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RUMI, THE POET OF UNIVERSAL LOVE:
THE POLITICS OF RUMI'S APPROPRIATION IN THE WEST

A Dissertation Presented

by

Fatma Betul Cihan-Artun

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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RUMI, THE POET OF UNIVERSAL LOVE:
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DEDICATION

To My Parents, Hatice & Selahattin Cihan

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ABSTRACT

RUMI, THE POET OF UNIVERSAL LOVE:
THE POLITICS OF RUMI'S APPROPRIATION IN THE WEST

FEBRUARY 2016

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This project—taking the polyvalence of Rumi as a religious figure and the discursive nature of Western approach to Sufism as its premises—interrogates the ways in which Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273), a thirteenth-century Sufi poet/scholar, has been appropriated in the West. In the valorization of Rumi, the engagement of distinct discourses that emerged out of complex histories stand out. This study, accordingly, seeks to contextualize the ways in which Sufism, as well as Rumi's works and thoughts, are being read and discussed in relation to discourses on Islam, religion, and spirituality so as to explore the "politics of representation" that is embedded in those refractions.

The dissertation analyzes the representations of Sufis, Sufism, and consequentially Rumi in a wide variety of texts, from pre-modern proto-ethnographic works to contemporary translations and novels, so as to trace the construction and engagement of discourses that engender the most significant readings of Rumi. The representation of Rumi's "Muslimhood" constitutes the focus of analysis. For several decades, and due to a variety of reasons that are discussed in this study, Rumi was imagined merely as an incidental Muslim in the West, where

the spiritual currents of the second half of the twentieth century cast him as a New Age guru with romantic sensibilities. It was only in the early twenty-first century, with the events of 9/11 and the consequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Rumi's Muslim identity has come to be acknowledged on a popular level.

The dissertation interrogates the discursive course of the assessment of Rumi as an extra-Islamic figure and the contemporary re-evaluation as an Islamic one, and thereby sheds light on the post-9/11 discourses on Islam in the West, within which Rumi in particular has been cast as an ideal(ized) representative of "good Muslims." It is argued that that Rumi's "ideality" is largely an effect of the New Age reading of Rumi, which underlines, among other things, the compatibility of Rumi's spirituality with Western values.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Every one became my friend from his own opinion;

none sought out my secrets from within me.

(Rumi; *Masnavi* I.1.6)

Jalal al-Din Rumi[1] (1207-1273), a thirteenth-century Sufi poet/scholar, has been enjoying an unprecedented surge of interest in the Western world, particularly in the United States. Hailed as "the poet of love," Rumi entered, in Franklin Lewis's term, "the Western consciousness," as early as the sixteenth century but in the last thirty years or so, he has gained the status of a universal icon thanks to the translations by prominent scholars, poets, Sufis, and even New-Age gurus.

The most significant aspect of Rumi as he is read today in the Western world is his contested Muslim identity. Not long ago Rumi was described as an incidental Muslim who promoted pantheistic theosophy, remnant of the supposed Hindu and Greek origins of Sufism. Today Rumi is often singled out as the paragon of "the good Muslim," which, as a subjectivity, has been engendered by the post-9/11 discourse on Muslims.[2] Defined

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[1] The full complement of names and titles is Mawlana (Mevlana/Maulana) Khodavandgar Jalal al-Din Mohammad b. Mohammad al-Balkhi al-Rumi. Rumi, literally meaning "from Rome", is a toponym and refers to the fact that he lived in Anatolia. Although he is known in the Western world as Rumi, in Turkey he is known as Mevlana (meaning "Our Master").

[2] The dichotomization of Muslims as good and bad is analyzed in detail by Mahmood Mamdani in his study *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (2005). In opposition to the "good Muslims" stand "the bad Muslims," who are, by and large, defined by their vicious attacks against the United States and other Western countries. Several studies, scholarly and non-scholarly alike, explore the category of the bad Muslim. To name a few see *Unholy War* (2003) and *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (1999) by John L. Esposito, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (2006) by Gilles Kepel, *Political Islam* (2011) by Frederic Volpi, *Understanding Jihad* (2005) by David Cook.

in opposition to the "bad Muslims," who are usually called fundamentalists, Islamic extremists or jihadists, "good Muslims" owe their goodness primarily to their compatibility with the so-called "Western values" that are proclaimed to be universal. Largely on account of his appreciation and promotion of these values and more, Rumi has earned eminence as an ideal Muslim.

This project, taking the discursive nature of Western approach to Sufism as its premise, interrogates the ways in which Jalal al-Din Rumi has been appropriated in the West. I am specifically interested in analyzing the process of assessment of Rumi as an extra-Islamic figure and the contemporary re-evaluation as an Islamic one. The "de-Islamization" and the consequent "re-Islamization" of Sufism, and of Rumi, constitutes the framework of my analysis because the Western representations of Rumi in general focuses on the extent of Rumi's agreement with the Islamic tradition.

By utilizing the terms "de-Islamization" and "re-Islamization," I do not mean to impose a standardized definition of Islam. To the contrary, one of the premises of the dissertation is the conceptualization of Islam as a "discursive tradition" (Asad 1986), which underlines a continuous restructuring that occurs by means of an unceasing debate over the correct practice of Islam, though always in relation to "the founding texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith" (14).[3] With Asad's notions about Islam in mind, de-Islamization

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[3] Talal Asad discusses this issue in *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (1986) and in *Genealogies of Religion* (1993). Islam, argues Asad, "is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition" (1986: 14). In this definition Asad draws on Alasdair MacIntyre's elaboration of the concept of tradition as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition" (222). Asad explains what he means by tradition in the same work: "A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to a past (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a future (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should

of Rumi in this dissertation refers to the Western identification of Rumi as a person whose ideas and beliefs fall above and beyond of, sometimes in contradiction to, Islam as imagined, once again, by the Westerners. Re-Islamization, accordingly, refers to Rumi's inclusion into the category of a yet another imagined Islam.

The re-Islamization, in particular, and its political implications are of concern in this dissertation because of the way it resonates in the post-9/11 world. By means of exploring Rumi's gradual transformation into the epitome of the "good Muslim," I also aim to provide an inquiry into the category of the good Muslim, which has not been examined from a critical perspective even though the discursive construction of its subjectivity requires serious attention. I argue that analyzing the specific case of Rumi effectively discloses the contents of the imagined identity of the good Muslim because Rumi's appropriation by the New Age religiosity, specifically through the translations by Coleman Barks, is considerably operative in the rereading of Rumi as the ideal Muslim, so much so that the more Rumi is domesticated or naturalized, the more exemplary he becomes.

Throughout the dissertation I analyze how Sufis, Sufism, and Rumi are represented in a wide variety of texts, from premodern proto-ethnographic works to contemporary translations and novels, so as to trace the construction and engagement of discourses that engender the most significant readings of Rumi. This project does not, however, offer a close reading of Rumi's verses. Neither is it corrective; it is not devoted to demonstrating the "fallacy" of the representations in question. It seeks, rather, to contextualize the ways in which Sufism, as well as Rumi's works and thoughts, are being

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be modified or abandoned), through present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions) (Asad 1986: 14).

read and discussed in relation to discourses on Islam, religion, and spirituality so as to discuss the "politics of representation" that is embedded in those refractions.

The dissertation operates on a meta level, because it focuses on the question of representation. The exploration of this question, however, does not necessarily inform us about Rumi; most of the time, representation, because of its socio-historical embedment, tells more about the subject (representer) than the object of study (represented).[4] As a culture-infused phenomenon, representation does not function in a vacuum; "any and all representations," says Edward Said, "are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer" (272).[5] The most appropriate and efficient way to disclose the constellation of power inscribed into any given representation is to adopt a discursive approach, basically because representation derives its strength from the discourse in which it is entangled. The diverse, sometimes contradictory representations of Rumi in the Western world clearly demonstrates the defining effect of these discourses. Just as the alleged pantheism of Rumi cannot be comprehended without examining the nineteenth-century discussions on pantheism prevalent among the German intelligentsia, Rumi's exemplariness as a Muslim cannot be comprehended without referring to the general discourse on Islam as well as on New Age religiosity in the United States. Therefore, the dissertation provides analysis of the discourses that determine the orientation of Rumi representations.

Systematic analysis of the discourses in question is crucial because discourse, as a "historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms,

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[4] However, I am, also, aware that representations, through discourses, produce not only meaning but also subjectivities.

[5] Numerous works produced within the field of cultural studies, specifically, the works of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, deal extensively with the question of representation.

categories, and beliefs" (Scott: 35), constructs and governs what is "sayable" and "unsayable" in any given historical moment. It determines the boundaries, and networks of associations but also, as importantly, conceals power relations that are inscribed into it.[6] What is more, the extent of a discourse's exploitation by networks of power determines its effect on policy. For instance, the contemporary discourse on Sufis revolves around their disagreement with fundamentalist Muslims and the possible utilization of this presumed conflict. Numerous newspaper articles as well as scholarly inquiries drew attention to this disagreement by means of reporting within, hence perpetuating, the same discourse over and over again.[7] In 2007 the RAND Corporation published a report entitled *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* on developing possible strategies "for the construction of moderate Muslim networks and institutions." It points at Sufis, along with "secularists," "liberal Muslims," as "potential partners" in the American combat against "radical Muslims" (73).[8] The United States and Pakistani governments, apparently already in agreement with this report, have sought means to

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[6] Thanks to Michel Foucault, discourse as a site of knowledge production is taken for granted to the extent that the deployment of discourse analysis to demystify power-knowledge relationships has almost become a standard method in humanities and social sciences.

[7] In a 2008 article that appeared both in *smithsonian.com* and *The New York Times*, Nicholas Schmidle compares the Sufi tradition defined as "a personal, experiential approach to Allah" with "the prescriptive, doctrinal approach of "fundamentalists" such as the Taliban within the Pakistani context. Schmidle paradoxically argues that the followers of Sufism, who "generally embrace Islam as a religious experience, not a social or political one," "represent the strongest indigenous force against Islamic fundamentalism." The juxtaposition acquires a more political tone to the end of the article: "Was Pakistan to be a state for Muslims, governed by civilian institutions and secular laws? Or an Islamic state, governed by clerics according to *sharia*, or Islamic law? Sufis, with their ecumenical beliefs, typically favor the former, while the Taliban, in their fight to establish an extreme orthodoxy, seek the latter. The Taliban have antiaircraft weapons, rocket-propelled grenades and squads of suicide bombers. But the Sufis have drums. And history."

[8] In this report Sufis gain significance on account of being one of the primary victims of the Salafis and Wahhabis: "Immediately relevant to this study is the fact that Salafis and Wahhabis are relentless enemies of traditionalists and Sufis. Whenever radical Islamist movements have gained power they have sought to suppress the practice of traditionalist and Sufi Islam, as in the well-known destruction of early Islamic monuments in Saudi Arabia. Because of their victimization by Salafis and Wahhabis, traditionalists and Sufis are natural allies of the West to the extent that common ground can be found with them" (73).

make use of Sufi groups. Both states endorsed, among other things, the formation of a Sufi council and a Sufi university as well as holding seminars and musical concerts so as to promote Sufism as a counter-ideology to the Taliban.

Representation, defined as "the production of meaning through language" (Hall 1997: 16), constitutes one of the foundational concepts that I utilize in my work. By "represent" I do not merely mean "to speak about." The conceptual perimeter of the notion of representation is based on the two main definitions of the term which are hardly mutually exclusive: (1) the action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented; (2) the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature. According to Gayatri Spivak, whose take on the term in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) precipitated a new wave of discussion on the link between the two meanings, the semiotic sense of the term (*darstellen*/ representation as aesthetic portrait) cannot be analyzed without taking into account its intricate connection with the political sense of the term (*vertreten*/ representation as political proxy). Despite her remark on the relatedness of the two concepts in her critique of Foucault and Deleuze, Spivak focuses more on how these two "related but irreducibly discontinuous meanings" (70) of representation are conflated by Western intellectuals. I agree with Spivak on the discreteness of the two meanings but I am not sure that "discontinuous" is the correct word to describe the relationship of the two. Both forms of representation are usually enmeshed in same discourses, hence are supported by similar structures, networks and power relations. Furthermore, these two forms perpetuate the viability of one another. Hence the symbiotic relation of the two meanings necessitates an adjective other than discontinuous to describe the porous boundary between the two. In

addition, these two forms of representation converge in certain occasions such as translation. The translator not only speaks on behalf of the author but also, via transposing the text to another context, speaks about it. The choice of words, omissions, additions, paratextual matter, which includes introduction, translator's note, footnotes and such, all constitute the act of "speaking about."[9] The convergence of the two forms of representation inevitably brings the translator to the fore.

A number of reasons exist to focus on the translator. Translators do more than redirecting pre-existing messages; they give voice to new texts, intervene in them, and in so doing, establish a subject-position (Hermans 2009: 96). The translator's positionality becomes part of the text he/she (re)creates. Hence I approach the position of the translator as a re-enunciator and discursive subject in the text. This approach has been shaped by recent developments in the field of translation studies[10] that have successfully illustrated that translated texts, as a form of interpretation, engage in a deep and complex relation with politics and power structures.

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[9] Tejaswini Niranjana also argues that "the Derridaean critique of "representation" combines *Darstellung* and *Vertretung* in "translation" [...] in a practice in which we constantly interrogate ourselves and our right to speak *as* and/or speak *for*" (170).

[10] In 1992 Tejaswini Niranjana criticized translation studies, albeit with good reason, for being "caught in an idiom of fidelity and betrayal that assumes an unproblematic notion of representation" instead of asking "questions about the historicity of translation" (4). In 22 years so much has changed in this field. As a matter of fact, as early as the mid-1980s the field already began to broaden so as to engage with questions about ideology, ethics, and culture. By the 1990s, as translation studies increasingly came under the influence of poststructuralist criticism and deconstruction, studies on the political intonations of translations have become more prominent. Analyses of the social, cultural, and ideological significance of translating and translations, the politics that translation is embedded in, the socio-cultural factors affecting translation behaviors, and the role of human agency replace comparative linguistic analysis of source and target texts. The main questions explored all reveal the political and ideological nature of translation: who translates what, when, how, for whom, in what context, with what effect and why? For further discussion on the presence of power in translation, see Gentzler & Tymoczko's *Translation and Power* (2002). The first chapter of Maria Tymoczko's *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007) also provides a comprehensive survey of contemporary translation studies in the Western world.

In my analysis, I take translation as a site of "active interpretation" in the Derridean sense. In "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966), Derrida claims that the idea of a secure ground, a "center" or a "transcendental signified," which remains outside the system yet guarantees its comprehensibility, is merely a philosophical fiction. No univocal signification – hence no text with a fixed, stable meaning – exists.[11] Accordingly, there are "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play" for those who become aware of the "presence of the absent origin:"

> The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play. (102)

The second interpretation, that is the joyous affirmation of "the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming" actually means the affirmation of a world of "signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active

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[11] Derrida's argumentations, despite challenging the very possibility of translation, opens up uncharted venues for translation scholars to explore. Even the idea of equivalence, fidelity and such are dismissed altogether because the idea of "origin" is shattered through deconstructionist thought. As aptly put by Gentzler "at the foundation of Derrida's thought is the assumption that there is no kernel or deep structure or invariant of comparison, nothing that we may ever discern – let alone represent, translate, or found a theory on" (147). In "Letter to a Japanese Friend" Derrida notes the centrality of translation to his thinking: "The question of deconstruction is also through and through the question of translation" (1985: 1). Derrida explored the concept of translation in "Des Tours de Babel" (2007), "Ulysses Gramophone. Hear Say Yes in Joyce" (1998) and "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" (2001).

interpretation" (*Ibid*). For Derrida this affirmation is crucial in interpreting the world

because it "determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of the center" (*Ibid*). And I

think it is the act of translation where "active interpretation" becomes most manifest.

Translation inadvertently discloses the "unlimited semiosis behind texts, inconsistencies

and fragmentary elements that reveal slippages of thought and belief, polysemous

language, and the play of words" (Tymoczko 2014: 46). In acknowledgment of "its

necessity as impossibility" (Derrida 2007: 197) the "player" (both the translator and the

reader) does not ask for a fixed meaning; he/she revels in the infinite plays the text

provides. And the "play of the trace" stands out in this infinitude. The always already

inscribed "others" within the text peek through/behind the signifier that is chosen among

many. Gentzler says that the "trace" "can never be presented" for "as one tries to stop its

movement and grasp it, it disseminates, separates, and continues to move on, crossing

over to another place" (2001: 160). As such the translated text supplements the original,

therefore rewrites it to be translated one more time in a different fashion, to supplement

the original *ad infinitum*. In this chain of continuous signification, the difference, or

rather the hierarchy between the author and the translator blurs.

Furthermore, translation is inherently a political act on account of its active

engagement with the "norms" of both the source and the receiving cultures. Analyzing

existing codes or norms or manifestations of power structures in translation, as well as

examining what is excluded and hidden in the translational process (Hermans 2007: 90)

reveal the ideological concerns at stake in the act of translation, which is usually defined

by the parameters of the socio-cultural context.[12] My analysis of Coleman Barks's "collaborative translations" as well as Elif Shafak's novel *The 40 Rules of Love / Aşk* (2009) is highly informed by such an approach. I contend that both figures metonymically represent Rumi in their translations, confirming Maria Tymoczko's thesis about translation being a metonymic transfer of meaning (1999: 41-61). Tymoczko argues that translation "constructs a source text, a literary tradition, a culture, and a people," for the receiving audience, "by picking parts, aspects, and attributes that will stand for wholes" (57). Both Barks and Shafak selectively translate Rumi for an audience that is barely knowledgeable in Sufism and the aspects they bring to the forefront are in agreement with the so-called universal Western values.

The dissertation consists of two parts. The first part, comprising the first two chapters, aims to trace the de-Islamization of Sufism in the Western world by means of a genealogy of Western perception(s) of Sufism. A close examination of discourses that shape, regulate and control the meaning and connotations Sufism has gained constitutes the core of this part. These discourses are significant as they authorize and constrain the ways in which Sufism is understood. The focus of this section is confined to European representations; it starts with the early modern impressions of travelers and captives to the Ottoman lands and ends with the more scholarly approach of the nineteenth-century Orientalists whose sources include the works of the former.

This part of the dissertation demonstrates that Western representations of Sufis(m) diachronically constitute clusters that are shaped for the most part by the dominant

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[12] Contextualization of translation inevitably invokes the issue of power which scholars like Niranjana Tejeswini and Eric Cheyfitz have compellingly examined in their studies. More and more scholars, specifically of gender and postcolonial studies, have employed poststructuralist criticism so as to discuss the power structures and the asymmetrical cultural exchanges involved in translation.

discourses about religion in general, hence about Christianity and Islam, as well as by impressions about Middle Eastern culture and peoples. Religion, as a historically constructed category that has been transformed through time (see Asad 1993), unavoidably framed the ways in which Westerners approach Islam, Muslims and Sufis. For instance, the Renaissance approach to religion, marked with Aristotelian valorization of practice over doctrine, is quite different from the post-Reformation reconceptualization of religion that is described and experienced in terms of belief. Accordingly, the focus in relevant texts shifted from Sufis as eccentric Islamic figures to Sufism as a belief system/philosophy.

The endurance of the images developed since the early modern period is hard to comprehend. Today, despite the efforts of scholars, Sufism, especially the philosophy of Rumi, is believed by many to be of non-Muslim origins and pantheistic in nature. Such de-Islamization did not happen overnight. A careful analysis of its history is required in order to fully comprehend the intricacies of contemporary perceptions of Sufism. The significance of this part for the dissertation lies, however, not only in the effect of analyzed discourses on the twentieth-century readings of Rumi that have been prevalent in the West. It will also help us to contextualize new forms of Sufism as experienced in the United States. Orientalists on their way to explain Sufism did create a new understanding of this specific phenomenon, which in turn began to be comprehended and lived according to the explanations provided by them. In other words, Orientalists once again have constructed an object that they set out to explain.

The first issue that needs to be addressed in this regard is the resilience of popular perceptions. Admittedly, the resistant nature of alterity discourses has been discussed in

numerous critical studies, especially ones on Orientalism. Ziauddin Sardar, for instance, indicates that "ways of thinking as well as pervasive images that were formulated in the Middle Ages have remained in the Western psyche and have been continuously drawn upon, reformulated and reworked into 'modern scholarship'" (1999: 77). Studies of Edward Said, Norman Daniels, and Raymond Schwab among many others have provided a multitude of examples of such reformulations but we still do not how this, now almost a given, resiliency is maintained.

Satisfactory answers to these questions are not easy. When the written word is involved, one immediately has to consider how every new text reflects and engages one way or the other with the extant literature on the subject in question. Therefore, it is impossible to trace any sort of intertextuality, but nonetheless certain conceptualizations utilized by scholars of literature provide useful tools to understand the transmission of images and representations. Edward Said, for instance, employs a distinction he borrowed from Freud between the "latent" and "manifest" forms so as to reveal the multi-layered structure of Orientalism. According to Said, while "manifest Orientalism" includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking, latent Orientalism, which is static, unanimous and essential, embodies the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is (2006: 222). To put it simply, latent Orientalism constitutes the foundation of manifest Orientalism displaying its cumulative feature.

A concept comparable to the interactive relation between manifest and latent Orientalism is suggested by Nina Berman with the metaphor of palimpsest which she utilized in her endeavor to examine "the archive of German images about the Middle

East" (2011: 16). The palimpsest, which as a metaphor has already shown its efficiency in analyses of historical fiction, perfectly demonstrates the inevitable effect of previous layers of "writing" on the current reading of any historical material. The consequent interaction of layers of "writing" engenders meanings that are beyond the intentions of any writer.

In my analysis I also utilize palimpsest as a conceptual tool to comprehend the intricate relationship between diverse readings of Sufis. The West never ceases to produce knowledge about Islam and Sufis, but the previous images or information that are imprinted in cultural memory are never totally erased off; from time to time they become legible affecting the current reading. Of course, it is not only almost impossible to trace each and every reference or allusion to Sufism or Rumi, it is a futile attempt as well. For this reason, I make use of texts that have resonated beyond their cultural milieux, or sticking to the metaphor, the most legible lines in the palimpsest. The accounts of Thomas Herbert and Jean Chardin, for instance, not only informed their contemporaries but also continued to provide "valuable" information for respected Orientalists such as Sir William Jones and F. A. G. Tholuck. Similarly, the theories put forth by Jones and Tholuck regarding Sufism, about its purported, non-Muslim origins and its pantheistic nature, are still legible despite the attempted refutations by scholars such as A. J. Arberry, Carl Ernst, and William Chittick.

The palimpsest I am employing in this part consists of four main layers: (1) the early modern one, which establishes dervishes to be hypocrites; (2) the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century layer attributing foreign origins to Sufism. (3) and (4), which were written almost immediately after the second layer, ascribe pantheism and in

relation to that, Aryan origins to Sufism. The history of Sufism in the West demonstrates how none of the layers lose their legibility despite studies arguing otherwise.

Having exposed the de-Islamization process of Sufism in the West, I move onto the third chapter of the dissertation, which specifically deals with one of the contemporary representations of Rumi. The central issue at stake in this part regards translation, specifically Coleman Barks's renderings of the poetry of Rumi, which have acquainted a much wider audience with Rumi.

Before Barks came into the scene, the intricacies of Sufi ideas, and particularly those of Rumi, were introduced to Western readers through two different strains in the twentieth century: scholarly translations of Rumi's poetry by R. A. Nicholson and A.J. Arberry that have become highly influential in the field of Rumi studies but are mostly limited to academic circles[13] and the popular movements and spiritual practices that are designated generally as New Age spirituality. With regard to the latter, the works of a number of modern advocates of the Perennial Philosophy, including René Guénon (d. 1951), Louis Massignon (d. 1962), Titus Burckhardt (d. 1984) and Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998) became influential albeit only to a certain extent. They introduced a specific interpretation of Sufism to a wider audience with a more popular appeal. They were all familiar with the works of Rumi but did not actually attribute special importance to his thoughts, yet their interpretation of Sufism affected the way Rumi would be read by later spiritual seekers. Also, as importantly, they were, for the most part, more active, hence instrumental in dissemination of Sufism, in Europe. As influential as the Perennialists

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[13] Nicholson's extensive study, which was published in eight volumes between 1925 and 1940, is the first critical Persian edition and the first full translation into English. The translations of Arberry and Nicholson, in fact, deserve to be examined in detail on their own. I believe "translator's alter ego as historiographer" (Niranjana, 1992) is more apparent in their translations.

were figures such as George I. Gurdjieff (d. 1949) and his leading disciple, P. D. Ouspensky, who helped spread the *sama* to a Western audience, whether or not that audience was conscious of its origins (Lewis: 514). Contemporaneous with Gurdjieff, Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927) founded the Sufi Order of the West, now the Sufi Order International, leadership of which has passed on to his grandson Zia Inayat Khan from his son, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan (d. 2004). While Hazrat Khan triggered the emergence of popular forms of Sufism in the US, Idris Shah gave mass-market appeal to Sufism in the UK at a time when many young Westerners turned to Eastern philosophy and religion (particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, and only to a lesser extent to Sufism) (Lewis: 516).

As regards the translations of Rumi's works into Western languages, one can definitely detect an increasing number of translations, specifically since the late 1940s, but none of these translations has enjoyed the popularity of Coleman Barks's series of translations from Rumi's corpus. The "New Ageization" of Rumi, also, had not occurred at a significant level until the translations by Barks (and Deepak Chopra) drew the attention of a new generation of spiritual seekers. Barks's renderings accompany yoga sessions or help maid-of-honors to polish their toasts at weddings. Again, thanks to Barks's translations, Rumi has become the best-selling poet in the United States.[14] In short, many English-speaking people get to know Rumi through Barks's refractions.

Analyzing Barks's representation of Rumi is significant on various levels. First of all, even though Barks's translations are not as "thick" as those of Nicholson and

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[14] In 1994 *Publishers Weekly* and in November 1997 the *Christian Science Monitor* proclaimed Rumi to be the best-selling poet in the United States. Barks owes his popularity, more than anything, to *The Essential Rumi*, which was first published in 1995 and sold 110,000 copies in three years.

Arberry, the paratextual matter that Barks provides, nonetheless, creates an image of Rumi that overlaps, to a certain extent, with a specific reading of Rumi that is highly informed by New Age religiosity as conceptualized in the United States context. This individualistic and hybrid form of religiosity[15] without a creed, dogma, sacred book or prescribed forms of rituals, feeds exponentially from a great range of religious beliefs and practices, enabling the seekers to create personal yet somehow supposedly universal sensibilities that are marked by spirituality.

Like all translators (or readers for that matter) Barks is embedded in discourses, that govern, structure and mold his work. The underlying ideological framework of his translations, I believe, can be discussed by analyzing the unique engagement of these discourses that can be gleaned from his translations as well as from the paratextual matter. The long history of the perception of Sufism in the Western world as outlined in the first two chapters exposes how Sufism came to be understood as an extra-Islamic tradition from the Islamic world. Barks's representation of Rumi in translations as well as in interviews, introductions, and prefaces to his books and personal statements inevitably engages with this history but additionally implants Rumi within the discourse of post-institutional "New Age religiosity," which liberally accommodates diverse religious, ethical, spiritual and mystical traditions and, at the same time, by virtue of its inclusivity and the potential validity for everyone, claims to be universal. Once a religion or belief system enters the realm of this religiosity, it is modified and transformed so as to make it more accessible for spiritual seekers who, for the most part, are disillusioned with institutional religions. For Rumi to become a part of this tradition he has to be taken out

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[15] Robert Bellah labels the extreme privatization and personalization of religion as "Sheilaism" after a respondent he met by the name Sheila who claimed to have her own personal religion (King 1999: 12).

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of his Islamic context. He had already been de-Islamized to a certain degree but did not get into the New Age canon until Coleman Barks's renditions came to the fore. I contend that Barks's success in making Rumi such a "harmless" mainstream figure partly lies in his "Americanization." Barks has kept up the de-Islamization tradition, but not through an appeal to history. He utilizes a form of license endowed by the act of translation, through which he produces "valid poems in American English" (Lewis 2008: 590).[16] The "Americanization" is not limited to stylistic issues; the "content" is appropriated as well, revealing its universal message through de-contextualizing and de-Islamizing the text. This method, as can be expected, enhances the role of the translator as a re-enunciator and discursive subject in the text. Barks gives a new voice to poems by a historical figure, supplements and recreates the originals, intervenes in them, and in so doing, establishes a subject-position.

One of the aims in this chapter is to interrogate Barks's positionality in relation to his translation strategies. Yet I should note at the onset that linguistic analysis is not of primary concern here. In this section rather than focusing on issues of fidelity or betrayal in the translational process, I examine acts of mediation, representation and the discourses with which these refractions engage. One of the main issues regards examining what is excluded and hidden in the translational process and, more importantly, to what effect. The main questions that will be explored in this part are as follows: in what context, how, for whom and with what effect does Barks translate Rumi?

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[16] Because Barks cannot read Persian, he works from "literal, scholarly transcriptions" of the poems, which he either receives from his Persian-speaking friend John Moyne, a professor emeritus of linguistics, or from scholarly translations such as those of Nicholson and Arberry, who are not given credit on the cover of the book.

What are the converging points of the New Age Rumi and Barks's Rumi? To what extent do they feed on each other?

The last chapter of the dissertation deals with the representation of Rumi as an exemplary Muslim in Elif Shafak's best-selling novel *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi* (*Aşk* [Love] in Turkish; 2009). As mentioned above, Sufism and, in particular Rumi, has been positioned vis-à-vis fundamentalist Islam yet I suggest that the canonization of Rumi as the exemplary Muslim has been processed through the lens of New Age religiosity.

Shafak's novel, which she first wrote in English and then edited the Turkish translation, interweaves two parallel but historically and geographically remote stories of self-realization-via-love. The novel was a huge success in Turkey, re-popularizing not only Rumi but also Shams to the point that even though the Forty Rules that gives the book its title is a fictional attribution of Shafak to Shams, many people have taken it for real and began to quote these rules on social media as if stated by Shams.[17]

The importance of the book, in addition to its impact on popular readings of Rumi in Turkey,[18] lies in its depiction of Rumi as the good Muslim as portrayed by a discourse which Barks, among others, contributes. In this chapter, I analyze the congruency of Shafak's portrayal of Sufi way of life, which both Aziz and Rumi as characters in the book endeavor to embody, with that of New Age religiosity. I particularly aim to analyze

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[17] A wandering mystic from Tabriz in north-Western Persia. Shams means "sun" in Arabic. His name Shams al-Din Tabrizi means "the Sun of Faith/Religion from Tabriz." What Shams left behind is a body of notes taken down by Rumi's disciples from his lectures. They were never widely disseminated or published. Some manuscripts of these discourses of Shams are entitled *Kalemat* (Sayings) or *Ma'aref* (Gnostic Wisdom) of Shams. By scholarly convention these notes are now generally referred to as the *Maqalat-e Shams Tabrizi* (Discourses of Shams Tabrizi). (Lewis: 135)

[18] As the history of the reception and various representations of Rumi indicate, Rumi and to a lesser degree, Shams wer figures already circulating within various discourses but no other literary figure has managed to make Rumi in Turkey such a mainstream figure as Shafak did.

Shafak's work as a form of cultural translation.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to a hitherto neglected aspect of Rumi studies in addition to cultural and translation studies in general. A thorough research on the contested field of Rumi, I believe, will cast a light on the convoluted mechanism of politics of representation in literature and translation. Some remarks are now in order about Sufism, as well as Rumi himself, so as to provide a historical context for this discussion.

<u>Sufism</u>

Jalal al-Din Rumi is widely known as a quintessential Sufi, but due to Sufism's pluralistic, divergent and protean history, the connotations the word "Sufi" prompts differ variously across time and cultures. As a term, "Sufism" is coined at the end of the eighteenth century, probably as a counterpart of the Arabic term *al-tasawwuf*, which very broadly refers to an experiential exploration of "Truth" (*al-Haqq*) within Islam, itself being a contested field of praxis and belief since the earliest times.[19]

Admittedly, Sufism is more than that, but no definition can actually cover the exact sense of the term because, as modern studies on Sufism indicate, no single, monolithic, homogenous doctrine or philosophy of Sufism exists. Any interpretation of *tasawwuf* is context-bound to the extent that some of them even contradict each other. Ahmet Karamustafa argues that despite the increasing imposition of essentialism and

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[19] In his article "Islam: A Civilizational Project in Progress?" (2003), Ahmet Karamustafa underlines that inevitable contestedness by suggesting to understand Islam as a civilizational tradition, in which Islam emerges as "a dynamic, evolving phenomenon, one that cannot be reified or fixed in any way" (109). For further discussion on this issue, see Shahab Ahmed's *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2015).

universalism on mystical and spiritual dimensions of any religion, "the exact content and meaning of such dimensions should not be conceived as unchanging essences; instead, the mystical and the spiritual need to be discovered, described and analyzed in particular contexts" (2007: vii). It is not, however, the intention of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive contextualization of the history of Sufism; this job has been performed in many superior studies.[20]

Sufism, which is traditionally defined as the "mystical dimension of Islam" (Schimmel 1977: 1), or "the religious philosophy of Islam" (Nicholson 2009: 1), is believed to have emerged from within renunciatory modes of piety (*zuhd*) that were prevalent in Baghdad and Basra in late eighth century onwards.[21] In the course of the initial phase of the "movement," the focus of Sufi life was the *khanaqah*,[22] or small residential center that evolved around *murshid*s or *shaykh*s (Sufi masters) who developed unique methods of spiritual pedagogy and training.[23] During this period with the increasing attention given to "the cultivation of the inner life," there emerged new

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[20] See Ahmet Karamustafa *Sufism: The Formative Period* (2007), William Chittick *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (2000), A. J. Arberry *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (1950), Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1977), Carl Ernst *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (1985), Hamid Algar's *Sufism: Principles and Practice* (1998), and *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* edited by Llyod Ridgeon (2014).

[21] During the first century of Abbasid rule, renunciation was a widespread form of piety in Muslim communities. Due to lack of documentation the earliest mystical approaches that appeared in the eighth century remain largely obscure but, nonetheless, scholars generally point at Hasan al-Basri (d. 728) and his circle as the progenitors of Islamic mysticism due to the stress he made on the notion of ascetic piety (*zuhd*). It is highly improbable to talk about the existence of a unified, coherent movement; renunciants (*zahid*) and pietists (*abid, nasik*) of this period were believed to be disparate and heterogeneous in nature. (Karamustafa 2007: 1).

[22] Known under various names such as *khaneqah* (among eastern Iranians), *zavie* (cloister or shrine), *rebat* (mostly in the Arabic speaking world), or *takye* (a support for the poor, or religious institution; a Persian word mostly used however among Turks, where it is pronounced *tekke* along the Muslim world, the Sufi lodge accommodates the sheikh and his family, together with traveling Sufis or disciples. It usually also has a library for religious and mystical literature, as well as room(s) for lectures, worship, and devotions (Lewis 2008: 27).

[23] The roles played by shaykhs within their communities evolved from 'master of instruction' (*shaykh al-ta'lim*) to 'master of training' (*shaykh al-tarbiya*) (Karamustafa 2007: 116).

discourses on spiritual states, stages of spiritual development, closeness to God, and divine love.[24] Many believed that the ultimate goal for a mystic would be the perfect *tawhid*, that is, the existential confession that God is One. In order to attain this understanding the adept has to enter the mystical path, that is, the *tariqa*, which spans various mystical stages (*ahwal*) and spiritual stations (*maqam*). The adept who truly repents upon entry to the path leads through these stations reaching gnosis (*ma'rifa*), ultimately leading to *fana*, annihilation in God and the realization that only God truly exists.

The characteristic features of the formative period include fusions, mergers, and mainstreaming in which Sufis operated. Initially only a few renunciant mystics were known as "Sufis."[25] By the second half of the ninth century, the disparate, heterogeneous mystics and the small communities formed around them blended with similar elements of religiosity to form a distinct type of piety (Karamustafa 2007: 5). Although the "original" Sufis constituted a specific portion of the new synthesis of mysticisms, the members of

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[24] Mojaddedi notes that among the concepts introduced *walaya*, or "friendship with God," in particular, constitutes the "basis of mysticism in Islamic context" (2012: 5). Also, with what is now called the "inward turn," some prominent renunciants and pietists "began to direct their energies increasingly to the cultivation of the inner life" (Karamustafa 2007: 2). This shift led to "a clear emphasis on 'knowledge of the interior' ('*ilm al-batin*) acquired through ardent examination and training of the human soul" (*Ibid*). For instance, while the first female mystic Rabi'a (d. 801) brought to the fore the idea of sincere love (*muhabba*) of God, Shaqiq al-Balkhi (d. 810) argued for *tawakkul*, the mystic state of abandonment into God's will and is believed to have described the various stages of worship. Another significant contribution was made by the Egyptian Dhu al-Nun (d. 860) through his conceptualization of *ma'rifa*, mystical intuitive knowledge. Again the idea of divine light, from which derives the luminous spirit of prophet Muhammad, and the virtue of *dhikr*, that is, the constant recollection of God, were introduced into the Sufi discourse in the ninth century.

[25] The etymology of the word "Sufi" itself had been a subject of debate, since, at least, the 10th century. The word *Sufi* was first coined as early as the 8th century to refer to some renunciants and pietists who wore wool as opposed to other renunciants and the majority of Muslims who wore linen and cotton. … "However, the words *zahid*, *nasik*, and '*abide* continued to be the primary signifiers of renunciation. (Karamustafa 2007: 7) In the eighth century the term *Sufi* designated several different social types, or, more properly, "it was the name of a particular orientation towards piety marked by the socially unconventional, and thus remarkable, habit of donning woolen garments". From the middle of the ninth century, the term *Sufi* came to be used increasingly as a technical term to designate a group of people who belonged to a clearly identifiable social movement in Baghdad that was based on a distinct type of piety.

this Baghdad-centered movement came to be known as *sufis* and the new movement itself was given the name *sufiyya* (*Ibid*).

Also concurrent with the Baghdad-centered mystical currents, mystics in Khurasan (north-eastern Iran) and Central Asia developed their own mystical approaches — though not born out of renunciation— among artisan and merchant classes. During the tenth century, due to reasons that will not be discussed here, they blended with the Baghdad mystics, and in time, like them, they too came to be identified as Sufis (*Ibid*: 1). The third merger occurred by means of a deliberate process of standardization and systematization of mystical ideas in tenth and eleventh century. Whether produced by scholar-Sufis or traditionalist, a surge of literary production on Sufis and Sufism occurred which helped to "draw normative boundaries around 'true Sufism' in order to differentiate it from 'fake', 'false', or simply 'misguided' mystical movements" (*Ibid*). Usually written as "accessible introductions," Mojaddedi argues, such endeavors most of the time stresses "Sufism's compatibility with the juridico-theological Islamic system that was consolidating its dominance at the time they were written" (2012: 5).[26] Just as the merger between the mysticisms of Khurasan and Baghdad engendered a new synthesis, the

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[26] One of the misconceptions about Sufism regards the presumed hostility between *tariqa* and *sharia*. Anne Marie Schimmel in her elaborate explanation puts emphasis on the dependency of *tariqa* to the *sharia*, which is defined as the main road from which paths branch out (1977: 98). The differentiation results from the Sufis' thirst to go beyond orthodox law and orthopraxy without devalorizing the *sharia*. They argue to interpret not only the content but also the spirit of the Qur'an. Jamal Malik notes that "mysticism can be considered as the internal (*batin*) view of Islam, focused on the latent mystery of the Qur'an. And since the experience is acknowledged as an inspiration of divine perspective, Sufis consider the law (*shari'a*) and the path (*tariqa*) not necessarily as opposites but necessary complementaries" (Malik 2008: 3). Despite the respect Sufis displayed towards *sharia*, some members of the *ulama* regarded the Sufi way of interpreting the Quran and the relationship they were trying to nurture with God unacceptable, if not heretical. The disagreements between the *ulama* and the Sufis lessened significantly around the tenth century.

engagement of the *ulama* with Sufi teachings and practices further elaborated the movement.[27]

Lastly, the dissemination of the Sufi mode of piety was further precipitated by the confluence of the rise of popular sainthood with Sufi sainthood. Though both concepts of sainthood take granted the closeness of the saint (*awliya*) to God, the popular understanding of sainthood mostly focuses on the supposed intermediary function of the saint. Furthermore, the saints venerated by the common masses were not necessarily identical with the ones deemed *awliya* by the Sufis (Karamustafa 2007: 131), which led to discontent on the part of Sufis and scholars alike. Nonetheless the saint cults flourished from the twelfth century onwards regardless of any condemnation (*Ibid*).

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, more explicitly defined devotional paths were developed as "ways" to be followed (Trimingham). First in the form of mystical groups (*taifa*) then in the form of orders (*tariqa*, pl. *turuq*) the initially loose mystical circles gained distinguishing identities.[28] In this phase, the position of the sheikh was further refined and his moral authority was further enhanced by means of appealing to words attributed to God (*hadith qudsi*).[29] The sheikh regulates all the activities of his disciples, paying utmost attention to correct etiquette (*adab*). The spiritual chain (*silsila*) became a conventional device to affiliate the sheikh to one of the first four caliphs,

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[27] "Marriage of scholarly and mystical modes of piety" was theorized by scholar-Sufis like Qushayri (d. 1072), Hujwiri (d. *ca*. 1071), Farmadhi (d. 1055) and Ahmad Ghazali (d. 1123 (Karamustafa 2007: 174). Also, as an alternative to the "academically tendered Sufism" another vein of Sufism continued to develop within more traditional circles hailed by Sufis such as Makki (d. 996), Abu Mansur (d. 1027) and Ansari (d. 1089). For further info on this subject, see Karamustafa *Sufism: The Formative Period* (2007).
[28] Most of the orders are named after their founders (such as Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya) but also toponyms of connotation (Kubrawiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Chishtiyya, etc.) were deployed as well.
[29] As distinguished from words of the Prophet (*hadith nabawi*).

specifically to Ali.[30] Through the deputies and successors (*khalifas*), as well as the followers and students (*murids*) of the sheikh a continuous uninterrupted chain of succession was guaranteed (Malik 2008: 5).

Through the orders, Sufism became much more widely known and practiced throughout different levels of society. In a few centuries what had started as an urbanite ascetic movement among the renunciants and pietists of Iraq evolved into an extremely elaborate and sophisticated "way of life." Through its fusion with various mystical currents as well as with what is defined as "orthodox Islam" and with popular religiosity, Sufism gradually spread to all social strata, became socially more mainstream and acquired widespread popularity. Distinctive rituals of initiation and special practices were adopted among different orders that follow distinct lineages. Therefore, by the time of Rumi's birth a visible Sufi identity, demarcated by public appearance, place of residence, distinct daily routines and specific rituals had already been delineated (Karamustafa: 175).

Rumi

Born in Balkh, part of greater Khurasan in today's Afghanistan, Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi migrated to Konya with his father Baha al-Din Walad who was one of the prominent preachers, jurisprudents, and Sufis of the times. In Konya, Baha Walad was

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[30] With the "invention" of the notion of "spiritual lineage", that is, the idea that those "who studied under a particle master shared a common spiritual heritage in the form of the master's unique 'path' or 'method' (*tariq* or *tariqa*)" were connected with one another, even across time and space, into a far-flung spiritual family. Muhammad is actually the first link in the spiritual chain of Sufism, and his ascension through the heavens into the divine presence became the prototype of the mystic's spiritual ascension into the intimate presence of God. According to the tradition, esoteric wisdom was transmitted from Muhammad to his cousin and son-in-law Ali, the fourth of the righteous caliphs (d. 661). Other members of his family and his friends, according to legend, were endowed with mystical insight or pursued mystical practices.

appointed by the Seljuk ruler ʿAla ad-Din Kayqubad (r. 1219-36) as teacher and preacher to one of the *madrasa*s.[31] Soon after Baha Walad's death, Rumi, who by then gained a reputation as an authority in the exoteric sciences, was asked to assume his father's duties as a preacher and jurisprudent.

Although Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi lived the first phase of his life as a respected theologian and jurist, he was well versed in the works of eminent Sufis including the Persian mystic poets Farid ud-Din Attar (d. 1193) and Sanai (d. 1130) and the great theosopher Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240). He was, in fact, formally trained in Sufism under Borhan al-Din Tirmidhi, a high-ranking disciple of Rumi's father. And yet, his supposedly "latent" Sufi inclinations came to the fore after his encounter with the profound mystic Shams al-Din Tabrizi. As noted by Chittick, Shams Tabrizi's influence upon Rumi was decisive, for outwardly he was transformed from a sober jurisprudent to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love (1983: 3). Shams probably guided him to the realization of certain stations of perfection to which Rumi had not already gained access.

Rumi was immediately drawn to Shams and welcomed him to his house as his master, a surprise to his own students. Despite the accusations of some of the students, Rumi considered Shams to be the most complete manifestation of God. Their companionship got interrupted after a year and a half when Shams left Konya. Annemarie Schimmel argues that this disappearance initiated Rumi's transformation into a mystical

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[31] As the Mongols advanced Westernwards, Anatolia became an increasingly attractive destination for the inhabitants of central parts of the Middle East who wished to flee. A number of important Sufis and influential scholars chose this option. The Seljuk sultans welcomed the famous scholars and mystics from Turkestan and Iran, fleeing before the Mongol invasion. Thus the Seljuk cities such as Konya, Kayseri, Aksaray or Sivas became the centers of mystical thought in the Islamic world.

poet. Shams came back after a while due to Rumi's appeals, but shortly thereafter, he once more vanished in 1247, never to be seen again. According to general belief and some reports, Shams was murdered by some of the jealous and resented disciples of Rumi who feared that their highly respected master was risking his reputation by accompanying with someone so unworthy in their eyes.

Upon the disappearance of Shams, Rumi remained in Konya but discontinued teaching or preaching for the general public. He decided to devote his attention to the training of Sufi initiates and most important of all expressing his philosophy through mystical poetry. Rumi left, in addition to three collections of his talks and letters, two extensive compilations of poems, namely the *Divan* which bears the name of Shams, and his masterpiece, the *Masnavi*, which he completed soon before his death in 1273. The multi-layered poems have been read in numerous ways which, partly due to the fact that "in all of Rumi's poetry, [...] the outward form is but a veil over the inward meaning" (Chittick 1983: 4).

Shortly after Rumi's death, his works, especially his *Masnavi* became known all over the Muslim world (Schimmel 1977: 324). Rumi's heritage was not limited to his works though; he also elaborated the Mevlevi *sama* (literally hearing, listening), which is composed of two controversial acts in the eyes of Islam, that is, listening to music and dancing.[32] It is believed that Rumi recognized *sama* as one of the most effective means to attain mystic ecstasy, when the Sufi gets closest to God.[33]

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[32] Although the Mevlevi order is the only order in which this whirling movement has been institutionalized, the *sama* has actually been practiced throughout the world of Islam from early times (Schimmel 1977: 179).

[33] Rumi is intimately involved with *sama* on a regular basis. Carl Ernst notes that in Rumi's time their gatherings were less structured events, with food and drink served along with the music, and the musicians

Soon after his death, Rumi's son Sultan Walad established the Mevlevi order which gained its institutionalized form in the fifteenth century when the *tariqas* in general become highly developed hierarchical associations. The order spread Rumi's word and music through the just-emerging Ottoman Empire. The center of the order was always the "Seat of the Pir" in Konya, a central lodge consisting of dervishes' cells built around the mausoleum containing Rumi's tomb. Soon many smaller *tekke*s (lodge) were established all over the Ottoman lands, including Egypt and Syria. The leader was called by the honorific titles Molla Hunkar and Chelebi who, since the fourteenth century, had been chosen from Mevlana Rumi's descendents.

The Mevlevi order, like other Sufi orders in general, had become a significant actor in the social, political and economic networks, specifically after the sixteenth century but it was at the same exceptional in certain aspects. Its exceptionality lies in the relationship it nurtured with the Ottoman court; several *chelebi*s were given the privilege to gird the Sultan with the sword during the coronation ceremony. Numerous studies mention that Ottoman sultans such as Selim III (r. 1789-1809) and Abdulaziz (r. 1861-76), many high-ranking statesmen including viziers and *sadrazam*s such as Fuad Pasha (d. 1869) were quite sympathetic towards the order, if not followers of it. Not only the statesmen but also many court poets such as Nef'i (d. 1635), and Nabi (d. 1712), musicians such as Itri (d. 1712) and Dede Efendi (d. 1897), as well as calligraphers and miniaturists were known to be Mevlevis.

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were professionals rather than dervishes. As the order developed, a formal performance structure developed, in which the Persian poetry of Rumi was put to music along with poems in praise of the Prophet and Qur'anic recitations. The *sama* ceremony attained its present form by the seventeenth century (Ernst 1997: 192). Contrary to today's perception, however, the Sufi can undertake *sama* only after he has attained a certain state of mystic development following years of spiritual poverty, fasting, retreats and such (Lewis 2008: 28).

The fate of the Mevlevi order, however, would be decided by actors outside its ranks. With the nineteenth-century reform movement of the Ottoman Empire, the hitherto fiscally and administratively autonomous Sufi orders became, by and large, answerable to committees established and controlled by the central government. These committees passed regulative ordinances with which Ottoman Sufi orders had to comply, resulting in the gradual evaporation of their institutional and economic independence.[34] The final blow came soon after the establishment of the Republic and the forceful closure of all orders, including that of the Mevlevis.[35] After the 1925 Kurdish rebellion led by Sheikh Said, it was made clear that in such an age, corrupt, superstitious and truly anti-Islamic organizations could not be tolerated.[36] Soon the negative image had intensified at an

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[34] One of the factors that prompted the state to regulate the Sufi orders had largely to do with the harsh criticisms directed against the Sufi orders not only by the *ulama* but also by the "modernist" Islamists and "positivist" intellectuals who deemed Sufi lodges to be nests of superstition, sloth, corruption and idolatry. There have, in fact, always been disagreements, at best, between some Sufi orders and certain segment of the *ulama* largely due to the common misconception regarding Sufis' attitude toward *sharia* and orthodoxy but the significance of the nineteenth-century attack lies in the fusion of criticisms from these various sources. Long story short by the second half of the nineteenth century, it was decided that the Sufi orders need to be reformed by means of rational structuring and control. For more info on this issue see Mustafa Kara's *Turk Tasavvuf Tarihi Arastirmalari* and Brian Silverstein's *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, which have provided detailed accounts about the extent of the impact of the reforms on Sufi orders.

[35] The whole premise of the Republican reforms was based on the exclusive power of the state over its citizens. Any other source that could potentially challenge the state by creating alternative loyalties was discarded. The deep-rooted Sufi orders, however, have been significant actors in the social, political, and economic networks at least since the sixteenth century (Ismail Kara 2005: 547). Ataturk himself was well aware of the function of Sufi orders and was on quite friendly terms with many Sufi leaders during the War of Independence. In 1919 he asked for their support in his venture against the Allied Forces. In 1919 on his way to Ankara he paid a visit to the central lodge of the Bektashis at Hacibektaş in order to seek the support of Bektashi sheikhs. In Ankara he visited the tomb of Haci Bayram Veli, another prominent Sufi sheikh (Soileau: 245). In another instance he visited the tomb of Mevlana Rumi. Furthermore, there were numerous Sufi affiliated representatives such as Mevlevis, Halvetis, Bektashis, and Naqshibandis at the first national assembly. However, by 1925 Ataturk not only criticized them for cultivating associations and sensibilities that the Republic not only deemed antagonistic to the ideals of "civilization," progress, and science but also considered as rival.

[36] Atatürk, himself, reveals the presumed antagonism between Sufism and progress in his famous *Nutuk*: The object of revolution … is to give the citizens of the Republic a social organization completely modern and progressive in every sense. It is imperative for us to discard every thought that does not fall in line with this true principle. All absurd superstitions and prejudices must be rooted out of our minds and customs. It is shameful for a civilized nation to expect help from the dead. Let the worthy occupants of … tombs rest in the happiness which they have found in a religious life. I can never tolerate the existence, in the bosom of a

unprecedented level in modern Turkey so much so that Sufism and religious orders simply became a target of contemporary Turkish thought (Ismail Kara 2005: 545).[37] Today, while Sufi orders are still technically illegal, most of the restrictions are not enforced.

Even though the Mevlevi order did not remain outside the effect of anti-Sufi invectives and the official edicts and laws, in time, thanks to the cultural significance of Mevlana, it has come to occupy a somewhat privileged position among Sufi orders and enjoyed a few exemptions: in 1927 the tomb of Mevlana in Konya was converted into a state-run museum, and in 1954 Mevlevis were permitted to perform once year in Konya during the Mevlana festival on December 17, (anniversary of Mevlana's death). By the 1970s, because Mevlevis had become mainly tourist attractions and representatives of "Muslim yet modern" Turkey, they were permitted to travel to the West. Today, one can see whirling dervishes not only in Mevlevi-related occasions but also at shopping centers,

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civilized Turkish society, of those primitive-minded men who seek material or moral well-being under the guidance of a sheikh, possibly blind and hostile to the clear light of modern science and art. Comrades, gentlemen, fellow countrymen! You well know that the Republic of Turkey can never be a country of dervishes and sheikhs, their disciples [and deranged people]. The only true congregation [order] is that of the great international confraternity of civilization. To be a real man it is necessary to do what civilization commands. The leaders of the *tekkes* will comprehend this truth, which will lead them voluntarily to close those institutions as having already fulfilled their destiny. (Gettleman & Schaar: 124)

[37] While modernist Islamists opposed Sufi orders for degenerating Islam, non-Islamists focused on the evils of Sufism and even mysticism in general, by portraying Sufi lodges as "nests of sloth" responsible for keeping the masses ignorant, bigot and indolent. These ideas, however, had already been expressed by the same figures even before the War of Independence. The difference between the pre-Republic and post-Republic defamations regards the conceptualization of Islam. In the pre-Republican ones, modernist intellectuals claim that these orders harm first and foremost Islam, which is based on reason and morals. Whereas in the Republican era Islam had lost its importance and visibility, and the focus of the vilifications shifted towards the incompatibility of the orders with higher "civilization." Today, the anti-Sufi sentiment is still quite alive, specifically among the secularists. In 1996, Necmettin Erbakan's, the Islamist prime minister of the period, instigated an uproar among the secularists when he hosted a Ramadan dinner (*iftar*) for the sheikhs of prominent Sufi orders at the official residency of the ministry. That specific dinner was later used as evidence of anti-secularist and Islamist agenda of Erbakan's *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party) both when the coalition government of Erbakan was forced out of power by the Turkish military in 1997 and also in the 1998 case at the Constitutional Court of Turkey against Welfare Party that resulted in its ban from politics.

commercials, and pop-music clips.[38]

Like the order founded after him, Mevlana occupies a unique position in the Turkish cultural arena. His representations are inevitably affected by the changing status of Sufi orders but this effect is based on a negative differentiation, meaning that even though Mevlana was a Sufi and has effectively founded the much-appreciated Mevlevi order, he is juxtaposed, throughout modern Turkish cultural history against the vast majority of other Sufi figures. In other words, the whole discourse on Mevlana is shaped around his exceptionality.

Very few cultural figures have enjoyed the attention Mevlana has garnered. Even though there is no consensus on the nature of his worth, almost everyone agrees on his greatness. Depending on the lens of the representer he could be hailed as the great humanist poet/philosopher who is above and beyond any religion or dogma,[39] or the great

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[38] The exceptionality becomes also apparent in semantics: In Turkish, "Sufism" is synonymous with *tasavvuf*, and by definition includes all Sufi *tarikat*s, that is, Sufi orders, but the word "Sufism" in Turkey seems to refer, especially in the last 20-30 years, exclusively to the Mevlevi order while *tarikat* is reserved for other orders such as the Nakshibendis. This has to do with the pejorative sense the word *tarikat* has gained in Turkish that can be understood with reference to a specific form of Islamophobia that has existed in Turkey almost since the proclamation of the Republic.

[39] Turkish/Anatolian Humanists regarded Mevlana's "humanism" as the most important characteristic of his poetry. They promoted Mevlana's alleged supra-Islamic message regarding the sacredness of human beings and the brotherhood of all people. They were extremely influential in the transformation of Mevlana into an almost secular cultural icon. Even though the authority of Anatolian humanists in the state-dominated cultural sphere waned with the ascent of Democratic Party in 1950 their cultural legacy is embraced till this day. The ascribed humanism (*humanizm*, *humanizma*) is significant because it enabled them to analyze Rumi's poetry independent from the Islamic and Sufi tradition. In other words, by being identified as humanist, he was transplanted into another "interpretive framework" that stands out with its non-religious character. I do not mean to suggest that Rumi's poetry does not talk about tolerance, sacredness of human beings, peace, love, and brotherhood that are usually associated with humanism. On the contrary, they are quite central, specifically the concepts of love and tolerance, but they were employed and interpreted in a different framework. Therefore, I agree with Soileau on the ahistorical nature of the imposition to label Rumi as humanist which as a concept has organically evolved out of European history.

"Turkish"[40] sage influential in the Islamization of Anatolian Turks.[41] Today's popular

reading of Mevlana is a medley of diverse readings.

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[40] The supposed Turkishness of Rumi still constitutes a topic of debate. In fact, all early Republican literature on Mevlana without an exception focused on his ethnicity. Until the early 1990s it had continued to be discussed at the national and international Mevlana conferences held in Konya as well as the official conferences of the Turkish History Association. It is claimed that by virtue of being from Khorasan, Mevlana must be ethnically Turkish, just like Avicenna and Omar Khayyam who simply had to write in Persian, the *lingua franca* of the time. As supporting evidence, they referred to the verses of Mevlana which reads "Don't take me for a stranger; I am from this district / I am searching for my own house in your lane. / I am not an enemy, even if I appear like an enemy; / Although I speak Hindi, my origin is Turkish." The extent of Turkification efforts went as far as discussing the ethnicity of Rumi's second wife Kera. It is generally accepted that Kera was a Greek orthodox who converted to Islam but in his introduction to the translation of Eflaki's *Ariflerin Menkibesi* Tahsin Yazıcı makes up a Turkish origin explanation for her name, suggesting that Kera was not Greek at all. Among the commentators on Mevlana, only Asaf Halet Çelebi mentions the futility of discussing the ethnicity of Rumi.

[41] This claim was, in fact, voiced by Atatürk at one of his famed parties when some of the guests attempted to hinder the burgeoning carrer of Hasan Ali Yücel, one of the promising young bureaucrats of the time, by disclosing the Mevlevi affiliations of Yücel. Atatürk surprised his guests by his positive reaction and initiated a "discussion" on Mevlana and the Mevlevis. After stating his appreciation for Mevlana, Atatürk asked his guests what "*Mevlevilik*" (Mevleviyya) was. Egeli notes that while some regarded this question as a chance to denounce the recently abolished Sufi orders, some others recounted "weird" (*tuhaf*) stories and anecdotes regarding the Mevlevi order. At last one of the guests said: "*Mevlevilik* is among the attempts that make religion seem ridiculous and degenerate Islam by introducing musical instruments into religious practice" (70). Atatürk's response to this specific comment was much harsher than anyone in that room had expected: "You fool! Don't speak about issues that your pitiful mind can't grasp. … To the contrary, Mevlana is a great reformer (*reformator*) who adapted Islam to the Turkish soul. Islam, as a matter of fact, is a modern and tolerant religion in the most expansive sense of the word. Arabs understood and practiced it according to their own nature. To make ablutions and to pray five times a day is an extremely progressive step for Bedouin Arabs (*Badiye Araplari*) who lived in a hot climate, scarcely found and used water, and spend their lives in general inactivity. The religion of Prophet Muhammad is based on prompting people to act. … Islam as it was practiced in the desert can be considered too inactive for Turkish people. A religious practice limited to ablution and daily prayer (*namaz*) was too inactive for a Turk who horse-played in the mountains, and bathed with melted snow. *Mevleviyye* is the perfect example of the permeation of Turkish tradition into Islam. Mevlana is a great reformer. The idea of getting closer to Allah by whirling on your feet is the most natural manifestation of the Turkish genius. On one side you have the accompaniment of beautiful music. On the other side beautiful-voiced people sing hymns while beautifully-donned people raise their hands to the heavens in an imaginary whirl. ... The aesthetics of this is marvelous." (70-71).

CHAPTER 1

WESTERN PERCEPTIONS OF SUFISM: THE FOUNDATIONS

Franklin Lewis and Carl Ernst note that until the late eighteenth century, when Sir

William Jones and his friends opened up an epistemological field of Sufism, few works

either on Sufism or Rumi existed except for a couple of brief notes now and then in

various travelogues (Lewis 2008: 499; Ernst 1997: 3). Even though I agree with Lewis

and Ernst to a certain extent, I believe such cursory notes deserve to be reviewed given

the weight of influence of these travelogues and proto-ethnographic studies of the East on

the public as well as on the intellectuals and belletrists of consequent eras. Also, while

such casual notes about Sufism may seem incidental, a thorough study of them discloses

the framework in which they all operate.

The Western encounter with Sufis goes back at least to the fifteenth century. In

this chapter I analyze the early-modern European representations of the Sufis that one

would read in travelogues, captivity accounts and proto-Orientalist scholarly studies.

Even though Sufis never constituted the focus of such accounts, numerous descriptions

and commentaries on the strange and exotic behavior, charisma, clothing, and

paraphernalia of the Sufis abound. A close examination of the portrayals in question

demonstrates their embedment within discourses that were prevalent during that time

about conceptualization of religion, Christianity, and Islam, as well as offers impressions

about Middle Eastern culture and peoples. These discourses shape, regulate, and

constrain the meaning and connotations Sufis have gained in the Western world. The

chapter demonstrates that the representations were heavily defined by the prevalent idea

of religion in Europe at the time as well as the political developments that were also interpreted from a theological point of view.

The analysis I pursue in his chapter on the early European accounts on Sufis is comprised of two parts. The first one concentrates on a constellation of portrayals that focus on the deceptiveness of Sufis, which manifests itself in the "evils schemes" they set into motion but detected by the perceptive Christian. The second part aims to demonstrate the representation of Sufis and Sufism in the early modern Orientalist efforts such as D'Herbelot's *Bibliotheque orientale* (1697) and Jean Chardin's travel account. The significance of their analysis for the purposes of this study lies in the referential status these works enjoyed for a long time.

(i) Early Modern Period: "Angels seem to be"

> "*Others with words and pleasing looks*
> *thou may'st deceive; but me*
> *thou shalt not, for I know thee*
> *a rank Hypocrite to be*"
> Thomas Herbert (1667: 331)

In the early modern accounts of various sorts, Sufis – under the appellation of dervishes, santons, abdals, and fakirs – are described within a general discourse on Islam – or, as it was called then, "Mohammedanism." The prevalent interpretation of the time, that is, dervishes of any kind, no matter how "alluring" or "angelic" they seem, being mere hypocrites, is engendered by a context rather than being deduced from original sources. Therefore, the approach of the early modern Westerner to the Sufis is a view derivative of the general public opinion about Islam.

Interaction between Christians and Muslims is as old as Islam itself; both parties

have always engaged with the other within certain discourses dictated by their immediate socio-historical situation. Christian interest in Islam, which is documented as early as the eighth century,[42] increased in time, as the existence of Islam had become "the most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom" (Southern: 3). Islam was not only theologically but was also politically the archenemy of the Christian world largely because Europe's relationship with the Muslim powers in the Middle East was fundamentally shaped by the Christian claim to sovereignty over the Holy Land and its surroundings that was an essential element of "a Christian eschatological understanding of space and time" (Berman: 57).[43]

During the Middle Ages a large number of treatises on Islam were produced both by ecclesiastics and laymen whose varied interests shape the content of their works. On the one hand, apologists and missionaries such as Abbot Peter of Cluny (d. 1145) and Ricoldo da Monte di Croce (d. 1329) informed their rather limited reading public through their attacks on the Qur'an so as to refute its doctrinal basis.[44] On the other hand, pilgrims, crusaders and travelers to the Holy Land and former captives of Muslims provided more descriptive accounts usually to embellish their adventures in the Middle East with "tales of wonder and disgust" which were already "part of the baggage they

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[42] Among the earliest accounts on Islam the work of St. John of Damascus (d. 749), who claims to provide the basic information about Muslims and their faith, had stood out for centuries. St. John's account, which became in time one of the classical sources for Islam, focuses mainly on Mohammad as a prophet; the religion of Abraham; the revelations made to Muhammad; the nature of the Qur'an and the content of revelation, that is, one God. For further information, see Daniels Chapter 1.
[43] Margaret Hodgen notes that Jerusalem was comprehended for a long time as "the center of the world" (68).
[44] During the high Middle Ages not only the first translation of Qur'an (1143) was made upon the request of Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny by Robert of Ketton but also scientific and philosophic texts, both authentic studies as well as translations of the important works of classical antiquity gradually began to be consumed in European intellectual circles. Around 1180, the first corpus of Avicenna's philosophical works was put into circulation in Europe (Rodinson: 16).

took with them into the East" (Chew: 542).[45] The latter group reached a far wider

audience than the first group largely because their doctored impressions spread via

stories, poems, folktales, and sermons, mostly through word-of-mouth.

Nonetheless, despite the variety of sources that the overall hostile reaction to

Islam fed on, eventually there developed a "communal mode of thought" (Daniels: 303)

which, in due course, created its own canon that served as a data basis for all Europeans

to "draw their collective perceptions of the 'other' and to choose those elements that

informed his or her personal opinion" (Blanks & Frassetto: 2).[46] The power of the

prejudices embedded in the communal mode of thought was so strong that "the themes of

hostile mediaeval misinterpretation of Islam," says Norman Daniels, "were constantly

reiterated with the total assurance with which one would teach the alphabet or

multiplication tables, and by major writers using old information, often without direct

reference to such sources as were available" (307).

While the earliest written travel accounts on the Middle East, produced by

ecclesiastics, focus more on the religious aspect of the journeys, more ethnography-

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[45] Ian Netton argues in his study *Seek Knowledge* that there was "a radical dichotomy between the impression of Islam gained by the ignorant layman or lowly crusading soldier and that received by the learned clerk, at least the kind of clerk or scholar who revered accuracy and abhorred deception whether of the self or others" (4). It might not be, however, accurate to make such a clear-cut distinction between travelers and scholars, since there are various travelogues written by scholars.

[46] Norman Daniels notes that in the formative period the Western view of Islam was based on a sound knowledge of Islam and the essentials of Islamic belief were known to those scholastic and other educated authors who took a serious interest in the subject"; however, the same view remained for the most part distorted because of the willingness to "accept a great deal that is now seen, was seen by many then too, to be nonsense" (302). Only a reader who was already well informed would have been able to pick out the statements that were true. In a similar vein Nina Berman notes "in spite of broad cultural, political, and economic exchange and in spite of close contact in Spain and Sicily, knowledge of Islam was rudimentary in most areas of Europe" (30). For detailed analysis of European perceptions of Islam, see also David Blanks and Michael Frassetto, eds. *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (1999) and Maxime Rodison *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (1987).

oriented accounts began to be produced in the late thirteenth century.[47] This shift matured

throughout the fifteenth century due to various factors, which include but are not limited

to the dissemination of humanist thinking, the "discovery" of hitherto unknown lands,

evolving missionary activities, the invention of printing, and the increasing power of the

Ottoman Empire, which conquered the city of Constantinople in 1453.[48]

The noticeable inflation in the number of proto-ethnographic texts was not limited

to those concerning Turks or Muslims. From the sixteenth century onwards, various sorts

of texts of cultural description, which bore the name "cosmographies" or works "on the

customs, laws, and rites" of different peoples, proliferated in Europe. The authors of such

collections drew on a wide range of classical and patristic sources, among which Isidore

of Seville's *Etymologiae* served for a long time as the main model.[49] The collection of

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[47] Accounts written by the ecclesiastics usually served as guides for future pilgrims and provide information about relics, holy places such as the Holy Sepulcher, etc. For examples of pilgrimage texts see John Wilkinson et al. eds. *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185* (1988). see also Margaret Hodgen, pp. 84-87. These texts became more geography-oriented during the Crusades.

[48] It should also be noted that during the fifteenth-century, partly due to the diffusion of humanist thinking and rediscovery of ancient texts, the sanctity of political institutions and providential history began to be questioned. The shattering of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church was felt in every aspect of life, including the conceptualization of the world and history, that got crystallized most clearly in the works of Eusibius (275-339) and Saint Augustine (354-430) who interpreted history as the unfolding of God's will, and believed the Christian church to be predestined to triumph over its enemies. As a matter of fact, scripture-based explanation for the successive Muslim victories in the Middle East was popularized in the late twelfth century by Abbot Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202) who interpreted the rise of Islam as a sign of the imminent coming of the Antichrist. Adam Francisco notes that Joachimist tradition of explaining Islam in relation to apocalypse was quite influential and "secured itself in the later medieval biblical commentaries, particularly in the work of the Franciscan exegetes" (21). Yet, this tradition lost its predominance in the sixteenth century as the Apocalypse did not happen, Turks continued to gain lands in Europe, and a more secular view of the world, history and politics began to predominate.

[49] In the *Etymologiae*, Isidore categorized the data available to him: the earth, with its three continents (Asia, Europe, and Africa) and islands; cities; public buildings and sacred buildings; information on mineral deposits and agriculture; military matters, ships and smaller fabricated objects including instruments, tools, and clothing. Isidore's choice of describing the world in its geographical expanse is said to be following pre-established models in the Mediterranean world set by classical authors such as Herodotus, Pliny, Solinus, etc. In the following centuries the Franciscan John of Plano Corpini's *Ystoria Mongalorum*, and Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale* further developed the genre (Johnson: 21-23).

manners and customs that would set the pattern for early modern ethnographers, however, according to Margaret Hodgen, was the German humanist Johann Boemus's (c.1485-1535) pocket-size compilation *Omnium Gentium Mores, Leges et Ritus ex Multis Clarissimis Rerum Scriptoribus* (1520).[50] In order to make accessible to the ordinary reader an already considerable amount of knowledge garnered during the age of exploration and inform his readers concerning the laws and governments of other nations, Boemus arranged a vast body of knowledge "on a broad geographical plan, with the geographical features subordinated to the ethnological" (Hodgen: 131). The resulting study of Boemus displays the major constituents of "culture" as conceived in early modern Europe. Boemus' categorization "with the clear intention of isolating the major social institutions for inspection, and with some degree of orderliness," placed special emphasis on "divergences in marriage and the family, divergences in social organization, in religions, funeral rites, weapons, warfare, justice, diet and apparel" (138).

The effect of this study is indisputable; any given travelogue written after Boemus is arranged in a manner so similar to it that usually the order of the categories follow the same structure. This specific compilation also inspired another influential genre that was revived in early modern Europe, namely, cosmography. Specifically, Sebastian Muenster's *Cosmographia: beschreibung aller lander* (1544) set the structure for future cosmographers who incorporated sometimes detailed yet erroneous ethnological information into the history-meets-geography type studies.

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[50] The book proved to be a huge success by Renaissance standards. Following the 1536 revised and expanded Latin edition, at least 23 other re-issues in five languages – nine in Latin, five in Italian, four in French, three or four in English, and one in Spanish- were published in less than a century (Hodgen: 132).

I will not get into the details of the development of these genres; Margaret Hodgen's meticulous study on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "anthropological" texts, Joan-Pau Rubiés's *Travellers and Cosmographers* (2007), and Carina Johnson's brief yet insightful analysis in the first chapter of her *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (2011), among others, expound on the evolution of such proto-ethnographic studies. The sections allocated to religion in such cosmographies and compilations of manners are of interest to us in this chapter and suffice it say that specific developments having occurred in the intellectual realm possibly had an effect on the presentation of religion in accounts dealing with the Muslim orient.

One such development is the humanist thinkers' revaluation of Aristotelian and Ciceronian preference of practice over doctrine and faith in their discussions on religion. Carina Johnson notes that while texts like *Speculum Historiale* marked out doctrinal divergences as error, Aristotle, who argued that civilized states must contain a degree of organization in religious practice and institutionalized structure, did not show interest in the details of doctrines and religious faith (23). In a similar vein, Cicero put emphasis on the practice of worship rather than adherence to particular beliefs in *De natura deorum* and *De officiis* (Johnson: 24). The Renaissance reverence for Aristotle and Cicero inevitably revealed itself in cultural descriptions. As a corollary effect of the novel appreciation of ethnography, discussion of religion in travel narratives began to allocate more space for practices, which were presented next to other aspects of culture, such as trade, governance, family, and costumes (Johnson: 23).

Alongside such transformations within the intellectual realm of Europe, the political reconfigurations on the eastern borders of Latin Christendom required the

immediate attention of Europeans. The Westward expansion of the Turks, particularly the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 that terminated the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, inevitably drew Europeans' attention to Turks – and to a certain extent to Persians, albeit as potential allies. As a consequence, treatises and accounts, both theological and ethnographic, mostly about Turks, began to be produced

These works, reflecting the confusion on the part of Europeans, hardly present a coherent picture. On the one hand Turks, just like Persians and Arabs, inherited "the traditional disparaging Christian tropes regarding Islamic culture" (Kaiser: 8) and were generally known as superstitious barbarians, or simply "the terror of the world." On the other hand, from the fifteenth century onwards, praises of positive traits such as frugality, humanity, sobriety, cleanliness, hospitability, and, most important of all, stable social order began to appear especially in the first-hand reports of various sorts, usually from German-speaking countries.[51] In time, it had almost become a tendency to present more "objective" descriptions as the need to explicate the current prosperity of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing number of Christian conversion to Islam.

This confusion, I think, can be explained with reference to contemporary situation of Europe. While the superiority of Christianity over Islam along with the communal mode of thought mentioned above regarding the falseness and veraciousness of Muslims were taken for granted, the political stability and the military supremacy of the Ottomans as opposed to the conflict-ridden European countries of the time were viewed with

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[51] For studies on the image of the Turk see Robert Schwoebel *The shadow of the crescent: The Renaissance image of the Turk (1453-1517)*; Aslı Cırakman *From "The Terror of the World" to the "Sick Man of Europe"*; Nina Berman *German Literature on the Middle East*; Orhan Burian's "Interest of the English in Turkey as Reflected in English Literature of the Renaissance"; Iver B. Neumann "Making Europe: The Turkish Other" in *Uses of the Other: The "East" in European Identity Formation*; C. D. Rouillard *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature (1520-1660)*;

admiration. The most transparent crystallization of this confusion is evident in the accounts written by German-speaking people who vocalized, as pointed out by Nina Berman, "a host of attitudes about the Ottomans ... on a spectrum as ranging from '*Turkenfurcht*' (i.e. Turkish fear) to '*Turkenhoffnung*' (Turkish hope)" (71). Even Martin Luther touches upon the "Turkish hope" in his "Vom Kriege wider die Türken" (1529); Luther acknowledges that there exist those who "actually want the Turk to come and rule because they think our German people are wild and uncivilized - indeed that they are half-devil and half-man" (1915: 75).

Furthermore, the theological strife dividing the Christian world complicated the nature of interaction with the Muslims. Having found a common ground against their great enemy, Protestants and the Ottomans sought various forms of cooperation and rapprochement, which in turn is registered as an ambivalent approach to the Ottomans during this period. Daniel Goffman argues that the equivocality is somewhat visible in Luther's "On War Against the Turk" (110). On the one hand, Luther believed that "the Turk … is the servant of the devil, who not only devastates land and people with the sword … but lays waste the Christian faith and our dear Lord Jesus Christ." (1915: 75). On the other hand, he never labels the Ottoman sultan an Antichrist, as he does the Pope, or Turks as devils incarnate, as he does Jews. In his appraisal of Islam Luther also underlines the similarities in the rejection of idols between Islam and Protestantism

No single monolithic European perception prevailed in those accounts. Depending on the country, story and the profession of the author, the content and the tone of the accounts in question display considerable divergences. The variations in perceptions and attitudes, first of all, owe to the differences in the intensity and form of engagement

among European countries; the Venetians, Hungarians and Austrians got to know

Ottomans on a more personal level, either through trade or war, but the English[52] and

French were bound to the information provided by the aforementioned countries into the

"barbarian Turk" – usually used interchangeably with Muslim – stereotype of the

period.[53] Only by the second half of the sixteenth century accounts of Turks began to be

produced first in France then in England. Specifically, the battle of Mohacs in 1528 and

the first siege of Vienna in 1529 aroused a new wave of European interest to which

increased number of travelogues attest but it was for the most part the diplomatic envoy

sent to Constantinople in 1536 by François I and the establishment of the Levant

Company in 1581 that induced the production of English and French accounts about the

Turks.

With regard to Persian speaking lands, as observed by various scholars, there is

no significant work until the late-fifteenth century when Europe recognized the "value"

of Persianate kingdoms, namely the Aq Qoyunlu (1378 to 1508) and the Safavids (1501

to 1722), as crucial allies against the threat imposed by Turks.[54] The first initiative to

form alliance with the Persians was carried out by Venetians after it became clear that the

holy alliance among the Christian states of the period would not be secured. Following

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[52] As noted by Samuel Chew, because of the remoteness of the Ottoman threat there was no such immense body of historical and propagandist literature on the subject as we find in "Germany" (104). By that time, England's policy was to stand aloof so far as possible from the struggle with Muslims. Moreover, between 1566 and 1581 the trade through Russia into Persia, despite all the dangers it presented, was on the whole more profitable than a Turkish route (Chew: 151).

[53] The prevalence of Latin as *lingua franca* set aside, translation activities facilitated the circulation of ideas and images. Nina Berman points out "translations, often word for word, were common and document the high degree to which Europeans shared this textual archive across linguistic boundaries" (78).

[54] There were couple of missionary accounts (e.g. Guillaume de Rubrouck's report of his visit to the Mongols in 1253) but in general there was a general neglect of Persia on the part of Europeans. It is even noted by S. Chew that until the second half of the sixteenth century no Englishman had ever visited Persia (205).

the fall of Constantinople, Venice sent two separate envoys to the court of Uzun Hasan, the chief/king of the Aqqoyunlu that was established in eastern Anatolia and Persia, so as to induce Uzun Hasan to take up arms against the Ottomans.[55] In the early sixteenth century, when a new dynasty, the Safavids, in Persia proclaimed its sovereignty, most European countries sought alliance either for trade purposes (e.g. Portugal and England) or for military purposes in order to relieve Ottoman threat in Europe (the Habsburgs and Venetians). In addition to the "secular" envoys sent over to Persia, Catholic missionaries began to show interest in the peoples of this region as potential converts. One of the outcomes of these developments is the increasing number of accounts of Persia.

In the traveler accounts of the Ottoman and the Persian lands, which aimed to enlighten and warn people, mostly about Turks, we come across the depictions of various dervishes that were found throughout the Ottoman Empire and Persia in the early modern period. The novel interest of the travelers in "practical" aspects of Islam, I think, supports Carina Johnson's point on the Aristotelian influence in discussions of religion in cultural depictions of this period, that is, the shift of focus from doctrines to practices. Unlike medieval texts on Islam which aim to refute Islam on a doctrinal basis, the new type of accounts intend for the same result through "authentic" depictions of the practices of Muslims that include "places of worship, priests, and rites and ceremonies". In fact, as Johnson notes, the word used for these chapters, that is, "*religio*," indicates the prevalent distinction of the time from *fides* or *doctrina* (29).

Because dervishes belong to the realm of *religio*, they were usually either briefly

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[55] The first ambassador M. Caterino Zeno succeeded in his mission but Uzun Hasan was defeated by Mehmet II in 1473 and could not receive the support he asked for, again via M. Caterino Zeno, from Christian princes. Giosafat Barbaro (1471-1487) and Ambrogio Contarini (1473) succeeded Zeno but could not convince the Aqqoyunlu ruler.

mentioned in memoir-style accounts as sort of Muslim equivalents of Christian monks who were given to superstition and were deemed to be holy/sacred by the masses (e.g. Giosafat Barbaro's travel account (1487), Ogier Ghiselin Busbecq's *Itinera Constantinopolitanum et Amasianum* [known as *Turkish Letters*] (1581)) or were discussed in more descriptive works, occasionally in a separate chapter, yet attention diverted to their eccentric looks, paraphernalia and the distinctive rites and customs (e.g. Giovanantonia Menavino's *Trattato de costumi et vita de Turchi* (1548), Guillaume Postel's *Des Histoires Orientales* (1560;1575), Bartholomeus Georgievic's *De Turcarum ritu et caeremonlis* (1544)). Notwithstanding the differences in the depictions, either way the dervish in question is presumed to be an impostor who undeservedly receives the respect of the "ignorant folk."

The consistent depiction of various sorts of dervishes as impostors and frauds, I would argue, stem from the above-mentioned communal mode of thought, which imagined Prophet Muhammad as "the son of Satan" who was able to attract followers by means of black magic and demonic miracles.[56] The efforts of the early modern writers to explicate the allure of dervishes in demonical terms should be considered in view of the Christian apprehension of the time regarding the seductive force of Islam for Christians living under the Ottoman rule. The religious challenge posed specifically by the Muslim Turks, along with the ongoing military threat, constituted one of the issues troubling early modern Europeans and the answer provided by first-hand observers utilizes the same-old trope about the demonic powers and superstitiousness of Mohammad and his followers.[57]

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[56] For detailed information on the Christian perception of prophet Muhammad see Norman Daniels's *Islam and the West* and John Tolan's *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. It should be noted that this trope continued to be effective well into the nineteenth-century.

[57] Martin Luther was among the important figures addressing this issue in their writings.

Nicolas de Nicolay (1517–1583), for instance, whose representation "dwells on the theme of sexual depravation" (Keller: 27), starts his chapter "des quatre religions des turcs," with a claim of revealing the "evidente hypocrisie et damnable superstition" of "des religions, ermites et pelerins, turcs et maures mahometistes" through descriptions of the mendicant dervishes of the period.[58]

Another diplomatic traveler to the Levant, Ogier Ghiselin Busbecq (d. 1592), unlike de Nicolay, did not provide a systematic catalogue of religious orders and personalities, yet found the "Turkish beggars" and "wandering monks" interesting enough to mention in his letters. On his way to Amasya the envoy he joined stopped at a *Tekye*, i.e. dervish lodge ("a famous establishment of Turkish monks, whom they call Dervishes" (192754) where he learnt that a saint these dervishes highly revere named Chederle (read *Hidrellez*) was in fact identical with St. George, "to whom they ascribed the same achievements" (55). Yet, apparently unlike Christians, the dervishes ascribed "laughable" tales and "ridiculous" past to this saint. Busbecq took notice of the appearances of dervishes as well. In his discourse on the superstitiousness of Turks he mentions another "Turkish wanderer and monk" (208) he encountered at some point in his journey. While this certain dervish arouses the respect of the beholder with his appearance, that is, "a white cloak reaching to his feet" complemented with "long hair, much as our painters depict the Apostles," Busbecq was vigilant and evidently "rational" enough to realize that 'the heart of an impostor was hidden under this respectable exterior' (208). Again, he notes that "the Turks respected him as a famous worker of

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[58] "Si la croyance et la foi des religions, ermites et pelerins, turcs et maures mahometistes aussi bonne, sainte et veritable comme elle est en fausse appearance, coloree de evidente hypocrisie et damnable superstition" (187).

miracles" (209) even though the impostor's fraud was revealed when he burned himself while trying to show that his body was not affected by the pain incurred by fire.

In more systematic accounts, more detailed descriptions of dervishes were provided, usually preceded by explanations about the basic tenets of Islam such as the *kelime-i shahadat* (the Islamic creed), certain rituals such as circumcision, marriage and fasting as well as elucidations on the different functions of the main religious officials. The comprehensiveness of these accounts notwithstanding, it can be confidently asserted that more or less the same image was conveyed in these accounts, partly due to the unchecked transmission of knowledge,[59] and partly due to the unusual appearances of the depicted dervishes (usually Qalandars, Jamis and Abdals), who, by the way, attracted the attention of not only the Western travelers but also Muslim scholars and travelers as well.[60]

At this point we should open a parenthesis and insert a little historical information about these deviant dervishes. Ahmet Karamustafa notes that the mendicant dervishes that emerged concurrently in Afghanistan, Syria, and Asia Minor "represent a kind of renunciation that emerged and spread in Islamdom during the Later Middle Period (ca. 1200-1500)" (1994: 2). According to Karamustafa, the emphasis of this new movement, which was in no way homogenous, on "deliberate and blatant social deviance" (*Ibid*: 3) gives an account for various dervishes' adoption of "anarchist and antinomian practices as nudity or improper clothing, shaving all bodily and facial hair, and use of

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[59] Adam Olearius, a seventeenth-century German scholar, criticizes contemporary geographers for copying from one another in the oft-quoted remark "errante uno, errant omnes". In fact, some of the accounts I have examined translated or copied previous accounts word-by-word and presented as their own observations.
[60] For a brief analysis of the historiography on deviant dervishes see the Introduction of Ahmet T. Karamustafa's *God's Unruly Friends* (1994).

hallucinogens and intoxicants as the only real methods of renunciation" (*Ibid*: 2-3).

Understandably enough, such deviant acts and living conditions of the mendicant dervishes attracted the attention of travelers, most of whom reduced the Sufi orders of the period, some of which, as matter of fact, condemn the practices of the deviant dervishes, to these four groups. Georgius de Hungaria and Giosafat Barbaro[61] in the late fifteenth century, Bortholomaeus Georgevic[62], Giovanantonia Menavino[63], Guillaume Postel[64] and Nicolas de Nicolay[65] in the sixteenth century provided similar descriptions of such dervishes for their audience, who were ready to incorporate the new "exotic" image into the stock of Oriental eccentricities.

Among many noteworthy points regarding the depictions, the use of the word

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[61] Venetian ambassador to the Aqqoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan (1471-1487). On his way to Uzun Hasan's court he encountered couple of mendicant dervishes. See *Travels to Tana and Persia, Part 1*, pp. 47, 48-9, 96-97. It is noteworthy that he calls "suffi" one of the dervish groups he met in Adana. (p. 47)

[62] A captive to the Turks for thirteen years between 1526 and 1535. Published five works based on his observations: *De Turcarum ritu et caeremonlis* (1544), which provides information about the religion, customs and the army of Turks; *De affectione tam captivorum quam etiam sub Turcae tributo viventum christianorum* (1544) on the plight of Christians captivated by Turks; *Exhortatio contra Turcas* (1544) which calls for arms against Turks; *Prognoma sive praesagium Mehemetanorum* (1545); *Pro fide christiana cum Turca disputationis habitae* (1547). See Melek Aksulu, *Mohac Esiri Bortholomaeus Georgievic (1505-1566) ve Turklerle Ilgili Yazilari* (1998).

[63] A Genoese captive who served as a palace official in Constantinople for several years until his escape in 1513. His account *Trattato de costumi de Turchi* had remained one of the main sources on Turkish customs and rites for early modern Western readers.

[64] French linguist, cabbalist, astronomer and religious universalist. In 1536 he was appointed by Francois I as the official interpreter of the French embassy of Jean de la Foret to Istanbul to negotiate an alliance against the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Upon his travel he penned *De la Republique des Turcs* but changed the name of the book in the second edition in 1575 to *Des Histoires Orientales* ... In the seventh chapter of the second book entitled "Des diverses religions" he briefly talks about some dervish groups: "*Il y a là un très grand nombre de caymans qui ont quatre noms et appartiennent à quatre sectes: les derviches, les seichlar, les torlaqui, les calender, qui ...*" (148-9). See Jacques Rollet's 1999 edition of the 1575 edition.

[65] The French royal geographer and spy, who wrote a book about his stay in Constantinople that he visited in 1551 as part of Henry II of France's embassy to the sultan. Unlike its predecessors, the written text of *Les quatre premiers livres de navigations et peregrinations orientales* (Lyon; 1567) was accompanied with engravings (60 in total) by Louis Danet that were based on Nicolay's original in situ drawings. The engravings formed the stock images of Turks in the Western imagination for many years and its impact on the European popular imagination and aesthetic conceptions of Islam is deemed indisputable (Brafman: 154). Nicolay's account was most recently published as *Dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique* by Stephane Yarasimos (1989).

"dervish" - though in various spellings - should be underlined because of the confusion it carries along. None of the earlier accounts address Sufism, either as a movement or as a system, and in most of them the word *dervish* is reserved for a specific deviant group without being acknowledged the disputed position of such groups within Sufism in general.[66] Dervishes as a subgroup appear in the detailed descriptions of Giovanantonia Menavino and those who liberally cite him, Nicolas de Nicolay and the anonymous author of *Viaje de Turquia* (1557), to name a few. They focus on the unusual appearances and unorthodox ways of behavior of four main dervish groups, namely, *torlaks*, *deruis*, *giomailer*, and *calenders* that, according to Ahmet Karamustafa, refer respectively to *qalandars*, *abdal*s, and *jami*s. Still some others such as Bartholomaeus who calls "deruisler" [i.e. dervishes] monks and briefly described three main dervish groups in *De Turcarum ritu et caeremonlis* (1544), use the term to refer to all sorts of dervishes.

With regard to the present subject, the specificities of the usages of the term dervish require such attention because of the gradual semantic narrowing of the term to denote the mevlevis, i.e. the whirling dervishes. Hence the semantic field of the term, together with being an impostor and hypocrite, was directly transferred to that of the Mevlevis. For example the French traveler Jean de Thévenot (1633-1667) concludes his seemingly positive description of Mevlevi dervishes with the same old image, that is,

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[66] By early sixteenth-century the word "sufi" – in various spellings, again – began to be used albeit to refer to the *Shah* of the Safavid dynasty. Although the Safavid family initially emerged as a Sufi order the rulers never used the title "Sufi". The misnomenclature probably arose from the Persian pronunciation of the Safavid, that is, *Ṣafawīyān*, which can be read as "*Sufuyan*" as well. According to Margaret Meserve, Marino Sanudo first used the word in 1502 to refer to Shah Ismail (2008: 232). By mid-sixteenth century the title became so standard that even Queen Elizabeth addressed Shah Tahmasb as "the Great Sophie" in a letter dated 1562. In time, couple of travelers and scholars attempted to clarify the misunderstanding. Anthony Jenkinson, for instance, who headed the 1562 English delegation to Persia, states in his account of the journey that the Shah himself would not approve such addressing due to the, again wrongfully assumed, meaning of the word sophy/sufi in Persian, that is, "beggar" (1886: 432).

dervishes being mere hypocrites.[67]

Despite the increasing number of references to dervishes, Mevlevis remained quite absent in early modern texts. The main reason of this absence, of course, has to do with the relative absence of the Mevlevis in Istanbul. The first Mevlevi lodge in Istanbul, Galata Mevlevihanesi, was founded in 1491, but it soon turned into a Halveti lodge to be transformed back into a Mevlevi lodge only in the 1640s. In the sixteenth century, Istanbul Mevlevis had not yet assumed the visibility they would gain in the seventeenth century. With regard to the Mevlevis living outside Istanbul, it might be conjectured that they did not attract the attention of travelers probably because they were not among the wandering dervishes. But nonetheless a fifteenth-century account written by a former captive, who resided out of Istanbul, constitutes an exception with the detailed description of a – probably Mevlevi – *sema'* ceremony it provides.

The work of Georgius de Hungaria[68] (c. 1422-1502) stands out not only on account of providing the first known European depiction of Mevlevis, but also due to the popularity it gained.[69] *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum*,[70] published anonymously in 1481, is deemed to be "one of the most important if not the most important source for the *Lebensverhältnisse* in the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century" (Francisco: 25). The account is also significant for its effect on Desiderius

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[67] See below.

[68] Georgius fell captive to the Turks in 1438 and managed to escape after eight unsuccessful attempts in 1458.

[69] Albrecht Classen points that seven manuscripts from ca. 1481/82 up to the early sixteenth century, twelve imprints from 1481 to 1550, eleven German translations from 1482/83 to 1531 as well as the wide dissemination of this narrative through secondary sources indicate the book's popularity (258).

[70] Critical edition of the treatise together with a German translation was published by Reinhard Klockow. For further analysis of the treatise see Albrecht Classen, "The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius de Hungaria's Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire" (2003) and Adam Francisco's Chapter I of *Martin Luther and Islam* (2007).

Erasmus, and Martin Luther's perceptions of Islam. The latter wrote a forward for the 1530 Latin edition and considered Georgius's account as the best description of Ottoman religion and culture and deployed Georigius's argument regarding the reasons behind Christians converting to Islam in his criticism of the Church (Francisco: 1).

Georgius is no different from his contemporaries in the sense that his account betrays his amazement at the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire, and Turks' respect for their religion, but at the same time exudes his hostility towards Islam and Turks. Through his personal experience, which made him "an extraordinary authority on the enemy's culture" (Classen: 265), he explicates why Islam emerges as a seductive force for Christians living under the Ottoman rule, hence addresses one of the issues troubling Europeans at the time.[71]

Although Georgius is convinced of a Joachimist explanation of the existence as well as the victories of Turks,[72] he was nonetheless concerned about the increasing number of Christian converts to Islam. In his lengthy analysis, he suggests the military success of the Turks as divine approval of their religion, the contrast between the Ottoman and Christian culture "which made the decaying *corpus Christianum* with all its political corruption and clerical abuses seem completely disgraceful", and "the sophisticated simplicity of Ottoman culture" of which he cited numerous examples, as the possible causes for Christian conversion to Islam. (Francisco: 27)

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[71] Similar to other captivity narratives Georgius's account also reflects the fear of "turning Turke", which "means either deteriorating in character from a supposedly Christian moral rectitude, or being forcibly converted to Islam, as was the common fate of European captives of the Ottomans" (Kamps & Singh: 4). Therefore, the whole account can be read as his justification of his years in Muslim lands.

[72] Georgius put an excerpt of Joachim of Fiore's *Exposition in Apocalypsim* as an appendix and "explained the apocalyptic nature the [Muslim] threat, 'what has made this sect so great is evident in the image of Apocalypse 13'. The beast with two horns like a ram but speaking like a dragon (13:11), he suggested, was the Turkish Empire, and its religion was the *ecclesie Antichristie*, which, working alongside its political machinery, sought the damnation of all men" (Francisco: 26).

Apparently Georgius himself was impressed with the above-mentioned aspects of the Ottomans because at some point in his captivity – probably within the despair he felt upon the futility of his escape attempts – he doubted his faith in Christianity and started learning the rituals of Islam (*incepi addiscere orationes et ceremonias eorum*) to the point of participating in dervish ceremonies, which he explains in detail (301). In the chapter "On the supernatural and religious reasons" (*De motiuis supernaturalibus et religiosis*) he expounds on the alluring yet "diabolical illusions" of Islam, one of which happens to be the supernatural powers of the "perfidious Turks" (272).[73] The dervish orders he provided descriptions for are those that belong to the above-mentioned renunciatory movement. Georgius contends that it is the supernatural powers of these dervishes that constitute an appeal for Christians but his restored faith in Christianity, Georgius argues, is the proof of the erroneous nature of Islam and its followers.[74]

According to Georgius's interpretation, depending on the specific nature of their external appearance, a special demonic power is immanent in these dervishes, some of whom wear no clothes on their back, but run around naked and some others show great strength in fasting (*Ibid*).[75] Georgius explicitly avows his admiration for the "*supernaturalibus*" deeds of these figures and adds there is no one among them who does not have any kind of spiritual experiences (*experientie spirtualis*). He also notes that these men belonging to the Orders are called "*deruischler*" [i.e. dervishes] (275).

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[73] Here Georgius specifically refers to the dervishes of various kinds.
[74] After about six months, his faith in Christianity was restored as he recognized the "demonic" aspect in the allure of Islam.
[75] Another point Georgius explicates in relation to the external appearances of dervishes is on how to differentiate different orders by their dresses (275).

While explaining the dervish way of life he mentions "*tekye*" (i.e. hospice) as

their houses (*domus*) and also relates a specific festivity that included *czamach* [sic.

sama] which is identified as the Mevlevi *sama* by Franklin Lewis (2008: 500) and

Reinhard Klockow (Georgius: 279, note 113) even though Georgius does not identify

Rumi or the Mevlevis by name.[76] Another interesting point that actually reinforces the

argument for the Mevlevi *sama* is the description of a feature of this specific celebration.

Georgius notes that these "dancing" dervishes also recite "poems that are handed down to

them from their predecessors ... in a state of rapture or ecstasy under inspiration (*in raptu*

uel in extasi erant, in spiritu locuti sunt)" (281).[77] These poems, according to Georgius,

are eloquent, written in rhyme, and easy to remember (*qui suauis sunt facundie et*

rigmatice prolati et faciliter mente retinentur). Their length varies according to the

subject they treat and they give the ceremonies and rites a spiritual sense (*et trahunt*

omnes ceremonias legis Turcorum et ritus ad sensum spiritualem) (281). Georgius

confesses to have either written or memorized a large number of these poems, which he

enjoys reading. Yet what is interesting is that he believes these poems tend to confirm

Christianity rather than the "religion of the Turks" (*eo quod magis Christianam*

religionem confirmant quam Turcorum).

Not only the poems recited during the *sama* but also the form of the ceremony,

that is "dancing," did not lose its appeal for Georgius even after his soul was saved.

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[76] *Sama* in the form of whirling was not peculiar to the Mevlevis, hence Georgius' description of the sama could as well be referring to another Sufi order: "who sway their entire body in a regular and well-measured manner, with a decorous, dignified, and very chaste movement of their limbs, matching the rhythmic modulations of the musical instruments, creating finally a whirl of dizzying velocity, a rotation and revolution, in which the power of these performances consist" (trans. by Lewis 2008: 500)

[77] The two poems he attached to the end of the text actually belong to Yunus Emre, a Sufi contemporary of Rumi's. However, it was plausible for Mevlevis to recite poems of Yunus Emre as well.

Georgius himself was lured by this specific demonstration of ecstatic rapture like everyone else: *inter ceteros actus sue ostensionis nullus est tam prouocatiuus deuotionis seu feruoris sicut ipse ludus eorum supradictus* (282). Yet he finds nothing contradictory in this dance to Christianity because, Georgius argues, even the holy prophets in ancient times performed such dances at their religious ceremonies.[78] Such an early Christian attribution to elements of Sufism is quite noteworthy, for in the preceding centuries it would become one of the main arguments regarding the origin of Sufism. However, at this stage Georgius does not suggest such an ascription.

In the following passages Georgius recounts a few sudden ecstatic dances he witnessed at the house where he lived. He was enticed not only by the spiritual experience of these dances, but also the dervishes themselves who "are so exemplary in all their words and actions, and also place in behavior and appearance of such a devotion during the day that they not men but angels seem to be" (*non homines, sed angeli videntur esse*) (282). Georgius says it is quite possible to recognize the spirituality on their faces even if one had never seen one before.[79]

But the angelic feature, as it would turn into a trope, is to remain just on the outside; it has nothing to do with the true inner self, which in the case of dervishes, is claimed to have been possessed by the devil.[80] Warned by St. Augustine in the nineteenth chapter of the twentieth book on the theocracy, Georgius contends that these dervishes were able to perform miraculous feats such as remaining unaffected by the cold (274) or

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[78] "*Nam et sancti prophete antiquitus huiusmodi ludis utebantur in suis festiuis officiis, sicut habetur de Dauid, quod ludebat ante archam domini, et de multis aliis veteris testamenti*" (282).

[79] "*Nam in facie eorum quandam spiritualis representationis notam habent, vt, si nunquam amplius vidisses eum, quod solius uultus intuitione eum statim cognoscere posses*" (284).

[80] "*Nam tanta est potentia diaboli in eis, ut uideantur potius diaboli incarnati quam homines*" (272).

ruining the house of a person simply through cursing (284) only by strength given from the Devil. In short, as the examples he has given demonstrate, dervishes, Georgius concludes, are angels of Satan transformed into angels of light ("*angelum sathane se transformare in angelum lucis*") (284).

The appeal of this trope for a Western audience becomes clear as one encounters it in almost all of the early modern accounts dealing tangentially or directly with dervishes of any sort. In fact, as the palimpsest metaphor suggests it never gets lost; by the seventeenth century the dervish figure (in various spellings and names) gained widespread circulation in accounts about Muslims, and the trope of fraudulence was prevalent in the literature of the period despite the emergence of more "scholarly" accounts of non-Western cultures.[81]

The last example I would like to examine briefly in this section was written by a seventeenth-century French traveler, Jean de Thévenot (1633-1667), who traveled for the mere pleasure of seeing other worlds (Behdad: 83). Thévenot's travelogue has been the subject of numerous studies on account of being one of the exemplary texts exoticizing and eroticizing the Muslim Orient, but it is also among the first Western texts describing a Mevlevi *sama*. Thévenot discusses dervishes in the chapter "Des Ministres de la lot des Turcs" of *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant* (1665) after introducing officials such as "*moufti*", "*moulla*", "*cadis*", "*imams*", "*muezins*" and "*hodgias*". He starts his description by making it clear that there are several sorts of orders in the Muslim world, but that

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[81] The extremely popular account of Sir Thomas Herbert could be examined as one of such accounts with the more systematic descriptions of the dervish orders it presents. Herbert's book, which first appeared in 1634, was reprinted and augmented five times, the last edition coming out in 1677. A Dutch translation appeared in 1653 and a French one in 1668. Different from other travelers Herbert provides historical yet inaccurate explanation for the existence of numerous sects he lists and explains in the third edition of his book.

dervishes (read Mevlevis here) constitute "the most familiar and polite" of them (*Ils on aussi plusieurs fortes de Religieux, parmy lesquels les Deruiches sont les plus familiers & plus polis; ie parleray des autres en discourant d'Egypte*) (102). According to his description, dervishes live in common; have superiors just like Christian orders (*leurs Superieurs comme nos Religieux*); dress humbly and wear on their heads a cap of white felt like nightcaps. Thévenot apparently visited their lodge and watched a *sama* ceremony which he found quite "*agreable à voit*" (102).[82] What makes Thévenot 's account more important is the information he provides about the "*autheur de cette danse*", that is, "*Hazreti Mewlana Deruiche, qui est tenu parmi eux pour Saint*". Thévenot does not provide further information about Mevlana or his sainthood but concludes his description, interestingly enough without giving any kind of explanation, by noting how hypocrite dervishes and saints in general are: they seemingly devote themselves to contemplation of God, but in fact were given to all kinds of vices (103).[83]

(ii) Early Orientalists and the Sufis: The Introduction of Original Texts

Accounts replicating the content of those mentioned above did not vanish from the scene in the ensuing decades but did begin to be consumed side by side with new

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[82] From the eighteenth century onwards, Mevlevi ceremonies would become one of the main attractions for any Westerner visiting Istanbul but very few of these travelers would give information about Rumi or his works. Their impressions, for the most part, do not go beyond describing the form of the ceremony, which, in most accounts, is presented as one of the exotic features of the Muslim orient. Despite the lack of interest on the part of Western travelers in Rumi or literature produced in Ottoman lands, Rumi's name began to circulate in intellectual circles by the end of the eighteenth century, though usually without any reference to Mevlevis. The cause of the change, however, should not be sought not in the accounts of Ottoman culture or history. It evolved, rather, out of a nascent interest in seventeenth-century orientalists in Persian literature and philosophy.

[83] *Tous le Deruiches & Santons generallement sont de grands hypocrites, car ils se sont passer pour des gens addonnez entierement à la contemplation de Dieu, & cependant ils sont accomplis en tous vices sans exception.*

forms of studies in "Oriental" cultures and languages, which can be described as more informed, relatively more accurate, and definitely more systematic on account of being written by those knowledgeable in Oriental languages. The changes regarding the content as well as presentation of the more detailed and nuanced works on the Muslim Middle East, of course, began to appear as a concomitant of the developments in the field of Islamic and Oriental studies.

The origins of Orientalism as a professional study have been a topic of debate since the publication of Edward Said's groundbreaking study *Orientalism* (1978). Said, just like Raymond Schwab, points at Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) as the first orientalist and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 as the decisive event in Orientalism. Recent studies in Orientalism, however, beg to differ; Urs App in *The Birth of Orientalism* (2010) and Ina Baghdiantz McCabe in *Orientalism in Early Modern France* (2008) present convincing arguments that take into account the studies undertaken in previous eras. The most significant development triggering such a change in the nature of books on "the Orient(s)" was engendered, argues McCabe, by the conflict between European humanists with ecclesiastics and the proceeding gradual transfer of the study of Oriental languages and cultures from religious to royal patronage. The court patronage of Oriental studies during the reign of François I (1494-1547) in France, for instance, opened up a new phase in that his court emerged as "a safe haven for humanists challenging the Church's monopoly on the production of knowledge in France" (McCabe: 22). The endeavors of the proto-Prientalists such as Guillame Postel resulted in the production of scholarly studies on Middle Eastern languages and cultures along with

immensely popular travelogues that are filled with adventure and "Oriental

peculiarities,"[84] as well as works of fiction with oriental themes.[85]

A cursory glance at the Oriental studies of the period following Postel, in fact,

reveals the increasing scholarly interest in the Orient.[86] The establishment of Arabic

chairs at the College de France (1587), Leiden (1613), Cambridge (1632), and Oxford

(1636), the printing of Arabic texts at the royal printing presses in France, Holland and

Rome, the scholarly activities of André du Ryer (1580-1660) and the de le Croix family

in France, of Frans van Ravelingen (Latinized to Franciscus Raphelengius; 1539-1597),

Thomas van Erpe (Erpenius; 1584-1624), Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), Louis de Dieu

(1590-1642), Hieronymous Megiser (*ca*.1554-1618) and Angelus St. Joseph [Joseph

Labrosse] in Holland, of William Bedwell (1561-1632), Edmund Castell (1606-1685),

Edward Pococke (1604-1691), his son Edward (1648–1727) and Simon Ockley (1678-

1720) in England, of Giambattista Raimondi (1536-1614), Antonio Giggei and Filippo

Guadagnoli (1596-1656) in Italy, of George Gentius (1618-1687) and Adam Olearius in

Germany paved the way for future Orientalists.[87] The "republic of letters" composed by

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[84] e.g. *Sir Anthony Sherley: his Relation of his Travels into Persia* (1613) by Sir A. Shirley. Anthony Nixon's account of the Sherley's adventures was dramatized in 1607.

[85] *L'Histoire des trois freres, princes de Constantinople* (1632) (novel) by De Logeas; Mayret's *Soliman ou la mort du Mustapha* (1630), Sir John Denham's *Sophy* (1642) and Robert Baron's *Mirza* (1647); *Tamerlan ou la mort de Bajazet* (1647) (play) by Magnon; *Bajazet* (1672) (play) by Racine; *Asterie et Tamerlan* (1675) (novel) by Mme de Villedieu; Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or the Persian Prince* (1682); Galland's *Paroles remarquebles des Orienteaux* (1695); Zulima *ou l'amour pur* (1695) (novel) by Le Noble, etc.

[86] See Nicholas Dew's *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (2009); Robert Irwin's *For Lust of Knowing* (2007); Alastair Hamilton & Francis Richard's *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (2004); Pierre Martino's *L'Orient dans la littérature française* (1906).

[87] André du Ryer is known for his translation of the *Qur'an* into French (1649) which was translated into English the same year, but he also rendered nearly half of Sadi's *Gulistan* into French as *L'empire des roses, compose par, Sadi, prince des poetes turcs et persans* (1634) and also published a Turkish Grammar Book Latin (1630). The de la Croix family served for three generations as the Arabic interpreter of the French court. The most accomplished one is François Pétits de la Croix (1653–1713) who was sent by his father to the Levant at the age of seventeen for the purpose of acquiring Oriental languages. Upon his return

such figures not only produced the first grammars and lexicons of Arabic, Persian and Turkish but also were in charge of collecting manuscripts from the Muslim orient.

Such intellectual endeavors, at least for the most part, were not pursued for the sake of mere intellectual curiosity. For a long time "oriental" studies had been "the handmaiden" of Biblical studies. It had been a custom for missionaries to learn the language of the land they were intending to pursue proselytization. So already in medieval Spain and the Vatican, Arabic was integrated into the curriculum of Semitic

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he served at the ambassadorial envoys to Tunisia, Algiers and Morocco. In 1692 he was appointed to the Arabic chair in the College Royal de France. De la Croix's most important work is considered to be the translation of Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi's *Zafar Nama or History of Timur* (*ca*. 1425), which was published posthumously in 4 volumes in 1722. Frans van Ravelingen held the chair in Hebrew at Leiden from 1587, but was also knowledgeable in Arabic and Persian. His Arabic-Latin dictionary, which was posthumously published in 1613, is considered to be first of its kind. Thomas van Erpe was Joseph Scaliger's pupil and became the first full professor of Arabic at Leiden. He published an Arabic grammar (*Grammatica Arabica*; 1613), *Rudimenta linguae Arabicae* (1620), *Grammatica Ebraea generalis* (1621), *Grammatica Chaldaica et Syria* (1628), and *Historia Saracenica* (1625) based on George Elmacin (a.k.a. Ibn al-'Amid, 1205–1273). Jacobus Golius was the pupil of van Erpe and held the chair of Arabic and Math at the University of Leiden after Erpe. His *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*, (1653), which, based on the Sihah of Al-Jauhari, considered to be the best in existence until the nineteenth century. Golius also prepared a Persian-Latin dictionary but it was published in 1669 after his death. Louis de Dieu published the first functional Persian grammar (Leiden, 1639). Hieronymous Megiser published the first Turkish grammar (Leipzig, 1612) to appear in Europe. Joseph Labrosse was one of the earliest Christian missionaries to Persia. His Persian grammar with dictionary in Latin, French, and Italian (*Gazophylacium linguae persarum*; 1681) though with much attention paid to medical terms, was praised by F. Bernier, F. Petits de la Croix and J. Chardin. William Bedwell's most well known published work is *A Discovery of the Impostures of Mahomet and of the Koran* (1615) but he also prepared Arabic lexicon in 7 volumes, to be shadowed by the publication of a similar work by Jacobus Golius in 1653. Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, Edmund Castell spent eighteen years on his *Lexicon Heptaglotton Hebraicum, Chaldaicum, Syriacum, Samaritanum, Aethiopicum, Arabicum, et Persicum* (1669). Edward Pococke was the first chair of Arabic at Oxford. In 1650 he published *Specimen historiae arabum*, a short account on the origin and manners of the Arabs, taken from Bar-Hebraeus (Abulfaragius). The son Pococke translated Ibn Tufail's twelfth-century philosophical novel *Hay ibn Yaqzan* into Latin as *Philosophus Autodidactus* (1671). Simon Ockley was a Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. His most well-known study is *The History of the Saracens* (2 vols, 1708-1718), which was based on *Futúh al-Shám* (supposedly penned by Al-Waqidi), which is considered to be more of a historical romance than history. Ockley also translated Ibn Tufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* into English as *The Improvement of Human Reason: Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* (1708). Giambattista Raimondi was in charge of the Medici printing press in Rome and produced a series of important publications in and on Arabic from 1590 to 1610 (Hamilton & Richard: 13). Antonio Giggei, using the manuscript collection assembled in Milan by Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, published an Arabic-Latin lexicon in 1632 which is considered to be not as good as Golius' but certainly better than Raphalengius's (*Ibid*). Filip Guadagnoli issued an Arabic grammar in 1642, which contained one of the first attempts in Europe to analyze the metrics of Arabic poetry (*Ibid*). George Gentius translated Sadi's Gulistan into Latin *as Musladini Sadi rosarium politicum, sive amoenum sortis humanae theatrum* (1651).

studies due to the desire to bring the Eastern churches under Vatican control (Rodinson: 40). The missionary movement of the new religious orders, predominantly of the Capuchins and the Jesuits, revived the practice of their predecessors and established missions almost all over the world.[88] But the new wave of interest in Arabic in sixteenth-century Europe was, to a large extent, text-based. Most of the names mentioned above showed interest in Oriental languages, specifically in Arabic, in order to examine different versions of the Bible. Their ultimate aim was to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the Protestants by improving the official Catholic Latin translation, the Vulgate attributed to St. Jerome. They were of the contention that the acquisition of knowledge of Arabic, which is so close to Hebrew, as well as of manuscripts written in Arabic might not only help them to better understand the Old Testament but also enable them to unearth "a text earlier and purer than the one traditionally used by the rabbis" (Hamilton & Richard: 15). More importantly, it was thought that Arabic version of the New Testament "might reflect an early Syriac version closer to the original than anything in the existing translations" (*Ibid*).[89]

Not all of the figures listed above were Catholic biblical scholars; some of the early Orientalists such as Joseph Justus Scaliger were interested in the acquisition of Oriental languages inasmuch as Oriental sources could shed light on the natural history of the world (Irwin: 77). Or still some others got the chance to read the works of medicine,

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[88] The letters and reports of Jesuit missionaries sent to Europe from China, Levant, India, America, and elsewhere are compiled under the title *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. The letters were published in 34 volumes between 1702 and 1776 and played a major role in the development of the Enlightenment. The great minds of the era such as Voltaire, Montesquieu and Leibniz are known to have praised the letters.
[89] The preoccupation of biblical scholars with the grand project of polyglot Bible is also one of the causes of the increasing interest in Arabic. For more information on polyglot Bible studies, see Robert Irwin's *For Lust of Knowing* (2007), pp. 73-76.

philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy – by medieval scholars such Avicenna and Averroes – in Arabic and Persian that were published at the newly established printing houses capable of printing Arabic script (Rodinson: 41; Javadi: 39-40).

Regardless of the motivations of the scholars, such pursuits began to operate, first and foremost in seventeenth-century France, within a much more complex structure that burgeoned with the rise of mercantalism and the expansionist policies of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), Louis XIV's Minister of Finance. In addition to establishing colonial companies in China (1660), the East Indies (1664) and the Levant (1670), Colbert financed French travelers in their overseas journeys. More importantly, he helped these travelers publish their travelogues (Behdad: 82).[90] It had been a custom for those attending diplomatic missions to publish their travelogues (e.g. Busbecq and Postel), but patronage of this sort is considered to be a key moment in the history of Orientalism. As noted by Maxime Rodinson, the new relatively organized nature of patronage at high levels also promoted a certain degree of specialization that was in contrast to the individualistic encyclopedism of the Renaissance (41).

Among the scholars Colbert appointed one certain orientalist by the name of Barthélemy d'Herbelot (1643-1695) stands out. The new "scholarly approach" probably reached its peak with the publication of his over-ambitious project, one took him more than twenty years to complete. Even though d'Herbelot could not witness the publication of his masterpiece, the monumental study *Bibliotheque orientale* (1697), which is said to be largely based on an equally immense bibliography, *Kashf al-Zunun* of Katip Chelebi

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[90] For a detailed analysis of Colbert's patronage of "the Republic of Letters" see Nicholas Dew *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (2009).

(a.k.a. Hadji Khalifa; 1609-1657),[91] became the standard reference work for Orientalists, from Sylvestre de Sacy and William Jones to F.A.G. Tholuck, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this posthumously published "universal dictionary" of the "Orient" d'Herbelot provides information on the people, history, traditions, legends, religions, politics, government, laws, customs, wars, and literature of the Muslim Orient in 8600 alphabetically arranged, cross-referenced entries.

Despite the richness of the encyclopedia, Rumi's name is neither among the Persian poets or the prominent Sufis to whom d'Herbelot devotes separate entries. Nonetheless Rumi is mentioned under the rubric of the "*maulavi*" and "*mathnaoui*" as "Gelaleddin Mohammad." In the "*mathnaui*" [i.e. *Masnavi*] entry he explains that this is the name given to one of the most famous books of the Orient written in Persian on a great number of subjects in religion, history, morals and politics. After giving brief information about Rumi, d'Herbelot explains that an order of dervishes, which is "more spiritual than others," was established in Konya with the name *Meulevis*. He also mentions the existence of Persian and Turkish commentaries on the book, including the one by Anqaravi, a Mevlevi himself.[92]

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[91] *Kashf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-al-funūn*, ("The Removal of Doubt from the Names of Books and the Sciences") is a bibliographic encyclopedia, written in Arabic, and lists more than 14500 books in alphabetic order.

[92] "*C'est le nom d'un des plus fameux Livres de l'Orient composé en vers Persiens fur un grand nombre de différentes matieres de Religion, d'Histoire, de Morale & de Politique. Un a été composé par Gelaleddin Mohammed, fils de Mohammed al-Balkhi al-Konoui, environ l'an 600 de l'Hég, Les surnoms de Balkhl & de Konoui sont donnés à cet Auteur, parce qu'il étoit natif de la Ville de Balkh en Khorasan, & qu'il vint s'établir ensuite dans celle de Cogni en Anatolie. Ce fut dans cette même Ville qu'il institua un Ordre de Derviches plus spirituels que les autres, lesquels on appelle ordinairement Meulevis, qui font leur capital de l'Ouvrage de leur maître, auquel ils ne portent guere moins de respect qu'à l'Alcoran. C'est pourquoi on donne aussi souvent au Mathnaoui le surnom de; Meulevi. II y a un grand nombre de Commentaires Persiens & Turcs fur ce Livre, dont la poésie est estimée si excellente, que tous ses vers font cités comme autant de sentences, plusieurs desquelles sont rapportées en divers lieux dans cet Ouvrage.*"

Bibliotheque orientale is significant at another level for the purposes of this dissertation: d'Herbelot provides a quite grounded clarification about the concepts and terms of Sufism. He reserves separate entries for "*Sofi*," "*Dervish*," "*Faqir*," "*Zahed*," and "*Tasaouf*" (i.e. Sufism).[93] According to d'Herbelot "*tasaouf*" is "*Exercices de Dévotion, ou de Spiritualité*" but Muslims call it "*Elm al-Tassaouf,*" that is the science showing them how to attain perfection in accordance with the nature of the devotee.[94] Not all the information d'Herbelot provided is correct; for instance, he states that "*sofis*," whose profession is "*tasaouf*," take their title from *Abou Hafchem al-Sofi* (d. 150 A. H.). But such errors are insignificant compared to those made by Herbert and others.

Except for d'Herbelot, Sufism did not get the attraction of Orientalist scholars residing in Europe. Some of them did not even show any interest in Islam. Despite the negligence of linguistics-oriented orientalists, the history and present state of oriental societies were of interest to diplomats and merchants as the patronage of Colbert attests. In the accounts written by non-scholars we come across depictions of dervishes. Different from the previous eras, however, this time some of these figures, who penned accounts (not necessarily travelogues) after spending a considerable amount of time in the Orient, used primary sources in order to explain the relevant aspects of the culture in question. Most of these texts are presented as histories. While some preferred to translate already

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[93] "*Le mot de Sofi se prend en Perse pour un Religieux Musulman, qui porte aussi le nom de Dervisch, cest-à-dire, de Pauvre, aussi bien en Turquie qu'en Perse, & que les Arabes appellent Fakir, dans la même signification, titre & surnom que les Sofis, ou Derviches portent particulièrement dans les Indes.*" In these entries, d'Herbelot even refers to the Western misuse of the word "Sofi" in references to the Shah of Persia as the great Sophi: "*Les Ancêtres de la Race qui règne aujourd'huy en Perse, tels que sont Scheïkh Sefi & Scheïkh Haïdar, ont porté le surnom de Sofi, & Schah Ismaël, fils de ce dernier, qui est sorti de la Vie privée & qui a le premier jetté les fondements dé cette Dynastie ou Monarchie, retint ce Surnom & se faisait appeller Ismaïl Sofi. C'est, de-là que plusieurs de nos Historiens, &de nos Voyageurs donnent le nom de Sophi & de Grand Sophi, aux Rois de Perse.*"

[94] "*La Science qui fait monter l'homme de fêtas purement humain à celui de la félicité, en faisant passer de degré en degré jusqu'à la plus haute perfection autant qu'il est possìble à sa nature.*"

existing authentic sources into European languages (e.g. Thomas van Erpe's *Historia Saracenica*, Francois de la Croix's *Zafar Nama*, Edward Pococke's *Specimen historiae arabum*), still some others chose to compose original histories. Paul Rycaut (1628–1700), for instance, spent six years, on and off, in Istanbul (1661-1667) as a secretary in the English embassy and eleven years in Izmir (Smyrna) as the official consul of the Levant Company. In 1687 he published *The History of the Turkish Empire from 1623 to 1677, containing the reigns of the last three emperors (Amurath IV–Mahomet IV)* as a continuation of the first major Ottoman history in English, *General Historie of the Turkes* (1603) by Richard Knolles. Before this volume, however, he had already published his most important work, which was used for a long time as the major reference book for those interested in Ottoman history and culture. The book, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire, containing the Maxims of the Turkish Politie, the most material points of the Mahometan Religion, their Military Discipline, a particular Description of the Seraglio … illustrated with divers pieces of Sculpture, representing the varieties of Habits among the Turks, in three books* (1668), is based on the materials he collected during his appointment in Istanbul.[95] Yet utilization of original materials does not guarantee correct information. We do not know what kind of sources Rycaut used, but the section where he discusses "the religion of the Turks" is quite problematic due to its mixture of correct information with factual errors. It is obvious that Rycaut's account of the religious sects is an enlarged and for the most part corrected, yet still erroneous,

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[95] Even though Dudley North, a contemporary of Rycaut who engaged in foreign trade with the Ottomans, condemned the work as "superficial" and "erroneous", and Bespier pointed out a few direct misstatements, such as that Muslim women have no hope of heaven, it was nonetheless consumed as a faithful picture of Turkish manners. It long proved a useful companion to Knolles's 'History,' and is even quoted by Gibbon in his account of the rise of the Ottomans. It ran through several editions and was translated into French, German, and Polish within the same century.

version of Thomas Herbert's account. After discussing various "modern" and "ancient" "Turkish sects and heresies," (47-53) Rycaut describes "dervishes" (54) that constitute one of the religious orders, which were established "in imitation of the Christians." He argues that the Turkish histories – yet, we do not know which Turkish history – point at Orhan (the founder of the Ottoman Empire) as "the first Institutor of these religious orders" despite the disputable claim of some to trace them back to the time of prophet Muhammad (54). According to Rycaut's account, there are two main branches, namely *Calvette* (read Halveti) and *Nacksbendec* (read Naqshibandi) from which a variety of orders, e.g. *Nimetulahi*, *Edhemi*, *Kadiri*, *Kalenderi*, etc, stem. Among the sub-branches of the Naqshibandi, Rycaut points at the *Mevlevee* (read Mevlevis) as the most famous among the Turks. He notes that "Mevlevees are otherwise called Dervises (signifying as much as poor)," have their "principal foundation at Iconium, consisting of 400 Dervises" and "commands all the rest of the same Order." It was correct that by the time Rycaut was residing in Istanbul the most powerful orders were Halvetis and the Naqshibandis, but no Ottoman account would make the mistake of classifying the Mevlevis under Naqshibandis, an equally influential yet distinct Sufi order.

Similar problems are encountered in other "histories" of the time. Like Rycaut, Jean Chardin (1643-1713) spent a significant portion of his life in the Orient, specifically in Persia and acquired a better grasp of Persian than many Orientalists of his time. A jewel trader by profession, Chardin spent ten years, between 1664 and 1677, in Persia in two separate journeys and published a ten-volume account in 1711 (*Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*) after publishing an account of his second travel in 1686 under the title *Journal du Voyage de Chardin en Perse et aux*

Indes Orientales. While the latter follows the pattern set by J. Boemus, the ten-volume edition, different from similar texts, presents an incredibly comprehensive study of Persian culture of the time.[96] Again, unlike his predecessors, but befitting to his own milieu, Chardin drew considerable a amount of information from authentic sources such as Mahmud Shabistari's (d. 1340) *Gulshan-i Raz* (1311), Sadi's *Gulistan*, and Firdawsi's *Shahnameh*.[97]

For the purposes of this chapter, Chardin's book is important for two reasons: firstly, he introduces Sufis as philosophers and secondly, he shows interest in Persian poetry to the point of inserting his translations of Hafiz and Sadi into the section on the literature of the Persians. Starting with the second point, we should note that Chardin does not constitute an exception in showing interest in Persian poetry. Adam Olearius (1599-1671), for instance, who visited Russia and Persia as the secretary of the trade envoy sent by Frederick III, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, to the Shah of Persia, came back to Germany with enough knowledge and appreciation of Persian poetry. Following his travels (1633-39), he published *Beschreibung der Muscowitischen und Persinischen Reyse* (1647), an extensive travel narrative enriched with charts and numerous drawings of the author.[98] Olearius was extremely influenced by the status poetry enjoyed in Persian culture and notes that "There is no nation in the world more addicted to Poetry than the

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[96] For an introduction to Chardin's *Voyages* see R. W. Ferrier *A Journey To Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire* (1996).
[97] Translated into English as *The Garden of Mystery*, *Gulshan-e Raz* is a mystical poem, written in the form of mathnawi. Structured in question-and-answer form it provides basic information about the doctrines of the Sufis.
[98] For analysis of Olearius's drawings see *Visions of Persia* (2004) by Elio Brancaforte.

Persians" (251). He was specifically fond of the verses of Sadi and published the translation of Sadi's *Gulistan* (Rose Garden) (1259) as *Persianischer Rosenthal* in 1650.

Like Olearius, Jean Chardin (1643-1713) noticed the significance of poetry in Persian culture.[99] He agrees with Olearius on poetry being "the particular and proper gift of Persians" and argues that oriental philosophers have preferred poetry to express their wisdom "in order to make it more venerable, agreeable and easier to learn" (257). Just like the old times, says Chardin, poetry being moralistic in intention embodies all the teaching of philosophy. Chardin names poets and inserts translation from *Cheic Sahdy* (read Sadi) and *Afez* (read Hafiz) but even though he makes the connection between philosophy, morals and poetry he does not see or make any particular link between poetry and Sufis that he introduced in a chapter on philosophy in the same volume of *Voyages*.[100] And this brings us to our second point, that is, the depiction of Sufis in *Voyages*.

The Sufis or dervishes of any sort are mentioned in Western accounts, understandably enough, as an interesting aspect of Islam – which they insisted on calling "Muhammadanism" further into the twentieth century. Chardin is no different; Volume 9 of *Voyages* is almost exclusively on "the religion of Persians," and at some point in this extremely detailed presentation of different aspects of Islam, Chardin mentions dervishes as "beggars" (*mendicant*). Chardin notes that "dervish" as a generic term designates anyone who chooses poverty and detachment from the world and there are different sorts of dervishes, descriptions of most of whom, however, fit into the stereotype of the era.

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[99] See Chapter XIV of *Voyages*, Volume V (1711)

[100] Hasan Javadi notes that Chardin's translations of Sadi and Hafiz were relatively popular. Joseph Addison, the editor of the *Spectator*, published adaptations of a couple of stories and poems by Sadi as they were rendered by Chardin. Javadi adds that Chardin's translations are something of a mixture, containing many stories and phrases not found in the original, but are on the whole derived from the poet's own work (37-38).

Chardin's report (82-84) repeats more or less, including the hypocrisy of dervishes, what others have said so far; therefore, I am not going to focus on such depictions. What is noteworthy here is that he introduces "*Soufys*" as a subsection of dervishes who constitute an exception.[101]

The emphasis on the exceptionality of *Soufys* is not limited to the volume on religion. In Volume 5, which is on Persian arts and sciences, *Soufys* are introduced as members of a secret society teaching the philosophy of Pythagoras, which is, according to Chardin, "*la grande & universelle Philosophie des Indiens, & de tous les Peuples Idolâtres de l'Orient*" (153). Little known about this "ancient" and "celebrated" sect because, Chardin contends, "its doctrine is entirely mysterious & that those who profess it make an agreement never to reveal its very discreet funds so that the religion of the country will not be troubled" (*Ibid*).

The fact that Sufis like Ibn Arabi were knowledgeable in ancient Greek philosophy was no secret, but reducing "the philosophy of Sufis" to Pythagoreanism is quite misleading, which would be pursued in the following decades by the new generation of Orientalists. Furthermore, it is correct that the Safavid shahs, specifically Shah Abbas I (1588-1629), attempted to eliminate the Sufi orders prevalent in Persia, first those of Sunni affiliation and then those with Shi'ite loyalties (Algar: para. 10). But, as observed by Chardin, Sufis, or as Chardin calls them dervishes, remained in the religious scene either as "individual or loosely organized practitioners of popular or antinomian religion" (*Ibid*). Therefore, again, it might be correct that, for the time being,

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[101] "*Il faut excepter de cette règle générale une sorte de Dervich, de la secte des Soufys, qu'on appelle Moreidon*" (84).

Sufi orders might have to operate in secrecy, but this quite recent development in the history of Persian Sufism does not transform all Sufi orders into "mysterious Cabals."

Chardin's report on Sufis definitely goes beyond such a dry description. He outlines the different theories regarding the etymology of the word Sufi, specifies the time of the origin of the sect – probably around 200 After Hegira – and tries to explain the basic beliefs of Sufis, specifically the doctrine of *vahdat-i vujud*, or the unity of being, based on his reading of *Gulshan-i Raz*. Although he describes *Gulshan-i Raz* as the "*Somme Theologique*" of Sufis, he admits that even that book does not make it easier to grasp the sentiments and the discipline of the Sufis because of the nature of the "sect": "this is a cabal into which it is difficult to get and where secrecy is the first and most important and precept" (*Ibid*).

Chardin also describes how Sufi ceremonies were conducted; his overall impression of them, however, is fairly negative. After describing the ecstatic Sufi ceremonies, he notes that such state is not different from the dizziness (*étourdissement*) of the false prophets mentioned in the tenth chapter of the first book of Samuel.[102] Also, as mentioned by Ferrier, Chardin seems to be appreciating certain aspects of the Sufi philosophy (Ferrier: 133), but nonetheless their methods such as fasting, seclusion, and meditation utilized to achieve the state of union with God (Chardin: 158-159) are not among the deeds that a devout Protestant such as Chardin would approve. He believes that such methods make them neglect the care of the things people are obliged to attend

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[102] "*Ils disent qu'ils entrent encore d'une autre manière dans le transport ou le ravissement; qui est de se tenir la têt droite inclinée, & de se regarder fixement le bout du nez; cependant ils se servent plus communément du Chant, de la Danse, & de la Musique, disant qu'ils produisent plus surement leur extase, par laquelle il faut entendre un étourdissement, de même qu'en ces faux Prophètes, dont il est parlé au dixième Chapitre du premier Livre de Samuel, qui me paraissent tout-à-fait semblables aux Soufys*" (158).

in a society, and that is the reason behind Persian people's hatred of Sufis. These men, says Chardin, easily give in to ideas of revelation, union with God, and ecstasy as opposed to "the necessary application to the needs of life" because they are "naturally inclined to negligence and laziness" (160). Furthermore, Chardin contends that the visions Sufis claim to have as a result of their austere methods are merely "a thousand chimeras formed in their poor empty brain" (*mille chimères formées dans leur pauvre cerveau creux*) (158). He has never seen anyone proving what he claimed to be capable of (e.g. foretelling the future, knowing the heart and thoughts of people) and is not convinced by their argument that their religion, which is, according to Chardin, "a sect full of stupid people," is felt better than it sounds and cannot be understood by human inventions such as science or physics that can only cover the light instead of discovering it (159).

The information imparted by Chardin has permeated into the deep veins of Oriental studies; his account was used as a principal source by orientalists further into the twentieth century. Thomas Salmon in his over-ambitious study *Modern History or the Present State of all Nations* (1727) directly quotes from Chardin –without any kind of acknowledgment – in his section on Sufis in Persia (484). Unlike Salmon, Sir William Jones and F. A. G. Tholuck express their appreciation of Chardin in their works on Sufism, which determined the destiny of perception of Sufism in the Western world.

The overall effect of the discourses analyzed in this chapter on the following generations' understanding of Sufism is incalculable. The late eighteenth-, early nineteenth-century Orientalists immensely made use of the material provided by early modern texts on the Middle East. Be it their hypocrisy or secrecy, Sufis for a long time

retained the labels, sometimes inappropriately attached by such texts. Abdolonyme Ubicini, for instance, single-handedly presents the three quintessential assumptions made in the West about Sufis and Sufism in his 1856 travelogue *Letters on Turkey*.[103] The rhetoric of hypocrisy is used even then alongside information provided by the Orientalist studies of the time that will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter. Needless to say, such studies liberally utilized the knowledge reviewed in this section.

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[103] Ubicini's work was by no means scholarly; it is merely a blend of what he read about the Muslim world and observed during his residency in Istanbul sometime between 1848 and 1850. On Sufis he notes that, "The doctrines of the Dervishes took their rise in the Sofiism, which existed in the East long before the time Mohammed, and which perhaps might be traced back through the secret schools of the Pythagoreans and the Neo-Platonic philosophy of Alexandria, to the remotest theocracies of Egypt and India. [...] The essence of the Sofi doctrine is neither more nor less than pantheism, defined in the following exclamation of Mawlana-Djelaleddin, addressing his spiritual master: "O my master! you have completed my doctrinal instruction by teaching me that you are God, and that all is God. [...] The pernicious character of such a system is increased by disguising its corruption under a plausible exterior, specially adapted to lead astray the finest minds" (87-93).

CHAPTER 2

SUFISM'S DIVORCE FROM ISLAM

> Some have supposed that Sufiism was imported from India after
> the time of Mahommad; some that it was a development of the
> doctrines of Zoroaster which the Prophet's successors silenced but
> did not destroy. […] A third theory is that the origins of Sufiism
> are to be looked for in the philosophy of the Greeks, strangely
> distorted by the Eastern mind, and in the influence of Christianity.
> Gertrude Bell, *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*, pp. 32-33

In 1897 Gertrude Bell expresses the need for a study on "the history of Sufiism"

in the introduction to her *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*, simply because the theories

hitherto put forth cannot explain "the sources from which it arose" and "that it should

have found a home in Mahommedanism, the least mystical of all religions" (32).[104] The

theories Bell was referring to are those that suggest Indian, Zoroastrian and Greek origins

for Sufism. By the time Bell composed her book, however, as Titus Burckhardt notes and

Bell herself acknowledges, such diverse attributions have ended by canceling one

another, and people such as Bell were still waiting for an erudite orientalist to come up

with a solid explanation of the origins of Sufism.

Such "absurd views in wild confusion," to use Annemarie Schimmel's words

(1975: 8), were the suppositions presented in the studies made during the golden age of

Orientalism. What had accumulated hitherto in European stock of knowledge on Islam,

Sufis, and Persian literature were synthesized in an unprecedented manner by the

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[104] Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), an English archeologist, is known foremost as "the woman who made Iraq."
She gained reputation not through her archeological studies but instead through her role as an extremely
influential British imperial officer in the Middle East. In addition to exploring and mapping the Greater
Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia, she played, together with T. E. Lawrence, a crucial role in establishing the
Hashemite dynasties in what is today Jordan as well as in Iraq.

renowned Orientalists of the time. Within a century, Jean Chardin's attribution of Pythagoreanism to Sufi philosophy had evolved to the complete absorption of Sufism into religions and philosophies other than Islam.[105]

According to Schimmel, this has to do with the unavailability of authentic sources from the earlier periods of Islam, which in turn caused the Orientalists to "agree that Sufism must be a foreign plant in the sandy desert of Islam, the religion that was so little known and even less appreciated and that could not possibly be related to any finer and higher spiritual movement" (9). Titus Burckhardt also touches upon this point in his *Introduction to Sufism*, but argues the reason to be the perplexity the orientalists experienced in trying to resolve the "double aspect of Sufism": "because orientalists are anxious to bring everything down to the historical level it could hardly be expected that they would explain this double aspect of Sufism otherwise than as the result of influences coming into Islam from outside" (1995: 16).

Notwithstanding the validity of these two points I believe that the change in Western approaches to Sufis, which include the invention of "Sufism" itself, is a resonance of the conundrums preoccupying some of the great minds of the Western world. Particularly discussions on natural history & ancient theology stand out with the unforeseen repercussions they generate. Furthermore, I should note at the onset that the invention of Sufism grew out of an interest in Indo-Persian history and culture, not Islamic studies per se.

The unprecedented level of increase in the eighteenth century regarding

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[105] Though it would be ahistorical to ignore the influence of non-Islamic philosophies and religions on Sufism, it would be equally inaccurate to trace Sufism to these traditions.

knowledge about Islam and the Muslim world is analyzed in numerous studies on Orientalism.[106] As mentioned above throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries numerous Middle Eastern manuscripts were brought into European libraries and personal collections. Nina Berman points out that by the early eighteenth century three to four hundred Middle Eastern manuscripts were available to scholars in the city library of Leipzig alone (121). What is more, centers for Orientalist studies were opened in Paris, Leiden, Leipzig, and Antwerp, among other cities. Yet, significant portion of the research done in these centers were, for the most part, limited to materials written in Arabic. On the other hand, the eighteenth century also witnessed an unparalleled flow of production of stories set in the "exotic" and "erotic" Muslim Middle East, a flow initiated by Antoine Galland's remarkably popular series of translations between 1704 and 1713 of *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Neither the popularity of all sorts of "oriental" tales nor the quantitative increase of available material, however, ensured qualified research, especially in the realm of Persian studies. Sir William Jones himself complains in the preface to his *Persian Grammar* (1771) about the lack of scholarly interest in Persian language and literature despite the availability of materials:

> [I]t must seem strange that the study of this language should be so little cultivated at a time when a taste for general and diffusive learning seems universally to prevail; and that the fine productions of a celebrated nation should remain in manuscript upon the shelves of our public libraries, without a single admirer who

[106] See Edward Said *Orientalism* (1978), Michael Curtis *Orientalism and Islam* (2009), Nina Berman *German Literature on the Middle East* (2011), Todd Kontje *German Orientalisms* (2004), and Maxime Rodinson *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (1987).

might open their treasures to his countrymen, and display their beauties to the light. (i)

The longed-for scholarly interest in Persian culture burgeoned only by the end of the eighteenth century; the studies of not-quite-professional Orientalists serving the British Empire at the East India Company in Calcutta introduced the rich literary culture of Persia to the Western world. Interestingly enough, this introduction was itself an incidental one; it constituted only a minor part of the grand project of Sir William Jones to ascertain the history of the ancient world.

(i) Sufis (among) the Inheritors of the Ur-religion

William Jones was a man of his time: he was born into the age of reason, which saw the rise of deism and natural religion, along with the rise of the historical spirit and the comparative method of inquiry. Jones, of course, does not need any kind of introduction; his genius and extraordinary accomplishments have already been reiterated numerous times in studies on linguistics, law, philology and literature but in the context of Sufi studies he stands out as a gifted Orientalist whose competence in Persian and Arabic alongside Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and several modern European languages had bestowed him a reputation already when he was a student at Oxford.[107] At the age of 22, Jones's reputation in Oriental studies even reached the King of Denmark, who insisted on Jones undertaking the translation of a Persian book on the life of Nadir Shah into

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[107] Before embarking on his career in law, Jones spent considerable time and effort on studying Persian and Arabic classics as well as reviewing the available studies on any aspect of Middle Eastern culture. Furthermore, thanks to the friendship he established with Count Karoly Reviczky (1736-1793), another self-taught Orientalist, Jones's interest in classical Persian poetry evolved. For further info, see *The Life, Writings, and Correspondence, of Sir William Jones* by Lord Teignmouth (1807).

French.[108] Upon the commendation his translation received Jones composed another work in French, a *Traité sur la Poésie Orientale* (1771), accompanied by a translation of some of the odes of Hafiz. In 1771, Jones published two major works: *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, which meant to be not only a grammar but also an introduction to Persian literature, and "Dissertation sur la littérature Orientale," in which he criticized the translation and assumptions of Anquetil Duperron regarding Zendavista.[109] In 1772 Jones was elected a Fellow at the Royal Society as a linguist and an Orientalist.

As this brief summary of his accomplishments illustrate, there was no doubt about Jones's credentials in Oriental studies. But Jones was definitely more than that; alongside his interest in classical wisdom of all sorts, he was interested in the questions bothering the intellectuals of his time, specifically the origins of mankind, languages, and the natural history of the world.[110] The overwhelming need to explain the non-Abrahamic peoples together with their customs and beliefs, the challenge raised by scientific developments as well as intellectual developments all forced the leading minds of the Western world including Jones to revisit the Bible-based interpretation of the world and its history.[111]

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[108] Jones first declined the project but changed his mind after learning that otherwise a Frenchman would translate it. The translation appeared in 2 volumes in 1770.

[109] In the *Grammar* Jones has explained the principal rules through the examples he chose, in the first place from Hafiz, then from the other poets. The *Grammar* became so popular that by 1828 it had gone through nine London editions. As a standard work, for years it taught Persian to future Orientalists.

[110] Bruce Lincoln notes that during his studies on law the only non-law book Jones let himself to revel in was Jacob Bryant's *A New System or Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (1774–76) in which Bryant attempted to incorporate diverse myths to the stories recorded in Genesis.

[111] For centuries, Genesis 10 and 11 were held as the answer to the question of how all the nations and languages emerged and where the origin of all civilization was – Israel the cradle of civilization and Hebrew the original language. Starting in the late Middle Ages, however, alternatives to Hebrew, such as Dutch, German, Belgian, Scythian, etc., as the *Ursprach* were proposed. For further info, see Bruce Lincoln's *Theorizing Myth* (1999). Lincoln notes that first Troy emerged as an alternative to Israel. It was a theory highly esteemed especially by Nordic people who pointed at the lexical resemblances between their languages and ancient Greek. In the following eras Dutch, German, and Belgian were proposed as

While lexical studies claimed origins of languages other than Hebrew, numerous scientists and intellectuals including the distinguished members of the Royal Society of London brought forth theories about the natural history of the world that clashed with the Biblical version.[112] It goes without saying that the Enlightenment critique of revealed religion did not remain unanswered. Deists merely constituted a faction among others who tried to rise to the scientific as well as to the ethnographic challenges. Missionaries, Jesuits in particular, sought scenarios to incorporate ancient Asian cultures and religions into the Bible-based universe, and hence diverted their attention to the histories and religions of non-Abrahamic peoples. Urs App's comprehensive study *The Birth of Orientalism* (2011) demonstrates that the reports of Jesuit missionaries on Japan draw surprising similarities with Christianity, something unnoticed in the sixteenth-century reports from Africa, India, and America (9). What needs to be pointed out in this regard is that such fashioned descriptions are intertwined with a specific interpretation of

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Ursprach. While such theories remained, for the most part, unpopular, Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn's (1612-53) "Scythian theory" gained wide acclaim to the point of becoming the "standard form in which claims of northern origins and privilege were encoded" (77-81). In opposition to such Nordic claims, another theory again in contradiction to the Biblical account gained momentum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: India, Kashmir, and Tibet came to the fore as the possible cradles of humanity (App 2009: 4).

[112] With the advent of the new science and its transformation into an "attitude of mind," everything, from Aristotle to the Bible, began to be reexamined. It was religiously argued that only through a scientific method based on experiments the natural history of the world could be ascertained. Specifically, the attacks of the "radical deists" of the seventeenth century and the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century constituted the major charge against a Bible-based understanding of history and universe. Revealed religion in particular was one of the main targets of deists due to their belief in the supremacy of reason, which does not recognize the validity of miracles or miraculous occurrences, such as the revelation. In order to strengthen their stance deists "invoked the support of all who, in time or space, had ever shown that it was possible to live a good life without knowing anything about revealed religion" (63). Among those cited were the Chinese, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans, and the Italian rationalists. *The Birth of Orientalism* (2011), the extensive study of Urs App, points at the role played by the flux of information coming from the newly "discovered" lands such as Japan, Americas and China in fortifying the case of deists through casting a hard-to-erase doubt on the Bible-based worldview not only by the mere existence of people hitherto unbeknownst to them but also by means of texts such as Chinese annals that might be as old as, or even older than, Noah's flood. For instance, Charles Blount in his attack on Christianity in *Oracles of Reason* (1693) drew on ancient sources as well as on the religious documents of Islam, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism (Herrick: 6).

religion, namely the distinction made between esoteric and exoteric forms of religion,

which parallels the distinction between faith and ritual. The significance of this

distinction for the purposes of this chapter is quite noteworthy because a similar approach

predominated the late eighteenth-century descriptions of Sufism.[113] Certainly, the "two-

religion theory"[114] is not a novelty; ancient Greeks viewed Egyptian religion consisting

of two sets of teachings because of their belief that the Egyptian priests had encoded

secret esoteric teachings in hieroglyphs while conveying only the exoteric teachings of

religion to the masses. The same distinction was used in early Christian literature in the

attempts to understand and explain heathen creeds around the Mediterranean. The

distinction gained popularity in the Renaissance when the "hermetic texts," that is texts

ascribed to Hermes Trimegistus, were translated into Latin and presented as "vestiges of

ancient Egyptian 'esoteric' monotheism" (App 2011: 2). Especially the Renaissance

invention of "*prisca theologia*" (ancient theology), which began with the "provocative

paganism" of Georgius Gemistus Pletho (1360-1454) and developed by Marsilio Ficino

(1433-1499), created a strand of early modern thought that would re-emerge in

subsequent centuries.[115] Thanks to the much discussed incorporation of the *prisca*

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[113] Sufis themselves adopted such a two-tiered approach to Islam. However, the Sufi approach shows significant differences with the "two-religion theory" upheld by Jesuits and the like.

[114] Burton Feldman and Robert Richardson describe this theory basically to be positing "one high religion for the wise and the initiated and one vulgar, priest-ridden, superstition-filled religion for the herd" (4)

[115] Pletho's claim that Plato was an heir to a long tradition of truth, that of Zoroaster and the Pythagoreans was taken by Ficino who argued for a single "fountain of truth from which run two parallel streams," that is, philosophy and theology (Schmitt: 508). While the Scriptures form the basis of true religion and the writings of Plato the basis of true philosophy, nonetheless, Ficino argues, even before Plato there had already been a long development of philosophical truth, which is found principally in the *prisca theologia*, a long religio-philosophical tradition – through Zoroaster, Hermes Trimegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus and Pythagoras – dating back to Moses. One of the most significant outcomes of the Renaissance discussions on *prisca theologia* is the invention of *philosophia perennis* (eternal philosophy), which according to Wouter Hanegraaff was basically the reconceptualization of *prisca theologia* in the sixteenth century, specifically by Agostino Steuco (1497–1548), a humanist Biblical scholar (390). The major work of Steuco, *De perenni philosophia* (1540), which was dedicated to Paul III, is based on the idea that "there is

theologia tradition, missionaries were able to incorporate non-Abrahamic Eastern religions, starting with Japanese to be followed by Chinese and Indian, into the Biblical universe.[116] Such missionary reports, to use App's words, "created patterns of understanding whose effects are shown to be pervasive in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and did not abate in the nineteenth century" (10).

Joseph-Francois Lafitau (1681-1746) was among such Jesuit missionaries who sought ways to incorporate non-Abrahamic religions and people into Mosaic history. Lafitau's *Moeurs des sauvages Ameriquains comparees aux moeurs des premiers temps* (1724), the book he wrote after completing his mission in Sault St. Louis with the Iroquois, shared the perspective inherent in the grand project William Jones undertook in India (App 2009: 23). What Lafitau's research taught him was that not only "peoples that are called barbarians have a religion" but also "this religion shows connections of such great conformity with that of the most ancient times ... that one feels due to this similarity

one principle of all things, of which there has always been one and the same knowledge among all peoples" and aims to demonstrate the harmony of classical philosophy with the central tenets of the Catholic faith (Schmitt: 517). This single truth pervades all historical periods and though it may not be well known in all periods, it is accessible to those who search for it. According to Steuco, knowledge, which was handed down to man by God, soon became dissipated and scattered and now it seems to people like a mere story or dream. The thread of truth, however, runs through history, preserved most fully, in the tradition of the *prisca theologia* (Schmitt: 517-8). The nineteenth-century occultists reconstructed this view under the influence of "the oriental renaissance" and comparative religion, to be finally adopted in the New Age movement (Hanegraaff: 390). For the historical development and analysis see Charles B. Schmitt's "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz", Daniel P. Walker's *The Ancient Theology*, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann's *Philosophia Perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought*.

[116] For instance, the teachings of Zen Buddhism in Japan such as "quiet meditation, passivity, nothingness, all-oneness" were taken as tenets of the "esoteric" aspect which, according to mid-sixteenth-century reports, constituted the "real" teachings of Buddhism's founder Xaca, whose creed, it was believed, had come from India via China to Japan. While the so-called esoteric aspects of Buddhism do not, to say the least, contradict Christianity, the ones committing it, such as transmigration, were considered to be "outer" or "provisional" teachings of the founder (App: 10). Comments on Japanese religion did not constitute an exception. App notes that early European perceptions of Japanese religion were extremely influential and also shaped the perception of Chinese religions (from the 1590s) and Indian religions (particularly by Roberto de Nobili in the first decades of the seventeenth century) (*Ibid*).

that everywhere the same principles and the same fundamentals are present" (*Ibid*). Lafitau did not base his argument on the distinction between esoteric and exoteric teachings of religion, but what he comes up with describes a similar phenomenon. He basically proposes that "the same principles and the same fundamentals" indicate the existence of an Ur-religion, "a formed and public cult consisting of many traditions, principles of virtue, observances, and legal ceremonies" (App: 25). Lafitau maintained that the pure Ur-religion was far older than Moses yet had been "altered" by various nations (24-25). As such the pure and universal teachings are comparable to esoteric teachings while the "corrupt" and provisional ones are to exoteric teachings.

Lafitau was by no means an idiosyncratic figure; pure monotheism as Ur-religion had been endorsed by many in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) ventured to prove that all ancient religions and philosophies display manifestations of an original monotheism that had morphed in various ways (App 2009: 30); renowned deists John Toland and John Trechard argued that Christianity and pagan religions alike represented corruptions of the simple primal religion (Feldman & Richardson: 4); Michael Andrew Ramsey (1686-1743) held the esoteric essence of Egyptian religions to be pure monotheism that was transmitted to ancient Greeks and represented by Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Democritus of Abdera, Epicurus and Lucretius (App: 36); Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736-1793) claimed that "humanity's initial pure monotheism and enlightened philosophy had soon degenerated into materialism and gross cults" and advanced a hypothesis of a wise primeval "instructor people" (App: 49). Such arguments need to be mentioned because,

as the studies of Urs App and Bruce Lincoln demonstrate, Jones was heavily influenced by these figures, specifically by Ramsey, in his conceptualization of natural history.

It was not only the Western intellectuals who endeavored to prove the existence of a primeval religion. Quite a similar approach to history of religions was promoted during the same time in India by a Zoroastrian author incorrectly identified by William Jones as Mohsin Fani, a learned Kashmiri Sufi of the seventeenth century.[117] The book *Dabestan-e Mazaheb* (School of Religions), which is believed to have been written sometime between 1645 and 1658, is a comparative examination of religions and sects.[118] While *Dabestan* constitutes one of the major sources of Jones in his studies on religion and history, the book relies heavily on *Dasatir*, another Zoroastrian tract penned by Adar Kaivan. Not long after Jones's extreme approbation of *Dabistan* the credibility of *Dabistan* as well as *Dasatir* was questioned by orientalists, whose research has revealed these texts to be "products of a heterodox Parsi sect" (Lincoln 2002: 13). Azar Kaivan (d. between 1609 and 1618), a Zoroastrian high priest who founded the above-mentioned heterodox sect – *Ishraqi* or Illuminative School – produced the texts with his followers presenting a made-up primordial prehistory so as to "dignify and legitimate their own brand of Zoroastrianism over all other religious traditions" (*Ibid*). This rather obscure

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[117] The book *Dabestan-e mazaheb* is actually anonymous and the author refers to himself only as "the author" (*nāma-- negār*) and "the writer of the acts" (*kerdār-gozār*). Three different theories regarding the identity of the author have been proposed so far. Jones's identification is among the three but it was rejected by Captain Vans Kennedy and William Erskine. Some historians and authors of biographical dictionaries identified the author as Mir Du'l-feqar Ardestani (ca. 1617-70), better known under his pen name Molla Mowbad or Mowbadshah, and this attribution is now generally accepted. It is said that the author composed most of the Dabestan during the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-57), traveling to various parts of India in order to study different religious creeds. For further information, see http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dabestan-e-madaheb.

[118] The Dabestan consists of twelve chapters, further subdivided into several sections. Each of the chapters explains the beliefs of a different religious group: respectively Parsis, Hindus, Tibetans, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sadeqis, Wahedis, Rowshanis, Ilahis, Philosophers, and the Sufis.

text, which came to the attention of Jones via a Bengali informant in 1787, immediately aroused Jones's enthusiasm on account of explaining the missing parts in Jones's scheme. Its content, says Jones, "at once dissipated the cloud, and cast a gleam of light on the primeval history of Iran and of the human race, of which I had long despaired, and which could hardly have dawned from any other quarter" (182).

What does all this have to do with Sufism? The answer to this question lies in Jones's list of "Objects of Enquiry During My Residence in Asia," written down on July 12, 1783 on his way to India, and the annual discourses he gave at the Asiatick Society of Bengal. Jones's list of "Objects of Enquiry," argues Edward Said, is an indicator of the entanglement of oriental studies with imperialism, but the research interests outlined on the list indicate a greater extent of the project of Jones.[119] It consists of sixteen topics of investigation, not nine as Said suggests, which interestingly enough includes items such as "The History of the Ancient World," "Proofs and Illustrations of Scripture," and "Traditions concerning the Deluge, &c." While most studies on Jones focus on his linguistic endeavors, a number of noteworthy scholars point at the rather ignored ethnographic and theological character of his inquiries. Trautmann convincingly argues that the ethnology of Jones could be encapsulated within the Mosaic frame, which "is supplied by the story of the descent of Noah in the book of Genesis, attributed to Moses, in the Bible" (40). In that respect Jones's initial motivation is no less different than that of the Jesuit missionaries who tried to prove the validity of the Biblical account despite the existence of non-Abrahamic people arguing otherwise. In a similar vein, Bruce Lincoln argues that Jones had "since childhood been convinced of the inspired, inerrant nature of

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[119] For a discussion on Edward Said's use of this list see App 2009: 1-2; and Lincoln 1999: 84.

Scripture" and that "the ultimate goal toward which he organized his lectures was 'scientific' validation of the Genesis account (1999: 91). But Jones's quest intended to do more than prove the validity of the Biblical account; he was "in search of God's original teachings" (App 2009: 71).

In his Third Annual Discourse (1786), Jones explicates his own project within the Asiatick Society of Bengal as "to prepare a series of short dissertations, unconnected in their titles and subjects, but all tending to a common point of no small importance in the pursuit of interesting truths" (1807: 24-25). As aptly noted "the hypothesis of a common origin of the major peoples of Asia and the question of congruence with the traditional biblical account was at the center of Jones's series of discourses" (App 2009: 41). Jones, in fact, hinted at his grand project in the conclusion of his essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" (1784): "We shall, perhaps, agree at last with Mr. Bryant, that Egyptians, Indians, Greeks, and Italians, proceeded originally from one central place, and that the same people carried their religion and sciences into China and Japan: may we not add, even to Mexico and Peru?" (1807: 387). At that point he was undecided as to where that *Urheimlat* might be: "But which was the original system and which the copy, I will not presume to decide; nor are we likely, I believe, to be soon furnished with sufficient grounds for a decision" (386). About eight years later, however, after reading the *Dabistan*, he seems to have found it out. Throughout the seven essays that he delivered at the annual meetings of the Asiatick Society, he aimed at finding that "one central place", which he would claim in 1792 to be Iran.[120]

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[120] See Jones's "Ninth Annual Discourse" (1792) in 1807: 185-205.

If we discard the first two discourses of Jones, we might say that the seven talks he presented on "Hindus," "Arabs," "Tartars," "Persians," "Chinese," "the borderers, mountaineers and islanders of Asia," and "the origin and families of nations" comprised the heart of his project devoted to find out the common origin.[121] Bruce Lincoln rightly notes that Jones followed a consistent pattern in his annual addresses, covering geography, history, and cultural accomplishments in sequence. In the last sphere he concentrates on four specific domains, namely, language & letters, philosophy & religion, architecture & sculpture, and lastly science & arts.[122]

It is in these annual discourses, especially in the language & letters and philosophy & religion sections that Jones not only mentions Sufism, but also situates it within his grand scheme of religions and history. Although harshly criticized by Max Muller for "the utter baselessness of its comparisons and identifications," Jones's essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" (1784) occupies a pivotal position in Jones's conceptualization of primeval religion. The essay, which takes its lead from "features of resemblance, too strong to have been accidental" between "different systems of polytheism" (1807: 321), relies heavily on the idea of a single origin and divine revelation as maintained in the Old Testament (App: 11).[123] This general affinity between

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[121] In Jones's words: "The five principal nations, who have in different ages divided among themselves, as a kind of inheritance, the vast continent of Asia, with the many islands depending on it, are the *Indians*, the *Chinese*, the *Tartars*, the *Arabs*, and the *Persians*: who they severally were, whence, and when they came, where they now are settled, and what advantage a more perfect knowledge of them all may bring to our European world, will be shown, I trust, in five distinct essays; the last of which will demonstrate the connexion or diversity between them, and solve the great problem, whether they had any common origin, and whether that origin was the same, which we generally ascribe to them" (1807: 27-28).
[122] In these sections Jones not only describes but also evaluates the cultures in question. His judgments are based on what he took to be levels of accomplishment and the extent to which one civilization influenced or was influenced by others (Lincoln: 88).
[123] "It is my design in this essay to point out such a resemblance between the popular worship of the old Greeks and Italians and that of the Hindus; nor can there be room to doubt of a great familiarity between

polytheistic cults, however, does not form the original religion of primeval mankind; it was, rather, a "deviation" from an earlier religion, which consisted of "the rational adoration of the only true GOD" (Jones 1807: 321). The Ur-religion as imagined by Jones was a pure monotheism like that of Lafitau, but it had "too early" metamorphosed into, "pre-mosaic united idolatry", which based the foundation of prevalent forms of polytheisms. Jones believed in an initial divine revelation to mankind and was convinced that despite the dissemination of polytheistic traditions the core of primeval monotheism had been continuously transmitted and survived in ancient texts (App: 71-2). Furthermore, Jones insisted that not only all his historical researches "confirmed the Mosaic accounts of the primitive world" but also he was able to locate "the true center of languages, and of arts" in "Iran or Persia in its largest sense" (Jones 1807: 135). Although he was unable to find answers to questions regarding antediluvian history and religion, he proclaimed in the "Ninth Anniversary Discourse," "On the Origin and Families of Nations" (1792), his conviction that Hindus (Persians and Chinese among them), Arabs and Tartars constituted the three primordial races. They were all descended from Noah, circa 1200 BC, and separated at Babel, which he located at the center of Iran between the Oxus and Euphrates, and between the Caucasus and the Ganges.[124] This division of people was permanent, and no amount of research would succeed in restoring the unity that was sundered or in recovering the original language (Lincoln: 93).

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their strange religions and that of Egypt, China, Persia, Phrygia, Phoenicia, Syria; and to which perhaps we may safely add some of the southern kingdoms and even islands of America; while the Gothic system, which prevailed in the northern regions of Europe, was not merely similar to those of Greece and Italy, but almost the same in another dress with an embroidery of images apparently Asiatick" (1807: 321).

[124] Jones repeats this point in 1792 in another essay entitled "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus": "'Plato travelled into Italy and Egypt, says Claude Fleury, 'to learn the theology of the pagans as its fountainhead:' its true fountain, however, was neither in Italy nor in Egypt (though considerable streams of it had been conducted thither by Pythagoras and the family of *Misra*), but in Persia or India, which the founder of the Italick sect [Academicks] had visited with a similar design" (1824: 131).

The impossibility of recovering the original language notwithstanding, Jones was

certain that at least certain vestiges of the "ancient theology" are quite present in certain

non-Judea-Christian philosophies and texts such as the Vedas, Sufi poetry, the

commentaries of Shankara, and alike. In the religion & philosophy subsection of his

"Discourse on the Persians" (1789), Jones notes that "the primeval religion of Iran, if we

rely on the authorities adduced by Mohsani Fani, was that which Newton calls the oldest

(and it may justly be called the noblest) of all religions" (1824: 99). The basic tenets of

this religion are listed as "a firm belief, that One Supreme God made the world by his

power, and continually governed it by his providence; a pious fear, love and adoration of

Him; a due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole

human species, and a compassionate tenderness even for the brute creation" (*Ibid*). Based

on his reading of *Dabistan*, Jones adds that because "a system of devotion so pure and

sublime" could not survive for a long time "among mortals," the primeval religion of Iran

degenerated into several sorts of popular worship, one of which was a "purely *Sabian*

popular worship" that took the adoration of celestial bodies into its centre. However,

again based on *Dabistan*, Jones argues "the first corruption of the purest and oldest

religion was the system of Indian Theology, invented by the Brahmans and prevalent in

these territories, where the book of Mahabad or Menu is at this hour the standard of all

religious and moral duties" (101).

The philosophy of old Persians, Jones believed, should be analyzed in connection

with their religion (102). Citing, once again, Mohsan Fani, Jones maintains that these

philosophers, who were "assiduous observers of the luminaries," "are said to have known

the most wonderful powers of nature, and thence to have acquired the same of magicians

and enchanters" (103). The metaphysical theology of the Persian philosophers that "has been professed immemorially by a numerous sect of Persians and Hindus" was, according to Jones, "carried in part into Greece, and prevails even now among the learned Muselmans, who sometimes avow it without reserve" (103). Such "Muselmans" in Jones's scheme, as a matter of fact, were the Sufis:

> The modern philosophers of this persuasion are called *Sufi's*, either from the Greek word for a *sage*, or from the *woolen* mantle, which they used to wear in some provinces of *Persia*: their fundamental tenets are, that nothing exists absolutely but GOD: that the human soul is an emanation from his essence, and, though divided for a time from its heavenly source, will be finally re-united with it; that the highest possible happiness will arise from its reunion, and that the chief good of mankind, in this transitory world, consists in as perfect an *union* with the Eternal Spirit as the incumbrances of a mortal frame will allow; that, for this purpose, they should break all *connexion* (or *taalluk*, as they call it), with extrinsick objects, and pass through life without *attachments*, as a swimmer in the ocean strikes freely without the impediment of clothes; that they should be straight and free as the cypress, whose fruit is hardly perceptible, and not sink under a load, like fruit-trees *attached* to a trellis; that, if mere earthly charms have power to influence the soul, the *idea* of celestial beauty must overwhelm it in extatick delight; that, for want of apt words to express the divine perfections and the ardour of devotion, we must borrow such expressions as approach the nearest to our ideas, and speak of *Beauty* and *Love* in a transcendent and mystical sense; that, like a *reed* torn from its native bank, like *wax* separated from its delicious

honey, the soul of man bewails its disunion with *melancholy musick*, and sheds

burning tears, like the lighted taper, waiting passionately for the moment of its

extinction, as a disengagement from earthly trammels, and the means of returning

to its Only Beloved. (103-104).

The description, in itself, is not unacceptable; to the contrary no scholar of Sufism would

object to the listed tenets of Sufis. Furthermore the idea of a primordial faith revealed by

God to a select few is not a foreign notion for Muslims.[125] The problem with the

description, however, lies in the framework: Sufism is basically taken out of its Islamic

context and is incorporated into the grand history of ancient theology. Of course no

religious tradition can develop and survive without having interacted with other

traditions, faiths or philosophies. In that regard one cannot propose the existence of pure

Sufism. What Jones and those following him claimed, however, is not limited to the

interaction among diverse traditions; they completely ignored Sufism's organic ties with

Islam and implanted it within another tradition, the validity of which rests on the Bible.

Such vestiges of ancient theology were important for Jones as long as they agreed with

Christian teachings. The appeal of this argument is undeniable; E.B. Cowell (1826-1903),

a renowned translator of Persian poetry and the first professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge

University, stated in 1848 "Sufeyism may be pronounced the nearest approach to

Christianity that poor fallen man can attain by his own unaided efforts" (44). To Jones,

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[125] Muslims themselves have developed a notion similar to that of ancient theology regarding Islam; it is basically argued that since the first revelation communicated to Adam there has been only one single religion. Until the time of prophet Muhammad that primordial religion was revealed at many times and places to several prophets among whom Abraham, Moses and Jesus are considered to be the most important ones. In time, however, the pure message of God had somehow been modified due to some misconstructions. At last with Muhammad this primordial faith had been revealed once again in its complete and perfect form.

the philosophy of Rumi and the poems of Hafiz express the same belief system as the

Vedas purely because they fed on the same spring, that is, the pure monotheist religion of

the primeval Iranians. The rest of the description underlines this point in a

straightforward way:

> "Such in part is the wild and enthusiastick religion of the modern *Persian* poets,
>
> especially of the sweet HA'FIZ and the great *Maulavi*: such is the system of the
>
> *Vedanti* philosophers and best lyrick poets of *India*; and, as it was a system of the
>
> highest antiquity in both nations, it may be added to the many other proofs of an
>
> immemorial affinity between them. (104)

In 1791, Jones wrote down another piece, "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and

Hindus," dealing with the manifestations of the common system of Vedantis and Sufis in

literature. This time, it seems that, rather ascribing a common origin to the Vedanta

school and the Sufis, he prefers to assign the Vedanta school to be the source of

inspiration of modern Sufis:

> A figurative mode of expressing the fervor of devotion, or the ardent love of
>
> created spirits towards their beneficent Creator, has prevailed from time
>
> immemorial in Asia; particularly among Persian theists, both ancient Hushangis
>
> and modern Sufis, who seem to have borrowed it from the Indian philosophers of
>
> the Vedanta school; and their doctrines are also believed to be the source of that
>
> sublime, but poetical, theology, which glows and sparkles in the writings of the
>
> old Academicks. (1824: 131)

Jones's endeavor to prove the compatibility of the vestiges of ancient theology with

Christianity by comparing the contemporary Western ideas about Divine Love or unity

with God and the tenets of Sufism constitutes another striking point of this specific

discourse. After quoting rather long passages on the concept of Divine Love by Isaac

Barrow (1630-1677), a reputed English Christian theologian, and mathematician, and on

unity with God by Jacques Necker (1732-1804), finance minister of Louis XVI but drew

the attention of Jones with his work *De l'importance des opinions religieuses*, Jones

repeats his argument: the same points would be done by the Sufis and Yogis.

> Now the passage from Barrow (which borders, I admit, on quietism and
>
> enthusiastic devotion) differs only from the mystical theology of the Sufis and
>
> Yogis, as the flowers and fruits of Europe differ in scent and flavor from those of
>
> Asia, or as European differs from Asiatick eloquence; the same strain, in poetical
>
> measure, would rise up to the odes of Spenser on Divine Love and Beauty, and, in
>
> a higher key with richer embellishments, to the songs of Hafiz and Jayadeva, the
>
> raptures of the Masnavi, and the mysteries of the Bhagavat. [...]
>
> If these two passages were translated into Sanskrit and Persian, I am confident
>
> that the Vedantis and Sufis would consider them as an epitome of their common
>
> system; for they concur in believing, that the souls of men differ infinitely in
>
> degree, but not at all in kind, from the divine spirit, of which they are particles
>
> and in which they will ultimately be absorbed; that the spirit of God pervades the
>
> universe, always immediately present to his work, and consequently always in
>
> substance, that he alone is perfect benevolence, perfect truth, perfect beauty; that
>
> the love of him alone is real and genuine love, while that of all other objects is
>
> absurd and illusory, that the beauties of nature. [...] From these principles flow a
>
> thousand metaphors and poetical figures, which abound in the sacred poems of

the Persians and Hindus, who seem to mean the same thing in substance, and differ only in expression as their languages differ in idiom! (135-138)

The implications of Jones's approach to Sufism are significant. He picks and chooses from vastly rich and living traditions only the parts that are of interest to his hypothesis. The common denominator he finds among different philosophies, religious traditions and faiths may not be unobjectionable, but it is contrary to logic to equate these traditions based on the existence of such common traits. In his text-based approach Jones created a version of Sufism that is fixed in time yet ahistorical and that is confined to the beliefs of Sufism, analysis of which, would be incomplete and incorrect without any reference to its practices. Unlike travelers to the Orient, Jones was first and foremost interested in the philosophy of the Sufis, not their rituals. At no point in his discourses he talks about the rituals performed by Sufis – hence no mention of the hypocrisy of dervishes! Among several factors, I believe, the changing conceptualization of religion stands out as the primary reason for this purely textual approach. In the first section of this chapter, I mentioned that since the Renaissance the practical aspect of religions occupied a considerable space in ethnographic accounts. In time what happened is that "'religion' in relation to ritual practice became an item in an inventory of cultural topics that could be presented either ethnographically in terms a particular people, ..., or in a cross-cultural encyclopedia under the heading of "ritual" or 'religion'" (Smith: 270). With the increasing impact of Reformation was observed another shift in understanding of the term "religion" that culminated during the Enlightenment. This time it was from ritual to belief.[126] By the mid-eighteenth century, the "essentially Catholic understanding

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[126] Talal Asad in *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) eloquently discusses the repercussions of the post-Reformation reconceptualization of religion in terms of belief.

of religion" in close proximity to ritual has been decisively altered and the shift to belief as the defining characteristic of religion could be observed in the German preference for the term *Glaube* over *Religion*, and in the increasing English usage of "faiths" as a synonym for "religions" (Smith: 271). Jonathan Smith reveals that even the dictionary and encyclopedia definitions of religion reflect the irrevocable change:

> Samuel Johnson, in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), defines religion as "virtue, as founded upon reverence of God, and expectations of future rewards and punishments." The first edition of the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* (1771) titled its entry "Religion, or Theology," defining the topic in the opening paragraph: "To know God, and to render him a reasonable service, are the two principal objects of religion. ... Man appears to be formed to adore, but not to comprehend, the Supreme Being." Terms such as "reverence," "service," "adore," and "worship" in these sorts of definitions have been all but evacuated of ritual connotations, and seem more to denote a state of mind, a transition begun by Reformation figures such as Zwingli and Calvin who understood "religion" primarily as "piety." (271)

It is no surprise that the new understanding of religion putting emphasis on belief both precipitated and facilitated the arguments of Jones and alike. By means of incomplete renderings of diverse yet similar traditions such as Hinduism and Sufism, as we shall see, Jones did manage to influence a generation of readers regarding ancient theology.

(ii) <u>The Legacy of Jones</u>

The "discoveries" of Jones irretrievably changed the course of Oriental studies and drew the attention of the leading intellectuals of his time.[127] Furthermore, Jones paved up a new path for Sufi studies, on which Orientalists from similar backgrounds, such as Lt. James William Graham, Dr. John Leyden, and Sir John Malcolm. Whether or not the newcomers to the field agree with Jones's grand scheme of history of religions and people or share his enthusiasm regarding the universal tenets found in Sufism, they immediately subscribe to the argument regarding non-Islamic origins of Sufism, even through making appeals to Islamic sources.[128] These figures, unlike Jones, also appeal to the alleged hostility between orthodox Muslims and Sufis. For instance, Sir John Malcolm, who considered Sufis to be "philosophical devotees" of "pure Deism," (219) not only took the supposed Indian origins for granted, but also presented the hostile views of a certain member of the Shi'ite hierarchy in the city of Kermanshah towards Sufis as the common feelings of orthodox Muslims in general (Ernst 1997: 11-12).

The studies of Jones at the Asiatick Society rendered another significant development in Sufi studies. Up to this point, discussions on Sufism were limited to brief

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[127] *Asiatic Researches*, the journal of the society, was extremely popular throughout the Western world and helped the Asiatick Society to get into contact with other similar societies. Some of the volumes were even translated into German and French. All of the leading orientalists of the time from Sylvestre de Sacy to Wilhelm Purgstall von Hammer as well as belletrists and philosophers of the time (e.g. Goethe, Herder, etc.) were subscribers to the journal.

[128] Sir John Malcolm, for instance, presented a very negative picture of Sufism although he did not disagree with Jones regarding the basic tenets of Sufism. In his *History of Persia* (1815) he presented Sufism as an imported philosophy from India to Muslim lands yet his presentation carries on the negative image of the previous eras: "It is in India, beyond all other climes, that this delusive and visionary doctrine has most flourished. There is, in the habits of that nation, and in the character of the Hindoo religion, what peculiarly cherishes the mysterious spirit of holy abstraction in which it is founded; and we may grant our belief to the conjecture which assumes that India is the source of from which other nations have derived this mystic worship of the Divinity (268).

observations in the context of remarks on Persian history and culture. In 1819, however, the first separate treatment of Sufism in a European language was composed by an officer of the East India Company named James William Graham.[129] In his article "A Treatise on Sufism, or Mahomedan Mysticism" Graham presents Sufism as a state of mind having nothing to do with Islam. According to Carl Ernst, Graham finds Sufism as an attractive system "precisely to the degree that it denies the law of Muhammad and approaches Christianity" (1997: 13). In this quite descriptive article filled with information based on Persian treatises that he had access to in Western India, Graham even explains the stages of a Sufi adept on his path to unity with God. However, Graham's explanation of "the doctrine of Sufism" right at the beginning sets the tone of the rest of the article:

> With regard to the religion (if it can be so termed in the general acceptation of that word) or rather doctrine and tenets of Sufis, it is requisite to observe, first, that any person, or a person of any religion or sect, may be a Sufi: the mystery lies in this; -- a total disengagement of the mind from all temporal concerns and worldly pursuits; an entire throwing off not only of every superstition, doubt, or the like, but of the practical mode of worship, ceremonies, &c. laid down in every religion, which the Mahomedans term *Sheryat*, being the law, or canonical law; and entertaining solely mental abstraction, and contemplation of the soul and Deity, their affinity, and the correlative situation in which they stand: in fine, it is that

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[129] The article was originally presented in 1811 at one of the meetings of the Asiatic Society. It had become one of the primary sources for those interested in Sufism. The above-mentioned Sir John Malcolm, for instance, basically paraphrases the information he gleaned through Graham's article and acknowledges his authority: "There cannot be higher authority than this gentleman, who adds to great learning a singular knowledge of the opinions and usages of these remarkable oriental devotees" (270, note g). Similarly, the renowned French orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy uses Graham as his main source in his comments in *Pend nameh: Ou le Livre des Conseils de Ferid-Eddin Attar* (1819) on the origins of Sufism.

spiritual intercourse of the soul with its Maker, that disregards and disclaims all

ordinances and outward forms, of what sect or religion soever; such as

observances of feasts, fasts, stated periods of prayer, particular kinds of meat to be

eaten, ablutions, pilgrimages, and suchlike other rites and ceremonies which come

under the head of practical worship (*Jismani amul*), being the deeds of the law, in

contradistinction to mental or spiritual worship (*Roohani amul*), that is, I take it to

be, grace or faith. (90-91)

Throughout his discussion, Graham insists on explaining Sufi concepts as identical with

Indian, Christian and ancient Greek ones (92-93). He further claims that the British

officials in India themselves were regarded as Sufis by the Indians because of their "non-

observance here of any rites of forms, conceiving a worship of the Deity in mind and

adherence to morally sufficient" (95-96). He concludes, "the present freethinker or

modern philosopher of Europe would be esteemed as a sort of Sufi in the world, and not

the one retired therefrom" (96).

De-Islamization of Sufism as such was not peculiar to the British Orientalists.

Their studies kindled a transnational interest in Oriental literatures and religions,

especially in the classical literature of Persia and the ancient religion of India. Shortly

after the publication of the above-mentioned discourses and articles, French and German

orientalists showed learned interest in Persian poetry and Sufism almost

contemporaneously.[130] Sylvestre de Sacy in Paris, Wilhelm Purgstall von Hammer in

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[130] In 1795, Louis-Mathieu Langlès became the founder-director the Ecole des langues orientales vivantes in Paris, which is still operating under the name of Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO). Silvestre de Sacy, who was the first professor of Arabic at the Ecole de langues orientales, was appointed about the same time, as the chair of newly created Persian chair at the College de France. In 1822, a Societe Asiatique was set up in Paris, the first meeting of which was chaired, again, by Sacy.

Vienna and F.A.G. Tholuck in Germany provided annotated translations of texts and poems written by Sufis.

<p style="text-align:center">(iii) <u>The Invention of Pantheistic Sufism</u></p>

The relocation of Sufism within the tradition of original monotheism with Indian origins have precipitated another major vein of perception that Jones and his friends had not probably anticipated: Sufism as a pantheistic philosophy. The overall impact of this derivative interpretation is not easy to assess but suffice it to say that numerous contemporary scholars of Sufism from Carl Ernst, A. J. Arberry, and Louis Massignon to René Guénon have felt the need to discuss the baselessness of this specific interpretation in their books.

The first question that needs to be addressed in this section is "how did the original monotheism theory turn into pantheism?" In order to provide a satisfactory answer to this question we need to turn our attention to Germany, in specific to the *Fruhromantiks* who grew up within the "pantheistic controversy" (*Pantheismusstreit*) that occupied the greatest minds of the time such as Moses Mendelsohn, Johann G. Herder, and F. Jacobi.[131] It has been pointed out that pantheism, or Spinozism as the two terms

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Shortly thereafter the society commenced the publication of its journal, the *Journal Asiatique*. The rise of oriental studies in Germany is dated to the turn of the eighteenth century, when a number of German scholars trained in Paris, many by Sacy, returned Germany to conduct their researches. By mid-nineteenth century Orientalist institutions such as the *Deutsche Morgenlandsiche Gesselschaft* began to be set up.

[131] The trigger firing a popular discussion of pantheism in Germany was Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's revelation to Moses Mendelssohn in 1783 regarding the confession G. E. Lessing made shortly before his death of being a Spinozist. The controversy, which started as semiprivate exchange of letters between Jacobi and Mendelssohn, became public with Mendelssohn's 1786 *Morgenstunden* and Jacobi's *Briefe uber die Lehren von Spinoza* (1786). In 1787 Herder got involved in the controversy with his *Gott, Einige Gesprache* (1787). At the core of the controversy lies the problem of Spinozism being atheistic. For further information on *Pantheismusstreit* and the pantheistic vision of the see Lee Tveson's *The Avatars of Thrice Great Hermes* (1982), Nicholas Riasanovsky's *The Emergence of Romanticism* (1992), Julia Lamm's

were used synonymously, had been prevalent in German thinking since the end of the

seventeenth century (Lamm: 167; Beiser: 176).[132] With the pantheistic controversy

initiated by Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich H. Jacobi, yet further complicated by

Herder, pantheism as a controversial term became a buzzword in the parlance of early

eighteenth-century German thinkers. However one should bear in mind that the meaning

attributed to pantheism had changed quite drastically within romantic circles

predominantly owing to Herder's reinterpretation of Spinoza.[133] To put it shortly, Herder

attacked both the notion of a personal, extra-mundane God and the simplistic version of

pantheism that equates the world/universe with God: "God is not the world, and the

world is not God, so much is certain. But it seems to me that with the 'extra' and the

'supra,' not much good is done. When one speaks of God one must forget all idols of

space and time" (trans. by Lamm: 173). Taking their clue from Herder's "organic

monism", Romantic thinkers such as Schelling, Holderlin, Novalis and F. Schlegel

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"Romanticism and Pantheism"(2010), Frederick C. Beiser's *The Romantic Imperative* (2003), and in Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* (1999).

[132] Although the term "pantheism" was coined by John Toland (1660-1722) in the early eighteenth century so as to distinguish it from atheism, for many, Spinoza's pantheism had continued to be indistinguishable from atheism. Generally recapitulated with his oft-quoted dictum *deus sive natura*, Spinoza's pantheism proposes answers to questions preoccupying philosophers and theologians regarding the presumed conflict between reason and faith, or in other terms science and religion with an identification of God with the infinitude of nature. As noted by Frederick Beiser, by divinizing nature as much as naturalizing the divine, Spinoza have "made a religion out of science, a science out of religion" (175).

[133] Julia Lamm and Frederick Beiser consider Herder's *Gott, Einige Gesprache* (1787) the turning point in the reception of Spinoza in Germany. First of all, Herder opposes Jacobi on Spinoza representing an alternative to atheism and theism, but, at the same time, believes that Spinoza's philosophy had to be revised with the findings of recent developments in biology, chemistry, electricity, and magnetism. Herder reinterpreted Spinoza's philosophy as "a vitalistic pantheism or pantheistic vitalism" (Beiser: 182) by transposing the latter's philosophy of immanence into a worldview according to which there is no inert matter or vacuous space, only a system of living, active, interrelated forces. He developed, in other words, an organic monism, what he called a world-nexus", according to which all of nature forms one vast living organism (Lamm: 169; Beiser: 182).

revised the notion of pantheism in such a way that their religious philosophy came to be identified as "panentheism" by scholars of German romanticism.[134]

Whether the idea of God that the Romantics upheld was pantheistic or panentheistic did not change the fact that their preoccupation with pantheism, or Spinozism, affected their ideas about religions, especially "Hinduism" and mysticism of any sort. It was even argued that the "romantically-glorified conception of pantheism" was one of pre-Catholic Schlegel's "original motivations behind his interest in India" (Halbfass: 78). Richard King, the author of *Orientalism and Religion* (1999), believes it to be a general inclination definitely not peculiar to Schlegel and draws attention to the focus of the Romantic interest in Indian culture on "the question of its apparent pantheism" (124). Herder, for instance, saw a pantheistic monism at the core of Hindu thought similar to Spinoza's philosophical system; or Schlegel associated Hinduism and Buddhist thought with pantheism. Schelling also, in defense of pantheism against Schlegel, praised Indian culture and towards the end of his life "became convinced that a noble form of pantheism was best exemplified in the philosophy of Vedanta" (*Ibid*).

As regards Sufism, it is safe to say that most of the Romantic thinkers were not interested in it or even Islam per se, but the permeation of pantheism (or panentheism) into almost every line of thought inevitably manifested itself in the nascent Sufi studies undertaken in Germany by a small group of Orientalists. Among the new generation of intellectuals showing scholarly interest in Sufi studies, F. A. G. Tholuck (1799-1877), a

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[134] Julia Lamm argues "although the Romantics wanted to defend the idea of pantheism, as well as those assumed to be pantheists, against crude accusations, they themselves were not pantheists. Rather than maintain the identity of God and world, they maintained a dynamic coincidence of the opposites; they did not so much deny a personal God as challenge fixed and limited ideas of God; and they affirmed the divine transcendence, albeit in terms of divine immanence" (183). On the panentheism of German romantics see Tuveson, Lamm and Beiser.

neo-Pietist theologian, stands out due to the scope as well as impact of his studies on Sufi studies. However, before discussing Tholuck's take on Sufism we need to briefly lay out the condition of Persian studies in Germany.

Thirty years before Tholuck, a far more influential German thinker had already shown interest in Persian poetry. Having been acquainted with Persian poetry through William Jones's *Traité sur la Poésie Orientale* (1771), Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote a series of essays about the literary productions of non-European cultures, in particular those written in Arabic and Hebrew. In addition, Herder published German translations of Jones's translations of poems by Sadi, Hafez and Rumi among others in the fourth collection of the *Zerstreute Blätter* (1792).[135] Due to his preference for didacticism, he proclaimed Sadi as the model most worthy of imitation (Remy: 19).[136] It is argued that the moralizing tendency that characterized all of Herder's work determined his taste in Persian poetry as well as the style of his translations (Remy: 17).

Herder undertook such translations without any prior knowledge of Persian, but more comprehensive and learned translations were produced in the following years by the Austrian diplomat and orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. Although predominantly known for his historical works such as *Die Staatsverfassung und Staatsverwaltung des osmanischen Reichs* (1814, 2 vols.); *Geschichte des osmanischen Reichs* (1827-35, 10 vols.), and *Geschichte der Ilchane* (1843, 2 vols.), Hammer's contribution to the

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[135] The influence of Johann G. Hamann on Herder, especially his perception of the Orient as a place of renewal and rebirth as expounded in his *Aesthetica in nuce* (1762), needs to be acknowledged as well (Berman: 135). Arthur Remy notes that Herder had already been interested in the literatures of the Eastern world, specifically in Hebrew poetry. With Jones's translations he had widened the sphere of his Oriental studies and had become interested in Sadi (16).

[136] Herder's taste in poetry was not shared by other leading minds of the time; for Goethe it was neither Sadi nor Rumi who sings the most beautiful poems. To him, Hafiz was "the singer of real love, real roses and real wine" (Remy: 27). The manifestation of Goethe's reverence and appreciation for Hafiz was his own Divan, *Western-östlicher Diwan* (1819) written in the style of Hafiz.

popularization of Persian literature in Germany is equally impressive. Together with

Count Reviczky he founded the "Fundgruben des Orients" (Vienna, 1809-19, 6 vols.), a

periodical devoted to Oriental studies. For this journal, thanks to von Hammer's

encouragement, Valentin Freiherr von Hussard translated a short piece by and about

Rumi. Von Hammer himself was keen on translating; he started his own series of

translations with the entire *Divan* of Hafiz (1813). Arthur Remy notes that Hammer's

renderings in German prose do scant justice to the original but nonetheless it was the first

time the poems of Hafiz were made known to Europe in their entirety. In 1818, Hammer

published a history of Persian poetry entitled *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste*

Persiens. It is known that Goethe, Rückert, and many others became acquainted with

Persian poetry through these translations.[137] In this book on literary history, he presented

to the German-speaking public seventy passages from Rumi's *Masnavi* and the *Divan-e*

Shams (163-199). His translations deserve to be analyzed on their own but suffice it say

that the annotations and the introductions written to such compilations of translations

emphasize, one way or the other, the extra-Islamic sources of Sufism over its Islamic

character.

The translations of Hammer-Purgstall inspired many literary figures; Goethe

composed *Western-östlicher Divan* (1819) in the spirit of the Persian poets, in particular

of Hafiz. Friedrich Rückert was so impressed by Hammer's work that he went to Vienna

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[137] Von-Hammer continued publishing his translations. From the Arabic he translated the poems of the tenth-century poet Mutanabbi (1824), and the *Atwak al-dhahab* of Zamahshar under the title *Samachscharis Goldene Halsbander* (1835). From Persian Mahmud Shabistari's *Gulshan-i-raz* under the title of *Mahmud Schabisteris Rosenflor des Geheimnisses* (1838), and a part of the *Ta'rikh-i-Wassaf*, under the title *Geschichte Wassafs* (1856). From Turkish he translated the sixteenth-century Ottoman poet Baki's *Divan* (1825), of Fazli's romantic poem "Gul u Bulbul" (1834), and of the *Baznamah*, a treatise on falconry, which he published with two other treatises on the same subject, one Greek and one German, under the title *Falknerklee* (1840). For further info, see Remy.

to study Persian with him, a productive venture completed with the publication of

Ghaselen (1819), "a small but exquisite number" of German poems, which, though not

exactly translations, were based upon the content and form of poems in the *Divan-e*

Shams (Remy: 39).[138]

The significance of the works of von Hammer and Rückert is undeniable, but for

the purposes of this dissertation F. A. G. Tholuck occupies a far more important position.

Similar to Jones, Tholuck showed extraordinary talent in the field of philology and is said

to have mastered nineteen languages by the age of seventeen. Having studied Oriental

philology at the University of Breslau, Tholuck moved to Berlin where he diverted his

academic interest to theology, much, like Julius in his philosophical epistolary novel *Die*

Lehre von der Sunde und vom Versohner, oder Die wahre Weife des Zweiflers (1823). It

is claimed that Tholuck "was plagued" in his Breslau years "by skepticism and argued

that Islam was superior to Christianity" (Baird: 283).[139] In Berlin he attended the lectures

of August Neander (1789-1850) and Schleiermacher, but eventually became one of the

first protégés of Hans Ernst von Kottwitz (1757-1850), the patron of the German

Awakening. Becoming an active member of the "Neo-Pietist" circle did not diminish

Tholuck's interest in Islam but nonetheless framed his approach to it, in the sense that he

focused his attention to its mystical aspect. In 1821 he published a Latin treatise entitled

Ssufismus, sive theosophia Persarum pantheistica (Sufism; or the Pantheistic Theosophy

of the Persians), which secured him a position as *ausserordentlicher* Professor at Berlin

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[138] Along with those of Hafez, Rumi's *ghazals* inspired the creation of a new German verse form.
Following Rückert, August Graf von Platen published his own collection of *Ghaselen* in 1821. For further
information, see Arthur Remy's *The Influence of Persia and India on the Poetry of Germany* (1901).
[139] An address he delivered after leaving college on "the Superiority of the Oriental World over the
Christian" was considered to be a eulogy on Islam. (*New Schaff-herzog Encyclopedia of Religious*: 420)

in addition to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Jena. *Ssufismus* together with Tholuck's later studies, namely *Die Lehre* (1823), *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik* (1825) and *Die Speculative Trinitätslehre des späteren Orients* (1826), introduced a new interpretation of Sufism to later generations. Before we discuss the significance of Tholuck's take on Sufism, we should note that Tholuck was first and foremost a neo-Pietist theologian who was showing interest in mysticism in general. He got preoccupied with Sufism inasmuch as it is pertinent to the current academic discussions in theology revolving around speculative philosophy, represented in particular by Hegel. In the preface of both *Blüthensammlung* and *Die speculative Trinitatslehre*, he calls attention to the importance of studying authentic manuscripts written in Middle Eastern languages for historians of philosophy and religion because, Tholuck contends, these mystics and some of his contemporaries express similar philosophies. In the preface to *Die speculative* he argues that "the special interest in modern times in Near Eastern or Oriental philosophy ... is partly due to the frequent attempts carried out in the new theology to derive certain Christian doctrines from gnosis" and partly to "the strong religious and philosophical inclination of our time" (v).

Refutation of that "strong religious inclination and philosophical inclination" was the main thrust of Tholuck's studies, and, to him, pantheism constituted one of the foundations of such modern speculative theology. Therefore, it became imperative for Tholuck to historicize, analyze and criticize pantheism. While in *Die Lehre* Tholuck explains what pantheism is and how it had branched out through ages, in *Ssufismus*, as

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will be discussed in detail below, and partly in *Blüthensammlung*[140] he endeavors to

reveal how Islamic mysticism got transformed into a pantheistic theosophy in the second

century Hegira, particularly by the Persian mystics. So in the great scheme of things,

Sufism, according to Tholuck, was merely one of the most influential interpretations of

pantheism.

In addition to being the first European monograph devoted exclusively to Sufism,

Tholuck's *Ssufismus* distinguishes itself from the studies of Jones and Malcolm on

account of his use of original sources, in addition to the Western materials written so far,

including numerous missionary reports as well as the works of D'Herbelot, D'Ohsson,

Thévenot , Chardin, Pococke, Jones, and Malcolm. Carl Ernst notes that Tholuck displays

a relatively wider base of knowledge because of his access to a handful of Arabic, Persian

and Turkish manuscripts in the royal library of Berlin, but A. J. Arberry, though

acknowledging his "serious and substantial effort," criticizes Tholuck for choosing

material "wholly inadequate" to construct his thesis with (Ernst 1997: 16; Arberry 1958:

16). Arberry believes that although Tholuck "suffered from the handicap under which

every pioneer labors," that is, he had no one to guide him, he might nonetheless "have

made a better choice of bibliography" given the current possessions of the library in

Berlin (17).[141]

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[140] *Blüthensammlung*, in the first five chapters, summarizes the detailed arguments explicated in *Ssufismus* but the rest of the book is devoted to the translations of excerpts from Rumi's *Mesnevi* (pp. 52-191), the *Gulshan-i Raz* of Shabistari (pp. 193-224), *Gulistan* by Sadi (pp. 225-254), *Jauhar al-dhat* by Attar (pp. 255-286), Sajib's *Diwan* (pp. 287-296), selected poetry by Mawlana Jami (pp. 297-309) as well as Mansur-u Hallaj's lifestory taken from Attar's *Tadhkirat al-auliya* (pp. 310-327).

[141] Tholuck's reading list includes in Arabic, two books of al-Gazali, which, according to Arberry, "he certainly did not study very profoundly"; ibn Khallikan and al-Qazwini; a history of Cairo by al-Suyuti, a book of Muslim sects by al-Isfarani, and an anonymous treatise on Muslim theology. His Turkish sources consist of a translation of Aziz Nasafi's *al-Maqsad al-aqsa*, and a work entitled *Miftah al-abrar wa-misbah al-anwar*, which he ascribes to Attar. His main material is drawn from Persian, which Arberry finds "more

Tholuck evidently tried hard to trace Sufism to its origins, but first we need to

determine what he meant by Sufism. As the title suggests, for him, Sufism is "Persian

pantheistic theosophy" which, according to Tholuck, shows, at first glance, more

similarities with the philosophies of Indian yogis or of Neo-Platonists than with Islamic

doctrines. According to the German theologian, this has to do with similar but not the

same conceptualizations of God within these systems. In one of the appendices of *Die*

Lehre, entitled "On the necessity by which the mere logical understanding is led to a

Denial of a self-conscious Deity, Individuality, Freedom, and Morality; of the Antiquity

and constant recurrence of these Doctrines in the history of the human mind and on the

distinction between the Belief in a self-conscious Deity and the Pantheistic notion,"

Tholuck argues that pantheism is as old as mankind and has assumed different identities

in time.[142] It showed certain differences according to the school of thought it was

incorporated in and now we can identify three sorts of pantheism, namely, "conceptual

pantheism" (*Pantheismus des Begriffs*), "pantheism of fantasy" (*Pantheismus der*

Phantasie) and "pantheism of feeling" (*Pantheismus des Gefühls*), which manifested

themselves in the mystical interpretations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.[143]

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impressive though still very primitive, and one forms the impression that he by no means read through all the books he names"- the first half of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawi*, the *Gulshan-i raz* of Shabistari, Jami's *Subhat al-abrar*, *Tuhfat al-ahrar*, and *Baharistan*, Attar's *Jauhar al-dhat* and *Tadhkirat al-auliya*, the first volume of Mirkhwand's *Raudat al-safa*, and a 'Kitab Hussniye' by one Asad al-Din. (Arberry 1958: 16-17)

[142] "*Da diese Lehre dem anmaßenden Weisheitsdünkel des Menschen am meisten genügt, so ist sie auch so alt als der Mensch und ist zu allen Zeiten in den mannigfachsten Hüllen und Gestalten wiedergekehrt*" (200).

[143] "*Der erstere ist ein reines Verstandesergebnis, das sich indeß nicht ohne Phantasie zu einem Ganzen constituiren kann. Die anderen beiden werden entweder durch Forderungen des consequenten Verstandes vorbereitet, oder verbinden sich mit seinen Formen. Der Begriffspantheismus ist eigenthümlich den Eleaten, Spinoza, Fichte, Hegel. Der Pantheismus der Phantasie findet sich im Orient, bei den Kabbalisten, Neu-Platonikern, Scotus, Engen, J. Böhme, Schelling. Der Gefühlspantheismus bei den meisten Mystikern nicht nur der christlichen, sondern auch der muhammedanischen Religion. Zuweilen hat derselbe sich auch mit Reflexion über die Gefühle verbunden, und dadurch ein speculatives Ansehn bekommt*" (200).

In the proceeding paragraphs Tholuck briefly explains how various systems such as the "Inkia," "Tao-tse," and the religion of "Fohi" from China, "Shinto" and "Budso" from Japan, the "Brahmin, Buddhist, and Jain" from India, Eleatic philosophy represented by Xenophanes from ancient Greece, Neo-Platonism, and German idealism among many others all represent pantheism of some sort. Among these systems, Sufism or "Persian pantheism" has been listed as well, which arguably displays "striking correspondence with Indian theosophical pantheism" maybe because of, as shown by Silvestre de Sacy, the incorporation of "the germs of ancient Persian teachings" (*Keime alter persischer Lehre*) into Sufism (206).

Not only with Indian pantheism but also with Christian pantheism, does Sufism seem similar. In *Ssufismus* he explains this similarity with regard to the "identical error" made in their endeavor to understand God:

This discussion in which Christian theologians have striven to determine merely how much is to be attributed to Divine agency in *the reform of the life*, has been turned aside by the Mystics into questions of much greater difficulty. For they have gone on to inquire, to what "principium" our other actions are to be referred; and they ended in the conclusion that God must be regarded as the sole fountain of all human actions. Pursuing the same strain of argument, they infer that nature in its inner nucleus and source is divine, and that he who withdraws his mind from things corporeal to his own essence which exists in perfect purity within the recesses of his breast, he having drawn nearer to the Deity, as it were, is able to hear His voice. The error of the Soofees, therefore, is identical with that which has caused so many Christians to fall into mysticism and pantheism. For this

question of "free-will" has vexed the Muhammedan theology not less than our own. (100; trans. by Noyes: 244)

As a neo-pietist, Tholuck is almost sympathetic to mysticism but does not express similar partiality towards pantheism. To him, pantheism does not allow room for free will and individuality but also, and much more importantly, does not distinguish between good and evil. In the novel *Die Lehre*, the spiritually self-saved character, Julius, tries to show, through a lengthy discussion on the nature of evil, the fallacy of speculative philosophy, and hence, pantheism, to his friend Guido, who "suffered Parmenides, Spinoza, Schelling, Schleiermacher, to pass before him as instructors, all uttering the same mighty words to his listening mind" (12). Julius first underlines the importance of free will, which is the only force preventing one from believing in a morality-free universe: "The greatest thing in man is power; but next to this, the control of that power" (25). Next, he explains how Pantheism, which is a negation of free-will, lets loose the "cold reckless spirit in man, which treats nothing with reverence, not even his own virtue, since it is his own creation" (*Ibid*). With Pantheism, it "audaciously tramples on worlds and laws, on holiness and sin" (*Ibid*). Eventually, it leads one to "sink into Satan."[144]

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[144] Julius explains this totally giving into Satan by referring to his experience of reading Schelling's *Representation*: "Should it get free from all restraints, and assail me when unarmed, I shall perish by an internal foe. This conviction it was which suffered me not to grasp, but only to touch, with inward trepidation, the doctrine of the equality of good and evil. A still more fearful horror seized me when I read the later 'Representation' of Schelling, in which he has selected terms to express his doctrine, as revolting as the thing itself had long been. He distinguishes in the deity a dark primitive origin, and a glorified form of the same. The one he calls the inverted God, the enemy of every creature; and as by means of the evolution of the dark God in the world, the glorified God develops himself; so out of Satan God is produced. Though these are symbolical delineations, yet my heart felt them in all their frightful reality. Am I, as I am, the appearance of a partly developed, partly undeveloped God? —then, as far as I know myself, he will become in me, not God produced out of Satan, but sunk into Satan. The horror which had previously seized me when I was on the brink of merging myself, with my evil as well as my good, into the absolute, appeared to me more just than ever. I found in the appellations of that primitive origin the very names which my mind had been always obliged to give to that Pantheistic god. (25-27)

Tholuck was absolutely confident in his interpretation of Sufism being pantheistic, but he was nonetheless reluctant to acknowledge the appropriation of foreign elements. In the second chapter of *Ssufismus* a detailed history of Sufism is presented and, probably due to his reliance on original sources, Tholuck did not agree with British Orientalists about the supposed Indian origins (1821: 38). He acknowledges that initially he was of the opinion, like many of his contemporaries interested in the subject, that Sufism was of Magian parentage, but, due to lack of confirmatory evidence, he reverted to the view that Sufism sprang from the widespread proneness of Arabs to monastic life (*Arabum nationem toto animo ad monasticam vitam proclives fuisse*) (45).[145] Tholuck argues that Prophet Muhammad declared that the journey to Mecca was accepted by God in place of monasticism for the mere purpose of checking this tendency (45). But the warning was to no avail and in less than thirty years following the death of the prophet, hermits had become numerous in the deserts, and, in fact, it was Caliph Abu Bakr (d. 634 A.D.) and Ali (d. 661 A.D.) who established the first Islamic monastic orders,[146] which in time would branch out into numerous organizations that would be called Sufi orders (48). Tholuck further argues that the purest forms of early Islamic mysticism can be found in the spiritual utterances of Rabia al-Basri (d. 801 A.D.), which carry the seeds and elements of the entire doctrine of Sufism (*totius Ssuficae doctrinae semina atque*

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[145] "For considering the multitude of Magians that had remained especially in northern Persia, and apprehending that many of the most eminent Sufi doctors were born in the northern province of Khorasan; having in mind also how the language had formerly passed from India to Persia, as well as how, amid the variety of opinions which even in the time of Agathias had divided Persia, some portion of Indian doctrine had also migrated thither: I came at one time to view that Sufism had been thought out in about the time of al-Ma'mun by Magians in Khorasan surviving, imbued with Indian mysticism. This opinion gained further support from the fact that, as we often read, the founders of the sects were either descendents of Magian families or at least were well acquainted with Magians." (Tholuck: 42-43; trans. by Arberry 1958: 17)

[146] This attribution to Ali and Abu Bakr was probably due to Tholuck's misunderstanding of self-proclaimed Sufi *silsilas*, or chains of transmission. All Sufi orders, with the exception of the Naqshbandis, trace their spiritual chains to Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Naqshbandi Sufi order traces its chain to Abu Bakr.

elements) and it was actually none other than the teachings of Muhammad himself that facilitated such mystical tendencies (54). The oft-quoted saying attributed to Muhammad provides the basis of Tholuck's interpretation, which goes as "I have moments (with God) when neither prophet nor angel can comprehend me" (*Momenta habeo ubi nec cherubinus me capit nec prophets*) (71).

Through examples selected from Farid al-din Attar's *Tadhkirat al-auliya*, Tholuck constructs his argument about the early mystical tendencies in Islam. He contends that both Muhammad's claim of familiarity with God or "the immediate communion" of Rabia with God reveal mysticism inherent in Islam but still cannot completely count for the growth of a speculative system that is called Sufism. It was actually the political, social, and intellectual developments in the two centuries following the death of Prophet Muhammad that transformed such mysticism into Sufism. Building on the seeds and elements cultivated by earlier mystics, the ones living in the second century of the Hegira engendered "a great diversity and conflict of opinions" (*ingens oriretur opinionum dissidium*) (55). Tholuck lists them as the modification of the old traditional ways of teaching and of believing, increased asceticism, the rise of the four "orthodox factions," the beginning and the growth of the scholastic theology, the heresies of the *Mutaselitea* [read Muʿtazilah] and *Batenici* (i.e. esotericists), the establishment of a great number of monastic orders, and eventually the rise of Sufism (55).[147]

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[147] Tholuck argues that frequent mention made of Sufism from the 200th year of the Hegira onward by authors whose writings still remain evidences that the foundations of Sufism were laid at this time (56). Tholuck further contends that we can even name the founder of Sufism based on Casinivius (the Arab geographer, 'Plinius Orientalium') who says that 'Abu Ssaid Abul Cheir was the founder of the system of Sufism or mysticism. After the manner of the Sufis, he built a caravansarai, in token of his love to God, and commanded his followers to take food twice in the day. He is the founder of all the Sufic institutions and author of the Sufic mysticism.'" (59).

Tholuck explains the dissemination of Sufism, again, with regard to socio-economic conditions of the era:

While all things were in dire confusion, and doubt of the truth of their religion was filling the minds of men with uneasiness, mysticism, as is wont to be the case, insinuating itself, by degrees, into the breasts of those who clung the more steadfastly to their faith, secured an immense number of adherents, and spread its branches far and wide. From classes of men the most diverse, appeared those who, moved by conscientious impulse, gave up their accustomed habits, and devoted themselves solely to the task commending to their fellow countrymen a fervid zeal in the things of religion, and of showing by example as well as by precept, what the divine love can do. In some cases, persons of high rank and even robber-chiefs from the mountains, assumed the coarse garments of religionists. (55)

Having thus secured the origin of Sufism, Tholuck proceeds to explain how a "pure mysticism" (*simplicioris pietatis purique mysticismi*) as such, initially merely promoting the renunciation of worldly possessions, evolved into a system "spreading pernicious doctrines among the people" (*perniciosaque in populum dogmata disseminare*) (61). He believes that two figures, Bayazid al-Bestami (d. 874) and al-Junayd (d. 910), divided the Sufis into two factions by introducing "hidden secrets of the science" (*abstrusae scientia arcane prac*). Especially Bestami's brazen exclamation of "the divinity of man" (*divinitas hominis*), as opposed to the more cautious Junayd, is the proof of Bestami's "insane pantheism" (*vesana haec Bustamii pantheistica*), which, according to Tholuck, is no different than some Christian mystics such as the Messalians

(64).[148] For Tholuck, pantheism constitutes the core of the abovementioned "pernicious doctrines" and believes that the extraordinary emphasis on *Tauhid* (Unity [with God]) made by Junaid, Abul Huseein Nuri, and Hallaj bin Mansur in their explanations of Sufism strongly suggests the pantheistic essence of Sufism (66-68).

Now that he has shown the pantheistic nature of Sufism, Tholuck moves on to answering the next question, that is, whether these pantheistic notions were of foreign origin, and were engrafted upon the simpler mysticism of early Sufis, or whether they were derived from Islamic dogmas (70). For Tholuck, the latter seems more plausible. Even though he cannot provide convincing proofs that the peculiar dogmas of the Sufis were stated in specific form during the first two centuries after the Hegira, he was quite confident that the early mystics such as Rabia were definitely familiar with them. In his answer, Tholuck's stance depends prominently on the concept of "*Tauhid*", which Tholuck argues, was introduced by Muhammad himself as the above-mentioned saying manifests, and all the peculiar dogmas of the later Sufis, such as "the emanation of the world, the plea of the divinity of man, the elimination of the difference between good and evil, and even the contempt for civil laws" is based on this specific concept (70).

Though Tholuck acknowledges the Islamic roots of Sufism,[149] he nonetheless accepts the influence of Neo-Platonism and ancient Persian philosophies on the "degeneration" of the nascent form of "sentimental mysticism" ("*gemütsvolle Mystik*",

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[148] For his interpretation of Bestami, Tholuck relied on Pocock's translation of al-Ghazali's comment on Bestami's claim of union with the Deity and on Attar's account of Bestami in his *Tadhkirat al-auliya*. As for Junaid, once again Tholuck's main source was *Tadhkirat al-auliya*.

[149] "*Daher bleibt es doch noch am wahrscheinlichsten, daß der Sufismus das Erzeugniß einer innerlichen religiosen Erregung der Muhammedaner ist, welche schon bald nach der Einführung des Muhammedanismus die tieferen Gemüther ergriff, und nachher eine bestimmtere Gestaltung gewann*" (1825a: 36).

1825: 33) into pantheism, which shows similarities with its nineteenth-century German

counterpart (1821: 77-83).[150] The transformation is to such a degree that "late Sufism" is

almost in contradiction with the principles of Muhammad. In order to support his claim

regarding the detachment of Sufism from Islam, he cites a report, in Ernst words "a

missionary fantasy," from the *Missionary Register* of 1818 maintaining that "there was a

number of about 80,000 persons in Persia, called Sophis, who about ten or twelve years

ago, openly renounced Mahommedanism" (vi) and, according to Tholuck, "has a hidden

pantheistic doctrine." Furthermore, in the proceeding chapters Tholuck provides

examples from travelogues mentioned above in order to illustrate the degenerate form of

such mysticism.

Rumi occupies a significant place in Tholuck's analysis insofar he is the perfect

pantheist, though he managed not to fall for 'dreadful austerities as a means of attaining

beatitude like the visionary devotees of India' (1821: 86). In all of his studies engaging

with Sufism, Tholuck gives examples from Rumi and even provides a considerable

number of translations from the first three books of *Mesnevi*, many of which, according

to William Hastie, are simply "wrong" (xxiii). When Tholuck was explaining the

interpretation of the doctrine of "Divine influence" in Sufism, he cites from Rumi (1821:

101).[151] Or in his explanation of prayers, he gives the whirling of Mevlevi dervishes as an

example of a third type of prayer during which "one finds it difficult to turn away the

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[150] Tholuck defines that kind of mysticism as "religious mysticism" (*mehr oder minder eine religiose Mystik*). See the appendix of *Die Lehre*.
[151] The quote is thus: "Into the breast of Omar flowth the voice of God, which is the root of all speech and of every language. All other tongues whatsoever, that which the Turk, the Persian, the Arab understands, are but echoings of this. But why speak of Turk and Arab? Nay, even the wood and stone are but repercussions of this voice; for in what moment soever it shall please God to cry aloud, '*Alist?*' (i.e. Art thou not a creature of mine?), matter replies, '*Beli*' (Even so)" (1821: 101; trans. by Noyes: 245)

mind from dwelling on Divine things" (trans. by Noyes: 245). The constant whirling of these dervishes is similar to some of the practices of Indian yogis, the ultimate aim of which is to arrive at a state of complete non-consciousness (1825b: 205).

The works of Tholuck did not remain unnoticed; his analysis elicited a multitude of positive and negative reactions.[152] His presentation of Sufism together with its definition, history, and associated pantheism remained the primary source for a long time in the West until Reynold A. Nicholson, his student A. J. Arberry, and others altered the framework. Encyclopedia Brittanica's Sufism entry of the 1911 edition, for instance, relies primarily on Tholuck's *Ssufismus*. American transcendentalists and Protestant theologians – with Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Hodge as the most prominent— also, drew on the studies of Tholuck. More importantly, the theosophists of the late nineteenth-century also utilized Tholuck's presentation of Sufism in their works.

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[152] Among the opponents of Tholuck, Hegel stands out probably as the most noteworthy but at the same time the most problematic. Because pantheism, hence speculative philosophy, constituted the main focus of the discussion between Hegel and Tholuck, Hegel never directly engaged with Sufism. In his answer to the pantheistic charges of Tholuck, Hegel in *Enzyklopadie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* (3rd ed., 1830) makes a distinction between the Hindu and the "Muhammedan", in particular Rumi's, conceptualization of God. In a footnote to that section, based on his readings of Rückert and Tholuck's translations of Rumi, Hegel commends Rumi because of his presentation of "the consciousness of the One … in its finest purity and sublimity." Hegel claims to find in the verses of Rumi "the unity of the soul with the One set forth, and that unity described as love, this spiritual unity is an exaltation above the finite and vulgar, a transfiguration of the natural and the spiritual, in which the externalism and transitoriness of immediate nature, and of empirical secular spirit, is discarded and absorbed" (308). Here in this short remark he basically dismisses Tholuck's claims regarding the pantheistic nature of Sufism, mostly because of Tholuck's supposed misconstruction of the term pantheism. On the other hand, in *Aesthetics*, he briefly discusses "Mohammedan Poetry," especially that produced by Persian poets, within a section entitled "Pantheism of Art", which according to Hegel's categorization falls within the evolutionary history of art into the "symbolic" form, which was followed by the "classical" form of art of the ancient Greeks and then the "romantic" form of the modern Western (368-370). Probably because of the incidentiality of such remarks and of the problematic approach, Hegel's objections against Tholuck's ascription of pantheism to Sufism have never become influential. For further discussion on this topic see Klas Grinell's "Hegel reading Rumi: The limitations of a System."

(iv) <u>Aryan Sufism</u>

In close association with the "ur-religion" and the "pantheism" theories, another interpretation of Sufism put into circulation in the nineteenth century: Aryan Sufism. Closely intertwined with the contemporary discussions in religious and philological studies, the Aryan theory affirmed almost a clear-cut distinction between Islam and Sufism. By relocating Islam into the category of national/ethnic religions yet differentiating Sufism from it by ascribing to it an Aryan origin and character it was argued that Sufism was the survival method of the Aryan mind in greater Persia against the conquering Semitic religion.

The Aryan ascription theory is utilized in the works of numerous Orientalists, but the real premise of the theory is couched in the prevalent theories about religion, race and philology. At least since the Middle Ages until the early decades of the nineteenth century, the world population had been traditionally divided into four groups: Christians, Jews, Muhammedans (i.e. Muslims), and the heathens, also invariably known as pagans, idolaters, or polytheists.[153] With the systematic analysis of the religions in the fourth category, another type categorization became prevalent. In 1827 Johann Sebastian von Drey introduced the term *Weltreligion* as opposed to *Landesreligion* (Masuzawa 2004: 9800). Even though von Drey did not differ from his predecessors in his supposition of Christianity as the one and only, hence the true, "world religion," the distinction he

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[153] This four-part classification did not, as a matter of fact, recognize four distinct religions as we think of them today; it rather implied "a division of the world's nations into, first, the correctly faithful believers in the true and only God (i.e. Christians of various sorts), then two major groups with errant or heretical opinions and attitudes toward God (Jews and Muhammedans), and then the rest, who were altogether ignorant of God and therefore paid inappropriate reverence to various substitute objects, or idols." Therefore, from that perspective, there was one and only religion and others were various ways of straying from it. (Masuzawa 2004: 9800).

brought forth became extremely standard in any study on religions in the ensuing decades of the same century. Hence instead of a four-part taxonomy, European scholars of religion suggested a two-part categorization that juxtaposes "universalistic" religions with "national" or "ethnic" ones.

James Freeman Clarke in his book *Ten Great Religions* (1872) explains the distinction between the two sorts of religions as such:

> By ethnic religions we mean those religions, each of which has always been confined within the boundaries of a particular race or family of mankind, and has never made proselytes or converts, except accidentally, outside of it. By catholic religions we mean those which have shown the desire and power of passing over these limits, and becoming the religion of a considerable number of persons belonging to different races. (15)

During the same period philology-based race theories upholding the superiority of Indo-European language family helped the practitioners of the newly emerging science of religion, or *Religionswissenschaft*, to outline their views on the above-mentioned distinction between universal and ethnic/national religions. It was argued that the Indo-European (or Aryan) languages are characterized and distinguished from other language groups by "the purity of their grammatical form," that is, inflection.[154] The new European identity was separated from the Semitic, whose languages are marred by "imperfect inflection," as well as from the rest who are the speakers of non-inflectional languages of Asia and Africa.

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[154] The nineteenth-century linguists who prioritized the Indo-European language group argued that inflected languages were capable of intellectual subtleties not available to non-inflected languages.

One of the most noteworthy ramifications of such hierarchical groupings came to be observed when the groupings of languages became increasingly understood in a racial sense. It did not take long, says Masuzawa, for philologists to draw, "an immediate equation between the nature of syntax and the cultural character of a people or their religious dispositions" (2005: 170). It was basically argued that not only the language groups, but also cultures and eventually "races" could be explained with reference to the superiority of inflection over agglutination. The relevance of this development to the current topic lies in its assessment of Islam. As aptly put by Masuzawa, concurrent to the re-appraisal/ennoblement of Buddhism occurred the re-evaluation/denigration of Islam on novel grounds. Islam has never been deemed a "true" religion by the orientalists but in light of such developments it came to be regarded a Semitic religion, hence a national/ethnic religion. Because Arabic, like Hebrew, was a non-inflected language it was not considered to be capable of the same kind of intellectual power as the Indo-European languages. By the end of the century, Islam, just like Judaism, had come to be seen a national religion rather than a world religion.

The mid- to late-nineteenth-century studies on religions, especially those on Islam, are couched in the safety net of such philological theories of language groups, races, and religions (e.g. the works of Ernest Renan on Islam). However, interestingly enough, the same period also witnessed another significant racialization with regard to Islam: the Aryanization of Sufism. The reconstitution of Islam as essentially Semitic further divided the assumed gap between Islam proper and Sufism. As it was explained in the previous section, due to the constellation of various socio-historical and political discourses Sufism had already been relocated to an extra-Islamic category. There was no

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consensus on whether it had originated from the religious traditions of ancient Persian (i.e. Zoroastrian), India or from Neo-Platonism, but it was decided that it could not be Islamic due to the rich and profound metaphysical and mystical tradition it carried. Furthermore, by virtue of being a pantheistic philosophy it could not be Islamic which is defined to be adamantly monotheistic. With philology-based racial theories the non-Islamic character of Sufism was underlined in more and more studies. Masuzawa uses the writings of the German theologian Otto Pfleiderer (1839-1908) to demonstrate the success of this discourse. In his description of Sufism in *Religion und Religionen* (translated as *Religion and Historic Faiths*; 1906) Pfleiderer dissociates Sufism from Islam which he supposes to be the national religion of the Arabs:

> A peculiarity of Persian Islamism, not less interesting is Sufism, a mystical-speculative tendency, some of which was deeply pious and given to flights of high thinking. Certain it is that this was not a genuine product of Arabian Islamism, even though it must remain undecided whether it owes its origin to ancient Persian, Indian or Neo-Platonic gnosticism. (1907: 287)

Pfleiderer was definitely not an exception. In 1867 E. H. Palmer (1840-1882), a young British orientalist by then, penned a very short treatise on Sufism titled *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on the Sufiistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians*. He describes "the system of the Sufis" to be consisting in "endeavoring to reconcile Philosophy with Revealed Religion, and in assigning a mystical and allegorical interpretation to all religious doctrines and precepts" (x). Even though he aimed to "present an epitome of the oriental Mystic Philosophy from the point of view taken by the Mohammedan writers, from whom [his] information is chiefly derived" (2), he was

convinced and determined to prove in subsequent studies that "Sufiism is really the development of the Primeval Religion of the Aryan race" (xi). One of the reasons of this belief is hinted in his definition of Sufism: "steering a mid course between the pantheism of India on the one hand, and the deism of the Coran on the other, the Sufis' cult is the religion of beauty, where heavenly perfection is considered under the imperfect type of earthly loveliness" (x).

In the United States, where European scholarship was the main source in any Orientalist literature, Sufism came to be understood as a Persian religious tradition separate from Islam. In *Ten Great Religions* James Freeman Clarke identifies Sufism as a "heresy" against Islam, a moral religion the root of which consists in obedience to Allah and his prophet (183).[155] "Sufism of Persia," on the other hand, is a spiritualistic religion which, just like Brahmanism, Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, as a tendency to the abstract, to the infinite" they "ignore personality. Furthermore, Clarke goes on to present the "Aryan reaction theory" as the cause of the difference:

> Judaism and Mohammedanism, with their more concrete monotheism, have not
> been able to convert the Aryan races. Mohammedanism has never affected the
> mind of India, nor disturbed the ascendency of Brahmanism there. And though it
> nominally possesses Persia, yet it holds it as a subject, not as a convert. Persian
> Sufism is a proof of the utter discontent of the Aryan intellect with any

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[155] Clarke explains the difference between Islam proper and Sufism with reference to the distinction between "spiritualistic religions" and "moral religions." It is his claim that "the essentially spiritualistic religions," such as Brahmanism, Gnosticism, the Sufism of Persia, the Mysteries of Egypt and Greece, Neo-Platonism, the Christian Mysticism of the Middle Ages, "are ignorant of their founders," Like "every tendency to the abstract, to the infinite" they "ignore personality." On the other hand, there are "moral religions" which are "the religions of persons," such as "the systems of Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moses and Mohammed" (183). all the moral creeds of the world proceed from a moral source, i.e. human will."

monotheism of pure will. Sufism is the mystic form of Mohammedanism, recognizing communion with God, and not merely submission, as being the essence of true religion. (500)

The whole idea of Sufism being an Aryan product was challenged only in the beginning of the twentieth century by Orientalist scholars such as E. G. Browne (1862 – 1926) and Reynold Nicholson who summed up the whole frenzy as the "Aryan reaction theory" which basically asserts that Sufism should be understood as "the reaction of the Aryan mind against a conquering Semitic religion" (Nicholson 2009: 8).

CHAPTER 3

RUMI IN THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

What I am saying is according to the measure of your understanding:

I die in grief for a sound understanding. (*Masnavi* III, l.2098)

The meaning in poetry has no sureness of direction;

it is like the sling, it is not under control. (*Masnavi* I, l.1528)

The past several decades have witnessed an intriguing increase of interest in Rumi in the United States. Works about Rumi, both scholarly and non-scholarly alike, and a variety of translations of his poetry by people from different walks of life have noticeably proliferated. The "Rumi-mania," as Coleman Barks calls it, has become impossible to ignore so much so that in 1997, the *Christian Science Monitor* proclaimed Rumi to be the best-selling poet in the United States (November 25, 1997).[156] The surge of interest in Rumi has been precipitated by factors such as the receptive spirit of the American religious landscape and the promotion of Rumi by people, specifically from Turkey and Iran, as the antithesis of radical fundamentalists. But, as the eminent Rumi scholar Franklin Lewis puts it, it is Coleman Barks "who, more than any other single individual is responsible for Rumi's current fame" (2011:1).

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the contentious translations by Barks with regard to the general theme of the de-Islamization of Rumi. Rather than dealing with questions concerning linguistics, I examine acts of mediation, representation and the

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[156] However, Franklin Lewis asks with reason whether Rumi's recent fame in the West represents just another passing fad, particularly when one considers the example of Omar Khayyam (d. 1121), who once had societies dedicated to him in every corner of the Anglophone world, but is relatively little read today (2009: para 3).

discourses with which Barks's renderings engage as well as Barks's positionality in relation to his translation strategies. I specifically focus on the qualitative contraction that characterizes Barks's translations of Rumi. Examining what is excluded and hidden in the translational process and, more importantly, to what effect, sheds light on the nature of contemporary reception of Rumi in the United States.

My analysis predominantly covers Barks's translations of *Masnavi-i Manevi* (Couplets of True Meaning) that appeared in *The Essential Rumi* (1995; expanded edition 2004), which also includes translations from the *Divan-ı Shams*. I choose to focus on *The Essential Rumi* because it is Barks's foundational work; in his later compilations such as *The Book of Love* (2003) and *The Big Red Book* (2010; paperback 2011), Barks uses the same translations though in a different layout. In some cases, such as some of the poems in *A Year With Rumi* (2006), he edits, abbreviates or "relineates" but usually keeps them loyal to the versions in *The Essential Rumi*.[157] Among his oeuvre only *The Essential Rumi* and *Soul of Rumi* are original in the sense that they include new translations. Between these two, however, the latter has not gained the recognition that *The Essential Rumi* enjoyed. In 2004, an expanded edition of *The Essential Rumi* was published probably because it had continued to be the far better-known work.

I prefer to concentrate on the translations from the *Masnavi* for a couple of reasons. As a collection of "strange tales and rare sayings and excellent discourses and precious indications, and the (religious) path of the ascetics and the (spiritual) garden of the devotees" (*Masnavi* vol. I: 1), *Masnavi* abounds with references and allusions that

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[157] Also only in *The Essential Rumi*, *The Soul of Rumi* and *A Year With Rumi* does Barks provide information regarding the origin of the poem. By the end of the books he lists which poem is translated from which source. In his other works there is no such information.

inextricably weaves it to Islamic culture. Furthermore, these stories are told with the aim to serve the righteous by virtue of being "the cure for (sick) breasts, and the purge of sorrows, and the expounder of the Qur'an, and the (source of) abundance of (Divine) gifts, and the (means of) cleansing (sordid) dispositions" (*Masnavi* vol. I, 3). In this respect they are quite distinct from the *ghazal*s (odes) and *rubai*s (quatrains), which are more obscure, less referential utterances of Divine Love and Longing and comprise another monumental work of Rumi, that is, *Divan-e Shams*.

The acquaintance with Rumi in the United States is quite a recent phenomenon. By mid-nineteenth century, Sufism, let alone Rumi, was hardly known, even among the United States intelligentsia. The whole Sufi literature, including the poetry of Rumi, was read under the intellectual guidance of European Orientalists who interpreted Sufism as an extra-Islamic tradition molded with pantheistic and Aryan characteristics.[158] Rumi's name, known as Dschelaleddin at that point in time, began to be mentioned only with the cursory references of the Transcendentalists, who got to know about Rumi and Sufism via the translations by Baron von Hammer-Purgstall and F.A.G. Tholuck.

By the early 1900s, the increasing interest in "Oriental wisdom," which until then had been mostly of a textual nature, prompted the practitioners of non-Judeo-Christian religious traditions to engage with religious liberals on a personal level.[159] On this

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[158] The absence of academic orientalism in the US was addressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson in a 1865 essay which complains about the slow and insufficient progress in the American academia: "Whilst the Journal of the Oriental Society attests the presence of good Semitic and Sanskrit scholars in our colleges, no translation of an Eastern poet has yet appeared in America. Of the two hundred Persian bards of whose genius Von Hammer Purgstall has given specimens to Germany, we have had only some fragments collected in journals and anthologies. There are signs that this neglect is about to be retrieved."

[159] The Early 1900s was, in general, a period of "flowering of diversity within a free market for religious entrepreneurs" (Hulsether: 49). Sufism partook in this religious diversification. In her article on Sufism in America, Gisela Webb identified three major phases in the development of Sufi groups in America. The above mentioned interest in Oriental wisdom corresponds to the first phase (251). For information on

account many "Oriental" spiritual teachers, be it Zen masters, Hindu yogis, or Sufis, frequented the United States. Thanks to the actual acquaintance with such personalities, Rumi's name became relatively recognizable. Specifically the "universalist" teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, who was appointed by his master to harmonize East and Western, incorporate selective readings from Rumi.[160]

The spiritual explorations of the baby-boom generation during the rise of the counterculture(s) further popularized Rumi to the extent of absorbing him into a unique form of American religiosity that has been marked by radical syncretism.[161] Disenchanted with institutionalized religion, spiritual seekers, who employed "psychothereapeutic, pharmacological, mystical and literary modes of introspection" (Tipton: 14), fostered an eclectic approach to religion that differentiates spirituality from religion, usually in favor of the former. Within this structure Rumi, though not necessarily Sufism, fell into the part of spirituality, along with Buddhism, Kabbala, Krishnaism, and "Jesus Freaks." Along the road, Rumi's deep-rooted organic connections with Islam have been further ignored.

Developments in the religious landscape inevitably made Rumi a familiar name, but only towards the end of the millennia did Rumi gain a deserved fame. In the late

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contemporary practice of Sufism in America, see *Sufism in the West* (2006) and *Sufis in Western Society* (2009).

[160] In his original country Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927) was first and foremost a musician, who in his early life received the highest recognition and honors for his artistic accomplishments. In addition to his musical studies, Inayat Khan was engaged in Sufism. By the very beginning of his journey, which he set on in 1910 at the behest of his Sufi master, Sayyed Muhammad Abu Hashim Madani, Khan founded the first American Sufi Order, called 'The Sufi Order in the West.' Throughout his continuous travels in Europe and the United States, Khan brought music to the fore in his spiritual teachings, which do not carry overt Islamic tones. Khan describes Sufism along the lines of the concept of "universal religion" which leaves its stamp on late nineteenth-century religious landscape, specifically in the US. Khan says "There is one God and one truth, one religion and one mysticism. Call it Sufism or Christianity or Hinduism or Buddhism, whatever you wish" (27). His followers describe Khan's philosophy as "a revolutionary vision of the unity of religious ideals and the coming awakening of the human spirit to its inherent divinity" (http://www.sufiorder.org/biographies.html).

[161] In Gisela Webb's scheme Rumi's reception by the seekers of the counterculture is included in the second phase of Sufism in the US.

1990s, the translations by Coleman Barks accomplished what the more scholarly translations by Reynold Nicholson (1945) and A.J. Arberry (d. 1969) from earlier decades failed to pull off: reaching out to spiritual seekers.

The popularity of Barks's versions over more literal translations unmistakably defined how Rumi is read and understood by modern audiences. Barks's translations are recited at wedding ceremonies (even sometimes replacing the all-time favorite Corinthians) or read by celebrities of the entertainment world such as Madonna, Tilda Swinton, and Demi Moore. But it is again Barks's versions that appear in the Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces. A simple search on the Internet manifests the extent of Barks's success in conveying his own version of Rumi.[162]

The success of Barks is partly explained by his poetic skills. As a published poet and a professor of poetry, Barks knows how to swim through words.[163] But more than his verbal dexterity the way Rumi and his "philosophy" are presented defines Barks's success as a Rumi translator. By means of translation strategies that are usually analyzed under the category of "domestication" or "naturalization," Barks contributes to the de-Islamization of Rumi – though, unlike Orientalists, without appealing to history. As maintained by Barks himself in numerous instances, he does not consider Rumi an

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[162] Barks addresses the issue of popularity of his works, specifically of *The Essential Rumi*, in *Rumi: The Book of Love*: "I have sold too many books. Rumi translations have no business cresting in a wave of over half a million. It's like selling picnic tickets to an unmarked minefield. You wouldn't expect there to be a rush, but somehow there is. […] That book has achieved the cultural status of an empty Diet Coke can! It's everywhere. It's recommended summer reading in a two-page newsletter put out by a women's clothing store, Kathleen Sommers of San Antonio. Philip Glass goes on world tour with *Monsters of Grace*, a choral piece using Rumi's words. Donna Karan reads Rumi on the fashion runway showing her new line. Madonna and Demi Moore read his poems on a Deepak CD. What to make of Rumi-mania? *This too shall pass*? Of course it will." (xvi)

[163] Upon receiving his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley in 1968 —with his dissertation on the short novels of Joseph Conrad— Barks began teaching literature at the University of Georgia-Athens. Long before securing a name as a Rumi translator he published three collections of his own poetry (*The Juice*, 1971; *New Words*, 1976 and *We're Laughing at the Damage*, 1977).

Islamic philosopher-poet; instead he interprets him to be a "dissolver of boundaries" who does not belong to any institutionalized, organized religion (2004: xvii). Not surprisingly, Barks's translation strategy reflects this interpretation. For instance, in his commentary on the concept of *fana*, Barks notes being scolded by one of his friends for not saying outright that *fana* means "annihilation in Allah." In his defense, Barks says:

> I avoid God-words, not altogether, but wherever I can, because they seem to take away the freshness of experience and put it inside a specific system. Rumi's poetry belongs to everyone, and his impulse was toward experience rather than any language or doctrine about it: our lives as text, rather than any book, be it Qur'an, Gospel, upanishad, or sutra" (2001: 9)

Getting rid of Islamic references is not the only means for Barks in his endeavor to render Rumi's poetry sound universal-yet-American. Stylistically as well Rumi was "Americanized" as Barks's explanation of his translating act demonstrates: "making literal, scholarly transcriptions of poems into valid poems in American English [in connection] with a strong American line of free-verse spiritual poetry such as that of Theodore Roethke, Gary Snyder, Walt Whitman, and James Wright" (Moyers: 46). Here Barks is referring to the politics as much as the poetics of his translations, which, as mentioned above, both stylistically and thematically domesticate Rumi. Without denying the importance of poetics, I aim to probe into the politics of Barks's translations so as to better understand the context as well as the conditions of domestication of Rumi. In order to better "situate the translated text in its social and historical circumstances and consider its political role" (Venuti 1992: 11), I will briefly discuss the strategy of domestication in

translation, then the historical tradition Barks is embedded in before moving onto analyzing the translations of Barks.

(i) Domestication in Translation

Translation is never an innocent act: it is inherently political and ideological on account of being a partial and metonymic transfer of meaning defined by the choices of the translator within the parameters of the socio-cultural context.[164] Translation is, after all, "an active reconstitution of the foreign text mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive, and ideological differences of the target-language culture" (Venuti 1992: 10). Of course the political standing of any translation is closely related to the semiotics in the sense that (1) languages are reciprocally incommensurable and (2) meaning of a text is always contested and is bound to be more extensive than a translation (or any reader for that matter) can impart. As such translators make choices that result in silencing, underlining, editing, transcreating or recreating certain aspects or parts of a text. For decades in translation debates, which have been dominated by the question of fidelity, many consider the inevitable recreation process inherent in translation to be a defect. Recent studies in translation theory suggest leaving such unproductive discussions behind so as to be able to focus on more significant issues such as the political nature of

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[164] Maria Tymoczko argues that translation, in addition to standing in a metaphoric relation to a source text, is also involved in a metonymic relation. The metonymic aspect is particularly significant as it precipitates the assimilation of the source text into "the existing structures in the receptor literary and cultural system" (51).Translation, she asserts, "metonymically constructs a source text, a literary tradition, a culture, and a people," for the receiving audience, "by picking parts, aspects, and attributes that will stand for wholes" (57). It becomes all the more significant in the translation of non-canonical or marginalized literatures, because in such cases the translator finds herself "in the paradoxical position of 'telling a new story' to the receptor audience" and "the more remote the source culture and literature, the more radically new the story will be for the receiving audience" (47). For a discussion on the metonymic aspect of translation, see Tymoczko's *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (1999), pp. 41-61.

translation. Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko, for instance, argue that partiality is "a necessary condition of the fact" rather than "a defect, a lack, or an absence in a translation" so much so that it "enables translations to participate in the dialectic of power, the ongoing process of political discourse, and strategies for social change" (xviii).

The recreation process is not a mere linguistic transfer from one system to another. There are additional levels such as "the literary system" and "the socio-cultural system" on which the translator operates during the process of translation (Holmes 1988). While the literary system comprises the set of texts that the text is connected with, both stylistically and thematically, the socio-cultural system comprises its cluster of values, meanings, norms, associations, power-relationships, in short a system "in which objects, symbols, and abstract concepts function in a way that is never exactly the same in any other society or culture" (47). On each of these three levels the translator is inevitably is confronted with inter-systemic incompatibilities that demand, at least the illusion of, resolution (36). In order to achieve that illusion, the translator, on each level, must make a choice. And it is these choices that result in the above-mentioned silencing, underlining, and the like that ultimately make translation a political act.

Among such choices, whether to "foreignize" or "domesticate" the text, hence indirectly/metonymically the culture that the text belongs stand out.[165] Lawrence Venuti aptly notes that the choice made by the translator between the two is itself an ideological one. Making translation visible (foreignization), by accentuating its strangeness and

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[165] Though akin to the debate on the "word-for-word" (literal translation or metaphrase) vs. sense-for-sense (free translation or paraphrase) translation, domestication vs. foreignization debate has a more political tone than the former one. Lawrence Venuti, who coined the terms, stresses the question of preserving/suppressing the cultural values of the source text (1995: 20).

resisting fluency and transparency, is as much a political gesture as appropriating the text

to the norms and values of the target-text culture (domestication). Admittedly, no matter

what kind of strategy is used during the process, translation, on account of being a form

of rewriting, is already endowed with the potency to manipulate literature.[166] But the

significance between the strategies of foreignization and domestication further increases

when there is an unequal relationship between the two cultures, that is, when the

preferred strategy has the potential to play a part in the construction of the "other," either

by challenging, resisting or reinforcing the hegemonic discourse regarding the other.

Between the two strategies, foreignization has enjoyed the support of scholars.

Antoine Berman argues that foreignizing is the more ethical choice of the two, if not the

most convenient. According to Berman, "receiving the Foreign as Foreign" is the "*ethical*

aim of the translating act" because accentuating the strangeness is "the only way of

giving us access to" the text (285). In this way "the language of the original shakes with

all its liberated might the translated language." Berman is not alone in his appreciation of

the foreignizing strategy. His article "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign" (2000),

where he describes the ideal form of translation as the "trial of the foreign," heavily

draws on Heidegger's analysis of Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles. Hölderlin's

contemporary Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), also, argues that instead of

"moving the author towards" the reader so as to leave "the reader in peace as much as

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[166] Translation, a double-edged sword, can either help a literary system/culture expand and evolve by means of introducing new genres, concepts, literary devices and techniques or aide "repress innovation, distort and contain." (Bassnett & Lefevere 1995: vii). Not all translations possess such power but some translations "have obliged a given language to express thoughts and facts that it was not accustomed to express before" (Eco 2001: 21). The impact of Luther's translation of the Bible on German culture, Heidegger translations on the French philosophical style, or Elio Vittorini translations of American writers on Italian literature constitute cases in point (*Ibid*).

possible," translator should "move the reader towards" the author in order to "leave the author in peace, as much as possible." In this way the reader would be able to "discern the workings of the original language that expresses the language game, the culture of which the original was a part, shining through the words on the translated page. (Lefevere 2002: 5).[167]

Yet the history of translation shows that "domestication" has been the preferred strategy. For many people, including publishers and critics, a successful translation is the one that does not feel like a translation at all, which requires above anything else the invisibility of the translator and "rewriting" of the text "in terms of a system their potential audience [is] able to understand" (Lefevere 1992: 77). The system in general imposes domestication, but there are "deforming tendencies or *forces*" inherent in the act of translation as well that not only "every translator is inescapably exposed to" but also unconsciously "form part of the translator's being, determining the desire to translate" (Berman: 286).[168] In effect, "the valorization of transparency," both by the system and the translator, leads to the inevitable manipulation of the text and the reader to a significant extent. Aiming for fluency, which is an essential component of the domestication strategy, leads to translator's self-annihilation and marginality, in addition to obliterating

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[167] Of course one of the most passionate advocates of the foreignizing strategy is Lawrence Venuti, whose influential study *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) provides an in-depth analysis of this issue.

[168] Berman's list comprises 12 tendencies: rationalization, clarification, expansion, ennoblement, qualitative impoverishment, quantitative impoverishment, the destruction of rhythms, the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, the destruction of vernacular network or their exoticisation, the destruction of expressions and idioms, and the effacement of the superimposition of languages. Because "the system   of deformation] is the internalized expression of a two-millennium-old tradition, as well as the ethnocentric structure of every culture, every language," adds Berman, it would be "illusory to think that the translator can be freed merely by becoming aware of them". (286). The only way for a translator to free herself from the yoke of deforming tendencies is to "yield to the 'controls' (in the psychoanalytic sense)" which requires analysis of the "tendencies" that are operative in the translation.

the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, ultimately performing "a labor of acculturation." By rendering the text more intelligible and even familiar to the target-language reader, domestication, also, precipitates a "narcissistic experience." Venuti argues recognizing his or her own culture in a cultural other, enacts "imperialism that extends the dominion of transparency with other ideological discourses over a different culture" (1992: 5).[169]

While the expectations of the reader as well as the translator's desire to translate prompt a preference for domesticated translation, the way the translator acts on these factors is largely determined by the socio-cultural milieu. The relationship between the two cultures, as well as the context that the translator is organically rooted in, loom over the translator's interpretation of the source text. Therefore, it becomes imperative to analyze the context of the translation in question in an attempt at revealing the ideological undercurrents.

(ii) Barks and American Spirituality

In order to better grasp the context of Barks's translations of Rumi, one has to, first and foremost, examine a specific tradition of spirituality that has assuredly influenced Barks. In agreement with the gist of this tradition, Barks declares himself not belonging to any kind of pre-defined religion, though he acknowledges benefiting, at least potentially, from all:

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[169] The foreignization strategy, on the other hand, by making the translator's work visible, can prompt a critical appreciation of its cultural political function. What is more, the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text can be preserved "by producing translations which are strange and estranging, which mark the limits of dominant values in the target-language culture and hinder those values from enacting an imperialistic domestication of a cultural other" (Venuti 1992: 13).

The religions of the world are luminous in their individuality ... I say that the

exclusivity of most of the organized religion *does* insult the soul. We must be

open enough to assimilate the insights of indigenous cultures as well as those of

the Abrahamic religions, to glory in the clarity of Rinzai and Bodhidharma as well

as that of the dreamtime drawings. Joseph Campbell teaches us this. (2004: xvii)

At first glance it seems like a mish-mash of any spiritual teaching with a relevant edge,

but it is of crucial importance to note that Barks is not alone in his promotion of a

personally crafted, eclectic form of religiosity. Though his tailor-made spirituality might

be unique on its own, the discourse that this individualized form of spirituality springs

from has become the source of a perspective that more and more people associate with.

Today many Americans, like Barks, craft their own definitions of religiosity, which, in

general, necessitate a syncretic outlook that would embrace the teachings of Rumi as

much as it would embrace Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. As long as the

practitioner is able to harmonize diverse traditions according to her/his perspective, the

individualized fusions are deemed to be as valid as any other religious system.[170]

The creation of individualized forms of "spiritual bricolage" is facilitated by two

developments: an unprecedented access to diverse forms of religions, and the adoption of

a new understanding of religion. This highly subjective approach to religion underlines

spiritual growth, holiness and authority of the self, self-awareness, self-actualization,

receptive and monistic holism, eclecticism, syncretism, intuitive knowledge and

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[170] For further information and analysis on the privatization of religion in the US see *A Generation of Seekers* by Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual but not Religious* by Robert C. Fuller, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace* by Robert Ellwood, *After Heaven* by Robert Wuthnow, *Religion in the United States* by Jeanne Cortiel et. al., *Getting Saved from the Sixties* by Steve Tipton, *Beyond New Age* by Steven Sutcliffe & Marion Bowman, eds., *American Spiritualities* by Catherine Albanese, ed., *The New Religions* by Jacob Needleman, *The New Religious Movements Experience in America* by Eugene V. Gallagher, etc.

immediate unmediated experience. It is, in Wade Clark Roof's words, "more internal than external, more individual than institutional, more experiential than cerebral, more private than public" (153)

The sociology of this hard-to-categorize tradition has become the subject of numerous studies, most of which point at the 1960s counterculture mentality as the turning point in its proliferation among spiritual seekers who happen to differentiate spirituality from religion. The distinction is crucial for the point of this chapter, because Rumi is believed by many who identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" to belong within the realm of spirituality. The distinction, however, has not always been this clear. Spirituality, once belonging to the realm of religion,[171] has acquired a new sense since the late 1950s, so different from the traditional one that it is now considered to be "an emic repacking of popular and vernacular religion to suit the peculiar conditions of industrial and post-industrial societies" (Sutcliffe: 8).[172] With "emphasis on the subject, discovery of the self and a more differentiated understanding of psychology" more and more people have approached with caution and doubt to "the empirical features associated with official religion such as distinctive buildings, a dominant founder-figure, a foundational book or a uniquely authoritative "canon," an acknowledged creed and determined body of ritual, and a more or less clear and unambiguous self-presentation" (*Ibid*). For most of these seekers, spirituality, due to its flexibility and malleability, has

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[171] Eric Leigh Schmidt states that *spirituality* was usually employed a s a theological term in opposition to *materiality* let alone being a keyword in the early Protestant vernacular of personal devotionalism (4).
[172] Catherine Albanese argues that in the 1960s the combined effect of the religious vernaculars of three distinct movements, namely a newly arrived Asian presence and missionary consciousness, the theosophical legacy, and the New Though tradition, on the baby boomer generation who, thanks to the socio-political ethos of the time, was dissociation with official religions by turning to experiential modes of self-presentation (2001: 3-9).

become a "universal codeword," covering diverse attitudes to experiential and mystical self-quest.

The American experience with spirituality in the twentieth century is usually roughly labeled as "New Age spirituality." More nuanced studies such as Catherine Albanese's *A Republic of Mind and Spirit* (2006)[173] or Eric Leigh Schmidt's *Restless Souls: The Making of American Religiosity* argue for calling it "metaphysical religiosity" or the "spiritual left." Admitting the cruciality of the 1960s both Schmidt and Albanese underline the historical roots of "pastiche spirituality" in America. Schmidt specifically calls attention to the tradition of religious liberalism which together with its romantic and reformer supporters, "led the way in redefining spirituality and setting out its essentials" (11).[174] Its legacy is so ingrained in American religious life that seeker spirituality with its "excitedly eclectic, mystically yearning, perennially cosmopolitan" nature is an artifact of religious liberalism (6).

Catherine Albanese agrees with Schmidt with regard to the legacy of religious liberalism but goes further back, to colonial times so as to trace the individual elements that are fused into "metaphysical religiosity. According to Albanese, the most prominent

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[173] According to Catherine Albanese three major traditions have shaped American religiosity. The first two being evangelicalism and the liturgical form of religious piety have been studied in numerous accounts. The third one, the metaphysical religion, on the other hand, had received less attention, probably due to its extremely ambiguous nature as well as its less respected value. Nonetheless as Albanese's extensive study demonstrates it has a major impact on both American culture and religion.

[174] Schmidt argues to examine varieties of spiritually-oriented traditions under the term religious liberalism. As products of nineteenth-century liberalism religious liberals were "committed to progress in the domains of spiritual consciousness, social organization, and scientific knowledge." Unlike their secular cousins, they consider "a deepened and diversified spirituality" to be "part of modernity's promise." They were, in general, wary of creeds and object to uncritical devotion to scriptural texts. Schmidt lists the rudiments of religious liberalism as "individual aspiration after mystical experience or religious feeling; the valuing of silence, solitude, and serene meditations; the immanence of the transcendent-in each person and in nature; the cosmopolitan appreciation of religious variety as well as unity in diversity; ethical earnestness in pursuit of justice-producing reforms or "social salvation"; an emphasis on creative self-expression and adventuresome seeking" (6-12). The rise and flourishing of religious liberalism is also analyzed from different perspectives in *American Religious Liberalism* (2012).

feature of this extremely heterogeneous and syncretic tradition is "combinativeness,"

which reveals itself in its extraordinary absorptive power of different sorts of

metaphysical traditions as diverse as Hermeticism, freemasonry, Native American

spirituality, Mormonism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christian Science and many more.

As it happens, American history is replete with miscellaneous attempts at

syncretic synthesis of religious traditions. Several Americans, at least since the eighteenth

century, have delineated the outlines of a universally acceptable fusion-religion that is

deemed to replace all religions. And it does not even have to be metaphysical as Albanese

argues; the "rational religion" anticipated by the Founding Fathers, for instance, is devoid

of particular creeds, rituals or metaphysical elements. In a similar vein Samuel Johnson,

who F. Max Muller described as the finder of "a religion behind all religions,"[175]

dedicated his life to the exploration of the "universal religion" which he describes as

"what is best in each and every one of the great positive religions in the world" (1873:

6).[176] A comparable concept, termed "pure religion," was put forth by the Free Religious

Association (FRA), which was founded in 1867 by David Atwood Wasson and Reverend

William J. Potter to create a "nonsectarian religion to which any intelligent person could

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[175] Max Muller says: "What I admire most in Samuel Johnson was his not being discouraged by the rubbish with which the religions of the East are overwhelmed, but his quietly looking for the *nuggets*. And has he not found them? And has he not found what is better than ever so many nuggets, -- that great, golden dawn of truth, that there is *a religion behind all religions*, and that happy is the man who knows it in these days of materialism and atheism?" (*Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion*, vol. 3, p. x)

[176] In the first volume of his multi-volume study *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion* Johnson says: "Universal religion, then cannot be any one, exclusively, of the great positive religions of the world. Yet it is really what is best in each and every one of them; purified from baser inter-mixture and developed in freedom and power. Being the purport of nature, it has been germinating in every vital energy of man; so that its elements exist, *at some stage of evolution*, in every great religion of mankind" (1873: 6).

subscribe despite conditions of race and birth" (Gohdes: 231).[177] The manifesto of "Fifty

Affirmations" written in 1870 by the editor F. A. Abbot to the first volume of the FRA-

inspired periodical *The Index* explains "Free Religion" as "the natural outcome of every

historical religion – the final unity, therefore, towards which all historical religions

slowly tend" (1).[178] Into the twentieth century there were those such as Hazrat Inayat

Khan and Aldous Huxley in the United States or Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon in

Europe who promoted the idea of *philosophia perennis* though under different

designations. Described by Huxley as "a version of the Highest Common Factor in all

theologies" (2009 [1944]: vii), the Perennial Philosophy could easily be analyzed as a

form of universal religion which, according to Schuon, is "the underlying religion" of all

religions, or simply "the religion of the heart" (*religio cordis*) (Lings: xii).[179]

Probably more influential and important than any of the above, there were the

Transcendentalists who under the guidance of Ralph Waldo Emerson explored world

religions by means of studying their sacred texts.[180] Even though he never termed or

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[177] FRA is considered one of the most important sites of activity for the post-Civil War Transcendentalist movement. Its members included prominent figures such as Cyrus Bartol, Lydia Maria Child, Octavius Brooks Frothingham (who served as the first president of the FRA in 1867-78), Thomas Wentworth Higginson (who also served a term as president of the association), David Wasson, and John Weiss. Emerson also supported and attended meetings of the group as well as serving as vice president under Frothingham" (Wayne: 113).

[178] In addition to such US based attempts or anticipations, there were international societies that were actively present in the US such as the Theosophical Society founded by Madame Blavatsky. Dedicated to revealing a dormant "Ancient Wisdom" common to religions worldwide, theosophists were specifically influential in conjuring up the image of mystical East. However, because theosophists preferred to narrow their focus to esoteric features, they consequently gave "the mistaken impression that their spiritual practices were primarily concerned with arousing the body's subtle energies or eliciting paranormal abilities such as clairvoyance, telepathy, and astral projection" (Fuller: 81). Later in the twentieth century

[179] For a detailed analysis of the Perennial Philosophy as promoted by Guénon et. al. see Mark Sedgwick's *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (2004).

[180] Transcendentalists' prioritization of text over performance clearly demonstrates a "textualist bias," which is one of the natural outcomes, among other things, of print culture. Due to print's encouragement of the 'sense of closure' – that is, "the sense that the content of the text was final and complete," "the enlightened mind" eventually became sure that "one can give an objective and definitive account of that

claimed to found a new religion, Emerson believed in the coming of a new understanding of a religion of fusion, which he explicates in his preface to the extracts from "Veeshno Sarma", the first "Ethnical Scriptures" article in the transcendentalist periodical *The Dial*:[181]

> Each nation has its bible more or less pure; none has yet been willing or able in a
> wise and devout spirit to collate its own with those of other natures and sinking
> the civil-historical and ritual portions to bring together the grand expressions of
> moral sentiment in different ages and races, the rules for the guidance of life, the
> bursts of piety and abandonment to the Invisible and Eternal; - a work inevitable
> sooner or later, and which we hope is to be done by religion and not by literature.
> (82)[182]

As the quote demonstrates, Transcendentalists never advocated fully adopting a religious tradition; they picked from the "ethnical scriptures" whatever they needed to support their

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which one is studying" (King: 65). It is also significant to note that the text-centered conceptualization of religion facilitated the rise of religious liberalism in the twentieth century. In a recent study Matthew Hedstrom exposes the dependence of the "the liberal project of renovating religion in light of modern knowledge" on "the marketplace of print" (4). The impact of the print on popular culture had been a case since the Protestant Reformation and the invention of the moveable type but as Hedstrom notes "only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did the economic, cultural, social, and religious forces align to make the consumption of mass-market books a part of everyday American spiritual practice" (*Ibid*). I believe it could be said that the early transcendentalists were heralds of such collaboration, which facilitated "the spread of liberal religious sensibilities through middle-brow culture" (*Ibid*).

[181] Emerson succeeded Margaret Fuller as editor of the *Dial* in 1842. Together with Thoreau he prepared a new section titled "Ethnical Scriptures", a selection and edition of sacred texts. According to Alan Hodder, the "Ethnical Scriptures" column represented the first tentative steps in the direction of composing a universal scripture or "world bible" that would encompass and transcend the individual scriptures of the world's religious heritage (32).

[182] Anthony Versluis coined the term "literary religion" for the American religion envisioned by Emerson and his close circle. This literary religion was removed from any ritual and institutional context and drew on various religious traditions from all around world. Though it must be noted that Emerson was rather individualistic in his attempts, which he has described in one of his essays as enjoying "an original relation to the universe" (2012: 1). By means of a syncretic approach, Emerson was looking for personal inspiration and spiritual edification in any text available to him and the emphasis was on personal and symbolic forms of expression that focus on the "individual fulfillment of one's potentialities" (Ahlstrom: 32).

own ideas or sometimes to construct a concept, such as the Over-Soul concept of Emerson.[183] Identified as "intellectual colonization" by Arthur Versluis, this approach has become a characteristic feature of not only transcendentalism but "religious liberalism" in general. Taken out of their socio-historical context, any given religious tradition is bisected into moral, ethical and self-transcending features as opposed to the "civil-historical and ritual portions." What is to follow is to synthesize the ethical strictures as well as moral and self-transcending aspects of those distinct traditions.

The most significant aspect of this approach to religious traditions, I believe, is its "transformative power," which can be defined as the effect of such combinative eclecticism on the appropriated subject. Once a tradition enters the range of this type of American religiosity, it no longer is the same as it is received and performed in its original landscape.[184] One could definitely dispute the uniqueness of this type of appropriation, but a brief glance at the history of culture and, in particular, of religiosity evolved in the United States, reveals the success and extent of this process of "Americanization," which was promoted, as early as 1847, by Ralph Waldo Emerson in a note in his journal: "It makes no difference what I read. If it is irrelevant, I read it deeper. I read it until it is pertinent to me and mine, to Nature, and to the hour that now passes. A

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[183] The transcendentalists were quite conscious of the consequences of their approach as a parable provided by Thoreau in his conclusion to a selection from the Saddharmapundarika bespeaks. In the parable chosen by Thoreau, the Dharma is explained through the analogy of a rain cloud, from which each plant depending on its size, nature and needs absorb water. This parable sums up the Transcendentalist attitude of the time toward Oriental scriptures and probably served as Thoreau's answer to those who object to taking part of Buddhism without taking all of it (Versluis: 191). Thoreau was of the opinion that comparable to the plants' absorption of water, human beings can utilize the teachings of Buddha according to their own needs; it could be as little as few drops or as much as many barrels.

[184] Richard King, for instance, demonstrates the extent of such transformative power on Buddhism and Hinduism in his book *Orientalism and Religion* (1999).

good scholar will find Aristophanes and Hafiz and Rabelais full of American history"
(1926: 222).

Going back to Coleman Barks, his embeddedness into the above-mentioned
tradition with regard to his approach to religion remains fundamental. Like the
transcendentalists and religious liberals in general, Barks is skeptical about the idea of
organized religion, and opposes to be defined or confined by any religion or the sacred
text thereof. For Barks in the "all-inclusive, no-dogma, no-structure way" the most
meaningful act is to nourish the soul which needs moving along, expanding and
deepening in love, without exclusively subscribing to any doctrine (2009: 9).[185] Rather
than clinging to prescribed forms of religious experience, Barks espouses creating
personalized forms in an "open-air sanctuary without buildings, doctrine, or clergy,"
where "the Lord is *what is*, nothing less than that" (2002: 164). In explanation of his
stance on the issue of exclusivity of religions, Barks refers to the words of his own master
Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, who says that "once you believe in God, there is no religion. Once
you divide yourself off with religions, you are separated from your fellow man" (2011:
479).[186] In this universe shared by many like-minded religious liberals and spiritual
seekers, again in Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's words, 'God has no form, no shape, no color, no

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[185] In *A Year With Rumi*, Barks argues that "the exclusivity of Abrahamic religious doctrines" "insult the soul" (7). He argues that there cannot be one messenger, one book, one revelation as the Islamic creed dictates.

[186] Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (d. 1986) was a Sufi mystic who had both Hindu and Muslim disciples in Sri Lanka. There he was known as "a former wandering ascetic, a holy man, and inspired teacher," who founded an ashram to care for the poor and to heal spiritual illnesses. Though he was associated with Islam because of him laying the foundation for a mosque near Mankumban, he insisted at his talks that distinctions between people due to race, color, class, or religion do not exist. He further argues that men and women of all religions could pray in the mosque as long as non-Muslims respected the *salat* times of Muslim prayer. Bawa came to America upon the invitation of a young woman, who in her own spiritual quest, had heard about Bawa. After his arrival in Philadelphia in 1971 a fellowship by similar-minded spiritual seekers was established (Webb: 254-55). For more information, see Gisela Webb "Sufism in America" and http://www.bmf.org/m/fellowship/founder.html

differences, no race, no religion, no country, no place, no name, neither beginning nor end. God is the grace that lives within all lives" (2011: 343).

Furthermore, in the customized religiosity, religion, as understood in the conventional sense, disappears to merge with literature, reminding us what Emerson had advocated. Barks argues that this type of approach to religion, that is, "the experiment to live without religion, or rather to live in friendship with all religion and literature simultaneously," is "the brave American try for freedom and flow" (2002: 164). Though, he makes sure that it does not have to be literature for everyone because there had been, and will be, many valid ways of acknowledging the mystery as well as the sacredness of creation (2009: 7). For Barks, it has always been literature; "works of literature," he argues, "are agents in the continuous revisioning of the language of who we are and are becoming" (2002: 265).

In parallel to his ideas about personalized forms of religious experience Barks argues that instead of blindly following the sacred texts that are promoted by institutionalized religions one needs to find out his/her "own anthology of sacred texts."[187] For him Cormac McCarthy and James Agee work better than the epistles of Paul or the Qur'an; Joseph Campbell is as illuminative as Abrahamic religions, Rinzai and Bodhidharma for that matter.[188] In this regard, Rumi, specifically his *Masnavi*, which, according to Barks, possesses "a wildness beyond Thoreau or D. H. Lawrence or

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[187] Though it must be noted that Barks believes that such "texts" do not necessarily have to be texts at all. In "disagreement with the idea of sacred texts as a category" Barks argues "everything," including people, memories, pets, "is a kind of sacred text" as long as they "deepen [one's] own sense of being" (interview)
[188] The compilation Barks plans to make for his granddaughter gives a hint about Barks's own anthology of sacred texts: "lines from Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth, maybe some Bible, C. K. Williams, Agee, Yeats, Hopkins, Dickinson, Mary Oliver" (interview)

Nietzsche," works far more successfully than many other texts in leading the listener

"into an experience, into a *presence* or *presences*" (2002: 258; 2010: 9).

Again like transcendentalists, or religious liberals for that matter, Barks adopts an

extremely selective approach to any spiritually enhancing material he encounters. The

bricolage method liberally employed by Barks and alike enable them to tailor anything

they read to the fusion they personally oversee. According to Barks, such fusions are

what Rumi's life, poetry and friendship with Shams suggest. By means of fusions that

simulate the revolutionary friendship of Rumi and Shams, we will be able to "break

cultural molds and cross religious and national boundaries" says Barks (2011: 480). The

overall effect, which is "a new way of being," has no name or form yet but is "something

at once planetary and tribal, indigenous and universal" (*Ibid*). Of course, as it is the case

with any claim to fusion, one has to ask which parts to use and which parts to get rid of.

The question is crucial because it determines the character of the fusion one is seeking.

(iii) Barks on Rumi

Barks's reading of Rumi needs to be discussed with reference to the question above. His

interpretation is marked by an emphasis on the universalist aspect, which allegedly

nullifies the Islamic character of Rumi's poetry. But in order to comprehend and

overemphasize the universalist aspect that he hears in Rumi's poetry and personality,

Barks interprets Rumi's poetry as if it exists in a vacuum, safe from any external element:

"the poems lived free of purpose, free of time and space in a kind of pure sailing" says

Barks (2004: xvi). In short the more Rumi is universalized the more his poetry is

decontextualized. Barks argues that "in its essential nature" mystical poetry in general "is

not something to locate or describe within a cultural context" (2004: xvii). It is always already above and beyond time and place. That's why, Barks claims, despite the different categories where individual "mystics" were put, "they recognize one another across centuries and cultures" (2009: 7).[189] And on account of being a universal mystic neither Rumi nor his poetry belongs to thirteenth-century Islamic culture.

Barks further argues that, similar to his independence from time and space, Rumi is also not confined by religions. As "a dissolver of boundaries" among world religions Rumi is capable of moving beyond the confines of organized religion that Barks insistently refuses to be a part of. "Other people see him as an Islamic poet," says Barks, "but I like to hear in him that which calls us beyond the boundaries that separate us" (*interview*). Preferring to "hear Rumi's poems outside of any system, in the shared heart, part of no religion and all" (TSOR: 46), Barks maintains that Rumi "claimed to belong to that companion who transpires through and animates the whole universe" "rather than be exclusively part of an organized religion or cultural system" (TSOR: 8). In short, in Rumi Barks sees a fellow free soul with no attachments whatsoever.

As can be predicted, Barks's interpretation of Rumi as a "gnostic, without-religious-form," constitutes one of the most controversial aspects of his reading. Many Rumi scholars, as well Sufis including Franklin Lewis and Ibrahim Gamard, oppose a reading of Rumi divorced from Islam. Sayer H. Nasr, for instance, aptly argues that representing Rumi as an extra-Islamic figure is as problematic as reading Dante as an extra-Christian poet:

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[189] In his "anthology of sacred texts" or the customized list of "soul books" Rumi is situated among a "scruffy, thoughtful, ecstatic crowd" that Barks identifies as "the DUMs, the Disreputable Unaffiliated Mystics" most of whom are, in Barks's words, "devoutly affiliated" and "not at all disreputable" (2009: 7).

It is as if Dante were to be translated very approximately into Arabic and presented

as a 'universal poet,' which he of course is, but without any reference to Christianity,

without which Dante would not be Dante. The same truth holds for Rumi, who

represents one of the greatest flowerings of Islamic spirituality, a tradition whose

roots are sunk deeply in the Koran and whose prototype is to be found in the Prophet

of Islam. (2003: xi)[190]

Barks is well aware of such criticism and welcomes them but argues to maintain

his position regarding Rumi's supposed indifference towards any organized religion. In

The Soul of Rumi he acknowledges the presence of "a Rumi loved by Muslims whose

almost every poem is read as a commentary on the Qur'an" (46) but adds that his own

version of Rumi, which he shares with notable figures such as "Dag Hammarskjold,

Gurdjieff, Joseph Campbell, Erich Fromm, Meher Baba, Hasan Shushed, Sam Lewis, Pir

Vilayat Khan, Reshad Feild, Idris Shah, Hamid Karzai, and Barack Obama" (2011: 487),

should be as valid as the Muslim Rumi. Rumi's *baraka* (blessing), he argues, is vast

enough to accommodate all kinds of interpretations and there is no need to be "dogmatic"

or "argumentative" about it. "We can meet and talk and proclaim our takes on his

poetry," says Barks, "but all within the embrace of his presence" (2002: 46).

In this scheme of interpretation Rumi owes his supra-religious standing to his life-

changing friendship with Shams-i Tabriz. Scholars actually agrees on the transformative

effect of Shams on Rumi. According to S. H. Nasr, Rumi's "latent" Sufi inclinations

came to the fore after his encounter with Shams, who probably guided him to the

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[190] James Winston Morris also notes that Rumi and Dante share a similar destiny in the sense that explicating the meanings of the *Masnavi* and *Divine Comedy* to modern audience is complicated because of the "constant interplay between initially unfamiliar metaphysical assumptions" that are inherent in both works but unfamiliar to modern audiences.

realization of certain stations of perfection to which he had not already gained access. Both Annemarie Schimmel and William Chittick underline the decisive influence of Shams upon Rumi; outwardly he was transformed from a sober jurisprudent to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love. It is the disappearance of Shams that initiated Rumi's transformation into a mystical poet. Barks probably agrees with these comments but further claims "that ineffable and yet particular connection, consumed the structure of religion for Rumi" meaning that "the friendship became his worship, absorbing Islam, Muhammad, Jesus, and all doctrines in the ocean of its reality, the heart" (TSOR: 46). At that point, says Barks, "theological discussions" including those on prayer, were "no longer relevant" (*Ibid*).[191]

Barks's translation strategy is inevitably an expression/continuum of this reading. In fact, he defends de-contextualization, or "not trying to place Rumi in his thirteenth-century locus," with reference to his "grandiose project" which is "to free [Rumi's] text into its essence" (2004: xviii) by "putting Rumi into the Whitman free-verse lineage, which is the strongest strand of American poetry, and the most soul- and self-searching" (2011: 10).[192] The "essence" that Barks claims to reveal is akin to the universalism of the transcendentalists and the like. Barks himself notes that in all his "renderings of Rumi", he aims to "emphasize this universalist aspect" (2011: 7).

This universalism, however, is not necessarily about finding "the Highest Common Factor in all theologies." A very personal universal underlines specific

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[191] According to Barks, Rumi "does not stress prayer so much as continuous conversation". Barks supports this highly contentious claim by his own take on the concept of worship: "If our real consciousness is beyond time and space, the core of worship must be beyond any cultural or religious system" (TSOR: 46).
[192] Barks notes that "I am told by those who know that Rumi's language has the taste of his refinement, his learned lineage, as well as an easy colloquial, conversational tone. That blend of delicacy and sudden directness is part of what I hope to reproduce in American English" (2011: 480).

characteristics that Barks finds ideally appropriate for the universal religion of love. What

is more, despite its neutrality claim, Barks's method of decontextualization does not

automatically make his Rumi or his poetry "universal" in the conventional sense, because

the term "universal" never remains out-of-context. Decontextualization, in this case,

means re-contextualization. Here the new context that Rumi is situated in corresponds to

a specific form of American religiosity that is briefly described above. The Rumi that

Barks favors and claims to capture the essence and soul of is, indeed, a mirror image of

Barks. Barks sees a fellow soul in Rumi and translates only the parts that would

substantiate the presence of that fellowship. By the same token the parts that he considers

"nonessential" are either mistranslated or not translated at all.

(iv) The translations by Barks

Barks never claims to produce "scholarly translations" and is well aware of the

criticism directed at his work for not being "proper" translations (2002: 390).[193] Such

criticisms are not baseless. Due to the extreme license he takes, Barks's renderings of

Rumi's poetry present certain complications. The first problematic element pertains to

Barks's lack of knowledge of Persian. Rather than the original Persian versions of the

poems, he works from different translations to English[194] to render them in American

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[193] In *The Soul of Rumi* Barks says: "These are not scholarly translations, though to produce them I collaborate with scholars who know the original language, Farsi. I do not work from the Persian. Some people would not call these translations, but rather "translations," or versions, or imitations" (390). In *A Year With Rumi* he reiterates the non-scholar characteristic of his translations: "Whatever you call the collaborative effort at translation that I do, it is not scholarship" (415).

[194] For the *Masnavi* translations he mainly uses Reynold Nicholson's 8-volumed *The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi* (1925-1940), and also M.G. Gupta's *Maulana Rumi's Masnawi* (6 vols; 1995). For the quatrains (*rubaiyat*), and odes (*ghazals*) his main sources are A. J. Arberry's *Mystical Poems of Rumi* (1968 and 1979), *The Rubaiyat of Jalal al-din Rumi* (1949) as well as the unpublished translations of John Moyne, an emeritus professor of linguistics at the CUNY. In addition, again particularly for the quatrains

English.[195] He calls this method "collaborative translation," by means of which he hopes to "release" Rumi's poems "from their cages" (2004: 363).[196] Here the cage that Rumi's poetry is entrapped in refers to the more literal and scholarly yet dry translations of R. A. Nicholson and A. J. Arberry. According to his own account, Barks has set a routine of translation practice since 1976 which, upon reading such literal translations, starts with him "enter[ing] the ecstatic consciousness, the love that is the subject that generates the poetry" (2003: 184). He describes this state as "mov[ing] with the images and try[ing] to absorb the soul-growth truth being transmitted" (*Ibid*). And the words come to him "when it feels like a connection has occurred," which is finalized by the feeling that his "head bowing in gratitude" (*Ibid*). The product of such an intuitive experience, of course, defies systematic analysis.

The second problematic aspect of Barks's translations concerns his editing process. Usually accompanied by some sort of paratextual matter Barks creates his own editions of Rumi poetry by redesigning the structure of Rumi's oeuvre. The *Masnavi*, for instance, is a collection of embedded stories, jokes, folktales, anecdotes, lyrical poetry all of which, though seemingly disconnected, are, in fact, linked to each other by the thread

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and odes he uses Nevit Ergin's *Divan-i Kebir* (16 vols; 1992-2001). For a few poems he uses other sources such as Hazrat Inayat Khan but these constitute a negligible percentage.

[195] What Barks does can, as well, be defined as a form of "intralingual translation" which is described Roman Jacobson as "rewording," or "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language" (2).

[196] In almost all of his works of Rumi translations Barks recounts his meeting with the poetry of Rumi. In 1976 when he was teaching poetry at the University of Georgia-Athens Robert Bly, a fellow poet, gave him a copy of A. J. Arberry's translations of Rumi, saying, "these poems need to be released from their cages." According his own account, he "felt drawn immediately to the spaciousness and longing in Rumi's poetry" (ER: 363). After a while he sent some of his early attempts of "rephrasing Arberry's English" to a friend who was teaching law at Rutgers-Camden. Though Barks does not know the reason this friend read those translations to his students among whom someone asked him for Barks's address, and started writing, urging him to come meet his teacher in Philadelphia. Somehow Barks accepted this invitation and the said teacher, Bawa Muhyiyaddeen, turned out to be someone that Barks had met in a dream a year before their actual meeting. That Bawa also told him to continue with the Rumi work: "It has to be done" he said.

of Divine Love.[197] In his editions Barks usually uses thematic chapters to re-contextualize the poetry he is using. An abridged version of a certain passage from the *Masnavi* is taken as a free-standing poem and usually sorted with another poem from the *Divan* and/or another abridged poem from another volume of the *Masnavi*. In short, usually the whole oeuvre of Rumi is re-categorized by Barks according to the themes he chooses.[198] Barks describes his method as 'taking what he hears as the tastiest lines from a poem without giving the context" (2003: 184). Though it should be noted that Barks acknowledges the disparity between his personal recreations' and Rumi's originals:

> Rumi's poetry was a continuous spontaneous outpouring. The poems have no titles in Persian. They are seamless, whereas I have given most of these titles. In English we feel the title is an organic part of the poem, but it may contribute here to a false feeling of stop-start process. There are no full stops. Rumi's poetry should be felt as a whole like Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* or Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*. Also, in this collection I often take what I hear as the tastiest lines from a poem without giving the context. That can be found in the earlier volumes, *The Essential Rumi* and *The Soul of Rumi*. The wider truth is that

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[197] Annemarie Schimmel argues that even though the *Masnavi* seems like an "illogical work" there is in fact "a secret order behind" it. As a work containing "the entire wisdom of an unusual and yet exemplary life, the fruit of scholarly and poetic activity, of burning in Divine Love and of being revived," the *Masnavi*'s inner working can be perceived with reference to a tree metaphor: *Masnavi* is a "wondrous tree that has produced strange blossoms and fruits, a tree in which birds of different hues are nesting – until they leave the nest "Word" and fly back to their eternal home." (2001: 29).

[198] The themes are organically related to the spiritual verses of Rumi. *The Essential Rumi* is divided into twenty-eight chapters that Barks present as "faint and playful palimpsests spread over Rumi's imagination" (xxiii). Chapters are titled "The Tavern: Whoever Brought Me Here Will Have to Take Me Home," "Bewilderment: I Have Five Things to Say," and "Emptiness and Silence: The Night Air," Union: Gnats Inside the Wind." And in each chapter Barks brings together poems from different works of Rumi. In his other works Barks uses more or less the same poems but under different organizations. In *The Big Red Book*, for instance, which is divided into twenty-seven categorical chapters, he uses the eighteen of the "ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah" in Arabic along with the categories of his own devising such as "Tenderness Toward Existence," and "Everything and Everyone Else." In short, at different levels Barks uses licenses to create "new" works by means of simple restructuring out of the oeuvre of Rumi.

Rumi's poems all grow together in a field called the *qalb*, or the innermost heart. (2003: 184)

In another instance, however, Barks argues that his re-arrangement of the poems does not contradict the original restructure of the *Masnavi*, which, despite being "whole," "seems composed of strands and fragments" and does not have "a satisfying beginning, middle, or end" (2002: 264). Because "there's no beginning or end to the flowing of heart energy," one can "enter the poem anywhere and swim around, listen for resonance, experience the motions" (*Ibid*) is his justification. The *Masnavi*, just like any great artwork, is a field "spreading out a spontaneously exploratory, tending region of consciousness" (*Ibid*).

As mentioned above, Barks's translation strategy tends toward "domestication," which roughly means adapting a text via translation to the norms and values of the receiving culture.[199] Such imposing of the norms and values of the target-text culture on the source-text culture can be undertaken by means of various tactics, each and every one of which potentially contributes to the ideological manipulation of the text. Christina Schaffner, for instance, notes that "the deliberate choice or avoidance of a particular word" at the lexical level and "the use of passive structures to avoid an expression of agency" at the grammatical level are common manipulative tactics operative in translation (23).

Upon careful examination of the translations by Barks, specifically those that appear in *The Essential Rumi*, specific maneuvers draw attention. I argue that Barks employs them so as to accommodate the poems to his own worldview partly because

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[199] It should be noted that because the receiving culture can never be monolithic there is no single set norms and values.

most of them inevitably serve the overarching theme of de-Islamization. Among such

tactics the most prominent one is qualitative contraction which needs to be examined in

conjunction with quantitative contraction. The six-volume *Masnavi*, which comprises

more than 25000 rhyming couplets, is claimed to be an exegesis of the Qur'an with

emphasis on its mystical dimensions, though, as William Chittick notes, "more generally,

it is aimed at anyone who has time to sit down and ponder the meaning of life and

existence" (1983: 6).[200] Following the example of the Qur'an, which according to Rumi,

contains seven layers of meaning for both common and elite readers,[201] Rumi aims to

appeal to the taste and constitution of every potential reader (Lewis 2009).[202]

As a collection of "stories, parables, exhortations to virtuous action, wisdom

sayings, didactic monologues, vivid eschatological reminders and ecstatic utterances,"

Masnavi nourishes from a vast array of sources such as the *Qur'an*, the *Bible*, various

Hadith sources, *Kalila and Dimna*, *Garden of Mystical Truth* by Sana'i, and *Book of

Secrets* by Farid al-Din 'Attar. It deals with, among other things, the principal themes of

Sufi mystical life and doctrine as well as the major questions of Islamic theology by

means of parables and exemplary tales.[203] According to Franklin Lewis, the aim is to

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[200] For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Chapter 3 of Jawid Mojaddedi's *Beyond Dogma* (2012).
[201] It is believed that Prophet Muhammad declared every verse of the Qur'an to have seven layers of meaning. This *hadith* is a precipitating factor in the development of esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an which is a major occupation for numerous Sufis who are in the quest of the hidden, inner meaning of the Qur'an.
[202] Throughout its history the discourse that the mystical aspect is wrapped in has been a contentious topic due to its seemingly unorthodox statements. Franklin Lewis notes that mystics in the Islamic tradition, following the example of Hallaj (d. 922), usually addressed to two distinct audiences, roughly described as the common folk who are not privy to the mysteries of esoteric discourse and for whom it might seem blasphemous; and an initiated elite who are familiar enough with the discourse to know that it is not blasphemy (2009).
[203] As noted by Arberry the use of the parable in religious teaching has a very long history, and "Rumi broke no new ground when he decided to lighten the weight of his doctrinal exposition by introducing tales and fables to which he gave an allegorical twist" (2013: 12). He was especially indebted, as he freely

"explain the very roots of spirituality and the meaning of religion as understood by those who tread the mystical path, and thus to provide a guide for the thinking person to resolve everyday moral and metaphysical quandaries as a true Sufi might" (2009).

This extremely digressive poetic exploration of the relationship between the Creator and human beings is situated within a tradition of spiritual writing with regard to its scheme (Arberry 2013: 13).[204] Barks provides an abridged though re-designed interpretation of the *Masnavi*. Admittedly, untranslated parts are far more than the translated parts; Barks skips most of the stories that are told in the *Masnavi*. Therefore, it would be mere speculation to make deductions based on these omitted parts. Nonetheless in addition to skipping parts that are coherent in themselves, Barks also leaves out or collapses lines or parts in his translations from certain passages that he claims to translate. The deleted parts, as I will demonstrate below, make up a consistent pattern that

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acknowledges in the course of his poem, to two earlier Persian poets, Sana'i of Ghazna and Farid al-Din 'Attar of Nishapur."

[204] Arberry's note on this specific tradition of writing shed light on some aspects of the *Masnavi* that some people find confusing: "The first mystics in Islam, or rather those of them who were disposed to propagate Sufi teachings in writing as well as by example, followed the lead set by the preachers. Ibn al-Mubarak, al-Muhasibi and al-Kharraz were competent Traditionalists and therefore sprinkled acts and sayings of the Prophet, and of his immediate disciples, through the pages of their times, furnished the next generation of Sufi writers with supplementary evidence, their own acts and words, to support the rapidly developing doctrine. Abu Talib al-Makki, al-Kalabadhi, al-Sarraj, al-Qushairi and Hujviri (who was the fist to write on Sufism in Persian), leading up to the great Muhammad al-Ghazali, all used the same scheme in their methodical statements: first topic, then citation from the Koran, a Tradition or two of the Prophet, followed by appropriate instances from the lives and works of earlier saints and mystics. Biographies of the Sufi masters, such as were compiled by al-Sulami, Abu Nu'aim al-Isbahani and al-Ansari (the last in Persian), provided rich and varied materials enabling later theorists to enlarge the range of their illustrations." Also note that Rumi ignored in the *Masnavi* a well-established tradition of beginning a work with the *Basmala* (the statement, in the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Though this lack is usually explained in commentaries on the *Masnavi* at least since the fourteenth-century that Rumi begins his *magnum opus* with the word *Bishnev* (Listen), which is, in fact, a reference to the Basmala on account of starting with the letter B (Gölpınarlı: 1990a: 16), about which a tradition is ascribed to Imam Ali, the fourth Caliph and cousin of the Prophet. This tradition claims that "the *basmala* is "all the treasure that is in the Qur'an is in the first opening chapter called al-Fatiha; all that is in the Fatiha is in the *basmala*; all that is in the *basmala* is in the first letter "b") which has a dot under it in Arabic script); all that is in the b is in the dot; and Ali, who was the *wasi* or trustee of the Prophet, is that dot" (Kassam 2001: 36).

can be categorized as the expulsion of Islamic references, specifically to the Quran, to

Prophet Muhammad, and also in particular to the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell.[205]

Such omissions constitute major examples of domestication that characterizes the

translations of Barks.

To start with the references and allusions to the Qur'an, Rumi's entire oeuvre,

specifically the *Masnavi*, is inextricably woven into Islamic culture, in particular to the

Qur'an, so much so that the Sufi poet Jami (d. 1492) calls it "the Qur'an in the Persian

tongue" (Arberry 2004: 1).[206] While this affirmation about *Masnavi* being a commentary

on the Qur'an is conventionally accepted, Jawid Mojaddedi remarks that what Rumi

claims in the *Masnavi* about it indicates being of the same origin as the Qur'an, rather

than being a commentary on it (2006: 369).[207] Whether a commentray or not, the *Masnavi*

makes "remarkably frequent use of the Qur'an" (*Ibid*). Rumi himself underlines

Masnavi's organic affiliation with Islam and the Qur'an in his description of his work in

the preface to the first volume of the *Masnavi*: as "the roots of the roots of the roots of the

(Mohammedan) Religion" and "the expounder of the Qur'an" it is intended to "unveil the

mysteries of attainment (to the Truth) and of certainty" (3).[208] References to the Qur'an,

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[205] There is also omission of references to prominent figures, whether religious or lay, that are known quite well in the Islamic world. Even though their deletion can be categorized under the concept of domestication, due to practical reasons I will not discuss Barks's treatment of them.

[206] Mojaddedi notes that even though this couplet has conventionally been attributed to Jami, a reference to a specific work of Jami has never been provided. The earliest reference given by Nicholson was W. Muhammad's 1728 work *Makhzan al-asrar* [Treasury of Mysteries] which was published in 1895 as a commentary on *Masnavi* under the title *Sharh-i Mathnawi* (2006: 372).

[207] The implications of this claim is briefly discussed by Mojaddedi in his entry on "Rumi" in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (2006).

[208] Here "the Religion" refers to Islam because in the Islamic tradition it is believed that there has only been one religion which has been revealed by Allah in different forms since the time of Adam to prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. In one of the stories in the *Masnavi*, for instance, Moses rebukes a shepherd for not acting like a proper "Muslim" (vol. II, l. 1727).

sometimes in the form of citation (in Persian or in the original Arabic) and sometimes in the form of explaining stories from it (Mojaddedi 2006), permeates this extensive masterpiece so much that it is said, that it includes more than two thousand direct references and allusions to the Qur'an (Gamard 2006). Furthermore, as a detailed analysis by James Winston Morris lays out, rhetorical and structural features of the Qur'an are adapted in the *Masnavi* as well (230).[209]

With regard to the Quranic references there is no consistent pattern on the part of Barks. Rumi usually inserts *ayet*s (verses from the Quran) into his work quite seamlessly, usually without mentioning the fact that he is quoting the Quran. The above-mentioned tradition that the *Masnavi* is a part of applies this method quite liberally. Besides, for an *alim* (scholar) of Rumi's scope to quote the Qur'an or the *Sunnah* (Tradition) in that manner was a very common practice. In such cases the readers of the original text usually understand the reference not only because they are already familiar with the Qur'an, but also because the inserted lines remain in their original language, that is, Arabic. Rumi uses those *ayets* either to verify a point in the story or sometimes to specifically explicate them. In either case they are quite vital in the transmission of the message(s) of the text. In Barks's renderings these *ayet*s sometimes remain (see pages 41; 57; 79; 80; 82; 87; 115; 179; 332) but usually do not (see pages 4; 10; 11; 55; 69; 80; 141; 153; 169; 174; 188; 222; 287; 322). The ones that remain, however, are not always stated to be from the

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[209] According to Morris these features and structures can be analyzed under 4 headings: (1) "the constant interplay of shifting multiple 'voices' emerging from or representing very different (and mysteriously uncertain) planes of being or origins;" (2) "the constant ambiguities and uncertainties of *time* and of the relevant contexts and reference-points tied to those temporal options;" (3) "its complex, intentional ambiguities of pronoun reference, regarding both the speaking and acting subjects and even more so the intended "objects" and audiences of that divine Address;" (4) the "characteristically mirroring, interactive dramatic interplay of constantly ambiguous and shifting relational perspectives which is so central in each reader or listener's encounter with both the Qur'an and the *Masnavi*" (230-32).

Qur'an. Interestingly enough Barks makes the Quranic reference vague without completely omitting it. In some instances, he makes it clear that it is from another source but the name of the source is not mentioned. It is either "the text" (79; 80; 87; 179), "the passage" (41), or even "sacred texts" (69). Given Barks's stance towards sacred texts it is not surprising for Barks to veil the authority of Qur'an that Rumi brings to the fore in *Masnavi*.

In a parable, for instance, from the first volume of the *Masnavi,* Rumi says "Recite (the text) Every day He is (engaged) in some affair: do not deem Him idle and inactive" (l. 3071).[210] Here the first part of the sentence is a direct quote from the Qur'an, specifically from the 29th *ayet* of Sura al-rahman which is devoted to the blessings that Allah bestows upon His whole creation including human beings. The previous lines in the text (*Masnavi*) commends God's incomparable power so as to underline God's active continuous involvement in everything. Barks translates the word God (*Haq*) as "the one" and then translates the line with the *ayet* as "*Every day that one does something.* / Take that as your text" (87). Except for being in italics, neither that specific line nor the preceding or the following line indicate its source. This case is not an exception; Barks hardly mentions the word Qur'an. This choice, I contend, is not innocent. By de-specifying the source Barks imposes his own views about sacred texts. As mentioned above Barks rejects the exclusive claim of any religion or text thereof and argues to embrace the wisdom that is inherent in each and every one of them. In *The Soul of Rumi*, he, once again, explains his stance towards sacred texts as:

I don't want to offend Muslims or Christians or Jews, or the Indian subcontinent

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[210] In my analysis, for practical reasons, I use the literal English translations of Nicholson.

or China, but I guess I will: the Bible, the Qur'an, the Torah, the Zen sutras, the

Vedas, the *Upanishads*, the *Tao Teh Ching*, indigenous stories and aboriginal

dream-time drawings in sand have no *exclusive* claim on scripting beauty and

truth, or revelation. John 8, Agee listening to foxes, Yeats casting out remorse,

Harrogate killing a shoat, and Samuel hearing his name called, they're all chapter

and verse. (394)

Therefore, Islam's claim to be "the religion" since the time of Adam or the

exclusive sacredness of Qur'an is not something Barks could accept. Maybe because of

that he omits the part on the guiding role of the Qur'an and the prophets that appear in a

passage on "the inner sense of 'Let him who desires to sit with God sit with the Sufis' (l.

1529) in the first volume of the *Masnavi*. Nicholson's literal translation of the passage is

When you have fled (for refuge) to the Qur'an of God, you have mingled with the

spirit of the prophets.

The Qur'an is (a description of) the states of the prophets, (who are) the fishes of

the holy sea of (Divine) Majesty.

And if you read and do not accept (take to heart) the Qur'an, suppose you have

seen the prophets and saints (what will that avail you?);

But if you are accepting (the Qur'an), when you read the stories (of the prophets),

the bird, your soul, will be distressed in its cage.

The bird that is a prisoner in a cage, (if it) is not seeking to escape, 'tis from

ignorance.

The spirits which have escaped from their cages are the prophets, (those) worthy

guides.

150

From without comes their voice, (telling) of religion, (and crying), "This, this is

the way of escape for thee.

By this we escaped from this narrow cage: there is no means of escape from this

cage but this way,

(That) thou shouldst make thyself ill, exceedingly wretched, in order that thou

mayst be let out from (the cage of) reputation."

Worldly reputation is a strong chain: in the Way how is this less than a chain of

iron? (l. 1537-1546)

Barks's translation of the same passage reads as:

A great joy breaks free of the self

and joins the moving river of presence.

Read about prophetic states

and let your soul grow restless in confinement.

Stay close to those who have managed to escape.

Don't do anything to make people applaud.

That shuts the cage door tighter. (336)

When compared the two versions differ markedly. In the original text the guiding role of

the prophets along with the Qur'an as well as the exclusivity of the way to "freedom" is

underlined whereas in the more secular version of Barks the message is coached in more

general terms which, rather than highlighting the role of the Qur'an or religion, supports

Barks's above-mentioned ideas.

A similar translation choice Barks makes also confirms his objection to

committing solely to one sacred text. The literal translation of the original passage reads:

151

as: Beseech God continually that you may not stumble over these deep

sayings and that you may arrive at the end,

For many have been led astray by the Qur'án: by (clinging to) that rope a

multitude have fallen into the well

There is no fault in the rope, O perverse man, inasmuch as you had no

desire for the top (vol. III, l. 4209-11).

Barks entitles the poem "The Well of Sacred Text" and translates thus:

> Don't fall down the well of scripture
>
> use the words to keep moving
>
> Thousands are trapped in the Qur'an
>
> and the Bible, holding to a rope
>
> It's not the rope's fault.
>
> Let the well rope pull you out.
>
> Then let the well rope go" (345).

A couple of points need to be addressed here. First of all, Barks creates a new imagery in

which the scriptures, not only the Qur'an but also the Bible, are the well itself. Whereas

in the original one Qur'an is the rope that aids one both in and out of the well; it is up to

the capabilities as well as to the will of the person to use it to his/her advantage. In

Barks's rendering, also, it is not clear what the rope refers to. If the referent is the sacred

scripture, his final remark to "let it go" is, once again, problematic according to Rumi and

Islam because neither Islam nor Rumi recommends leaving the Qur'an behind.

References to Prophet Muhammad are equally problematic because, once again,

in most cases Barks prefers to omit such references (see pages 11; 23; 80; 223; 290).[211] In

some stories, taking out the reference is impossible because the Prophet is a character

within the story. In such cases Barks manipulates the text so as to trivialize him. By

trivializing I do not mean denigration. Barks does not dispute the prophethood of

Muhammad; he, rather, minimizes or transforms his role. To give an example, in one of

the poems that Barks translates an unbeliever named Abu Jahl challenges Prophet

Muhammad. Abu Jahl holds pebbles in his hand telling Muhammad that he should know

what he hides in his fist if he is the Messenger of God as he claims to be (vol. I, l. 2154).

To this challenge, the pebbles in the hands of Abu Jahl begin to pronounce the s*hadah*

(Islamic profession of faith): "Each said, "There is no god" and (each) said, "except

Allah"; (each) threaded the pearl of "Ahmad is the Messenger of Allah" (l. 2159).[212]

Barks does not translate the whole line; his translation reads as "Immediately, from inside

the fist come the voices/ of the round stones chanting the *zikr*. *La 'ilaha il'Allah*. There is

no/ reality but God; there is only God. *La 'ilaha il'Allah*. / Every pebble threads" (2002:

59). This specific omission is an imposition of Barks on Rumi. In the Islamic tradition,

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[211] Annemarie Schimmel criticizes works such as Barks's that deliberately veils the role that Islam as well as its Prophet play in Rumi's works: "There has been an increasing tendency among Western scholars and, even more, lovers and admirers of Mawlana [= Jalaluddin Rumi] to forget the deeply Islamic background of his poetry. Did not Jami call his Mathnawi 'the Qur'an in the Persian tongue'!? Modern people tried to select from often very vague secondhand translations only those verses that speak of love and ecstasy, of intoxication and whirling dance. The role that the Prophet of Islam plays in Mawlana's poetry is hardly mentioned in secondary literature. But whosoever has listened with understanding to the na`t-i sharif, that introductory musical piece at the very beginning of the Mevlevi [= "Whirling Dervish"] ceremonies, feels, nay rather knows, how deep the poet's love for the Prophet Muhammad was, which is expressed in his words-- the Prophet, 'cypress of the garden of prophethood, springtime of gnosis, rosebud of the meadow of the divine Law and lofty nightingale.' He is the one whose secrets are communicated through Shams-i Tabrizi, the inspiring mystical friend. And as Muhammad was the last in the long line of God-inspired prophets from Adam to Jesus, it is the believers' duty to acknowledge and honor those who brought in divine message in times past. Thus, their stories [= the stories of the Prophets, such as rendered into Persian by Rumi in the Masnavi] as related or alluded to in the Qur'an form part and parcel of Muslim faith." (1994: x-xi).
[212] Ahmed is another name of the Prophet Muhammad.

accepting Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of Allah is an indispensable component

of the shahada ("the testimony"), which constitutes one of the five pillars of Islam, and

not reciting the part about the Prophet is considered for almost all Muslims to be an

indicator of being in *kufr*, that is, disbelief. Therefore the assumption that Rumi would

leave the *kalima-i shahada* (the Islamic testimony of faith) incomplete suggests Rumi to

be an extra-Islamic figure.[213]

Barks's preference not to include the part about the Prophet, I believe, needs to be

considered within his general view of religion, not Rumi's. In the universal religion of

love that Barks claims to be a part of, there is a God who is all-loving and merciful.[214]

Even though this envisioned God share certain characteristics with the God of Islam, it is

safe to say that they differ noticeably in certain aspects, the most important of which

regards His wrath and Divine plan. In Islamic theology Allah is known with reference to

the Qur'an and the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) through which Allah's 99

"Most Beautiful Names" (*al-asma al-husna*) are revealed.[215] Among His "Most Beautiful

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[213] Even the quatrain that reads as "As long as my soul is in this body,/ I bow to the Qur'an,/ dust on the road Muhammad walks. / Do not interpret my words as different from his./ Whoever does that, I break with/ and reject what he says" (2011: 476) does not change Barks's approach to Rumi's treatment of Qur'an and the Prophet. In the endnote to this poem Barks says "I do not hear this quatrain as a claim that Islam has an *exclusive* truth. Rumi is honoring the presence of Muhammad and the truth of the Qur'an. Others have heard this poem as proof that Rumi should be considered an Islamic poet, and that only. I would claim that there are many other passages that show how he and Shams honor the living, gnostic, experiential truth of every unique life, and that core of longing that is beyond doctrine and religion. I hear him as a planetary poet,…" (486). To highlight his point the quatrain that precedes the above one suggestively leaves the reader in ambiguity: "A lover is not a Muslim or a Christian, / or part of any faith. / The love religion has no doctrine / to be faithful or unfaithful to" (476).
[214] Barks explains his stance toward religion and sacred texts by means of an anecdote he has with Jelaluddin Chelebi, who is directly descended from Rumi and is the head of the Mevlevi dervishes. Barks's answer to his question, "What religion are you?" was a simple who-knows gesture in the form of arms-open, palm-up. To this reply Chelebi said "Good, Love is the religion, and the universe is the book" (AYWR: 8).
[215] These names are not actually "names" of Allah; they are, rather, attributes of Allah that are either sporadically mentioned in the Qur'an or in the sayings attributed to the Islamic Prophet (*hadith*). Each of the 99 names of Allah evokes a distinct attribute of God. They are specifically revered in the Sufi tradition;

Names," the most widely referred ones are *al-Rahman* (the merciful) and *al-Rahim* (the compassionate).[216] In fact, many of these names put emphasis on the forgiveness and mercifulness of Allah (e.g. *al-ghafur* [the forgiver and hider of faults], *ash-shakur* [the rewarder of thankfulness], *al-afu* [the forgiver], *ar-ra'uf* [the clement], *al-mani* [the preventer of harm], *al-ghaffar* [the forgiving], *as-salam* [the source of peace], etc). However, as in the case of many other religions, He is also the one who brings destruction upon those who transgress his laws (e.g. *al-qahhar* (the subduer), *al-mudhill* (the humiliator), *ad-darr* (the creator of the harmful)).[217] Accordingly, on the Day of Judgment all human beings will be resurrected to be judged, based on their deeds, by Allah. Consequently, some will go to Heaven and some to Hell. The centrality of the promise of Paradise or the punishment of Hell in Islam is impossible to overlook, so much so that belief in the Day of Judgment and in Heaven and Hell are components of the pillars of faith.

On the other hand, the Sufi tradition strongly emphasizes selfless love that esteems Primordial Beauty and Essential Love over the desire for Paradise or the fear of Hell.[218] Without denying the presence of the afterlife, most Sufis argue to focus on attaining unity with Allah rather than the promise of Paradise. Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (d.

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meditation through either recitation of or reflection on them is a widely used method in attempts at comprehending the essence of divinity.

[216] These two adjectives are the most quoted ones because they appear in the *Basmala* (i.e. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). This phrase is recited before each *sura* (chapter) of the Qur'an. In the Islamic tradition Muslims begin numerous tasks including prayer with the recitation of the *Basmala*.

[217] The Qur'an warns Muslims by describing the fate of past nations (e.g. The People of Lut) or personalities (Pharaoh) who became subjects of God's wrath because of such transgressions.

[218] In its earliest phase of Sufism, Sufis were predominantly ascetics and quietists who are said to act on "fear of God, fear of Hell, fear of death, and fear of sin" (Nicholson 2009: 4). By the eighth century, however, a concomitant approach towards Heaven and Hell flourished, particularly in Basra where the female mystic Rabi'a al-Adawiyya has preached pure, disinterested love for God.

752 or 801), for instance, is thought to have said "If I adore You out of fear of Hell, burn me in Hell! / If I adore you out of desire for Paradise, Lock me out of Paradise. / But if I adore you for Yourself alone, / Do not deny to me Your eternal beauty."

The fear of Hell or the promise of Paradise is not central to Rumi's thought or oeuvre. What is more, most of the references to resurrection simply alludes to spiritual resurrection, rather than an eschatological one. Nonetheless, Rumi does not seem to challenge the conventional Islamic approach in his utilization of the eschatological resurrection. In some of his parables or stories he either alludes to or brings up the reality of the Resurrection, Heaven and Hell. In the *Masnavi*, for instance, Rumi quite regularly makes references to the Day of Judgment, and the consequences thereof. His treatment of the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment is in line with the Islamic understanding: he says "even so in death: we go all alike, (but) half of us are losers and half are (fortunate as) emperors" (vol. III, l. 3516). Rumi's descriptions of Heaven and Hell also fit into the Islamic view as well; Hell is depicted to be "the awful torment" (vol. V, l. 2210) "full of fire and fury" (vol. VI, l. 3965) and Paradise is a garden "abounding in verdure" (vol. III, l. 4579).

According to Barks, however, God is all Love and there can be no need for such rewards or punishments; hence no need for critical assessment of one's deeds as imagined to be done on the Day of Judgment. Once again I should note that Barks is not alone in his interpretation of God as Love and the irrelevance of afterlife. Most of the spiritual seekers share his worldview in this regard. According to Robert Fuller, most self-proclaimed "metaphysical seekers" believe that religion should primarily focus on the here and now of this life rather than "devoting most of its attention to some

speculative afterlife" (99).

To no surprise, in the translations by Barks, references to the resurrection, heaven and hell are treated accordingly. Most of the Resurrection and Day of Judgment references are omitted (see pages 9; 25; 112; 118; 177; 188; 241; 282; 290; 341). References to Hell share the same destiny (see pages 164; 171; 175; 180; 185; 189; 197; 259). Specifically, the ones that describe the Hell in terms of fire, wrath, torment and such are excluded. In a similar line Barks also omits lines or passages that refer to God's wrath (see pages 163; 204; 263; 326). For example, in one of the parables Rumi comments on the instinct to flee from tribulation and impatience in affliction by comparing it to the agitation and restlessness of chickpeas and other pot-herbs when boiling in the pot (Vol. III, l. 4160-4208). In his explanation Rumi refers to God's plan for human beings:

> His (God's) mercy is prior to His wrath, to the end that by (God's) mercy
>
> he (the afflicted person) may suffer affliction.
>
> His (God's) mercy (eternally) preceded His wrath in order that the stock-
>
> in-trade, (which is) existence, should come to hand (be acquired);
>
> For, without pleasure, flesh and skin do not grow; and unless they grow,
>
> what shall the love of the Friend consume?" (l. 4166-68).

Barks transforms this passage by abbreviating it in such a manner that it not only becomes vague but also gains an additional signification. His translation reads as:

> Grace first. Sexual pleasure,
>
> then a boiling new life begins,
>
> and the Friend has something good to eat. (132)

157

In another parable Rumi explains why Jesus avoids "foolish people" even though he does not avoid the most afflicted ones. In the story Jesus is asked why "the Name of God," which has worked in the healing of physical afflictions, does not cure the folly if both cases are forms of disease. Jesus replies: "The disease of folly is (the result of) the wrath of God; (physical) disease and blindness are not (the result of Divine) wrath: they are (a means) of probation/ Probation is a disease that brings (Divine) mercy (in its train); folly is a disease that brings (Divine) rejection/ That which is branded on him (the fool) He (God) hath sealed: no hand can apply a remedy to it." (vol III, l. 2592-4). Apparently Barks does not like the answer of Jesus because he does not translate this part, which reads in his version as "Other diseases are ways for mercy to enter, but this non-responding breeds violence and coldness toward God" (204). The God image presented by this answer does not overlap with the one Barks has. A God that inflict afflictions, both physical and spiritual, on the people He created is not the God that religious liberals like Barks prefer to believe in.

The most significant point of this specific translation, I believe, is not the veil put on the "negative" aspects of God. Barks not only silences the wrath of God but also silences His agency. The parable in the original text suggests that all is in the hands of Allah. If He wills to seal the heart and mind of a person, nobody, even Jesus, can cure him. Again He is the one who afflicts people with psychical infirmity and only swearing "By the holy Essence of God, the Maker of the body and the Creator of the soul in eternity/ By the sanctity of the pure Essence and Attributes of Him, …" Jesus was able to cure the blind, raise the dead, and mantle a mountain (l. 2583-88). A similar point made in the story about Solomon's crooked crown in the 4th volume of the *Masnavi*. By the

end of the story Rumi recommends the reader to be wary of his/her judgments because as the story indicates even the King Solomon is capable of making bad judgments. Again this imperfection is a decree of God. Rumi says Pharaoh's "understanding was superior to that of (other) kings: God's ordainment had made him without understanding and blind. / God's seal upon the eye and ear of the intelligence makes him (the intelligent man) an animal, (even) if he is a Plato. / God's ordainment comes into view on the tablet (of the heart) in such wise as Bayazid's prediction of the hidden (future event)" (l. 1922-25). Barks translates this part as

> When something goes wrong, accuse yourself first.
>
> Even the wisdom of Plato or Solomon
>
> can wobble and go blind. (191)

This silencing is not an exception; it is, in fact, one of the most interesting points of Barks's renderings. In the Sufi tradition, which evidently relies on Islamic theology, Allah is omnipotent in every conceivable way; He not only created the universe but also actively oversees every single incident. He is never regarded to be reticent or withdrawn; on the contrary He is always actively involved in the creation and destruction of everything. That potency is somehow diminished in Barks's renderings. Similar to the example presented by Christina Schaffner the choice to use passive structure to "avoid an expression of agency" is Barks's technique to curtail the agency of Allah. By silencing the His agency, Barks appropriates the text to his own world-view which underlines personal will and determination as opposed to a form of Divine involvement. Examples of this tactic abound (see pages 14; 23; 74; 98; 112; 132; 172; 187; 191; 239; 241; 258; 263; 265; 275; 296; 326; 349). To give a simple example the line that reads "grace

awakened the worm, …" (vol. IV, l. 2538) is quite illustrative. Barks changes the tone of it by translating as "suddenly, he wakes up, call it grace, whatever, something" (265). With this maneuver Barks effaces the clarity of the original line by casting doubt on the agent of the sentence.

A more interesting example is from a passage from the fifth volume, in which Rumi elucidates on the vital role conditions play in "the apprehension of the vulgar" (l. 228). At one point Rumi says "satiety is from God, but how should the unclean attain unto satiety without the mediation of bread? / Beauty is from God, but the corporealist does not feel (the charm of) beauty without the veil (medium) of the garden" (l. 232-33). These lines are translated by Barks as:

> A feeling of fullness comes,
>
> but usually it takes some bread
>
> to bring it.
>
>> Beauty surrounds us,
>>
>> but usually we need to be walking
>>
>> in a garden to know it. (172)

In his version Barks renders the point of the passage regarding the role of material instruments, be it bread or garden, in sensual appreciation but the original text also underlines the fact that an actively involved God is the source of everything.

Silencing God takes another form in a short passage taken from the story of an old minstrel from the first volume of the *Masnavi*. In the story the minstrel addresses God and says: "For seventy years I have been committing sin, (yet) not for one day hast Thou withheld Thy bounty from me. / I (can) earn nothing: to-day I am Thy guest, I will play

160

the harp for Thee, I am Thine" (l. 20084-85). Barks personalizes the text and alters the

direction of the address. His version, which is entitled "The Music," reads as:

> For sixty years I have been forgetful,
>
> Every minute, but not for a second
>
> has this flowing toward me stopped or slowed.
>
> I deserve nothing. Today I recognize
>
> that I am the guest the mystics talk about.
>
> I play this living music for my host.
>
> Everything today is for the host. (98)

In this translation Barks, first of all, personalizes the text by changing the number of

years from seventy to sixty — perhaps he was sixty years-old at the time of translation.

He further alters the ethos of the passage by changing the addressee.[219] While the

minstrel's modest addressing of God in the original text suggests atonement in addition to

gratitude, Barks's utterance, which does not have a specific addressee, reflects humility

and gratitude. The feeling of atonement in the original one is reinforced through the use

of the word "sin" which inevitably evokes a religious sense. Barks's choice of changing

the line "I have been committing sin" to "I have been forgetful" makes the poem a-

religious/worldly.[220]

   Barks further manipulates the text by employing maneuvers that make the text

specifically palatable to the taste and life-choices of the body of "implied reader" that

mostly consists of like-minded spiritual seekers who are quite familiar with, if not

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[219] Though it would be unfair to suggest that Barks has taken God out of the poem here; he rather makes the reference concealed. It is quite obvious for many that the host mentioned in his version is God.
[220] A similar omission of the concept of "sin" from the poetry of Rumi occurs in other instances as well (see pages 164 and 345).

believers of, Christianity. First of all, probably not to offend those who esteem Christian values Barks prefers not to translate the parts that contradict the very heart of Christianity. For instance, contrary to the Christian belief Muslims do not consider Jesus the son of God; he is a prophet saved from death by God by raising "him unto Himself" (Qur'an 4:158).[221]

In Barks's renderings, lines about Jesus are somehow appropriated to the Christian perception of him. In the third volume of the *Masnavi*, Rumi is reflecting on the importance of deliberation in any decision one has to make. At one point he says God created the world in six days even though He is potent to create at an instant with the single command "Be!" The following lines expound on the potency of God with reference to His relationship with the prophets among which Jesus is mentioned in a line that reads as "Jesus by means of one prayer was able to make the dead spring up (to life) without delay/ Is the creator of Jesus unable, without delays, to bring men in manifold succession/ This deliberation is for the purpose of teaching you that you must seek (God) slowly, without (any) break" (vol. III, l. 3504-6). In the version of Barks, the implication about Jesus to be a mere messenger of God is omitted. He keeps the fact that Jesus raised a dead man but omits the line that emphasizes the will and potency of God. His translation reads as: "Jesus said one word, and a dead man sat up,/ but creation usually unfolds, like calm breakers" (258). This rendering is more in line with the Christian

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[221] According to the Qur'an God put over the likeness of Jesus over another man and it was this man that the Romans took for Jesus and crucified. In the Qur'an it says: "They said, 'We killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God,' They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but the likeness of him was put on another man (and they killed that man)" (4: 157). For a detailed analysis of Jesus in Islam see Oddbjørn Leirvik's *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (2010). For Rumi's utilization of Jesus in his poetry, see Renard "Jesus and Other Gospel Figures in the Writings of Jalal Al-Din Rumi."

understanding of Jesus as God.[222] In the version of Barks the potency lies in Jesus who is able to raise a dead man with "one word." Whereas in the original text, where Jesus invokes God by *du'a* (prayer or invocation), God is the one who actually "make the dead spring up" through the instrument of Jesus.

A similar twist is performed in the translation of a line from the sixth volume. The line reads as "That (miracle) which Jesus had wrought by (pronouncing) the Name of Hu (God) was manifested to her (Zalikha) through the name of him (Joseph)" (l. 4039). Barks's translation reads "The miracle Jesus did by being the name of God / Zuleikha felt in the name of *Joseph*" (p. 108). Here Barks identifies Jesus as "the name of God," which is in itself the miracle.[223] The original, on the other hand, bestows a certain power to Jesus who is able to execute it because of the source of the power, which is God.

The issue of Jesus's prophethood, or to be more correct, him not being God is addressed in a veiled manner in another poem from the third volume of the *Masnavi*. In his rendering, Barks omits the implied refutation of the doctrine of Trinity by transforming it into an irrelevant remark. In the story the Lover in his explanation of his love to the Beloved says that, "Thirdly, since I have gone away from thee, 'tis as though I have said, 'the third of three'" (vol. III, l. 4703-5). Here the Beloved/Prince is God and "the third of the three" is a direct reference to the Qur'an which says that "They have certainly disbelieved who say, *Allah is the third of three*. And there is no god except one

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[222] In one of the ghazals (#631), which is about being hopeful of the mercy of God, one of the lines reads as "Do not despair, though Mary has gone from your hands, for that light which drew Jesus to heaven has come" (l. 3-4). This line, which contradicts with Christian version of Jesus' "death," does not appear in Barks's version as well (286).

[223] In the Islamic tradition, Jesus is known with the title *kalimatullah*, which means "the Word of God." Even though it bears resemblance to what Barks attributes to Jesus in this line, "i.e. the name of God", from an ontological point of view they are quite apart.

God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment" (5:73).[224] Rumi uses this reference to hint at the extent of lover's misery. Barks did not translate the allusion at all and replaces it with a completely unrelated remark "Third, why did I ever learn to count to three?" (9) which not only silences the Quranic reference but also affects the meaning of the poem.[225]

Another example of appropriation of the text to Judeo-Christian taste regards the replacement of a *hadith* with a Biblical allusion. It once again includes Jesus but this time the original does not have anything to do with him. In the sixth volume of the *Masnavi* Rumi tells the allegorical story of a mouse and a frog who are depicted as close friends. One of the lines of the story reads in Nicholson's translation as "Telling secrets with and without tongue, knowing how to interpret (the Tradition), 'A united party is a (Divine) mercy'" (l. 2636). The line is used to describe the sincerity of the friendship between the mouse and the frog. The quoted part of the line is a *hadith* attributed to Prophet Muhammad; it basically means the gathering together or the union of the believers (*al-jamaat*) is a mercy (from God) (*rahman*). Barks translates this specific line as "to watch and listen to those two / is to understand how, as it's written, / sometimes when two beings come together, / Christ becomes visible" (79). The de-Islamization is quite apparent in this example because Barks switches the Hadith reference with a Christian one which alludes to the Biblical saying "For where two or three have gathered together

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[224] The rest of the *sura* goes as "The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded" (5: 76).

[225] The rest of the translation is also quite problematic as well due to the licenses Barks takes.

in My name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). Admittedly this time meaning is not marred but the implication of Jesus' divinity is not present in the original.[226]

Accommodating the text to Judeo-Christian sensitivities is not limited to Christ references. When the Qur'anic version of a Biblical story contradicts the Bible, Barks chooses to translate it in line with the Bible as it is the case with references to Ishmael, son of Abraham. In ghazal No.728 Rumi refers to the story of Prophet Abraham who in the Islamic tradition is believed to sacrifice his son Ishmael, not Isaac as both Jews and Christians believe. In the ghazal Rumi says that "Like Ishmael, cheerfully lay your neck before the knife; do not steal your throat away from Him, if He is slaying, until He slays" (Arberry 2009: 5). Even though Barks does not claim to be a Christian, he prefers to allude to the Judeo-Christian version by changing Ishmael to Isaac: "At the banquet where we will be a main dish, / Isaac leans his head down for the blade" (287). This is not the only Ishmael reference that Barks manipulates. In another instance which reads as "He offers his throat like Ismail: the knife cannot do anything to hurt his throat" (vol. II, l. 283), Barks did not replace it with Isaac but omits the relevant line altogether (158). A similar omission is observed in the translation of a passage from the third volume (l. 4175-80) (133).

Making the text palatable to the taste of the implied reader involves other types of omissions as well. In one of the stories in Masnavi (vol. IV, l. 83-84), for instance, a preacher's prayer reads as "O Lord, /let mercy fall upon evil men and corrupters and insolent transgressors, / upon all who make a mock of the good people, / upon all whose

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[226] A quick search on the Internet reveals the unquestioned reliance on Barks's translation which is used by several books and websites. None of these sources, however, attribute the line to Barks. They interpret the story, and the line within, as what Rumi originally said.

hearts are unbelieving /and those who dwell in the Christian monastery." Barks chooses to translate it simply as ""Let your mercy, O Lord, / cover their insolence"" (176). Rumi does not necessarily focus on the "insolence" of monastery dwellers but they are nonetheless examples of such behavior.

This specific example does not, of course, prove that Barks is partial to Christianity. It could very well be the result of a poetic choice. However further examples all point that Barks lets the views of the implied reader, or more probably, personal ones interfere in his translation choices. For instance, as a religious liberal Barks does not spurn or condemn any belief, be it monotheist, pantheist or polytheist, as long as they convey some sort of wisdom. In accordance with this line of thinking he prefers not to translate the line "the spirit of polytheism is quit (devoid) of belief in God" (Vol. IV, l. 3295) (Barks 2004: 241). Such maneuvers of "political correctness" abound probably because the Rumi he imagines is not capable of making such remarks. In an instance, for example, Rumi says "The road of religion is full of trouble and bale for the reason that it is not the road for any one whose nature is effeminate" (vol. VI, l. 508). Barks apparently finds the word "effeminate" problematic and translates the line simply as "This road demands courage and stamina" (246). Similarly, the line that reads as "… for a woman's counsel will keep thy foot lame" (vol. IV, l. 2210) is translated by Barks as "when you're traveling, ask a traveler for advice, not someone whose lameness keeps him in one place" (194). It appears that the ideal Rumi that Barks has in mind could not, in essence, make such a sexist remark.

Less significant changes occur in Barks's renderings as well. In addition to omission of Islamic references, both in terms of culture and religion, Barks domesticates

certain terms and concepts; the translation of "*jinni*" as "spirit" (30), "*nafs*" as "impulse" (62); of "*miraj*" simply as "night-journey" (328) constitute such examples.[227]

Domestication efforts also includes rectification of matters related to science. If a line in the original text contradicts modern science Barks revises it. He translates "the seven wheels" (seven heavens) (*haft charkh*) (vol. IV, l. 3767) as "the Universe" (259) and "wheeling heavens/motion of the spheres" (*dawr-i gardunha*) (vol. V, l. 3854) as "world" (55). Another interesting example, again, concerns the medieval perception of the universe. In a story Rumi's recounting Daquqi, a fellow soul, has witnessed an extraordinary event by the shore where seven candles had turned into seven men who, in turn, transformed into seven trees. In his explanation of the expansiveness of the trees Daquqi says "On account of the denseness of the leaves no boughs were visible; the leaves too had become scant (had almost vanished) on account of the plenteous fruit. / Every tree had thrown its boughs above the Sidra: what of the Sidra? They had reached beyond the Void. / the root of each had gone into the bottom of the earth: assuredly it was lower than the Ox and the Fish (vol. III, l. 2006-7). Sidra, which is the short name for Sidrat al-Muntahā, refers to the Lote tree which marks the end of the seventh Heaven, the boundary where no creation can pass. The Ox and the Fish refers to the hadith "the earth stands on the ox and fish." In his rendering Barks did not correct it but omits both references altogether: "They became seven men, and then seven trees, / so dense with leaves and fruit / that no limbs were visible" (263).

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[227] *Jinni*s, or genies, are the mythological creatures that are believed to be lower rank than the angels, able to appear in human and animal forms and to possess humans. *Nafs* is an Arabic word vaguely meaning self, psyche, ego or soul. In the Sufi tradition it has become a crucial concept, pejoratively referring to the animal spirit of human beings, usually an obstacle on the path to reach Divine Knowledge or Love. *Miraj* is the specific physical & spiritual "night-journey" of Prophet Muhammad to Paradise. The journey itself is outlined in the Qur'an (*Sura Al-Nisra*).

The overall effect of the examples cited in this chapter is a Rumi who writes more in line with a twentieth-century spiritual seeker than like a thirteenth-century Muslim scholar-mystic-poet. This specific feature has been mentioned in scholarly works as well. Jawid Mojaddedi, an eminent Rumi scholar, argues that Barks's secular translations may not be word-for-word, but the message they convey is representative of Rumi's poetry (2012: 3). According to Mojaddedi, "at the root of the appeal of Rumi's poetry" lies "the celebration of God's presence and its effect in everyday life" which the translations of Barks manage to reflect to a certain extent (*Ibid*). Though many other scholars of Sufism, such as Franklin Lewis, Annemarie Schimmel, and William Chittick, beg to differ,[228] the continuing popularity as well as "authority"[229] of the versions of Barks proves the irrelevance of the scholarly reviews for the common readers who are comprised of, for the most part, spiritual seekers who think along the lines of Barks.[230] Taken out of its context both Rumi and his poetry have gained a cosmopolitan appeal that seekers from all over the world see a mirror image. Rumi is believed to be a spiritually enhanced person who, thanks to his hazy friendship with Shams, liberated himself from the chains of an organized religion, namely, Islam. Particularly in the post-9/11 world, which is marked by Islamaphobia, many consider Rumi a supra-Islamic figure who does not intimidate the reader by emphasizing particulars of religion such as ritual, sin, and preoccupation with the afterlife. As this chapter has demonstrated, this specific interpretation of Rumi owes

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[228] They are critical of Barks's rendering precisely because of his domestication strategy. Most of them problematize Barks's lack of Persian but also are disturbed by his selective interpretation and the terminological misconceptions he holds.

[229] Numerous websites and books use the versions of Barks in their references and allusions to Rumi. As far as I can see very few of them mention the poetic licenses Barks employs.

[230] An interesting way to analyze the reader of Barks is to examine the reader reviews that are posted on sites such as Amazon and www.goodreads.com

its existence largely to the "translations" by Coleman Barks, who not only eliminates particulars of Islamic culture but also appropriates the text to the taste and sensitivities of his readers by means of smoothing parts that can be considered controversial.

CHAPTER 4

RUMI MEETS MEVLANA: *THE 40 RULES OF LOVE / AŞK* BY ELIF SHAFAK

"So what would Rumi say to Osama bin Laden if the two met?"

"What he would say is that you are a total stranger to Islam."

In a 2003 article on Rumi entitled "A Love That Conquers Barriers of Time, Culture,"

The Washington Post reporter Caryle Murphy juxtaposes Bin Laden with Rumi in his

question to Abdul Aziz Said, director of the International Peace and Conflict Resolution

Program in the School of International Service at American University. This simple

juxtaposition, which by no means is a singular incident, resonates significantly in a post-

9/11 world that has been marked by the dichotomous subjectifiction of Muslims as

"good" and "bad." Within this politically determined dichotomy the "good Muslims" that

stand in opposition to radical Muslims such as Usama bin Laden and the like, are Sufis.[231]

And Rumi, who had already been hailed as the universal poet of love and peace, emerges

as the epitome of the "good Muslim" that would ideally "bridge the gap between

Americans and Muslims" (Holgate 2005: para. 13).

Interestingly enough, a similar discourse, marked by its socio-cultural specificities,

is also adopted in Turkey, where the cult of Rumi has survived till this day, despite the

official anti-Sufi position. The renowned musician-cum-politician-cum-novelist Zülfü

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[231] In 2004 a group of scholars of Sufism, leaders of various Sufi orders and US bureaucrats convened at the Nixon Center to discuss the potential role Sufis could play in US foreign policy. At that meeting not only Bernard Lewis, one of the leading specialists on the Middle East, but also the Sufi leaders who were present put special emphasis on the peaceful characteristic of Sufism as opposed to Wahhabism. Juxtaposition of Sufism with radical Islam, be it Wahabism or Salafism, is further propagated by the media in the ensuing decade.

Livaneli, for instance, describes the relevance of Rumi in a 2014 interview with *New York Times* as follows: "Fundamentalists hate Rumi. He was a poet, not a religious figure. He was very progressive-minded and wasn't against wine. […] Rumi was against racist and religious and sexual discrimination. We need this kind of bright understanding now."[232] Aside from its anachronism, this approach is significant on numerous levels. Once again Rumi is brought to the fore as the Muslim to be emulated. Just like the American commendation of Rumi as a bridge between Muslims and "regular" Americans, it highlights the necessity of an understanding that could be utilized against fundamentalists.

And yet who is this Rumi from whom we all desperately need to learn? What is the discourse that shapes the presentation of this specific Rumi? As discussed in the previous chapter Rumi had already been allocated to the sphere of liberal spirituality that is defined and experienced beyond the confines of institutionalized religions; therefore Rumi's re-location into the Islamic sphere and re-conceptualization as the ideal Muslim inevitably bring into question the influence of "New Age"[233] readings of Rumi. To what extent has the Muslim Rumi has been read and presented through the lens of New Age

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[232] In June 2014 Zülfü Livaneli's musical piece "Rumi Suite: The Eternal Day" was presented during the Istanbul Jazz Festival after having premiered in Berlin. It is described as an "an engaging contemporary fusion of jazz, traditional Turkish tunes and other genres" (Schweitzer). In other interviews, though not necessarily on this musical piece, Livaneli makes similar comments about Rumi. He also mentions, curious, as it is, that he prefers to read the English translations of Rumi, which is most probably those of Coleman Barks. Livaneli says that he realizes the greatness of Rumi as a poet after reading those English translations. He adds: "Yes, we do have good translations as well but we know Mevlana through his religious stories. Whereas in the USA he is known as a modern poet and a best-seller. (2010 *Haberturk* interview)

[233] I use the term "New Age" as an umbrella term to refer to forms of religiosity conveniently described as the "combination of self-help systems, subjectivity, devolved authority structures, iconic discourses and experimental syncretism" (Turner: 205) that is briefly outlined in the previous chapter. Bryan Turner (2011) suggests using terms that more aptly capture the post-modern flavor, such as "liquid religiosity," "post-institutional religiosity," and "low-intensity religion" but none of these terms have been extensively used in the pertinent literature.

Rumi? In what contexts have the re-Islamized Rumi been utilized?

The answers to such questions can be gleaned from various sources in areas as diverse as the academia, politics, religious platforms, popular culture, and literature. Political science professor Cyrus Masroori's 2010 article, "An Islamic Language of Toleration: Rumi's Criticism of Religious Persecution," for instance, argues that Rumi "presents one of the most extensive and vigorous Islamic theories of toleration" (243). Similar arguments are voiced by Muslim groups who subscribe to the discourse of "good" Muslims in their attempt at ameliorating the image of Islam.[234] Whether they follow Rumi's path or not, some of them specifically utilize the figure of Rumi in their apologetic discourse of Islam by "marketing" Rumi as the tolerant face of Islam.[235] Depiction of Rumi as the voice of peace in Islam also occurred on a more popular level; on the final episode of the controversial TV series *24*, the "goodness" of a Muslim character is further fortified by a Rumi quote through which he appeals to the conscience of the president of the United States.[236]

Notwithstanding the importance of these diverse discourses on Rumi, the literary usage of Rumi is more significant for the purposes of this dissertation. Since 9/11 Rumi has become an inspiration, if not a character, for several novels. Roger Houdsen's *Chasing Rumi* (2002), Pico Iyer's *Abandon* (2003), Saideh Ghods's *Kimya Khatun* (2004;

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[234] Jamal Malik notes that Sufism has been popular particularly among immigrant groups, some of whom pay particular attention to restoring Islam's image in the eyes of the host culture (24).

[235] Among such groups the sympathizers of the Gülen movement, who try to discredit the claims regarding the "belligerent" nature of Islam, stand out.

[236] On the show Omar Hassan, to-be-assassinated president of the fictional country Islamic Republic of Kamistan (IRK), was planning to give an inscribed pen box to the president of the United States to sign a historic peace treaty between the US, Russia and the IRK. The Persian inscription on the box, which supposedly represent the deceased president's feelings about the treaty, is from Rumi, and is explained by the wife of the president in Coleman Barks's translation: "All religions, all this singing / One Song." The quote, which makes the US president realize how grave a mistake she is about to commit, reminds her the common ground they all share.

translation to English in 2011), Muriel Maufroy's *Rumi's Daughter* (2005), Connie Zweig's *A Moth to the Flame* (2005) and Elif Shafak's *The 40 Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi* (2010) are examples of such novels. In my analysis I focus on Elif Shafak's novel *The 40 Rules of Love* (*Aşk* [Love] in Turkish), which interweaves two parallel but historically and geographically remote stories of self-realization-via-love.

The novel is noteworthy on two accounts. First, it targets American and Turkish readers at the same time. Shafak wrote the novel in English primarily for an American audience and then edited a Turkish translation that was made by K. Yiğit Us and contains noteworthy modifications. Second, the novel resonates significantly within the discourse of New Age spirituality, which is roughly defined as an extremely personalized and hybrid form of religiosity, one that is based on the "sacredness of the self." In this sense, Rumi and Shams depicted in the novel parallels Coleman Barks's representation both in terms of content and language. The novel's reception in Turkey, where Rumi occupies varied, interconnected, and sometimes contradictory positions, is another aspect to be grappled with. Rumi's contested identity has become a field to discuss what being a "good Muslim" entails.

I start my analysis with a discussion on the extent of the congruency of Elif Shafak's portrayal of Rumi and Sufism *The Forty Rules of Love* with New Age religiosity. Because I consider her representation of Sufism as a form of cultural translation, the domestication tactics utilized by Shafak constitute the focus of my analysis. Then I move onto discussing the roots of contemporary understanding of religion and Sufism in Turkey so as to contextualize the following examination of the Turkish version of the novel's, that is *Aşk*'s (Love), engagement with discussions in

Turkey on the contested identity of Rumi. I argue that the New Age Rumi as depicted in Shafak's novel agrees to a significant degree with the current notion of Islam as a privatized belief system.

(i) *The 40 Rules of Love*: Catering an Islamic Rumi to American Spiritual Seekers

Elif Shafak's novel *The Forty Rules of Love* centers around the American housewife Ella Rubinstein's unintended soul-searching that commences with her new job reviewing a novel entitled "Sweet Blasphemy." Ella, the main character to be identified with by the potential American reader, pursues a suburban middle-class life in Northampton, Massachusetts with her dentist husband and three children. The historical novel she is assigned to review is written by a man named Aziz Zahara, originally a Scottish wanderer who has eventually found peace in Sufism. Aziz's novel "Sweet Blasphemy," constituting a substantial part of Shafak's book, speculates on the extent and nature of Shams's role in the transformation that Rumi had undergone from an unhappy religious scholar to a passionate mystic. As Ella becomes immersed in her e-mail relationship with Aziz, soon the major problems in her life, including her unfaithful husband and distant children, become meaningless. By the end of the novel Ella realizes that just as Shams had set Rumi free, Aziz, the contemporary reincarnation of Shams, liberated her from the chains of her depressing life.[237]

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[237] The parallels drawn between Aziz and Shams is to such an extent that Aziz is suggested to be the reincarnation of Shams. At first Ella draws attention to the physical resemblance between the two and then by the end of Aziz's novel Rumi says in confirmation of the thirty-ninth rule of Sham's list "The Basic Principles of the Itinerant Mystics of Islam" that "for every Shams of Tabriz who has passed away, there will emerge a new one in a different age, under a different name" (343). Apparently the twentieth-century Shams happens to be Aziz who not only introduces the power of love as experienced by Sufis to an American readership but also validates his point by helping Ella to "realize" herself via love.

The central theme of the novel is the transformative power of love. Both Ella and Rumi turn into different people by virtue of the love they feel for Aziz and Shams respectively. Shafak does not narrate a simple love story, however. Through the voice of Aziz, she attempts to demonstrate how true love should guide a person in her journey of self-realization. In this endeavor, Shafak draws heavily on Sufism, specifically on its love-oriented interpretation by Rumi. Due to Shafak's representation of Sufism, her rendition has proven to be a valuable tool in my attempt to understand the contemporary contextualization of Sufism within the larger discourse on Muslims.

Being well-aware of the anti-Islamic sentiments that prevail in the Western world, Elif Shafak presents an interpretation of Islam that challenges the negative image associated with it. Yet her repackaging is inspired by the target audience. In the novel Shafak particularly speaks to a Western audience informed by "New Age religiosity," or in other words, "spiritual seekers," who disparage institutionalized religions but appreciate the universal essentials that religions, spiritual traditions, and ethical teachings supposedly share. To Shafak's version of Islam not only such seekers would not object, they would also find valuable in their personal spiritual quests. I contend that the "likeable" or "good" Islam as presented by Shafak is her New Age-inspired interpretation of Sufism, and Rumi is its main representative.

Shafak's portrayal of Sufism works on two levels, mirroring the nested structure of the novel. The outer story, that is, the story of Aziz and Ella, presents a version of Sufism as embodied by Aziz, a "Neo-Sufi," who interprets Sufism as "universal spirituality"

which is not necessarily defined by Islam or any particular religion.[238] In fact, Aziz admits partaking in the spiritualist ethos of contemporary American culture by describing himself "spiritual but not religious" (145). Though he avows to be a convert to Islam from atheism,[239] Aziz acknowledges avoiding "religion" in his personalized search. In one of his e-mails to Ella, he talks about the nature of his surrender to the will of God. In order to clear any future confusion, he adds, unmistakably echoing the self-identification of numerous members of the quest culture, that: "Now you think I am a religious man. But I am not. I am spiritual, which is different. Religiosity and spirituality are not the same thing, and I believe that the gap between the two has never been greater than it is today." (145). Aziz's preference to act like a "Neo-Sufi" proves to be efficient; despite her prejudice towards religious people, Ella the average reader is not bothered by Aziz or his preachy e-mails and novel. On the contrary, she feels a connection, probably because Aziz speaks not as a self-righteous religious man but as "a spiritual man who took matters of religion and faiths seriously, stayed away from all contemporary politics, and didn't 'hate' anything or anyone" (159).[240]

　　The second level where the representation of Sufism operates is a meta-level,

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[238] "Neo-Sufism" as called by Mark Sedgwick, is a specific line of interpretation of Sufism that is essentially informed by New Age religiosity. As diverse and heterogeneous as New Age spirituality, Neo-Sufism stands apart from "Sufism as found in the Muslim world" with its presentation of Sufism as "somehow above and beyond religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, building on the understanding of Sufism that had been established during the nineteenth century" (Sedgwick 2009: 184).
[239] Aziz embraces Sufism after an absurdly interesting life as a village boy, photographer, well-to-do banker, mourning husband, clubber/drug-addict/squatter, and travel-writer.
[240] As a Jewish woman, who "enjoys performing a few rituals every now and then," Ella considers religion, at least at the beginning of her unintentional journey, detrimental to world peace. On top of that she is irritated by religious people, specifically by Muslim fanatics: "Ella believed that the major problem consuming the world today, just as in the past, was religion. With their unparalleled arrogance and self-proclaimed belief in the supremacy of their ways, religious people got on her nerves. Fanatics of all religions were bad and unbearable, but deep inside she thought that fanatics of Islam were the worst" (159). Soon Ella's view on religion and Islam changes thanks to her friendship with Aziz.

produced by Aziz. This derivative version presents a domesticated form of Sufism, informed by contemporary socio-politics.[241] The need for domestication arises first and foremost from the cultural remoteness of the inner story, which takes place in the thirteenth-century Baghdad and Konya. By means of cultural translation in the form of a historical novel, Aziz provides a domesticated yet de-contextualized interpretation of Sufism for readers who are represented by Ella with her ignorance of, as well as indifference towards, Islam and Sufism. In accordance with the conventions of historical novel, Aziz aims to narrate the past in a relatable manner. This aim is partially marked by Aziz's conviction that the twenty-first century and the thirteenth century are not dissimilar on account of both being "times of unprecedented religious clashes, cultural misunderstandings, and a general sense of insecurity and fear of the Other" (15).[242] And yet Aziz takes this attempt to familiarize the past for the modern reader a step too far: he projects the fears and prejudices of today onto thirteenth-century century Anatolia, so much so that almost all of the characters speak as if they are giving a message to their Western audience about what "real" Islam is and how Sufism embodies this pacifist,

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[241] Shafak's employment of Aziz's perspective in her domestication endeavor is quite intelligent; she removes herself from the domesticated version by showing the appropriation of Sufism by a contemporary spiritual seeker from the West. I should, however, note that no other character appears in the novel to comment on Aziz's rendition of Sufism. In this regard, *The 40 Rules of Love* cannot function as a proper polyphonic novel in the sense that Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term. Aziz's voice, in general, subsumes other voices because of the same domestication tactic that is supposed to present a familiarized form of Islam and Sufism for an American audience.

[242] Elena Furlanetto notes that the analogy between thirteenth-century Anatolia and post 9/11 America is not limited to the themes of conflict and fear of the Other; two regions are comparable in terms of their multiculturalism and ethnic heterogeneity, characterized by the presence of numerous ethnic groups coexisting peacefully (207). In the novel, Shams' first impression of Konya, for instance, invokes the melting pot narrative of America: "I ran into gypsy musicians, Arab travelers, Christian pilgrims, Jewish merchants, Buddhist priests, Frankish troubadours, Persian artists … Despite their seemingly endless difference, all of these people gave off a similar air of incompleteness, of the work in progress that they were, each an unfinished masterwork" (109). Shams considers the heterogeneity of Konya as a godly achievement as part of a divine plan, once again, reminding the reader the narrative of America's manifest destiny (Furlanetto: 207).

spiritualist interpretation of it, regarding either its stance towards *jihad* (holy war) or towards women's place in society. Aziz/Shafak domesticates partly because he/she tries to show the congruency of Sufism with New Age religiosity. The intended effect is displayed on Ella's changing views on religion and Islam. As a person who has found peace in Sufism, Aziz shows Ella, both by means of his own character and his novel, that a likeable form of Islam is actually available. Predictably the good Muslims are the Sufis.

The Sufis are presented as sympathetic Muslims but the question remains: what distinguishes them from other Muslims? Why they are to be liked and the others avoided? Why and how is Sufism made appealing to contemporary American audience? I believe the answers to these questions lie in the novel's engagement with New Age religiosity which is crafted in the general spiritual market by seekers who do not feel connected to any institutionalized religions, but who are nonetheless in search of some "higher meaning" of life. Historically embedded into Protestant, Schleiermacherian, and Transcendentalist interpretations of religion the New Age religiosity, or "post-institutional religiosity," such seekers seldom recognize any authority other than the emotions and the inner self.[243] As discussed in the previous chapter, this extremely individualistic and hybrid form of religiosity with no official creed or manifesto, allows the sympathizers to create their own personal, yet somehow potentially universal, synthesis of diverse religious, ethical, spiritual and mystical traditions. In close proximity to the centrality of the self, the diverse traditions utilized are deemed valuable as long as the seeker is able to find peace and/or enhance the self by means of methods

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[243] Amanda Porterfield notes that specifically the conception of "divine reality as an impersonal flow of spiritual energy works to equalize all religious traditions as well as to validate internal experience as the apotheosis of religious authority" (16).

that accompany those traditions. This is precisely why they are often associated with therapeutic or healing services, or the promise of personal enhancement through meditation (Turner: 204). It is difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition of this "liquid religiosity" as it defies conceptualizations that come along with systematic analysis of religions. Usually appropriated by the members of "quest culture," the diverse interpretations of it usually provide "a sacralized rendering of widely-held values (freedom, authenticity, self-responsibility, self-reliance, self-determination, equality, dignity, tranquility, harmony, love, peace, creative expressivity, being positive, and above all, "the self" as a value in and of itself)" and assumptions that are associated with them such as "the intrinsic goodness of human nature," "the idea that it is possible to change for the better," "the person as the primary locus of authority," and "the efficacy of positive thinking" (Heelas: 169).

The New Age religiosity is central in any attempt at understanding the presentation of Sufism in *The 40 Rules of Love* because Shafak's portrayal of Sufism agrees, in general, with the basic tenets of New-Age religiosity, such as the importance of achieving supreme consciousness, the realization of the self and the belief in the guidance of the self. In that sense, her version is quite similar to the domestication of Rumi by Coleman Barks, which I have explored in the previous chapter, but there are some important differences between the two as well. Most significant difference is that Shafak presents Sufism, through the personalities of Rumi and Shams, as an interpretation of Islam, though paradoxically supra-Islamic at the same time. According to her account, Sufism, on the one hand, is the pacifist, harmonious and more profound version of Islam as opposed to the literalist interpretations of it. On the other hand, because of its engagement

with what is universal and eternal, it is above and beyond Islam. By prioritizing what is

deemed to be universal and eternal, Shafak appropriates Sufism to the taste of American

audience who has already shown its appreciation of Neo-Sufism. Therefore, by means of

domesticating Sufism, Shafak metonymically domesticates Islam, bringing into mind

Bryan Turner's remark about Islam in America. Turner says, "In the United States, Islam

could become acceptable as a denomination in the melting pot of multiculturalism, but

only on the condition that it becomes a 'religion' in *our* terms" (169).

In *The 40 Rules of Love* Shafak administers domestication quite intelligently

through the voice of Aziz, who inevitably reflects onto his novel his ideas and views

about religion and Islam that have grown out of his experience as a contemporary

spiritual seeker. By means of Aziz, Shafak re-conceptualizes a specific interpretation of

Sufism that is contextually bound by its own discursive tradition as well as the conditions

particular to the thirteenth-century Anatolia in the language of New Age religiosity. Just

as important, this re-designation is conducted with reference to the post-9/11 discourse on

Muslims. Since 2001, Sufism, once merely identified as "mystical Islam," has come to be

described as "pacifist," "peaceful," "tolerant," "flexible," and "moderate" Islam, usually

in opposition to the Taliban, al-Qaida or any other hard-liner Islamist group. With their

music, dance and tolerance, Sufis are presented as the Muslims to be supported against

fundamentalists. From the beginning, Aziz's novel subscribes to this topos of good

Muslim vs. bad Muslim and presents two types of Muslims: Sufis and "literalists."[244]

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[244] One might argue for the presence of a third category, namely the in-betweeners such as Kimya and Kera, both female, who intuitively opposed the literalist view but are not Sufis either. Though they are not Sufis they tend to agree with Sufis on most of the issues. Rumi's wife Kera, for instance, as a former Christian still has doubts regarding her love for Virgin Mary. Shams assures her that it is extremely understandable and not contradictory to Islam to still love and pray for Virgin Mary, who is also highly revered by Muslims.

While the first group is defined by pacifism, spiritualism, tolerance, and open-mindedness, the second one emerges as the polar opposite of the former. Limited by their literalist interpretation of Islam the characters belonging to the latter group (e.g. the judge in Baghdad; the "zealot" in Konya; Baybars) argue for waging war against everyone but themselves, show intolerance towards those that are identified as sinful such as drunkards and prostitutes, and nurture hostility towards Sufis.

Even though Rumi is represented as the perfect Muslim, it is usually through the character of Shams that the dichotomization is administered. Shams is the one that stands up against the literalists and does not hold himself back from criticizing them, usually by means of juxtaposing his stance towards the issue in question with that of the literalists. The difference between the two "camps" is displayed most manifestly in a passage where Shams and Kimya, Rumi's adopted daughter, discuss several verses from one of the *suras* (chapter) ("al-Nisa") in the Qur'an on the relationship between man and woman (196). Shams recites two different translations, hence interpretations of the same verse, one of the versions of which permits men to beat their wives.[245] Another version, or to be more correct, another translation simply tells men to stay away from their wives when there is disagreement. Through the diversity of interpretations that determine the meaning and sense of the translations Shams shows Kimya the decisive role of the reader in the interpretation of a text as multilayered as the Qur'an. Shams explains to Kimya that from afar the Qur'an seems to have, just like "a gushing river," only one watercourse but as one plunges into it, she/he would realize that there are, in deed, four currents, all of which "flow in harmony and yet completely separate from one another" (196). Literalists are the

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[245] It is interesting that Shams, a learned mystic well-read in Qur'an explains the verse to Kimya, a student of Islamic sciences under the supervision of Rumi, in translation rather than using the original Arabic text.

ones who swim closer to the surface and are content with the outer meaning of the Qur'an. The other currents remain unknown to them. These are the people who read a *sura* like the Nisa and "arrive at the conclusion that men are held superior to women because this is exactly what they want to see" (*Ibid*). The novel makes it clear that the "zealot" and the like read as such and almost always prefer the version that leaves no place for good intentions, tolerance, and peace. Whereas Sufis such as Shams even go beyond the second level of reading, that is the "moderate" interpretation, and swim within the "esoteric, (*batıni*)" which is a much more profound yet hard to reach level, where the discussed verse is not even about men and women but "about womanhood and manhood," about "how each and every one of us has both femininity and masculinity in us, in varying degrees and shades." Shams adds, in Jungian fashion, "only when we learn to embrace both can we attain harmonious Oneness."[246]

Hence Shams himself makes it clear that the literalists and Sufis practice different Islams because they read the Qur'an differently. As someone capable of reading "the Qur'an in the budding flowers and migrating birds," and "the Breathing Qur'an secreted in human beings" (112), Shams disparages Muslims who, according to his observations, "spend their whole lives hunched on prayer rugs while their eyes and hearts remain closed to the outside world" and "read the Qur'an only on the surface" (112). Ironically Shams claims that Sufis do not judge other people (51), althoughhe himself continues to

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[246] More than once Shams refers to the four levels of reading the Qur'an. In another instance he says "Each and every reader comprehends the Holy Qur'an on a different level in tandem with the depth of his understanding. There are four levels of insight. The first level is the outer meaning and it is the one that the majority of the people are content with. Next is the *Batini* — the inner level. Third, there is the inner of the inner. And the fourth level is so deep it cannot be put into words and is therefore bound to remain indescribable. Scholars who focus on the sharia know the outer meaning. Sufis know the inner meaning. Saints know the inner of the inner. And as the fourth level, that is known only by prophets and those closest to God" (50). Rumi, once, says that the companionship of Shams is "like the fourth reading of the Qur'an – a journey that can only be experienced from within but never grasped from the outside" (193).

criticize people throughout the novel, specifically those who, according to Shams, stick to the literalist interpretation of the Qur'an.

A direct consequence of reading the Qur'an at different levels manifests itself in the stance toward engagement with violence. At the beginning of "Sweet Blasphemy" Shams makes it clear that Sufis do not resort to violence no matter what: "As a Sufi I had sworn to protect life and do no harm. In this world of illusions, so many people were ready to fight without any reason, and so many others fought for a reason. But the Sufi was the one who wouldn't fight even if he had a reason. There was no way I could resort to violence" (31). In another instance he says, "The true Sufi is such that even when he is unjustly accused, attacked, and condemned from all sides, he patiently endures, uttering not a single bad word about any of his critics" (225). Literalist Muslims, on the other hand, promote war in the name of Islam and vehemently criticize the pacifist stance of Sufis. Representatives of the "bad Muslims," such as the judge in Baghdad, the "zealot" in Konya and Rumi's elder son Aladdin, all make comments in favor of war and violence, widening the gap between them and Sufi-minded pacifist people, represented first and foremost by Rumi. Take Baybars, for instance, who strongly rails against Rumi and Shams:

> … when surrounded by cold-blooded enemies on all sides, how can we afford to be
> peaceful? This is why people like Rumi get on my nerves. I don't care how highly
> everyone thinks of him. For me he is a coward who spreads nothing but cowardice.
> He might have been a good scholar in the past, but nowadays he is clearly under the
> influence of that heretic Shams. At a time when the enemies of Islam are looming
> large, what does Rumi preach? Peace! Passivity! Submission! Rumi preaches

submissiveness, turning Muslims into a flock of sheep, meek and timid. … Other than "love," his favorite words seem to be "patience," "balance," and "tolerance." (188)

Of course, on the issue of violence, Aziz's suggestion to read *today* in thirteenth-century conflicts inevitably engages the novel, which is already replete with anachronistic projections and allusions to contemporary anxieties, with current debates on whether Islam promotes violence. From the beginning, Aziz urges his readers to pay attention to the similarities between thirteenth-century Anatolia and the twenty-first-century Western world. In this respect, Shams' disparagement of literalists brings into mind the contemporary criticism towards Salafis for selectively reading the Qur'an in accordance with their agenda. Shams says that

> Instead of losing themselves in the Love of God and waging a war against their ego, religious zealots fight other people, generating wave after wave of fear. [...] Instead of searching for the essence of the Qur'an and embracing it as a whole, however, the bigots single out a specific verse or two, giving priority to the divine commands that they deem to be in tune with their fearful minds. (181)

The message given above is quite clear: the literalists are bigots in every sense of the word and they are wrong. Opposed to such literalists who swim in the shalloWestern waters of the river of Qur'an stands Rumi with his unhesitating plunge into the deepest streams. Islam promoted by Rumi in the novel, however, is not only compatible with but also similar to the spiritually enhancing, privatized, non-parochial, post-institutionalized, hybrid religiosity to which an increasing number of Americans turn for comfort. Aziz's Rumi is a proponent of a universal religion of love that is not only above and beyond

184

doctrines and creeds but is, also, free from the bounds of time and society. In fact, Aziz's introduction of Rumi underlines Rumi's distinction from other Muslims with regard to his promotion of "universal spirituality," inclusiveness, and pacifism:

> Beset with religious clashes, political disputes, and endless power struggles, the thirteenth century was a turbulent period in Anatolia. […] It was a time of unprecedented chaos when Christians fought Christians, Christians fought Muslims, and Muslims fought Muslims. Everywhere one turned, there was hostility and anguish and an intense fear of what might happen next. In the midst of this chaos lived a distinguished Islamic scholar, [...] In an age of deeply embedded bigotries and clashes, he stood for a universal spirituality, openings doors to people of all backgrounds. Instead of an outer-oriented jihad —defined as "the war against infidels" and carried out by many in those days just as in the present — Rumi stood up for an inner-oriented jihad where the aim was to struggle against and ultimately prevail over one's ego, *nafs*. (19-20)

The density and the pervasiveness of this dichotomy to the texture of the novel is quite significant because of the effect it generates. The authorial voice, that is the New Age voice of Aziz, situates everyone on the axis of the good Muslim / bad Muslim dichotomy. Such projection of today into the past brings into mind Mikhail Bakhtin's warning about distortion of the past in the form of modernization of it:

> The depiction of the past in the novel in no sense presumes the modernization of this past. On the contrary, only in the novel have we the possibility of an authentically objective portrayal of the past as the past. Contemporary reality with its new experience is retained as a way of seeing, it has the depth, sharpness,

breadth and vividness of that way of seeing, should not in any way penetrate into

the already portrayed content of the past, as a force of modernizing and distorting

the uniqueness of that past." (29)

The distortion in the novel occurs in two areas. Aziz, as the writer of a historical novel, is

ideally expected to "devise various forms and methods for employing the surplus of

knowledge" that we as contemporary readers know but the hero does not know or see

(Bakhtin: 32). None of these forms and methods, however, is supposed to precipitate an

ahistorical presentation of the past as the novel does here.[247] Aziz's description of Rumi

from the mouth of a Sufi sheikh as "a great enlightener who will generate a significant

positive change in the history of Islam, if not in the history of the world" (68) or Shams's

ominous prediction about the fate of Baghdad, which, then, was at the peak of its glory

constitute considerable examples of ahistorical projection. Of course, the most significant

of such comments revolves around the auspicious friendship and its concomitant effect

on Rumi. Prior to the meeting of Rumi and Shams, Sheikh Zaman introduces Rumi to

Shams as someone "good with words, but not with metaphors, for he is no poet. He is

loved, respected, and admired by thousands, but he himself is not a lover" (72).[248] He

knows that only by means of Shams, Rumi would be able to become the poet that he

needs to be.

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[247] Of course, in post-modern historical novels we see the utilization of ahistorical perspective but in those cases the novel's self-reflexivity makes the reader question the ahistorical presentation as well. In the case of "Sweet Blasphemy" we cannot talk about self-reflexivity. To the contrary it quite agrees with the conventional definition of the historical novel.

[248] Seyyid Burhaneddin, a disciple of Rumi's father and a teacher of Rumi, writes a letter to Sheikh Zaman in Baghdad to see if there lives the spiritual companion that would be of help to heal Rumi's existentialist crisis. In his letter Burhaneddin describes Rumi as "a spiritual leader," "a role model," who "has excelled at law, philosophy, theology, astronomy, history, chemistry, and algebra" but nonetheless unhappy and discontent. Burhaneddin sums up Rumi's state as "though he was anything but raw, he wasn't burned either" (68). Upon receiving the letter Sheikh Zaman recommends Shams to go to Konya and meet Rumi.

The second area in which the novel creates a distortion is that of language. The imposition of contemporary language couched in New Age jargon is a means of domestication that has been used throughout the inner novel. Shams, in particular, speaks like a contemporary New Ager. For instance, by the beginning of "Sweet Blasphemy" he comes across an innkeeper whose heart was hardened by the trials and tribulations he had to go through. Shams proposes to read the palm of the innkeeper in return for the money he owes for the accommodation. Shams recounts his impression of the session in a New-Agey language:

> Bit by bit, the colors in his aura appeared to me: a rusty brown and a blue so pale as to be almost gray. His spiritual energy was hollowed out and thinned around the edges, as if it had no more strength to defend itself against the outside world. (32)

There are other similar incidents in which Shams explains "spiritual growth" as being "about the totality of our consciousness" (246), warns about "fake gurus" (88) or teaches how to avoid "vicious circle of malevolent energy" (211), and "arrive at a supreme form of consciousness" (112). More significant than such incidents, however, is the "Forty Rules of the Religion of Love," a list allegedly compiled by Shams and gives the novel its title.[249] The list, entitled by Shams as "The Basic Principles of the Itinerant Mystics of Islam," is recited one by one, mostly by Shams, throughout the nested novel befitting the situation at hand. Most of the rules, in the form of aphorisms, sound as if quoted from a self-help book. They are, as a matter of fact, in agreement with New Age religiosity's emphasis on the centrality of "the self." Rather than recommending how to

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[249] The list is apparently based on William Chittick's edition of *Shams & Me*, which Aziz reads even in his deathbed. The book is the collection of notes that are ascribed to Shams but as Chittick acknowledges Shams himself did not leave any written material behind. These disconnected notes are probably taken by the disciples of Rumi, who later on compiled them as *Makalat*.

annihilate or subjugate the self, as one would expect from a Sufi mystic, they speak of the ways to enhance self-awareness, find happiness and inner peace, and become content.[250] To give an idea, here are a few examples:

If you want to change the ways others treat you, you should first change the way you treat yourself, fully and sincerely, there is no way you can be loved. Once you achieve that stage, however, be thankful for every thorn that others might throw at you. It is a sign that you will soon be showered in roses. (135)

Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead let life live through you. And do not worry that your life is turning upside down. How do you know that the side you are used to is better than the one to come? (101)

If you get to know yourself fully, facing with honesty and hardness both your dark and bright sides, you will arrive at a supreme form of consciousness. (112)

Fret not where the road will take you. Instead concentrate on the first step. That is the hardest part and that is what you are responsible for. Once you take that step let everything do what it naturally does and the rest will follow. Don't go with the flow. Be the flow. (177)

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[250] As noted by Mark Sedgwick one of the objectives of a Sufi on her/his path to *tawhid* (existential/experiential union with Allah) is to subjugate the *nafs* (ego), not to discover it (2009: 119). Also, Sufism conventionally urges guided journey to the point of discrediting the individual search. A well-known Sufi adage says that "He who does not have a *murshid* (spiritual master) has Satan for his *murshid*." Shams's list, on the other hand, except for one rule, does not mention the significance of murshid (spiritual master).

Hell is in the here and now. So is heaven. Quit worrying about hell or dreaming about heaven, as they are both present inside this very moment. Every time we fall in love, we ascend to heaven. Every time we hate, envy or fight someone we tumble straight into the fires of hell. (182)

In the words of fictional Shams these "rules" are "universal, dependable, invariable as the laws of nature" and "could be attained through love and love only" (39). Shams' claim to be able to identify such universal and invariable rules agrees with the novel's general insistence on the universal message Sufism embodies. The claim to universality is worth examining because I believe "universal" to be the key word for understanding the entirety of Shams' and Rumi's philosophy represented by Shafak: as a defender of "universal spirituality" (19), Rumi is said to know how to differentiate the "universal and eternal" aspects of religion from the husk of it (68).[251] Furthermore his latent capabilities as a supreme mystic are set into motion by the spiritual friendship of Shams, who taught him the "universal rules of love" that the "Religion of Love" entails.[252]

Of course, Sufism – and Islam itself – just like many other religious and spiritual traditions claim to embody and teach universal truths. In that respect it is completely reasonable for Shams to articulate such a claim. The significant point of this claim concerns its form, the language in which these "forty rules" are couched in because of its sure effect on the content. As Judith Butler notes, "the claim to universality always takes

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[251] In "Sweet Blasphemy" Rumi is introduced by a fellow sheikh as someone who has the "rare ability to dig deep below the husk of religion and pull out from its core the gem that is universal and eternal" (68). This distinction brings into mind the suggestions made by the Transcendentalists to dissect any given religion into moral, ethical and self-transcending features as opposed to the "civil-historical and ritual portions."
[252] Needless to say, these rules are appropriated by Rumi as well; the fortieth rule, for instance, is articulated by Rumi long after the death of Shams.

place in a given syntax, through a certain set of cultural conventions in a recognizable venue" (Butler 2000: 35) even though the universal, by definition, has to remain "untainted by what is particular, concrete, and individual" (23). Therefore, because "the meaning of 'the universal' proves to be culturally variable, [...] the specific cultural articulations of the universal work against its claim to a transcultural status (Butler 2004: 190). The universals espoused by Sufism, particularly the ones by Rumi, are determined by the Sufi tradition, which, as a discursive tradition, reproduces and re-signifies itself in a continuous manner just like the Islamic tradition out of which it organically has grown. As such the universalistic claims that these traditions convey inevitably carry their mark.

But then how could they be translated? How can one assure that the claim of universality will work if it is always already affected by language? Judith Butler argues that for a universalist claim to work, "for it to compel consensus, and for the claim, performatively, to enact the very universality it enunciates, it must undergo a set of translations into the various rhetorical and cultural contexts in which the meaning and force of universal claims are made" (2000: 35). Butler basically argues that proponents of a universalism rely upon a certain type of domestication or appropriation. Though domestication is an inevitable condition of cultural translation, with regard to the translation of religion, in particular of Islam, one has to keep in mind that religions ideally claim to appropriate, not to be appropriated. The whole point of "religious conversion" is to domesticate the subject to the cultural text of the said religion. In reality, of course, this is rarely the case. The subject appropriates religion as much as it is appropriated by it. It is the same with the engagement with the universals espoused by religions.

190

Elif Shafak, in *The 40 Rules of Love*, domesticates what she deems to be universal in Sufism by equating it with another set of universals. She interprets Sufism as practiced by Shams and Rumi as the universal aspect of Islam and translates it into a contemporary American context. In order for the universal claim to work in the American context, she naturalizes Rumi and Shams to the degree of assimilating them into New Age religiosity, which not only accommodates diverse religious, ethical, spiritual and mystical traditions but also, on account of its inclusiveness, claims to be universal. So, Shafak basically equates the universals espoused by Rumi as articulated in the thirteenth-century Anatolia to the universals promoted by New Agers as articulated in the twenty-first-century America. That is why, even though Sham's list is entitled "The Basic Principles of the Itinerant Mystics of Islam" it barely includes any references to Islam or Islamic culture whatsoever, at least in the English version. It is as if the universality that Shams attributes to them requires some kind of zero culture-specificity, negating any kind of contingency. It is implicated that the more "neutralized" or "decontextualized" the list is the more it would become universal. But yet again its "neutralized" or "decontextualized" state is, in fact, is a product of a certain context as, first and foremost, the language of the novel suggests.

So apparently Shafak finds the "universal language" of New Age religiosity as the most appropriate equivalent of the universal language of Sufism, but her "cultural translation" is problematic because of the incongruence of the basic notions that these two universal languages espouse. Particularly, the concept of the "religion of love," which both traditions incorporate under the same name but has different connotations,

raises questions.[253] The semantic fields of this concept in the traditions of Sufism and

New Age-ism hardly overlap because of the different socio-historical contexts from

which these two concepts with the same designation arose. While both "religions of love"

claim to be universal and are based on an experiential understanding of religion, we have

to consider the defining effect of the differences that are shaped within the specific

traditions to which they belong. While the Sufi "religion of love" primarily emerged from

the religious and cultural traditions of the Islamic world (Chittick 2013; Mojaddedi

2012), the New Age conceptualization of "religion of love" has, as one would expect,

organic ties with the Christian conceptualization of love, in addition to the tenets it has

incorporated from other spiritual and religious traditions such as Hinduism and

Buddhism.

So this is how Rumi as a Muslim gets transplanted into another tradition of

religiosity. This specific attempt of Shafak has been interpreted as assimilating into

"American hegemonic narratives and the Western instrumentalisation of the East"

(Furlanetto: 208) in her attempt at creating "a cosmopolitan narrative that speaks to the

West and the East" (*Ibid*).[254] Admitting the validity of this point, I must add that I am not

convinced that giving into American hegemony in order to create a "cosmopolitan

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[253] The concept of "religion of love" is, in fact, a common theme in Sufi literature; from Ibn Arabi to Ansari many Sufis contemplate on the meaning of this concept. Rumi mentions it numerous times in his works. For instance, he says "The religion of Love is apart from all religions: for lovers, the (only) religion and creed — is God. (Masnavi II: l. 1770); "My religion is to live through love / life through the spirit and head is my shame" (Masnavi VI: l. 4059); "What is the *miraj* of the heavens? Nonexistence. The religion and creed of the lovers is nonexistence" (Masnavi VI: 233); "Fear is not even a hair before Love; in the Religion of Love, all things are sacrificed" (Masnavi V: 2185); "The intellect does not know and is bewildered by the Religion of Love – even if it should be aware of all religions" (Divan 2610); "In the religion of the lovers, that spirit is mortally ill whose illness does not make him worse every day" (Divan 3610); "I am an utter profligate and scoundrel, I am brazen in the Religion of Love – what property have I that I should send as a gift?" (Divan 17685) (Chittick 1983: 212-213).
[254] Furlanetto argues that Shafak's contribution to the American Rumi discourse is a case of self-Orientalisation, as she has internalised a Western perspective in her account of one of the most significant figures of the Islamic heterodox tradition" (208).

narrative" fully explains the domestication of Rumi in *The Forty Rules of Love*. I contend that Shafak's portrayal has been affected by the Turkish context as much as it has been shaped by her desire to become a global/cosmopolitan writer. The intricacies presented by the Turkish socio-historical context, however, requires a brief exploration of the reception of Rumi in Turkey with reference to the secularization project.

(ii) *Aşk* (Love): The Secularist Dream of Religion in Turkey

The 40 Rules of Love, published under the name *Aşk* (Love), was an instant best-seller in Turkey.[255] Though dismissed, specifically by conservative intellectuals, as "new Age … kitsch" (Cündioğlu: 2009), the novel was embraced enthusiastically by a significant portion of Turkish society. Its reception in Turkey is of consequence for the purposes of this chapter, because it falls right into a debate on the nature of the exemplariness of Mevlana as a Muslim.[256] As will be outlined below, Mevlana's Muslim identity has long been a topic of discussion among different factions from Turkish society and Shafak's representation of Mevlana, Şems (Shams) and their relationship resonates effectively within this discussion.

Out of the diverse interpretations about Mevlana's Muslimhood two specific positions stand apart due to the ways in which they exploit the contested identity within their own discourse on how to be a Muslim or how to live Islam. These two interpretations are largely utilized by two segments of Turkish society that are historically

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[255] Initially 100,000 copies were published which is an extremely high number for Turkey. In no time sales have mounted over 500,000. Even a grey-jacketed version of the book was published as well because male readers were embarrassed to be seen reading the original pink edition.
[256] In this section of the chapter, instead of "Rumi" I will use "Mevlana" by which Rumi is widely known in Turkey.

counterposed to each other. It is not easy to describe these two camps. They are usually

identified as "Islamists" and "secularists" and for practical reasons I will stick to that, but

I believe the convoluted history of Turkish modernization precludes rigid subjectivities,

and instead encourages hybrid ones.[257] A very small portion of Turkish society would be

defined strictly secularist or strictly Islamist if one assumes the two categories mutually

exclusive. Today, though it may be one of the feats of the Republican project, many

people identify themselves as Muslim (either nominal or practicing at varying degrees)

and secular at the same time. It is, however, also correct that there is a defining

ideological framework that determines how one defines himself/herself *vis-à-vis* religion,

which, in turn, differentiates one camp from another. In the Turkish context, the early

Republican conceptualization of religion is the major constituent of that framework, and

one's compliance with that conceptualization determines which stance he/she identifies

with. The respective outlooks of the members of these camps is of importance because

any reading and representation of Mevlana in Turkey has been inevitably shaped, besides

other factors, by the reader's conceptualization of religion and morality, in particular, by

the personal stance of the reader towards Islam.

On the one hand, secularists maintain the perfectness of Mevlana as a Muslim, but

they draw attention to his presumed anti-orthodox, love-oriented philosophy, which,

according to their readings, highlights the importance of "purity of heart" in comparison

to Islamic rituals such as daily prayer, and fasting that Islamists supposedly valorize

above all else. For instance, Zülfü Livaneli, a staunch secularist, posits Rumi to be first

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[257] Some prefer to identify these camps as traditional vs. progressive/modern, Islamist vs. Kemalist, secular vs. religious, or left vs. right. None of them, however, captures the nuances of the differentiation, partly because of the elusive nature of identities that are always in the process of becoming.

and foremost a poet, suggesting that the Turkish people "made a religious leader out of a poet who loves to dance, drink wine and fall in love" (2010: para. 5). On the other hand, another group agrees with the former with regard to the perfection of Mevlana as a Muslim, but they strive to prove that Mevlana, in addition to promoting love and peace in every aspect of life, never failed to faithfully perform his religious duties. Furthermore, they strongly object to portraying Rumi outside orthodox Islam. Ömer Tuğrul İnançer, for instance, a controversial Sufi, vehemently criticizes those who overlook the Islamic piety of Mevlana.

Elif Shafak, apparently in agreement with both camps presents Mevlana as the ideal Muslim to be emulated. Her Mevlana is not a non-practicing, wine-loving poet as some secularists imagine him to be. In the novel Mevlana is presented as an observant Islamic scholar who transforms into a poet burning with divine love. Furthermore, there are numerous references to Mevlana's, and Şems's as well, observance of Islamic rituals. On the other hand, her domestication of Mevlana to the taste of New Age religiosity agrees with the secularist reading of Mevlana due to the congruence of their religion conceptualization. In this sense, it can be said that out of different historical backgrounds there emerged an overlap of interpretations regarding Mevlana Rumi. In order to understand the dynamics of the overlap we need to examine the secularists' stance toward religion and Islam which is manipulated, or at least attempted to be manipulated, by the state by means of various regulatory/disciplinary tools that include but are not limited to secularization and nationalization.

The grand modernization project that was initiated by the elite cadres[258] of the

newly founded Turkish Republic entails a radical interpretation of secularism, the

applications of which have touched upon every single realm of life. This has largely to do

with the Republican elite's understanding of religion that apparently developed under the

influence of Western conceptualization of religion, which is considered to be a private

matter and is seen as the antithesis of reason and scientific progress.[259]

    Islam further complicates the matter for Mustafa Kemal and his fellow reformers

because of its inherent incongruity with the definition of "religion" in the Western sense

of the word. The concept of "religion" as understood today in the Western world as a

private matter is formed by a specific series of European phenomena, such as the

Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment, and German idealism.[260] Islam, on the other

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[258] The stance and the policies of the political elite is central in any attempt to understand Turkish modernization project because, as noted by Resat Kasaba, for long stretches of time in Turkey's modern history, the relatively small political elite "has appropriated the right to determine the pace and the shape of its modernisation" which was modeled after Western European experience (302). On account of being an extremely comprehensive project of social engineering it "required a very heavy dose of state intervention to mould the nation's broader social transformation so that it could fit into this new riverbed" (*Ibid*).

[259] As staunch believers of "scientific materialism" many members of the Republican cadre, including Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, regarded religion to be an obstacle in the envisioned future of modern Turkey. Şükri Hanioğlu notes that as social Darwinists and scientific materialists, many members of the intellectual cadre of the *Ittihat ve Terakki Partisi* (The Committee of Union and Progress, or CUP), which was in power from 1908 to 1918, "expected the Darwinian triumph of science over religion in their time" (2010: 138). As the materialist movement gained traction within the Ottoman elite, argues Hanioğlu, it evolved into a peculiar form of scientism that rejected religion and attributed European progress to the alleged adoption of materialist doctrine in Europe (140).

[260] As eloquently argued by Talal Asad, any attempt to work on a transhistorical definition of religion is doomed to fail because it basically denies the historical specificity of religious phenomena. In his article "Towards an Anthropology of Islam" as well as in later studies Genealogies of Religion and The Formations of the Secular, Asad deconstructs the category of religion by identifying some of "the historical shifts that have produced our concept of religion as the concept of a transhistorical essence" (1993: 29)."There cannot be a universal definition of religion," says Asad, "not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historical specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (1993: 29). The secular-liberal assumption of a transhistorical presence of religion consequently leads to the discreteness of the field of politics, religion, economics and so forth. This expectation itself is a historical and cultural product of the Western European experience. Building upon the premises of Protestantism, Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant elaborated the principal conditions of a compartmentalized life, the *modus vivendi* of which, as noted by William Connolly, entails a newly crafted space of private religion and faith. But what is important here, as pointed

hand, operates on a different level as the meaning of the term *din* ("religion") suggests.

The coherent ultimate meaning intended with "*din*," says Muhammad Al-Atlas, is "faith,

beliefs and practices and teachings adhered to by the Muslims individually and

collectively as a Community and manifesting itself altogether as an objective whole as

the Religion called Islam" (184). Accordingly, the sense *din* embodies is not the same as

the sense denoted by "religion" as interpreted and understood throughout Western

religious history (*Ibid*). Talal Asad explains this discrepancy with reference to Islam

being a "discursive tradition"[261] (1993:1), which enables it to manifest itself as "practice,

language and sensibility set in social relationships rather than as systems of meaning"

(Asad 2014: 13).

 The Republican elite were, actually, in favor of creating a secular morality that

would ideally replace the Islamic one, but they were aware of this project's

impracticability, at least immediately. So they decided to set into motion the next best

thing, which was to redefine Islam.[262] The active form of secularism pursued by the state

did not allow religion to interfere in other realms of life, in particular in politics, but at

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out by Asad, is that this process did not mark off an already established or experienced exclusive sphere called the religious; it, in fact, engendered that exclusiveness in the first place.

[261] Here Asad suggests to use the term "tradition" in the Aristotelian sense as elaborated by Alasdair MacIntyre. According to MacIntyre, tradition, which continuously restructures itself in time, "is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition" (2007: 222). The engagement of discourses with the practical aspect is of extreme importance because of the dialogical relationship between the two. The continuous interrelation between a discourse and practice is secured partly because practices as spiritual exercises are "intended to affect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practice them" (Hadot: 6). Such transformations inevitably affect the discourse the subjects partake in which is, in turn, projected onto the practice and ad infinitum.

[262] Though I should note that Ataturk did not reveal his plans about religion even after the proclamation of the republic. He asked for the support of religious leaders during the war of independence. In the letters he wrote to them he praises Islam and the role of such figures (Mustafa Kara: 83-85). In 1923 he even preached a sermon in a mosque in Balıkesir, arguing that Islam was a perfect religion on account of being a rational religion (Soileau: 240). Furthermore, the 1924 Constitution declares Islam to be the official religion of the state. Though, that clause was deleted in 1928.

the same time allowed the state to regulate religiosity, specifically the Islamic one.[263] As noted by Christopher Dole, "Turkey's history of secular reform was as much as about structural differentiation (of religious from political institutions) as it was about control and regulation" (11). Conceptualized largely as a system of belief, dissociated from practices, the state offered a supposedly "enlightened" version of Islam that would be promoted by governmental tools such as the newly founded Directorate of Religious Affairs (1924),[264] a Divinity School first at Istanbul University (1925-1933), then at Ankara University (1949), and later *Imam-Hatip* schools that were founded in order to train religious officials.

The most important feature of the state's attempts to regulate Islam is the redefinition of it as a private matter along the lines of Western conceptualization of religion. It is thought that as long as it does not manifest itself in the public sphere, Islam would, at least, be tolerated. The elites knew that the transformation of people into the envisioned ideal citizen, who was not defined by religiosity, required time as well as effort on both sides. They were well aware that the masses would continue to be pious no

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[263] Different from American secularism, which "has historically provided 'freedom *of* religion' for people feeling religious persecution," Turkish secularism (*laïcité*), modeled after the French one, is defined by its promotion of "'freedom *from* religion.'" (Cagaptay: 45).

[264] The mission of DRA was stated in the 1924 constitution as the administration of "the affairs related to faith and worship of the religion of Islam" (diyanet.gov.tr) but as Hakan Yavuz draws attention, its mission expanded in time: "from simply supervising faith and worship to 'taking necessary steps to secure the loyalty of Muslims to the national ideas' of the Republic. Law 633 of 1963 redefined the task of the DRA in terms of 'conducting the affairs of belief, worship, and enlightening society on religious matters and the moral aspects of the Islamic religion.' The new law added the concepts of morality and 'enlightening society' on religious issues. In other words, the state sought to create a moral order based on Islamic values. The 1982 constitution went even further and asked the DRA to 'carry out its mission within the framework of the principle of secularism and with the goal of achieving national solidarity and integration'" (24).

matter what but the rationale was that, if one was pious she was encouraged, or urged, to practice her religion at home.[265]

Of course, the state was not the sole player in the secularization process (Dole: 12) and the applications of the reforms, not only the ones pertaining to secularism, have engendered identities and sensibilities that were not foreseen either by the political cadre of the period under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal or by the opposition which had to, for the most part, operate underground.[266] In time more and more people have forged hybrid forms of morality that are not exclusively defined by secularism or Islam. This has been partly due to the fact that secularism, defined as "the marginalization of religion's public role, was no longer an externally or state-imposed force but became a societal force that was internalized by a considerable number of nominal or pious Muslims" (Tezcur: 70).

Contemporary readings of Mevlana in Turkey are inevitably affected by the above-mentioned social engineering, causing in an increase in the already assorted representations. As aptly observed by Chelebi Husam, "Mevlana's words are like a mirror: everybody sees something in that mirror, but what they see is themselves." (qtd. in Soileau: 303). The history of Turkish representation of Mevlana attests to this remark.

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[265] Some of the reforms implemented within the first decade of the Republic, such as the closure of the Islamic courts and Islamic schools, the enactment of compulsory "modern" dress codes and the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code) precipitated the effacement of Islam from the public domain.

[266] Even though the early Republican reforms are consequential in the creation of later generations configuration of religion in their lives, the state's stance towards religion and its involvement in religious affairs have shown variances in accordance with the political atmosphere of the period. Specifically, the political ascent of conservative parties such as *Demokrat Party* (Democratic Party) in the 1950s, *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party) in the 1960s and 70s, *Anavatan Partisi* (Homeland Party) in the 1980s precipitated a more intense integration of "orthodox Islam" into the "nation-state's projects of rationalization, homogenization, and disciplinization" (Gurbey: 41). Additionally, with the ever-increasing impact of globalization as well as neo-liberal policies, the state's controlling power over religion or morality weakened to a significant degree.

Because representations of Mevlana show interesting variances in accordance with the ideological stance of the representer, the new readings carry the marks of the new secularist interpretation of morality. Turkish humanists, for instance, portrayed Mevlana as a humanist poet who sang the beauty and fraternity of human beings in the most exquisite manner. Or, the Turkish-Islamists insisted on describing Mevlana as a "Turkish" sage instrumental in the Islamization of Anatolian Turks.

Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, these two predominant representations—the humanist and the Turkish-Islamist—competed with one another. Today, however, both of these have given way to other interpretative concerns that focus on the nature of Mevlana's religious beliefs and, perhaps with more immediacy, that of his "Muslimhood." This specific reading is as political as the humanist and the Turkish-Islamist one. With the political ascent of the so-called Islamists, first the *Milli Görüş* (National Vision) ideology under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan and then its transformed continuation, the *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* or AKP (Justice and Development Party) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has disconcerted if not alarmed the more secular-wise sensitive section of society.[267] Faced with an Islam openly promoted by the politicians as well as the supporters of these socio-political movements, people, who have felt left out, have developed several coping mechanisms one of which is presenting an alternative interpretation of Islam that unequivocally agrees

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[267] The ousting of Erbakan's *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party) from a coalition government in 1997 and its consequent ban from politics led the younger generation of Islamists to re-craft their Islamist politics in a new party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, or AKP (The Justice and Development Party) along the lines of neo-liberalism. The AKP was founded in August 2001 and gained a landslide victory in the November 2002 elections. Even though AKP denies being an Islamist party, it is generally identified both internationally and domestically as such.

with the founding principles of the Republic. This specific interpretation describes religion, hence Islam, along the liberal model as a private matter.[268] Their discourse on the idealized Islam entails the Kantian distinction between religion as cult and religion as moral action. While the former "seeks favors from God through prayer and offerings to bring healing and wealth to its followers," the latter "commands human beings to change their behavior in order to lead a better life" (Turner: 5). Needless to say the distinction comes along with hierarchization in favor of the latter, which secularists claim to adopt. Also, interpretation of religion as moral action precipitates an easier transition to a New Age approach to religion, one which is ultimately utilitarian on account of its insistence on seeing religion as a tool in the enhancement of one's self.

The secularists regard Mevlana, though not Sufism per se, as the embodiment of this ideal Islam which is privatized, progressive, reformed, not ritual-based, and in tune with secular morality. Mevlana is the perfect candidate for them because his poems not only valorize universal humanistic themes that are shared by secular morality, but also he has recently become a phenomenon on his own in the Western world, which many members of the secular-minded group look up to in their lives. The unprecedented popularity that Mevlana has gained in recent years among this socio-economically diverse group of people was both taken advantage of, and bolstered, by Elif Shafak with her novel *Aşk* (Love).

In *Aşk*, Shafak touches upon some of the sensitive issues with which these secular urbanites are concerned, but the novel's Turkish and English versions give such issues

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[268] The visibility of piety in the public sphere has been considered by some, at least until recently, a transgression of secularist values. Some fanatic secularists even go as far as saying that public display of piety is an imposition on the part of religious people on other people.

particular emphases. The venting of a minor character, Sarhoş Süleyman (Suleiman the Drunk), is emblematic in this regard: Süleyman exclaims that he is "sick and tired of bigots" because "they are convinced that they have God on their side and therefore look down on everyone else" (165).[269] In the English version, however, "Suleiman" claims to detest "all religions" and directs his criticism towards all religious people: "You know, this is exactly why I abhor religion. All sorts of them! religious people are so confident of having God by their side that they think they are superior to everyone else" (127). In the Turkish version, Süleyman's criticism is directed specifically towards "bağnazlar" (bigots). This seemingly minor difference is significant because in the US the juxtaposition of religion and spirituality, and the consequent devalorization of religion is getting more and more prominent. Whereas in Turkey, direct criticism against religion, in particular against Islam, in a novel as mainstream as *Aşk* can be rather contentious.[270] Besides, it is incompatible with the premise of the novel, which artlessly distinguishes Muslims as good and bad. By using the word "bağnazlar," Shafak, once again, draws attention to this distinction, which has been in use as a trope since the early Republican period. What is more, public figures, specifically among the secularists, avoid adopting a negative approach toward religion and religious people, partly because it is a remnant of the strict early Republican attitude towards religion that led to the alienation of a considerable segment of the population. The rhetoric is now focused on the adverse influences of not religion, or to be more specific Islam, but on the incorrect interpretation

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[269] "Zaten bu yüzden bağnazlardan bıktım usandım! Tanrı'yı yanlarına aldıklarından o kadar eminler ki, geri kalan herkese tepeden bakıyorlar" (165).
[270] In fact, Shafak was put on trial in 2007 for "insulting Turkishness" through characters in her novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* by referring to "the Armenian genocide." She was acquitted but this trial was a case in point showing the repercussions of dealing with such sensitive issues.

and execution of it. In this regard, Shafak's replacement of "religious people" with "bigot" speaks within and to the Turkish context.

Another delicate issue regards the place of women in society. Traditionally Islamists tend not to wish to see women active in the public sphere. They are believed to prefer seeing women at home, performing their motherly and wifely duties. In the novel, Mevlana, unlike Islamists, encourages women to participate in social life.[271] Kimya, for instance, after proving herself to be a curious and intelligent girl, becomes one of the students of Mevlana. Though Kimya was not an exception; after her, Mevlana accepts to train his daughter-in-law Fatma and her sister Hediye, as well. Mevlana's praise of them is noteworthy due to the message it conveys:

> This extremely hardworking and smart girl reminds me of my most beautiful
> Kimya. In time Fatma has become "my right eye" and Hediye "my left eye."
> Whenever I need to perform a duty in the public, these eyes guided me. Who says
> girls cannot be just as good students as boys? My dear Kimya had already proved
> what girls could achieve. Out of respect for her memory, I arrange *sema* sessions
> not only for men but also for women as well and advise Sufi sisters to continue this

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[271] In parallel to Mevlana's egalitarian views on women, the outer novel further champions the liberation of women through the story of Ella Rubinstein, who, thanks to her relationship with Aziz, acknowledges the shackles that has bound her to a rather stagnant domestic life. Eventually she gets rid of those shackles and embraces the infinite possibilities open to her. I cannot say that in Turkey the outer story resonated as successfully as the inner story; most readers focus on the latter at the expense of ignoring the former story. I contend that Shafak's utilization of Western woman is consistent with a trope in Ottoman/Turkish literary tradition, in which Western women are depicted as some sort of damsels in distress saved by morally superior Ottoman/Turkish Muslim men. In the case of *Aşk*, the savior is not Turkish but on account of being a Muslim, Aziz, still more or less, fits into the scheme.

tradition. Let no one think that women are inferior to men: it is humans, not Allah, who discriminate and prefer one over the other!" (405)[272]

In this passage Shafak deploys Rumi to challenge the prevalent discrimination against women. Mevlana's recognition of the caliber of girls to the point of trusting them, not his sons or any other men, to help him perform his public duties is noteworthy, if not inconceivable. What is more, he not only praises their intellectual qualities but also encourages them to become active Sufis. Even today it is not common to see a woman perform the Mevlevi *sema* but in the novel Mevlana tells female Sufis to perform it. His justification of it is equally interesting because he acquits religion from the current subjugation of women by pointing at the latter's social basis. The passage as a whole speaks both to the Islamists and secularists by emphasizing Mevlana's respect for women. As a Muslim to be emulated in every respect, his esteem for women is simply exemplary for contemporary readers of all sorts.

Shafak's stance in the Turkish version is more pronounced compared to the English, probably because discrimination against women is a bigger problem in Turkey. The entire passage in the English reads as "Bright and inquisitive, [Fatima] reminded me of Kimya. I taught her the Qur'an. She became so dear to me that I started referring to her as my right eye and her sister Hediyya as my left eye. That is the one thing dear Kimya proved to me long ago: that girls are just as good students as boys, if not even better. I

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[272] I prefer to make literal translations of the Turkish version into English so as to better display the nuances. The original Turkish reads as: "Bu son derece çalışkan ve akıllı kız bana güzeller güzeli Kimya'yı hatırlatır. Zamanla Fatma 'sağ gözüm' oldu, kız kardeşi Hediye ise 'sol gözüm'. Ne zaman toplum içinde bir vazife ifa etmem gerekse, bu gözler bana rehber oldu. Kim demiş kızlar erkekler kadar iyi talebe olamaz diye? Sevgili Kimya kızların başarısını kanıtlamıştı zaten. Ben de onun ruhuna hürmeten sadece erkekler için değil, kadınlar için de sema ayinleri düzenliyorum ve Sufi bacılara bu adeti devam ettirmelerini salık veriyorum. Sakın ola bir kadının erkekten geri yahut eksik olduğunu sanmasınlar! Ayrımcılık yapıp insanı insana üstün tutmak biz kullara özgüdür; yoksa Allah'a değil." (404-5)

arrange sema sessions for women and advise Sufi sisters to continue this tradition" (342). This version serves the purpose of showing how an exemplary Muslim would treat and esteem women, but it does not mention how Rumi uses these girls to help him in the public domain or how Allah does not actually discriminate or prefer men over women. The emphasis on the intellectual capacity and capabilities are more conspicuous.

Shafak touches upon the issue of women in Islam by means of Şems as well. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Şems talks about the possibility of interpreting the Qur'an at a level that does not let men subjugate or beat women (245). While that passage certainly speaks to a Western audience who consider Islam a misogynist religion, it also addresses concerns that are voiced in Turkey, where many people still use Islam as an excuse to restraint women. Once again, Shafak speaks to both the secularists and the Islamists in her attempt of refuting the basis of that justification by referring to the very core of Islam itself.[273]

Another key notion that deserves our attention regards the approach toward the practical aspect of religion. Shafak criticizes, this time by means of Şems, the fetishization of religious rituals at the expense of more profound and fundamental aspects of religious or spiritual life. Within the American context this distinction does not resonate well. In some ways it parallels the religious vs. spiritualist dichotomy but does not directly speak to the concerns of the Western audience. In the both Turkish and English version, such passages function as criticism targeting the literalist Muslims who does not venture to go beyond the literal meaning of the word of God. In the extreme

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[273] However, the source that she uses in the Turkish version to propose an alternative translation of a specific section of the Qur'anic chapter *al-Nisa*, is itself quite controversial. Shafak uses Yaşar Nuri Öztürk's translation to make her point but the Islamist circles have serious issues with Öztürk's interpretation of Islam and the Qur'an.

cases, such people justify their intolerance or violent acts with reference to Islam. In the

Turkish context, however, there is an additional level that immediately engages the novel

with a debate that is organically tied to the secularist interpretation of religion. In such

passages Şems not only criticizes Islamists for neglecting the spiritual aspect in their

overindulgence in the practical aspect, but also valorizes the secularists' status, either as

non-practicing Muslims or simply as "moral" human beings, because of their

appreciation of "more profound" spiritual aspects, in some ways reminiscent of the

Kantian distinction between religion as cult and religion as moral action.

One of the most significant articulations of the secularist morality is its emphasis on

the "purity of heart" as opposed to observance of religious practice. More than once Şems

stresses the purity of heart as the foundation of piety. In order to prove his point, he

recounts the story of Moses and the shepherd in which Moses reprimands the latter for

praying in a blasphemous manner but was reprimanded in return by God for tampering

with the blasphemous but passionate and sincere prayer of the shepherd that God

nonetheless liked (77). Şems underlines the cruciality of purity of heart in his list as well.

Rule seventeen reads in the Turkish version as "Real filth is in the inside, not on the

outside; it is in the heart, not on the garment. Any stain other than that, no matter how

bad it seems, can be washed off, can be cleansed with water. The only dirt that is not

washed off is the grudge and malevolence that congeal in one's heart" (146).[274] Şems

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[274] Esas kirlilik, dışta değil içte, kisvede değil kalpte olur. Onun dışındaki her leke ne kadar kötü görünürse görünsün, yıkandı mı temizlenir, suyla arınır. Yıkamakla çıkmayan tek pislik kalplerde yağ bağlamış haset ve art niyettir." The English version is slightly different than the Turkish version with its additional emphasis on love. It also further underlines the insufficiency of rituals in the purification of one. It reads as: "Real filth is the one inside. The rest simply washes off. There is only one type of dirt that cannot be cleansed with pure waters, and that is the stain of hatred and bigotry contaminating the soul. You can purify your body through abstinence and fasting, but only love will purify your heart" (111).

articulates this rule as a response to the warning of an hermaphrodite owner of a brothel in Konya to stay away from the environs of the brothel, as it is, in her words, "the worst and the dirtiest place in town" ("*şehrin en beter, en pis yeri*") (146). Consequently, Şems recognizes a fellow pure heart (*temiz kalp*) in Çöl Gülü (Desert Rose) who works as a prostitute at that brothel (147).

Another common characteristic of the secularist criticism of practicing Muslims concerns the quality of the latter's practice. It is usually insinuated that most people do not execute religious duties in the right spirit, that is, having filled with love or compassion. Nonobservant "secularists" or "nominal Muslims," on the other hand, can be already filled with love and compassion for all humanity, which is the universal basis of all religions including Islam. That is why Şems considers a Christian hermit that he met in Damascus more Muslim than many who claim to be so (356). The valorization of love-infused faith over religious practice is expressed in another instance, again, by Şems. The purity of heart, of course, goes hand in hand with "love" as the quote below indicates:

> So much fear, so many misgivings and injunctions ... There are those who fast throughout Ramadan without missing a day, sacrifice a sheep every Eid as an atonement for his sins, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, pray five times a day on his prayer rug but there is no place for love or compassion in his heart. O fool, what's the use of all of this? Can there be faith without love? Is it possible to have faith by constantly muttering and complaining, without loving and being loved? If there is no love, "worship" (*ibadet*) is merely a seven-lettered word, a hollowed

out husk. One should have faith with love and in love, his love for God and love

for people should rumble in his veins. (228)[275]

This passage directly aims those who obsess over practice at the expense of overlooking

the supposed real point of Islam, that is, having a pure heart which enables one to be

filled with love, the very basis of faith. Once again, Shafak employs such passages to

play up the distinction between the literalist and the more profound Muslims, but within

the Turkish context it also mirrors the criticism directed by secularists toward Islamists.

As much as there is disagreement on the correct execution of what is commanded

by Islam, there is controversy on what is forbidden as well. In such discussions usually

drinking alcohol constitutes a major problem. Shafak touches upon this issue as well. In

"Sweet Blasphemy" (Aşk Şeriatı [Sharia of Love] in the Turkish version) Şems asks

Mevlana to go to the tavern and fetch some wine for them.[276] Mevlana, a respected

scholar and preacher, is aware that it is part of the test that Shams conducts on him. So

Mevlana says okay and heads for the tavern, where Suleiman the Drunk argues that

people who drink wine are not evil and do not deserve to be scorned. He, then, asks

Mevlana why wine was forbidden. Mevlana's reply to this question reads as:

I think one should avoid alcohol. With that in mind, one should not forget that we

cannot hold responsible neither wine nor the tavern owner for what we do. We

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[275] "Bunca korku, bunca vehim ve yasak … Öyle insanlar var ki, her Ramazan sektirmeden oruç tutar, her bayramda günahlarının kefareti icin kınalı koyun keser, hacca umreye gider, gunde beş vakit alnı secdeye değer ama yüreğinde ne sevgiye yer vardır, ne de merhamete. Bre adam, ne demeye uğraşır durursun ki? Aşksız inanç olur mu? Sevmeden ve sevilmeden, habire bir şeylere söylenip homurdanarak iman etmek mümkün mü? Aşk yoksa "ibadet" bir kuru kelimeden, yan yana gelmiş altı harften ibaret. Dışı kabuk, içi oyuk. İnsan aşkla ve aşkta iman etmeli; damarlarında gürül gürül hissederek Allah ve insan sevgisini!" (228)

[276] Even though this specific incident is recited in other accounts, the resonation of it in contemporary Turkey is quite unique.

have to get rid of the arrogance, hypocrisy, spite, rigidity and aggression that dwells in our selves (*nafs*) before wine. At the end of the day whoever wants to drink will drink and whoever does not will not. No one has the right to impose his ways on others. Because there is no compulsion in religion (300).[277]

Mevlana further elaborates on the issue while talking to Şems who asks him to drink the wine he has brought from the tavern. Mevlana is trembling but nonetheless takes the glass and says:

> It is important to abide by religious rules. But one should not attach more importance to rules than the essence, to fragments than the whole. A person who drinks wine should not disdain the person who does not drink and vice versa. I drink this glass of wine with this understanding in mind and believe with my whole heart that there is sobriety in the drunkenness of love" (304).[278]

These specific parts probably do not resonate in the United States as they do in Turkey. At one level Şems's testing Mevlana with wine and Mevlana's reaction is the perfect example to illustrate Mevlana's complete surrender to Şems and his love but it resonates at another level as well. Public consumption of alcohol is still one of the most sensitive

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[277] "Kanaatimce içkiden uzak durmalı. Bununla beraber, unutmamalı, yaptıklarımızdan meyi de meyhaneciyi de sorumlu tutamayız. Şaraptan evvel nefslerimizdeki küstahlığı, riyakarlığı, kindarlığı, katılığı, saldırganlığı kovmalıyız. Ve en nihayetinde içen içer, içmeyen içmez. Kimsenin kimseyi zorlamaya hakkı yoktur. Çünkü dinde zorlama yoktur." (300). The English version is more or less the same: "My friends, wine is not an innocent drink because it brings out the worst in us. I believe it is better for us to abstain from drinking. That said, we cannot blame alcohol for what we are responsible for. It is our own arrogance and anger that we should be working on. That is more urgent. At the end of the day whoever wants to drink will drink and whoever wants to stay away from wine will stay away. We have not right to impose our ways on others. There is no compulsion in religion" (241)

[278] "Dinin şartlarına uymak önemlidir. Ama insan kuralları özden, parçaları bütünden daha fazla önemsememeli. İçki içen insan içmeyenleri, içki içmeyense içenleri küçümsememeli. Bugün bana ikram ettiğin kadehi bu şuurla içiyorum ve tüm kalbimle inanıyorum ki aşk sarhoşluğunda ayıklık var" (304). English version, which is quite the same, reads as: "Religious rules and prohibitions are important, but they should not be turned into unquestionable taboos. It is with such awareness that I drink the wine you offer me today, believing with all my heart that there is a sobriety beyond the drunkenness of love" (246)

and divisive issues in the Turkish social and political arena because of its symbolic status as an indicator of one's "lifestyle." Specifically, with the political ascent of Islamists, cultural preferences and lifestyles have been extensively politicized (Tezcur: 70). Within this polarized and politicized atmosphere secularists began to express their fears and anxieties in a discourse shaped by lifestyle choices that usually revolve around the practices of consumption of alcohol, wearing miniskirts, and eating food in public during Ramadan.[279] Shafak, once again, deploys Mevlana to comment on this issue. As an exemplary Muslim, he does not approve its consumption and yet he also mentions that one has no right in intervening in another's life choices.

The novel includes more examples that speak to secularist sensitivities without painting Mevlana as a non-observant Muslim. It situates Mevlana into the discourse of a certain kind of religiosity, which the secularists deem appropriate for "enlightened" Islam. The congruency of Mevlana's views with the secularist conceptualization of religion enables the novel to connect with the American interpretation of Rumi, the epitome of "the good Muslim."[280] In fact, the difference in Aziz's description of himself in the Turkish and the English versions signify the reciprocity of the two interpretations. In the English version, Aziz defines himself as spiritual, but not religious: "Now, you think I am a religious man. But I am not. I am spiritual, which is different. Religiosity and spirituality are not the same thing, and I believe that the gap between the two has

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[279] Controversies regarding lifestyle have become more prominent specifically in 2013 after AKP prohibition of retail sale of alcohol between 10 PM and 6 AM and banning all alcohol advertising and promotion. The government defended itself by referring to comparable restrictions in Western countries, but accusations directed against AKP, and specifically Erdoğan for pursuing Islamic policies and imposing his own religious agenda on everyone have not waned.

[280] Of course I should add that Elif Shafak does not constitute an exception in her corresponding of secularist Rumi with New Age Rumi. The agreement of these two distinct interpretations is also suggested by Zülfü Livaneli when he says that he prefers to read the English translations of Mevlana, probably those of Coleman Barks. (2010).

never been greater than it is today" (145). As mentioned previously in this chapter, this distinction is one of the hallmarks of the New Age religiosity. In the Turkish context, however, being religious is juxtaposed to a form of religiosity that does not exactly correspond to spirituality as understood in the United States. Probably that is why in the Turkish version of the novel, the word that Shafak (or the translator) chooses to translate "spiritual" is "having faith" (*inançlı olmak*). The same passage in the Turkish version reads as: "You think I am religious, but in fact I am not. Being religious is not the same as having faith. The difference between these two concepts probably has never been greater than it is today" (187).[281] Shafak's juxtaposition of "being religious" with "having faith" is goes to the very root of Turkish secularist religiosity and its relation with Islam itself. In its attempts to (re)define the correct and modern interpretation of Islam, contemporary Turkish secularism claims to valorize individual morality and seeks to liberate religion from its legalistic and ritualistic dimensions. And the distinction implied by the juxtaposition above recapitulates this modernist claim.

As a cultural translation meant to explore the transformative power of love, Elif Shafak's novel effectively merges Rumi with Mevlana. The Rumi as idealized by Shafak is at home both in the United States and in Turkey because he usually agrees with both the New Age and Turkish secularist religiosity rather than challenging them. Furthermore, this new Rumi proves to be a useful tool in the condemnation of certain Muslims, who happen to fall into the category of the "bad Muslims" within the post-9/11 Western discourse on Islam because of their literalism, legalism or impurity of heart.

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[281] "Beni dindar biri sanmışsın. Halbuki değilim. Dindar olmakla inançlı olmak aynı şey değil. Bu iki kavram arasindaki fark belki de hiç bugün oldugu kadar açılmamıştı" (187).

CONCLUSION

The topic of my dissertation often comes up in non-academic settings. During a recent reception, I was having a conversation with someone who predictably asked about it. Having answered the same question several times before that very evening, I simply said, "the representations of Rumi in the Western world" and then added, just in case, "Rumi, the thirteenth-century Sufi poet." The response that I got, perhaps not coincidentally, pointed straight at one of the central issues of my dissertation project: "Oh, I know Rumi! But he was *not one of those Muslims*, right?"

Today, more than ever before, Rumi conjures up diverse images for those who are in the least bit familiar with him and his writings. Even the very name "Rumi" means little in a geography extending from Central Asia to the Balkans, where Rumi had lived and his descendants and followers kept his intellectual and spiritual legacy alive for centuries. To his Turkish- and Persian-speaking audience, Rumi was known simply as Mevlana/Molana, or "our Master." I am of the opinion that Mevlana and Rumi are distinct interpretations of the same historical person. Both succeed in capturing parts of his essence, but neither is complete in any sense of the word; after all, as Chelebi Husam al-Din says regarding the different interpretations of Rumi, "thousands of rivers flows into the sea, but thousands of rivers can not be the sea" (qtd. in Soileau: 303).

This dissertation has focused on the latter figure, that is Rumi, who was born not in early thirteenth-century Balkh in what is today northern Afghanistan, but rather in the imagination of his Western readership in the 1900s. This Rumi is significant for a number of reasons: his creation rests on discourses that are based on the history of Sufism's reception in the West and which, for the most part, do not necessarily have any

organic links with the contemporary and parallel development of Mevlana as an imagined historical figure in the Muslim world. It is due to this discrepancy between Mevlana and Rumi that the latter figure was thought to be "an incidental Muslim" by many in the West, where the spiritual currents of the second half of the twentieth century cast him as a New Age guru with romantic sensibilities.

It was only in the early twenty-first century, with the events of 9/11 and the consequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dominating discourses about the Muslim world, that the two figures finally met and Rumi was finally "reconciled" with Islam. In this politically-charged setting, Rumi was actively promoted as the "ideal Muslim." I contend that his "ideality" is largely a factor of the compatibility of Rumi's spirituality with Western values that are deemed to be universal. The issue of universality is at stake because it potentially carries the power to silence cultural and religious differences for the sake of an idealized form of correspondence between cultures.[282]

Adopting this perspective in the examination of the translations of Rumi—be it in the form of literal, collaborative or cultural—raises issues that can be discussed with reference to the debate on universality at a time when centers of cultural hegemony almost only accept what is palatable to their taste and values. For this reason, increasingly a similar language is employed, both within and outside the said centers of cultural hegemony, that emphasizes the same values, concerns, and sensivities. In this respect, I agree with Seyla Benhabib on the urgency to "understand how claims to universality can

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[282] That is why the distinction made by Gayatri Spivak between global and planetary is crucial. According to Spivak, global imposes homogenization and uniformity, while planetary is attentive to cultural specifities and emergent identities (2003: 72).

reason can be reconciled with the diversity of life-forms" (2007: 9).

The case of Rumi reveals the appeal and success of the insistence to find, and bring to the fore, the assumed universals. Combined with the hegemonic power of the locus of production, such readings, along with the values they highlight, exert unpredictable influence on the rest of the world. Having emerged in the West, Rumi's image now travels widely in the world: in Turkey, he formed new bonds with, and even transformed, Mevlana as seen in Elif Shafak's best-selling novel *The Forty Rules of Love*. The new Mevlana is the product of various components that inevitably include speicifities peculiar to Turkey, but the impact of (the American) Rumi on (the Turkish) Mevalana has to be identified and analyzed.

One of the goals of this dissertation has been to show the ways in which the contested field of Rumi studies can shed light on the convoluted mechanism of politics of representation in literature and translation. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to a "planetary" understanding of Comparative Literature as espoused by Gayatri Spivak (2003: 101-102). I believe that the critical exploration of the increasing imposition of a globalized-yet-Western understanding of Rumi requires a planetary vision. Analyzing the dynamic engagement of representations and discourses that are conventionally examined in the insularity of diverse disciplines has proved to be rewarding in ways that I had not foreseen and hope to further explore in the future.

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