverage of the Tiennamen square massacre in 1989. Western viewers saw Dan Rather reporting the event live in front of a copy of the Statue of Liberty; "in short" comments Žižek, "if you scratch the yellow skin of a Chinese, you find an American" (207). Žižek's scorn, clearly, is for those Western commentators who automatically translate any desire for freedom, anywhere in the world, as the desire for a Western, free market, liberal democracy. Within Žižek's texts, however, a similar, though not so explicit process takes place; there are enough references to the Baader-Meinhof group and a "Muslim International" to suggest that in Žižek's work, if we scratch the skin of a Muslim, sooner or later we find a Socialist underneath.

Certainly, phrases such as "the Western recolonization of the East" (*Ticklish Subject*, 206) draw fully on the bi-polar ambiguities, both Soviet and Oriental, a term such as "the East" contains for Žižek. A common opposition to Western capitalism, unsurprisingly, brings both Slavic and Muslim, both materialist and transcendental Orients together in a common stand against US hegemony. And yet, this common tendency to lump together the left-wing protester and the Muslim radical as two equally discordant elements in the

Nouveau Ordre Mondiale is not the main reason why Žižek views the phenomenon of global Islam with such an interesting mixture of speculation and hope:

> *...instead of celebrating the greatness of true Islam against its misuse by fundamentalist terrorists, or bemoaning the fact that, of all the great religions, Islam is the most resistant to modernization, one should, rather, conceive of this resistance as an open chance, as 'undecidable': this resistance does not necessarily lead to 'Islamo-Fascism', it can also be articulated into a socialist project. Precisely because Islam harbours the 'worst' potentials of the Fascist answer to our present predicament, it can also turn out to be the site for the 'best'. In other words, yes, Islam is indeed not a religion like the others, it does involve a stronger social link, it does resist integration into the capitalist global order - and the task is to work out how to use this ambiguous fact politically. (Iraq, 48-9).*

A large portion of the passage has been repeated from *Desert of the Real*, with some adjustments (the insistence that "we should agree with" Fukuyama's definition of "Islamo-Fascism" has been dropped). Precisely that which makes Islam 'other' - its anti-modernity, its stronger and more cohesive sense of collectivity, its resort to radical violence - is proposed as an integral part of a future "socialist project". Žižek, in his praise of Paulinian universality and the irrational passion of the Zionist attachement to Israel, has already performed this gesture of a selective political appropriation of the pre-modern with regards to the Jewish and Christian legacy. What lends the passage an uncomfortable tone for a Muslim reader is the open way Žižek speaks of 'using' Islam as a handy, minor component in a larger, geo-political game. For all the theorist's good

intentions - and Žižek has many of them - there is something unsettlingly colonial, perhaps even corporate, about the Chess-like way Islam is discussed here, its "potential" considered, its positives and negatives carefully weighed (the passage is also reminiscient of Marx's own belief, expressed in 1853, that the Turk "must be got rid of" in order to bring European progress to Ottoman Asia Minor). Whatever Islam might be, modern or not, its value clearly lies as an intermediate stage towards something else, an ancillary motion or transition phase towards some even more desirable outcome.

Regardless of what form of socialism this outcome will entail, it is difficult to avoid the fact that Islam will vanish within it. Žižek's remark that Islam is distinguished from its sister religions by the fact that it "resist[s] integration into the capitalist global order" does call to mind his own considerations on the Jamesonian concept of the "vanishing mediator" - the mechanism by which a belief may facilitate the emergence of another belief-system, and render itself obsolete in the process. In *For They Know Not What They Do*, Žižek relates how the "Protestant universalization of the Christian stance" was merely a "transitory stage" to a bourgeois individualist society which, once it had incorporated and secularised Protestant values, subsequently relegated religion to a mere private matter, a "means" to better economic performance. Protestant Christianity, having "mediated" the passage from medieval feudalism to bourgeois capitalism, effectively "vanishes" within it. If Žižek sees Islam, at least in the above passage, as something which essentially resists this process, a different version of the same fate ("vanishing" this time within socialism, not capitalism) appears to be offered as the only alternative to "Islamo-Fascism". Within this "socialist project", it would seem, Islam would vanish from society in much the same way as the Muslim faith of the Calvinists' Sultan would after his conversion at the gates of Rome.

Endnotes

1 For an examination of thirteenth-century numerological interpretations of Islam, see David Burr's "Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis" and Philip Krey's "Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos on Islam" in John V. Toran (ed), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (London: Routledge, 1996) pp131-174

2 W. Schmidt-Biggemann, "Comenius' Politische Apokalyptik" in *Studia Comenia et Historica* 32 (2002) p78

3 Willhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Salvation Through Philology" in P. Schäfer and M. Cohen, *Toward the Millenium:Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998) p267

4 *Zur Philosophie* in Ernst Behler et al. (eds), *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1958-) 19:241

5 *Novalis Dichtungen* (Rowohlt: Hamburg, 2002) p37

6 See S. V. Hellerich's book *Religionizing, Romanizing Romantics* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995) for an interesting account of Schlegel's own spiritual development and idiosyncrasies. Hellerich argues a growing appreciation of medieval art and history, alongside a disentchantment with his Protestant circle of friends, gradually brought Schlegel into the Catholic church. By 1813, reports Hellerich, Schlegel's wife could complain that her husband cared less about religion than about good food and wine (183-4, 149).

7 *Zur Geschichte und Politik* in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 20:115

8 See J. C. Krause, *Geschichte der wichtigsten Begebenheiten des heutigen Europa* (Halle, 1796) 4:III, in particular pp5, 13, 16. Krause also correctly points out how the forced conversion of Christians in Muslim Spain actually went against the principles of Islam itself (p16).

9 *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 20:144

10 ibid 20:213

11 M. Finlay, *The romantic irony of semiotics : Friedrich Schlegel and the crisis of representation (*Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988) p266

12 *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 18:56

13 *Zur Poesie und Litterature* in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 16:326

14 ibid 16:31, 368; 18:138

15 ibid 16:363

16 ibid 20:73

17 ibid 20:386

18 ibid 22:213

19 ibid 21:26

20 ibid 22:72

21 ibid 22:293

22 W. Hecht (ed), *Friedrich Schlegel: Werke in zwei Baenden* (Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin: 1988) p116

23 *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 22:293.

24 from *Gedanken* (1808) in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 19:282

25 Zur Geschichte und Politik in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 22:182

26 ibid 22:208

27 ibid 22:311

28 see, for example,*Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 6:193

29 from *Orientalia* in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 15.1:72

30 Schlegel-Ausgabe 14:132

31 from *Studien zur Philosophie und Theologie* in *Schlegel-Ausgabe* 8:93

32 ibid

33 ibid, 14:129

34 see Section 60 of Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990)

35 Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton (Sydney: Power Institute, 2000) p86

36 *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, p* 85-6

37 ibid, p36

38 Luther's remarks can be found in his translation of Montecroce's *Confutatio Alchoran* – see R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Harvard University Press, 1965) p 105.

39 *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p37

40 "Hypothesès sur le terrorisme" in Jean Baudrillard, *Power Inferno* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002) pp42-43. Own translation.

41 Ibid, p43

42 Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle (London: Verso, 2004) p18

43 Welcome to the Desert of the Real:Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates (London: Verso, 2002) p133

44 Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling (eds), *The Eastern Question: A Reprint of Letters Written 1853-6 dealing with the events of the Crimean War* (Burt Franklin: New York, 1968).

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