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Part Lion, Part Wolf: The Orientalist and Occidentalist Dimensions of Kurban Said's *Ali and Nino*

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Abstract: In this essay, I begin by examining arguments concerning "Orientalism" from the work of the late Edward W. Said. I then highlight the way that Kurban Said's novella *Ali and Nino* is indebted to this tradition, the author relying upon it in order to create a complex world within a few pages. On the one hand, this novella is a wonderful work of art with which to work out some of Edward Said's key ideas, and on the other hand, appreciating Edward Said's key ideas is also crucial for a better appreciation of this novella's complexity. The second part of the paper focuses on the novella itself, so as to think of *Ali and Nino* with Edward Said's critique of Orientalism in the foreground of one's mind. In conclusion, I not only highlight why this also sheds light on art and literature, religion and politics, history and current affairs, in such a geopolitically important area as the Caucasus as well as elsewhere the world over; I also point out parallels between the Orientalist stereotypes examined in this essay and key ideas from ascetic religious traditions.

Résumé : La première partie de cet essai analyse les principaux arguments qu'Edward W. Saïd développe sur l'orientalisme. La tradition intellectuelle elle-même sera ensuite mise en parallèle avec *Ali et Nino* de Kurban Saïd, pour démontrer à quel point ce dernier puise à la source même de l'orientalisme afin de créer un univers riche et complexe dès les premières pages de sa nouvelle. La dernière partie de l'essai fait une lecture critique d'*Ali et Nino*, avec l'orientalisme d'Edward Saïd en filigrane. Ces deux œuvres sont en fait complémentaires. D'une part, *Ali et Nino* est une nouvelle

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exceptionnelle pour travailler les idées clés de la pensée d'Edward Saïd. D'autre part, ces mêmes idées sont essentielles à une compréhension pleine et totale de cette nouvelle. Ma conclusion souligne comment et pourquoi cette analyse est aussi une réflexion sur l'art et la littérature, sur la religion et la politique, sur l'histoire et l'actualité, dans une région aussi critique au niveau géopolitique que le Caucase, ainsi qu'au niveau international. La fin de l'essai ouvre sur une réflexion sur l'ascétisme.

Keywords
Edward Said, Occidentalism, Orientalism, religion and literature

Mots clés
Edward Saïd, occidentalisme, orientalisme, religion et littérature

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> I am the City of Knowledge and 'Ali is its Gate (Bāb).
>
> The Prophet Muhammad

> [A] political party quickly and easily becomes a religious sect.
>
> Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History" (1993 [1984]): 292).

> Communities are to be distinguished [. . .] by the style in which they are imagined.
>
> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (2006 [1983]): 6).

In the first part of this essay, in broad brushstrokes, I examine arguments drawn from the work of the late Columbia University Professor Edward W. Said. These arguments concern "Orientalism," an intellectual tradition with a long and complicated pedigree. From the subtitle of this essay, one can see that what I begin highlighting about one of Kurban Said's novellas, the rightfully famous *Ali and Nino*, is that as a work of art, it is heavily indebted to the Orientalist intellectual tradition, the author relying upon this tradition in order to create a richly complex world for the reader within relatively few pages (2000 [1937]).[1] Therefore, I argue that this novella is a wonderful work of art with which to work out some of Edward Said's key ideas. Moreover, I am also suggesting that appreciating Edward Said's key ideas concerning Orientalism is crucial for a better appreciation of this novella's complexity. The second part of the paper, therefore, will focus on the novella and on bridging these two writers' areas of interest, so as to think of *Ali and Nino* with Edward Said's critique of Orientalism in the foreground of one's mind. In conclusion, I highlight why this kind of critical exercise is timely, for our thinking about both art and literature, religion and politics, history and current

affairs, in such a geopolitically important area as the Caucasus as well as elsewhere the world over.

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(i) Dualisms, Stereotypes, Identity and Change: On Edward W. Said's Critique of Orientalism

> [W]hat began as a political disagreement acquired in the course of time a much wider and deeper character.
>
> Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History" (1993 [1984]: 157).

> [N]ationalism has to be understood by aligning it [. . .] with the large cultural systems that preceded it . . .
>
> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (2006 [1983]: 12).

When the Palestinian-American literary scholar and public intellectual Edward W. Said published the now rightfully famous work *Orientalism*, the world was a complicated place. This previous statement does not aim to suggest that the world is any less complicated today. Much has changed and yet, the world's complexity remains significant. The most recent Russian annexation of Crimea is a case in point. Edward Said's work entitled *Orientalism* was first published in 1978. Three years prior, the Vietnam War had officially ended. The following year, the Iranian revolution would take place. Needless to say, in the intellectual sphere centred on the North Atlantic, any voice raised to help make sense of such events should be welcome. Voices like that of Edward Said arise far too infrequently.

The intellectual and academic milieu of the time was also complex. Structuralism, an academic stream of thought that initially emerged within Linguistics, had exerted no small measure of influence within disciplines such as Philosophy, Anthropology as well as Literary Studies.[2] In fact, at the time, many intellectuals like Edward Said were struggling to get beyond Structuralism, though not by denying its insights. Structuralism had been quite novel in its day, making plain that a word is not significant in a vacuum; rather its significance arises in relation to other words and cannot be properly understood in isolation.[3] Other streams of thought were in the process of taking shape alongside what became known as Post-Structuralism, namely Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism.[4] After the fact, historians of ideas began elaborating the complex ways Edward Said's *Orientalism* constituted an integral chapter in the emergence of these critical intellectual movements. If Structuralism emphasized that one cannot properly define the dark without light, Post-Structuralism taught that dualities such as this are also intellectual traps that break down and point beyond themselves, for example, to the nuances of varying shades, shadows, hues, etc. Modernism had brought with it great unifying discourses that ordered everything below the sun, habitually focusing on a single set of ruling concepts: reason versus unreason, the proletariat versus the bourgeois, the Empire or civilization

versus barbarism, and so on. In their basic structure, such discourses are not so different from the time-honoured clash between darkness and light. These more recent permutations of this old discourse as well as the practices they animated and were an integral part of, however, were also breaking down, revealing that reality is always richer, more stubborn and unruly than neat orderly discourses would have it seem.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is very much an integral part of the intellectual movements of its times, namely Post-Structuralism, Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism, though it was not uncritically a part of any of these intellectual movements. The work teaches its readers to be watchful of discourses built upon dyads, dualities, dualisms and binary thinking in general and therefore to be highly suspicious of such discourses. One such discourse is what Said terms "Orientalism." His use of this term is eccentric, an example of catachresis. However, before getting more deeply into what Said thought about Orientalism, it is best in this specific context to first discuss what he came to call "imaginary geography."[5] As a critical concept, "imaginary geography" was very much present in his work before he came to repeatedly formulate it using these exact terms. Simplifying, however, with these words, Said aims to get us to realize that land, as well as the people within it, are not a given. Those who represent various lands and peoples do not have a patently obvious, readily available objective reality to work from; rather, representing land and people is largely poetic. To begin with, much like fields of study, lands and peoples are shaped, even constituted, via discourse.[6] Representing land and people, this way or that, is to no small extent what makes the lands and peoples represented. Representations shape us, steering us this way or that. Different people will represent different lands and peoples differently for a whole set of different reasons and in accordance with a variety of different interests. These discourses have a weight to them, entrenching habits of mind, affecting how we experience space, place, time and people, including ourselves. It is no small task to attempt to break out of old habits of mind, if only to better understand how and why such old habits took shape to begin with.

One habit of mind that Edward Said wishes the world would break out of is one that organizes by dividing all geographical as well as socio-cultural reality into the tired dualism of East and West.[7] Edward Said's critique of Orientalism hinges on how this way of organizing reality does not serve the interests of all concerned parties. He is especially concerned with the West's discourse concerning the East, in particular the Islamic East. Not only did Edward Said convincingly point out great injustices within this discourse, he just as importantly makes plain that the West, to no small extent, constructed its self-identity via this largely "imaginary geography." Said identified a not so large set of ideas that seem to continually reappear throughout the history of Orientalism. The more often these stereotypes emerge, the less likely they are to be called into question and the more likely it is that they will continue to re-emerge unquestioned. This contributes to a rather large set of peoples and places being considered by another as more or less identical, as of the same essential nature, as somehow immune to history, progress and change.

Among the stereotypes Edward Said identifies, a few need to be discussed in the present context. One of these is passion, or rather, excessive forms thereof. According to Edward Said's reading of the Orientalist archive, the West makes itself seem all the more calm, restrained and reasonable by routinely emphasizing the impassioned, hot-blooded

temper of the Islamic Orient.[8] This in turn is linked to a corollary of unchecked passion, namely violence. According to Edward Said's view, Orientalist representations of the non-West all too often seek to emphasize the cruelty of the non-Western character(s).[9] Hand-in-hand with an emphasis on the great frequency and degree of violence, is what Max Weber famously calls an "other-worldliness," suggesting that although bodies may be born, live, fight and die, something far less transitory nevertheless does not change behind or beyond what are mere shadows on the platonic cavern's walls. This brings us to note that the Orient as changeless, even timeless, is yet another stereotype heavily critiqued by Edward Said.[10] Here, in considering the "essentially" changeless nature of the East, one may think of Karl Marx's view of what redeems colonialism: it brings people without history into history, forcing upon people purportedly without history "necessary" changes and the consciousness thereof (see Kennedy, 2003). The last stereotype I would like to note here is that of the Orient as feminine, submissive, as a body for the West to take possession of for the sake of proper utilization.[11] This also belongs to the set of ideas Edward Said saw as an endlessly reoccurring rhetoric that aimed to convince the West that it had a good grasp of its proverbial other, the Orient.

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(ii) Islam, Shi'ism, Society and Justice: Kurban Said's *Ali and Nino*, Orientalism and Religion

> [O]ne of my descendants will arise and fill the world with justice and equity as it is now filled with injustice and tyranny.
>
> The Prophet Muhammad

> [R]eligious thought [. . .] responds to obscure intimations of immortality, generally by transforming fatality into continuity [. . .]. In this way, it concerns itself with the links between the dead and the yet unborn, the mystery of re-generation.
>
> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (2006 [1983]: 10–11).

Much has been said about this novella. I have only begun to scratch the surface of what has already been published about it. In reading Tom Reiss's *The Orientalist* (2005), a recent work about Lev Nussibaum (*alias* Kurban Said?), the historical figure Reiss argues is most likely the author of *Ali and Nino*, it became still more obvious than in simply reading the novella that more deserves to be written about the Orientalist dimensions of both the novella and the author.[12] This is not meant to imply a negative critique of Reiss's work. His work is overflowing with possible directions that future research may take. Here, however, I will simply continue elaborating the heuristic points of reference I have begun setting before us. Earlier I noted the dualistic mindset that appears to have ruled much of Oriental Studies as well as representations of the Orient and the West prior to work such as that of Edward Said. The novella does very much focus on the distinction between East and West but does also more or less subtly point towards

the imaginary dimensions of geography. In the novella's opening chapter, Ali Khan Shirvanshir's Russian-born school teacher point blankly tells his class that they must decide if their city, Baku, belongs to the East or the West (K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 3–4).[13] The fact that the agency is emphasized by the school teacher contributes to our better realizing just what Edward Said aimed to spell out with the apparently paradoxical expression, "imaginary geography." Not only need one actively decide to belong to either the East or the West (or both), one needs also to decide what these really are, if anything.

Much of the novella's genius hinges on contrasting what is believed to be "authentically" Eastern and what Western and deciding how best to move forward with these at least apparent options to choose from. In this, this novella is an inquiry into the dynamics of established as well as emergent identities.[14] However, this novella is also a rallying cry, in that positions are taken, both for and against a variety of existing and emerging identities. The city of Baku as a living site of synthesis is never too far off in the novella's background, often figuring in the novella's very foreground. Ali Khan strongly identifies with the city, especially Baku, *his* city, if not always with all of its people.[15]

A few key distinctions emerge, however, taking on greater, far more metaphorical qualities than one would initially think. I want to suggest that these are figures via which the distinction of East and West is represented. These figures make East and West seem all the less "imaginary" and all the more concrete, in much the same way that describing actually existing places and actual historical events in the novella contributes to creating the novella's great sense of realism.[16] For example, still early in the novella, Ali Khan tells us that acquiring and displaying books is symptomatic of the West. Later, however, we find Seyd Mustapha—a figure in the novella clearly incarnating the tradition-minded, learned Oriental—similarly immersed in many volumes. Nonetheless, in the East, we are told, displaying culture via carpets (especially tapestries on the walls) is deemed better.[17] These are indeed meant to represent strong contrasts. In the background of Ali Khan's implied critique of book-fetishism is the Koran, "[t]he Book of God which is a rope stretched from Heaven to Earth."[18] According to a faith-bound vision, the Koran is the only book the common man truly needs, thus implying that there exist limits to one's needs.[19] The importance of this ascetic reading of Islam will be a theme returned to later in this study. The interwoven quality of the tapestry is also a powerful image, oddly enough not unlike the art-work that silently taught history and doctrine within the walls of European cathedrals during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Moreover, for the less Islamicized reader, it may be important to note that during the course of Islamic history, the carpet became a typical location for prayer.

Another distinction that repeatedly emerges within the novella is between forest people on the one hand and, on the other hand, desert people (K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 50–51).[20] The respective qualities Ali Khan and his interlocutors associate with these deserve our critical attention. For Nino, the forest is a source of comfort, whereas for Ali Khan the forest is busy, dark, confusing, denying the eyes the open space required for a proper sense of perspective and security. For Ali Khan, the desert is the opposite. The importance of light, so plentiful in the desert, when it is calm, is emphasized. For Ali Khan, the desert is quite the opposite of the busy and confusing nature of the woods; a calm clarity is for him found in the desert. The desert is described as "simple like the

thrust of a sword'' (51). Moreover, for him, its most representative inhabitant, the lion, is one with which to identify, even one to emulate. Moreover, the close association between the symbol of the lion and the Persian Empire is clearly made (K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 11).

Similar distinctions emerge concerning technology. The first example concerns modes of transportation. When Ali Khan discusses technologies born of scientific advancement, his discourse is usually ambivalent since these advancements he identifies with the West. Before getting to these examples, however, I would like to draw from among the many intensely political and poetic passages of this novella. Still relatively early within the novella, Nachararyan, the ''decent Armenian'' who would later become Ali's rival and victim, makes use of the metaphor of the bridge in discussing Caucasian peoples (K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 86). Many readers may not even think of the bridge as technology and yet it is just this. So old a form of technology is it that it is no longer thought of in these terms. Within a Roman Catholic context, for example, it is shrouded in a deep religiosity; those who know the deeper meaning of key words (such as Pontiff, Pontifex Maximus, etc.) understand. The Pope is understood as both bridge and bridge-builder.[21] This kind of figurative language is not foreign to the Islamic imagination either. Of the Prophet's early years in Medina, the City of the Prophet, Moojan Momen writes: ''He [the Prophet Muhammad] was a builder of bridges between the rival factions who lived in Medina'' (1985: 5). For Nachararyan, therefore, Caucasian peoples are a dynamic meeting point between worlds, that is to say, such people are themselves living bridges.

This focus on the figure of the bridge may bring to mind the ''bridge party'' that early on in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1989 [1924]: 49) helps to get the story's plot moving. The purpose of the bridge party depicted in Forster's *A Passage* is to bring different people together, people who normally might have opted to minimize their contact with one another. Baku, culturally and religiously, is described as something of a bridge party and *Ali and Nino* does depict the interconnectedness of many different people; the story weaves together Azerbaijani, Georgian, Armenian, Turkish, Russian and Iranian perspectives and realities. In this light, one must observe that in order to properly understand the perception and representation of this location as a meeting place between peoples, one must not simply focus within existing borders but also include what exists beyond them as well, always remembering that past empires (Persian, Turkish and Russian) have expanded to include the location at hand. Then, as now, Azerbaijan was a country with a relatively small population in comparison with some of its larger neighbours.[22] What this land represented then and now in terms of what it could supply in terms of energy (that is, oil, petroleum, natural gas, etc.) is significant. Some still think that one cannot have a party without a cake. In this respect it is important to remember the date and the language of the novella's publication, remembering also that only a half-decade later, ''[i]n September 1942, [Hitler's] general staff presented him with a giant cake in the shape of the Caucasus. A newsreel of the occasion shows the führer cutting himself the piece with BAKU spelled out in frosting'' (Reiss, 2005: xii). It is also symbolically rich that Ali Khan, in the novella's conclusion, has ''made no attempt to escape, but died in the accomplishment of [his] mission'' (Lewis, 2004 [1985]: 295). Ali willingly gives up his life on a bridge, valiantly aiming to keep Western

invaders from getting deeper into the Orient, using Western technology to block further "westernization."

When Ali Khan first discusses the "autocar," namely Nachararyan's, he highlights how ill adapted these are to the narrow streets of the old inner city, where, at the time, they simply could not pass. He acknowledges the prestige of this novel means of transportation, contrasting it with his own means, a horse-drawn carriage. The train is described, late in the novella, in terms far more negative and in this case far less ambivalently: "The rails were like long snakes, and the train came out of the dark like an evil monster" (2000 [1937]: 271). In stark contrast, when Ali Khan describes the cult surrounding the famed twelve existing Red Gold horses of Karabagh, the prose seems aimed to send the reader to a pastoral seventh heaven. Interestingly, the Red Gold that carries Ali Khan to his fateful final meeting with Nachararyan is not afterwards treated as a mere means of transportation by its rightful owner, Count Melikov. Melikov has the poor mount shot. In effect, the Red Gold suffers the fate some felt should have rightfully befallen Nino, a situation not unlike that of the Biblical Isaac in that an animal here also replaces a human agency. However, not all discourse concerning technology is negative. The best example is from the novella's final scene. Ali Khan here states: "I went to the bridge, sat behind the machine-gun, and the bullets were gliding through my fingers as if they were rosary beads" (274). Not only does this statement correspond well to what Lewis calls "an almost sacramental cult of weapons" (1993 [1984]: 162), but this statement is made right after Ali Khan tells his compatriots that the whole of the Islamic world is on its way to their aid and yet is unlikely to reach them in time. This statement can only be understood as belonging to a mystical view of what is taking place. Noteworthy is the conflation of the whole of the Islamic community and the nation. The point of including this quotation is to make note of the fact that any tool in the right context, regardless of its origin, becomes an instrument of a divine architecture for the believing agency utilizing it.

The last of the dualisms that need to be included here, as again built upon the East–West distinction, concerns Nino as possibly the most integral of Ali Khan's representations of the West.[23] The astute reader will immediately realize that this is an inversion in relation to what was stated earlier concerning the Orientalist stereotypes discerned and critiqued by Edward Said, among these the Orient represented in the West as feminine. According to this view then, for the West, the East is a woman and yet for the East, insofar as we accept Ali Khan's view of Nino as a representative one, the West is a woman and similarly, woman is understood as an agency similar to that of the West. This apparent paradox accords well with the mystical view that G-d alone is male and all of creation female and yet, this is not what deserves highlighting. Both so-called camps depict the other as feminine.

Now it is important to note some of the reasons why Nino is equated with the West since it is not simply due to her being a woman. She is from a prominent Christian family. She does not wear the veil and has no intention of wearing one. She speaks her mind when she wants to and even also enjoys alcohol. Ample reason, therefore, insofar as the novella's frames of reference are adopted. It is important to underline that with this dualism in play, the West is easily portrayed as a seductress, as a source of weakness much like Eve is to Adam in the traditional Biblical Genesis account. Another point that

deserves consideration concerning this East–West/female–male dualism is that, at the time and in this specific context, having a story about a young Muslim woman and a young Christian man would for many have been far beyond what was socially acceptable. This fact may also have influenced the author's choice of subject matter. The foregoing points simply aim to make plain just how important certain dualisms are within the novella, how much of the novella's subject matter *is* these very dualisms. Stating this does not on its own diminish their hold on the mind even though this is where the form of criticism Edward Said propounded would like to lead us.[24]

Earlier I enumerated and briefly examined three key Orientalist stereotypes, namely, the impassioned, the violent, and due in part to an "other-worldly" orientation, the impervious to change. I would like to return to these, now concerned with the novella. Ali Khan tells us that only "religion, politics, and business" should be discussed openly anywhere, in any company (67). By his own criteria then, his story is not one that should be discussed because it is "a love story," that is, for many it is like war, part religion, part politics, part business, and yet beyond all of these. It being a love story, one that begins with young love, the reader is privy to passion, not all of it perfectly channelled at first, nor all of the time. An impassioned love story matches the first of the stereotypes here examined, namely "sensuality," one of the words Said uses in drawing the contours of this set of associated ideas he calls "Orientalism," "sensuality" being a word used in describing the attraction of both minds and bodies toward the body. Ali Khan dearly loves the young Georgian princess, Nino Kippiani, and yet struggles with his nagging feeling that this love represents giving in to a supposedly rival religio-cultural bloc. His reservations concerning the good social standing of this love are in due course overcome, in part because of his own feelings, though also because of what others such as Nachararyan and Seyd Mustapha tell him in support of his union with Nino. However, Nino succumbs to a similar initial temptation, that of remaining closer to her own religio-cultural fold. This leads to one of the novella's most important violent events, Ali Khan killing his rival. It deserves to be stated that for this, Ali Khan expresses little or no remorse. With the exception of a brief somewhat implied exposition of the Shi'a just war doctrine, the novella is largely devoid of an explicit critique of violence, even though, given the circumstances the novella dramatizes, such a critique would be aptly placed. Concerning Ali Khan's lack of remorse for killing Nachararyan, a key mitigating point to keep in mind is that in many countries throughout the world at the time, a crime of passion defense was a valid defense, something that has since changed in many legal traditions even though one may legitimately ask oneself if the legal traditions are not prescribing behaviour rather than dealing with human agents as they are. Concerning the overall condoning of violence, however, a few key passages advocate against pushing this charge too far. For example, before the first major battle dramatized within the novella takes place and even before Nachararyan meets his untimely end, at the meeting of elders that Ali Khan's father requests Ali Khan also attend, the Baha'i character, Musa Nagi, states what is probably the most spiritual vision of peace and universal fraternity of the novella. Thus, the follower of the Bāb spoke:

> The Russians are killing the Turks, the Turks are killing the Armenians, the Armenians would like to kill us, and we the Russians. Is this good? [. . .] But what use is a school when

> what is taught there is nonsense, and what use is a hospital if it is the body only that is healed there, and the soul is forgotten? Our soul strives to go to God. But each nation believes they have a God all to themselves, and he is the one and only God. But I believe it is the same God who made himself known through the voices of all sages. Therefore I worship Christ and Confucius, Buddha and Mohammed. We all come from one God, and through Bab we shall all return to him. Men should be told there is no Black and no White, for Black is White and White is Black. So my advice is this: let us not do anything that might hurt anybody anywhere in the world, for we are part of each soul, and each soul is part of us. (2000 [1937]: 141)

Interestingly, Kurban Said has Ali Khan appear rather naive concerning the Baha'i, namely in saying that if the Shah persecuted the Baha'i so cruelly it must be because the beliefs of the Baha'i are so twisted (138). It appears beyond poor Ali Khan, as Kurban Said presents him, that the Baha'i must have seemed a true threat to the Shah's religious and political dominion to have merited such an implicitly legitimating persecution.[25] Another example, this time after the first major battle, comes to us from the words of Nino. Ali Khan talks to Nino of his father's ability to transcend this world.[26] After the horrible ordeal of the first major battle the novella dramatizes, on the boat headed for Persia, Ali Khan's father and the boatman quietly discuss a certain oasis. Ali Khan says to Nino of his father: "That's the way to be if one has to live in this world." Nino responds: "I can't, Ali Khan, the dust on the street was red with blood" (193). Gone is the Nino who earlier had teased both Nachararyan and Ali Khan in saying: "I always thought [. . .] that fighting was the Caucasian's element. Yet here I am, sitting between two Caucasians, neither of whom wants to fight" (86). The horrors Nino witnessed radically alter her perspective and although this change is not fully elaborated within the novella, it also may be described as a critique of violence.

Some readers may wish to say the contrary, that much of the novella glorifies marshal valour. This would align it with very old traditions and much more traditional literary forms.[27] To some readers it may seem to be going further still. In the following I only take up a few illustrative examples. Other examples could be selected since they also deserve further discussion. For example, Ali Khan senses that his father thinks he is a "degenerate" because, like Arjuna of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, he initially has no wish to "rush into battle, did not thirst for the blood of his enemies, did not want to see tears in their eyes" (76), or because of how he sees the spreading "lust for war" (77) and describes this in terms of "the blood lust of the Orient" awakening (79), etc. This said, when Ali Khan is about to kill Nachararyan he likens himself to the wolf (151).[28] At its most basic, the wolf is a symbol for that which is savage, for something that cannot be tamed, remaining forever wild. In this context, however, Ali Khan is in part contrasting himself with Nachararyan, who "learned boxing in Europe." In this respect, Ali Khan believes that he "can only go mad like the desert wolf."[29] Later, he describes his "grip" as that of "the grey wolf" (151). Moreover, the blood-feud is presented early in the novella as the foundation of a justice-seeking social order (68–69). A recurrent theme is that of a people's sword having rusted.[30] The successful campaigns Ali Khan's ancestors led are continually represented in idealistic terms. For example, Nadir Shah's campaign against the Mughal Sultanate of Delhi is evoked repeatedly, always as a source of pride

(e.g., K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 150). However, if one adopts a *Delhiwala*'s perspective, one can then see that the assault on Delhi by Nadir Shah's forces was no more glorious than the assault on Baku by Russian forces.[31] Again then, in representing violence as something rather ennobling, the novella matches this standard Orientalist stereotype.

In discussing the last of the three Orientalist stereotypes I enumerated earlier, I will be going a little further. Changelessness is in fact a quality many have taken to be a product of religion. In this respect, Joseph L. Blau writes:

> ... every living religion is perennially changing, adapting its principles, its practices, its rituals, its beliefs, and its theology to meet the needs of the varying times and places in which its adherents live. Each living religion *must* change thus, if it is to continue to have relevance to the lives of those who accept it. But, although it is constantly changing, each religion must seem to be as unchanging as possible, for though we want our religions to be always relevant, we also want them to serve as our link to the past, the root of our sense of continuity. Most of the time, therefore, changes in religions take place slowly, almost imperceptibly. From time to time, however, in the history of every religion, the conditions under which its adherents live change so rapidly and so radically that the changes in the religion must come with shocking rapidity. (1966 [1964]: viii)

As noted, one of the themes of the novella is the dizzying changes brought about by modernity and modernization and one of the clashes the novella is good at elaborating dramatically is the conflict created by the varying rates of change that different social actors choose or at least tolerate.

Continuing on the theme of religion as a means of masking changes that are otherwise impossible to tolerate without this religious masking, Mircea Eliade not only focuses on how religious traditions both create and routinely re-create mythic time, that is, a sense of time that is experientially different from what one may call "mere" history, he also focuses on how these traditions create a sense of centredness in space, namely by creating a focus on an *axis mundi*.[32] Through certain cyclical religious observances a community is forever linked to a specific and highly significant time and place. Therefore, in effect, discussing the "forever changeless" stereotype leads one to discuss the relative religiosity and secularity of the novella. In space, the novella proves more secular than in time. In space, although Ali Khan is well aware that Baku is in a large constellation of important cities, including Tehran, Tiflis, Moscow, Delhi, Berlin, Stockholm, Paris, and so forth, Baku remains his touchstone. After fighting for his city once, he later returns to again fight for it even though this in the end spells his disappearing from the visible world. In time, then, and even though he does not jump at the first opportunity, the novella does end in a very Shi'a fashion: Ali Khan is rewarded with the heroic and meaningful death of a martyr. A reader aware of the Shi'a mythic frame of reference that Ali Khan has been drawing attention to from the novella's early chapters cannot miss this.[33] This is a part of the masking of change alluded to in various ways earlier. The Platonism of this religious ontology should also be emphasized. True being is made via becoming a link in a chain, through active participation, tying one in with the community's foundational event(s). The end of *Ali and Nino* is a renewal of Shi'a mythic time, a somewhat secularized form of the passion and fall of the community's

foundational figures. For Ali Khan, Baku becomes a new Kerbela. The author chose to finish the novella in this way—a tragic ending and yet one glorifying bravery in the service of defending a people's rightful place in the world—in order to create a parallelism between "secular" and religious history, late (i.e., more contemporary) history and early history, between an Ali of modern times and the archetypal Husayn.[34]

Just as for Ali Khan no woman is ever compared to Nino, just as he could not opt out of avenging his honour when he felt called upon to, he also gives the reader no sense that he felt he could rightfully avoid the battle that takes his life in the novella's final scene. In these examples one touches upon some of the fatalism that permeates much of the main character's outlook, and in this also he conforms to the Orientalist stereotypes thus far examined. Much like Nietzschean "Amor Fati," in this, it is imagined that nothing could be changed. The largely pervasive sense of fatalism may even lead one to think of the fatalist mindset (read: Orientalized mindset) as being more akin to backgammon than it is to chess, more about fate and chance than about strategy and real choices seeking viable outcomes.

* * *

Conclusion

Don't go,
but if you must, take my soul with you.
Rumi, "Please Don't Go," *The Forbidden Rumi* (2006: 54).

"Orientalism" was a term used to describe an academic discipline practiced in places such as the school in Moscow that Ali Khan, early on in the novella, dreams of attending. Tom Reiss discusses the fact that Lev Nussibaum may very well have attended such an institution (also see Mikoulski, 1997).[35] For Edward Said, however, Orientalism was also a broad discourse useful in giving a definitive shape to the East, one the producer could utilize to his or her advantage. Many still do not see how these discourses are advantageous to some, though not all, and having internalized these discourses, now live them. In due course, following Said, Orientalism acquires a still broader sense, being used to mean any form of discourse that refuses an "other" his or her *full* humanity, a humanity that would include the opportunity and ability to calmly reflect about the great variety of ways one may live and act within *this* world and for *this* world (even if still focused on a world beyond it). For reasons understandable to history conscious readers, in the novella, written during a period in Azerbaijani historiography referred to as "the Great Terror," the most Orientalized peoples, in this third sense, are the Russians, the main source of the aforementioned "Great Terror." The novella is therefore compensatory, a vicarious payback. As the Russians advance towards Ali Khan's machine-gun, they are made to appear like nothing more than ants, faceless automatons. It is difficult to want to go on about this since, in the end of both the novella and the period it dramatizes, Russia takes hold of the young republic, thus dashing its independence, a situation that would continue for many long

decades. Nonetheless, it is a point well worth making in order to arrive at as balanced a picture as possible.[36]

The novella is rather self-consciously a matter of keeping a memory, like a fire, alive. The memory is that of a people struggling from within—for example, with diversity and dizzyingly rapid patterns of social change—and from without—with military incursion aimed at establishing foreign domination. The novella was written about, as well as during, such conditions. Keeping this in mind enables one to understand why passion, violence and a good measure of fatalism are central themes. One needs passion to keep memory, like a fire, burning brightly. Armed resistance to foreign rule has often been deemed a lesser evil than a people's memory fading away into oblivion. Often collective memory and the people itself are conflated in our thinking and not always without good reason; the health of one often spells the health of the other. When such matters are deemed pressing, a people's survival possibly being at stake, violent themes come to dominate the imaginations of many otherwise harmless souls. An awareness of Caucasian history, broadly speaking, allows one to bring to mind a long succession of different great regional powers. Fatalism in the novella's worldview is not wholly unlike saying: "we have seen this before and this too shall pass; although difficult to imagine in practical terms, independence will return." To a significant extent, though not without exception, history has proven the justice that does inhere within this perspective.

As we have seen, and in conclusion, this brief yet powerful book is built upon dualisms that it also contributes to consolidating, namely that there is something fundamentally distinct that sets East apart from West, that they are different like a desert is from a forest, like an animal is different from a machine, etc. Classic Orientalist stereotypes are clearly present. The novella concerns passion that leads to violence, and demonstrates that regardless of mountains of wisdom and learning, there is something about these events that conforms to laws or a will that humans seem unable to easily change or escape.

An entirely new essay would deserve to be written about an interesting correspondence that I can only briefly outline here in concluding, opening up this brief study toward other horizons. As stated earlier, this is no mere afterthought in that it points to the fact that these three Orientalist stereotypes may be understood as belonging to deep identity-generating springs and that therefore, the way out of the so-called Orientalist frame of reference is not such a simple affair as typically imagined. The "Three Poisons" that hold the Buddhist Wheel of Life together, symbolically represented as a rooster, a snake and a pig, respectively stand in for lust, anger, and ignorance. All three of these "totemic" animals can be viewed as dangerous. If one thinks of St Anthony Abbot's familiar or of Piglet from A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, one is unlikely to see this and yet if one imagines the wild boars of ancient Greek mythology, maybe the best example being the one that spells the demise of Venus' beloved, the beautiful youthful Adonis, one will imagine it more accurately. Coq fights are clearly violent affairs and the venom of poisonous snakes has claimed innumerable lives, both human and non-human. Interestingly, however, some depictions of the Wheel have the dove represent what the rooster does in other representations (see Lowenstein, 1996: 30–31). This alters one's perception of the Wheel's teaching to some degree.

In Houston Smith and Philip Novak's *Buddhism*, lust (rooster/dove) and anger (snake) are rendered respectively as craving and aversion. Elsewhere one can also find greed equated with lust or craving, hatred equated with anger or aversion, and stupidity or delusion equated with ignorance (pig). About ignorance specifically, Smith and Novak write: "Ignorance here is not lack of formal education, but rather lack of insight into *anatta* (no-self, no-soul) [. . .]. For Buddhists, delusion about what we really are is the 'original sin,' the error that leads to personalities built of craving and aversion—the warp and woof of suffering" (2003: 203). Another author writes: "it is attachment to the mental monolithic I that fuels fear and craving" (K. Smith, 1981: 64). In this sense then, it is the pig that makes itself and/or something *the* axis mundi and therefore in so doing generates the precondition of and for both the rooster and the snake. In this, one observes core dimensions of a far reaching critique of idolatry, a form of criticism very central within the Islamic tradition as well. This brings one to consider if Muhammad's refusal to also destroy the Kaaba at Mecca and abolish practices such as Hajj is not, from a Buddhist point of view, an example of "skillful means": his world may not then be (and much of it is not now) ready to live without any literal religious points of reference in space and time, *ergo*, the refusal to destroy the Kaaba at Mecca and related annual practices like Hajj; or it may prove best to understand this as an example of the "Middle Path": to destroy all axis mundi-like phenomena would be excessive; to radically minimize the current number and radically limit the possibility of further proliferation was not a radical aim but rather a moderate one. Again concerning the attachment to axis mundi-like phenomena, Kendra Smith writes: "Only when a person sees through the working of his mental apparatus can he see through these tight fortifications" (1981: 66) and that "any self-image," something that is at least implicitly, if not explicitly based on an "attachment to the mental monolithic I," will "capture attention and extinguish naturalness and balance" (67). Similarly concerned with what takes place once the poisons are identified and transcended, Smith and Novak write that as "[t]he *three poisons* [. . .] begin to evaporate, [. . .] we see that things were not as we had supposed. Indeed, suppositions of whatsoever sort begin to vanish, to be replaced by direct perception" (2003: 49).[37]

The "Three Poisons" correspond surprisingly well with the three Orientalist stereotypes examined in the foregoing study. They also correspond well with three key concepts of the Jain religious tradition, namely *aparigraha* (non-grasping), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *anekantavada* (non-absolutism).[38] Although they are here expressed negatively, these are nevertheless, arguably the positive flipsides of the Three Poisons, the antidotes to these poisons. Again within a Buddhist worldview, once the Three Poisons are eliminated, nothing holds the Wheel together. This is a negative expression of what *Nirvana* is.[39] I have not included this all too briefly developed comparison simply in order to critique the three Orientalist stereotypes examined in this essay. One level of this critique is straight forward, that is to say, these are some of the heuristics of the alternative life-ways proposed by religious traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism. As the reader may have noticed as well, I have also tried to present examples from early Islamic history and teaching, threaded throughout this essay, that also do not conform with the three Orientalism stereotypes here examined. The comparison formulated here with the Buddhist Wheel of Life is also a way of underlining the fact that within the

Orient there exist longstanding traditions that, as I have just mentioned, aim to open human beings to ways of life that attempt to control passion and violence through the self-transformation of human agents.[40] This critique, however, has its limits. Within traditions such as these, and here I mean Buddhism and Jainism more specifically, the traditions themselves recognize that only the ascetics' life is ideally suited to maximize the limitation of passion and violence, more fully altering the human agencies on such a path toward liberation. It is in this sense that R. Williams writes:

> . . . in general it may be said that where the monk is excessive, since his life is the negation of compromise, moderation must be the keynote of existence for the householder whose life is rooted in compromise.
>
> In his every action the householder is beset by the unintentional evil which he provokes in his daily work. (1983 [1963]: xxi–xxii)

Not everyone can live as a monk does. The passion-filled circumstances that beset the lives of the main characters of this novella made their stories very different from those of people seeking liberation from the basic forms of suffering, generated by the identification, the non-identification and the desires that make up (and/or riddle) life. One of the most beautiful dimensions of the novella is how the characters embrace—living to the fullest—the types of suffering they could not choose to easily avoid.

Its relevance undiminished, a novella such as this will continue to be read for generations. This seems clear. However, it is important to ask ourselves certain key questions: how and why we read this novella, in what spirit and to what end . . . ? These are critical questions, which the work of critics such as Edward Said specifically and postcolonial critics generally may inform with important insights in order to guide generations of new readers.

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Notes

1. The work was first published in German in Vienna in 1937 and only translated into English by Jenia Graman after the end of the Second World War. The novella begins as a love story between a Muslim boy, Ali, and a Georgian girl, Nino, both residing in what is now the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Their potential union is faced with a challenge: overcoming the barriers of religion, ethnicity and culture. Ali's wooing of his would-be mate is especially complicated since her family would rather she marry within her own ethno-religious fold. Early in the novella she attempts to elope with someone closer to her fold. Ali kills his rival,

a wealthy, very modern, pro-Western Armenian, and is forced into exile. The pattern Bernard Lewis describes as that of the Prophet as "role model," involving "resistance, migration, and return," is an obvious and integral dimension of the social and religious imaginaries informing this novella and any fair criticism thereof. See Lewis (1993 [1984]: 160). After his returning from exile their union is accepted by their respective communities. Ali, however, is forced into a second exile, this time together with Nino as well as his father, all fleeing to Iran seeking refuge among extended family to avoid the first large scale conflict the novella dramatizes. Once back in Baku, Ali becomes professionally involved with the country's young independent government. This is short lived (28 May 1917 to 28 April 1920) since again a major conflict would be visited on the young capital. Ali is killed heroically defending his city and its people from foreign invasion, namely that of the largely Russian, Soviet 11th Red Army, on 28 April 1920. Nino, now with her young child, is again forced into exile. This is a far too terse summary of the story, included here simply to aid the reader unfamiliar with the novella. As I discuss later in the essay, one of the novella's main aims is to keep alive the memory of this brief period of independence. About this region, Bernard Lewis would later write: "The Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, which until its annexation by the Russian empire was an Iranian province, is overwhelmingly Shi'ite." These words alone make obvious how easily some forget this brief independence literally between rival imperial rules. See Lewis (2004 [1985]: 297). Today in Baku, the cult classic nature of the novella lives on. One can find a café named in honour of the novella; a relatively recent issue of a nation-wide magazine was devoted to representing what the capital was like at the time the novella's drama took place; and I have it on good authority that soon a movie version of the novella will hit the silver screen.

2. The key text from Linguistics is that of Ferdinand de Saussure, namely his posthumously compiled *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916).
3. Typically, in keeping with de Saussure's nomenclature, one would speak of a sign rather than a word since a word is already an assemblage of signs, and yet for our present purposes I will nonetheless speak of a word as one would a sign.
4. Many volumes have been devoted to each of these intellectual movements. It is impossible to summarize these here in a few words. In Anthropology, to take one clear example from the Humanities and Social Sciences, Claude Lévi-Strauss is likely the figure most closely identified with Structuralism. The clarion call among texts within Post-Modernism is Jean-François Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* (1979), which described the emergence of an increasing "incredulity toward metanarratives." It is well known among scholars familiar with Post-Colonialism, that among the more theoretically-minded literary scholars, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha were the leading lights during this intellectual movement's initial emergence.
5. See E. Said (2003 [1978]: 49). In 2012, the then French head of state, Nicolas Sarkozy, in attempting to communicate the seriousness of the European Union's position regarding Greece's debt, threatened Greece that if it did not face up to the seriousness of the situation it would be forced out of Europe. This rhetoric makes Europe out to be merely an economic reality, making all the more obvious just how imaginary is the geographical reality many would have assumed its basic foundation. In this respect, see Courville (2010, ch. 2).
6. It is well known that a reading of Foucault would have him arguing that even humanity *qua* humanity does not exist outside of the discourse that constitutes it. Among the clearest examples of scholars of religion utilizing such social constructivist approaches are Jonathan

Z. Smith, Russell McCutcheon, Tomoko Masuzawa, etc. Said did agree with much of this approach, his *Orientalism* being a brilliant example of this. He did also think this theoretical position could be extended too far; this is why I have suggested elsewhere that he be read as being both a social constructivist as well as a critical realist (see Courville, 2010: 81).

7. North–South is not wholly different from the East–West trope examined here. How long the list of such tired dualisms is, in fact, is beyond the scope of this essay.
8. In support of the view that a fixation with great flows of libidinal energy has survived in contemporary literature, one may recall the Turkish Professor of English in David Lodge (2011 [1984]).
9. For example, see Henri Regnault's 1870 "Execution without Trial," in Lemaire (2001: 145). The work is a part of the permanent collection of the Musée d'Orsay, in Paris. Similarly, one might think of the evil Vizir, Jafar, of Walt Disney's *Aladin*.
10. For example, concerning these three key stereotypes, Edward Said writes that, among other things, a significant part of what is involved in Orientalism is "a complex array of 'Oriental' ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality) . . . " (2003 [1978]: 4). Later he notes that within this intellectual and academic tradition "a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality" and that "Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient, absolutely different (the reasons change from epoch to epoch) from the West" (96). He quotes from Chateaubriand, who states that for "Orientals, and especially Muslims," "force is their God" (172). Paraphrasing Lamartine, he describes these stereotypes again, namely the assumption that "Orientals, and Muslims in particular, are lazy, their politics are capricious, passionate, and futureless . . . " (178). Said returns to the prevalence of all three of these key Orientalist stereotypes at least a dozen or so times, in different ways, throughout this specific study and yet, just from the passages quoted here, one can see these important concerns active within this work.
11. Rather ironically, one may think of the story and representations of Zeus carrying off Europa regardless of her wishes. In the Orientalist imagination, the Orient is primarily land, the West being the divine agency that, taking hold of it, shapes and rules it. In this respect, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]: 6, 138, 147, 182, 184, 206–208, 220, etc.). Do also see Sardar (1999), since he also develops this same idea in parallel ways. An irony here deserves to be noted. The West represents the non-West as less than rational in order to appear rational, and yet also represents the non-West as submissive, to make the West's taking control seem natural: it is unlikely, however, that Hera would have agreed that Zeus was *always* rational in his choices.
12. Even though Reiss's case is convincing, not all of the concerned parties are convinced. For example, for years after its publication, the Wikipedia entries about the novella and about the real identity of its author still made no mention of Lev Nussibaum, nor was Reiss's work considered. Thankfully this has since changed. It deserved emphasizing here that Reiss examines Nussibaum's life, oeuvre and historical context in an exhaustive fashion; interest in these areas of research may direct attention to this work first.
13. Later in the novella, one finds a clear example making obvious that a part—maybe not so large a part and yet a part nonetheless—of Ali wished to have the Russians' respect, namely when he discussed his love of uniforms and said that it was his understanding that only if one had worn a uniform could one then be deemed respectable from the Russian point of view. This deserves to be contrasted with the attitude of Kim, who finds uniforms stiff and an impediment

to the naturalness of his movements in his more customary attire, that of a "Hindu boy." See Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1987 [1901]). Building on both this comparison and contrast, one may wish to recall the passage from E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1989 [1924]: 250–251) in which the most likable of the English characters, Cyril Fielding, describes feeling ill at ease in native dress whereas the subtlety of the native Indians' movement is described as akin to Yoga, this being another passage where fashion and the anthropology of the body meet. It deserves stating that the descriptions of Ali's father in *Ali and Nino* harmonize well with the description of the native Indians' ease in the passage from Forster's *A Passage* just mentioned. Readers of *A Passage* will remember the "No, not yet" of its conclusion, that is, the physical and symbolic splitting of the main Eastern and Western representative characters, Aziz and Fielding respectively. Much has been said and written about this conclusion. The main thrust of Said's oeuvre, if such general terms can be tolerated, may be thought of as elaborating the conditions for a different conclusion. It is worth underlining that *Ali and Nino*'s conclusion is in many significant ways similar to that of *A Passage*; Forster describes it as natural—it is nature itself as well as in the nature of animals and things—that East and West split; Kurban Said describes it as the result of historical forces and the heroism born of patriotism. Most recently, in May 2015, an international summit was convened in Riga, Latvia, during which representatives of the European Union sought to convince nations formerly a part of the Soviet Union to steer a westward course. The general tendency among many of these nations at present appears to be what is described as an eastward course; here "eastern" means "in the Moscow orbit," again making plain that what or who is East and who or what is West is relative and situational. Moreover, seeing the word Eurasia (as it figures in Eurasian Economic Union) brings to mind George Orwell's *1984* (1949), in which three great powers, centred in London, Moscow and Peking respectively, are variously at odds with one another for the control of the balance of the world. The Islamic world, in this frame of reference, is part of the world these three great powers are fighting over. The similarity between the "international relations" of Orwell's *1984* and those of Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1997) deserves noting, as does the way that Huntington, like Fukuyama, discounted Russia's staying-power, especially in the light of recent events in Abkazia, in Crimea, and realities such as the Eurasian Economic Union.

14. Identity and its generation may be considered religious phenomena. The identities focused upon here are not only built upon Orientalist stereotypes; this essay concludes by underlining that these Orientalist stereotypes may be understood as belonging to a level of reality far deeper than generally assumed. By adopting a Buddhist point of view, a point of view examined in this essay's conclusion, one begins to see that the three stereotypes can also be viewed as the three most fundamental roots of identity (and identity-generation) itself. This may lead one to the conclusion, as I believe it should, that the path of liberation from the so-called Orientalist mindset may also be more complicated than generally assumed.
15. For example, still early in the novella, recall how disturbed Ali Khan feels about the thought that he has befriended a decent Armenian. Ironically, he says this of someone who later becomes his rival, whom he must kill to save face. This may be said to implicitly point to the, at times, "inscrutable" and "hypocritical" nature of certain social relations that the novella dramatizes and that many Orientalists felt typified Oriental social relations, this being yet another "*lieu commun*."

16. Regarding this last point, see Anderson (2006 [1983]). Also see one of the key works that inspired Anderson, namely Auerbach (2003 [1953]).
17. To see some of the limits of the view that book acquisitiveness is un-Oriental, see Altstadt (1992: 12). It may deserve observing that on the 5 Manat note, three books figure prominently, one for each of the Abrahamic faiths, in Islamic terms, "the people of the book."
18. "This is [part of] a very widely reported statement of Muhammad [drawn from] the Sunni collection of Hadith by Ibn Hanbal," quoted in Momen (1985: 16).
19. Momen writes: "As to Muhammad's personal life, he led a simple existence" (1985: 9).
20. It may deserve noting that the cult of trees was not unknown in Islam's birthplace during pre-Islamic times. See Fahd (1970–1976: esp. 654–655).
21. If one imagines what a bridge over a river looks like, one visualizes a cross; this ties in nicely with the even older religious language that describes the Buddha as having reached the proverbial other side, although in Buddhist imagery, one typically imagines the means as a raft, to be abandoned once across, and not as a bridge, which is more platonic in its being far more permanent.
22. Today its population is numbered at 9,686,210; 92nd in world ranking. The population of Baku alone is 2.123 million. This is a slightly larger population than those of Armenia (3,060,631) and Georgia (4,935,880). However, it is much smaller than its other three neighbours, Iran (80,840,713), Russia (142,470,272) and Turkey (81,619,392). In many respects, it is an existing meeting of these greater regional powers: its language, closely related to Turkish; its religion, nominally the same as that of the Iranian Theocracy, Shi'ism; and yet, its profound Russified character is also presently undeniable. Therefore, even if its internal diversity may on paper appear relatively slight—ethnically Azerbaijanis constitute nearly 92 percent of the population, nearly 93 percent of the population speak Azeri and 93 percent of the population claim some affiliation to Islam—when understood in its greater regional context, the continuities as well as the contrasts within this larger reality become apparent. Armenia, claiming to be the oldest Christian country, is 98 percent Armenian, nearly 98 percent of the population speak Armenian and nearly 93 percent of the population are Armenian Apostolic. Like Azerbaijan, Georgia can also put forth strong claims concerning its representing regional diversity; nearly 84 percent of its total population are ethnically Georgian, important minorities being Azeri, Armenian and Russian; 71 percent of the population speak Georgian; Russian, Armenian and Azeri being important minority languages; nearly 89 percent of the population claim some adherence to forms of Christianity, whereas nearly 10 percent of the population claim adherence to Islam. Ethnically as well as linguistically, Iran can also put forth strong claims concerning the importance of its internal diversity. Persians constitute only 61 percent of its total population; Azeris and Kurds representing 16 and 10 percent respectively, and Arabs, for example, only 2 percent. Only less than 1 percent of Iran's population claim to be non-Muslim; between 90 and 95 percent are Shi'a and between 5 and 10 percent Sunni. Russians in Russia and Turks in Turkey represent similarly significant portions of their respective total populations: nearly 78 percent in Russia, between 70 and 75 percent in Turkey. Roughly 96 percent of the Russian population speak Russian and, an important legacy of the Soviet Union, less than 40 percent of the total population claim any religious affiliation whatsoever. Nearly 99 percent of the total population of Turkey claim to adhere to Islam. All of the foregoing statistics are made available by the *CIA World Factbook* found on the world wide web.

23. See ch. 2 of the novella for many of the heavier Occidentalist themes. It deserves to be noted that many of Edward Said's readers misunderstood his comments about so-called Occidentalism within his work *Orientalism*. Nowhere does he say there is no discourse concerning the West in the Orient. What he states is that at the time there was nothing as systematic and as disciplinary (in an explicitly Foucaultian sense) as Orientalism in the East; no chairs, no departments, nor scholarly journals, etc., solely devoted to studying the West. This said, and on a rather different note, it may deserve mention that discourse about woman, poetically, as a Western reality, is not unknown within Western creative works either. Here one may think of Jacques Brel's "Madeleine" or The Guess Who's "American Woman" as popular cultural examples of this same discourse.
24. This discourse, one that works to equate Nino with the West, breaks down, however, when Ali and Nino are closest physically. In these instances, it breaks down in that Ali stops representing her in culturally divisive terms, that is, although he typically aligns her with the Western world, here he represents her rather as being close to, or even of, the earth. Her physicality or, rather, their *shared* physicality is here represented as more basic than even identity-forming cultural filters. It is essential to also keep in mind that Ali lays down his life in order to save a place, and therefore identifying a person with such a reality is likely one of the strongest associations of ideas of Ali's poetic imagination.
25. In reading these words of Momen's concerning the Prophet Muhammad, to take one clear example among a near innumerable amount of such examples, it is difficult to sympathize with those who imagined that the Bāb of the Baha'i was a threat to the core message of Islam. Momen writes: "The major social achievement of Muhammad's ministry was the welding together of a hundred or more disparate and feuding tribes into one nation, a union that overrode the ties of kinship and the enmity of bloodfeuds" (1985: 9). Here it becomes obvious that any perceived "change" may be regarded as a threat by suspicious-minded political "leaders."
26. Of this ability that his father still had he would say: "He knew the hidden world, the world that begins where reality ends" (K. Said, 2000 [1937]: 195). This is a clear reference to "knowledge of the unseen (*'ilm al-ghayb*), [. . .] that is to say [knowledge of] what is in the future and what is in men's minds" as well as "gnosis or mystical knowledge (*'irfan*)" (Momen, 1985: 37, 156, 216). Also see Lewis (2004 [1985]: 296).
27. The central place of loyalty, honour, blood-feuds and fighting in general within society at the time of the Prophet's birth is described early in Momen's study of Shi'i Islam (1985: 1). Concerning traditional literary forms from Azerbaijan that deal with these and similar traditions, also see Altstadt (1992: 13–14).
28. It may also deserve observing that the Celestial Blue Wolf, founder of Chinese and Mongol dynasties, is also a symbol identified with the father of modern Turkey, Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, known to his followers as the Grey Wolf. See Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (1996 [1969]: 1119–1121).
29. Here one might think of the lines from James Brown's "The Big Payback": "I don't know Karate, but I know crazy!" (Brown, 1973).
30. Although represented as "'highly civilized," with few exceptions Persians are also represented as esthetes and Persia's love of peace as a form of weakness (see K. Said, 2000 [1937], ch. 24: esp. 213–218). I here use the expression "highly civilized" with little to no irony, rather hoping to evoke the particular meaning given the expression by work such as Kennedy

(2005), a work indebted to that of Edward Said in its major concerns and also one that does help to reconstruct much of the worldview that to no small extent shaped the creative genius of the likes of Kurban Said.

31. "... in 1739–40 [...] a Persian army under Nadir Shah invaded India, defeated the Emperor Muhammad at the battle of Karnaul and then occupied Delhi. The city was thoroughly plundered, its inhabitants massacred and, in a gesture which combined cupidity with political symbolism, the Peacock Throne was carried off to Persia" (James, 1997: 8).
32. See, for example, Eliade (1965 [1957]). The most obvious examples of these in Islam are Ramadan and Hajj, respectively. However, within a Shi'a frame of reference, Muharram and pilgrimage to sites such as Kerbala also belong to this orienting of religious identity in both time and space.
33. On martyrdom in this context, see Lewis (1993 [1984]: 163). That Aziz of Forster's *A Passage to India*, having been falsely accused, spends Muharram in jail is in this respect a quite similar secular and literary recasting of an older religious tradition.
34. Momen quotes the following words from S.H.M.Jafri, a modern Shi'i historian, in his study of Shi'i Islam: "A careful study and analysis of the events of Kerbala as a whole reveals the fact that from the very beginning Husayn was planning for a complete revolution in the religious consciousness of the Muslims. All of his actions show that he was aware of the fact that a victory achieved through military strength and might is always temporal [*sic*], because another stronger power can in course of time bring it down in ruins. But *a victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice is everlasting and leaves permanent imprints on man's consciousness* ..." (1985: 31–32; emphasis added). If the novella does nothing else, it achieves a linking of a modern, dramatized Ali with the grandson of the Prophet, Husayn, in showing the modern Ali achieving a spiritual and therefore, in this sense, more lasting victory through suffering and sacrifice, facing a colossally greater force bravely, steadfast in the knowledge that the result was not as important as the stance he took against what was taking place. Again, it may deserve highlighting how similar this theme, if not the story's conclusion, is to the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is significant that the author should choose to name his main character Ali, even if in the end his main character is also linked to the historical Ali's son, Husayn. It is true that in the novella's conclusion the reader may recall early religious history, especially Kerbala, and that in naming his main character Ali, the author manages to immediately recall the very root of the old contention between Sunni and Shi'a and aligns one with the group with a claim to be the victim of injustice, that is the Party of Ali. Again, with respect to Shi'i Islam, see Momen (1985). Concerning the Shi'a view of Sunnis as backers of the status quo, also see Lewis (2004 [1985]: 292–293). One may wonder if Kurban Said was not also forecasting more than just a little: a Vienna and Berlin-centred reading, as opposed to a Baku-centred one, might lead one to ask if this new Holy Husayn was not a trope for Adolph Hitler, the work being designed to generate fear and hatred directed towards Russia. Concerning the Shi'a and "propaganda," see Lewis (2004 [1985]: 294).
35. Edward Said's 1978 work was critiqued as having under-examined German and Russian Orientalist scholarship (for example, see Lewis, 1993 [1982]). This essay, therefore, may be understood as showing that regardless of this being the case, what his work enables his readers to see is of significance even when it is these archives that enabled a work's production.
36. Although the discourse of Russian Imperialism during the initial period dramatized by the novella was different from that of the Soviet period, in reading Thomas Goltz's

Azerbaijan Diaries (1998), I was struck by just how similar the Soviet discourse was to that of Canadian federalism.

37. Two studies of anger have relatively recently been published by two prominent Buddhist teachers: see Thurman (2005) and Hanh (2001). Also with respect to anger, note just how much emphasis is placed on anger in the opening passage of Lewis's 1985 essay, "The Shi'a."
38. Regarding Jainism, one may begin by consulting the following: Sethia (2004), Dundas (2002 [1992]), Matilal (1981), and others.
39. About Nirvana, Smith and Novak write that it "is the highest destiny of the human spirit and its literal meaning is 'extinction,' but what is to be extinguished are the boundaries of the finite self and the three poisons that feed that self." Smith and Novak then include the following passage from Buddhist scripture: "The extinction of greed, the extinction of hate, the extinction of delusion: this indeed is called Nirvana." The passage is drawn from the *Samyutta Nikaya* (see Smith and Novak, *Buddhism*, 2003: 52, 203).
40. It is worth observing that all five of the traditional pillars of Islam can be understood as forms of asceticism. The profession of faith limits the number of Gods to one, in theory eliminating the possibility of rival Gods creating rivalry among human beings. Accepting this profession of faith, in practice, means no longer actively seeking new, more important, divinities since according to this view there is only one. Regular daily prayer enables humans to routinely turn away from the striving and wanton acquisitiveness of the everyday world. Taxation also aims to limit this wanton acquisitiveness, diverting funds toward noble causes such as caring for widows, orphans, the poor and the sick, etc. The annual fasting aims to help believers actively remember the great control one can exert over the tyrannies of the body, turning away from the food and sex that drive so many much of the time. Moreover, during the fast, like during the pilgrimage, fighting is to be set aside. In this respect, the pilgrimage is a turning away from everyday struggles for the sake of turning towards concerns that transcend it.

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