

**Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969):
A Critical Evaluation of an Orientalist.**

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Statement

This research was undertaken under the auspices of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and was submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of PhD in the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

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Student Number: 29001081.

Declaration Sheet

This sheet MUST be signed and included within the thesis

The work was previously submitted on 2nd December 2018 for the degree. The thesis is re-submitted in accordance with the decision of the Examining Board dated 14th May 2019. It is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

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Date 12th March 2021

Statement 1.

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and the nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Abstract

Arthur John Arberry (1905–1969): A Critical Evaluation of an Orientalist

Arthur J. Arberry is widely recognised as one of the leading British scholars of Oriental Studies in the mid-twentieth century. This thesis aims to re-evaluate Arberry's contribution to the field by examining his works and translations from a post-colonial perspective.¹ After having provided a background to A. J. Arberry, this PhD thesis focuses on discussing and defining the concept of Orientalism as understood by its critics, especially Edward Said. We analyse the influence of empire and imperialism on Said's experiences and academic works, concluding that post-colonialism informed Said's views. The post-colonial critique is the foundation to analyse the opus of Arberry and examine concepts of empire and colonialism in his works and his attitudes to the Middle East. A selection of Arberry's works reveals that his interpretation of Islamic culture is that of a Western scholar. His wartime work for the Ministry of Information and the BBC showed that he was a strong supporter of British values but also that his contributions were evidence of his inability to adjust his scholarly practices to the need to communicate effectively with audiences abroad. Theories of translation provide additional analytical tools to assess his Orientalist views as revealed by his translations of Arabic and Persian texts, including those of Iqbal. His frequently acclaimed versions of the Qur'an will be scrutinised in detail with the result that their accuracy of interpretation and style of translation are open to question. The thesis finds that Arberry was a text-based Oriental scholar who did not consider contemporary life in the countries from which the texts originated. His outlook was conservative, declining to venture into fields of study outside his discipline, being unsuited to fully engage with challenges emanating from a changing world. The thesis agrees with the critique that his works

¹ The phrase 'post-colonial perspective' is used to describe a new methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale critique of western structures of knowledge and power; the term indicates the theoretical and methodological approach used in the analysis and critique. For post-colonialism in general, see E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1978).

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show essentialism, absence and otherness. Examination of Arberry's works has demonstrated the nature of scholarly Orientalism of the mid-twentieth century.

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Notes

Arberry's Works

Arberry's Oriental studies take the form of books, monographs and journal articles which are listed in the Bibliography, Part 1, of this thesis.

Sources

Reference will be made extensively in this study to the work by Edward Wadi Said, *Orientalism*. The work was first published by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. in 1978, and re-printed with a revised Preface and Afterword in 2003 in the series *Penguin Modern Classics*. The 2003 edition is used throughout this study, references in footnotes and otherwise refer to that edition.

Referencing system

This follows the *University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, (UWTSD) Referencing Guide Modern Humanities Research Association System*, published as the Modern Humanities Research Association system (MHRA) Style Guide December, 2009.

(<http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>)

Abbreviations

BJMES – *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*

BSOS – *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (to 1940)

BSOAS UL – *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*

JRASGBI – *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
(otherwise JRAS)

MOI and Miniform – *Ministry of Information*

BBC – *British Broadcasting Corporation*

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Dates

For Muslim dates, all stated are After Hegira (AH) (from 622 CE, see below); for Western dates, all are either Before Common Era (BCE) or Common Era (CE).

Transcription

Instead of the direct representation of original words, i.e. transliteration, I use transcriptions representing the sound of the original language. The Romanisation of words and the use of diacritical marks follow the conventions used by the various authors referred to in the thesis, especially the versions used by Arberry. This method adds vowels in accordance with the conventions of the target language, English. The assimilation of the definite article (*al*) ignores variations for 'sun letters'.

Spelling

In quotations this study uses the spelling of each individual author from which the quote is taken from, unless used generically in the text, when modern standard English spelling is used.

Words from other languages, notably from Arabic or Persian, are italicised, unless there are conventional forms in English, such as Qur'an.

Addition to Statement 1, Correction Service

In accordance with the Statement made above, a correction service has been used and the text has undergone some typographical, formatting and syntactical corrections.

Foreword

I acknowledge with grateful thanks for the advice and support received throughout the preparation and writing of this thesis from the supervisors of this study, Professor Gary R. Bunt and Dr Catrin Williams of University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969): A Critical Evaluation of an Orientalist.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale for Undertaking the Research

Arthur John Arberry (1905–1969) has produced numerous translations of the literature of the medieval Arabic and Persian civilisations, and he is the author of academic works on the poets and writers of those civilisations. His work in the period 1930–1969 was founded on established scholastic views of those civilisations and was produced when consciousness of the legacy of empire and colonialism remained strong. The combination of increased critical scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s, together with the changing post-war geo-political attitudes towards the countries of the Middle East, posed questions about Orientalism as a way of understanding the cultures and societies of the region. Arberry has been regarded, therefore, as one of the last in the line of the tradition of scholars of Arabic and Persian cultures known as ‘Orientalists’.

My personal motivation for undertaking a study of Arberry arose from the research I undertook when preparing a dissertation on the subject of Sir William Jones (1746–1794) for a Master’s Degree in Islamic Studies.² Jones was one of the early translators of Persian poetry, whose work *The Grammar of the Persian Language* and his translations of verses of Hāfīz,³ were important influences on later translators. Arberry’s treatment of Persian poetry and his writing on Jones indicates that his own work was a rich source of material on Persian and Arab poets. Further enquires revealed the extent of his published works and suggested an area for more detailed study. As an early Orientalist, Jones had been named variously as ‘Asiatic

² Richard Owen Watkin, *Sir William Jones (1746–1794) and Islamic Studies*, MA dissertation (Lampeter, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, 2013), <http://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/346>.

³ William Jones, *Grammar of the Persian Language* (London, 1771); Teignmouth, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London, John Stockdale, 1807).

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Jones',⁴ 'Orientalist Jones'⁵ and 'Oriental Jones',⁶ and, from his writings and reputation, Arberry was seen to be a scholar in the same field of studies. I decided to research into Arberry's works and their place in the context of Oriental studies. The possibilities of exploring the field were opened on reading Said's works, which presented new dimensions to the meaning of the Orient and Orientalism. The combination of Arberry's works and Said's critiques, in their time and what they represented, suggested a new area for study.

This study is important and relevant as Arberry, an Orientalist scholar working in the mid-twentieth century, produced a significant body of works which continue to be published and used as material for academic writing. His translations of the Qur'an and of the works of Rūmī continue to raise interest on a world-wide basis, as will be shown later.

The relevance of Arberry's work was not confined to scholarly studies as he contributed to institutions which derived their status and influence from their support for the structures of the British Empire. By writing about it and educating those who would participate in its administration, he contributed to forming institutional attitudes of the 'other'. This has contemporary relevance, as can be seen in the current debates on the legacy of institutional attitudes towards the British Empire, demonstrated by the decision of Oriel College, Oxford, to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the issues surrounding Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902)⁷ and the historic legacy and implications for the College of retaining on public display an image of the British Empire.⁸

⁴ A.J. Arberry, *Asiatic Jones: The Life and Influence of Sir William Jones (1746–1794) Pioneer of Indian Studies* (London, New York and Toronto, Published for The British Council by Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1946).

⁵ Michael J. Franklin, *Writers of Wales* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1995) and Franklin, *Orientalist Jones* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷ Marks, S. and Trapido, S., 'Rhodes, Cecil John (1853–1902), imperialist, colonial politician, and mining entrepreneur', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (3rd October 2013). Retrieved 5 Mar. 2021, from <https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3573>.

⁸ www.oriel-rhodes-commission.co.uk. The Commission was appointed on 17th June 2020 to report to the College's Governing Body in early 2021.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this thesis are to present a critical evaluation of Arberry's works in order to inform us of his contribution to Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century and to examine the prevalence of imperialistic and colonialist attitudes in his works.

The first strand of the objectives is directed at Arberry as one of the last scholars of the kind of Orientalism that had grown over the preceding century before it was supplanted by modern attitudes and methods of study. The second concerns critical reactions to the Western domination of the countries of Islam which opened the debate about the validity and relevance of Orientalism as a method of relating to the civilisations of those countries.

The relevance of the objectives lies in understanding how, during a period of change, a scholar demonstrated in his works accumulated attitudes that underlay an important area of study and how significant anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial critiques were in addressing the assumptions of Orientalism.

This thesis will evaluate the work of Arberry as an Orientalist in the context of the post-colonial debate about Orientalism as developed by critics but particularly in the context of the critiques of Edward Said.⁹ It will examine the epistemological and hermeneutical debates around the concept of what had traditionally been loosely and diversely called 'Orientalism' and the theoretical approaches to the issue of translation of foreign texts. Through theoretical and empirical analyses of Arberry's works, this study aims to be a contribution to the on-going critique of Orientalism, adding a hitherto unexplored dimension to the understanding of Orientalism.

Central to this study is what my analysis reveals about Arberry's production of knowledge and about the Near East. Criticisms made by commentators are important methodological tools in order to identify the forces or influences, both conscious and unconscious that informed Arberry's output, allowing us to examine Arberry's attitudes towards the civilisations which were the subjects of his works. Said's views were themselves the subject of academic criticism and the debate surrounding 'Orientalism' and this study will consider the later development of that

⁹ Other critics of Orientalism will be considered in detail later in this thesis.

debate, including the works of Abdel-Malek, Tibawi, Turner and Rodinson in order to re-evaluate Arberry's work in light of more recent analyses.

1.3 Structure of the Study

The thesis comprises seven chapters,

1. The Introduction sets out the rationale for undertaking the research, articulates the issues arising from considering Arberry's works; it also presents key issues for the thesis and provides a brief biography of Arberry's life and career.

2. The chapter 'Orientalism, Said and Empire' discusses critiques of the concept of Orientalism, leading to a consideration of the arguments expressed by Said, as well as the critical responses to his propositions and later interpretations of Said's concept of 'Orientalism'. The Chapter will examine Orientalism in the wider context of Imperialism and Empire, as well as its practice. We will assess Arberry's place in the light of the views on 'Orientalism' that have been developed in a post-colonial context in the last thirty years.

3. In the chapter 'Arberry's Works: Orientalism in Practice' we will consider a selection of works by Arberry's in order to analyse his views on Orientalism, and how his works demonstrates Orientalist attitudes.

4. The chapter 'Arberry and Propaganda' examines a particular aspect of his work as an Orientalist, namely his work as a propagandist working for the Ministry of Information and the BBC. The chapter will also investigate Arberry's other activities during the Second World War in the context of his attitudes to the cultures of the Near East.

5. It is the aim of the chapter 'Arberry's Translations, Theories of Translation and Arberry's Work' to focus on the theoretical studies of translating foreign texts into English and apply these theories to Arberry's work. This will help to identify Arberry's attitudes to translating as a particular aspect of his place in Orientalism.

6. Arberry's translation of the Qur'an has been regarded as one of Arberry's most important works. In the chapter 'The Qur'an Translated', his approaches to the translations are assessed and a re-evaluation of the works is given in light of recent critiques.

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7. In the 'Overall Conclusions', we will show how the critiques of Orientalism and the theories on the techniques of translating applied to Arberry's works and an evaluation of his works demonstrate his conservative approach to Oriental studies and his support for British imperial and colonial power.

Appendices

1. Extract from *Salaman and Absal*.
2. Extract from an *Autobiographical Sketch*.
3. Extract from G. M. Wickens, *John Arthur Arberry 1905–1969* (Proceedings of the British Academy, 1972) Vol. 58, p. 360–361.

Bibliography

Part I Arberry's works

Part II General Works referred to

1.4 Methodology and Statement of the Issues in this Study

In one sense Arberry could be regarded simply as a 'traditional academic', in the sense of a scholar immersed in a specialised field of study, isolated from the realities of his contemporary life. To a degree that stereotype would be a reasonable assessment of his life and work. However, such a generalisation would gloss over the extent of his contribution to Oriental and Islamic studies as well as to the of understanding of the works of Arabic and Persian writers, which, in turn, has enriched the literature in the English-speaking world. For example, his translations of the Qur'an and his extensive translations of the works of Rūmī both continue to influence contemporary understandings as can be seen by the frequent references to them in various media forms.

An evaluation of Arberry raises two fundamental issues: the first is an assessment of him as an Orientalist, and, secondly, analyses of his work as an important translator, as most of his published works are translations of Islamic texts. The latter is more particularly concerned with the challenges of translating medieval Islamic prose writings, and especially the challenges of rendering poetry. The issue of Orientalism in the mid-twentieth century raises the question of British Imperial interests, which leads us to the next Section.

1. Introduction

1.4.1 The Academic Context of Arberry's Oriental Studies

Arberry did not work in a vacuum. During his life as scholar of Arabic and Persian literature, there were many other academics and writers in Britain and Europe who equally contributed to the body of knowledge about the cultures of the Middle East. Writers of the late nineteenth century produced works that created the field of academic studies in the early and middle twentieth century which formed the background for Arberry's works and influenced his approach. Setting a brief account of the academic world in which Arberry worked will identify that background and will explain Arberry's place in it, a consideration that will emerge in more detail in this study.

The nineteenth century impetus for European studies of the Middle East may be attributed to a large part to the French incursion into Egypt in 1798. Said wrote that, 'the occupation gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient'.¹⁰ Orientalism grew from the accounts of travellers and the growing interest among European powers in gaining overseas colonial interests. Dutch Orientalism grew from the country's involvement in the Dutch East Indies, with Leiden University becoming an important centre for the study and publication of works on Arabic language and literature. Dutch scholars of that period included Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy (1820–1883), Professor of History at Leiden, and Michaël Jan de Goeje (1836–1909). Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), Professor of Arabic at Leiden (1906–1936), combined academic study with working as a government advisor on the administration of Dutch colonies, especially with regard to the Aceh population; his *Het Mekkaansche Feest (The Festivities of Mecca 1890)* and *Mekka* (1888) were written from personal observation.¹¹

Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) held the chair of Oriental Languages in Strasbourg from 1872 to 1906. His work on the Qur'an, and his innovative revision to the order of the *suras* in the Qur'an, based on his understanding of the sequence of the revelations made to the Prophet Muhammad, featured in Arberry's studies and translations. Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933), who was appointed Professor

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, Penguin Modern Classics, 1993), p. 87.

¹¹ Christine Carvalho, *Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje: Biography and Perception* (Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2010).

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of History and Culture of the Orient at Cologne in 1908, and, in 1913, Professor of Oriental Philology at Bonn, founded the journal *Der Islam*, and introduced modern sociological thinking into Islamic studies.¹²

In France, Sylvain Lévi (1863–1935) was a prolific writer and scholar on Oriental and Hindu subjects. He was lecturer at the Sorbonne (1889–94) and then Professor at the College de France (1894–1935). The treatment of Islamic subjects in an ideological and sociological framework was undertaken by Maxime Rodinson (1915–2004), a Marxist Orientalist, historian, and sociologist who aimed to explain the economic and social origins of Islam. Rodinson’s critique will be examined in chapter 2 of this thesis.

According to Said, Jean-Jacques Waardenburg (1930–2015) identified important writers in the period 1880–1939 who created the image of Islam, and thereby contributed to the creation of the context for scholarly study of Orientalism.¹³ Amongst those Waardenburg listed as significant contributors to the portrayal of Islam to the West were Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), and Louis Massignon (1883–1962).

Goldziher deserved particular attention. His great work was on the origin and internal development of Islam, in particular his *Muhammedanische Studien* published in 1889 and 1890, and his *Vorlesungen über den Islām* of 1910. He differed from many Western Orientalists by having spent 1873–1874 in the Middle East and studied at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo.¹⁴ He identified himself so closely with Muslim scholars and the study of Islam that ‘ultimately I became inwardly convinced that I myself was a Muslim’.¹⁵ Goldziher may be regarded as an exception among the majority of Western scholars of the Orient we discuss in this thesis as he was a devoted and proud Hungarian Jew who had spent some time in the Middle East. Based on his experience within a Jewish minority in Hungarian

¹² *Der Islam, Journal of the History and Culture of the Middle East* (Berlin, De Gruyter) (Internet Archive search, 06/11/2018).

¹³ Said, 2003, p. 209. Other important contributors to the portrayal of Islam to the West according to Waardenburg include Duncan Black Macdonald (1863–1943), Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933) and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936).

¹⁴ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* (London Penguin Books, 2007), p. 193.

¹⁵ Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism Knowledge & Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 2015), the quotation is a passage from Goldziher’s *Tagebuch* 59 (translated by Raphael Petai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary: A Translation and Psychological Portrait* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 35).

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society, living under the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, he was politically anti-colonialist and participated in street demonstrations in the Middle East against Ottoman imperial power.¹⁶

According to A. A. Bevan, Goldziher was ‘perhaps the greatest authority on Muhammadan theology that the world has ever seen.’¹⁷ We shall note later Goldziher’s influence on Bevan, one of Arberry’s teachers at Cambridge.¹⁸ Irwin suggested that his status in the world of orientalism ‘depended not on a formal academic rank but on his sheer brilliance and industry’.¹⁹ Louis Massignon declared that Ignaz Goldziher was ‘the uncontested master of Islamic studies in the eyes of Western Orientalists’ and that he had exercised a ‘vast and complex personal influence on our studies’. Irwin further referred to the comment of Bernard Lewis that Goldziher was ‘one of the founders and masters of modern Islamic studies’.²⁰

Scholars in mainland Europe, writing in the late nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century, can therefore be seen to have contributed significantly to the knowledge and understanding of Islamic cultures, their works being of major importance to Western scholarship. Usually based in universities, their approach was academic and mostly culturally and geographically distant from the cultures which formed the subjects their studies.

Equivalent scholarly efforts in Britain were joined by the empirical experience of gifted amateurs with practical experience of those cultures. According to Arberry, substantial figures in Oriental studies emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century, as British involvement grew in Bengal and in the greater India. None was more renowned than Sir William Jones (1746–1794), described by Arberry as ‘The Founder’ of Oriental studies in Britain²¹ and the subject of many of his works. As well as by academic scholars, knowledge about Indian, Mughal and Persian cultures was also developed by those working in India. Sir William Muir (1819–1905), of the Bengal Civil Service, was described as ‘one of

¹⁶ Hamid Dabashi, p. 49.

¹⁷ A. A. Bevan ‘Professor Ignaz Goldziher’, *JRASGBI*, Vol. 54, No 1 (January 1922), pp. 143–144, quote from p. 143.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3, section 3.3.

¹⁹ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* (London, Allen Lane, 2006), p. 193.

²⁰ Irwin, p. 196, quoting Bernard Lewis (1916–2018), ‘The Pro-Islamic Jews’, in *Islam and History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*, 2nd edition (Chicago and La Sale, Illinois, 1993), p. 144.

²¹ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 4.

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the few prominent Arabists or Islamicists that British India produced'²² and Sir Charles Lyall (1845–1920), also of the Bengal Civil Service, made extensive contributions to the *Journal of the Asiatick Society of Bengal*, established by Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones. He was later one of the original founders of the School of Oriental Studies (SOAS) of the University of London. The effect of their work was to provide a wider perspective to the study of Oriental subjects, adding to the knowledge of the cultures of the East, while at the same time, building and reinforcing colonial and imperialistic attitudes. The impact of their contributions will be analysed later in this thesis in the context of Orientalism as a field of study.

To this group of amateur experts, the names of travellers can be added. Edward William Lane (1801–1876) and his *An Account Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*²³ opened the world of the Orient to a new group of readers and so contributed to the popularisation of interest in the East. Lane's work is an example of the opportunities offered by the new vogue of travel books, providing readers with novel experiences of different cultures and customs. Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840–1922) – a poet, writer, and traveller in the Middle East – worked in the Diplomatic Corps. His *The Future of Islam* touched on forces of pan-Islamism and Mahdism, and his *Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia* (1903) pre-dates Arberry's own translation of 1957.

Clifford Edmund Bosworth (1928–2015), in his essay on Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926),²⁴ referred to the lamentable sparsity of academic provision in Britain for the learning and studying of Persian, save for the teaching of Persian to those about to enter the Indian Civil Service, especially at Hailybury College, which had been established for that purpose. According to him, Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883), when working on his translations, sought detailed and continuing advice on Persian vocabulary and grammar from Edward Byles Cowell (1826–1903), Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge University. A feature of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century popular literary world was the

²² Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* p. 162.

²³ Edward William Lane, *An Account Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, Ward Lock & Co., third edition 1842, reprinted 1890), p. 193.

²⁴ Charles Edmund Bosworth, ed., *A Century of British Orientalists 1902–2001* (Oxford, The British Academy, by the Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 76.

increasing interest in the perceived exoticism of the culture and literature of Arab and Persian speaking countries.

In parallel with the popular interest in, for example Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyam* (1859) and the works of travel writers, scholars contributed to the knowledge of Oriental cultures by translating texts into English, cataloguing collections, and annotating recently translated manuscripts. This work was subject to stringent academic standards and high levels of expectation resulting from peer criticism.

As for Oriental studies in America, Duncan Black Macdonald (1863–1943)²⁵ was one of the few scholars in the field. According to Irwin, he was 'the first US-based Orientalist worth lingering on. In general Americans were to contribute little to Oriental scholarship until the second half of the twentieth century'. He adds that 'there were few academic posts in the field, and for a long time, there were very few texts and manuscripts available to the students'.²⁶ Macdonald, who taught at the Hartford Theological Seminar in the United States, wrote extensively on Islamic matters, including works intended to assist Christian missionaries to Islamic countries, for example *Aspects of Islam*.²⁷ In the English-speaking world, British Orientalists were dominant.

Among academic scholars in Britain of this period, a particular group of individuals made valuable contributions to the knowledge of Islam and Oriental studies, and it was they who provided the groundwork for Arberry's later writings. Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859–1933),²⁸ Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, wrote on Firdausi and Rumī, and on Arabic poetry. Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) was a leading Orientalist scholar. His early work, *A Year Amongst the Persians*,²⁹ was seminal in delineating Persian society, mystics, Zoroastrianism and religious movements. According to Bosworth, the work

²⁵ Among Arberry's papers deposited in Cambridge University Library is a photograph of Professor Macdonald dated 6th September 1943, at the age of 80 (Manuscript Reading Room, Box 4).

²⁶ Irwin, p. 214.

²⁷ Duncan Black Macdonald, *Aspects of Islam* (London, Macmillan, 1911), reviewed in *The American Journal of Theology* Vol. 15, No. 3 (July 1911), pp. 482–484 by Henry Preserved Smith.

²⁸ R. A. Nicholson, 'Professor A. A. Bevan', in *Obituary Notices, JRASGBI*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Jan. 1934), pp. 219–221. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00083143>.

²⁹ E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character & Thought of the People of Persia Received During Twelve Months' Residence in that Country in the years 1887–1888* (London, Adams and Charles Black, 1893).

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remained substantially in print ever since, attesting to the work's enduring attractiveness and scholarly value.³⁰ Browne, a master of the Persian, Turkish, and Arabic languages, became a lecturer in Persian in Cambridge, having been elected a Fellow of Pembroke College in 1887, and later, in 1902, was appointed Professor of the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic. His chief work was *A Literary History of Persia*, published in four volumes from 1902 to 1924. He was an influential teacher of many who later became eminent scholars, one of whom was Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945), who was to have a decisive influence on Arberry.³¹ Although Arberry never met Browne, he wrote: 'I owe my own career as an orientalist, and my own love for Persia and all things Persian, to Browne's inspiration and example'.³² Browne's writings expanded Western knowledge of the character of religions and their practices in Persia, which he gained from his personal experience.

Browne was also engaged in the cataloguing of collections of Islamic manuscripts preserved in Cambridge. Arberry was later engaged in similar work in the India Office and on the Chester Beatty Collections. Browne published on the sources of biographies of Persian poets, and in 1899 published the *Chahār Maqāla*, a treatise on the four key classes of men who served the king. These led to works on Persian literature of 1902–1924, by which his name was 'immortalised in the sphere of Persian literary studies'.³³ Browne was clearly a figure who gave an example to Arberry of what was achievable in the investigation and exposition of the depth of Persian writings and religious movements. His disclosure of the intellectual genius of the Persian civilisation, in religion, philosophy and science, in addition to the works of literature, provided a new and informed discourse.

Among the scholars working in the field was Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky (1877–1966). Following an illustrious career as a Russian diplomat and scholar working in Iran and the Caucasus, Minorsky taught Persian literature in Paris but joined the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, initially as lecturer in 1932, before becoming Professor of Persian in 1937 on the retirement

³⁰ Bosworth, p. 79 (Time-Life Books published a facsimile edition in 1984, 1986 and 1987 from the 1857 third edition).

³¹ Academic influences on Arberry, including those of Nicholson, will be discussed in Chapter 3.3.

³² A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1960), p. 190.

³³ Bosworth, p. 81.

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of Sir Dennison Ross (1871–1940). He lived in Cambridge from 1939 and contributed extensively, on Persian and Orientalist subjects, to the BSOS and to the *JRASGBI*.³⁴

A major influence on Arberry was Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945), who set the context for many of Arberry's works. Arberry described Nicholson as 'a most eminent scholar of Arabic and Persian who made massive contributions to Islamic studies'.³⁵ Nicholson's greatest contributions were in the field of the discovery, translation and publication of the works of Ṣūfī poets, especially those of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273). The first of the works, published in 1898, was *Selected Poems from the Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*. Arberry described the book as a 'finished masterpiece',³⁶ and it was the foundation for later studies of Persian literature. It set out the relationship between Neoplatonism and Islamic mysticism, a theme which scholars would develop over succeeding years.

Nicholson's translations were rendered in rhyme, a style adopted by Arberry in his own translations. He was a productive author of articles for learned journals and in 1906 published a long monologue '*A Historical Enquiry concerning the Origin and Development of Ṣūfism* which Arberry described as 'the most important and fundamental paper ever published on Islamic mysticism'.³⁷ In 1907 a companion volume to Browne's work on Persian literature, the *Literary History of the Arabs* was published. In that work Nicholson discussed the nature of Arabic writing in relation to the problems of their presentation in another language, an issue which was to become familiar to Arberry himself. Nicholson, referring to the problems of treating old Arabic texts, wrote 'I agree with the author of a famous anthology who declares that it is harder to select than to compose (*ikhtiyāru 'l-kalām aṣbu min ta'lifihī*)'.³⁸ He made the works of poets, Firdawsī, 'Umar Khayyām, Sa'dī and Hāfiz, accessible to modern culture – works that later engaged Arberry.

Nicholson's major corpus of work was on Ṣūfism, including a translation of the *Kashf al-mahjūb*, which Arberry described as the oldest Persian treatise on

³⁴ D. M. Lang, 'Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky (1877–1966)', *BSOAS UL*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1966), pp. 694-699. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/611557>.

³⁵ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 197.

³⁶ Arberry, p. 199.

³⁷ Arberry, p. 203.

³⁸ R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, T. Fisher Unwin 1907), 'Preface', p. x (reprinted Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1930, 1941, 1953, 1962, 1966).

mysticism, and a translation of the mystical odes of Ibn ‘Arabī. In 1914 he published the *Kitāb al-Lumā’ of Abu Nasr al-Sarrai*, one of the most fundamental treatises on Šūfī doctrines. In 1947, Arberry added a translation of some pages missing from Nicholson’s work³⁹. In 1914, Nicholson published *The Mystics of Islam*, described by Arberry as ‘an excellent and illuminating introduction to this vast and fascinating subject’.⁴⁰ In many ways Nicholson set the pattern that was to be followed by Arberry.

Subjects selected by Nicholson foreshadowed later work by Arberry, for example his interest in Muhammad Iqbal was taken up by Arberry. In 1920, Nicholson published *The Secrets of the Self* (a translation of Iqbal’s *Asrār i Khudi* of 1915) and in 1953 Arberry published the second part of Iqbal’s theory on the conception of selfhood in his *The Mysteries of Selflessness (Rumuz-i Bekhudi)* by which the poet–philosopher–statesman sought to create a new philosophy of Islam.⁴¹ Arberry later, in 1947, published *The Tulip of Sinai*, a translation from Persian verses by Iqbal in *Payām i-Mashriq* (Message of the East, of 1923). Nicholson’s lectures to the School of Oriental Studies on the nature of Sufism were published as *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*.⁴² His greatest works were the translations of the odes of Rūmī, the *Mathnavī*, published between 1925 and 1940, consisting of 25,000 couplets in eight volumes, totalling some 1,000 pages. Nicholson undoubtedly created the scholarly context for many of Arberry’s works.

Overall, we can see that the context within which Arberry worked had been created by eminent scholars and academics of many countries, as well as diplomats, travellers and private individuals, all of whom contributed to the growing corpus of knowledge on Orientalism and studies of the Middle East. British scholars had the most influence on Arberry, although he was aware of the works of the most outstanding European scholars, as was shown in his reviews of their publications.⁴³ Fellow academics in the field of Orientalism formed the contemporary context in

³⁹ A. J. Arberry, *Pages from the Kitāb al-Lumā’ Of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj Being the Lacuna in the Edition of R. A. Nicholson, Edited from the Bankipore Manuscript with Memoir, Preface and Notes*. Subsidized by the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust (London, Luzac & Company Ltd., 1947), p. 31 with 16 in Persian. The book contained a photograph of Nicholson.

⁴⁰ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 213.

⁴¹ A. J. Arberry, *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (London, John Murray, 1953).

⁴² Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1923, reprinted at Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964).

⁴³ Listed in the Bibliography, Part I.

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which Arberry worked, and they included noted scholars who expanded the concepts of Orientalism and the range of subjects on the cultures and countries of the Middle East and Persia, to meet emerging concerns and challenges.

David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940) was appointed to the Laudian Chair of Arabic in Oxford at the early age of thirty, which he held for forty- nine years, until his retirement in 1937. He translated many important medieval Arabic texts and turned to producing works aimed at a wider audience than the solely academic. This is typical for many Orientalists of the period as they and their publishers were aware of the importance of the texts upon which they worked and of the desirability of sharing that knowledge to a wider public, a practice also followed by Arberry. In 1905, Margoliouth published *Mohamed and the Rise of Islam* and, in 1911, *Mohammedanism*.

A near contemporary of Arberry's was Hamilton Alexander Roskeen Gibb (1895–1971).⁴⁴ Having read Classics at the University of Edinburgh, he also studied modern European languages and physical sciences. His studies of Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic were interrupted by the war in 1917, but he resumed his studies of Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University after the war where he became a lecturer in 1921, appointed Reader in 1929, and finally Professor in 1930. During his time in the School, he was an Editor of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.⁴⁵

In contrast to Arberry, Gibb engaged in diverse scholarly and academic interests. Arberry's work was in the tradition of Browne and Nicholson; Gibb's works showed an increasing readiness to embrace the developing modern world and the changing academic management of the subject of Oriental Studies. His early works dealt with a range of historical Arabic subjects and he produced articles on contemporary Arabic literature, providing, in the words of Hourani, 'the first serious treatment of the subject by a Western scholar'; his work on Arab literature 'was the first attempt by a scholar trained in the European tradition of literary study to apply

⁴⁴ Albert Hourani, 'Gibb, Sir Hamilton Alexander Roskeen (1895–1971)' (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31143>, accessed 24 June 2014.

⁴⁵ Now *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden, Brill, second edition, first published online 2012, www.brillonline.com).

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critical standards to the new writing in Arabic'.⁴⁶ Gibb, according to Hourani, developed the aptitude of striving to cross frontiers between disciplines and civilisations, and to show unexpected connections as to how one thing could help to explain something completely different.⁴⁷

In 1937, Gibb succeeded Margoliouth as Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford, with a Fellowship at St. John's College, until 1955, when he became James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and University Professor at Harvard University. Gibb's interest was in the nature and development of Islam and on Islamic political theory. In the late 1930s and the 1940s, he lectured on the political problems in the Middle East and on British policy there. His expertise was officially recognised when he was appointed as head of the Middle East section of what later became the Royal Institute of International Affairs, with the function of providing information to the Foreign Office.⁴⁸ Gibb's followed the development in the United States regarding the nature and purpose of 'Oriental Studies', and its replacement by Area Studies and broader Middle Eastern Studies.

Şūfism was one of the many aspects of Islamic subjects dealt with in Arberry's work and one of the leading writers in that field was Louis Massignon (1883–1962) who was an outstanding French scholar of Islam. His major work on the life of the tenth-century mystic al-Hallaj, *La passion d'Al-Husayn-Ibn- Mansour Al-Hallaj: martyr mystique de l'Islam, exécuté a Baghdad le 26 mars 922*.⁴⁹ His direct personal experience of living in Muslim countries, as described by Irwin,⁵⁰ contrasted with the rather insular practices of English scholars, who generally resisted the opportunities of going to the countries whose literature and culture was the subject of their work.

Another near contemporary of Arberry was William Montgomery Watt (1909–2006). Though his academic life was also engaged in Oriental Studies, Watt, as a Scottish Episcopal clergyman, approached the study of Islam from the position of a

⁴⁶ Hourani, p. 160.

⁴⁷ Hourani, p. 192.

⁴⁸ Hourani, p. 164.

⁴⁹ Louis Massignon, *La passion d'Al-Husayn-Ibn-Mansour Al-Hallaj : martyr mystique de l'Islam, exécuté à Baghdad le 26 mars 922. Étude d'Histoire Religieuse* (Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1922, published in four volumes in 1925).

⁵⁰ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing. The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London, Penguin Books, 2007), p. 221.

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Christian theologian, with greater sympathy for his subject than Macdonald. After holding the post of lecturer in Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University (1934–1938), he was ordained into the Church. He was awarded a doctorate in 1944 from the University of Edinburgh on the subject of free will and predestination in early Islam.⁵¹ He was appointed lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1946 and in Arabic in 1947, and finally Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies from 1964 to 1979.

Watt's works were based on his hermeneutical belief that, by eliminating misconceptions and stereotypes about Islam, the West would be better served in understanding its enduring values. His biographical works on the Prophet Muhammad, *Muhammad at Mecca* (1953) and *Muhammad at Medina* (1956),⁵² are sympathetic treatments of his subject, considered to be classical texts in the field. He argued that Western attitudes to Islam could be traced to the 'medieval war-propaganda' of the crusades.⁵³ During his tenure as professor, he launched the *Islamic Surveys* series, published by Edinburgh University Press, which he edited from 1961 to 1979, which included his works *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (1962), *A History of Islamic Spain* (1965), *Islamic Political Thought* (1968), *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (1972), *Islamic Creeds* (1994), and *Introduction to the Qur'an* (1995).⁵⁴ Thompson concluded that 'methodologically, Watt attempted to blend philology with sociology' and that Watt saw that the root of reconciling class conflict, racial prejudice and nationalist chauvinism lay in religious and political internationalism, so that religion should play a crucial role in helping humanity form a 'single harmonious society'.⁵⁵ In *Islam and the Integration of Society* (1961), Watt explored the influence of Islam in the past in creating social cohesion in local contexts and the extent to which it might do so on wider scales.

⁵¹ Todd M. Thompson, 'Watt, William Montgomery (1909–2006)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, Jan. 2010), accessed online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/97508>, accessed 01/09/2014.

⁵² William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953), *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1956), *Islamic Creeds* (Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

⁵³ Thompson, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1962); *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1965); *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1968); *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1972); *Islamic Creeds* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1994); *Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1995).

⁵⁵ Thompson, quoting Watt, Thoughts on Islamic Unity, *Islamic Quarterly*, 3, 1956-7, p. 193.

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Watt was regarded as 'one of Britain's foremost interpreters of Islam in the twentieth century.'⁵⁶

The context for Arberry's works was set by scholars who taught him at Cambridge University, and whose overall attitudes to Oriental Studies and their academic approaches informed Arberry's methods of working and choice of subjects for study. It was a context influenced by the scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both in Britain and other European countries, in which their works on the writers and theologians of the medieval cultures of Arabia and Persia reflected their classical education and their regard of the subjects as isolated from the realities of persons living throughout those times. The contrast between the traditional attitude and that of Arberry's contemporaries is shown by their readiness to tackle political and sociological issues, and to challenge traditional approaches. In the period 1939–1944, Arberry worked for the Ministry of Information (MOI) as a producer of propaganda material. That experience provided an additional context to his works, and influenced his writings in the post-war period, a subject that is discussed in detail in this study.

The attitudinal approach to Oriental studies at the time of Arberry's academic career, and during his time with MOI, a theme that will be re-evaluated in more detail in this study, may be characterised generally as being based on the idea of the superiority of the scholarship that was found in European universities over that of scholarship in the countries where the various 'Oriental' cultures originated. This fact leads to Said's critique of the concept called 'Orientalism' as being based on the colonial power of the British Empire in the countries under its political influence. As we shall see in this study, Arberry emerges as an active participant in, and a contributor to, established Western views of Arabic and Persian cultures. His controversial position as an Orientalist is the subject of this study.

The institutional context for most of Arberry's working life was Cambridge University. He took the Chair in 1947. In the immediate post-war period, we can identify two significant changes that affected the academic delivery in his field. The first was the move away from the traditional view of Orientalism, as discussed above, as a result of the changing political perspective held of the Middle East and

⁵⁶ Thompson., *ibid.*

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Persia by countries of the West, especially by the United States, and secondly, as a consequence of the first, there was a change in the way in which Oriental subjects should be taught in higher education.

The Yalta conference between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill in the spring of 1945 sanctioned a new geo-political division of the world into American and Soviet spheres of interest. The implications of the understanding had direct effects on the future of Oriental studies in America as, according to Cumings, 'the ultimate force shaping scholarly studies of what used to be called "the non-Western world" is economic and political power'.⁵⁷ United States central financing would henceforth be directed to Area Studies and Middle Eastern Studies, in close association with its intelligence apparatus. Social sciences became of greater importance than traditional disciplines, such as linguistics and philology, resulting, according to Kramer, not in a variation on the theme of Middle Eastern studies, but its reinvention.⁵⁸ American perceptions of the world would be based on strategic areas affecting American interests, rather than on themes such as culture or religion.⁵⁹ According to Kramer, Americans viewed the traditional Orientalist approach as 'antiquarian' and that henceforth 'American academics would be social scientists, these "post-Orientalists"⁶⁰ would become more than scholars: they would become experts'.⁶¹ The contrast with the pattern of scholarship in which Arberry had worked, and in which he was engaged, could not have been starker.

The second major change in the context of Arberry's work was caused as the result of the Government's decision to review the provision for the teaching of Oriental languages in Higher Education. It was considered that existing provisions were too academic to meet practical needs of persons preparing for careers in the East, and too poorly endowed to produce outstanding scholars to enhance the prestige of this country abroad; moreover, it was inadequate in vigour to meet the

⁵⁷ Bruce Cumings, 'Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies during and after the Cold War', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29 (1997).
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/cumings2.html>, Retrieved 23/04/2009.

⁵⁸ Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington DC., The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), p. 5.

⁵⁹ Kramer, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Kramer, p. 122.

⁶¹ Kramer, p. 8.

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practical needs of the country after the Second World War.⁶² The Report of the Scarborough Commission,⁶³ published in 1946, advised that the study of language should be balanced with the study of 'the equally important related subjects such as history, philosophy, and economics',⁶⁴ a similar approach to that seen in the United States. Arberry, who was at SOAS when the Commission began to prepare its report and at Cambridge when it was published, was faced with the challenge of seeking funding for his Department according to the new criteria for financing academic study. Arberry established the Middle East Centre at Cambridge, partially funded by oil companies, and was appointed its chairman.⁶⁵ Progress following the publication of the Scarborough Report was reviewed by a Sub-Committee of the University Grants Committee, which reported to the Committee in 1961, and made further recommendations which were close to the arrangements adopted in American educational institutions.⁶⁶ Arberry sought to address the issues raised by the Report by the creation of an Institute in Cambridge to include the teaching of Turkish and Urdu, and spoken Arabic and Persian. The Institute would offer tuition to scientists, engineers, doctors, economists and those interested in careers overseas in the cultures and languages of the countries of their intended destinations.⁶⁷

The context for Arberry's work remained for the most part the conceptual framework for studying Arabian and Persian cultures which had become established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and continued until the Second World War. The geo-political changes brought about by the conflict and its aftermath posed challenges to the entire approach to the study of Orientalism, to Arberry's outlook and to the expectations for knowledge production about the social, economic and political conditions of the countries of the Middle East. As lessening importance was being given to the traditional, philological and theological

⁶² Ian Brown, *The School of Oriental and African Studies: Imperial Training and the Expansion of Learning* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 112.

⁶³ HMSO, Scarborough Report (The Earl Scarborough), 1947, Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies, London: Foreign Office; HMSO 1947.

⁶⁴ Scarborough, pp. 29–31.

⁶⁵ G. M. Wickens, 'Arthur John Arberry', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 58 (1972), pp. 355–366.

⁶⁶ Report of the Sub-Committee on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies (London, HMSO, 1961) (Hayter Report, 1961).

⁶⁷ Arberry, p. 248.

studies, in a sense, Arberry was one of the last of a long line of Orientalists, and it is for that reason that this study considers his contribution.

1.4.2 Issues of Orientalism

In order to provide an analysis of Arberry's work, and to position Arberry within the scope of writers upon the Orient in the mid-twentieth century, the framework laid down by Edward Said in his *Orientalism* and his related works will be used in this study.⁶⁸ Said criticised those described by Varisco as 'the old-fashioned academic Orientalist who interpret[s] the reality of Orientals through fancifully biased images derived from texts'.⁶⁹ The knowledge produced by that group and their teachings might have been relatively benign but the wider implications of the influence of the group on the way in which the Orient was viewed by the West were severely criticised by Said. Irwin summarised the message of Said's *Orientalism* as 'the hegemonic discourse of imperialism, a discourse that constrains everything that has been written and thought in the West about the Orient and the Arabs. It has legitimised Western penetration of the Arab lands and their appropriation the West possesses a monopoly how the Orient may be represented. Characteristically Orientalism is essentialist, racist, patronising and ideologically motivated'.⁷⁰

Writing in 1943, Arberry himself posed the question: 'What is Orientalism, and what constitutes an Orientalist?'⁷¹ He concluded that the simple dictionary definition, 'one versed in oriental languages and literature' should suffice.⁷² According to his adopted definition, Arberry, by his works, clearly fell within the traditional description of an 'Orientalist', and a member of the group described by Varisco. However Arberry's interpretation of the term did not include the implications of what being an 'Orientalist' meant or what 'Orientalism' signified when taking into account the effects, attitudes and wider aspects of the discipline, or of the forces of

⁶⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 2003, *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world* (London and New York, Vintage Books, 1997), *The Question of Palestine* (New York, Vintage Books, 1992), *Culture and Imperialism* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1993), *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London, Granta Books, 1999).

⁶⁹ Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2007), p. 8.

⁷⁰ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing: The Orientalist and their Enemies* (London, Allen Lane, 2006 and Penguin Books, 2007), p. 3.

⁷¹ Arthur John Arberry, *British Orientalists* (London, William Collins, 1943), p. 7.

⁷² Arberry, p. 8.

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power or hegemony underlying the work of academics in institutions seeking to articulate their concepts of what they regarded as 'the East'. The polemic initiated by Said created a re-evaluation of what the concept of 'Orientalism' meant which was the subject of both criticism and support. It was not a wholly new analysis but became the means of critiquing those who had involvement in the field.

This study therefore poses some key areas for examination. The first area to assess is the phenomenon of Orientalism as developed by its critics: was Orientalism an original concept, how was it received by scholars of the field and what was the contemporary view of Said's critiques? This assessment will take the form of a literary review of the works on Orientalism. Arising from that study, Arberry's works will be assessed within Said's framework of analysis. A number of issues need to be examined: the messages, explicitly and otherwise conveyed by Arberry's works, regarding his attitudes to the East. Also, did his experiences while working for the MOI in creating propaganda material informed his later views. Did he follow the societal expectations of the institutions that employed him and did he further their objectives? We need to investigate whether he was an imperialist or a non-political scholar. Did later critiques of Orientalism validate his views.

1.4.3 Translation Issues

The second area of our investigation concerns Arberry's translations from Arabic and Persian regarding the question whether they can be interpreted from the post-colonial perspective inspired by Said's critiques. Arberry produced translations of theological works, some written in prose, and a wide range of poetic works by Persian writers (for example Rūmī and Hāfīz). The phenomenon of translation carries with it particular issues. We need to examine the question of Arberry's attitudes and dispositions regarding translations. Did he have a purely technical approach, or whether he held views of contemporary translation theory? Did Arberry's attitudes evolve over time? Were they affected by prevailing social norms?

The study will draw upon several theories relating to strategies for effecting translations, including concepts of equivalence, 'domesticating' and 'foreignising' strategies, the function of the start text and the purpose of translating, as well as the theories of translating poetry.

1.5 Arthur John Arberry – a brief biography

Arberry's personal background and career present useful information on his outlook on the cultures of the East. It can be shown that his close involvement with the theological works of Islam impacted on the way in which he viewed religion of the East and caused him to reflect on his own beliefs.⁷³ Arberry was born in 1905 into a modest home in Portsmouth, his father serving in the Royal Navy, while his mother brought up the family of five children. His parents had a significant influence on their children, as he recounted, late in life, in his *Autobiographical Sketch*.⁷⁴ He succeeded in winning a scholarship to Portsmouth Grammar School before going to Pembroke College, Cambridge to study Classics.

He excelled at his studies, gaining a First in Part I of the Classical Tripos in 1925, and a First in Part II in 1927 with a distinction in his special subject. His ambition was to obtain a research fellowship in Classics with an eye to an academic career, but in his year of graduation no fewer than five candidates were awarded First Class Degrees in Part II of the Classical Tripos. The competition excluded Arberry from his desired path, but a different avenue opened for him. Supported by scholarships for the study of oriental languages, he studied under Professor Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, the eminent authority on Islamic mysticism.⁷⁵

On graduating, he was successful in winning a number of scholarships and, in 1931, was made a junior research fellow of Pembroke College.⁷⁶ The College suggested that he might benefit by spending the first year of his Fellowship in the East. So he moved to Cairo in 1931 where, as he later wrote 'did a great deal of

⁷³ There are few direct sources of information about his early life, except some sparse accounts by Arberry himself. The primary sources are to be found in a few pages scattered in his works covering a period from 1943 to 1968, his *British Orientalists*, the last chapter of his *Oriental Essays* (in which he describes his life under the essay entitled 'The Disciple'), and in his 'An Autobiographical Sketch' which was published posthumously in *Mystical Poems of Rūmī*. The few paragraphs in *British Orientalists* are written by Arberry about himself in the third person. Obituaries, especially the detailed obituary by G. M. Wickens, and an encyclopaedia entry, are the main external sources containing details of his life.

⁷⁴ Arberry, A. J., 'An Autobiographical Sketch' published in the *Mystical Poems of Rumi* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1968 and 2009), p. 21. See Appendix 1.

⁷⁵ Lecturer in Persian, University of Cambridge 1902–1926, Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic 1926–1933.

⁷⁶ Wickens, 'Arthur John Arberry 1905–1969', p. 355; Susan Skilliter, 'Arthur John Arberry', *BSOAS*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1970), p. 364.

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work and amassed rich material for future research'.⁷⁷ While in Cairo he applied for the post of Head of the Classics Department at Cairo University. He wrote: 'I had tasted the East, and was eager to return there to continue my research, which by now had broadened to include contemporary Arabic literature'.⁷⁸ During the years spent in Egypt, Arberry made friends amongst Egyptian scholars and travelled to Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. He later wrote that 'I look back on my years in Egypt... as among the happiest of my life'.⁷⁹ It was in Egypt that Arberry's practice of translating and publishing started.

In 1934, he was appointed to the post of Assistant Librarian in the India Office. The vacancy arose since the librarian, Charles Ambrose Storey (1888–1968), was appointed to the Sir Thomas Adams's Professorship of Arabic in Cambridge, a post that Arberry was later to occupy.⁸⁰ In the India Office, his tasks included the cataloguing of the extensive number of manuscripts that had come into the possession of the Department on the dissolution of the assets of the East India Company.⁸¹ He was responsible for compiling the section on Şūfism and Ethics in the first catalogue of Arabic manuscripts, a task that included listing the documents and writing brief notes on their contents. He found not only literary interest in his work on the catalogues of Arabic and Persian Books but also found that the work was enriched by the physical pleasure of handling precious manuscripts.⁸²

In addition to his work as Assistant Librarian, he published his own works, and contributed to journals of the Royal Asiatic of Great Britain and Ireland, (*JRASGBI*) and to the Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (*BSOAS*). The importance of his work was recognised in 1936, when he was awarded, at the early age of 31, the degree of *Literarum Doctor* by Cambridge University.

⁷⁷ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 237.

⁷⁸ Arberry, p. 237.

⁷⁹ Arberry, p. 237.

⁸⁰ Yuri Bregel, 'Charles Ambrose Storey', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 20th July, 2005 (www.iranicaonline.org), Obituaries: Meredith-Owens, G. M., *JRASGBI*, 1967, p. 182; Serjeant, R. B., *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 1969, pp. i-ii.

⁸¹ *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts Vol. II, India Office 1936, and the Catalogue of the Library of the India Office Vol. II Part VI Persian Books, India Office 1937 and later catalogues.*

⁸² See A. J. Arberry, *FitzGerald's Salaman & Absal: A Study by A. J. Arberry* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 43, see Appendix 1 to this study.

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At the outbreak of the Second World War, as a civil servant, Arberry was transferred from the India Office initially to the Postal Censorship Department of the War Office, based at Liverpool, where he was engaged in the 'uncommon languages' section, work he found 'tedious and exhausting.' After six months, he was transferred to the Ministry of Information in London in 1940, a period which he described as: 'for the next four years my master was Miniform, my business propaganda'.⁸³ His work in the Ministry of Information will be considered later in this study.

As his work in the Ministry was coming to an end, he was appointed in 1944 to the Chair of Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, as successor to Professor Vladimir Minorsky, and in 1946 was appointed to the Chair of Arabic and Head of the Middle East Department there.

In 1947, Arberry was appointed to the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic at Cambridge and was re-elected a Fellow of Pembroke College. As Professor, he faced the challenges of continuing his academic interests while developing the Department to meet the increased demands for the expansion of the teaching of oriental languages in higher education following the submission of the Report of the Scarborough Commission in 1947 and the Hayter Report in 1961 (see above). During his tenure as Professor, from 1947 until his death in 1969, Arberry produced notable works. They included translations of the poems and writings of Hāfez and Rūmī, his versions of the Qur'an, translations of Omar Khayyam and studies of the works of Edward FitzGerald, works on Ṣūfism, as well as translations of Maltese and Moorish poetry. He wrote many journal articles based upon his studies of the manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Collection, and contributed to the reviews of books. It will be argued in this study that Arberry's views on the treatment of the literature and cultures of the countries of East were conditioned by the norms of the institutions for which he worked, both the India Office, the civil service, and by outside interventions to which he had to react.

As to Arberry the man there is very little available evidence concerning Arberry as an individual. Most of his contemporaries are deceased and comments in obituaries on his personality are sparse save for one exception. Wickens's

⁸³ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 238.

obituary contains the fullest account of Arberry as he saw him, and, although uncollaborated, serves as the single surviving testament of Arberry.⁸⁴ It is not an altogether flattering account but does suggest aspects of Arberry as a personality. As it would be unjust to both Wickens and Arberry to attempt an interpretation of the account, it is reproduced in the Appendix to this study. Elements of the account are discussed in this study as independent analyses of Arberry's works and his impact.

1.6 Arberry: The Impact of Islam

Arberry spent almost the whole of his academic life immersed in the world of Islam, which became his intellectual territory. His detailed studies required him to enter into a deep understanding of the beliefs and the intricate works of medieval Muslim theologians, poets and mystics, and his translations of the Qur'an and the works of Rūmī involved him in unravelling some of the most profound expressions of Islam.

Arberry recounted his boyhood experiences of religion as being fairly conventional for his day:

'I was born the child of Victorian parents, strict believers of the Christian evangelical school. My early religious education was therefore of the same pattern: family prayers, church three times every Sunday, and a severe puritanical attitude to pleasure, especially on the Lord's Day. My parents were virtuous and, according to their light, deeply sincere in their conformity.'⁸⁵

His experiences of the hardships and privations of the years after World War I, and his reading of works by rationalists, agnostics and atheists, caused him to abandon worship entirely. He resolved to become an academic scholar, 'abstract truth being the only truth before which I would kneel'.⁸⁶ Arberry recalled that as a student and an unbeliever, he felt that he would be amused by 'devoting my mind to a critical examination of Islam, no doubt as fallacious as Christianity'.⁸⁷ At Cambridge he was introduced the writings of Ṣūfīs, particularly those by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Intellectual scholarship, Arberry considered, would lead to finding abstract

⁸⁴ G. M. Wickens, 'John Arthur Arberry 1905–1969', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 58 (1972), p. 360.

⁸⁵ A. J. Arberry, 'An Autobiographical Sketch', in *id. Mystical Poems of Rumi*, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Arberry, p. 22.

⁸⁷ Arberry, p. 22.

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truth, which he saw as a quest for reason, but in seeking to understand the expressions of emotions by Sūfi writers, he became exposed to versions of belief that went beyond the intellectually rational. Arberry recognised the impact that his close consideration of the texts of Islamic writers had made upon him: 'It certainly never occurred to me that that examination would have the effect of bringing me back to a belief in God.'⁸⁸

Considerably later, in 1962, when aged 57, he wrote a new Introduction to his *The Koran Interpreted* which conveyed feelings that reflected certain events in his personal life, possibly concerning his health, to which Wickens made reference in his obituary of Arberry.⁸⁹ He wrote that undertaking the translation had been a heavy task, done at a time which he described as one of 'great personal distress.' It is possible that here he referred to his health, as the strain of producing and publishing works and translations in the 1950s had placed him under considerable pressure. He wrote that his experience in translating the Qur'an had 'comforted and sustained the writer in a manner for which he will always be grateful. He therefore acknowledges his gratitude to whatever power or Power inspired the man and the Prophet...'.⁹⁰

His recognition of the beneficial effects of a "power or Power" had been expressed in his earlier works on Ṣūfism. His belief in the universality of God enabled him to see beyond superficial differences: 'Whether we are Muslims or not, we are all surely children of One Father'.⁹¹ This, he argued, was justification for the Christian scholar to discover the essential truths that enabled the teachings of Sufism to be shared on a wider scale for the benefit of mankind, Ṣūfism being an important force contributing to 'the needs of many seeking the re-establishment of moral and spiritual values in these dark and threatening times'.⁹² This study will explore the way in which Arberry's sympathies with Islam and its culture informed his works of translation and explanation of medieval Muslim writings.

⁸⁸ Arberry, p. 22.

⁸⁹ Wickens, 'Arthur John Arberry, 1905–1969', p. 357.

⁹⁰ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, The World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. xii-xiii. This Introduction did not appear in the 1955 edition of George Allen & Unwin.

⁹¹ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism. An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1950), p. 134.

⁹² Arberry, 1950, p. 135.

1.7 Arberry's techniques

It is possible to have some appreciation of how Arberry worked from the material contained in the Arberry archive held by Cambridge University Library.⁹³ His papers show that in some cases he used notebooks previously used by Nicholson for preparing drafts of translations, written in small and intense handwriting; other papers reveal his methods of cataloguing and translating manuscripts held in the Chester Beatty Collection. His work as an Orientalist was recognised when the Shah of Persia presented him with a copy of the Qur'an in Persian Arabic script, and commented favourably on his *Oriental Studies* of 1960. His work as a MOI propagandist is recalled in his papers, with a letter indicating that he might have been present in Kolkata sometime during World War 2, a copy of the *Arabic Listener* of 1943 published by the BBC, to which he contributed translations of Arabic poems, and a scrapbook containing what might have been propaganda cartoons. His handwritten draft translation of Avicenna's work *On Curing the Fear of Death* showed how he prepared his works of translation, as was shown in his notes on a work by an un-named Islamic author *On Prayer*.

1.8 Résumé

This Introduction has established the rationale and motivation for undertaking the study and has stated its objectives for the evaluation of Arberry as an Orientalist working in the mid-twentieth century, giving the context of contemporary scholarship. It has identified the issues surrounding Orientalism that arose following the critiques by Said and other observers of the field which the study discusses in more detail. It has given an account of his personal background in order to understand Arberry's approach to his works discussed in the study.

⁹³ Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Arthur Arberry: Correspondence and papers, MS Add. 7891. The co-operation of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library is gratefully acknowledged. Cambridge University Library reference to the papers may be found in <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb12-ms.add.7891>.

Chapter 2: Orientalism, Said and Imperialism

2.0 Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of this study is an evaluation of Arberry's work in the context of the post-colonial debates about Orientalism, as developed by its critics, particularly by the critiques of Edward Said. This chapter will examine the epistemological and hermeneutical debates around the concept of 'Orientalism' and issues relating to Western influence on the East in order to provide the context in which to place Arberry's works. In particular, this chapter aims to re-evaluate the critique of the concepts of Orientalism by scrutinising Said's assessment and by inserting the debate in a discussion of western imperial discourses and power structures of the West. It is therefore necessary to discuss, *inter alia*, Said's personal background in order to understand what motivated his criticisms.

Arberry's *Oriental Essays* presented studies of scholars who, between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, had contributed to the understanding of the peoples and cultures of Asia and Europe, including an essay about his own contribution to Oriental studies.⁹⁴ That collection of essays demonstrated that academic interaction with the Middle East had not changed significantly over a period of two hundred years, and was based on certain attitudes and assumptions that were almost universally shared in the west by those who worked in that field of study. In the years after the Second World War, those attitudes and assumptions were faced with the force of new ideas about what had been studied but also how the subjects had been treated. Previous ways of looking towards the cultures of the countries of the East came under intense scrutiny, mainly as the result of the publication of Edward Said's work, *Orientalism*.⁹⁵ After 1978, it was not possible to consider Oriental or post-colonial studies without reference to Said's work.

That work created the platform for the whole debate, opening avenues for discussion that had not previously been considered, and challenging previously held assumptions. Said's reach in the book was extensive, in the subjects he covered, his methodology and his working assumptions. The concept of Orientalism itself has

⁹⁴ A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, reprinted with a new Preface by Penguin Books, 2003).

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developed, especially after the writings of Edward Said, to be a broad area of study, featuring many disciplines within academic study, encompassing critical theory, reactions and debates surrounding ideas about the subject, and ideas about the societies and cultures that were, in the background, the supposed subjects of the studies.

This chapter has been divided into four sections to provide a more informed critical understanding of Arberry's work in the field of Orientalism as it has developed since Said's *Orientalism*.

1. Review of the literature on Orientalism by Abdel-Malek, Tibawi, Turner and Rodinson.
2. The section 'Orientalism and Edward Said' discusses Said's approach and understanding of Orientalism, the critical reception of 'Orientalism', and the changing image of Orientalism.
3. The section 'Said, Imperialism, and the idea of Empire' aims to analyse the wider context behind the problems that were revealed in Said's views of Orientalism, notably the close entanglement between Oriental Studies, Imperialism and Colonialism.
4. Conclusion: Lessons from Said's Analysis.

2. 1 Review of the Literature on Orientalism

2.1.1 Outline of the theoretical framework

The importance of Arberry's works lies in the fact that they provide an extensive corpus on the written culture of the Arabic and Persian civilisations, presenting works originally produced in the early and medieval periods, including translations of some of the most important theological and poetic texts of those cultures. Arberry regarded himself as an Orientalist, in the way that the concept was understood in the first half of the twentieth century, that of following an arcane and academic field of study purely for its scholastic interests. He wrote 'I suppose mine was the last generation of scholars who entered upon orientalism (sic) without prospect of

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employment'.⁹⁶ Orientalism as a discipline was then primarily a scholarly discourse. Some of its outward manifestations were positioned amidst a general public interest in subjects relating to the East and found in popular culture, literature and travel writing, and supported by traditional views of the British Empire.⁹⁷

Orientalism in its widest sense came under intense scrutiny in the mid-twentieth century by scholars who analysed the interaction between western and eastern cultures, a scrutiny that found a new impetus following its critique by Edward Said, which was widely regarded as being a watershed in the perception of Orientalism.⁹⁸ As has been seen in the last chapter, the concept of Orientalism came under even more critical examination in the United States in the mid-1940s, reflecting post-war thinking on contemporary geo-political interests, but that examination did not directly engage with academic and scholarly treatment of the field of study.

Critiques of Orientalism as it developed during the twentieth century had been published when Arberry was alive, and although he predeceased the publication of *Orientalism*, taken together they form a framework for studying the subject as understood among Western scholars.

The chapter firstly investigates diverse approaches taken to analyse the meaning of Orientalism, which will lead us to a closer study of Said's critique.

2.1.2 Orientalism under scrutiny

The complex relationships between the West and the East and the reality of life in the East became the subject of critical analyses in the post-colonial and post-imperial era, especially as the effects of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath on the Middle East became clearer. Scholars from eastern countries with direct experience of the effects of colonialism began to question conventional views and posed their own challenges to western held stereotypes.

⁹⁶ A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 240.

⁹⁷ Jan Morris, *Pax Britannica, The Climax of an Empire* (London, Faber and Faber, 1968; Penguin Books, 1979, three vols).

⁹⁸ See, for example, the statement of William Greenwood and Lucien de Guise, 'His book has created a genre in itself' (in *Inspired by the East* (London, The British Museum, 2019), p. 15).

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Macfie in his anthology of writers on the on the phenomenon of Orientalism identified four writers who made contributions to the 'assault' on the discourse.⁹⁹ The critiques of Anouar Abdel-Malek (1924–2012) and Abdul Latif Tibawi (1910–1981) were published in 1963 and 1964 while Arberry was still engaged on his work. The critique of Edward W. Said (1935–2003) was first published in 1978, followed by another critique by Tibawi, and critiques by Bryan S. Turner (1945–) and Maxime Rodinson(1915–2004). The authors of the critiques dealt with Orientalism as it was practised during Arberry's lifetime and are of direct relevance in the evaluation of Arberry as an Orientalist, and, in most cases, refer directly to his work.

2.1.3 Anouar Abdel-Malek (1924–2012)

Macfie regarded Abdel-Malek's article, *Orientalism in Crisis* of 1963, as 'one of the most influential, if not the most influential, of the many critiques of orientalism written in the period immediately following the end of the Second World War',¹⁰⁰ a period during which Arberry produced many of his more important works. Abdel-Malek, a Marxist thinker of Egyptian Coptic descent,¹⁰¹ was a sociologist who, after teaching in Cairo, worked in the *Centre National de a Recherche Scientifique* in Paris.

In his analysis of the main characteristics of traditional Orientalism,¹⁰² Abdel-Malek regarded that the growth of Oriental studies had come initially as a result of early colonialisation, and from the 'domination of "forgotten continents"' by European imperialisms in the middle and second half of the nineteenth century that were seen in the creation of Orientalist societies and in meetings of Orientalists in congresses held across Europe.¹⁰³ A cadre of scholars and writers arose whose attitudes, derived from their training in the works of classical antiquity, treated Oriental culture through a Hellenistic lens.¹⁰⁴ Their sense of 'eurocentrism', as the starting point of their research, led to an increasing manifestation of European hegemony.¹⁰⁵ Abdel-Malek referred to Arberry's *Oriental Essays*, 1960, as conveying the sense of

⁹⁹ Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p 3.

¹⁰⁰ Macfie, p .47.

¹⁰¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Anouar Abdel-Malek (1924–2012)', *Review Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2010), p. iii, accessed 29/03/2020.

¹⁰² Anour Abdel-Malek, 'Orientalism in Crisis', *Diogenes*, Vol. 11, No. 44, Winter 1963, pp. 103–140.

¹⁰³ Abdel-Malek, p. 104.

¹⁰⁴ Abdel-Malek, p. 105.

¹⁰⁵ Abdel-Malek, p. 106.

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European domination by giving portraits of seven English Orientalists, although no non-European scholar was included in the essays.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Abdel-Malek recognised that those writers made valuable contributions to the study of the ancient civilisations.

Orientalists, according to Abdel-Malek, included 'university dons, businessmen, colonial officials, missionaries, publicists and adventurers whose only objective was to gather intelligence information in the area to be occupied, to penetrate the consciousness of the people in order to better assure its enslavement to the European powers'.¹⁰⁷ Abdel-Malek saw similarities between the attitudes of scholars towards Oriental subjects and the attitudes of those having the animus of domination, approaches that were manifested in two strands of thought. The first strand was what they identified as the problem. Both tendencies considered the Orient and Orientals, 'as an "object of study", stamped with an otherness of an essentialist character',¹⁰⁸ and that the 'objects of study' would be 'passive, non-participating, [subjective] and above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself'.¹⁰⁹

The second strand of similarity between the scholarly tendency and the group seeking a dominant position lay in a 'thematic' approach; both groups adopted an essentialist conception of the areas under study, 'a conception which expresses itself through a characterised ethnist typology' which, in the case of the second group, would result in a tendency towards racism.¹¹⁰ Both groups accepted that the objects of their study had historical origins, but those objects were seen by Abdel-Malek as 'ahistorical' as the observers had defined for themselves an artificial society for the objects of their studies, fixing them in a perpetual medieval era removed from actual living societies in the Middle East.¹¹¹ Abdel-Malek regarded the result of this 'typology', a combination of the actual and the device of the constructed, as the basis for classifying the objects of study as being an 'other' type, in relation to which the study itself was transcendent or superior.¹¹² The norm of the

¹⁰⁶ Abdel-Malek, p. 106.

¹⁰⁷ Abdel-Malek, p. 107.

¹⁰⁸ Abdel-Malek, p. 107.

¹⁰⁹ Abdel-Malek, p. 108.

¹¹⁰ Abdel-Malek, p. 108.

¹¹¹ Abdel-Malek, p. 108.

¹¹² Abdel-Malek, p. 108.

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study was a European man of the Hellenic/Western tradition, the objects were the 'Other', thus the 'hegemonism of possessing minorities' became the common-place standard for viewing the East.¹¹³

With regard to the methodology of the study of the Orient, Abdel-Malek wrote that the approach was based on the tradition of classical studies of the past. The result was to describe a 'golden era' remote from the contemporary world.¹¹⁴ As the studies concentrated on the culture, notably language and religion, the social evolution of the societies of those cultures was ignored. The emphasis on past language eclipsed the reality of the living, contemporary languages, leading to misunderstandings in meanings and contradictions in the use of terms.¹¹⁵ Of greater concern to him was that the work of scholars from the countries which were the subjects of the studies was overlooked in the West. Precious and rare manuscripts forming the culture of the East were taken to institutions in the West, making access to them for study difficult for scholars in their countries of origin.¹¹⁶ Those texts were the material available to Western scholars for their studies, translations and explanations, processes that exhibited attitudes of paternalism, if not incipient ethnicity and racism.¹¹⁷

Traditional views of the Orient, according to Abdel-Malek, became challenged by political movements and the growing consciousness of national identity expressed in the countries of the 'Orient' during the twentieth century.¹¹⁸ According to Abdel-Malek modern scientific studies of those societies highlighted the inadequacies of traditional views, emphasising the increasing gap between methods of the traditionalists and the development of modern knowledge,¹¹⁹ a view endorsed by Said in his discussion of the crisis facing Orientalists as empire and imperialism came to a close.¹²⁰

Key issues arising from Abdel-Malek's 1963 article with relevance for our assessment of Arberry's Orientalism may be summarised as follows. The classical

¹¹³ Abdel-Malek, p. 108.

¹¹⁴ Abdel-Malek, p. 109.

¹¹⁵ Abdel-Malek, p. 110.

¹¹⁶ Abdel-Malek, p. 111.

¹¹⁷ Abdel-Marek, p. 111.

¹¹⁸ Abdel-Malek, p. 112.

¹¹⁹ Abdel-Malek, p. 112.

¹²⁰ Said, 2003, p. 105.

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genesis of traditional scholars imbued their views of the East from the viewpoint of a Hellenic/European norm; they shared the imperialist tendency of the objectification of the 'other'. The glorification of the 'golden age' of Oriental civilisations inevitably led to the concept of the stigmatisation of the cultures of subsequent eastern societies as being inherently inferior. Some western commentators did not fully engage with scholars having direct knowledge of their societies and the ability of those scholars themselves to properly address the histories of their societies was itself hindered by the removal by collectors and institutions of manuscripts, containing the written heritage of Oriental civilisations.

Abdul-Malek's criticism can validly be applied to Arberry. His intellectual background was initially in the Classics, he certainly benefitted from the acquisition of texts from Muslim countries, as he relied extensively on collections of manuscripts in the possession of universities and in private collections, especially that of Chester Beatty for his translations. He did not engage in anthropological or economic methods of studying Muslim societies, probably by reason of his education and the particular skills he had developed through his academic career. Even when surveying future developments in Oriental studies, Arberry confined his vision to historical and philological studies.¹²¹ Arberry was unlikely to bridge the intellectual and practical space between his understanding of the cultures of Muslim countries and the type of engagement that would satisfy Abdel-Malek's expectations. His vision, limited by his own cultural outlook, extended to a hope that future education would instil in the population the idea of the 'unity-in-variety of mankind', so that the British would feel 'as much at home' in any Middle East city as their own, without recourse to the British Club',¹²² an attitude that perpetuated the colonial and imperialist thinking criticised by Abdel-Malek. He relied on the hope that adequately funded oriental studies would 'provide a sound diagnosis of the disorder' caused by the 'psychological maladjustment affecting the nations of East and West' and provide methods of therapy,¹²³ a view that could only be based on the continuation of past attitudes and practices. Abdel-Malek's critique can be seen to be correct in its application to Arberry's views and work, as will be seen in the consideration of the following critics of mid-twentieth century Orientalism.

¹²¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 256.

¹²² Arberry, 1960, p. 256.

¹²³ Arberry, p. 256.

2.1.4 Abdul Latif Tibawi (1910–1981)

While Abel-Malek approached Orientalism from a sociological and left wing-standpoint, Abdul Latif Tibawi took a more overtly Islamic view. Tibawi was born in Palestine and following studies in history and Arabic literature became an educational officer in Jerusalem. He left Palestine in 1948 when he was appointed Lecturer in Comparative Education at the Institute of Education of the University of London. He wrote on Islamic education and on the problems facing education in the Arab world.¹²⁴ The failure of the West to understand Islam, and the prejudice flowing from an antagonistic attitude towards the faith were, according to Tibawi, at the root of the inability of western dealings with the Orient. Those failings resulted in a lack of detachment and objectivity, leading to mistaken assumptions and incorrect interpretations of eastern cultures. Tibawi's views on Orientalism were expressed in two critiques in which he analysed the evolution of Western attitudes towards the East.

Tibawi's first critique was set out in his article *English Speaking Orientalists* in which he identified that the early basis of western attitudes to the cultures of the East was a vigorous religious reaction against Islam, and in particular the Judeo-Christian hostility towards the Qur'an, which created such breach that it prevented objective understanding of the faith and the cultures based upon it.¹²⁵ Despite the interest shown during the Renaissance in Arab translations of Hellenic philosophy and science, and the growth of commercial and diplomatic interests, there was little development from the hostile attitudes that had prevailed for centuries.¹²⁶ In Tibawi's view, the close nexus between teachers of theological studies and Arabic scholarship, who were to become known as Oriental scholars, created an underlying attitude of animosity. Their backgrounds in Western Biblical studies caused them to argue for changes in what they saw as the deficiencies of Islam: 'Islam might be

¹²⁴ Critical Muslim, *Ten Key Texts on Islamic Education*, (London, The Muslim Institute) www.criticalmuslim.io, accessed 30/03/20.

¹²⁵ Abdul Latif Tibawi, 'English Speaking Orientalists A Critique of Their Approach to Islam and Arab Nationalism', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (July 1963), pp. 185–204 and *The Islamic Quarterly*, 8, 1–4, 1964, p. 25.

¹²⁶ Tibawi (1963, p. 27) gives by way of example the motivation for the endowment of the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic in Cambridge, which demonstrated the move to engage on a secular basis with 'Eastern nations' in the interests of commerce which had become recognised as 'equally, if not more valid' than religious.

transformed through “westernisation” or “modernisation” or “reformation”. According to him, ‘the missionary prayed, and the orientalist speculated, and both wrote with varying degrees of subtlety and insight on the subject’.¹²⁷

During the nineteenth century, the fortunes of the Muslim world were at a low ebb as a result of political domination and cultural subordination by Christian powers. In two areas of scholarship, the editing of texts and analytical studies, Tibawi judged that scholars had not been sufficiently detached or objective, perpetuating stereotypical views of Islam that had existed for centuries. He wrote, ‘old prejudices, greatly diminished since the dawn of this [twentieth] century, are still strong and widely disseminated by some Arab and Islamic scholars in the West’. Hostility towards Islam as a faith had extended to politics with resulting negative views of Arab nationalism. Although Arberry had a positive attitude towards the works of medieval Islamic writers, recognising their literary quality, a generally Orientalist outlook becomes clear from an examination of his work, as discussed in Chapter 3. In his book *Islam Today*, 1943, it will be seen that he promulgated the government’s policy towards Arab nationalism as part of his work in the MOI.

In Tibawi’s view, the work of English-speaking Orientalists, despite displaying considerable erudition in their studies of Islam, revealed a profound lack of understanding of the subject, resulting in speculation, guesswork and non-evidenced judgements, as well as being deficient in understanding historical perspectives.¹²⁸ Scholars, proceeding with their enquiries on academic lines, and in turn educating a wide range of personnel for work in the East, did so on suppositions, instead of disinterested and objective standards.¹²⁹

Scholars of Islam assumed that their readers were either sufficiently knowledgeable in Islam not to have to give balanced accounts of the faith or, more often, those scholars perpetuated stereotypical versions, carrying with them incipient misunderstandings.¹³⁰ Tibawi illustrated this by the common assertion that the Qur’an was the product of Muhammad’s own intelligence, without adequately stating the position of Muslim believers.¹³¹ From that assertion, there grew a corpus

¹²⁷ Tibawi, p. 28.

¹²⁸ Tibawi, p. 30.

¹²⁹ Tibawi, p. 31.

¹³⁰ Tibawi, p. 31.

¹³¹ Tibawi, p. 31.

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of conjecture around the elements of the Islamic faith, which, by reiteration and development, became the universal norm, and so giving offence to the Muslim world. He asked rhetorically why the non-Islamic Orientalists did not simply set out the Muslim conception of faith in Islamic terms, instead of embarking on speculative explanations of Judeo-Christian origins, attempts at Higher Criticism, or creating analogies with the Western understanding of religion.¹³² He argued that by stating an accurate account of Islam, scholars would have permitted a better understanding of the religion. The Qur'an had been the subject of several attempts by scholars to translate it into English, in response to which Marmaduke Pickthall claimed that 'no Holy Scripture can be fairly presented by one who disbelieves its inspiration and its message'.¹³³ That argument could extend to most of the works of translation of religious texts by non-Islamic Oriental scholars, and it would be unlikely that the cadre of scholars criticised by Tibawi could qualify themselves to meet the level of understanding of the texts that would satisfy him or Pickthall; despite this, Tibawi described Arberry as one of the 'most perceptive of living English orientalists'.¹³⁴

Speculation about the 'origin' of Islam, in Tibawi's analysis, was inherently contradictory. Those who accepted the sincerity of Muhammad's account of the revelations made to him could not also contest that its origins were rooted in religions recognised in the West. The discourse upon origins perpetuated the medieval image of Islam, although often expressed in more modern terminology, frequently in the field of 'comparative religions' in which the ascendancy of Christianity disadvantaged Islam. Absenting any 'missionary' motives from modern religious scholars, Tibawi advocated that the approach towards Islam by such scholars should be grounded in tolerance, respect and sympathy, which would foster better understanding of the religions of the scholar and of that being studied.¹³⁵

Protestant Orientalists in the West, who according to Tibawi, 'almost entirely monopolised' the subject of the reformation of Islam and sought to bring Islam as near as possible to the Protestant form of Christianity, failed to understand that

¹³² Tibawi, p. 33

¹³³ Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Koran* (New York, Alfred A. Kopf Inc., 1930, reprint Everyman's Library, 1992), p. v.

¹³⁴ Tibawi, p. 32, fn. 11.

¹³⁵ Tibawi, p. 36.

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Islam, apart from being a civilisation and a culture, comprised two essential elements, the creed and the law.¹³⁶ The former was precise, universally comprehensible and, as it was found in the Qur'an, not subject to change; the latter, derived partly from revelation, partly from prophetic tradition through the exercise of human judgement, was open to interpretation and adjustment according to evolving social conditions and state created laws.¹³⁷ The Western advocates of reform tended to confuse the two elements and concentrated on Sunni Islam. In Tibawi's view, Western advocates of reform would have been better advised to leave such matters to the wisdom of the Muslim community, as was the approach of Gibb, who avoided a meddling, patronising interference.¹³⁸

The key issues that arise from Tibawi's article of 1964 is that the lack of understanding of Islam, of the ways in which the faith permeated all aspects of Muslim life, and, for the Westerner, its elusive meanings all created a false basis from which to make assertions concerning Islam. This resulted in incorrect assumptions that led to unfounded speculation, and an attitude of the superiority of Western values which prevented a proper approach to study. Adopting an attitude of respect for Islam, and its place in Muslim societies, would have enabled scholars to understand the limits of their enquiries, enabling the formation of a more positive attitude from Muslim scholars for Western studies.

Tibawi returned to the question of English-speaking Orientalists in a later article in 1979, *A Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs*.¹³⁹ His views on the work of Orientalists expressed in the second article showed a considerable hardening in outlook from his views of 1964. He chose to examine the works of a group of contemporary academics selected for their pronounced opinions which were indicative of bias against Arabs and the 'Muslim mind'. The views of those selected would, *in extremis*, represent the trends which Tibawi criticised. Scholarly criticism of Arab nationalism still existed, to a lesser extent than before Second World War, but negative views of

¹³⁶ Tibawi, p. 41.

¹³⁷ Tibawi, p. 41.

¹³⁸ Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1895–1971), *Modern Trends in Islam*. The Haskell Lectures in Comparative Religion delivered at the University of Chicago, 1945 (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1947).

¹³⁹ Abdul Latif Tibawi, 'A Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs', *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1979), pp. 3–54.

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Islam and Muhammad had not abated. Disputations upon the origin of Islam and the sincerity of Muhammad continued, but unlike the earlier scholarly approach that relied upon evidence, however misconstrued, the later debate was based on assertions assumed to be factually correct.

Tibawi criticised scholars including Watt (1909–2006), whom he described as a ‘clergyman’, Cragg (1913–2012), portrayed as a ‘missionary’, and Peter Malcolm Holt (1918–2006) with Bernard Lewis (1916–2018), the latter labelled as ‘audacious and extreme’, for their misrepresentations of the revelation of the Qur’an and the sincerity of Muhammad, as part of what Tibawi saw was an overt intention to denigrate Islam.¹⁴⁰ Watt, for example, was one of the Orientalists sympathetic to the teachings of Islam, as he was of the opinion that those teachings were capable of giving insights into the beliefs of Christianity for its better understanding.¹⁴¹ According to Tibawi all were guilty of offending Muslim opinion by making assertions about Muhammad and Islam as though they were facts, without reference to the Muslim point of view.¹⁴² He criticised the lack of language skills among academics, the teaching of the Arabic language by non- specialists in Arabic, and those who continued to make judgemental comments upon Arabic subjects.¹⁴³ Academic interest in Islam moved from advocating its reform, a feature of the earlier cohort of scholars, to arguing for the virtual secularisation of the religion’s place in society, by implication asserting that Islam should align itself with modern Western thinking, without considering whether Western thought itself should adapt to Islam.¹⁴⁴

Tibawi recognised that the critical editing and publication of manuscripts were the greatest service that had been rendered to the cultures of the East by the earlier Western scholars, but newer academics lacked the skills to produce works of originality and deep investigation, and tended to base their studies on previously translated documents, without adding or creating new knowledge.¹⁴⁵ Tibawi considered that the greatest damage, however, was the ‘continuous adulteration of

¹⁴⁰ Tibawi, 1979, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ Watt’s interview transcribed in: Bashir Maan and Alastair McIntosh, “The whole house of Islam, and we Christians with them,...”, an interview with “the Last Orientalist”, *The Coracle*, the Iona Community, Vol. 3, No. 51 (Summer, 2000), pp. 8–11, available online: <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2000-Montgomery-Watt-Interview.pdf>, accessed: 01/10/2018.

¹⁴² Tibawi, 1979, p. 9.

¹⁴³ Tibawi, 1979, p. 12.

¹⁴⁴ Tibawi, 1979, p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ Tibawi, 1979, p. 15.

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Islamic history.¹⁴⁶ Academics not trained as historians created false impressions of the past, often unsubstantiated by any historical evidence.¹⁴⁷ In the case of collective works on Islam, the absence of Arab contributors to publications such as *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*,¹⁴⁸ *The Cambridge History of Islam*,¹⁴⁹ and *The Legacy of Islam*,¹⁵⁰ perpetuated the traditional and prevailing views on Islam, Muhammad and the Qur'an, Islamic law, history, language and literature.¹⁵¹ In the case of the former, the editions were, according to Tibawi, "on" Islam but not "of" it.¹⁵² The congruity between the politics of the state and Oriental scholars was illustrated by Tibawi in what he saw as the direct involvement of British Orientalists as advisors to the government at the time of the Suez conflict, or by their silence towards the conflict.¹⁵³

The positions held by Orientalists and their motivations, according to Tibawi, were validly expressed by Muḥammad Kurd 'Ali, Director of the Arabic Academy of Damascus, who wrote in *al-Islam wal Ḥaḍārah al-'Arabiyyah* in 1933, '[n]o admiration of their methods of study can spare the condemnation for their faulty and biased opinions', and who accused academics as being the political tools of their governments, possessing 'political aims inimical to our interest... using Orientalism as means to other ends'.¹⁵⁴ Tibawi drew the distinction between studies of Islam based on tolerance and empathy, and others founded on antagonism, scepticism and enmity, without there being common ground between them. He wrote, 'Islam is perhaps the only religion to be thus maltreated by outsiders'¹⁵⁵ because of their assumptions and attitudes. The effects of their views were far-reaching, as the Orientalists were 'teachers, government advisers and influencers of the press and

¹⁴⁶ Tibawi, 1979, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ Tibawi, 1979, p. 17.

¹⁴⁸ Tibawi, 1979, p. 19. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (second edition, Leiden, Brill, reference works online).

¹⁴⁹ *The Cambridge History of Islam*, eds Peter Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970); it was replaced by the six-volume *New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Michael Cook (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁰ *The Image of Islam*, ed. by Joseph Schacht with C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, Oxford University Press, second ed., 1974).

¹⁵¹ Tibawi was a contributor of an article to *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* (Cambridge, University Press, 1969) of which Arberry was the General Editor.

¹⁵² Tibawi, 1979, p. 19.

¹⁵³ Tibawi, 1979, p. 25.

¹⁵⁴ Tibawi, 1979, p. 23, quoting Muḥammad Kurd 'Ali, *al-Islam wal-Ḥaḍārah al-'Arabiyyah* (Cairo, 1933, third edition 1968).

¹⁵⁵ Tibawi, 1979, p. 22.

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public opinion.¹⁵⁶ The promulgators of pro-Western attitudes, the legatees of the mentality of the colonial periods, refused to adjust their outlooks to meet modern views of international and human understanding.

There were no advocates for Arabs among the Orientalists according to Tibawi, and no sympathy was expressed by them for the plight of the Palestinians Arabs because of the support, overt and tacit, for the Zionist cause, and concern at the influence of Communism in the Middle East.¹⁵⁷ Journals published to increase the knowledge of the East by their learned articles instead became 'an unavowed fraternity of mutual congratulation whose members restrict publications to their own product and that of their colleagues and protégés', and what they published was generally 'an echo of their collective mind'.¹⁵⁸ Lecturers and advisers on the Middle East remained largely anti-Islam and anti-Arab, and failed to provide the intellectual framework and vocabulary needed to express the relationship between the West and the East in any realistic manner.¹⁵⁹

The key issue derived from Tibawi's second article was his evident frustration at the increasingly negative attitudes held by influential writer towards Islam and its civilisations. However prejudiced to the Orient scholars might have been in the past, their academic standards of their work stood superior to later willingness merely to accept assertions about the Orient, instead of seeking evidence-based studies. Attitudes towards the East had hardened in the fifteen years since his first article due to the history of conflicts in the Middle East during that period. Attempts at seeking reform of Islam had lessened, but replaced by an expectation that the Orient should acquiesce to a norm of modern Western thought and secularisation.

The third work by Tibawi, on the subject of Orientalists, was his review in 1980 of an article published in 1979 by Donald Little.¹⁶⁰ In his review, Tibawi confirmed the views expressed in his previous two articles of 1964 and 1979. Commenting on the works of Gibb and Arberry, whom he described as lifelong friends,¹⁶¹ Tibawi wrote that both 'were aware that I had reservations concerning

¹⁵⁶ Tibawi, 1979, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ Tibawi, 1979, p. 29.

¹⁵⁸ Tibawi, 1979, p. 26.

¹⁵⁹ Tibawi, 1979, p. 36.

¹⁶⁰ Tibawi, 'On the Orientalists Again', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1980), pp. 56–61, reviewing Donald Little, 'Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 69 (1979), pp. 110–113.

¹⁶¹ Tibawi, 1980, p. 57.

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their respective understanding of Islam', and referring to his second article of 1979, he wrote that 'my *Critique* of English-Speaking Orientalists... did disturb both Gibb and Arberry'.¹⁶² It is of significance that Arberry agreed that Tibawi's analysis, quoted by Tibawi as stating that it was 'sad but unfortunately true',¹⁶³ as Arberry must have realised the inadequacies of pre- and post-war Oriental scholarship. Tibawi wrote of Arberry, 'I always regarded him more "Muslim" than Gibb. His attitude became clear when he invited me to lecture on the subject to the staff and students at the Middle East Centre at Cambridge immediately after publication of the *Critique*'.¹⁶⁴ Tibawi commented that, in respect of his *Critique*, 'Thus, far from being aggrieved by it, the two leading English Orientalists [Gibb and Arberry] accepted it, implicitly or explicitly, as justified'.¹⁶⁵

With regard to 'moderate' Orientalists, such as W. Montgomery Watt, Tibawi maintained that they were 'still shackled by a legacy of medieval prejudices'.¹⁶⁶ His criticisms in the *Critique* continued to be valid:

'The Orientalists failed to take any notice of the revision in the teaching and writing of world history after the Second World War. They failed to respond to the meaning of the changed relationship between their countries and former dependencies. With a few honourable exceptions, I found the professional Orientalists still distort and misrepresent Islam, and a new breed of pseudo-Orientalists is extending the distortion and misrepresentation of the Arabs'.¹⁶⁷

The key issues arising from the review *On Orientalists Again* is Tibawi's assessment of Arberry as an Orientalist and commentator on Islam, Arberry's response to the second *Critique*, and the opportunity Arberry gave Tibawi to express his views at Cambridge. That information will be relevant in the later evaluation of Arberry as an Orientalist.

Overall, Tibawi criticised the antagonistic attitudes of Orientalists towards Islam and Muslims, their conservatism of outlook, and their unwillingness to embrace the realities of the post-war world. Their narrow, often mistaken, view of

¹⁶² Tibawi, 1980, p. 58.

¹⁶³ Tibawi, 1980, p. 59.

¹⁶⁴ Tibawi, 1980, p. 58.

¹⁶⁵ Tibawi, 1980, p. 58.

¹⁶⁶ Tibawi, 1980, p. 60.

¹⁶⁷ Tibawi, 1980, p. 61.

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the East was not confined to their written work but had wider effect as it informed their teaching to successive groups of students, from Britain and from Eastern countries, and in the advice they gave to governments on matters of political importance in the relations between the East and the West.

Abdel-Malek and Tibawi based their critiques of Orientalism on the failure of the field to adequately take into account the nature and importance of the nature of societies in the countries of the East and their antagonistic attitude towards Islam and Muslims, both views grounded on their own experience. A different approach was to analyse Orientalism from the theoretical basis based on the teachings of Marxist Communism by Maxime Rodinson (1915–2004) and Bryan S. Turner (1945–).

2.1.5 Maxime Rodinson and Bryan Stanley Turner

After having analysed the critiques of Orientalism by Abdel-Malek, a Marxist, we now turn our attention to Rodinson and Turner who also approached Orientalism from a leftist viewpoint, but presented different views on the growth and future of Orientalism, providing contrasting views to Arberry's philological approach.

Maxime Rodinson, a historian and sociologist, began his studies at the *École des Langues Orientales* in Paris and the National Council for Research (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*). In 1948, he was appointed head of the Muslim section at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, then director of studies at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in 1955 where he became Professor of Classical Ethiopian in 1959. Although not a Muslim, he was renowned as specialist on Islam and the Arab world. In contrast to scholars of Islam who based their studies on issues of belief and the relationship between Islam and Christianity, he studied Islam in terms of its economic and social history. He was a productive writer on Islamic subjects; his most renowned work was his biography *Mohammad* (1961).¹⁶⁸ Of the Europeans writing on the Middle East, Rodinson's critiques were described as 'the most measured and erudite of them all'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Douglas Johnson, 'Maxime Rodinson: Marxist historian of Islam', *The Guardian Obituary*, 3rd June 2004, available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/jun/03/guardianobituaries.france>, accessed 10/10/2016.

¹⁶⁹ Fred Halliday, "'Orientalism' and its Critics', *BJMES*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1993) p. 148.

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Maxime Rodinson presented a more dynamic and positive view of the evolution of Orientalism in the twentieth century. He saw that the anti-colonialist movements in the Muslim world impacted on the image of Islam as seen in the West. Two trends could be discerned, according to him, one from Muslim countries and the other which grew from Western appreciation of Islam. Movements supporting independence from colonial rule in the interest of local economic advantage found sympathy among some Western politicians and commercial sectors.¹⁷⁰ In the West itself, Rodinson saw a fundamental change in attitudes towards Islam; no longer would it be regarded as an opponent to Christianity but as a religion like any other. Rodinson described the change of attitude among those in the Catholic Church, a change led by Massignon, who recognised that the monotheist message of Islam was part of the essential 'oneness' of the original values of the Christian church.¹⁷¹ This view gained support amongst those who began to appreciate the spiritual value of Muslims' religious experiences and who were troubled by historic injustices of the West towards Islam as a religion and to its peoples, who had been subjected to the effects of colonial rule:¹⁷² 'Understanding had given way to apologetics, pure and simple'.¹⁷³

At the same time, new academic approaches to the study of the countries of the Muslim world challenged old ways of working. The importance of economic history and social sciences went beyond the philological approach of the past, with greater appreciation and collaboration with scholars from Muslim countries, who, in the past, had been 'merely informants, whose contributions had to be totally thought out afresh by the European scholar'.¹⁷⁴ Linked to the broader appreciation by more recent scholars, was a move away from what had been seen by some as a 'Golden Age of Islam'. Studies of Oriental cultures had concentrated on the 'cultural essentialism' of the Muslim Middle Ages, a categorisation that stressed the 'paramountcy of religion and "race" and acknowledging the existence and perdurability of a "pure" type for each civilisation'.¹⁷⁵ The emergence of new

¹⁷⁰ Maxime Rodinson, 'The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam', in *The Image of Islam*, ed. by Joseph Schacht with C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, Oxford University Press, second ed., 1974), p. 57.

¹⁷¹ Rodinson, p. 58.

¹⁷² Rodinson, p. 59.

¹⁷³ Rodinson, p. 59.

¹⁷⁴ Rodinson, p. 60.

¹⁷⁵ Rodinson, p. 61.

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disciplines of sociology, anthropology, demographics and economics, supported by more evidential material, enabled studies to extend to what Rodinson called 'low periods' in the histories of Muslim cultures, away from periods when Islam was at the height of its influence.¹⁷⁶ The new approach required 'inter-disciplinary co-ordination and excludes any fictitious hierarchy of noble and ignoble disciplines'.¹⁷⁷

In Rodinson's view, what had been described as 'the end of Orientalism' was in effect the challenge to the dominance of philology.¹⁷⁸ Training in philology had been essential for the discovery of the basic materials in the field of Oriental studies, but the 'vast increase' in material, tools for research and methodology of study, the progress of social sciences had shown that the complexity of the issues raised by new knowledge could not be solved by reliance simply on 'a profound knowledge of the language' and broad philosophical principles.¹⁷⁹ It appeared to him that the pursuit of Oriental studies had become 'more arduous and less specific... Contact with other disciplines once a luxury is now an inescapable need'.¹⁸⁰

Said welcomed Rodinson's recognition of the movement away from the essentialism of 'type', by which Said meant the 'Oriental, Islamic, Arab, or whatever' although he considered that even in the modern social sciences those 'abstractions' continued to exist.¹⁸¹ The strength of Rodinson's approach was his 'methodological self-consciousness,' continuous self-examination of their methodology and practice, and sensitivity to the information and knowledge arising from the societies, being studied rather than operating within the constraints of 'doctrinal preconception'.¹⁸² Better approaches to Oriental studies would depend on scholars being critical readers of the broad fields of human sciences which would act as correctives to what had been perceived as 'Oriental problems'.¹⁸³

Turner, a British and Australian sociologist, held academic appointments in many universities before becoming Professor of Sociology at the University of Cambridge (1998–2005) and latterly Professor of the Sociology of Religion at the

¹⁷⁶ Rodinson, p. 61.

¹⁷⁷ Rodinson, p. 61.

¹⁷⁸ Rodinson, p. 62.

¹⁷⁹ Rodinson, p. 62.

¹⁸⁰ Rodinson, p. 62.

¹⁸¹ Said, p. 260.

¹⁸² Said, p. 327.

¹⁸³ Said, p. 327.

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Institute of Religion, Politics and Society at the Australian Catholic University. For Turner, Orientalism meant 'a syndrome of beliefs, attitudes, and theories which infects, not only the classical works of Islamic studies, but also extensive areas of geography, economics and sociology'.¹⁸⁴ That syndrome comprised the view that elements which were internal to society drove its social development; that the historical development of society was an evolutionary process leading either to progress or decline, and that all institutions of society were reflections of its inherent, essential, values.

Turner contested the views of Orientalists such as Gibb who created a 'dichotomous' distinction between Western societies in which their internal dynamics worked towards democratic industrialisation, and Islamic societies which were characterised by scholars as timelessly static or in decline: in this view their alleged stagnation was responsible for Middle Eastern societies lacking the dynamics that would bring about active middle classes, urban development, political activity, and eventual secularisation. That analysis, according to Turner, was empirically false and failed to explain the fact that, as industrial centres grew in the West, marginal societies at the periphery, such as the Middle East, declined bringing about conditions of inequality. The nature of capitalism was to preserve existing undeveloped societies, nullifying any progress to modern societies, and so defeating the aspirations of Orientalists for reform, modernisation or secularisation within Muslim societies. This resulted, according to Turner, in the Orientalist view that any initiatives for the improvement of Eastern societies should be deterred. Turner argued that the end of Orientalism required a fundamental attack on the theoretical and epistemological tools of Orientalist scholarship which had created the 'long tradition of oriental despotism, mosaic societies and the urban development of the Muslim cities'. Turner argued that although Marxism was equipped to end the influences of the past, it was hampered by its own teachings and a new approach was needed.

The key issues derived from Turner's approach are that, while he recognised deficiencies with Orientalism, the nature of those deficiencies differed from those described by Abdul-Malek and Tibawi because of the basic tenets of his analysis.

¹⁸⁴ Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1978), pp. 81–82 and 85, extracted in Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader* (2000), pp. 117–119.

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Marxist proposals for tackling the problems of Eastern societies differed fundamentally from those of the Orientalists whose views were made essentially irrelevant to his analysis by their willingness to accept societies as being unchanged since the 'Golden Era' of Islam. Said, however, provided yet another approach, one based on the nature of the representations of the Orient as shown by the writings and actions of Orientalists. His polemic was to be the most far-reaching in questioning the basis of Orientalism.

Turner regarded the way forward as the creation of different paradigms, a complete move away from the whole approach of Oriental studies of the previous century and a half. Rodinson recognised the dynamic changes that had taken place, both in attitudes towards Islam and in the methodologies that enabled more comprehensive understandings of Muslim cultures to be gained by using the techniques of complementary disciplines. The contrast with Arberry's approach was evident. Arberry's own training in philology, and his teaching of new generations of students in that field, had not admitted the possibilities that other relevant disciplines could offer. His work had been to privilege what the West had regarded as Muslim culture at its height, selecting Islam in the Middle Ages as being the worthwhile subject of study. To Rodinson, that omission denied access to knowledge of cultures and the condition of society beyond the works of the elite minority of Islamic scholars and writers of that time, and omitted gaining understanding of those societies through succeeding ages. Arberry's approach was based on a type of cultural essentialism which, although necessary, as Rodinson recognised, to establish the basic knowledge of the cultures through his works of translation and commentary, did not add to the knowledge of the range of knowledge of those societies that a fuller understanding required.

2.2 Orientalism and Edward Said

2.2.1 *Orientalism* of 1978

The publication of Said's work *Orientalism* in 1978 introduced a new dynamic into the study of Orientalism.¹⁸⁵ His approach was based on the application of a critical

¹⁸⁵ Said, *Orientalism* (London, Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1978, Penguin Classics, revised edition, 2003), p. 325. This work will be further referenced in the following as 'Said, 2003'.

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literary methodology to textual representations, using philosophical and investigative tools that had not been previously applied to the concepts of Orientalism. By introducing epistemological methods of validation, Said introduced new ideas to modern critical studies of the field. Although Said's work was published after Arberry's death, the work was of such significance in the discussion of Muslim countries by the West that it is seminal in the whole field of study. Scholars of Orientalism of the twentieth century, including Arberry, came to be measured against the critiques made by Said. This makes it necessary to re-assess Said's writings in order to understand Arberry's place in the canon of twentieth-century Oriental and colonial studies.

2.2.2 Said's Approach to Orientalism.

Although a scholar of English and Comparative literature, Said wrote extensively on the subject of Orientalism and Palestine. He wrote a series of three books on the modern relationship between the world of Islam, the Arabs and the Orient on the one hand and, on the other hand, the West, by which he meant France, Britain and especially the United States.¹⁸⁶ His choice of countries to represent the West was criticised, as he omitted, with some limited exceptions, equal consideration of the valuable work by Orientalists in Germany, Spain and Italy, and, in a wider context, Orientalists in Russia and Hungary. His major work, the first in the series, which is considered in detail in the following part of this Chapter, was *Orientalism*, published first in 1978. *The Question of Palestine* followed,¹⁸⁷ which dealt with the interface between the Palestine and 'Zionist movement (later Israel)'.¹⁸⁸ *Covering Islam* was the third in the series, in which he discussed the stereotyping of Islam and Muslim cultures by modern media.¹⁸⁹ His autobiography, *Out of Place*,¹⁹⁰ traced his life in Jerusalem, Cairo and America, and is the subject of a consideration later in this Chapter.

¹⁸⁶ Said, *Covering Islam* (London, Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1981, Vintage Books, 1997), p. xlix. This will be referenced in the following as 'Said, 1981'.

¹⁸⁷ Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York, Times Books, 1979, reprinted edition, New York, Vintage Books, 1992).

¹⁸⁸ Said, 1981, p. xlix.

¹⁸⁹ Said, 1981.

¹⁹⁰ Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London, Granta Books, 1999). This will be referenced in the following as 'Said, 1999'.

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In essence, Said's *Orientalism* provided a commentary on the phenomenon of Orientalism as he found it in Western writings about the East. The aim of his critique was indicated by his statements: 'My project has been to describe a particular system of ideas, not by any means to displace the system with a new one', and that '*Orientalism* is a partisan book not a theoretical machine',¹⁹¹ and further, 'I meant to cast some light on their [Orientalists'] positions so as to make other humanists aware of one field's particular procedures and genealogy'.¹⁹² According to Walker, to Said 'the word *theoria* means the action of observing – for him theory was a dynamic activity not a matter for passive reception', commenting that, 'the theorist critic affects the work he observes and the works themselves are not self-created or autonomous but precipitated in the crucible of society and history'.¹⁹³ Said's thesis was that the works he analysed, the products of Orientalism, had created a dynamic beyond the intention of their authors. Their works themselves instigated attitudes and impressions of the 'Other' that had become deeply imprinted in the consciousness of the West.

The subject of his study was a certain academic tradition, one which dealt with 'a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"'.¹⁹⁴ His focus was on the mass of literature produced by 'poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and imperial administrators'.¹⁹⁵ He wrote that he had adopted as his analytical method Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, described in his books *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, in order to 'to identify Orientalism'¹⁹⁶ which he considered to be a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the East.

Daniel Martin Varisco, in an extensive critical engagement of *Orientalism*, succinctly describes Said's work as 'a text about texts'.¹⁹⁷ Said wrote, 'texts can

¹⁹¹ Said, 2003, p. 340.

¹⁹² Said, 2003, p. 341.

¹⁹³ Marina Walker, *Stranger Magic, Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London, Chatto, Windus, 2011), p. 322.

¹⁹⁴ Said, 2003, p.2.

¹⁹⁵ Said, 2003, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Said, 2003, p. 3. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), transl. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London, Routledge 2002) and *Discipline and Punish* (Paris, Gallimard, 1975).

¹⁹⁷ Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2007), p. 21.

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create (sic) not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it'.¹⁹⁸ Said contented that 'without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormous systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period'.¹⁹⁹

Concentrating on the textual analysis of the written material removed from his attention the factual content of the writings; rather, his concern was with the 'analysis of the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes'.²⁰⁰ This was the central element of his analysis, stating that 'I do not think that this idea can be over emphasised'. The essence of Orientalism was 'the fact that the Orientalist, poet, or scholar makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact'.²⁰¹ This analysis correctly recognised that traditional writers had fixed the Orient with an exterior image in accordance with the conventional Western understanding of the East, and later the standardisation and cultural stereotyping became intensified in the 'postmodern world'.²⁰² Dealing with Middle Eastern issues had become highly sensitive because of the anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West which, with the reaction to the struggle between Arabs and Israeli Zionism, resulted in the 'total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam'.²⁰³

He argued that reliance only on what texts stated would lead to failure to understand the underlying reality implicitly conveyed by them.²⁰⁴ That discrepancy grew from the function assumed by scholars who were distinguished from the subjects of their writings. This difference resulted in an uneven relationship, as may be seen from his statement:

¹⁹⁸ Said, 2003, p. 94.

¹⁹⁹ Said, 2003, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ Said, 2003, p. 21.

²⁰¹ Said, 2003, p. 21.

²⁰² Said, 2003, p. 26.

²⁰³ Said, 2003, p. 27.

²⁰⁴ Said, 2003, p. 92.

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A still more implicit and powerful difference posited by the Orientalist, as against the Oriental is that the former *writes* about, whereas the latter is *written* about. For the latter, passivity is the presumed role; for the former, the power to observe, study and so forth... The Oriental is given as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, in need even of knowledge about himself. No dialectic is either desired or allowed.²⁰⁵

Said appeared to suggest that, in general, Oriental scholars wrote about contemporary societies whereas, in the case of Arberry, his work concentrated on medieval texts and their place within religious literature of their periods, giving contextual accounts of historical developments in order to locate the texts within their backgrounds. We have seen in the discussion on Abdel-Malek that it was not his purpose to consider contemporary sociological or economic conditions or envisaged that they should be the subjects for study in the future.

2.2.3 Said's Concept of Orientalism

Having set out how he proposed to analyse Orientalism, the question then arose as to what he understood by the concept. A Christian Palestinian, latterly a United States citizen, Said wrote that he had been acutely affected by political events in the Middle East. The difficulties, by which he mainly meant those of Palestine, impacted greatly on his personal feelings as he told his readers: 'Orientalism is written out of an extremely concrete history of personal loss and national disintegration'.²⁰⁶ He was motivated by 'my own experiences [which] are in part what made me write this book. The life of Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening'.²⁰⁷ His experiences are a theme underlying his work and I suggest that they are important for the understanding of what prompted his critique. A later section in this Chapter considers how Said's personal views were formed and how they changed over his life.

Instead of providing a basic definition of 'Orientalism', he wrote that 'by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent'.²⁰⁸ In his view the term 'Orientalism' was not confined to a particular geographical area or

²⁰⁵ Said, 2003, p. 308.

²⁰⁶ Said, 2003, p. 338.

²⁰⁷ Said, 2003, p. 27.

²⁰⁸ Said, 2003, p. 2.

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field of study, but covered diverse subjects having common attributes under a general theme. Said was reticent to define the geographical or even the virtual abstract or intellectual entity which he regarded as the 'Orient'. From an American standpoint, the term 'Orient' had more meaning in relation to China, Japan and the 'Far East', but expanded American political and economic roles in what Said called 'the Near East (the Middle East)', using modern American terminology, required greater awareness of that Orient.²⁰⁹ For the purposes of his arguments in *Orientalism*, Said's concept of the Orient was of a cultural enterprise²¹⁰ rather than having a definite physical location. The location of the Orient was set out in more precise terms in his *The Question of Palestine* in which he wrote that during the last thirty years of the nineteenth-century the 'Orient', from a European viewpoint, was everything east of an imaginary line drawn between Greece and Turkey,²¹¹ a distinction that omitted consideration of Egypt, the Maghrib or the rest of the African continent that had also been the subjects of scholarly Orientalist attention. We can explore in more detail the way in which he developed his discourse. In 2003, he wrote:

'Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient. Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically as a topic of learning, discovery and practice. But in addition I have been using the word to describe that collection of dreams, images and vocabulary available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line'.²¹²

Said, in common with commentators on Islam, such as Rodinson²¹³ and Daniel,²¹⁴ brigaded their views of Western approaches to the subject as matters of 'image' in the sense of regarding a distant object, not having immediate concrete form. This logocentric, abstract approach, which omitted other means of representing Muslim cultures, is considered in more detail below. Said, for his part, tackled the identification of what he considered to be Orientalism by way of

²⁰⁹ Said, 2003, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Said, 2003, p.4.

²¹¹ Said, 1992 edition, p. 3.

²¹² Said, 2003, p. 73.

²¹³ Rodinson, 1974.

²¹⁴ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford, OneWorld Publications, 1960, reprinted 1997, 2000, 2003, paperback 2009).

description rather than by definition, and in so doing recognised three elements that described his concept.

An obvious first grouping of Orientalists within his broad description were academics and their institutions: 'Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism'.²¹⁵ Said did not distinguish between the wide range of persons who fell within the scope of his description. As Varisco commented, the range of scholars included those who had been critical of work on Oriental subjects as well as others, for example Goldhizer, who had been acclaimed for the quality of their work.²¹⁶ Said's description, according to Varisco, would also have encompassed Arab and Muslim writers on Oriental subjects who would not have produced works of the negative nature criticised by Said. Varisco used the comment of Samir Amin to show that Orientalism was not merely the accumulation of all that had been written by Western specialists and scholars but was better expressed as the 'ideological construction of a mythical "Orient" having an immutable nature in contrast to the characteristics of the West.'²¹⁷

In a second extended description, as we have seen, he wrote that, 'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the "Occident"'.²¹⁸ Varisco argued that there was a degree of circular logic in Said's description,²¹⁹ as the elements criticised were the same as those that created the distinction. To this is added what may be taken as a further element of criticism of eastern cultures, as this description is applied to 'a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators' who had 'accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novel, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind" , destiny and so on'.²²⁰ Varisco

²¹⁵ Said, 2003, p. 2.

²¹⁶ Varisco, p. 43.

²¹⁷ Varisco, p. 46, quoting Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism (L'eurocentrisme)*, translated from French by Russell Moore (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1989).

²¹⁸ Said, 2003, p. 2.

²¹⁹ Varisco, p. 49.

²²⁰ Said, 2003, p. 2.

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identified other critiques of the apparent distinction between West and East, and the question of geographical accuracy of distinctions within societies; problems lay to the West of Europe as well as to the East (American colonies and Ireland) and the societal North-South divide of Europe indicated that Europe was not a 'homogenised geographical space of Orientalists'.²²¹

Said then moved on to the third strand of his description, by which his concept of Orientalism, beyond being a merely literary technique, was applicable to the political and practical methods of controlling the Orient:

Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the orient— dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.²²²

This can be taken to mean an animus 'to promote European imperialism and colonialism'²²³ by a system of knowledge production created by the West to manage the Orient, which would become an object of Western quasi-possession.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these three facets of Orientalism is that Said saw it as a Western creation, serving Western purposes. It was not a phenomenon found in the East, existing independently within its societies and the communities. From the outset, then, Orientalism carried forward two traits: (1) a newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe, and (2) a proclivity to divide, subdivide and re-divide its subject matter, without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object.²²⁴

The Orient, according to Said became a field of study, discrete in its ambit, to which matters categorised as being connected with it were consigned to a 'bin called "Oriental"'²²⁵ and made subject to a uniform Western approach in its study.

I suggest Said used a distillation of ideas derived from his experiences and from his reading of Oriental scholars to create an image of how he believed the West

²²¹ Varisco, p. 52.

²²² Said, 2003, p. 3.

²²³ A. L. Macfie, *Orientalism* (London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), p. 8.

²²⁴ Said, 2003, p. 98.

²²⁵ Said, 2003, p. 102.

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saw the East, and that image became for him Orientalism. By using a static Western construct to understand the true nature of the phenomenon of 'the Orient', a fundamental difficulty arises as his critiques themselves did not represent the reality of life in Muslim countries. An alternative view would be that Said's approach provided analytical tools by which the canon of western Orientalism was put into a sharper perspective, drawing elements from the works of Orientalists they would not otherwise have seen. By presenting a new focus on how the Orient was expressed he drew attention to the assumptions and conventions implicit in their works. According to Said, in a later work, 'My analysis of the Orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations as *representations*. The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, normative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original'.²²⁶

Said imposed three qualifications upon his concept of 'Orientalism'. Firstly, the phenomenon 'deals principally not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as a career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with the "real" Orient'.²²⁷ Secondly, that 'ideas, culture, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configuration of power, being studied'. He added, 'The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'.²²⁸ His third qualification was that 'Orientalism is more particular valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient (which is what in its academic or scholarly form, it claims to be)'. Orientalism was an 'accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness'.²²⁹

Said was concerned with devices of image and representation. In discussing the issue of representation, Said referred, for example, to Massignon for failing to describe the beliefs of an 'average' or 'common' Muslim. He wrote:

²²⁶ Cited by Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 30 (25th July 1992), pp. 98–116, at page 105.

²²⁷ Said, 2003, p. 5.

²²⁸ Said, 2003, p. 5.

²²⁹ Said, 2003, p. 6.

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‘as this book has tried to demonstrate, Islam *has* (sic) been fundamentally misrepresented in the West – the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or, whether any and all representations, because they *are* (sic) representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer.’²³⁰

By way of illustration, he gave the example of the scholar who, on finding a previously lost manuscript and proclaiming it to be ‘found,’ was in effect placing the discovery in a context already defined by him, a context not provided by the work itself, nor by its author or the circumstances within which it had been composed. The description ‘found’ for the manuscript could be understood only in the context of the West where works of the past were inserted into a preconceived frame, dictated by a tradition entirely different from that of the original.

He believed that the provenance of the Orientalist was an amalgam of the influences on him, as well as what he might have considered to be the ‘truth’, and even that was a product of his background, not derived from the source of the object being studied. He wrote: ‘My whole point about this system is... that it operates for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual and even economical setting’.²³¹ His conclusion, that works on the Orient were produced to meet expected demands and to contemporary standards, can be seen to apply to Arberry, as we will discuss in the next Chapter, whose works included those aimed at a non-academic readership as well as scholarly works, produced according to his understanding of the academic Oriental conventions of the time of his writing. Said’s remarks concerning the relevance of the setting in which works on Oriental subjects were written applied to discourses by Orientalists on the subject of Islam and its importance as a religion and a determinant of the conduct of Muslim society. Islam was integral to many of Arberry’s works, as we will discuss, however the way in which it was studied revealed underlying attitudes towards the nature of Orientalism, as Said’s analysis of American studies of Islam showed.

Said distinguished between the attitudes of critics of Islam and other tendencies that were ostensibly less antagonistic towards the religion. One,

²³⁰ Said, 2003 p. 272.

²³¹ Said, 2003 p. 273.

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according to Said, was Gustave von Grunebaum (1909–1972, Professor of Arabic at University of Chicago 1949–1957, and afterwards Professor of Near Eastern History at UCLA at Los Angeles), for being reductive and negative towards Islam.²³² Von Grunebaum, according to Said, portrayed Islam in the way of the ‘earlier European Orientalists –monolithic, scornful of ordinary human experience, gross, reductive, unchanging’.²³³ This criticism was justified in respect of the attitudes of the first European encounters with Islam when Christian writers translated the Qur’an in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity, as Arberry discussed in the Preface to his translation.²³⁴

The second tendency recognised by Said was of an approach that was not based on polemical criticism but relied rather on inadequate evidence on which to draw conclusions: ‘Islam is rarely studied, rarely researched, rarely known’.²³⁵ In Arberry’s case, the basis of his works was Islam, which was a constant theme and subject, as is seen from his translations of the works of Islamic theologians and poets, Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980–1037) and Jalāl al-Din Rūmī (1207–1273) being but two examples. However, underlying those tendencies, Said, in his survey of the literature on the treatment of Islam from the period of the Enlightenment to the time of writing (1978), identified a clear pattern in the attitudes among Orientalists. Said viewed the way in which they dealt with the subjects of the Arabs and Islam as being the essence of the phenomenon of Orientalism, which were expressed ‘in their purest form today’.²³⁶ The conclusions he drew from that literature were expressed in the form of ‘dogmas’ which I suggest can be regarded as encapsulating Said’s view of the field of Orientalism. He listed the ‘dogmas’ in the following terms:

Let us recapitulate them here: one is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, and inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a “classical” Oriental civilisation, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining

²³² Said, 2003, p. 296.

²³³ Said, 2003, p. 299.

²³⁴ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1955), p. 7.

²³⁵ Said, 2003, p. 300.

²³⁶ Said, 2003, p. 300.

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itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalised and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically “objective.” A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation, whenever possible).²³⁷

This analysis, I suggest, although expressing a generalist view, identifies accurately the principal attributes of Orientalist and imperialistic attitudes which were recognisable from practices of Western countries for the greater part of their involvement with the east. I discuss imperialistic attitudes in more detail later in this Chapter. Said’s analysis, however, tends to omit the nuances in the attitudes of individual Orientalists, whether scholars or others, who fell within his wide description of Orientalists. Arberry, for one, expressed his admiration and respect for works he discussed or translated, and the way in which certain texts, including the Qur’an, benefitted him personally. Other writers converted to Islam, such as Pickthall, Martin Lings (1909–2005, who adopted the name Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn) and Gai Eaton (Charles le Gai Eaton, 1921–2010, who adopted the name Hasan le Gai Eaton or Hassan Abdul Hakeem).

In his ‘Afterword’ of 1995, Said softened his view:

‘My position is that in the case of essential Islam or Orient, these images are no more than images, and are upheld as such both by the community of the Muslim faithful and (the correspondence is significant) by the community of Orientalists. My objection to what I have called Orientalism is not that it is just the antiquarian study of Oriental languages, societies and peoples but that as a system of thought it approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint.’²³⁸

He said that this position hid historic change, both within the Orient and within the work of Orientalists themselves. The traditional Orientalist stance with regard to the East was overtaken, after the Second World War, by the growth of Area Studies, especially in America, arising from emerging economic and political dynamics. The change, impelled further by the Arab-Israeli war and the oil crisis of the mid-1970s,

²³⁷ Said, 2003, pp. 300–301.

²³⁸ Said, 2003, p. 333 (Afterword).

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was not such that changed the fundamental essentialist view traditionally taken of the East and its incidents.

The key issues that can be drawn from Said's understanding of Orientalism may be summarised as an attitude taken by scholars of the Middle East derived from their study of texts not from direct empirical observation. That attitude imposed on the East a convention of how it should be understood. More recent analysts have taken a more critical stance on Said's view of Orientalism, possibly better informed by the events that have taken place in the world, and especially in the Middle East, since Said published his books in the 1970s. Changes in western countries, and in community relationships within their own societies, have developed critical attitudes towards the recent past. A recent statement succinctly described Said's view of Orientalism as 'a Western discourse that essentialises the Muslim world in pejorative ways, one intimately entwined with the imposition of imperial power and offering ideological justifications for it'.²³⁹ Despite the changes that have taken place since the publication of the book, the author recognised, in conclusion, that it appeared impossible to escape from the 'cultural essentialism that, for Said, was the hallmark of Orientalism'.²⁴⁰

2.2.4 Literature Review: The Critical Reception of *Orientalism*

Ansari stated that '[e]ver since the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978 there has been a great deal of debate about Edward Said's thesis and propositions',²⁴¹ a debate which, according to another observer, would be 'presumptuous [indeed] to ignore or emulate'.²⁴² *Orientalism*, essentially the application of a critical literary methodology, by an eminent scholar of literature upon an identified body of Western writing, caused critical responses in journal articles and book reviews, which, in some cases, were early reactions which followed the publication of the book. Criticism of Orientalism was not new, as has been seen in the critiques of Abdul-Malek, Tibawi, Turner and Rodinson, but what was novel was Said's approach of using literature

²³⁹ K. Humayun Ansari, 'The Muslim World in British Historical Imaginations: Re-thinking *Orientalism*', *British Journal of Middle East Studies* (38(1), April 2011), p. 73.

²⁴⁰ Ansari, p. 93.

²⁴¹ Ansari, p. 73.

²⁴² G. Michael Wickens, 'Western Scholarship on the Middle East', *Comparative Civilisations Review*, Vol. 13, No. 13, (1985), Article 6, p. 62.

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about the Orient as a basis for his analysis. Reviews of the work, I suggest, were based on already entrenched understanding of Orientalism without necessarily engaging with the new paradigm created by Said. His approach was also made from a personal perspective, unlike the experiences of previous Western Orientalists. It is necessary, I suggest, to view the critiques of his work with the caveats of when they were made and whether they engaged with the essence of Said's intentions.

One group of reactions was towards the perceived shortcomings of the book because of its omission of reference to established academics and to specific issues that the reviewers thought important. Among that group was C. F. Beckingham. For him the difficulties of the book were that the scope of the book was nothing as extensive as its title suggested; it was limited in the periods studied, and 'Islam apart from the Arabs receives very little attention', and that the Arabs discussed were confined to those of Arabia, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent.²⁴³ His review, with reason, referred to certain inaccuracies and inconsistencies found in the book, to the partiality in selecting sources and its omission of relevant writings. Another who found the coverage of the book inadequate was Bryan Turner, who also referred to the omissions of major Orientalists, such as Montgomery Watt, 'who within the context of overt Christian religious preferences have made major sympathetic contributions to the study of Islam, but those writers are ignored. The same might also be same for the Islamology of Kenneth Cragg, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and J Spencer Trimingham'.²⁴⁴ I have shown that although Watt came under criticism from Tibawi, his works on Islam and Muhammad have been critically supported.

The methodology of the book was the subject of criticism by reviewers. Dalby pointed out that Said's critique did not offer substantive alternatives to the shortcomings which he identified in Orientalism; neither did he develop the issues analytically and historically.²⁴⁵ Gran identified that Said's methodology made European culture itself to be the subject of study, as the book created a phenomenon reflective of its own concerns, rather than those of the societies claimed to be studied. Too great an emphasis was placed on the methodology of

²⁴³ C. F. Beckingham, 'Edward W. Said: Orientalism. xi, 368 pp. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978', *BSOAS UL*, Vol 42, No. 3 (1979), pp. 562–564.

²⁴⁴ Bryan Turner, 'Review of Orientalism', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 14, Nos 1–2 (Winter-Spring, 1981), pp. 107–112.

²⁴⁵ Michael Dalby, 'Nocturnal Labors in the Light of Day. Reviewed work: Orientalism by Edward W. Said', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (May 1980), pp. 485–493.

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the philosophical traditions of Western scholars who faced a cultural system based on totally different philosophies and attitudes. The provenance of Said's approach, the world of Foucault, Gramsci and Marx, by which Said treated Orientalism as 'discourse', presented the West with its own version of the Orient. Gran saw that Said's theories were on the whole beneficial:

'For those who work with the large corpus of writings on the image of Islam, or the Arabs in Western thought or the equally voluminous and equally unstructured body of writings on the history of Orientalist activities in different countries, Edward Said provides a theory, a way of understanding a vast body of knowledge... The work must be understood as providing the outlines of a new theory as well as a critique of positivism in conventional cultural history.'

Eventually the stasis of conventional attitudes was overtaken by a metamorphosis to area studies, reflecting the impetus demanded by the funders of political, economic and commercial imperatives.²⁴⁶

The methodology adopted by Said, according to Kerr, was the root of the problem: 'In charging the entire tradition of European and American Oriental studies with the sins of reductionism and caricature (sic), he commits precisely the same error'.²⁴⁷ He further commented that 'distinguished and even sympathetic' writers, including Massignon and Gibb, observed the East as a distinctly different, peculiarly Islamic society, by thinking that religion effectively defined the whole character and outlook of its adherents. Kerr recognised that Said questioned the assumption that the daily life of Muslims was so overwhelmingly defined only by religion, instead of them being seen as having economic, social, political and personal interests and struggles like other people, concerns that arose from their own material and historical circumstances especially from the effects of colonialism.

We have seen Said's views on the influence of colonialism and western domination of the Middle East. The opposition to that influence so motivated him, according to Kerr, that Said's approach changed: 'Once possessed of that conviction Said turns from an imaginative critic to a relentless polemicist'. Kerr

²⁴⁶ Peter Gran, 'Review: Orientalism by Edward Said', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (July–October 1980), pp. 328–331.

²⁴⁷ Malcolm H. Kerr, 'Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Dec. 1980), pp. 544–547.

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suggested that Said failed to recognise the importance of Islam in the fabric of Muslim society, despite the fact, I suggest, that Said's upbringing had been amongst such a society.

According to Kerr, a basic omission in Said's work was a lack of a more comprehensive consideration of writers on Orientalism, for example, scholars, including Arberry, and contemporary scholars from other countries, a 'veritable army of luminaries', were omitted by Said. Kerr argued that the critique of scholars in *Orientalism* was further based on a view of an established cadre of writers who 'propagated the old racist myths of European Orientalism in order to further the cause of Western domination of the East'. The outcome of the critique, as he correctly identified, was that Oriental scholarship was self-perpetuating and questionable. A greater challenge, according to Kerr, would have been to expose the resistance of scholars to oppose the 'anti-Islamic prejudice in American society', by doing so Kerr introduced an ideological element into the debate.

The academic response to '*Orientalism*', therefore, comprised reactions to the post-modernist methodology and to the message that Said sought to convey, although opinions varied as to whether the model was entirely new or a re-statement of established attitudes towards orientalism. Said's propositions came under criticism by Robert Irwin, who in strong language declared it 'a scandal and a damning comment on the quality of intellectual life in Britain in recent decades that Said's argument about Orientalism could ever be taken seriously', describing *Orientalism* as presenting a 'picture of the world richly imagined, but essentially fictional'.²⁴⁸ That view was essentially a polemic against Said's attempts to bring a new way of thinking into the world of Oriental studies. A more measured and analytical approach was made by Fred Halliday (1946–2010) in his lecture, *Orientalism and its Critics*.

Fred Halliday expressed his belief in the validity of social science for discussing the question of Orientalism. For social scientists, the core of the discussion was the terms on which that analysis could be undertaken.²⁴⁹ Critiques of Orientalism had been made before in the 1960s from leftist and anti-imperialist perspectives of the Third World, as we have seen in the cases of Abdel-Malek and

²⁴⁸ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* (London, Penguin Books, 2007), p. 309.

²⁴⁹ Fred Halliday, 'Orientalism and its Critics', *BJMES*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1993), p. 145.

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Tibawi. Halliday regarded Said's work as coming at the end of those critiques, in effect negating those arguments by using a literary critical methodology to the phenomenon of Orientalism.²⁵⁰ Said made the debate on Orientalism one of a discourse of European domination or imperialism.²⁵¹

Halliday considered that Said had concentrated on what had been written about the Middle East, choosing to focus on the discourses about the region in contrast to other studies that considered social, political or economic issues.²⁵² Halliday was not prepared to align himself with either approach but considered that a more objective way of approaching the issue of Orientalism was to analyse the issue by firstly considering how to evaluate writing on the Middle East and how to write about its societies, secondly deciding on the methodology of social analysis, whether to adopt the traditional approach based on classical studies or a critical approach to writing which was a discourse derived from post-modernism. Oriental writing, he saw, could be distilled into three themes: language, religion and historical change,²⁵³ although the concept of Orientalism itself was contestable.²⁵⁴ The term was used by Said to cover so many different epochs and ways of expression that the term lost 'analytical or explanatory purchase'.²⁵⁵

Halliday stated that Said's debate about Orientalism was erroneously based on the concept that it was by the study of language and literature alone that the path to the study of political and social ideas could be found. The study of Islam, defined by its classical texts and traditions, could be seen not only as a phenomenon pervading most of life in the Middle East but also as an independent variable that contained many different aspects, like sociology, the world of Islam, or the Islamic city, all of which could be described as the Islamic tradition or 'Islamic society'.²⁵⁶ However, the mainstay of the Orientalist position was that there was an impossibility of change within Islam, and those who saw progress were seen as idealists.²⁵⁷ What was presented as Islamic tradition included also negative aspects: the lack of an entrepreneurial class, the frailty of democracy, the hostility towards Israel, the

²⁵⁰ Halliday, p. 148.

²⁵¹ Halliday, p. 149.

²⁵² Halliday, p. 150.

²⁵³ Halliday, p. 152.

²⁵⁴ Halliday, p. 158.

²⁵⁵ Halliday, p. 158.

²⁵⁶ Halliday, p. 151.

²⁵⁷ Halliday, p. 152.

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insecurity of boundaries and the apparent rejection of modernisation, the irrationality, cruelty, and terrorism that characterised Middle Eastern politics, which all related to a temporal Islam or what was described as ‘the Arab mind’. All this was attributed by the Orientalists to the timeless recurrence of Islamic practice, in effect stagnation.²⁵⁸

Halliday’s analysis was coincident with elements of the views of Abdul-Malek, Tibawi, Turner, Rodinson and Kerr. It is arguable that had Said adopted the substantive issues, as identified by the critics, he could have contributed usefully to a body of understanding of the dynamic elements of Islamic society of which he was able to speak, but his arguments rested on the outward form of Orientalism. Halliday’s view was that ‘when the cult of language was tied to the idea of the Arabic or Islamic mind or the essence of the “Muslim” and his society’, it then became a ‘flight from serious social analysis’.²⁵⁹ That was not Said’s intention; his work deliberately set out to be an exercise in postmodernist literary analysis. The question arises whether Said chose to use the scholastic tools with which he was familiar, and in which he was an expert, because he was not confident of engaging fully with Oriental scholars, as theirs was a specialist field in which he had insufficient experience or knowledge. Halliday identified further problems with Said’s approach. Firstly, the term ‘Orientalism’ as used by Said was contestable, especially as it was seen as the core of his critique of a wide range of literature. In the search for an expressive totality of all that Said wished to cover, it was only one of a number, others could have been economics, hermeneutics, empiricism, euro-centralism but ‘Orientalism’, a term gaining an ‘almost metaphysical power’, became too vague for specific analysis.²⁶⁰ Secondly, the ‘Orient’ as a category was imprecise. Said concentrated on the Middle East but, according to Halliday, ‘the claim of special European animosity towards Arabs or Muslims does not bear historical comparison’,²⁶¹ a comment that appears to be justified when consideration is given to the exploitative treatment by Europeans of the civilisations of the Americas, Africa and other parts of the world. The claim that ‘They are all the same’ might be applied

²⁵⁸ Halliday, p. 152.

²⁵⁹ Halliday, p. 155.

²⁶⁰ Halliday, p. 158.

²⁶¹ Halliday, p. 158.

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to any foreign civilisation but, as Halliday pointed out, the myth about Arabs, Islam and the Orient was a convenient vehicle for the West, and for Said, to sustain.²⁶²

Thirdly, the relation between the genesis of ideas and their validity became confused. Halliday stated that it was a fact that Europe did create a world after its own image, and whether that fact is or is not acceptable to later scholars was irrelevant. As a corollary, if dominance had been the overt objective of European writers, an accurate practical knowledge about the subject matter would have been preferable to a vague secondary approach, based on literary impressions and outdated information.²⁶³

Lastly there was, according to Halliday, a problem of the analysis, or lack of analysis, of ideas or ideologies from the Middle East itself. No consideration was given to the manner in which the tenets of 'Orientalism' were considered in the region itself. It was open to either side of the debates to make their own myths, as those of the dominated could be as equally potent as those of the dominator. The 'West' as a generic term could be used just as pejoratively as an indicator of abuse and exploitation as 'Orientalism.'²⁶⁴ Relying on vague terminology could result in all scholars, in both East and West, falling into the same trap of generalisation.

Halliday analysed issues of *Orientalism* as a social scientist, but without relying overly on a strictly 'scientific' view that used quantification, predictive techniques or rigorous methodologies, preferring to use qualitative judgement and application of values in a discourse on the subject. He was not enthusiastic for some of Said's writing, referring to *Covering Islam*, one of the three works by which Said introduced his critiques of Orientalism, as 'his least illuminating book' and as 'a naïve critique of press coverage' being about 'attitudes, consciousness, rhetoric, identity discourse, *not* (sic) facts'.²⁶⁵ This criticism, I suggest, indicates Halliday's overall approach to Said's standpoint. Instead of using data that could be measured, analysed and subjected to comparisons, Said's work was motivated by subjective reactions to what he observed in Western attitudes to the Middle East, the outcome of which could not have been a scientific appraisal of the subject. Efforts made after the books were published to categorise Said's approach into existing methodologies

²⁶² Halliday, p. 159.

²⁶³ Halliday, p. 160.

²⁶⁴ Halliday, p. 161.

²⁶⁵ Halliday, p. 150.

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or to evaluate them according to contemporary thinking mistook Said's intentions, as we have seen in the reactions of the critics discussed above. Halliday, having recognised that Said had embarked on a new type of study, nevertheless judged Said for extrapolating his experiences of colonialism and imperialism into a basis for criticism. I suggest that Said was justified in expressing his opposition to what he believed to be the failures of Euro-centralism and imperialism in their treatment of the Middle East which included Western attitudes to Islam. Said regarded Islam as remaining 'forever in the Orientalist's idea (or type) of *original* cultural effrontery' as opposed to the Christian West.²⁶⁶ It was Western antagonism towards Islam that caused Norman Daniel to adopt a 'scientific' approach for the purpose of establishing 'a series of facts' about Islam and Muhammad.²⁶⁷

Daniel recognised what he called the 'scientific treatment of Islam', by which he meant 'emancipation from medieval modes of thought',²⁶⁸ and commended the approaches of Gibb and Rodinson; the latter he described as a 'brilliantly effective' scholar who wrote 'in the shadow of colonialism, conscious of it and sensitive to Muslim feeling'.²⁶⁹ However, in contrast to their approach "'scientific" objectivity' had been 'infiltrated by subjective ideas of cultural, political and social prejudice' for which he held Said responsible: 'the condemnation by Edward Said in his *Orientalism* of the assumed superiority and cultural intolerance of the orientalist tradition in the West was not only justifiable but overdue'.²⁷⁰

Although Said 'overstates his case or misses hitting his main target fair and square', according to Daniel, he abundantly demonstrated that the academics of the previous hundred years were 'patronising and guilty of double standards'.²⁷¹ The intention of the 'great orientalists' to make 'impartial judgments' was itself a 'major achievement', although that did not enable them to escape from the 'bundle of

²⁶⁶ Said, 2003, p. 260.

²⁶⁷ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image* (Oxford, One World Publications, 2009), p. 9.

²⁶⁸ Daniel, p. 323.

²⁶⁹ Daniel, p. 324.

²⁷⁰ Daniel, p. 324.

²⁷¹ Daniel, p. 324.

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inherited prejudices of all kinds.²⁷² Daniel's critique of Said was of the type seen by Varisco as finding resonance amongst some established Orientalists.²⁷³

Opposition to Said's approach had been expected from the type of 'old fashioned academic Orientalist who interprets the reality of Orientals through fancifully biased images derived from texts' but Varisco concluded, as we have shown in the case of Daniel, that scholars and students 'have in the main accepted Said's exposure of the biases and methodological dogmatics that for so long had dominated academic and popular treatment of most things Oriental'.²⁷⁴ Varisco showed that contrary to that expectation, the 'main opposition to Said has come from the modern-day American Middle East expert' who represented the type of 'political scientists and protagonists in present-day Arab-Israeli politics'.²⁷⁵ According to him, the term Orientalism had almost become redundant: since the early 1970s, new attitudes to the Middle East had resulted in the effective termination of the term in twenty-first century American academic discourse to be replaced by 'area programs in Middle Eastern or Asian studies'.²⁷⁶ Said's choice of Orientalism as a vehicle to express his post-colonial and anti-imperialistic criticism of Western attitudes to the Middle East, according to Varisco's view, was misguided.²⁷⁷ The concept had been the subject of doubt from the early part of the twentieth century²⁷⁸ and in 1973 the First International Congress of Orientalists decided to abandon the term altogether.²⁷⁹ By 1978, when *Orientalism* was published, the term had outlived its usefulness among scholars 'but also the notion that whole cultures could be encyclopedically pedantically from exotic texts alone'.²⁸⁰

²⁷² Daniel, p. 324.

²⁷³ Daniel Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2007) p. 8. He refers to Daniel Martin, 'Orientalism Again', in Derek Hopwood ed., *Studies in Arab History: The Antonius Lectures 1978–87* (New York, St. Martins), pp. 178–189 and to Oliver Leaman, 'Orientalism and Islamic Philosophy', in *History of Islamic Philosophy, II*, eds Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 1143–1148.

²⁷⁴ Varisco, p. 8.

²⁷⁵ Varisco, p. 9.

²⁷⁶ Varisco, p. 32.

²⁷⁷ Varisco, p. 32.

²⁷⁸ Varisco, p. 32 refers to the address of James Henry Breasted to the American Oriental Society in 1919: 'The heavy burden of recovering and mastering the lost oriental languages has made us orientalists chiefly philologists and verbalists equipped to utilize written documents, and a little perplexed and bewildered in the presence of other kinds of evidence', in: 'The Place of the Near Orient in the Career of Man and the Task of the American Orientalist', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 39 (1919), p. 169.

²⁷⁹ Varisco, p. 32.

²⁸⁰ Varisco, p. 33.

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Varisco saw that the value of *Orientalism*, despite its 'manifest flaws', lay in the way it stimulated debate 'over ways in which representations is never just a description of manners and customs, modern or otherwise'²⁸¹ The book's value lies in providing a means for the evaluation of approaches of the Orientalists up to mid-twentieth century and in opening new dimensions to the ways in which Oriental studies could be viewed as can be seen from our consideration of Arberry's works.

Critiques of *Orientalism* were not confined to the West as the book had an impact on critics who viewed it from the standpoint of the East, but the outcomes were disappointing, revealing missed opportunities and the omission of progressive arguments. Poor translation of *Orientalism* into Arabic, according to Sabry Hafez, itself created unexpected reactions:

'Thanks to the opacity of the translation ardent opponents of modernity and Westernisation in the Arab world, Islamists and traditionalists who would logically be enemies of Said's culture and ideological stance, instead exuberantly embraced the book, perceiving it as a new rendering of their traditional attack on the Orientalists, articulating in the language of their own adversaries their grievances and sense of injustice vis-à-vis the West.'²⁸²

Hafez wrote that 'It is ironic that they saw the text so radically at odds with their own approach as an extension of their attack on the works of the Orientalists, an attack which in their case had been historically motivated by religious convictions and in the belief that the Orientalists' aim had been to undermine Islam and distort its image'. Thus, instead of seeing Said's seminal approach as exposing and undermining the basis and motivation of the Orientalists' discourse, they considered it as a vindication of their own views, as one in a series of diatribes against the misrepresentation of Islam in European discourse. In the process, the crux of Said's argument – concerning the derivation of knowledge and power, the complicity of discourse in the dynamics of hegemony and imperialism and the fabrication of an inferior Orient as justification for its subjugation and conquest – were completely overlooked. More importantly Said's implicit call for the Orient 'to represent itself and purge the culture of the traces and sedimentation of the Orientalist legacy was lost.'

²⁸¹ Varisco, p 39.

²⁸² Sabry Hafez, 'Edward W Said's Intellectual Legacy in the Arab World', *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 33, Special Issue in Honor of Edward W. Said, Spring 2004 (University of California Press), pp 76–90.

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For Muhsin Mahdi, *Orientalism* was an account of the impressions that the body of literature made on Said, but 'he went beyond this and imputed to Orientalism a vision of reality that it could never have created for itself. For throughout modern history, Orientalism has been a by-product of influential currents in Western thoughts and attitudes, both sublime and vulgar. The political vision of reality imputed to Orientalism, for instance, was not created but merely confirmed by Orientalism. And so far as the practical use of Orientalism is concerned it was used for practical or political ends just as any other type of knowledge that is thought to be practically useful is promoted and used by society and its leaders'.²⁸³

In their reactions, critics of *Orientalism* captured essential elements of Arberry's work in the field. Although it was not Said's intention to deal in detail with the works of scholars, Arberry's intention was to reach deeply into the writings of Arab and Persian writers, and engage in the theological debates of Islam. He traversed the views of Ṣūfis, poets and philosophers, producing valuable works in translation. It cannot be claimed that Arberry adopted a totally new approach towards Islam by emancipating himself entirely from medieval thought, as Daniel described, although he maintained a sympathetic and positive view towards the religion. It is true, however, that he did not concern himself with the economic and social conditions of Muslim countries, or the lives of their people, either in the Middle Ages or later.

2.2.5 The Material 'Image' of Orientalism: The Concrete Reality

Writers on Orientalism and Islam have been concerned with the 'image' of Islam. It has been seen above that Rodinson's *The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam*,²⁸⁴ and Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*²⁸⁵ focussed on the abstract idea of the subject and the way in which the West portrayed Muslim civilisations, notably images of the religion of Islam which had been formed primarily by the antagonistic attitudes of the medieval Western Church. Islam and

²⁸³ Muhsin Mahdi, 'The Study of Islam, Orientalism and America', in *Mapping Islamic Studies, Genealogy, Continuity and Change*, ed. Azim Nanji (Berlin, De Gruyter, 1997), p. 174.

²⁸⁴ Rodinson, 'The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam', in *The Image of Islam*, eds. late Joseph Schacht with C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, Oxford University Press, second ed., 1974).

²⁸⁵ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford, OneWorld Publications, 1960, reprinted 1997, 2000, 2003, paperback edition 2009).

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the Muslim civilisations became the subjects of academic discussion and study as paper-based exercises. However, there is another meaning to the image of Islam and of the Muslim civilisations which had a possibly more potent impact on the way in which people in the West came to view the Orient.

Representation of the Orient in the West by physical image, artefact and pictorial design and debating their effects has been less prominent than other critiques. It is arguable that popular Western views of the Orient were formed more by images seen by the public than by the impressions gained from reading the texts of early Oriental scholars, whose works, although often stated to be attempts at popularising Eastern cultures, were more likely to be read by the educated classes and those with some prior knowledge of the East, except for works such as FitzGerald's *Rubāiyāt* and editions of *The Arabian Nights*. By widening the scope of understanding Orientalism, and considering its other aspects, it is possible to add another dimension to the assessment of Said's analysis.

Naish pointed out that art, science and the study of history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depended on the leisure to undertake such studies and the financial means necessary to support such interests.²⁸⁶ Increased material wealth in the West, brought about by industrial developments, led to the growth of urban classes with the time and resources that enabled them to become interested in artefacts brought from eastern countries. It has been shown that Europe became dependent on the East firstly 'for luxuries, presently for necessities, ultimately for markets for her own wares. And with Eastern goods constantly before them, the fascination of these world-old civilisations began to exert itself'.²⁸⁷ The public, since the advent of modern transport, and the completion of the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, had become familiar with goods brought from India and the development of modern printing techniques enabled communication between markets to proceed rapidly. Museums displayed artwork and objects from the East and, as popular culture became more international, more people were enabled to gain knowledge of Oriental art and design.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ John P. Naish, 'The Connection of Oriental Studies with Commerce, Art, and Literature during the 18th-19th Centuries', *The Journal of the Manchester University Egyptian and Oriental Society*, Vol. 13 (1930), p. 33.

²⁸⁷ Naish, p. 35.

²⁸⁸ Naish, p. 37.

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Examination of art works of the Orient confirms Said's logocentric approach. Geographically he omitted Islamic countries such as Persia and the Maghreb, further, by concentrating on the Empires of the West, he did not consider the colonial and imperialist nature of the Ottoman Empire. His positioning of the beginning of Orientalism at the end of the eighteenth century missed both the early depictions of the East in the West and the absorption in the East of images of the West, especially in the illustrations of Western fashions.²⁸⁹ In terms of visual arts, Said did not evaluate the significance of the 'vast artistic and cultural output of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that took aspects of the Orient (specifically the Middle East and North Africa) culture as their theme',²⁹⁰ so omitting the interest within Western societies of Oriental influences on everyday cultural life. Said's critique of texts that described the Orient could have been applied to the methods and practices by which the East was portrayed by visual art, often as admiring and emulative as the texts themselves. Artists who had lived in Muslim countries brought to the West images of religious scenes that sought to convey to the viewer a feeling of the spiritual connection in a way that perhaps Arberry sought to achieve in his translations of the Qur'an and the work of Rūmī.²⁹¹ In both cases it is possible to identify representations of unchanging societies, however sympathetic the written or visual representations might have been, as we will discuss in Chapter 3.3.

According to MacKenzie, the significance of industrialisation in the West and its impact on urban life, as noted by Naish, was a very important response omitted by Said.²⁹² To counter the mechanistic production of goods brought about by the Industrial Revolution, craft movements of the nineteenth century were inspired by the quality and diversity of Eastern arts and artefacts. Fascination with eastern designs entered popular culture and was seen, for example, in the Great Exhibition of 1851 which prompted the production of Eastern designs, and, for example, the publication of *The Grammar of Ornament* by Owen Jones, aimed at encouraging the production of designs inspired by eastern patterns.²⁹³ This kind of patronising

²⁸⁹ William Kynan-Wilson, 'The Origins of Orientalism: A Plurality of Orients and Occidents, c. 1500–1800', in William Greenwood and Lucien de Guise, eds., *Inspired by the East: How the Islamic World influenced Western Art* (London, The British Museum Press, 2019), p. 30.

²⁹⁰ William Greenwood and Lucien de Guise, 'Introduction', in *Inspired by the East*, p. 11.

²⁹¹ Bridgeman, *The Prayer (1877)*, in *Inspired by the East*, p. 106 is an example.

²⁹² John M. MacKenzie, 'The Orientalism Debate', in *Inspired by the East* p. 26.

²⁹³ Catherine L. Futter, "'Beautiful as a Poet's Dream..." Islamic Influence on European Design', in *Inspired by the East*, p. 70.

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cultural appropriation ignores the true meaning of the artefacts, many with religious connotations, that were used.

Lying outside Said's interpretation of Orientalism were technological advances resulting from industrialisation, for example photography, and its impact in Asian countries. Photography became popular amongst the ruling elites of the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. The Ottomans used photography for the purposes of depicting individual power, as propaganda to inform the populace of the eminence of the rulers, and to gain information about the conditions within the Empire. In a similar way, the Qajar court (1789–1925) in its later period embraced the technology to enhance the prestige of the rulers and record their achievements. Depictions of the ethnic population within the Ottoman Empire created a racial difference by which the Europeanised Ottoman hierarchy justified their status, creating an 'Ottoman Orientalism' according to Makdisi, which legitimised its internal hegemony over its subject peoples,²⁹⁴ to which Ali Behdad added that 'Photographic representations of provincials and the lower classes by the Qajar elite engaged in a similar form of local Orientalism'.²⁹⁵ Western practices, adopted by Eastern rulers, copied the Europeanised approach to the Middle East.

These issues question the adequacy of Said's consideration of the Western view of the Orient, and the accuracy of his model, by showing the limitations of his vision which was largely based on what he had seen and remembered in Palestine and Lebanon, and to an exclusive textual field which ignored the wealth of pictorial and artistic imagery. His analysis of the Oriental text relied on the evidence of 'representations *as representations* (sic), not as natural depictions of the Orient'. Although Said's wrote that an analysis of Oriental representation should consider style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances in his reference to 'avowedly artistic (i.e., openly imaginative) text' he did not discuss representation of the Orient other than the textual.²⁹⁶ If Said had discussed the study of a pictorial images, in the way an art historian would, instead

²⁹⁴ Ussama Makdisi quoted in Ali Behdad, 'Orientalism and the History of Photography in the Middle East', in *Inspired by the East*, p. 89.

²⁹⁵ Ali Behdad, 'Orientalism and the History of Photography in the Middle East', in *Inspired by the East*, p. 89.

²⁹⁶ Said, 2003, p. 21.

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of a mere exteriority of descriptive written passages, a more empathetic appreciation of the subject, as suggested by Mary Kelly, would have been more likely to result.²⁹⁷

2.3 Said, Imperialism, and the idea of Empire: The wider context behind *Orientalism*

2.3.1 Orientalism, Imperialism and Colonialism: Meanings

‘To say simply that modern Orientalism has been an aspect of both imperialism and colonialism is not to say anything very disputable. Yet it is not enough to say it; it needs to be worked through analytically and historically’.²⁹⁸

Already previously, Said had asked the rhetorical question, ‘What... sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one?’²⁹⁹ Said used the terms *imperialist* and *imperialism* in relation to the foreign interests of Britain, France and America freely throughout his book. He referred, for example, to ‘that political imperialism that governs the whole field of study’ and to ‘the study of imperialism and culture (or Orientalism)’³⁰⁰ to the ‘imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one’, ‘and to ‘Orientalism’s broadly imperialist view of the world’³⁰¹ without explaining his meaning of the specific nature of the terms.

Said used the term ‘Orientalism’ to identify what he saw as the incidents of the Western dominance of the East. Orientalism was seen as ‘a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself... colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators’.³⁰² Indeed, the inspiration that caused him to write *Orientalism* was said to be his reaction to the disastrous Arab defeat in 1967, his meeting with Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, who recruited him to the Association of Arab American University Graduates, and the anti-Arab media frenzy in 1968 that led to him writing an article for *Arab World* (a monthly journal published by the Arab League in New York) on ‘the

²⁹⁷ Mary Kelly, ‘Orientalism, Orientalist Art and the Making of Meaning’, in *Inspired by the East*, p. 49.

²⁹⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 2003, p. 123.

²⁹⁹ Said, 2003, p. 15.

³⁰⁰ Said, 2003, p. 14.

³⁰¹ Said, 2003, p. 15.

³⁰² Said, 2003, p. 4.

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image of the Arabs in the media, popular literature and cultural representation going back to the Middle Ages'.³⁰³ In what follows we will examine Said's own account of his experiences of the Middle East.

Said wrote that the ruling institutions of the imperial powers, Britain, France, and latterly America, coloured the thinking of their societies, making a direct 'political infusion' into their civil societies, imparting a 'sense of urgency' to the importance of protecting their imperial interests. The importance of Egypt and India as 'British colonies', for example, was held by Said to be constantly in the minds of those serving in those countries. Awareness of the importance of the Empire was part of society's currency of knowledge, supported by all section of society, including the world of academia.³⁰⁴

2.3.2 What inspired Said's view of Colonialism and Imperialism?

This study suggests that Said's views on Imperialism, and its associated incidents, were the direct result of his own experiences as a young man in Palestine and Egypt and the impact those experiences made on him and his family. Said clearly stated that his 'personal investment' in writing *Orientalism* was his 'awareness of being an "Oriental" as a child growing up in two British colonies', receiving a Western form of education, but the awareness of being an 'Oriental' persisted with him and which impelled him to write the book.³⁰⁵ He did not explain what he meant by describing himself as an 'Oriental' in 1978, but his identification with Palestine and its political and social interests became clear from his memoir.

Said gave an extensive account of his boyhood memories in his memoir *Out of Place*, written between 1994 and 1999, a work that was begun following his diagnosis of being affected by a life-threatening disease.³⁰⁶ The memoir covers closely the formative experiences of his early life and the information he provided is significant in seeking to understand his motivations for holding the views expressed in *Orientalism* and in his other writings.

³⁰³ Sabry Hafez, 'Edward Said: Intellectual Legacy in the Arab World', *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 33, Spring 2004, p. 81 quoting Edward Said, 'My Guru: The Death of a Palestinian Intellectual', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 23, No. 24 (13th December 2001), pp. 19–20.

³⁰⁴ Said, 2003, p. 11.

³⁰⁵ Said, 2003, p. 25.

³⁰⁶ Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London, Granta Books, 1999).

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Said describes his memoir as a 'record of a lost or forgotten world' from which his later writing and teaching seemed to take him 'far away from the various worlds and experiences' described in his book.³⁰⁷ The impact of his experiences convinced him that he was an alien, separate from a contemporary world made up of close social affiliations of which he was aware but not a part. That instilled in him a feeling that, in all he saw and felt, he was the one who was 'out of place', a theme that is recurrent throughout his memoir. The feeling of alienation was particularly brought home to him, he recalled, when visiting Jerusalem in 1998, the place in which he had been born in 1935. When asked by Israeli officials whether he had any relatives there, he answered 'No', an incident that 'triggered a sensation of such sadness and loss as I had not expected'. By the spring of 1948, as a result of political upheaval, his entire extended family had 'been swept out of the place, and has remained in exile ever since.'³⁰⁸

Said was drawn closely to his family's connections with Palestine and the Levant, although even there, he felt himself to be outside the wider community. His mother, Hilda, was born in Nazareth in 1914, the daughter of Lebanese Christian parents; her father was described by Said as 'an unappealing, fundamentalist Baptist minister, a harsh patriarch and a repressive husband'.³⁰⁹ She was sent to attend a boarding school in Beirut, which was a missionary institution, and later attended a Christian school in Cairo.

His father, Wadie Ibrahim Said (who later adopted the Anglicised name William Said), was born in Jerusalem in about 1883/5 where he was given a conventional Western education in St. George's School. He went to North America in 1911 to avoid conscription to the Ottoman army in its war in Bulgaria, going firstly to Canada, and then to the United States, where he enlisted with the American Army, serving in France during the First World War.³¹⁰ Because of his mother's ill-health, Wadie Said returned to Jerusalem in 1920, a place which he detested, according to Said. Although he regretted his forced return, he established successful

³⁰⁷ Said, 1999, p. xi.

³⁰⁸ Said, 1999, p. xii.

³⁰⁹ Said, 1999, p. 13.

³¹⁰ Said, 1999, p. 6.

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businesses in Jerusalem and later in Cairo. By an arranged marriage, Wadie (William), at the age of 37, married Hilda aged 18 in 1932.³¹¹

The family having moved to Cairo in the early 1930s, Said described its impact on them as being in 'a gigantic and confusing city in an unfamiliar Arab country, an essentially foreign territory'.³¹² They were 'self-creations – two Palestinians with dramatically different backgrounds and temperaments living in Cairo as members of a Christian minority within a large pond of minorities'.³¹³ They were Protestants, raised as a Palestinian Protestant Christians, attending the Anglican Cathedral, unlike the many other Catholic Christian Lebanese in Cairo.³¹⁴ They were influenced by British colonial attitudes, that, according to Said 'represented both the lords and the general run of the "humankind" they ruled'.³¹⁵

Said was born in Jerusalem. His parents named him Edward after the then Prince of Wales, while he received his father's name Wadie as his second name. Said's relationships with his parents were mixed. He had an 'enraptured state of precarious, highly provisional rapport with my mother, so much so that I really had no friends of my age', but his father represented a 'devastating combination of power and authority... rationalistic discipline' that 'impinged on me my whole life'.³¹⁶

His material upbringing in Cairo was comfortable, but they lived within a cocooned world. The family lived in Zamalek, 'among foreigners and wealthy locals' without there being a 'real community, a sort of colonial outpost whose tone was set by Europeans with whom we had little contact'.³¹⁷ For a time, he attended the Gezira Preparatory School and played at the Gezira Sporting Club, while on Sundays he attended Sunday school at the Anglican All Saints Cathedral in Cairo.³¹⁸ His school gave him his first experience of an organised system set up as a colonial business by the British: 'School gave me my first extended contact with colonial authority in the sheer Englishness of its teachers and many of its students. I had no sustained

³¹¹ Said, 1999, p. 11.

³¹² Said, 1999, p. 14.

³¹³ Said, 1999, p. 19.

³¹⁴ Christopher Catherwood, *A Brief History of the Middle East* (London, Constable & Robinson, 2006), p. 146.

³¹⁵ Said, 1999, p. 19.

³¹⁶ Said, 1999, p. 12.

³¹⁷ Said, 1999, p. 21.

³¹⁸ Said, 1999, p. 22

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contact with English children outside the school'.³¹⁹ The school emphasised its Britishness, through the subjects taught and the stress it placed on the importance of Empire, in which 'Britannia stood supreme, and all of us took it for granted'.³²⁰ When he and his father were unfairly admonished over an incident at the Gezira Sporting Club, they accepted their 'necessary inferior status', the memory of which he recalled 'shames me still'.³²¹

Although Said had close feelings for Cairo, it was a place in which 'I never felt I belonged'.³²² From his early days, the issues of identity were confusing to him. It is unsurprising that to try to reconcile the apparent contradictions in his life he had an acute memory of 'the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or All-Egyptian, and so on'.³²³ He rhetorically asked, referring to his Christian birth name, 'Could "Edward's" position ever be anything but out of place?'³²⁴

British influence on him was put into perspective when he briefly attended the Cairo School for American Children, established to educate the children of the foreign community, including those of American oil company businessmen. There he became aware of other perspectives: the Arabic language was taught to him for the first time as part of the school curriculum, and recognition was given by the school to persons in local Arabic public life, which made Said aware for the first time of experiences outside his normal family life. But the feeling of apartness persisted; although Said was at an American school and held American citizenship by virtue of his father's right, he still felt different. As an ostensible Arab in an American school, he felt he had 'a troublesome identity as an American, inside whom lurked another Arab identity from whom I derived no strength, only embarrassment and discomfort'.³²⁵

Two major political events affected his outlook on the situation in which he and his family found themselves. The first, the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 affected his family directly. In 1999 he still felt overwhelmed by 'the scale of

³¹⁹ Said, 1999, p. 42.

³²⁰ Said, 1999, p. 82.

³²¹ Said, 1999, p. 45.

³²² Said, 1999, p. 43.

³²³ Said, 1999, p. 5.

³²⁴ Said, 1999, p. 19.

³²⁵ Said, 1999, p. 90.

dislocation our family and friends experienced in 1948. As a child of twelve and a half I couldn't comprehend the tragedy that had befallen ordinary middle class people of Palestine'.³²⁶ The former inhabitants of West Jerusalem, of which he was familiar, were 'expelled for all time by mid-1948'. The memory was profound:

'It is still hard for me to accept the fact that the very quarters of the city in which I was born, lived, and felt at home were taken over by Polish, German and Armenian immigrants who conquered the city and have made it the unique symbol of their sovereignty with no place for Palestinian life.'³²⁷

His aunt, Nabiha, worked for Christian charities for Palestinian refugees in Egypt, and it was she who explained to him the history of Palestine, causing him to feel anger and consternation over the suffering, poverty, hunger and humiliations of the refugees.³²⁸ The memory of the events stayed with him long after moving to America, as an 'unresolved sorrow and uncomprehending anger'.³²⁹

In 1949 he attended Victoria College in Cairo, regarded as the 'Eton of the Middle East',³³⁰ where he was taught about English life and letters, the Monarchy, Parliament, India and the Empire, but nothing about his own Arabic language, his own history, culture and geography, and he was 'tested as though we were English boys. We all felt that we were inferiors pitted against a wounded colonial power that was dangerous and capable of inflicting harm on us'.³³¹ He was rebellious as a student, disruptive and disrespectful during his school years – 'an attitude I regarded as a form of resistance to the British' – a behaviour which resulted in his expulsion.

He moved to America, partially to obtain an American passport, but also to gain an education. He enrolled at Mount Hermon School, New England, which he attended until he went to university at Princeton, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1957. While at Princeton he fell under the influence of Charles Malik, a former Professor of Philosophy at the American University at Beirut, who was then serving as Lebanese Ambassador to the United States and who was distantly related to his mother. Said remembered that he had numerous

³²⁶ Said, 1999, p. 114.

³²⁷ Said, 1999, p. 111.

³²⁸ Said, 1999, p. 111.

³²⁹ Said, 1999, p. 141.

³³⁰ Irwin, p. 278.

³³¹ Said, 1999, p. 186

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conversations with Malik during which he learned the value of questioning assumptions, searching for truths, and, more prosaically, about the conflicts between the East and the West, and the effect on Egypt of the Independent Officers' Revolution of 1952. Malik explained to him the arguments in support of the refusal by Christian Lebanon to align itself with Arab nationalism, why the decision to join the Cold War on the United States' side was correct, and why it was right to oppose, rather than to enthuse about and accommodate, Nasser's 'rousing exhortations'.³³²

The events in Egypt following the Revolution of 1952, and the more difficult commercial climate in which his father's business found itself, caused the family to relocate again by leaving Egypt for America. He realised 'that our days as alien residents in Egypt were finally drawing to a close'.³³³ He continued his education at Harvard where he studied from 1958 to 1963, gaining degrees of Master of Arts (1960) and Doctor of Philosophy (1964) in English Literature. He was appointed to the English Department at Columbia University, New York in 1967 where he remained until his retirement.

The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was the second major political event that affected his outlook. He wrote that he was not the same person after 1967: 'the shock of the war drove me back to where it had all started, the struggle over Palestine'.³³⁴ According to Lockman, he openly embraced his identity as Palestinian and the cause of political activism, becoming a leading advocate of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), a body then recognised as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.³³⁵ He started taking lessons in Arabic in the early 1970s.³³⁶ His political actions were based on what he considered to be a hidden feeling within him of anti-authoritarianism, which previously had been seen to surface in his Cairo schooldays in Victoria College, and on the urge to make his voice heard in 'an imposed and enforced silence'.³³⁷ He wished to revert to a 'sort of original state of what was irreconcilable, thereby shattering and dispelling an

³³² Said, 1999, p. 268.

³³³ Said, 1999, p. 288.

³³⁴ Said, 1999, p. 293.

³³⁵ Zachariah Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East. The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 183.

³³⁶ Irwin, p. 281.

³³⁷ Said, 1999, p. 293.

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unjust Establishment order'.³³⁸ Said was elected in 1977 as an independent member of the Palestinian National Council, a body on which he served until 1991.

Said concluded his memoir with the comment that 'skeptisim is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right, and out of place'.³³⁹ Being out of place was essentially one of identity, and the recollections recorded in his 1999 *Memoir* showed how acutely Said felt the issue of lost identity and of not belonging, feelings that affected him throughout his life. In his youth he had hoped that life would be made less complex by assuming a single being, but the complexities of layered identities, between Anglicans, Catholics, Palestinians, Egyptians or Americans, faded into insignificance when confronted with new Middle Eastern reality, which forced him to make political choices. He remained an observer, occupying a remote, but sometimes anomalous position in which he was drawn to some sort of imagined connection with his past. Writing in 1993 of the British, French and American worlds in which he lived and worked, he said 'Although I feel at home in them, I have remained, as a native from the Arab and Muslim world, someone who also belongs to the other side'.³⁴⁰ It appeared that Said had, at one stage, created for himself a new identity, no longer an Anglican Christian from Cairo, but reinvented himself as a member of an Arabic Islamic world.

The experiences of his life in Palestine and Egypt, and his later political activism, were the spur to his critique of Orientalism. In his Afterword to *Orientalism*, Said wrote in 1995 that the book represented 'a sort of testament of wounds and a record of sufferings',³⁴¹ and he accepted that the book was 'written out of an extremely concrete history of personal loss and national disintegration'.³⁴² In his book *The Question of Palestine*, Said expressed his frustration at the implacable refusal by Israeli and Western powers to acknowledge the validity of the cause of the Palestinian people for their own lands, with the consequential paradoxical and ironical position of a people becoming the victims of another group of victims.³⁴³ His

³³⁸ Said, p. 293.

³³⁹ Said, p. 295.

³⁴⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. xxvi. Referenced in the following as 'Said, 1993'.

³⁴¹ Said, 2003, p. 337.

³⁴² Said, 2003, p. 338.

³⁴³ Said, 1992, pp. xiii and xxi.

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identification with the Palestinian cause impelled him to energetic involvement in its support. Answering critics who claimed that, by attacking Orientalism Said was in effect defending Islam and the Arabs, Said responded: 'I have no interest in, much less capacity for, showing what the true Orient or Islam really are', as his aim was to describe the ideas behind the policies of Britain, France and America to dominate the Orient.³⁴⁴

In *Orientalism*, Said acknowledged his debt to Michel Foucault's analysis of discourse as a means of discovering 'truth'. Foucault wrote that what was important in assessing an intellectual was not as the bearer of 'universal truths', but as a person occupying a particular position in relation to a wider understanding of truth. The intellectual variously represented his class position ('whether as a petty-bourgeois in the service of capitalism'), the conditions of his life and work (the political and economic demands to which he submits against or rebels) and 'the actual political truths within his society'.³⁴⁵ Foucault's view was that in thinking of the political problems of intellectuals, what mattered most was their relation to 'truth' and 'power' rather than wider concepts of ideology. In developing his ideas of Orientalism, Said drew constructively on Foucault's discourse on the relationship between power and knowledge, demonstrating how Orientalists were complicit in serving imperial discourses and ideologies through their knowledge production.³⁴⁶ Lockman interpreted Foucault to mean that people were shaped by their conscious understanding of society, not simply by inherent personal feelings unaffected by external influences.³⁴⁷ These factors could be seen in Said's life and his reaction to the circumstances of his upbringing and later experiences. His reaction was personal, derived from what he saw and experienced in Palestine and Egypt. As a child he absorbed influences which were unarticulated until his acute sense of awareness of the society of which he was part, and of the society of which he was not a part, led him to intellectually define his relationship with the world around him.

The society in which he grew up, as described in his *Memoir*, was restricted, confined to a particular Anglican Christian group in society, first in Jerusalem and

³⁴⁴ Said, 1993, p. 331.

³⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 131-3, extracted in A. L. Macfie, *Orientalism, A Reader* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 42.

³⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that the motto of SOAS is 'Knowledge is Power'.

³⁴⁷ Lockman, p. 187.

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then in Cairo. It was membership of that group, and their effects on him, that provided the filter, or lens, through which he initially viewed the world and which, at a very localised level, provided the discourse that gave him his version of reality. It was that discourse, created by his observations and confirmed by his extended family, that presented him with the truth about the community in which he lived: the British dominated school education system, the frontiers and barriers between that society and the outside world, its relationships with other people, their understandings, conventions, and their patterns of behaviour.

He felt 'out of place' because of the circumstances in which he found himself but realistically he could not have avoided them. He reiterated his constant anxiety about identity, his feeling of alienation from the culture imposed by colonial control and British imperialism, and the effects political setbacks had on his family. So strong were his critiques of those factors in *Orientalism* that the question arises whether what he believed to be the 'truth' about the causes of alienation was the same reality as understood by those who supposedly created, consciously or unconsciously, the culture that caused his alienation.

To Varisco's thinking, Said's 'autobiographical emphasis is politically charged'.³⁴⁸ He criticised Said for choosing a particular attitude so that exile for him became 'less of a position than a positioning', enabling him to claim to bridge a cultural and imperial divide in ways that other Western observers were unable.³⁴⁹ Said was seen to be 'privileging the Western intellectual tradition as the only ground from which to assess and critique a specifically Western discourse' at the cost of ignoring views from the 'non-West'. We saw from the critique of Abdel-Malek the failure of some Western critics to accommodate views from outside their own circles; Varisco recognised a similar problem with Said's approach: 'the possibility of an indigenous knowledge not informed by Western reason and science is not broached. He claims to speak as an "Oriental", but in fact he is able to speak mainly because he is a Western-educated Oriental'.³⁵⁰ Varisco's views, I suggest, seek to homogenise Said into an approved type of Western academic discourse without giving due account to the personal effects on Said of the experiences of his early life. In creating a conceptual construct which he named 'Orientalism' as a vehicle

³⁴⁸ Varisco, p. 283.

³⁴⁹ Varisco, p. 283.

³⁵⁰ Varisco, p. 285.

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for the expression of his views, it is unsurprising that he was motivated by his personal experiences. His Western education was to him an advantage as it enabled his critiques to reach the audience he aimed to address and to engage with the subjects of his critiques on similar terms.

The contrast between the experiences of Said and those of Arberry could not be starker. As has been shown earlier, Arberry came from an English working-class family but, by his ability, overcame the barriers of his background and joined the privileged class of academics and the scholars of Oriental studies in the early twentieth century. He spent comparatively little time in Egypt in his early years, and it may be assumed that he did not become overly familiar with Egyptian society while working there as a lecturer in Classics. The remainder of his academic career was spent at Cambridge University. He did not engage in politics nor argued for any cause, preferring the anonymity of academic life. Said, as has been shown, was brought up within a Palestinian society; he experienced at first hand the effects of the colonial presence and later witnessed the effects of political change in Jerusalem and Palestine; he aligned himself with the Palestinians cause and lived in exile from his native society. Arberry produced knowledge about Muslim civilisations, Said critiqued that knowledge production. Up to 1939, the wider society of which Arberry was a member accepted (unconsciously) the ideas of Empire, and, as will be shown in more detail in this study, during 1939–1944, he became an active advocate of Britain's political interests in Muslim countries. Said was personally affected by his experience of Imperialism and Colonialism. In the next subchapter, we need to investigate what was generally understood by those terms during the periods of Orientalism described by Said in order to understand the motivation for his criticisms.

2.3.3 'Empire' and Oriental Studies.

In the context of Orientalism, Said made numerous references to Empire, Colonialism and Imperialism, and it is therefore necessary to understand the changing meaning of those terms. As Irwin pointed out, Said 'cannot make up his mind about when Orientalism began'.³⁵¹ This observation is significant, as the

³⁵¹ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* (London, Allen Lane, 2003, Penguin Books, 2007), p. 284.

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dynamics of the inception, growth and decline of those ideas affected the ways in which they were variously used and articulated.

In considering the growth of Empire, and the development of imperialism and colonialism, it is necessary to analyse the sequence of events that led to the state of hegemony that Said refers to. He held, on the one hand, that colonial rule was justified by Orientalism,³⁵² and on the other, that 'To colonialise meant at first the identification – indeed the creation – of interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, cultural',³⁵³ followed by the growth of Orientalist attitudes. The development of the British Empire suggests a more complicated evolution.

The development of the British Empire was a sequence of events, sometimes uneven, that gradually became consolidated into firm policies. Early travellers were explorers who identified the possibility of opportunities for trade, as well as claiming territories for the Crown. The Shirley brothers (Anthony Shirley, 1565–1635, and Robert Shirley, 1581–1628) for example, who were resident in the Abbasid court in Persia, acted as both ambassadors and advocates for trade.³⁵⁴ Trading outposts attracted more commercial interests, missionaries followed, settler communities were established, all of which required protection, sometimes by private armies, as the history of the East India Company demonstrated.³⁵⁵

Abstractions concerning the status of settlements were used loosely, and words assumed different meanings. The idea of 'colonies' was initially associated with the thirteen settlements in North America (until the granting of American Independence by the Treaty of Paris of 1783), and the occupants of such settlements were called colonists.³⁵⁶ In the case of British interests, colonialism could be regarded as the physical practice of exercising power and control over lands, implanting them with settlers, and the commercial exploitation of those lands, while

³⁵² Said, 2003, p. 39.

³⁵³ Said, 2003, p. 100.

³⁵⁴ Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, p. 9.

³⁵⁵ William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy. The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (London, Bloomsbury, 2019).

³⁵⁶ According to the *dictionary.cambridge.org*, a colonist is defined as a 'person living in a country or area controlled politically by a more powerful country. See also Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 8.

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imperialism could be understood as the ideology of sovereignty and domination,³⁵⁷ driving the impetus for extending power by economic, diplomatic or military means. Said in his *Memoir* frequently used the term 'colonial' when referring to his experiences of British presence in Palestine and Egypt. He described the practice of colonialism as he saw it in his daily life during the British occupation. That presence appeared to him as colonialism but its legal claim to legitimacy lay in the Mandate agreements reached at the San Remo Conference of 1920 and by the League of Nations covenant, settlement based on the policies and in the interests of Western powers. In *Orientalism*, references to 'colonialism' are few, as in that work the concept of Imperialism, the manifestation of sovereignty, as a Western attitude, was the subject of his critique. Thornton noted that as a result of the Colonial Conference of 1902, the word 'Colony' as a description of the self-governing communities was officially dropped in favour of the term 'Dominions', but the term and its connotations continued to be used for the remainder of the Empire.³⁵⁸

Before the century of imperial expansion identified by Said, academic and intellectual interest in colonial matters in Britain was limited. During the early eighteenth century the growth of settler colonies was regarded as problems which placed burdens on the finances of the home economy for their defence and administration. India stood apart, mainly because its 'colonisation' was operated by a private company and made little financial demands on the Treasury as it was generally economically self-sufficient. Academic interest in Britain in Oriental studies as a distinct area of study was at a nascent stage.³⁵⁹ The works of Sir William Jones (1746–1794), and those of other members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, were the beginnings of the British study of the Orient, but were confined to the study of the Moghul and Hindu civilisations of India. Until the late nineteenth century, apart from the long-established genre of Biblical and theological studies of Islam, there were few academics in Britain who produced works comparable to those by scholars in France and Germany.

³⁵⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; A. P. Thornton, *The imperial idea and its enemies: a study in British power* (London, Macmillan, 1959, second edition 1985); see below for our discussion on J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York, James Pott and Co., 1902).

³⁵⁸ Thornton, p. 141.

³⁵⁹ Irwin, p. 161 and p. 176.

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In the latter part of the nineteenth century as the British Empire expanded and India became governed by Westminster as the Imperial Parliament, the idea of a 'New Imperialism' became to emerge as a political discourse. Said assumed that 'the discoveries of Westerners about the manifest and modern Orient acquired a pressing urgency as Western territorial acquisitions in the Orient increased'.³⁶⁰ Apart from acquiring Cyprus in 1878 and its *de facto* 'protectorate' over Egypt in 1882, Britain acquired nineteen territories between 1884 and 1900, most of them were in Africa and the Far East,³⁶¹ clearly outside Said's of conception of a Middle Eastern Orient.

Said linked the growth of the scholarly studies of the Orient with empirical knowledge of the Empire, as the experiences gained by those working in and reporting from the colonial countries formed a 'latent Orientalism' that cohesively reflected the 'imperial culture of their epoch'.³⁶² Non-academic works by writers such as Gertrude Bell (1868–1926), T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935) and St. John Philby (1885–1960) ran in parallel with and augmented scholarly studies, the academic framework for which was set by scholars such as Muir (1819–1905), Bevan (1859–1933), Margoliouth (1858–1940), Lyall (1845–1920), Browne (1862–1926), Nicholson (1868–1945), Le Strange (1854–1933), Denison Ross (1871–1940) and Thomas Arnold (1864–1930).³⁶³ The work of non-academic Orientalists did not subvert the work of scholars, but, according to Said, made it more effective.³⁶⁴ Although not mentioned by Said, and belonging to a slightly later period, the name of Arberry (1905–1969) could justifiably be added to this list, as he continued the work instigated by many of those named. Said's approach was to include by implication any writer on Orientalism, as has been shown, and to apply his criticism to Oriental countries without distinction. However, the expanded British Empire, as seen by followers of New Imperialism of the late nineteenth century, was the subject of the studies of the scholars chosen by Said. The areas in the Middle East in which

³⁶⁰ Said, 2003, p. 223.

³⁶¹ Leonard Trelawney Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction* (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1904) quoting John Atkinson Hobson *Imperialism* (New York, James Pott & Company, 1902), p. 20, who set out the following as territorial acquisitions between 1884 and 1900: British New Guinea, Nigeria, Pondoland, Somaliland, Bechuanaland, Upper Burma, British East Africa, Zululand (with Tongoland), Sarawak, Pahlong (Straits Settlement), Rhodesia, Zanzibar, British Central Africa, Uganda, Ashantee, Wei-Lai-Wei, Kow-lung, Soudan, Transvaal and Orange River Colony.

³⁶² Said, 2003, p. 224.

³⁶³ Said, 2003, p. 224.

³⁶⁴ Said, 2003, p. 224.

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he was most interested in were governed by Britain after the First World War in pursuit of international treaty obligations.

If it was not the fact of Empire, supported by New Imperialism or rule brought about by legal obligations, then it is necessary to enquire what was the basis of his objection. If he had contested the historical facts or the political compromises that created countries in the Middle East brought about in the aftermath of the 1914–1918 war, his book would not have been written as it was. Instead, had he taken a wider view of diplomacy, international relations, and rivalries over power, spheres of interest between states and their historical contexts and implications might have been the subjects of his work.

From his early days spent in Jerusalem and Cairo, the object of his criticism and disquiet was the style, conduct and way of life of foreign residents. These he viewed as an outsider, the subject of their effects, not being in any position to influence them but having to accept them in an inferior position. His family had no choice but to follow a life within the social and political circumstances in which it found itself, and to experience the constraints and difficulties caused by them. As a result it was the style of the wider Western society that Said saw as most manifest, an aspect of society created by 'specific worldly circumstances, being molded (sic) by tradition, institutions, will and intelligence into formal articulation'.³⁶⁵

2.3.4 The Practice of Imperialism and Orientalism.

Said contended that the period of greatest advance in the development of Orientalism coincided exactly with the period of 'unparalleled European expansion' when, during the period 1815–1914, direct European colonial dominion, principally by the empires of Britain and France.³⁶⁶ Orientalism, he held, had an 'imperialist view of the world' and was part of an 'imperialist tradition'.³⁶⁷ He saw the relationships between the West and East in terms of power, as described by Foucault and Gramsci. 'My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient as weaker than the West, which

³⁶⁵ Said, 2003, p. 225.

³⁶⁶ Said, 2003, p. 41.

³⁶⁷ Said, 2003, p. 15

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elided the Orient's difference with its weakness'.³⁶⁸ He implied that Orientalism represented a specific political initiative, active in a specific area of the world, having coherence and purpose, and supported by an intention to put it into effect by the powers of the state.

In his extensive study of the complex relationships between the British Empire, those who operated it, and its critics, Thornton – a contemporary of Arberry – provided an account of the genesis of the motivations, attitudes and justifications for the exercise of imperial power.³⁶⁹ Far from being a project or political doctrine as claimed by Said,³⁷⁰ Thornton argued that the concept of Empire was simply an idea that reflected the aspirations of British society. Such an idea was not based on reason; rather it was intuitive, unconscious and unexpressed, found in the imagination.³⁷¹ The idea became an item of faith for the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, it motivated individuals to believe that the British Empire had come into being to 'lead the world in the arts of civilisation, to bring light to dark places, to act as trustee of the weak and to represent in itself the highest aims of human society.'³⁷² That idea was sustained by the creation and propagation of myths, amongst which was the idealisation of the Monarchy, by which the Queen became depersonalised as a figure, being transformed into the idea of a 'Great White Queen' to millions of her subjects (and dependents) over the globe.³⁷³

Irwin reduced the idea that there was a distinct political movement which created Orientalism even further to terms that created a caricature of students of the Orient which denied the value of the work by esteemed Orientalists, like Sir William Jones: 'If there was a connection between the nineteenth-century imperialism and Orientalism, it was chiefly this – that imperial servants, lonely and bored in remote outpost, took up the study of exotic languages and histories as their hobby'.³⁷⁴ Further, and more generally, Irwin wrote that, 'There has been a marked tendency

³⁶⁸ Said, 2003, p. 204.

³⁶⁹ A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies. A Study in British Power* (London, Macmillan, 1959, second edition, 1985).

³⁷⁰ Said, 2003, p. 204.

³⁷¹ Thornton, 1985, p. xxix.

³⁷² Thornton, p. xxx.

³⁷³ Thornton, p. xxx.

³⁷⁴ Irwin, p. 147. In Chapter 3.5, we will discuss analyses of Jones' works, in particular the analysis by Humayun Ansari, 'The Muslim World in British Historical Imaginations: "Rethinking *Orientalism*"?', *BJMES* Vol. 38, No. 1 (April 2011), pp. 73–93.

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for Orientalists to be anti-imperialists, as their enthusiasm for Arab or Persian or Turkish culture often went hand in hand with a dislike of seeing those people defeated and dominated by the Italians, Russians, British or French'.³⁷⁵ He cited E. G. Browne as an example of those who campaigned for Persian freedom and democracy. The concepts of colonial interests, Empire and Imperialism were not constants, as they changed over time as political and economic circumstances unfolded.

The idealised concept of service and duty expressed by the 'emotional imperialism' of the Service Class was contested by the growing support for nationalism in the territories they governed. In India, for example, British administrators were viewed as working for their class and their own interests only, not in the interests of the indigenous people, with whom they scarcely conversed.³⁷⁶ The same attitudes were no doubt to be seen in the other governed territories.

Said had referred to the great imperial expansion during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The imperial idea lasted throughout the Victorian era and endured as the 'dynamic in the thought and action of the governing classes in England until after the close of the twentieth century's second world war'.³⁷⁷ The concept was 'unscientific', not being one that could sustain interrogation, and accordingly, intellectual arguments against it gained no traction, even when critics demolished any political arguments raised in its favour. John Atkinson Hobson (1864–1929), the author of 'the most famous analysis of contemporary Imperialism' according to Thornton, saw the problem of Imperialism as being that of a deeply ingrained attitude: the Imperialists 'believed in what they said and did, and it was impossible by reasoned argument to shake a belief'.³⁷⁸ The idea of Empire, its prestige arising from its authority, elaborated by the import of material goods enjoyed by the home market (a view also advanced by Naish) gave assurance to those who had no need to question the rightness of their Empire.³⁷⁹

Political debates between Liberals and Imperialists, reflected in the differences between Gladstone and Disraeli and later politicians, recognised the

³⁷⁵ Irwin, p. 204.

³⁷⁶ Thornton, p. 214.

³⁷⁷ Thornton, p. xxxi.

³⁷⁸ Thornton, p. 73, referring to L. T. Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction* (London, 1904).

³⁷⁹ Jan (James) Morris, *Heaven's Command* (London, Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 535, 537.

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advantage that imperial interests gave to the expression of British power in the world. Faith in that superiority encouraged Imperialists to maintain their confidence in the rightness of their beliefs. Distrust in any other system of government but their own fashioned the Imperialists' attitude to other empires, as the term 'Oriental government' was for them 'a synonym for malevolent despotism'.³⁸⁰ The Imperialists did not trust the administration of their Empire to its inhabitants, as only they, the foreign interveners, 'could be relied upon to pursue policies of progress, and to ensure a good and incorrupt government'.³⁸¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, echoing Hobhouse, saw that the basis of the Imperialists' confidence was self-belief: 'the British approach was a calm assurance of always being in the right, faith in their racial destiny, contempt and anger at unbelievers', which gave rise to 'something of the religious temper about this attitude'.³⁸² It is possible that the self-assurance shown by the British described by Nehru was behind the style of the British that so caused offence to Said.

Colonialists and Imperialists regarded their mission in the territories they governed as equating to a service or duty owed to a greater good, their work being a kind of 'rescue service'.³⁸³ That Service Class was not concerned with the politics of Empire, as they considered that they held a higher 'Commission' from a vague power, somehow associated with the Crown. This romanticised, idyllic and altruistic cast of mind was regarded by some critics as cant. Hobhouse denied that the Empire had made any contribution to the civilisation of the world, and countered claims that the Empire was a form of trusteeship, arguing that the doctrine of trust was an 'ideal fiction' which was never within the Imperialists' intentions. He took a pragmatic view that imperial powers were not motivated by laying down standards of civilised values or for the welfare of the people of the subject countries, but were more concerned with material and political gains, through trade, commerce and economic exploitation. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) viewed Imperialism as being based on the relationship of the captive and the free, yet even the guardian, in his duties to the captive, was unfree. For Spencer, Imperialism rested on the acceptance of the power of military superiority, an attitude that permeated society, its militaristic culture

³⁸⁰ Thornton, p. 68.

³⁸¹ Thornton, p. 69.

³⁸² Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India*, 1st edition (London, John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1936), quoted by Thornton, p. 72.

³⁸³ Thornton, p. 69.

being seen in the creation of imitative civilian organisations such as the Boy Scouts and the Salvation Army.

2.4 Conclusion: Lessons from Said's Analysis

This study in this Chapter aimed to set the context relating the issue of Orientalism within which we can evaluate Arberry's works in the next chapter. The specific aims of this Chapter were to examine the scrutiny of the concept of Orientalism, to investigate the critiques of Said and critical reactions to them, to discuss what caused Said's attitudes to Orientalism and to the influence of the imperial power of the West.

This chapter studied the views of four commentators who looked at the interaction between the West and the East from perspectives that were mixed in their approach. Abel-Malek decried the creation of an 'ahistorical' Orient imagined by Western scholars, who used, as the basis of their work, manuscripts removed from the East, rather than paying regard to the works of scholars who had direct understanding of Eastern societies and cultures. The study showed that his criticism was immediately relevant to Arberry's method of working, although Arberry did value the work of scholars from the Middle East. Tibawi was concerned with the denigration of Islam by most Western scholars, and their repeated calls for the reform of the religion on Western lines, but he regarded Arberry as being sympathetic to the Muslim culture. Turner's Marxist approach shared the criticisms of Western scholars, but provided solutions that were ideologically based on anti-imperialism.

Said, on the other hand, presented a wholly different approach, based on literary criticism, which was concerned with how the Orient was represented in Western texts. His expressions of his argument, and the scope of his criticisms, created a different way of thinking about the Orient that changed the Orientalist agenda. As has been shown, for him Orientalism was a construct that he studied through the method of literary criticism, while his attitude towards Western scholarship of the Middle East was informed by his personal experiences and strong criticism of Imperialism, in common with the views of Tibawi and Rodinson. Reaction to his methodology and analysis revealed that his choice of material was highly selective, the geographical scope of his Orient was limited and that, as Halliday

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argued, he presented an analysis that was more concerned with the supposed shortcomings of Western scholarship than with the conditions in which the Eastern countries found themselves. In addition to Said's literary critique, there is also the cultural appropriation of Islamic art and design that he did not discuss.

As Said's criticism of the treatment of the East was expressed as the effects of Western Imperialism, this study has examined how Said approached the ideas of Imperialism and Colonialism. The study found that the motivation for many of Said's criticism was found in his early experiences gained when living in Palestine and Egypt. A theme running through his *Memoir* was the sense of loss of identity, which affected him during the time he spent in the Middle East and later in America. Associated with this was certain ambivalence in his attitude towards Islam. Adoption of the Palestinian cause showed his increasing identification with Islamic religion and culture of Islam, despite his Christian upbringing, but in other places he wrote that he had no inherent authority in showing what the *true* Orient or Islam really were,³⁸⁴ and that he felt uncomfortable with using broadly generalising words, like 'Islam' and 'Islamic', because the terms were often used as convenient political cover or shorthand for issues that had nothing to do with the religion.³⁸⁵ However, in his *Memoir* he appeared to re-align himself with Islamic culture.

We have found that Said's treatment of the issues of Empire, Imperialism and Colonialism to be variable and coloured by his youthful experiences. His conception that the issues were constant in their meaning throughout the periods treated in *Orientalism* was found to have been mistaken, as the discussion in the study of the perception in Britain of Empire and its attributes showed. Said concentrated his criticism on what he saw as the foreign occupation of the Middle East as a demonstration of imperial practice, but, as shown in the study, the great expansion of British Empire during the century of Imperialism defined by Said occurred in places far away from the Middle East. Said was on stronger ground when he wrote that he had been disturbed by the 'style' of the British in Palestine and Egypt, a manner of custom identified by Nehru in the study indicative of a 'self-belief' that bordered on the feeling of superiority and otherness which so discomfited Said.

³⁸⁴ Said, 2003, p .331.

³⁸⁵ Said, *Covering Islam* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 53.

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The study suggested that these feelings were the basis of his criticism of what he saw as the domineering traits of Western influence on the Middle East.

The basis of Said's criticism was the effect of western empires on the dominated populations. Unlike Said, Arberry did not appear to allow issues of politics or current affairs arising from the phenomenon of the British Empire to intrude into his personal or academic life. Although by implication he benefitted from imperial institutions, like his position in Cambridge University, his access to Islamic scriptures, and his recognition in scholarship. In his account of his stay in Cairo between 1932 and 1934, he refers to his time being spent in teaching Greek and Latin, being engaged on his research and enjoying the friendship of Egyptian scholars.³⁸⁶ In the early 1930s Egypt, nominally independent since 1922, was under British domination with regard to political and administrative affairs, with British troops stationed in Cairo and the Suez Canal Zone. For British foreign policy, Cairo was the lynchpin of the Empire, but Arberry made no reference to the large British civilian or military presence there or to the involvement of Britain in Egyptian life in general. He lived in a refined society that had no need to involve itself in life outside academia.

At that time Arberry, in his late 20s, newly married, and having a daughter, appears to have concentrated his efforts in enhancing his academic credentials with a view to obtaining employment at home in what he had recognised was a field of limited opportunity.³⁸⁷ With regard to political issues of that period, he made a passing reference to politics in the academic world in which he worked: 'Though politics sometimes clouded the serenity of the academic sky, politics was never my business' which attested to his disengagement with matters outside his immediate academic circle. He regarded his time spent in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria as 'the happiest in my life'.³⁸⁸ Life in Cairo, as described by Said, was totally unknown to Arberry. Although he mixed with Egyptian scholars, he remained a member of the ruling English class who found employment in Egypt but who lived lives mostly isolated from the everyday lives of the Egyptians. It was only in later life

³⁸⁶ Arberry, 1960, p. 237.

³⁸⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 238; he was appointed Assistant Librarian in the India Office in 1934, a post he described as a 'niche area in the world of orientalism.'

³⁸⁸ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 237.

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that he reflected on the changing status of Britain in relation to British imperial interests, as we shall discuss when examining his work on Muhammad Iqbal'.³⁸⁹

He was aware of past British involvement in Egypt when it took control of the country in 1882, as his account of Palmer's activities and death reveals, but Arberry emphatically distanced himself from that particular issue, and non-academic affairs in general, by writing, 'Holding as I do, and that firmly, that the proper business of a scholar is scholarship and not politics'.³⁹⁰ In his lifetime occurred the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and later the end of the British Empire, political events of profound significance to the world but they did not appear to affect his direct thinking in any way. Those Empires had immense influences on the civilisations which were the subjects of his scholarship. Arberry's interest predominantly lay in the cultures of the medieval period, wholly removed from contemporary life and developments, fields of study which were the very essence of the critics of Orientalism.

This Chapter has contextualised Said's criticisms of 'Orientalism' within a broader understanding of the term and has suggested reasons why Said held the views expressed in his writings and has clarified the ideas of Empire used in Said's Orientalism. It has provided a context for understanding the way in which Arberry worked within the field.

³⁸⁹ Please see Chapter 5.3.

³⁹⁰ Arberry, p. 159.

Chapter 3: Arberry's Works: Orientalism in Practice

3.0 Introduction

The objectives of this thesis are to present a critical evaluation of Arberry's works in order to inform us of his contribution to Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century and to examine the prevalence of imperialistic and colonialist attitudes in his works. Central to the study is the critique of Arberry's attitudes towards Oriental cultures, as revealed by his works and writings, and what that analysis reveals about Arberry's production of knowledge about the Near East.

This Chapter follows on from our analysis of the theories of Orientalism identified in the literature review in Chapter 2 and applies the critiques to a selection of his works identified by his fellow scholars as representing his best works. Arberry's translations are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 since translating works from a non-Western language raises issues that need to be examined if we wish to evaluate his contributions and his attitudes to those studies.

Arberry produced over seventy books and many journal articles listed in the Bibliography (Part 1) to this thesis.³⁹¹ I decided, in the interest of managing the corpus of his works in pursuance of the aims of the thesis, to be selective in a choice of the works to be examined. This was done in accordance with the following methodology. In the absence of an existing comprehensive critical analysis of Arberry's works, the selection of works for evaluation this Chapter is based on the views of his peers and colleagues as expressed in their obituaries of him. This approach is open to the challenge that his peers formed part of a small group of scholars, mostly in Cambridge University, all having personal connections with Arberry and were, to a degree, supportive of him. The field of Oriental scholars in Britain working between 1930 and 1960 was comparatively small, and, because of their backgrounds, those who wrote obituaries for Arberry (referred to in this Chapter as his peers) shared many common characteristics. They were representative of Orientalism in Britain of the period: they held positions in institutions involved in the promulgation of knowledge about the Orient, and they influenced thinking about the Orient in Britain and Europe by their teaching and scholarly writings. Their individual

³⁹¹ See also *Who was Who* (London, Adams and Charles Black, 1972), Vol. VI, 1961–1970, p. 29. Wickens wrote of Arberry's 'carefully prepared entry in *Who's Who* of the "inchage" of which he was so immensely and unselfconsciously proud', p. 364.

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connections with the University of Cambridge are marked, as five of the commentators had worked there with Arberry, two having occupied the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic. Connection with SOAS can also be identified where Arberry himself held Chairs at SOAS, successively of Persian and Arabic in 1944 and 1946, before being appointed in 1947 to the Chair of Arabic at Cambridge. The incidence of his peers who worked for the oil industry in Iran and for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is noteworthy. The group and their institutions can be regarded as representative of those holding Orientalist attitudes and values which came within Said's description of Orientalists.³⁹² Criticisms that the obituaries are hagiographical accounts, infused with partiality, without critical elements, are balanced by the fact that, notwithstanding their positions and attitudes, the peers used their professional knowledge of Arberry's output, naming only a selection of his many works that merit it, as they were critical of some of his works and drew attention to his shortcomings.

3.1 Arberry's Works: Peer Appreciation

The obituaries written by Arberry's peers appeared in leading journals concerning the Orient and may be summarised as follows. Lockhart described Arberry's academic career as 'brilliant in the extreme'. Laurence Lockhart (1890–1975) studied Arabic and Persian in Cambridge, worked for the oil industry, from 1919–1939 in Iran and in London until 1948. In 1939 he served in wartime intelligence and at the Foreign Office. He was involved in the creation of the Centre for Middle East Studies at Cambridge with Arberry and wrote extensively on Iranian studies. He acknowledged Arberry's *Classical Persian Literature* as 'a most valuable work', his *Sufism (sic): an Account of the Mystics of Islam* as 'excellent', and *The Koran Interpreted* as 'masterly'.³⁹³ Serjeant considered Arberry's prose translations as being his most successful, and that his rendering of the Qur'an won general praise,

³⁹² Said, 2003, p. 2: 'Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient-and this applies whether that person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist, either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism'.

³⁹³ Laurence Lockhart, 'Professor A. J. Arberry, M.A., Litt.D., FBA', *Iran*, Vol. 8 (1970), pp. vii-viii, published by the British Institute of Persian Studies, accessed 13/04/15: R. W. Ferrier, Dr. L. Lockhart, *Asian Affairs* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1975), p. 64, accessed from *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online edition, New York, 1996, Vol. XVI, 13/04/2015).

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becoming the standard modern version.³⁹⁴ Serjeant (1915–1993), an Arabist, held the posts of Professor of Modern Arabic at SOAS 1955–1964 when his friend, Arberry, invited him to take up the lectureship in Islamic History at Cambridge, 1964–1970. After Arberry's death, Serjeant was appointed Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic 1970–1982 and Director of the Middle East Centre at Pembroke College. From 1941 until 1947, he edited the 'Arabic Listener' at the BBC Arabic Service to which Arberry was a contributor.³⁹⁵

Erwin Izak Jacob Rosenthal (1904–1991), Reader in Oriental Studies at Cambridge University 1959–1971, identified Arberry's significant works as *An Introduction to the History of Sufism (sic)* (1942), *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (1957), *Sufism (sic)* (1950), his translations of Niffarī and Kalābādihī, and his *Classical Persian Literature* (1958). He placed importance on the Introduction to *The Holy Koran, an Introduction with Selections* (1953), and described *The Koran Interpreted* (1955) as having 'a superb mastery of the original tongue', and being an 'imaginative rendering which always captures the spirit and, I am convinced the meaning of the original Arabic'. He further recognised *Avicenna on Theology* (1951), *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (1950), and *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (1957) for their quality of phrasing, the sympathetic treatment of the original texts, and for the Arberry's ability to convey a sense of the mystical.³⁹⁶

Susan Skilliter, lecturer in Turkish studies at the University of Cambridge between 1964 and 1985, described Arberry as 'one of the greatest Islamic scholars of this [twentieth] century'. She identified his works on Ṣūfism, his translations of Rūmī and Niffarī as worthy of note, as were the products of Arberry's 'training as a populariser' which produced his British *Contributions to Persian Studies* (1942),

³⁹⁴ Robert. B. Serjeant, 'Professor Arthur John Arberry', *JRASGBI*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (1970), pp. 96–98. Downloaded on 13/04/15. Serjeant (1915–1993), an Arabist, held the posts of Professor of Modern Arabic at SOAS 1955–1964, Lecturer and Reader in Islamic History 1964–1970, Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic 1970–1982 and Director of the Middle East Centre at Pembroke College. From 1941 until 1947, he edited the 'Arabic Listener' at the BBC Arabic Service.

³⁹⁵ We discuss Arberry's role in the 'Arabic Listener' below.

³⁹⁶ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, 'Arthur J. Arberry – A Tribute', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Dec. 1970), pp. 297–302, published by Cambridge University. Accessed 13/04/15. Rosenthal was Reader in Oriental Studies at Cambridge University from 1959 to 1971 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

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British Orientalists (1943) and *Asiatic Jones* (1946). His 'great task' was the translation of the Qur'an, in his works of 1953 and 1955.³⁹⁷

Malcom Cameron Lyons, avoiding selecting specific works for note, commented that Arberry's impetus to publish was the cause of his problems. 'He was criticised by colleagues for his easy choices, where he would pick work that already been translated, and he left himself no time for extended analysis or the through development of ideas'. He referred to criticism of Arberry's style as being 'reminiscent of nineteenth century versifying' and to the negative reception of his work on Omar Khayyam. He recognised that the translation of the Qur'an was regarded 'by some as his masterpiece'.³⁹⁸

George Michael Wickens's obituary of Arberry was a piece of writing later described as 'one of the most brutal and sustained hatchet jobs in academic history'.³⁹⁹ Wickens, (1918–2006), a scholar of Arabic and Persian, lectured at SOAS, then at Cambridge University until 1957 when he moved to the University of Toronto as Professor of Islamic Studies.⁴⁰⁰ He listed works which, in his estimation, would be generally accepted as being considered of lasting value. His selection comprised 'The various library and other catalogues he compiled; the *Mawāqif of Niffarī* (1935); *Kings and Beggars* (1945), chiefly for its fine introduction; *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (1950); *Sufism(sic)* (1951); *Avicenna on Theology* (1951); *The Koran Interpreted* (1955); *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (1957); *The Seven Odes* (1957); *Classical Persian Literature*(1958); *Arabic Poetry* (1965)', although he had reservations that the last three works were of equal merit as the remainder.⁴⁰¹ Wickens wrote of Arberry: 'these works represent the contribution which, in his own generation, probably he alone was capable of making to the general body of Islamic studies'.⁴⁰² That statement, coming from one of his sternest

³⁹⁷ Susan A. Skilliter, 'Arthur John Arberry', *BSOAS UL*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1970), pp. 364–367. Lecturer in Turkish studies, University of Cambridge, 1964–1985.

³⁹⁸ Malcom Cameron Lyons, 'Arberry, Arthur John (1905-1969), Orientalist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxfordnb.com/view/article/30429>, accessed online 16/06/14.

³⁹⁹ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London, Allen Lane, 2006, Penguin Books, 2007), p. 244.

⁴⁰⁰ Rivanne Sandler, Associate Professor Emerita, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilisations, University of Toronto. *Wickens, George Michael (1918–2006)*
https://sce.library.utoronto.ca/index.php.Wickens_George_Michael. Accessed 29/5/2020

⁴⁰¹ George Michael Wickens, 'Arthur John Arberry 1905–1969', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 58 (London, The British Academy, 1972), pp. 355–366, at p. 362.

⁴⁰² Wickens, p. 362.

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critics, demonstrates Arberry's importance as scholar and translator in the field of Oriental scholarship in the period 1930–1970.

Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton (1912–1984) wrote that 'his most outstanding work was the English translation of the Koran, which superseded all previous efforts in this field'.⁴⁰³ Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton (1912–1984), having graduated in Arabic from SOAS, worked in the oil industry in Iran from 1935–1938, as an expert on Persia in the BBC and as editor of the *Arabic Listener*. He was Press Attaché at the British Embassy at Tehran from 1943 to 1947. He then lectured at the University of Edinburgh from 1952 to 1982, holding a Professorial chair in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies.⁴⁰⁴ In Chapter 4, I shall examine Arberry's contributions to the MOI and BBC in greater detail where it will be seen that many of the scholars listed also participated with Arberry in the production of propaganda material as part of their wartime duties.

From the foregoing comments, Arberry's works that were generally held to be of merit by his peers are *Mawāqif of Niffarī* (1935); *An Introduction to the History of Sufism* (1942), *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1942); *British Orientalists* (1943); the Introduction to *Kings and Beggars* (1945); *Asiatic Jones* (1946); *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (1950); *Sufism(sic)* (1950); *Avicenna on Theology* (1951); *The Holy Koran* (1953) and *The Koran Interpreted* (1955); *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (1957); *The Seven Odes* (1957); *Classical Persian Literature* (1958) and *Arabic Poetry* (1965).⁴⁰⁵

With the exception of one very early work, most of these works were produced from 1950 onwards. The works published in 1942 and 1943 coincided with Arberry's period spent at the Ministry of Information.

⁴⁰³ L. P. Elwell-Sutton, 'Arberry, Arthur John', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 2, Fasc. 3 (1986), pp. 278–279.

⁴⁰⁴ Carole Hillenbrand, 'Professor L.P. Elwell-Sutton (1912-1984)', *BSMES Bulletin*, Vol. 11, Issue 2 (1984), pp. 212–213, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530198408705402>, accessed 10/05/2016.

⁴⁰⁵ References to each of these works are found in the following text of this Chapter.

3.2 Selected works

The aim of this sub-Chapter is to consider how an examination of these selected works can inform us about the nature of Arberry's Orientalism. It is possible to identify the selections into some tentative categories:

- a) The influence of mentors: *Mawāqif of Niffarī* (1935) and the Introduction to *Kings and Beggars* (1945)
- b) Works produced to meet defined objectives prompted by outside demands: *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1942), *British Orientalists* (1943) and *Asiatic Jones* (1946)
- c) Theological and philosophical studies: *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (1950); *Sufism(sic)* (1950); *Avicenna on Theology* (1951); *The Holy Koran* (1953); *The Koran Interpreted* (1955); *Reason and Revelation in Islam* (1957)
- d) Literature: *The Seven Odes* (1957); *Classical Persian Literature* (1958); *Arabic Poetry* (1965).

This suggests a development in the type of material produced by Arberry. The works range from those produced under the influence of his teachers to his writings of the 1950s which concentrated on subjects of Islamic theology and the debates on philosophy within the medieval Muslim world. Publications produced as part of his duties with the MOI during the war form a clear grouping while his later works seem to reflect his wide knowledge of Arabic and Persian literature accumulated during his scholastic career.

The Mawāqif and Mukhātabāt of Muhammad ibn 'Abdi 'l-Jabbār al-Niffarī was an early translation made at the instigation of Nicholson while Arberry was Assistant Keeper of Oriental Books and Manuscripts in the India Office Library.⁴⁰⁶ Both Nicholson, as Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, and Arberry at the India Office, can be considered representatives of that world of scholarly Orientalism recognised by Said as creating and promoting the Western view of the East.⁴⁰⁷ The institutions

⁴⁰⁶ A. J. Arberry, *The Mawāqif and Mukhātabāt of Muhammad ibn 'Abdi 'l-Jabbār al-Niffarī* (London, Luzac & Co., 1935).

⁴⁰⁷ Said, 2003, p. 2: 'Orientalism is style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the "Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"'.

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from which they came were components of British imperial culture and were at the heart of the hegemonic management of the societies of the Eastern world and their cultures. The India Office Library was the repository of the manuscripts taken from India by the East India Company, following its demise in 1858, and of accumulations of papers donated by private collectors.⁴⁰⁸

Arberry acknowledged the co-publication of the translation of the *Mawāqif* by Cambridge University Press and the Egyptian Library Press. He described the latter as the 'most progressive native Arabic Press in the world', its high standards standing in contrast with other 'native' presses where 'inaccuracy is unfortunately only too common'.⁴⁰⁹ The hierarchical relationship between the old-established institution of Cambridge and 'native' presses demonstrated the capital value of the prestige and authority of the established university, contrasted with the implied inferiority – from a Western point of view – of the quality at that time of most 'Arabic' print houses.

The author of the *Mawāqif* and *Mukhāṭabāt* was Muhammad ibn Abdi 'l-Jabbār ibn al-Hasan al-Niffārī (died c. 965). Al-Niffārī was described by Arberry as a 'sufficiently obscure figure in the history of Islamic mysticism', portraying him as 'a mystic of fairly common type, careless on his own account, wanderer, a free-lance'.⁴¹⁰ His work comprised two books, the Book of Spiritual Stayings (*Kitāb al-Mawāqif*), which described the spiritual journey of a Ṣūfī through the essential stages of mysticism to reach oneness with his God, and the Book of Spiritual Addresses (*Kitāb al-Mukhāṭabāt*) which comprised Al-Niffārī's version of God's messages to the mystic, in the form of aphorisms. Arberry's descriptions of the author drew attention to Niffārī as being one of the 'other', which placed Al-Niffārī as an object being studied in the way criticised by Said. Arberry places Niffārī geographically at the same Babylonian city as Nippur (now Basra in Iraq's Fars province) which he described as having 'disappeared entirely from the knowledge of man' until restored in the nineteenth century by American archaeologists,⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy* (London, Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 456, and *The Last Mughal* (London, Bloomsbury, 2006 and 2009), p. 457.

⁴⁰⁹ Arberry, 1935, Preface.

⁴¹⁰ Arberry, p. 1.

⁴¹¹ Arberry, p. 6.

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omitting the possibility that the ancient city might have remained alive in cultural memories or in other oral or written records.

In his translation and comments on the texts, Arberry explained the theological terms used in the works and offered his explanation of al-Niffārī's spiritual beliefs as he interpreted them from the text. Arberry presented an encyclopaedic account of the work, with the original writing transcribed for examination, notes and commentaries on the contents, comparisons with other works and authors,⁴¹² testimonies of other Islamic scholars,⁴¹³ an indices of Arabic terms and of technical terms with their origins.⁴¹⁴ Arberry's *Mawāqif* was an impressive work of Western-style scholarship, in which the theological works were considered as objects of forensic study. Arberry undertook his textual analysis in accordance with the standards of scholarship demonstrated by Nicholson in his own translation of parts of the start text.⁴¹⁵ Arberry produced what he considered to be a definitive version of Al-Niffārī's writings with the aim to make it available for future scholarly study. The work was an example of the scholastic approach to the treatment of a medieval text. It presented the work on similar lines to an exposition of a text from classical antiquity, providing an account that fell within the established canon of Orientalist writing in the early twentieth century. Arberry's work was clearly written primarily for a Western scholastic readership, composed according to its expectations of form and standards.

Arberry spent the years 1939–1944 working for the MOI and the BBC where he applied his scholarly expertise to producing propaganda pieces for reading and listening audiences as will be discussed in Chapter 4. During that period, he also produced studies on Islamic and other subjects, including a series of lectures on Sūfism. Arberry was invited by Hassan Suhrawardy (1884–1946) to present the 'Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy Lectures for 1942'. The lectures had been established at University of Calcutta in memory of Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy (1877–1935), Hassan Suhrawardy's brother, for the purpose of stimulating 'research into Islamic thought

⁴¹² Arberry, p. 10.

⁴¹³ Arberry, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ Arberry, p. 14.

⁴¹⁵ As discussed in Chapter 5, the term 'start text' in the context of translations is used to refer to the text from which an English translation is produced from. It is not necessarily the source text, as the text used may not be wholly original and may be made up of different sources that may vary between different copies and eras. The term 'target text' refers to the translation produced (taken from Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories* (London, Routledge, 2014)).

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and culture'.⁴¹⁶ Arberry had been invited to give the lectures as he was 'one of the leading authorities in Europe on Islam and Islamic culture',⁴¹⁷ which once again demonstrates the idea of 'western superiority' in a colonial context.

The Suhrawardy family were distinguished members of the Ṣūfī fraternity, the *Suhrawardīyah*. Sir Abdullah, educated in Dacca, Bengal and in European universities, was called to the English bar and studied at London University. While in London, he supported Muslim activities, including the Pan-Islamic Society and the construction of the East London Mosque. He was a prominent educator, academic and politician in India. His work, *The Sayings of Muhammad* was published in 1905 in the *Wisdom of the East* series, a series which also include works by Arberry. Both Suhrawardy brothers were closely associated with the British Empire and its activities in India and in London, as will be seen in the account of Arberry's work with the MOI.

The subject of the lectures was *An Introduction to the History of Ṣūfīsm*.⁴¹⁸ According to Hassan Suhrawardy, Arberry wrote the lectures 'at a time when his energies [are] fully extended in patriotic work directly connected with the war'.⁴¹⁹ Writing in Oxford in 1942, in the Preface to the lectures, Arberry wrote that '[a] twentieth-century world-war is not perhaps the best time to write a series of lectures introductory to the history of mysticism in Islam'.⁴²⁰ His own situation was described as being under 'circumstances of total mobilisation of the Empire's resources for total combat' in which the scholar 'finds himself pressed into service of a kind for which he never prepared himself', having to find moments from 'wholly uncongenial but wholly necessary bellicosity' to continue his scholarly studies.⁴²¹ His difficulties were compounded because source material had been removed for safety reasons by the 'malice of the Empire's enemies'.⁴²² However, despite being 'beset as we have for some time now by pressing dangers, in this finest hour of the nation's and Empire's life, and having experienced the imminent threat of violence from our skies

⁴¹⁶ Hassan Suhrawardy, in Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Ṣūfīsm* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1942, reprinted Delhi, Facsimile Publisher, 2016), p. iii.

⁴¹⁷ Hassan Suhrawardy, p. iii.

⁴¹⁸ A. J. Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Ṣūfīsm* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1942, reprinted Delhi, Facsimile Publisher, 2016).

⁴¹⁹ Hassan Suhrawardy, p. iii.

⁴²⁰ Arberry, 1942, p. ix.

⁴²¹ Arberry, 1942, p. ix.

⁴²² Arberry, 1942, p. xix.

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on many nights',⁴²³ Arberry found some comfort from immersing himself in Şūfīc thought as he prepared the lectures.⁴²⁴

The lectures were written from an entirely Western perspective, as might be expected from the period in which they were prepared, but they also were written according to the unquestioned assumption of the superiority of Western scholarship and the defence of the Empire's interests. Using the knowledge he gained in working for the Ministry of Information (MOI), he likened the experiences of Britain in 1940 to that which he thought might take place in India in the event of hostile incursion, hoping that India would 'repel the evil threat', similar to the response shown by Britain.⁴²⁵ Arberry was wholly immersed in the defence of the Empire, and found in the Suhrawardy brothers like-minded persons. His expressions of 'bellicosity', 'malice', 'the finest hour' and 'Empire's life', although revealing a changed outlook from that which might be supposed of a scholar in normal circumstances, show that Arberry was prepared to assume an attitude that defended interests which he considered to be of value.

The purpose of the lectures, according to their general title, was to give an introduction to the history of Şūfīsm, their main thrust being how Şūfī studies had developed in Europe with comparisons being made of the views of Western scholars over centuries of study of the subject. It is noteworthy that as the lectures concentrated on European learning, they did not consider studies of Sūfīsm in countries where it had grown and was being practised. He argued that speculation on the phenomenon and origin of Şūfīsm should be deferred until a thorough study had been made of Şūfīc theology based exclusively on Islamic sources, and welcomed the publication of Şūfī texts in Islamic countries in the late nineteenth century.⁴²⁶ However, he was of the opinion that no complete account of its history could be written because of the inaccessibility of manuscripts and their uncoordinated distribution across the world, which assumed that such an account should be written by Western scholars, giving the example of Massignon's researches for his work *La Passion d' al-Hajj*.⁴²⁷ In his lectures, Arberry advised how

⁴²³ Arberry, 1942, p. xix.

⁴²⁴ Arberry, 1942, p. 2.

⁴²⁵ Arberry, 1942, p. 2.

⁴²⁶ Arberry, 1942, p. 26.

⁴²⁷ Arberry, 1942, p. 4.

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future studies should proceed. More source material should be accumulated and scholars should be open-minded to the mystical beliefs of Ṣūfism in the broadest sense. Even Muslims 'unable to appreciate the mysticism of other faiths than their own', would not be competent to undertake such a comprehensive study.⁴²⁸ He was of the opinion that religious belief was itself essential for the work: 'the student of Ṣūfism ought himself to be something of a Ṣūfī',⁴²⁹ although Arberry having himself published many works on Ṣūfism, admitted that he was no Muslim, nor could ever have been one.⁴³⁰ As will be seen in the discussion on translations of the Qur'an in Chapter 6, Arberry, in defence of his work of 1953, contested Pickthall's view that only a Muslim was qualified to translate the Qur'an.⁴³¹ Despite Pickthall's strictures Arberry, in common with the views of Western scholars, had no misgivings about translating and dealing with Islamic texts.

His detailed analysis of the works of Western scholars so dominated the content of the lectures that it appeared that the gate to further investigation on particular subjects was closed; referring to Massignon's major work on Al Ḥallāj, he remarked that 'there remains little original work to be done', to the exclusion of the possibility of works by scholars in the East.⁴³² The assumed hegemonic superiority of Western scholars underlay his attitude to Oriental studies. He adopted an almost messianic view of the place of his and Western scholarship, writing that 'for we orientalists in this generation are still in many respects in the position of the classical scholars of the Renaissance'⁴³³ in their role of safeguarding the history of the Ṣūfīc mystics, as though they were the works of classical Greek and Roman civilisations. It 'devolves upon us, Orientalists, to record the sources for posterity'.⁴³⁴ Those views applied 'with special force' to the study of Ṣūfism but equally to all branches of Islamic studies.⁴³⁵ In a series of lectures intended for an Indian, presumably Muslim, audience, Arberry was in effect denying the validity of Eastern input into their own history, while elevating Western scholarship as superior, and reinforcing the Imperial hegemony over Indian culture.

⁴²⁸ Arberry, 1942, p. 61.

⁴²⁹ Arberry, 1942, p. 61.

⁴³⁰ A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran* (George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 31.

⁴³¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

⁴³² Arberry, 1942, p. 50.

⁴³³ Arberry, 1942, p. 5.

⁴³⁴ Arberry, 1942, p. 5.

⁴³⁵ Arberry, 1942, p. 5.

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In this lecture series on the subject of mystical Islam in India, he reminded his Indian audience that it was in the city of Calcutta that 'the modern science of orientalism was founded: its chief creator was the celebrated English scholar Sir William Jones',⁴³⁶ and that 'the interest in oriental studies provoked by the considerable achievements of British pioneers in India' spread to other European scholars.⁴³⁷ He demonstrated the attitudes that suffused Oriental studies in Britain, which seemed to operate to be the repository and natural home of all studies of the East. That attitude was recognised by Said who observed that in the West 'no Oriental can know himself the way an Orientalist can, any vision of the Orient ultimate comes to rely for its coherence and force on the person... whose property it is'.⁴³⁸ Arberry, no doubt with the encouragement of Hassan Suhrawardy, assumed the position of authority for interpreting the history of Sūfism in the West and how it should be explained to the Muslims of India.

As discussed above, Arberry's work and experience as a 'propagandist' with the MOI influenced his attitude towards his work. The 'most abiding lesson' he learned by working with the Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken MP (1901–1958), was the 'relevance of publicity ... to oriental studies'.⁴³⁹ In order to increase awareness of the work of British scholars, largely forgotten at home, and in an effort to promote 'goodwill over huge areas of the globe' in a way that was more effective than the 'widely advertised endeavours of soldiers and politicians',⁴⁴⁰ he wrote short works entitled *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, and *British Orientalists*, both regarded by his peers as meritorious.

British Contributions to Persian Studies was published in 1942 for the British Council on behalf of the MOI as part of the war effort.⁴⁴¹ The circumstances in which the MOI used external organisations for the publication of propaganda is discussed in Chapter 4. This short 'pamphlet'⁴⁴² was, in effect an extended catalogue of works by British writers on Persian literature, especially its poetry. The language used in the work was academic, neutral, and rather austere, which recorded aspects of the

⁴³⁶ Arberry, 1942, p. 8.

⁴³⁷ Arberry, 1942, p. 15.

⁴³⁸ Said, 2003, p. 239.

⁴³⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 239.

⁴⁴⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 239.

⁴⁴¹ A. J. Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1942).

⁴⁴² Arberry, *British Contributions*, 1942, p. 6

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written connections between English and Persian literature; it made rather 'dull reading' according to Arberry.⁴⁴³ Arberry likened his efforts in the MOI to the works of early Indian Orientalists: 'mark it well, largely in the rare intervals of leisure after their arduous official duties had been discharged', they attended to their studies of the Orient.⁴⁴⁴

The greater part of the book concerned Persian scholarship in India, based on the interest taken by employees of the East India Company in Persian, the *lingua franca* of the Moghul kingdom, and adopted by the Company for the discharge of its work. Their studies in Persian and Sanskrit languages, found in the areas under the Company's control, were integral to the growth of Persian studies in India and Britain. The East India Company was described by Arberry as 'a great and liberal trading organisation',⁴⁴⁵ the impression conveyed was one of pride in its achievements.⁴⁴⁶

The purpose of the publication was to present positively the connection between Britain and the Persian culture which flourished in India up to the nineteenth century. Iranian culture and literature were largely omitted from consideration, as the work concentrated on the writers of Persian literature in the Moghul Empire as seen through the eyes of British Orientalists, most of whom had experience of working in India. The publication was a seemingly benign, historic, and scholarly view of a civilisation, distant both in geography and history from the West, chiefly created by amateur scholars who were only at the cusp of revealing Persian and Mughal civilisations. The work was probably commissioned by MOI for publication by the British Council, to distance itself from political interests and practical support. The focal point for the MOI and Arberry, and the reason for the publication, was to emphasise the Britishness of the studies and the superiority of its scholarship. That purpose was also to be found in a companion publication that followed.

⁴⁴³ Arberry, *British Contributions*, 1942, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁴ Arberry, *British Contributions*, 1942, p. 14.

⁴⁴⁵ Arberry, p. 14

⁴⁴⁶ For a recent alternative view, see William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

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The purpose of Arberry's *British Orientalists*⁴⁴⁷, like that of his *British Contributions to Persian Studies* of the previous year, was to demonstrate the positive connections between British scholarship and values with the cultures of the East, a subject which the MOI particularly emphasised during the war. This book did not state any overt connection with the British Council but, as it was written and published during Arberry's work with the Ministry of Information and consistent with the previous work, it is arguable that, from its treatment of the subject matter, it was produced in furtherance of the government's propaganda effort.

The book gave short accounts of British Orientalists who had produced works on the languages of Arabia, Turkey, Persia, India, Indonesia, and the 'Far East' which included China, of which Arberry wrote, 'The languages and literature of more than half the human race, and of several great civilisations, thus fall within the province of the Orientalist'.⁴⁴⁸ According to the definition of the *New Oxford Dictionary*, such a person was a scholar defined as 'one versed in oriental languages and literature'.⁴⁴⁹ Arberry listed ninety-four names of past British Orientalists, from Adelard of Bath (fl. 1125) to Edward Denison Ross (1871–1940). Orientalists living at the date of writing the book were not included, so, for example, Nicholson (1868–1945) was omitted. In the concluding passage of the book, Arberry gave a brief account of his own history, written in the third person. He wrote of his taste in Oriental languages and his visits to countries whose people and culture aroused his curiosity. They 'justified his instinctive leaning, and form[ed] the basis of his integrity as a scholar' which led him to conclude that 'between the ordinary man of the West and his brother-man in the East there exists not a barrier insurmountable but a common humanity that craves for realisation'.⁴⁵⁰ Arberry clearly identified himself as being one of the British Orientalists, and a disciple in their tradition.

The work aimed to show the close involvement of Oriental scholars in all aspects of the cultures of the countries of the Empire and beyond, linking the motivations of those who conquered new territories for the expansion of the Empire with those of the Orientalists who sought out 'abstruse and recondite territories of

⁴⁴⁷ A. J. Arberry, *British Orientalists* (London, William Collins, 1943).

⁴⁴⁸ Arberry, 1943, p. 8

⁴⁴⁹ Arberry, 1943, p. 8.

⁴⁵⁰ Arberry, 1943, p. 47.

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knowledge', a knowledge little known and obscure in the West.⁴⁵¹ He claimed that 'the university don immured in his well-stocked library' was able by 'inherited instinct and native intuition [to] arrive at a profoundly accurate interpretation of the mind and soul of dwellers in Samarkand or far Tartary'.⁴⁵² The publications of those engaged by the East India Company were recognised as important although amateur contributions to the study of Eastern cultures, their works incidental to their primary purpose, 'coming to orientalism often to find relief from the busy cares of office'.⁴⁵³

Said's identification of Orientalists as being those who wrote of the 'Orient, its people, customs, "mind"...and so on',⁴⁵⁴ and the Orientalist as one who 'describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West',⁴⁵⁵ is mirrored by Arberry's statements, especially by his egregious claim that scholars could accurately interpret the mind and soul of the East, despite not having ventured outside Europe. His writings reveal an unconscious concept of Western hegemony, whereby it was assumed that the scholar's innate knowledge superseded that of the peoples of Eastern cultures. The learned amateurs in the field had closer connections with the people of Eastern countries than the 'university don', a prime representative being Arberry himself. Those amateurs contributed to Western control over Eastern countries by gathering vast amounts of manuscripts, later deposited in the library of the East India Company, and later in the library of the India Office, so removing them from local access by Indian and Persian scholars. Interpretations and explanations of the texts could have been expected from them based on their understanding of the original cultures. After the period spent in the MOI on wartime propaganda Arberry resumed academic duties in 1944 as Professor of Persian at SOAS and turned again to scholarly works.

Arberry's Preface to *Kings and Beggars: The First Two Chapters of Sa'dī's Gulistān*, published in 1945,⁴⁵⁶ was identified by Wickens as one of his better works.⁴⁵⁷ The Preface presents a mature and scholarly account of one of the most important Persian writers, in an accessible style – balancing Western commentators

⁴⁵¹ Arberry, 1943, p. 10.

⁴⁵² Arberry, 1943, p. 10.

⁴⁵³ Arberry, 1943, p. 47.

⁴⁵⁴ Said, 2003, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Said, 2003, p. 20.

⁴⁵⁶ A. J. Arberry, *Kings and Beggars: The First Two Chapters of Sa'dī's Gulistān* (London, Luzac & Co., 1945).

⁴⁵⁷ Wickens, 1972, p. 362.

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(Browne, 1862–1926, and others) with Persian scholars (Mirzā Muhammad Qazvīni, 1874–1949, and ‘Abd al-‘Azīm Garakānī, 1879–?). Arberry gave details of Sa’dī’s life (1184/5–1291/2 CE) and his provenance, giving an explanation of his approach to the translation of the Chapters, and a detailed account of how the work had been edited in the past by European scholars. The Preface is in effect an erudite monograph of the work of Sa’dī. It did not overtly press the case of Western superiority, unlike the works commissioned by the MOI previously discussed, and respectfully acknowledged the value of Eastern scholarship. It is Orientalist in outlook, in the ‘Saidian’ sense, and can be regarded as another example of classical Western scholarship on Eastern cultures, while showing sympathy and some identification with the subject. A medieval poet from a distant Persian culture, Sa’dī was the ‘other’ but Arberry brought the essential message of Sa’dī’s work to a twentieth century readership. Despite Said’s critique of the works of Western scholars, Arberry’s treatment of Sa’dī can be regarded as one of the more successful of the products of Western scholarship, by reason of the erudite treatment of the start text,⁴⁵⁸ the comprehensiveness of the analysis, the detailed accounts of writers contemporary to Sa’dī and the accessibility of the translation.

The bicentenary of the birth of Sir William Jones (1746–1793) was marked by the publication of journal articles on different aspects of his contribution to Oriental studies,⁴⁵⁹ including an article by Arberry.⁴⁶⁰ He also published a monograph, *Asiatic Jones: The Life and Influence of Sir William Jones (1746–1794) Pioneer of Indian Studies*,⁴⁶¹ recognised by his peers for the quality of its scholarship. As was the case of other of his publications of the period, the work was published for the British Council to advance the idea of British expertise in the cultures of the East. In the pamphlet, thirty-nine pages with illustrations, Arberry

⁴⁵⁸ The term ‘start text’ is explained in footnote 415.

⁴⁵⁹ The articles were all published in *BSOAS*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1946): J. A. Stewart, ‘Sir W. Jones’ Revision of the Text of Two Poems of Anacreon’; V. de Sola Pinto, ‘Sir Williams Jones and English Literature’; A.S. Tritton, ‘The Student of Arabic’; Alfred Master, ‘The Influence of Sir William Jones upon Sanskrit Studies’; S. G. Vesey-FitzGerald, ‘Sir William Jones the Jurist’; L. F. Powell, ‘Sir William Jones and the Club’; A. D. Waley, ‘Sir William Jones as Sinologue’ (many are available online, e.g.: doi:10.1017/S0041977X00089734).

⁴⁶⁰ A. J. Arberry, ‘Orient Pearls at Random Strung’, *BSOAS*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1946), pp. 699–712.

⁴⁶¹ A. J. Arberry, *Asiatic Jones: The Life and Influence of Sir William Jones (1746–1794), Pioneer of Indian Studies* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1946).

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gave considerable detail of the life and work of 'the foremost exponent of Oriental studies in England'.⁴⁶²

According to Arberry, Jones challenged the eighteenth century's sterile literary classical tradition, as 'he dared to put Persian literature on the same level as Greek and Latin',⁴⁶³ making the West aware of the quality of the rich literature of another culture which previously had received scant attention. Jones brought a new idiom and range of literature in contrast to the established anti-Islamic attitude.⁴⁶⁴ Arberry praised Jones for his Preface to the *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771)⁴⁶⁵ which encouraged students of Oriental letters to concentrate on the substance of the original works, and not be detracted by minutiae of verbal criticism.⁴⁶⁶

Jones's 'broad vision' created the science of Orientalism, according to Arberry, who quoted Jones as writing in the *Grammar* of the history of 'mighty empires, such as 'India, Persia, Arabia and Tartary' and how 'obscure states [rose] to glory and the most flourishing kingdoms have sunk into decay'.⁴⁶⁷ According to Jones, by becoming aware of the literate of Asian countries, the philosopher would value literature of those civilisations, whereby he would 'trace the human mind ... from the rudest to the most cultivated state' and the 'man of taste would undoubtedly be pleased to unlock the stores of native genius, and gather the flowers of unrestrained and luxuriant fancy'.⁴⁶⁸ The approval of these attitudes by Arberry was consistent with the Orientalist view of the cultures of the East which created an imaginary 'other' world, for the entertainment of Western readers.

Arberry again quoted with approval Jones's statements in his *Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations*⁴⁶⁹ to the effect that studying the manuscripts from the East, already deposited in libraries of the 'great seminaries of learning', would enrich

⁴⁶² Arberry, 1946, p. 10.

⁴⁶³ Arberry, 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁴ Arberry, 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁵ Sir William Jones, *Kitab-i Shakaristan Dar Nahvi-i Zaban-i Parsi, Tasnif-i Yunus Uksfurdi, A Grammar of the Persian Language* (London, 1771), in *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 Vols. (London, John Stockdale, 1807).

⁴⁶⁶ Arberry, 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁷ Arberry, 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁸ Sir William Jones, *Kitab-i Shakaristan Dar Nahvi-i Zaban-i Parsi, Tasnif-i Yunus Uksfurdi, A Grammar of the Persian Language* (London, 1771), in *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 Vols. (London, John Stockdale, 1807), in Arberry, 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶⁹ Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 Vols. (London, John Stockdale, 1807).

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contemporary English literary culture for the benefit of scholars and poets.⁴⁷⁰ Western culture would be enhanced by the literature of the East, brought to it by the works of the Orientalists. Jones, according to Arberry, was the first to 'propose a satisfactory transcription of Oriental words and names' that would assist Western scholarship. Unlike the long history of Christian writings that attacked Islam, Jones 'recognised in Islam and Hinduism – the faiths most familiar to him after his own – creeds noble and venerable; in all his writings there is no trace of sectarian bigotry',⁴⁷¹ an attitude with which Arberry sympathised.

Arberry's celebration provided a sympathetic and laudatory, but uncritical, account of Jones which anticipated later biographies.⁴⁷² It also showed the qualities of Orientalism which Arberry shared, and in which he might have felt most comfortable: investigating the languages of Persia and Arabia, quiet scholarly work in libraries on rare manuscripts from the East, tracing the varying fortunes of Eastern civilisations over their long histories, seeking out works of little known writers, adding the presence of the Orient to English literature, and considering the tenets and practice of religion. The function of Oriental literature, viewed from this Orientalist perspective, was to enhance Western knowledge, rather than being recognised as part of the cultures from which it came and studied in order to contribute to them. Jones brought Orientalism to the consciousness of the West, and Arberry was its exponent. His treatment of Jones's life and works suggests that Jones was Arberry's ideal Orientalist, and that his and Arberry's Orientalism were not dissimilar. As well as bringing a celebrated Orientalist to the attention of the public, the experience Arberry gained in the MOI of writing non-scholastic material can be seen in his works in which he aimed at explaining the works of Islamic ideas to readers outside academic circles.

Books published in the Series *Wisdom of the East* were aimed at being 'ambassadors of goodwill and understanding' between East and West. Indications of Saidian Orientalism were evident in the overall approach to the books in the Series. The General Editor, J. L. Cranmer-Byng, contrasted the 'old world of thought, and the new of action', claiming Western superiority with the civilisations of the

⁴⁷⁰ Arberry, 1946, p. 35.

⁴⁷¹ Arberry, 1946, p. 37.

⁴⁷² See Chapter 3.3 for a discussion of Arberry's endorsement of Jones's works.

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East.⁴⁷³ Arberry claimed that his translation of *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes (at-Ṭibb ar- Rūḥānī)* was the first to be made into any language. He described the original work by Rhazes (*Abūbakr Mohamad-e Zakariyā-ye Rāzī*, 854–925 CE) as belonging more to 'the realm of popular ethics than to high philosophy'.⁴⁷⁴ Arberry essentialised the status of the work in accordance with Western concepts, a type of reductionism, in which the value of the original was assessed in accordance only with the expectations of the intended target readership in the West, omitting views of Persian or Arabic scholars on the value of the work in Islamic culture.

A work held by Arberry's peers to be among his most notable was his *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, another contribution to the series *Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West*.⁴⁷⁵ The series was intended for the 'intelligent reader, who is not an expert – the undergraduate, the ex-Service man who is interested in the East, the Adult Student, the intelligent public generally', so, 'like the heroes of Homer we may stretch out our hands' to the works of the East, as there was an 'enormous amount of common ground in the great religions, concerning too the most fundamental matters'.⁴⁷⁶ The work, by its nature, reduced the beliefs of adherents to a common Western understanding of religions.

Arberry's objective, as stated in his Introductory Chapter,⁴⁷⁷ was to explain Ṣūfīsm from the point of view of a Ṣūfī, although we observed earlier that in his Suhrawardy lectures he had declared that the 'student of Ṣūfīsm ought himself to be something of a Ṣūfī', and that he was 'no Muslim, nor could ever be'.⁴⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the book is an extended account of Sufic Islam, as though written by one embedded in Islamic mysticism. His work included judgemental statements in respect of historical figures, and negative comments of historical events, as viewed from the perspective of a Western Orientalist.⁴⁷⁹ His account of Islamic mysticism was intended to enable Ṣūfīsm to be compared and contrasted 'with the mysticisms

⁴⁷³ In A. J. Arberry, *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London, John Murray, 1950), editorial note.

⁴⁷⁴ Arberry, p. 9.

⁴⁷⁵ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1950, reprinted by Unwin Paperbacks, 1979, 1990).

⁴⁷⁶ *Sufism* (1950 edition), General Introduction, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁷ Arberry, 1950, p. 12

⁴⁷⁸ In footnotes 27 and 28 above.

⁴⁷⁹ Arberry, 1950, p. 32, in which he wrote that of the 'cunning Mu'āwiya', that his son Yazīd was 'a confirmed drunkard', and that the 'effeminacy of Syria replaced the ascetic manliness of Arabia ... when an extravagant new capital, Baghdad, was built ... the course of degeneracy was fully run'.

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of other faiths and so be seen for what it really is',⁴⁸⁰ although he did not offer an explanation of what he saw as the essence of Sufism. His 'necessarily brief account of Ṣūfīsm'⁴⁸¹ could be not more than his, Western, interpretation of mysticism in Islam and of all religions and so reductive of Ṣūfīsm and other mysticisms to the Orientalist way of thinking.

He made no apology for enquiring into Ṣūfīsm: 'it is no impertinence or irrelevancy for the Christian scholar' to seek out the essential beliefs of the Ṣūfīs. But he equally recognised the need to enlist the aid of 'Muslim colleagues' in that work.⁴⁸² In effect he sought ways to reform Ṣūfīsm according to Western thinking, in which the East was expected to co-operate. Arberry's view of the future of Ṣūfīs was that with the coming of reason and rational thought, 'Sufism (*sic*) has run its course; and in the progress of human thought it is illusory to imagine that there can ever be a return to the point of departure'.⁴⁸³ Tibawi warned in his *English Speaking Orientalists* that it would have been preferable for scholars to leave matters of faith alone and to desist from their nostrums for modernising Islam.⁴⁸⁴

Arberry's contributions to the *Wisdom of the East* Series have been noted above. Another volume in the Series, regarded by his peers as valuable, was *Avicenna on Theology*.⁴⁸⁵ Avicenna's real name was Abū Alī al-Husain ibn Abd Allāh, called ibn Sīnā (980–1037). He regarded Avicenna's embrace of reason as a Neoplatonist to be his greatest virtue as it was a rationalist approach that accorded with the traditions of Western philosophy and humanist thought. Avicenna's theological arguments were, according to Arberry's Christian viewpoint, equally sound for the defence of Christianity and Judaism.⁴⁸⁶ The volume's overall approach to the original work, its historical explanations, the disquisition on Avicenna's life, the placement of the debates in a theological context, indicate a work that exemplified Orientalist attitudes.

Whereas the primary purpose of this Chapter is an evaluation of how Arberry's works bring to light Orientalism in the mid-twentieth century, his

⁴⁸⁰ Arberry, 1950, p. 12.

⁴⁸¹ Arberry, 1950, p. 11.

⁴⁸² Arberry, 1950, p. 134.

⁴⁸³ Arberry, 1950, p. 134

⁴⁸⁴ Tibawi, *English Speaking Orientalists*, chapter 2, footnote 5.

⁴⁸⁵ A. J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (London, John Murray, 1951).

⁴⁸⁶ Arberry, 1951, p. 7.

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translations of the Qur'an from 1953 and 1955⁴⁸⁷ will be evaluated in Chapter 5 as their significance rests primarily on the way in which they were translated. The texts exemplify Arberry's Orientalism which is also assessed in that Chapter.

Among Arberry's praised pieces was his contribution to the Forwood Lectures of 1956 commissioned by the University of Liverpool which took the title *Revelation and Reason in Islam*.⁴⁸⁸ His objective was to discuss the relationship between Neoplatonic rationalism within Islamic teaching and mysticism. His starting point was a discussion of the ancient philosophers' demand for proof by argument for the existence of God. That theosophy 'paved the way' for Neoplatonism's 'triumph in Islam'⁴⁸⁹ by enabling Muslim scholars to access Graeco-Roman philosophy and science, which gave them the intellectual tools to develop their own interpretations of Islamic mysticism, which took the form of Sufism.⁴⁹⁰

The lectures discussed in detail the rise and fall of rationalism and religious belief in Islam during the medieval period, giving rich accounts of the teachings of Muslim theologians and their controversies. He juxtaposed the intellectual analyses by Christian theologians of the natural and revealed knowledge of God, by which they categorised religious knowledge according to general, special and unique revelations, with the uncomplicated single message of the Qur'an on the other.⁴⁹¹ Views of those who accepted God's speech as revealed in the Qur'an without question were contrasted by Arberry with the approach of the rationalists, who found the existence of God through 'a fine-spun web of syllogistic reasoning', and then with the position of the Şūfīs, who based their mystical approach on their 'personal knowledge of their Creator', possibly – in the words of Arberry – 'through Christian influence'.⁴⁹²

Despite his obvious respect for the teachings of Muslim theologians, his discussions throughout the lectures on their teachings, their controversies and arguments were placed within a Western frame of thinking and understanding, a natural position to take by a Western Christian Orientalist in the 1950s addressing

⁴⁸⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1953) and *The Koran Interpreted* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., two vols., 1955).

⁴⁸⁸ A. J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1957).

⁴⁸⁹ Arberry, 1957, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁰ Arberry, 1957, p. 10.

⁴⁹¹ Arberry, 1957, p. 12.

⁴⁹² Arberry, 1957, p. 28.

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a Western audience. The lectures were the authoritative work of a scholar in the field of Neoplatonic philosophy and Islamic theology, and displayed his undoubted expertise and knowledge, representing a body of learning and outlook built on the foundations of Western disciplines, Classics and Orientalism. In an intellectual exercise of high calibre, Arberry discussed the teachings and the theologians as abstract entities located in the medieval world of Islam. Omitted from the lectures were references to the work of Muslim scholars which might have shown how the works of medieval theologians were received and evaluated in the light of their knowledge of their own cultural history.

Arberry's translation of *The Seven Odes* is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In terms of the concept of Orientalism, I suggest that, based on an assessment of his comments, the translation was intended to capture the nature and feel of the original text, consistent with the style and attitudes of Orientalist literature of the time it was translated.⁴⁹³ El Masry's thesis gives a detailed account of Arberry's approach and translation from which she concludes:

His representation of the Arab reality in his translation of the *Mu'allaqāt* is characterised by essentialism, absence, and otherness, which are the three features that characterised the representational recognition of the non-West in imperialist England towards the end of the eighteenth century, and which surfaced in the representation of Arabs in the British Press during the Suez Crisis. The translation strategies he employs are foreignising.⁴⁹⁴

Arberry unconsciously relied on the assumptions of the primacy of the British Empire that grew in the nineteenth century, as we saw in the discussion of Said's reaction to Imperialism.

El Masry's comments are linked to the ideas of what was termed 'New Imperialism' which grew from policies of European Powers to accumulate more territories and colonies and to consolidate their rule over existing possessions. That move was given as the reason for the growth of popular interest in Eastern cultures

⁴⁹³ A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London, George Allen & Unwin, Co. Ltd., 1957).

⁴⁹⁴ Heba Fawzy El-Masry, 'A Comparative Study of Arthur John Arberry's and Desmond O'Grady's Translations of the Seven *Mu'allaqāt*', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, September 2017, unpublished, p. 297.

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in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a development that supported and furthered the concepts of Orientalism.⁴⁹⁵ That type of imperialism instigated the development of new institutions, which were 'planned or founded to apply the latest British technology and scholarship to the colonial possessions', institutions that, according to Morris, were to include the proposed 'London School of Oriental Languages'.⁴⁹⁶ Further, it was claimed that as a result of New Imperialism, 'Oriental scholarship in England, long overshadowed by German work, began to revive'.⁴⁹⁷ Oriental studies grew in scope and depth from that period onwards, and would have informed the thinking of institutions such as the University of Cambridge, and of its students and staff, of which Arberry was prominent in both capacities. Arberry's approach to *The Seven Odes* can be seen, therefore, within the context of the imperialist view of literature from the cultures of Muslim countries, informed by the attitudes underlying the Orientalist approach.

Recognised by his peers as a work of merit, possibly because of its value to students of Persian literature, Arberry's *Classical Persian Literature* was equally characterised by his scholarly Orientalism.⁴⁹⁸ The work, which gave accounts of major poets and writers from the early to late medieval period, was encyclopaedic in its range and detail. In its studies of individual authors, it included extensive translations, commentaries and historical notes. It was written on the same lines as works previously discussed: close attention was given to detail; its poetry and prose were translated in accessible forms. The authors and their works were treated with appreciation, and the quality of their works extensively praised. Examples of Persian culture and their treatment were presented in a valuable handbook for the study of Persian literature, typifying the scholastic approach to the subject. The book was a continuation of the traditional style of Orientalist teaching presented for a further generation of readers.

Of Arberry's later works that were praised by his peers no mention was made of his many translations of Rūmī, his Maltese translations, the Arabian Nights or of his extensive work on Omar Khayyam and FitzGerald or his *Oriental Essays*.

⁴⁹⁵ Jan (James) Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire* (London, Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 436 *et seq.*

⁴⁹⁶ Morris, p. 450.

⁴⁹⁷ Morris, p. 450.

⁴⁹⁸ A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1958).

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Instead they chose his *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* as being amongst his better works.⁴⁹⁹ I suggest that the work in essence encapsulates Arberry's *modus operandi*. The Introduction contains long extracts from works of Oriental scholars of the beginning of the twentieth century on their views of Arabic poetry and its characteristics;⁵⁰⁰ it is scholarly in tone, and technical terms of Arabic poetry are used in their original, with biographical notes of the thirty poets chosen,⁵⁰¹ all but four of whom flourished before the twentieth century. Arberry provided detailed forensic analyses of the formal composition of the poetry, its grammar, and patterns of rhythm, rhyme and metre, effecting strict categorisation of examples, regardless of the poets' artistic intentions. While this might have been justified in educating university students in the structure of verse with a view of enabling them to translate for themselves, as an introduction to Arabic literature it can be said that his approach objectified the original writing in a way characteristic of Orientalists of the early twentieth century. As a textbook for teaching, students were encouraged to follow Arberry's method of translating which we will examine in Chapter 5.

Having dissected the composition of Oriental poetry, Arberry acknowledged that the nuances within Arabic poetry could not be reproduced in any European language, so that 'it necessary follows that all western translations of Arabic poetry, however artfully contrived, fail utterly to convey the immense range of moods expressed in his rhythmic the incantations by the Arab poet'.⁵⁰² Stereotypes of the nineteenth century Oriental view of Arabia were repeated, for example 'the martial virtues attracted the widest admiration in that land of perpetual feuds', with images repeated of 'lyric and wine' enjoyed with 'soft music' while savouring 'dance and song'.⁵⁰³ Arberry objectified the 'other' to his students while using material created for entirely different purposes, perpetuating the Western trope of the East.

In the book Arberry used also his own works as examples for readers to translate, and gave extensive extracts from his *Mystical Poems of Ibn Al-Fāriḍ*,⁵⁰⁴ a book he described as having 'become somewhat rare'.⁵⁰⁵ Arberry gave examples

⁴⁹⁹ A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1965).

⁵⁰⁰ Arberry, 1965, pp. 1–3.

⁵⁰¹ Arberry, 1965, pp. 170–175.

⁵⁰² Arberry, 1965, p. 12.

⁵⁰³ Arberry, 1965, p. 12.

⁵⁰⁴ A. J. Arberry, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, Chester Beatty Monograph No. 6 (Dublin, Emery Walker (Ireland) Ltd, 1956).

⁵⁰⁵ Arberry, 1956, p. 18.

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from Al-Fārīd (d. 1235 CE) of conventional poetic themes, and an index of the meanings of poetic figures, in a mechanistic approach to the study of poetry.⁵⁰⁶ This was justified, in his view, as the poet was not a 'God-given genius' but a craftsman, 'a goldsmith of words, a jeweller of verbal images' whose work could be broken down into components and evaluated objectively and rationally.⁵⁰⁷ That was Arberry's interpretation of the function of the Arabian poet, a view stated as fact in the absence of supportive views of Arabian experts on the poetry. The Primer, intended as an educational resource for students of medieval Arabic, served the same purpose as his *Classical Persian Literature*, perpetuating the scholastic Orientalist attitude to Eastern cultures.

This survey of Arberry's works as identified by his peers as representing his more notable publications has shown the principal elements of Orientalism in the period 1930–1965. He produced works which perpetuated Western attitudes to Eastern cultures in the ways in which they conveyed the content of the texts in Western terms, by the language used, their Westernised literary images and assumptions of superiority of Western learning in the treatment of texts. A thought-process that relied on translating texts as though they were examples of Western classical antiquity brought Islamic texts from their heritage into that tradition, rather than regarding them as being the fruits of their own civilisations which should be considered within their own cultural contexts. Arberry followed the pattern for viewing Eastern literature set by his predecessors, especially Nicholson, which was rooted in the practices of the nineteenth century. Arberry gave an Anglo-centric response to religions of the East, seen particularly in his works on Sūfism, by which he assumed that their meanings should be explained by Western scholarship.

Works aimed at more general readerships combined a scholastic approach with an imperialistic attitude for transmitting the ideas of the East, reflecting the post-war feeling of the superiority of British values over those of the countries whose cultures were being discussed, approaches that mirror Said's formulations of the West writing about the East and of descriptions of Oriental life that reassert the Orientalness of the subject and the Westernness of the observer.⁵⁰⁸ His claim that the library-based scholar was competent in accurately interpreting the minds and

⁵⁰⁶ Arberry, 1956, pp. 18–26.

⁵⁰⁷ Arberry, 1956, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁸ Said, 2003, p. 247.

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souls of dwellers in Eastern countries can possibly be interpreted as wartime hyperbole or, if it indicated his basic view, was deeply revealing of his attitude of Western superiority over the East.⁵⁰⁹

The choices made by his peers of his works included examples of high scholastic standards and a breadth of knowledge that justified his status as an Orientalist of high repute within the particular ambit of his field. That field, comprising scholars of the European tradition, was not large in number but was an important medium for the perpetuation of Orientalist attitudes in Europe and throughout the world. Imperialist motivations, as we saw in El Masry's comments, were part of the complex web of ideas and attitudes which implicitly informed the production of works about the East, as we have seen in examples of Arberry's works. Those imperialist tendencies will be seen in their fullest extent in the assessment of Arberry's work as a wartime propagandist discussed in the next Chapter.

3.3 Arberry and the 'Academic-Research Consensus'⁵¹⁰

In the Introduction to this thesis,⁵¹¹ a group of scholars in Britain was presented who had made valuable contributions to the knowledge of Islam and Oriental studies, and thus provided the groundwork for Arberry's own works. Their attitudes to Oriental Studies and their academic methodologies informed Arberry's choice of subjects for study and his methods of working. The aim of this section is to examine more meticulously the Orientalist features displayed in the works of some of those and other scholars on Eastern subjects were reflected or reproduced in Arberry's own approaches. This also raises the question whether Arberry was aware of their views which are now regarded as a form of western-centric 'Orientalism', whether he gave uncritical acceptance to their knowledge output and how their work was seen to influence his own work.

It is useful at this stage of our discussion to assess the impact the institutional environment had on its 'Oriental' scholars. Apart from comparatively short periods between 1940 and 1944 spent in the Ministry of Information, Arberry's academic career was based at SOAS and Cambridge University.

⁵⁰⁹ See footnote 52 above.

⁵¹⁰ Said, 2003, p. 275.

⁵¹¹ This thesis, p. 9.

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He was appointed Professor of Persian at SOAS in the summer of 1944.⁵¹² SOAS was formed in 1916 as a constituent part of the University of London, initially under the name of the School for Oriental Studies, with the aim to provide teaching languages to persons about to take up posts in the East and Africa.⁵¹³ In the words of a Director of the School, it was the purpose of the School, the motto of which is 'Knowledge is Power', to 'mobilise Oriental scholarship in support of the country's imperial role'.⁵¹⁴ In its early years, it was considered that the School was not effective in fulfilling the intentions of its founders: McWilliam wrote that 'the Orientalist academic community [after 1916] was very conservative and somewhat dominated by philologists, which had the unfortunate effect of isolating it from other academic disciplines'.⁵¹⁵ This criticism could have been equally directed to the scholars who taught Arberry at Cambridge, as well as to Arberry himself. The School was criticised for its 'over-insistence on the academic side. Many professors could not even speak a modern foreign language', that is a useful Asian language as opposed to Classical Arabic of the Qur'an and medieval Muslim scholars.⁵¹⁶ Arberry was in post during this period but in fairness to him, he showed a proficiency in Arabic as seen in his pieces in the Arabic language publications when working for the Ministry of Information and broadcasts in Arabic for the BBC, as we shall see in Chapter 4.4 and 4.7 below.

The upheaval brought about by the Second World War caused a radical re-appraisal for the function of the School from which the then Director of the School, Lord Hailey, applied for government support for the comprehensive training of servicemen and colonial officials. The reaction of the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden MP, was to appoint a Joint Departmental Committee, chaired by Lord

⁵¹² Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, pp. 239–240.

⁵¹³ Ian Brown, *The School of Oriental and African Studies: Imperial Training and Expansion of Learning* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 2. The creation of the School followed the recommendation of a Committee appointed in 1907 by the Treasury, under the chairmanship of Lord Reay. In 1909, the Committee's report states that, 'A knowledge of the language and some preliminary of the religious and social customs of the country to which they are appointed is essential to such persons'. The Report stated that in comparison with Berlin Paris and St. Petersburg, '... England is the country which above all other has important relations with the East, the fact that no oriental school exists in its capital city is not creditable to the nation'. Originally called the 'School for Oriental Studies' the name was changed to 'School for Oriental and African Studies' in 1938.

⁵¹⁴ Michael McWilliam 'Knowledge and Power: Reflections on National Interest and the Study of Asia', *Royal Society for Asian Affairs*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, 1995, p. 34.

⁵¹⁵ McWilliam, p. 37.

⁵¹⁶ Brown, p. 113, quoting Foreign Office Minute of 1st November, 1944 (NA FO 924/98).

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Scarborough, which started its work in December 1944, to consider the provision of facilities to teach Oriental, East European and African languages. In his capacity as Professor of Arabic and Head of the Middle East Department at SOAS, Arberry was in a critical position to defend the role of SOAS and to give evidence to the Commission on the provision of adequate modern teaching.⁵¹⁷ The Scarborough Commission reported that it found a perceived 'national attitude of traditional exclusiveness which tends to disregard and even look down upon a culture that has little in common with our own'.⁵¹⁸ This suggests that Arberry was part of an institution that showed an inherently imperialistic attitude as described by the Scarborough Commission. It seems likely that the attitudes to the Orient at Cambridge University prevailing in the mid-1940s were even more traditional than those within SOAS. Arberry's Orientalism was as much formed by the institutional attitudes of and the working environment at SOAS and Cambridge as it was by those who worked and taught in them.

We have already seen Arberry's approach to treating and interpreting Arabic text earlier in this Chapter. Based on an examination of his comments on the work of other Orientalist scholars, it can be argued that Arberry, although critical on technical aspects of his colleagues' methodology, shows an unquestioning acceptance of their attitudes in discussing the Orient. His critiques did not take into account the societal aspects of everyday life in the Middle East. In this section, we aim to analyse his views on Orientalism and towards his peers.

Said wrote that 'Every writer on the Orient ... assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself.'⁵¹⁹ That approach may be considered to be a framework for identifying how Arberry viewed how other scholars treated the cultures and civilisations which were the subjects of his studies. Arberry was a member of a Western elite of scholars that valued classical works, and whose literary values contributed to the dialogue on the scope and standards of the works

⁵¹⁷ Arberry is noted as one of the witnesses in the Scarborough Report.

⁵¹⁸ The Commission reported in 1947: Scarborough Report, Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies (London, Foreign Office, HMSO, 1947), p. 23, paragraph 25.

⁵¹⁹ Said, 2003, p. 20.

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studied. Their views on Oriental literature were based on common values and ideals and based on implicit assumptions of the superiority of Western values and learning that we already discussed above. That discourse can be found both in their written works and in their collections of manuscripts and artefacts taken from the civilisations which became the subjects of their studies, as in the case of Chester Beatty's collections which provided Arberry with access to original source material. In Said's view, their mind-set was based upon a canon of shared knowledge that grew from their studies and, in turn, informed the outlook of other scholars. Their works became, in Said's words, 'affiliated' with each other, depending on each other, forming a cycle by creating works on the Orient that informed other works on the Orient. Common features of the works were recognised and accepted as endorsing their outlook so maintaining the closed scholarly society based upon a common point of view. Their practices of Orientalism were undertaken without reference to considerations of the aspirations of the peoples or societies who were the descendants of the cultures they studied or whether their works would be of material benefit to them. They produced works primarily aimed at enlarging the educational and literary repertoire of Western societies. Said already recognises this state of affairs when he writes:

The Orient existed for the West, or so it seemed to countless Orientalists, whose attitude to what they worked on was either paternalistic or candidly condescending – unless, of course, they were antiquarians, in which case the “classical” Orient was a credit to *them* and not to the lamentable modern Orient.⁵²⁰

The emergence of critiques of these patterns provided a further framework for identifying the Orientalist nature of the works of scholars especially, developed, as we have seen, by Said's analyses. Although Arberry's works were produced well before *Orientalism* was first published in 1978, Said's analytical framework provides criteria that allow us to assess the underlying nature of Arberry's approach. As we have seen in Chapter 2.2.2, Arberry clearly fell within Said's broad description of

⁵²⁰ Said, 2003, p. 204.

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Orientalists.⁵²¹ This section aims to evaluate how Arberry's approach in relation to other works of scholars he discusses, correspond to Said's frameworks. We need to investigate whether his approach was one of unquestioning acceptance of the Western-centric 'Orientalism' that pervaded the works of fellow scholars, whether he was aware of their Orientalism and appreciated their impact on his own work? Or, alternatively, was his work more nuanced in that he could see a distinction between a wholly Western approach and an appreciation of the reality of Eastern societies? We also need to take into account how his own attitudes were evolving, notably as a result of his experiences in the Second World War. Seeking answers to these questions, we will examine his views on the work of prominent scholars from the eighteenth century onwards.

Arberry devoted the first of his *Oriental Essays* to Simon Ockley (1678–1720) whom he called 'The Pioneer' of Oriental studies in Britain.⁵²² His account of Ockley's works and his contribution to expanding knowledge about the Orient appears factual and positive, drawing, *inter alia*, attention to Ockley's support for learning Arabic, which Ockley claimed would assist in the study of Biblical languages and by being able to read the Qur'an, theologians would be enabled to refute 'the false' in Islam.⁵²³ Arberry described Ockley's *History of the Saracens* (1708) 'a truly epoch-making work'⁵²⁴ because of his use of 'ancient and reliable Arabic' sources, which included a copy of al-Wāqidī's *Futūḥ al-Shām* ('Conquest of Syria'). Arberry remarked that 'his [Ockley's] decision to allow an Arab to tell the story of the Arabs gave Europe its first authentic and substantial taste of the Arab viewpoint touching the wars with Byzantium and Persia',⁵²⁵ despite Ockley's depreciatory opening words of Volume 1: 'Mahomet, the great imposter'.⁵²⁶ Arberry pointed out that the 'chilly opening accords ill with the patent admiration for the martial and moral qualities of the Arabs' found in the remainder of the work,⁵²⁷ but Ockley made it clear that he did not wish to be associated with 'the whimsies and conceits of the Arab

⁵²¹ Said, 2003, p. 2: 'Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism'.

⁵²² Arberry, 1960 p. 12.

⁵²³ Arberry, 1960, p. 14

⁵²⁴ Arberry, 1960, p. 30

⁵²⁵ Arberry, 1960, p. 31.

⁵²⁶ Arberry, 1960, p 30.

⁵²⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 30.

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enthusiasts' and wished 'to remain close to the teachings of the church for fear of falling into their error'.⁵²⁸

Arberry appreciated Ockley's delicate position. On the one hand, he was a priest whose livelihood depended on not offending the authorities of the Anglican Church, while, at the same time, his inclination was to produce works on Oriental subjects with the aim to educate the West about the East. Arberry commented that Ockley's recognition, that Islamic scholarship valued the Greek teaching of philosophy and science 'must have shocked painfully many of those who read it'.⁵²⁹ Overall, his account is positive describing Ockley as one who 'built a bridge between East and West, a bridge of greater sympathy based upon better informed understanding'.⁵³⁰

Arberry recognised in Ockley's works attitudes and practices towards Arabic and Arabian history that were consistent with his own. Ockley's use of Arabic texts, his admiration for the Arabic language and intent to communicate an understanding of the Eastern world to a Western audience reinforced Arberry's framework of views and actions. Ockley's works were part of a wider collection that shaped Arberry's views of the East. In Saidian terms, both Ockley and Arberry were Orientalists but of different generations, as, with the benefit of his twentieth century perspective, he was able to distinguish Ockley's more enlightened views from the negative attitudes of his predecessors towards Islam.

Arberry's assessment of Ockley, on the one hand, recognised the constraints within which Ockley operated while, on the other hand, saw his positive attributes despite those constraints. Arberry's assessment of Ockley was based on his understanding of the state of discourse on the Orient of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, his views being consistent with the mid-twentieth century scholarly understanding of Oriental studies, before the concept of Orientalism, as a specific genre of Western-centric studies of the East, had been developed by Said and others. Ansari regards Ockley as one who continued the Western practice of criticising Islam and the Prophet, although he equally

⁵²⁸ Arberry, 1960, p. 24 quoting Ockley's Appendix to *Improvement of Human Reason Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* (London, printed and sold by Edm. Powell in Black-Friars, and J. Morpew near Stationers-Hall, 1708).

⁵²⁹ Arberry, 1960 p. 30.

⁵³⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 47.

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acknowledges that his works displayed a move away from the negative practice of outright condemnation of Islamic culture towards an appreciation of its qualities.⁵³¹ This assessment is not too dissimilar to Arberry's views in his *Oriental Essays*, emphasising the balance between loyalty to the church and recognition that Ockley was moving away from the negative attitudes of the past.

In retrospect, it can be argued that Arberry, in his discussion of Ockley, he lacked criticism, displaying attitudes of Orientalism characteristic of his age. He wrote on Ockley in a way that he considered to be consistent with the qualities of interpretation, analysis and comment that he had personally developed after decades of scholarship, as being entirely appropriate for the purpose of his *Oriental Essays* and his expected readership.

We already discussed above Arberry's study of the 18th-century scholar Sir William Jones in his *Asiatic Jones*.⁵³² Arberry also referred extensively to the life and works of Jones in his articles,⁵³³ in his books on Orientalists,⁵³⁴ in discussions of poetic works⁵³⁵ and in his anthologies,⁵³⁶ a further tribute to Jones can be found in his *Oriental Essays* of 1960.⁵³⁷ We now have to assess whether Arberry was aware of any western-centric Orientalist tendencies in his evaluations of Jones' works.

Arberry considered Jones to be the 'Founder' of Orientalism, as the one who 'created the science of orientalism',⁵³⁸ stating that 'it must remain a matter of pride to his compatriots for all time, to note how scholar after scholar looked back to Jones as the founder of, or massive contributor, to his own chosen discipline',⁵³⁹ Arberry

⁵³¹ Ansari, Humayun 'The Muslim World in British Historical Imaginations: "Rethinking Orientalism"?', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (April 2011), p. 78.

⁵³² Arberry, *Asiatic Jones: The Life and Influence of Sir William Jones (1746–1794)*, *Pioneer of Indian Studies*. (London, Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1946), p. 16.

⁵³³ Arberry's articles included 'Persian Jones', *The Asiatic Review, Proceedings of the East India Association*, April, 1944, Vol. XI, accessible at https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.83875/2015.83875.The-Asiatic-Review-_djvu.txt; 'New Light on Sir William Jones' and 'Orient Pearls at Random Strung', *BOAS*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1946, pp. 673 and 699 respectively.

⁵³⁴ Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1942), *British Orientalists* (London, William Collins, 1943).

⁵³⁵ Arberry, *Fifty Poems Hafiz* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1947).

⁵³⁶ Arberry, *The Legacy of Persia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1953), *Persian Poems* (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1954), *Classical Persian Literature* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958).

⁵³⁷ Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), p. 48.

⁵³⁸ Arberry, 1960, p. 80

⁵³⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 76. Arberry had previously written in *British Orientalists* (1943, p. 30) that Jones was 'truly the founder of British Orientalism'.

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offered in his Essay on Jones an almost idealised portrait: 'a great human',⁵⁴⁰ who 'in all his writings there is no trace of sectarian bigotry',⁵⁴¹ and who showed 'surpassing merit'.⁵⁴² As to Jones's work in India, Arberry concluded that he 'recognised no frontiers of race or colour, and accepted no limits of interest or capacity'.⁵⁴³

By contrast, Ansari's assessment of Jones from 2011 is not only more critical, but unsympathetic. While Jones is described as an admirer of Muslim civilisations, he is also seen as having a 'firm belief in the superiority of the European civilisation to that of the Muslim', a belief founded on 'its superior knowledge, its command of "Reason" and its application of scientific methodology'.⁵⁴⁴ Ansari took the view that Jones believed that despotism was the cause of the inferiority of Asian peoples and that scholars who ignored these aspects failed to understand the reality underlying Jones's work. Ansari warns that 'Indeed, those who judge Jones's scholarly work as entirely motivated by aesthetic and academic interest really need to look at his life and career more closely: this would reveal him to be not only complex, inconsistent and contradictory but also one who undoubtedly possessed utilitarian propensities'.⁵⁴⁵ Does this stricture apply to Arberry?

Ansari's juxtaposition of literary output and reality is pertinent in evaluating Arberry's views of Jones. In his conclusion on the works of Oriental scholars, Arberry emphasised two particular features of their works: 'their devotion to history and poetry',⁵⁴⁶ while pointing out Jones's own significance as 'champion of the humanities' and 'the visionary creator of the idea of a world-literature'.⁵⁴⁷ In his lecture *Persian Jones*, given to the East India Association in London in 1944 to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Sir William Jones' death, Arberry concentrated entirely on the contribution made to Jones to poetry and literary knowledge, with no reference to any other aspect of Jones's involvement

⁵⁴⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 75.

⁵⁴¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 83.

⁵⁴² Arberry, 1960, p. 86.

⁵⁴³ Arberry, 1960 p. 85.

⁵⁴⁴ Humayun Ansari, 'The Muslim world and British Historical Imaginations: "Re-thinking *Orientalism*"?' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (April 2011), p. 79.

⁵⁴⁵ Ansari, p. 80.

⁵⁴⁶ Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1942), p. 30.

⁵⁴⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 78.

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with the governance of Bengal or to his views of its people.⁵⁴⁸ In his *Asiatic Jones* (1946), Arberry's interest clearly lay in cultural matters: he described the 'admirable preface' to Jones's *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) as marking 'a veritable turning-point in the history of humane studies, for it comprises the most informed and eloquent *apologia pro litteris orientalibus* which had yet been penned, perhaps that has ever been penned'.⁵⁴⁹ Arberry was content to explore Jones's literary and poetic works without concerning himself with investigating the more worldly issues that lay behind a large part of Jones's work. This can be seen from a closer examination of Jones' preface to his *Grammar*.

Ansari cites the *Grammar* to argue that Jones was motivated to produce it because of the value of proficiency in Persian to those working for the EIC (East India Company).⁵⁵⁰ But one may argue that this was merely incidental to Jones' primary motivation. As Arberry explained in his *Persian Jones*, Jones compiled the *Grammar* because of his delight in the Persian language which began when he was a student at Oxford University, an interest that grew from about 1764 onwards and continued while he was employed as tutor to Lord Althorp.⁵⁵¹ It is obvious that the *Grammar* would find a ready market which would increase its sales and was inevitably to be of interest to those associated with the EIC, but when the book was published in 1771, according to Mukherjee, 'Jones... took very little interest in India until he thought of going there as a judge in 1778'.⁵⁵² The *Grammar* was a work primarily intended to help understand the Persian language for those wishing to read and translate Persian its literature, rather than a tool in the armoury of the EIC.

In his study of Persian Orientalists, Arberry included long extracts from the Introduction to the *Grammar* but confined his comments to Jones's wish that the work might be of interest to a few of those resident in Bengal who, in their leisure time, 'amused themselves with the literature of the East' without making any reference to the real reasons why they were resident in the East.⁵⁵³ In his essay on

⁵⁴⁸ Arberry, 'Persian Jones', *The Asiatic Review, Proceedings of the East India Association*, Vol. XI, April, 1944, accessible at https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.83875/2015.83875.The-Asiatic-Review-_djvu.txt.

⁵⁴⁹ Arberry, 1946, p. 33.

⁵⁵⁰ Ansari, p. 80.

⁵⁵¹ Arberry, *Persian Jones*, p. 189.

⁵⁵² S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 30.

⁵⁵³ Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1942), pp. 12–13.

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Jones, Arberry makes no reference to the Introduction or to any suggestions for the reasons for its publication, or its possible use by personnel of the EIC, commenting only that 'it is characterised by great elegance and humanity'.⁵⁵⁴

The same pattern can be seen in Arberry's treatment of other works by Jones. His 1960 *Oriental Essays* provides a chronological account of Jones's works with appreciative comments confined to the poetry and linguistic contributions without any deeper critique of the works or exploration of Jones' position in India. For example, Arberry accepts Jones's reason for translating the *Bughyat al-Bāḥith 'an juml al-mawāriḥ (The Mahomedan (sic) Law of Succession to the Property of Intestates)* of Ibn al-Mulaqqin,⁵⁵⁵ as a translation was 'essential to a complete administration of justice in our *Asiatick* territories',⁵⁵⁶ without enquiring about Jones' role in the Indian justice system. Arberry seemingly accepted that a British lawyer may require an understanding of Islamic law in order to administer it in court in cases where the litigants were Bengali. Arberry equally accepted Jones's function as a judge without questioning his involvement in the governance of Bengal. Said, on the other hand, recognised that 'Jones's official work was the law, an occupation with symbolic significance for the history of Orientalism'.⁵⁵⁷ The significance is that the EIC saw, for the first time, the need to govern India according to its own laws. Although substance of the laws also derived from Hindu and Muslim laws, Jones and his peers introduced procedural aspects of a British court of law in the part of India controlled by the EIC. In fact, Jones' translations are one of the three legal texts that led to the development of Anglo-Mohammedan law in India that continued into the twentieth century.

In none of his works did Arberry refer to Jones's other translation of local laws, the *Al-Sirajiyah or The Mohammadan Law of Inheritance with a Commentary by Sir William Jones*, published in Kolkata in 1792.⁵⁵⁸ That work was better received than his 1782 attempt, being described as 'undoubtedly of considerable utility to the

⁵⁵⁴ Arberry, 1960, p. 51.

⁵⁵⁵ <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/curiosity/islamic-heritage-project/40-990039944700203941>

⁵⁵⁶ William Jones, *The Mahomedan (sic) Law of Succession to the Property of Intestates* (London, Printed by J. Nichols for C. Dilly, 1782), quoted in Arberry, 1960, p. 58.

⁵⁵⁷ Said, 2003, p. 78.

⁵⁵⁸ William Jones, *Al-Sirajiyah or The Mohammadan Law of Inheritance with a Commentary by Sir William Jones* (Calcutta, Joseph Cooper, 1792).

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English judge'.⁵⁵⁹ Jones' legal works provided the EIC with a means of involving it in most aspects of the transfer of property between persons during their lifetimes and on their deaths, so enabling the company to have access to information for the collection of rents and taxes, issues of the greatest importance for the company's revenues and influence. Jones made important addresses to the juries of his courts, in which he specified how the courts would decide cases in the operation of the judicial system in British controlled Bengal.

Arberry concentrated on Jones's literary works whose aesthetic nature was more in keeping with his personal interests. Wickens wrote that Arberry as regarded himself as 'a man of letters', one who was 'proud of his literary skill and taste... [whose] particular vanity was translation into rhymed verse'.⁵⁶⁰ In Arberry's own translation of Persian verse one can clearly see the influence of Jones' style. As Wickens points out,⁵⁶¹ Arberry's Introduction to his *Fifty Poems of Ḥāfiẓ*⁵⁶² begins with an appreciative acknowledgement of Jones' translations and contains Arberry's translations in that style.

In his numerous publications, Arberry did never question the reality that lay behind Jones' works. His concentration on his literary output and his interest in Persian and Sanskrit poetry, presumed to be undertaken for personal enjoyment and amusement while ignoring Jones' legal and administrative functions, presents a rather unbalanced account of Jones' life in Bengal. We can clearly see that Arberry was mainly interested in the aesthetic and literary contributions made by Jones, especially his works of Persian literature in translation and its effects on English literature, and that Arberry therefore falls into the category of those who were the subjects of Ansari's warning (*v. supra*).

Arberry's works on Jones reveal the above-mentioned criteria for Orientalism: adherence to the values of western and classically educated scholars, such as Arberry, who saw the Orient through the lens of western scholarship and values with no wish to look deeper into the societies of the East they described. Said accepted Arberry's description of Jones as the founder of Orientalism because of

⁵⁵⁹ William Hook Morley, *The Administration of Justice in British India, its Past History and Present State comprising an Account of the Laws peculiar to India* (London, Williams and Northgate, 1858), p. 304.

⁵⁶⁰ Wickens, p. 360.

⁵⁶¹ Wickens, p.364.

⁵⁶² Arberry, *Fifty Poems of Ḥāfiẓ* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1947).

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his pioneering work on language and poetry, but Said also believed that Jones' aim was to 'codify and subdue', thus reducing Oriental societies to Western domination.⁵⁶³ This resulted in forming 'a set of structures inherited from the past, secularised, redisposed, and re-formed by disciplines such as philology'.⁵⁶⁴ Jones did contribute to 'modern Orientalism', but for Said it was scholars such as Edward Lane who 'placed Orientalism on a scientific and rational basis'.⁵⁶⁵

Edward William Lane (1801–1876) was the subject of one of Arberry's essays of 1960.⁵⁶⁶ For him, he was principally a lexicographer and translator, once again illustrating Arberry's preference of literary and linguistic studies of the Orient East rather than the reality of Western presence in the East with its utilitarian aspects. Arberry, following his usual practice, included copious and extended extracts from Lane's works, including his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*,⁵⁶⁷ but critical comments on were confined to a few statements, such as 'a brilliant picture of a society long since transformed beyond recognition'.⁵⁶⁸ As Arberry considered that the book was readily procurable, he commented that 'there is no need to describe its contents further', although 'the detail of his information is most valuable' for historical study.⁵⁶⁹ As he pointed out, he spent a few years in Egypt himself and remarked that the life he encountered there was totally different from that seen by Lane but he offered no information to explain his comment.

Arberry used extracts from the book to inform his readers of Lane's findings without any critical evaluation of its contents; there is no discussion on the society which attracted Lane to Egypt, how the information contained in the book might inform Western appreciation of Egypt, or on its place in Orientalist studies of the East, a matter for comment by Said as we discuss below. The essay contains, however, extended accounts of Lane's preparation for writing the *Arabic-English Lexicon* which was eventually posthumously published in 1893 by his nephew, Stanley Lane-Poole.

⁵⁶³ Said, 2003, p. 78.

⁵⁶⁴ Said, 2003, p. 122.

⁵⁶⁵ Said, 2003, p. 122

⁵⁶⁶ Arberry, 1960, pp. 87–121.

⁵⁶⁷ Edward William Lane, *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (London, Charles Knight & Co., 1836).

⁵⁶⁸ Arberry, 1960, p. 90.

⁵⁶⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 98. Perhaps Arberry was thinking of the reprint of the book by Ward, Lock & Co. (London, 1890) based on an 1842 edition by Charles Knight, or that of J. M. Dent (London, 1936).

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In Ansari's critique of *Manners and Customs*, he emphasises the book's value, despite its Orientalist nature, in expressing a positive attitude to Islam and providing an account of Egyptian society that was 'respectful, and one that a "native" of that culture could broadly accept as authentic and accurate'.⁵⁷⁰ The editor of the 1890 version of the *Manners and Customs* commented that it 'has a permanent value as history' and that it was the 'realisation of the genius of a different race from his own',⁵⁷¹ but Arberry was content to reproduce extracts from Lane, without critical engagement, concentrating on Lane's literary output.

The contrast between Arberry's approach and Said's detailed analysis of Lane's contribution to Western appreciation of the Orient could not be starker. For Said, Lane's scientific and rational approach⁵⁷² objectified the Orient by describing it with 'impersonal Western confidence' by which descriptions were made of 'general aspects of society, as though they constituted collective phenomena, which resulted in tendencies to make realities not so much out of the Orient as out of their own observations'.⁵⁷³ Further, by creating a picture which was 'accurate, general and dispassionate', he would convince the English reader that he 'was never infected with heresy or apostasy'.⁵⁷⁴ Lane, according to Said, 'Orientalised the Orient', as he defined and edited it and 'excised from it what might have ruffled European sensibilities'.⁵⁷⁵ Although appearing to be sympathetic to the Orient, to Lane it was 'something kept carefully at bay'.⁵⁷⁶ By contrast, Arberry was content to uncritically marshal extracts from Lane's works, assuming that his conservative account would be acceptable without having to provide the reader with a balanced account of the nature of Lane's narrative or how it formed the overall narrative of Western understanding of the Orient.

We have seen from Ansari's critiques of Ockley, Jones and Lane how early scholars forged the study of Oriental subjects and that particularly the literary aspects of their works attracted comments by Arberry. Ansari provides a historical account of the development of Western thought which enables us to analyse

⁵⁷⁰ Ansari, p. 82.

⁵⁷¹ G. T. Bettany, ed., *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (London, Ward, Lock & Co., 1890), p. vii.

⁵⁷² Said, 2003, p. 122.

⁵⁷³ Said, 2003, p. 176.

⁵⁷⁴ Said, 2003, p. 167.

⁵⁷⁵ Said, 2003, p. 167.

⁵⁷⁶ Said, 2003, p. 242.

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Arberry's approaches to Orientalism, especially in relation to the study of Islam. Historical criticism of Islam and of perceived Ottoman despotism began to give way to a growing appreciation of Muslim culture, although still framed within the strictures of Christian orthodoxy,⁵⁷⁷ as we saw in Ockley's works. Increasing contact with the culture encountered by EIC officials in Bengal brought new knowledge, initially judged against established Western values, but increasingly based on more empirical approaches.⁵⁷⁸ The key to understanding the civilisation and culture in the parts of the Moghul-dominated Indian subcontinent in which the EIC operated was seen to be Islam, which formed Muslim consciousness, but which was, at the same time, considered to be subject to the 'intellectual and moral superiority of contemporary Great Britain over the Muslim world'.⁵⁷⁹ It followed, as utilitarian thinkers explained, that British rule of India was morally justified as an influence for the 'improvement' of native society.⁵⁸⁰ The 'paternalism and utilitarianism'⁵⁸¹ of the eighteenth/nineteenth century became manifested in the drive to undermine the teachings of Islam and to install instead Western values and beliefs. Their motivation was also triggered by the Indian reaction to British rule, resulting in the fundamental change in colonial governance after the so-called 'Indian Mutiny' (or 'First War of Independence') of 1857.

William Muir (1819–1905), a 'high-ranking evangelical Christian official',⁵⁸² exercised a significant influence in the colonial domination of the occupied territories. He had a long career in the Indian civil service, including appointment as Lieutenant-General of the North-West Frontier Province⁵⁸³ and Foreign Secretary to the Indian Government. His *Life of Mahomet*⁵⁸⁴ was written during the crisis described as the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, 'when negative stereotyping of Muslims became rampant'.⁵⁸⁵ Ansari stated that Muir 'in his historical works consistently denigrated Muhamad and the Qur'an, misrepresented Muslims and undervalued

⁵⁷⁷ Ansari, p. 78.

⁵⁷⁸ Ansari, p. 79.

⁵⁷⁹ Ansari, p. 81.

⁵⁸⁰ Ansari, p. 81.

⁵⁸¹ Ansari, p. 83.

⁵⁸² Ansari, *The Infidel Within* (London, C. Hurst & Co., Ltd., 2009), p. 61.

⁵⁸³ Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, (London, Allen Lane, 2006), p. 162.

⁵⁸⁴ William Muir, *A Life of Mohamet and the History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira* (London, Smith, Elder, & Co., 1858 (Vols 1–2), 1861 (Vols 3–4)).

⁵⁸⁵ Varisco, p. 107.

Islam... in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christian and British culture in justification of colonial dominance'.⁵⁸⁶

In the late nineteenth century, the *Life of Mahomet* was recognised as 'the standard presentment... of the career of the Prophet of Islam'.⁵⁸⁷ Said referred to that work and Muir's *The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall* (1891) as being 'still considered [in 1978] to be reliable monuments of scholarship',⁵⁸⁸ a view contested by Varisco who regarded Said's view as 'wrong' and that Muir's work was 'relegated to the rare books sections of the libraries' by 'serious historians'.⁵⁸⁹ To Varisco, like Ansari, Muir was an 'unabashed Christian apologist, whose prose is full of self-righteous invective against Islam'.⁵⁹⁰ Little support has been given for Muir's work: Norman Daniels said of Muir's *Life of Mahomet* as striking 'us now as no more sympathetic to Islam than the work of his mediaeval (sic) predecessors'.⁵⁹¹

What do Muir's writings tell us about Arberry and the nature of his Orientalism? In his works, he makes no mention of Muir, although it is inconceivable that he was unaware of his works, especially the *Life of Mahomet*. Arberry did not share Muir's antagonistic attitude towards Islam and India, on the whole being sympathetic to Islam. He regarded the Qur'an as 'among the greatest monuments of mankind',⁵⁹² and recalled that during his stay in Egypt, he 'the infidel, learnt to understand and react to the thrilling rhythm of the Koran',⁵⁹³ statements that contrast sharply with Muir's contention that 'the sword of Muhammed, and the Koran, are the most stubborn enemies of Civilisation, Liberty and the Truth which the world has yet known'.⁵⁹⁴

In his attempt to provide a 'fair' representation of the Qur'an's meaning, Arberry sought to show what the Qur'an meant to the 'unquestioning soul of the

⁵⁸⁶ Ansari, p. 83.

⁵⁸⁷ C. J. Lyall, 'Sir William Muir', *JRASGBI*, Oct. 1905, p. 876.

⁵⁸⁸ Said, 2003, p. 151

⁵⁸⁹ Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2007), p. 107.

⁵⁹⁰ Varisco, p. 107.

⁵⁹¹ Norman Daniels, *Islam and the West* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 1960), p. 327.

⁵⁹² Arberry, *The Holy Koran*, p. 33.

⁵⁹³ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

⁵⁹⁴ Muir, *The Life of Mohamet* (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 522 quoted by Albert Hourani, 'Islam and the Philosophers of History', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (April 1967), p. 222; also cited in Said, 2003, p. 151.

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believer',⁵⁹⁵ However, as we shall discuss in Chapter 6 (Translating the Qur'an), Arberry's Orientalism can also be identified in his Qur'anic translations. Muir had a clear standpoint – to show the superiority of Christianity over Islam, and of British rule over the despotism of Indian native leaders. Arberry did not argue from a particular theological, philosophic or political point of view and avoided making value judgements on Asian countries or on their societies. At the beginning of this section we pointed out that Arberry's approach was to concentrate on the literature and poetry produced by those societies and on the scholarly treatment of those subjects. Arrangements for governing, political and social issues and the elements underlying those societies or the contextual issues that surrounded them were outside his sphere of interest, although, as we discuss below, his work can be seen to fall within a wider Western narrative.

Said identified the development of frames of reference for studying the Orient by a group of scholars, including Muir, in the nineteenth century, who formed and influenced the British imperial culture of their times.⁵⁹⁶ One of those scholars was David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940). While Muir was openly antagonistic towards Islam, Ansari described Margoliouth's treatment of Islam and Muhammad as less virulent, being a 'thinly veiled disparagement', coming from the 'fervently Christian professor of Arabic at Oxford', whose works 'continued to inform influential historical analysis'.⁵⁹⁷ In the words of Ansari, Margoliouth was 'an ordained Anglican cleric... [who although he] had many good things to say about Muhammad and Islam... he considered Muhammad and his Muslim followers to be ultimately deeply flawed in several respects'.⁵⁹⁸

Margoliouth's works appeared in the early years of the twentieth century⁵⁹⁹ and it was his Introduction to Rodwell's translation of the Qur'an of 1909 that

⁵⁹⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

⁵⁹⁶ Said, 2003, p. 224. He lists, apart from Muir, the scholars Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859–1933), David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940), Charles James Lyall (1845–1920), Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926), Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945), Guy Le Strange (1854–1933), Edward Denison Ross (1871–1940) and Thomas Walker Arnold (1864–1930).

⁵⁹⁷ Ansari, p. 85.

⁵⁹⁸ Ansari, p. 85.

⁵⁹⁹ David Samuel Margoliouth, *Mohammad and the Rise of Islam* (1905), *The Early Development of Mohammedanism* (1914) and *The Relations Between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam* (1924).

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attracted Arberry's attention.⁶⁰⁰ Arberry agreed with Margoliouth's view that the Qur'an was the key to creating the 'vast politico-religious organisation of the Muhammadan world' which, in 1909, was 'one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to reckon today',⁶⁰¹ but he disagreed with Margoliouth regarding the source of the Revelation contained in the Qur'an. Margoliouth wrote that the 'secret of the power exercised by the book... lay in the mind which produced it',⁶⁰² thus immediately denying a divine agency, and so, according to Arberry, repeated an 'unremarkable idea, intolerable to the Muslim'.⁶⁰³

In Margoliouth's view, 'to speak of the Koran is, therefore, practically the same as speaking of Muhammed', so that any attempt to form an evaluation of the religious value of the book was, in effect, 'an attempt to gauge the character of the prophet himself'; in this Margoliouth saw the revelation and the prophet as inseparable ('there is such a complete identity between the literary work and the mind of the man who produced it').⁶⁰⁴ To Arberry, this amounted to a 'deliberate fraud',⁶⁰⁵ and he further criticised Margoliouth's reference to studies that suggested that Muhammad might be regarded as being a 'prophet of certain truths',⁶⁰⁶ as only a 'sop to open-mindedness'. Arberry was ready to dismiss Margoliouth's views, in the words of Pickthall, as a 'commentation offensive to Muslims'.⁶⁰⁷

Although highly critical of Margoliouth, Arberry was himself equivocal about the source of the revelation; he undertook his translation on the basis 'as if he believed' the Qur'an was 'divinely inspired', a phrase that he qualified by adding 'whatever that phrase may mean',⁶⁰⁸ and, further, that he was unable to say 'what might have been its origin, in spite of the psychologists, and am equally content not to guess at it'.⁶⁰⁹

What does his reaction to Margoliouth tell us about Arberry's attitudes towards Islam and Orientalism? In Chapter 6, we discuss in detail Arberry's

⁶⁰⁰ Margoliouth, *Introduction*, *The Koran translated from the Arabic by the Rev. J M. Rodwell* (London, J. M. Dent, 1909.)

⁶⁰¹ Margoliouth, p. vii.

⁶⁰² Margoliouth, p. vii.

⁶⁰³ Arberry, p.15.

⁶⁰⁴ Margoliouth, p. vii.

⁶⁰⁵ Arberry, 1953, p.15.

⁶⁰⁶ Margoliouth, p. viii

⁶⁰⁷ Arberry, 1953, p.16.

⁶⁰⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

⁶⁰⁹ Arberry, 1853, p. 32.

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approaches to translating the Qur'an. For the purposes of discussing Arberry's awareness of the phenomenon of Orientalism, it can be said that Arberry adhered to his usual approach to Islamic texts and his methods based on his knowledge accumulated over decades of work. The doubts he expressed over the divine source of the Qur'an, a central tenet of Islam, allied Arberry to Western works on Islam; while not going as far as Muir, he showed something of the reticence of Ockley. Although his own academic position was not compromised in the way that constrained Ockley, he did not wish to depart from the prevailing orthodoxy of Lane and Pickthall, consequently confirming his Orientalist outlook.

Arberry's aim was to explain, in his own terms, the text of the Qur'an to a Western readership. He assumed the position of interpreter, not only of the language of the text, but of the messages conveyed by it. In effect he was telling the West how it should view the revealed text and the conclusions to be drawn from it. The knowledge gained from his scholarly studies provided the medium for creating an English version of the text which accorded with the conventions of that learning, grounded in Western values, standing as the gate-keeper for the transmission of the phenomenon of the Qur'an. Unlike Pickthall, a Muslim convert, who aimed to produce a literal translation, Arberry approached the text as a Western scholar as if he was working on a piece of high-quality literature. While Pickthall looked from the inside out, Arberry looked from the outside in. However sympathetic he was to the meaning of the Qur'an, showing awe and respect to its writing and calligraphy, he consciously remained a Western observer, outside the faith that informed its adherents.

This leads us to Edward Glanville Browne (1862–1926) whom Arberry considered to be a 'very great orientalist... for whose example... I have very particular reason to be thankful';⁶¹⁰ here he refers to the studentship he was awarded, funded by a bequest by Browne to the University of Cambridge.⁶¹¹ Arberry did not personally know Browne, neither was he taught by him, but Browne had a deep influence on his learning and attitudes to Oriental studies. As a tribute to Browne and his work, Arberry wrote an essay, named 'The Persian'. Though largely consisting of extracts from the work of other scholars which celebrated

⁶¹⁰ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, 1960, p. 161.

⁶¹¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 235.

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Browne's achievements, it is possible to discover elements of Arberry's own assessment of Browne.

Arberry regarded Browne as an outstanding Persian scholar whose work on Persian literature had 'inspired and informed the work of all scholars in the field',⁶¹² among whom he probably included himself. Arberry thought highly of Browne, but was not reticent in criticising him. In the case of his *A Literary History of Persia* which attracted wide praise as Arberry confirms, he found 'errors and omissions, some serious', though he thought that they did not detract from the 'remarkable and sustained excellence of the whole'.⁶¹³ Browne's 'exceptional gift for translation' suffered 'from the defect common to all scholar's verses – the anxiety to be exactly true to the original militates against the full release of creative energy',⁶¹⁴ – a criticism that Arberry must have realised also applied to him. Arberry was supportive of Browne and felt he deserved due recognition: regarding the decision not to appoint Browne to the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic at Cambridge in 1889 on the death of William Wright (1830–1899), Arberry comments that, had he been an elector, he would have supported him, 'but the conservatives were strongly entrenched in academic politics in those days' and passed him over.⁶¹⁵

Ansari viewed Browne as one who believed in the emancipation of the Persian people, who supported the 'Constitutional movement and resistance to European imperialistic encroachments'.⁶¹⁶ Arberry, however, preferred to regard Browne's criticism of the complaisant policies of the British government towards Russia, and its failure to support Turkey in 1911, as 'the voice of Britain the champion of the weak and oppressed, Britain the torchbearer of freedom and democracy'.⁶¹⁷ It is not however certain that Arberry shared those views or whether they were Arberry's own interpretation of Browne's views, but if he had held that belief, that would have been a rare expression of a political opinion by Arberry, suggesting that loyalty to Browne, at least, shaped his outlook. If it is true, it suggests a view of the world not extended by Arberry to the conditions in other British colonial territories or to the British involvement in India. Arberry's abiding attitude was that

⁶¹² Arberry, 1960, p. 179.

⁶¹³ Arberry, 1960, p. 178.

⁶¹⁴ Arberry, 1960, p. 180.

⁶¹⁵ Arberry, 1960, p. 174.

⁶¹⁶ Ansari, p. 85.

⁶¹⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 187.

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of the British Orientalist, one of acceptance of the status quo and avoidance of any controversial opinions outside his own field of study.

Browne's impact of Browne on Arberry was patent: 'I own my own career as an orientalist, and my own love for Persia and all things Persian, to Browne's inspiration and example'.⁶¹⁸ Browne's example may have created for Arberry an image of how he himself wished to be regarded, as he wrote of Browne as 'bridging the gap between the old order and the new, in creating a pattern of university and college life which was wholly good, a pattern of humanity and the humanities in the broadest and truest sense'.⁶¹⁹ If this can be taken as a statement of Arberry's personal belief, it suggests a scholar totally grounded in the ethos of Western thought, one who regarded other cultures and civilisations from the viewpoint of such humanism, applying Western values to their study, interpreting the 'other' in Western terms, transmitting Eastern learning through Western teaching, and thus an epitome of Said's Orientalist.

Among the group of scholars who contributed to Arberry's framework of thought about Eastern subjects, Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859–1934) made a major impact on Arberry. As Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge from 1893 to 1934, Bevan was Arberry's 'revered teacher'.⁶²⁰ Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), translator of the Qur'an, with whom Bevan maintained regular correspondence for most of his life (as he did with Ignaz Goldziher, 1850–1921), influenced his work.⁶²¹ The connection with some of the foremost European Orientalists and their learning must in turn have been transmitted to his students. Bevan's main subject was Arabic, especially Arabic poetry, together with which he had extensive knowledge of the Persian language and the works of Firdausi and Jalālu'ddin Rūmī. Those writers and the methods by which their works were analysed and interpreted by Bevan and other of his lecturers were seen to be at the core of Arberry's later work.

Bevan produced works on Arabian poetry, edited with Lyall the *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* ('The Examination of al-Mufaddal') and an eighth-century collection of pre-Islamic verses of Arabic life dating to the sixth century;⁶²² he also edited the

⁶¹⁸ Arberry, 1960, p. 190.

⁶¹⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 192.

⁶²⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 167.

⁶²¹ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, 'Professor A. A. Bevan', *JRASGBI*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 1934), p. 219.

⁶²² World Heritage Encyclopaedia (WHEBN0002634166), downloaded 30/10/2020.

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Naqā'id of Javīr and *Farazdaq* (an inter-tribal poetry contest)⁶²³ and contributed to Arabic lexicology.⁶²⁴ An examination of Arberry's works shows only praise for Bevan, any critical evaluation is omitted.

Nicholson recalled that Bevan's lectures made a 'deep and lasting impression' on everyone who heard them, including Arberry. In his tribute to Bevan, Nicholson concluded with 'some words written from Egypt by a former pupil of his and mine, "Having known him and studied with him, I feel that I have known and studied under the great scholars of the nineteenth century, from whom he learnt and whose accuracy and enthusiasm he so faithfully reflected"'.⁶²⁵ These words can only be those of Arberry who was a pupil of both Nicholson and Bevan and stayed in Egypt in 1934.⁶²⁶

Arberry's words about Bevan encapsulate the framework of thought of Orientalists during the mid-twentieth century. Their reference points were the studies carried out in the centres of European Oriental studies and the works of British nineteenth-century Orientalists. Nicholson and Bevan impacted on Arberry's Orientalist outlook, their *exempla* and works defined his fields of study, their methodologies (insisting on accuracy and standards of translations in accordance with the literary and poetic expectations of the time) informed his way of working, and their Orientalism, based on the nineteenth century conception of the East, moulded his. They operated in the context of the height of British imperialism, in a University whose ethos was a component of the imperial political and social structure, and formed part of a consciousness fortified by the prevailing attitudes of superiority of their knowledge and expertise. Bevan's and Nicholson's Orientalism was inward looking, neither having been to any Asian countries,⁶²⁷ regarding the cultures which they studied from a world far removed from the reality of everyday life in the East. It is clear that Arberry's Orientalism was inspired by theirs.

⁶²³ Cory Alan Jorgensen, dissertation, 201291, University of Texas at Austin, UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

⁶²⁴ Nicholson, p. 220.

⁶²⁵ Nicholson, p. 221.

⁶²⁶ Arberry, 1960, p. 237.

⁶²⁷ Nicholson, p. 219.

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Arberry's views of Nicholson (1868–1945) are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.⁶²⁸ In this Section we have examined more closely the degree to which the Orientalism shown in the works of scholars and others is mirrored in Arberry's own approaches and we have investigated whether Arberry was aware of their Orientalism and whether he gave uncritical acceptance to their knowledge output and how their work was seen to influence his own work. Here we examine the nexus of outlook between Arberry and Nicholson in more detail.

Arberry's Essay of 1960, *The Dervish*,⁶²⁹ is an unqualified tribute to Nicholson and his works, without the type of critical comments seen, for example, in Arberry's views on Browne. Having described Nicholson as 'my teacher, my chief inspirer, and my very dear friend',⁶³⁰ it was unlikely that Arberry would offer anything other than an uncritical acceptance of Nicholson's knowledge output. For example, he quoted Nicholson's attitude towards the Qur'an as 'literature'⁶³¹ without any comment, despite its obvious false analogy, lack of appreciation of the unique status of the text and its anachronistic nature when viewed in 1960, or even that it contradicted his own view of the Qur'an as expressed in his translations of 1953 and 1955. His unremitting eulogy of Nicholson can be seen where Arberry describes him as the 'greatest pure scholar ever' to be elected, as Browne's successor in 1926, to the Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic at Cambridge.⁶³² It is worth recalling that Nicholson was unable to speak Arabic or Persian, despite his profound knowledge of those languages, nor did he take pleasure in writing in them, and, like Bevan, he did not venture to Muslim countries.⁶³³

Nicholson stood in the tradition of the Orientalism exemplified by Ockley, Muir and Margoliouth: conservative, inward looking, concerned with their type of learning, their own approaches and their established conventions. As Said put it: 'there is in each scholar some awareness, partly conscious and partly non-conscious of national tradition, if not national ideology... [T]his is particularly true of

⁶²⁸ Nicholson is discussed in this thesis at Section 1.4.1 (The Academic context of Arberry's works), Section 3.3 (Selected works) and Section 5.2.3 (Arberry's views on Translating).

⁶²⁹ Arberry, 1960, *The Dervish*, pp. 197-232.

⁶³⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 197.

⁶³¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 207: '*the opinion almost unanimously held by European readers that it is obscure, tiresome, uninteresting; a farrago of long-winded narratives and prosaic exhortation, quite unworthy to be named in the same breath with the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament*'.

⁶³² Arberry, 1960, p. 223.

⁶³³ Arberry, 1960, p. 224.

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Orientalism.⁶³⁴ Hourani identified the possible source of that awareness in the writings of philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as we shall discuss below.⁶³⁵ Arberry was trained in that way of thinking, although he was positive in his appreciation to the merits of Arabic and Persian literature and the Qur'an. He knew that his work and his own Orientalism were profoundly influenced by Nicholson, a factor in his scholarship of which he was proud.

The Orientalism we see in the scholars discussed here, including Arberry, could be described, in Said's words, as forming an 'academic-research consensus or paradigm' in which *their* Orient 'was not a place one encountered directly; it was something one read about, studied, wrote about within the confines of learned societies, the university, the scholarly conference'.⁶³⁶ Those scholars regarded the East as static, whose unchanging nature was confirmed to them from the medieval texts they studied and translated, as we saw from the discussion on visual representations.⁶³⁷ Said's words, directed to Hamilton Alexander Roskeen Gibb (1895–1971), were equally applicable to Arberry (Gibb is discussed elsewhere in this thesis). Following his period as Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford University (1937–1955), Gibb,⁶³⁸ became professor of Arabic at Harvard University and Director of its Center for Middle Eastern Studies.⁶³⁹ Gibb's significance in relation to Arberry lies, in one sense, in the passing from traditional studies about the East to the new concept of Area Studies, of which Gibb was the principal instigator. He saw the necessity to move on from inward-looking Orientalism, as demonstrated by Nicholson and Arberry, to a new concept of Orientalism which would address the issues of politics and economics in modern societies. There were, however, some similarities between Arberry and Gibb, notably their attitudes to what they considered to be at the heart of Muslim ways of thinking and their confidence in informing a Western readership of what they considered to be the truth about Islam. Said analyses Gibb's assertion that there was a dislocation between Islam as a pure

⁶³⁴ Said, 2003, p. 263.

⁶³⁵ Albert Hourani, 'Islam and the Philosophers of History', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Apr. 1967), pp. 206–268.

⁶³⁶ Said, 1993, p. 275.

⁶³⁷ Chapter 2, Section 2.5.

⁶³⁸ Gibb is discussed in this thesis in Chapter 1.4.1, Chapter 2.1.4, 2.1.5 and 2.2.4, Chapter 6.3 and Chapter 7.3 and 7.5.

⁶³⁹ Albert Hourani, 'Gibb, Sir Hamilton Alexander Roskeen', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31143>, accessed 24/06/2014.

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religion and the formulations of that religion by the clerics⁶⁴⁰ the latter, according to Gibb, being the cause of the resistance to the modernising of Islam. In adopting this view, Said argued that Gibb had assumed a 'privilege... the very ground on which the Orientalist places himself so as to write about, legislate for, and reformulate Islam'.⁶⁴¹ Ansari pointed out similar assumptions made by Gibb: that the studies of ancient texts were accurate sources for understanding the 'mind' of the Arab or Muslim and as the basis for 'effective policy making'.⁶⁴² Ansari's analysis of the work of Bernard Lewis (1916–2018) shows that he, too, 'ignored local contexts and histories' in depicting a Muslim society that was static and tending to autocracy.⁶⁴³ Arberry's works equally demonstrates these aspects: Arberry used the capital of his scholarly status to depict Islamic, Arabic and Persian subjects of the medieval era as though they remained valid representations of their societies, using his privileged standing to seek to penetrate the Muslim mind in order to inform the West of what he understood to be the meaning of Islam. He did not go as far as Gibb in using that information for the purpose of establishing modern public policy attitudes towards the Middle East – not even during his wartime propaganda work – but saw his task to be an authoritative interpreter of Islam and Muslim thought.

The scholars discussed so far appear representative of the attitudes of Western Orientalists towards the East, raising the question about the reasons that led to the domination of this Western-centric Oriental view of the East. Empire and imperial superiority, as we discussed in Chapter 2, provided a strong background force that shaped the thinking of scholars in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, and we have seen other trends within Orientalism that reinforced that attitude. Said's suggestion that, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the whole question of imperialism became infused with the dichotomy between 'advanced' societies on the one hand and, on the other hand, 'backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies',⁶⁴⁴ points to racist attitudes underlying imperialism. His view, that 'every European, in what he [the European] could say about the Orient, was consequently [a] racist, [an] imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric'. This view encompassed scholars who, by their positions in academia, assumed a privileged status for the

⁶⁴⁰ Said, 2003, p. 281.

⁶⁴¹ Said, 2003, p. 282.

⁶⁴² Ansari, p. 87.

⁶⁴³ Ansari, p. 88.

⁶⁴⁴ Said, 2003, p. 207.

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dissemination of their views about race. This attitude of hegemony, superiority, even institutionalised racism, that we find, for example, at the universities in the 19th and 20th century, was first articulated by Renan (1823–1892)⁶⁴⁵ and Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931)⁶⁴⁶, both writing in the late nineteenth century,⁶⁴⁷ and by Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) in the early twentieth century. They argued that the dislocation between the Islamic world and the Christian West lay in fundamental differences between them. Renan, whose work had an ‘immense impact’⁶⁴⁸ in the nineteenth century, argued that Islam and Christianity were the products of different ‘races’, each with their own mentality.⁶⁴⁹ Le Bon argued that ‘racial character is the permanent factor in history, moulding institutions, languages and doctrines in its own image’.⁶⁵⁰ This idea was further developed by Spengler (1880–1936) who saw human history as consisting of different ‘cultures’, the essence of each lying in its ‘creative soul’ through which it viewed the world, each culture being considered incomprehensible to those who did not belong to it.⁶⁵¹ Such views are patently racist and doubt have been cast with regard to their methodology.⁶⁵² Nevertheless, they can indicate an underlying attitude between the West and the East found in the period during which Arberry was studying, working and writing and must have been, consciously or unconsciously, part of the currency of scholarly discourse within those institutions. Reference has already been made to the current controversy regarding the emblematic display of Cecil Rhodes⁶⁵³ as a hero of the British Empire. In modern terms, the organisations which allowed such views would be under scrutiny for permitting elements of institutional racism. This demonstrates the need for further studies into the relationship between Orientalism and racism, and how attitudes of institutional racism impacted on the teaching and work of members of those bodies.

⁶⁴⁵ Albert Hourani, ‘Islam and the Philosophers of History’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Apr. 1967), pp. 206–268, at p. 207.

⁶⁴⁶ Hourani, p. 255, with reference to Le Bon, *La Civilisation des Arabes* (Paris, 1884).

⁶⁴⁷ Hourani, p. 250.

⁶⁴⁸ Hourani, p. 252, referring to *Histoire général et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (Paris, 1878).

⁶⁴⁹ Hourani, p. 250.

⁶⁵⁰ Hourani, p. 255.

⁶⁵¹ Hourani, p. 257, referring to O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Munich, 1923).

⁶⁵² Hourani, p. 259: ‘such systems now have a curiously old-fashioned air’; Varisco: ‘...to the extent that Orientalists of any era follow Hegel, Spengler or Toynbee, they are guilty of employing a faulty methodology’, *Reading Orientalism* (2007) p. 120.

⁶⁵³ See Introduction above.

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In his essay,⁶⁵⁴ Hourani suggests that 'Islamic society is different from others, and [can] only to be understood in its own terms; secondly, it is not a single existing society but an "ideal type" – a group of related characteristics which have embodied themselves in different ways and to different extents in many existing societies'.⁶⁵⁵ Arberry and the scholars we have discussed regarded Arabic and Persian societies in the way identified by Hourani because of who they were, their backgrounds, education and training, and their scholarly positions, as well as due to the ethos prevailing within the academic institutions of which they were part and which they themselves informed.

Arberry's Orientalism was derived directly from the 'academic-research paradigm' of the scholars we have discussed. Aware of his own Orientalism, calling himself the 'disciple'⁶⁵⁶ of his teachers and mentors, he was sparing in his criticism of their work but fully appreciative of the impact they made on his outlook and works.

3.4 Conclusion

The overall objective of this thesis is consideration of Arberry's works in the context of the debate about Orientalism, and central to the study is the critique of Arberry's attitudes towards Oriental cultures, as revealed by his works and writings. In this Chapter we have analysed a selection of his works – recommended by his peers and contemporaries – which appear to demonstrate Arberry's clear identification with the Orientalist tradition of British scholarship. By producing versions of medieval texts, with extensive commentaries and explanations, scholarly superiority was assumed in the works produced, supported by the reputational capital of the institutions in which Arberry worked. The authority of the works underlined the primacy of scholarship in the way European attitudes towards the East were formed, showing a clear continuation of long established attitudes by which it controlled and managed sources of knowledge from the East in the interests of Western scholarship. An explanation of the history of Ṣūfī studies in the West for an Indian audience was an example of that approach: that Suhrawardy had chosen Arberry, and not an Indian scholar, to deliver the lectures reflected not only his own personal

⁶⁵⁴ Hourani, p. 262.

⁶⁵⁵ Hourani, p. 262.

⁶⁵⁶ Arberry, 1960, p. 233.

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involvement in the Orientalist outlook and support for the colonial management of scholarship, but also gave a platform for a Western scholar to emphasise Western values and to reinforce the colonial nature of Islamic studies. In essence, Arberry was a scholar in the Orientalist tradition. His published works and wartime activities demonstrate that he was grounded in the culture, attitudes and mind-set of the Orientalists developed during the end of the nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth century, and those beliefs remained with him during his scholastic career.

Chapter 4: Arberry and Propaganda

4.0 Introduction

In Chapter 3 we assessed Arberry's works in the context of western Orientalism and identified the prevalence of his belief in the legitimacy of the Orientalists' approach to the study of Arabic and Persian cultures. His confidence in that belief was seen in the material he produced while working for the MOI and the BBC during the period 1939–1944 which provides the clearest statements of his support for imperialist and colonialist causes and the superiority of western scholarship. During this period, his works were produced under circumstances that were entirely different from his normal scholarly practices, while but they show essential underlying similarities with the works discussed in Chapter 3. In the context of a career of nearly forty years as a scholar of the Orient, the years spent on wartime activities was a comparatively short time span, but his activities and writings during that period put into a sharper focus his willingness to express the superiority of Western Orientalism and the values of British imperial hegemony over the countries falling under its influence in the face of unprecedented challenges.

This account of Arberry's roles in the MOI and in the BBC Arabic Service during the Second World War will reveal that Arberry and the organisations for which he worked were wholly unprepared for the tasks expected from them. How to respond effectively to the changed circumstances of operating in wartime conditions appeared to have been a difficult decision. The government therefore adopted an immediate response of relying on familiar and established ways of working, and on an assumed perception of the world in the terms by which it was understood since the First World War. This section will explore how Arberry and the organisations gradually adjusted to new challenges.

In this Chapter, there will be references to the term 'propaganda' in connection with the MOI and BBC Arberry's works. The ordinary meaning of the word, according to *The Chambers Dictionary*, is 'the organised spreading of doctrine, true or false information, opinions, etc., esp. to bring about change or reform,'⁶⁵⁷ but in the context of the Second World War the term took a more ominous

⁶⁵⁷ *The Chambers Dictionary* (London, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 2003), p. 1209.

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meaning. A BBC paper, probably written in December 1939 according to Briggs, reveals that 'propaganda' was considered to be a 'deliberate perversion of the truth', used in order to maintain national morale within the country and to further the effort of the government's overseas activities.⁶⁵⁸

4.1 Arberry and the Ministry of Information

In his *Oriental Essays*, Arberry described the period which he spent as a civil servant working for the Ministry of Information.⁶⁵⁹ Having been employed as a civil servant in the India Office, he was 'transferred to the War Office' in 1939 by which he was attached to the Postal Censorship Department at Liverpool for six months. He was engaged in the 'uncommon languages section' and found the work 'tedious and exhausting'.⁶⁶⁰ He wrote of the sense of relief when he was transferred to the MOI in March 1940.⁶⁶¹ A theme that was to run through the period spent during the war was his aphorism: 'For the next four years my master was Miniform, my business propaganda'.⁶⁶² Significant aspects of the Western Orientalist approach became revealed in the organisations in which Arberry worked. In order to understand the Orientalist aspects of Arberry's contributions, as well as of the institutions he worked for, we first need to examine briefly accounts of the development and the activities of the organisations, the MOI and BBC Arab Service.

4.2 The Origins of the Ministry of Information

An account of the origins and working of the MOI during the period 1939–1945 is hampered by unavailability of evidence and access to material. Holman pointed out that publishing history for the period 'is virtually absent from any printed account of the war years'.⁶⁶³ This is attributed to the lack of an official history of the MOI and the absence of records kept by the publishing and print industries; for them the war

⁶⁵⁸ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London, Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 7.

⁶⁵⁹ A. J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 238.

⁶⁶⁰ S. A Skilliter, 'Arthur John Arberry', *BSOAS UL*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1970), p. 365.

⁶⁶¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 238.

⁶⁶² Arberry, 1960 p. 238.

⁶⁶³ Valerie Holman, 'Carefully Concealed Connections: The Ministry of Information and British publishing, 1939–1945', *Book History*, Vol. 8, 2005, John Hopkins University Press, p. 200, accessed 15/11/2019 from JSTOR.

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years were seen as ‘an aberration, a time of lost stock, mobilised staff and a failure to meet an unprecedented demand for books’.⁶⁶⁴ The lack of material was also caused by the decision of the government to conceal the interface between the production of information on behalf of the state and the publishing of that material in furtherance of its objectives. Holman ascertained that nearly one thousand files of internal correspondence were housed in The National Archives but that material relating to book publishing during the war were ‘lost or destroyed’, and that in 2008 no official history had by then been published.⁶⁶⁵ To remedy the lack of knowledge, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) financed a project in 2013 which was carried out by the Institute of English Studies, part of the School of Advanced Study of the University of London, in collaboration with The National Archives and King’s College London. The purpose of the project ‘*Make do and Mend*’ was to provide research into the MOI as the public information authority and publicity agent of the British government during the Second World War. It is intended in due course to publish material and the results of the research.⁶⁶⁶

The MOI had its origins in the publicity efforts of the First World War. A 1917 report entitled *Enquiry into the Extent and Efficiency of Propaganda* chaired by Sir Ronald Donald into the use of printed materials proved to be so controversial, as Holman pointed out, that it instigated a further Report, *British Propaganda During the War 1914–1918*, which considered the production and distribution of written material to allied and neutral countries and dominions. The Reports were mainly concerned with the relationships between government and publishers and with the print and distribution industries, and gave models for future organisational structures in the event of further conflicts. Holman showed that propaganda was not confined to the intended audience, but its production impacted on the structures adopted for the creation and dissemination of material, which would be of consequence to the future MOI.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁴ Holman, 2005, p. 200.

⁶⁶⁵ Valerie Holman, *Print for Victory: Book Publishing in England 1939-1945* (London, The British Library, 2008), p. 91.

⁶⁶⁶ <https://ies.sas.ac.uk/research/ministry-information-1939-45>. It has published *Allied Communication to the Public During the Second World War* (London, Bloomsbury, 2019). Home Intelligence Reports regarding the MOI are on the project website: <http://www.moidigital.ac.uk/>

⁶⁶⁷ Holman, 2005, p. 198.

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According to Partner, the creation of 'great propaganda machines by the right-wing dictatorships in continental Europe aroused revulsion and fear among many on the British Left and distaste among many on the Right'.⁶⁶⁸ However, the need was recognised for effective techniques of mass persuasion, both internally and for foreign audiences. Sir Stephen Tallents, former head of the Empire Marketing Board, later to become prominent in the nascent MOI, stated in response to increasingly sophisticated and extensive German state self-promotion:

'We must master the art of national projection. The English people must be seen for what it is – a great nation still anxious to serve the world and to secure the world's peace'.⁶⁶⁹

The campaign for 'national projection' was to be the major concern of the MOI throughout the war years. The British Council, formed in 1934 under the auspices of the Foreign Office, was responsible for the promotion of cultural aspects of Britain to overseas countries and it was seen as the type of organisation that would be suitable to project the image of Britain abroad during the war.

Early in 1939, the Government's response to intense German propaganda activities in Europe and the Middle East was to develop the policy of producing overseas 'publicity', a term regarded as less offensive than 'propaganda'. Publicity suggested the issuing of factual information, conveying the Government's concern for an image of objectivity and truth. The British Council was regarded as operating in the field of diplomacy, but, in reality, as Holman pointed out, its working methods more closely resembled propaganda.⁶⁷⁰ Duff Cooper MP (1890–1954), Minister of Information in 1940, wrote of its work:

'The supposition is that the British Council exists only for cultural and not for political propaganda, but this at the best of times was mere camouflage since no country would be justified in spending public money on cultural propaganda unless it had a political or commercial significance.'⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁸ Peter Partner, *Arab Voices: The BBC Arabic Service 1938–1988* (London, BBC External Services, 1988), p. 1.

⁶⁶⁹ Stephen Tallents, *The Projection of England* (London, 1932), pp. 39-40, quoted in Partner p. 1.

⁶⁷⁰ Holman, 2008, p. 19.

⁶⁷¹ Duff Cooper TNA PRREM 4/203, 7 Feb 1941, quoted in Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London, Cape, 1984), p. 78, and in Holman, 2008, p. 19.

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As the war continued, and the need for propaganda became more obvious, its effect on the values of the organisation and its operation came to be questioned. The MOI was concerned to avoid compromising the reputations of existing institutions for fairness and reasonableness in their operations without imitating the practice of the German Propaganda Ministry, established in 1933, of issuing state propaganda. The MOI was required to rapidly put in place effective structures, and operational strategies and policies, including efficient methods of production, from the writing of material to its eventual dissemination. To avoid the impression that the state itself was the creator of propaganda, a policy was adopted whereby a(n imaginary) distance would be created between the government and the production of propaganda material by carefully concealing the nexus between government and publishing activities so that none of the literature initiated by MOI bore 'overt marks of its origins'.⁶⁷²

The MOI, established in September 1939, was initially organised into three divisions, the Press and Censorship Bureau, Home Publicity and Foreign Publicity, which was overseas publicity in allied and neutral countries, all supported by the General Production Division. In March 1940, Arberry was transferred from work in Liverpool on censorship to the MOI, based in Senate House, University of London. Late in 1940, the Foreign Publicity division was re-organised into four strands, Empire and American, the Neutral Countries section covering the Middle East and the Far East, and a section for enemy and enemy-occupied countries, including France. According to Holman, 'In post-war histories the MOI appears like a monstrous amoeba, constantly changing shape and growing out of control. Initially chaotic and unpopular, as the MOI grew more efficient, it attracted less [hostile] attention'.⁶⁷³

4.3 MOI: Production of Written Material

The General Production Division was responsible for literary and editorial work, production of material and publicity. The problems facing the MOI at this period included shortage of management expertise and raw materials for paper

⁶⁷² Holman, 2005, p. 198, fn. 5.

⁶⁷³ Holman, 2008, p. 91.

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manufacture, which was itself subject to paper rationing, and the difficulties in distributing printed material, due to fuel and transport shortages. For home consumption, books were produced that highlighted positive features of British history, culture, achievement or sensibility. Publications had the appearance of normal books and were sold commercially, but they originated from and were supported by the MOI.

An example of the publications was the popular series *Britain in Pictures: The British People in Pictures*, under the general editorship of Walter James Turner, formerly of the BBC. Launched in 1941, the series comprised over a hundred books, sold at 'modest' prices (2/6 or 3/6), depicting various aspects of British life and activities. They included *British Sport* of 1941, written by Eric Parker, and in 1943, *The Story of Wales* by Rhys Davies, and of particular interest for us the 1943 book entitled *British Orientalists* written by Arberry. All books were published by William Collins of London and produced by Adprint, a company largely staffed by refugees.⁶⁷⁴ The books, which contained no reference to the MOI or any connection with any official government activity, were examples of the implementation of the policy of subtle propaganda, by understated positive publicity. The image sought to be created was of a country of individuals, localities and communities, not a 'national conglomerate,'⁶⁷⁵ but a society different in nature and culture from a centralised state. Books in the series were translated and distributed overseas.

For the export of books, the MOI formed a company, the Book Export Scheme Ltd., which was designed to ensure the production of books for overseas readership. To avoid the prohibitively high costs of books in the Middle East and elsewhere, the MOI underwrote their production, books were made available on a 'sale or return' basis, the MOI purchased unsold copies, and guaranteed production costs.

4.4 Arberry: Contributions to Publications for the Middle East

The available records of Arberry's work in the MOI reveal his involvement in the propagation of British interests throughout the Muslim world. Examples show the

⁶⁷⁴ Holman, 2005, p .213.

⁶⁷⁵ Holman, 2005, p. 214; see also Michael Carney, *Britain in Pictures: A History and Bibliography* (London, Werner Shaw, 1995).

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initial unfamiliarity of an Orientalist in the world of politics and diplomacy, a weakness he later recorded.⁶⁷⁶ However scholastically able he was, the new tasks required entirely different skills as he wrote 'during that time I founded and edited several newsletters and magazines in Arabic and Persian, and supervised and proofread an endless stream of posters, leaflets, pamphlet and brochures in those languages', writing 'many hundreds of thousands of words in the propaganda battle'.⁶⁷⁷ Correspondence in the Qatar Digital Collection in the British Library⁶⁷⁸ reveals that Arberry was also engaged in fairly humdrum administrative tasks. An example of this may be found in his early years with the Middle East Section of MOI.

In 1940, he was engaged in promoting the war effort in the Far East by distributing portraits of Muslim rulers supportive of the Allies. He sought the advice of the India Office on whether it was thought acceptable to distribute copies of portraits of the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, the Sheik of Kuwait and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman throughout the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), to the Hadhramaut (the area lying at the south of Saudi Arabia, from Yemen to Oman), and to the Persian Gulf. The India Office responded by advising that the Sultan of Muscat objected to any publicity being given to Muscat, fearing that it would draw attention of Germany and Italy to his country, and that the value of distribution to the Persian Gulf was doubtful, as these countries were already supportive. Commenting on the design of the proposed portraits on behalf of the India Office, Hassan Suhrawardy responded that with regard to the design of the portraits, the intention to include a motif of a crescent and star was objectionable, because the motif was not recognised as a universal religious symbol across the Islamic world, and could also be interpreted as a reflection of the medieval conflicts between Christianity and Islam.⁶⁷⁹ We can interpret Suhrawardy's response as a reaction to the incorrect initial understanding of MOI officials in London about the Islamic cultures of the countries intended to receive the material and of their underlying assumptions. Arberry's seemed to have missed the point of the potential impact of the design of the portraits as his enquiry concerned distribution only.

⁶⁷⁶ Arberry, 1960, *The Disciple*, chapter 7, p. 233.

⁶⁷⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 239.

⁶⁷⁸ British Library Digital Collections at <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues-and-collections/digitla-collections>.

⁶⁷⁹ Susannah Gillard, British Library, <https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2018/10/propaganda-portraits-of-muslim-rulers-during-ww2.html>. The letters were on files of the India Office Records (IOR), references IOR/L/PS/12/3942, f 23, and IOR/L/PS/12/2995, f 9, and IOR/L/PS/12/3942, f 11.

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Arberry worked on posters produced in Arabic by the MOI in 1941 for distribution in the Middle East. The posters depicted life in Britain, showing children planning for re-building London after the blitz, which were aimed at conveying a positive and inclusive image of Britain; another discussed military service for British youth. Copies of the posters, carrying the slogan 'For the Sake of Freedom,' were found in Bahrain, a country nominally independent but whose foreign affairs were under British control.⁶⁸⁰

It is possible that more important matters were being undertaken but public access to the files is currently unavailable. Amongst his papers, there appears a letter dated to the 7th August 1961 and addressed by Garland Cannon to Arberry, sent from the 'Columbia University Team', then at the American Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. Cannon wrote that he had to stay in Kabul for another ten months and so would be unable to visit Arberry during that year, but that he aimed to visit the Asiatic Society of Bengal in January 1962, where, 'No doubt we will find remembrance of your war-time visits there'.⁶⁸¹ This is the only reference I have found that Arberry possibly travelled outside Britain during the war; unfortunately it is not possible to corroborate owing to the non-availability of MOI records. We have seen that in the Suhrawardy Lectures of 1942, Arberry wrote that he was unable to deliver the lectures at the University of Kolkata in person because of the circumstances of the war.⁶⁸² Cannon's comment appears to contradict that statement, but without further evidence it is impossible to establish its validity.

4.5 Arberry as Editor of Periodicals

Arberry's specialised knowledge of Iran and the Middle East was instrumental in his work as editor of periodicals aimed at a readership in those areas. He was editor of the magazine *Rūzgār-i naw* (*The New Age*) which was published quarterly between 1941 and 1946. Favourable attitudes towards Britain in Iran were considered

⁶⁸⁰ Louis Allday, 'For the Sake of Freedom': British World War II Propaganda Posters in Arabic, Gulf History Specialist, British Library/Qatar Foundation Partnership, Qatar Digital Library. <https://blogs.uk/untoldlives/2014/02>.

⁶⁸¹ This study acknowledges permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library in enabling reference to this document. Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Arthur Arberry: Correspondence and papers, MS Add. 7891, Box 2.

⁶⁸² Arberry, 1942, p. xx.

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essential in the circumstances of wartime instability, especially to secure access Iranian oil and to provide access for sending war supplies through the country to Russia. Iran was officially neutral in 1939, although many Iranian people, who hoped to see the end of British and Russian interference in their country, were sympathetic towards Germany.⁶⁸³ The Allied invasion of Iran in August 1941 led to the deposition of Reza Shah and his replacement by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, alignment with the Allied powers and thus to the abandonment of the official policy of neutrality.

In pursuance of its policy of avoiding direct involvement in the production of publications like *Rūzgār-i naw*, the MOI engaged the publishing house Hodder & Stoughton of London. The periodical, printed with attractive coloured covers, placed emphasis on the cultural and literary aspects of Iran and British connections. Under Arberry's editorship, a team drawn from the India Office and the British Museum produced articles which focussed on British contributions to Persian studies and Persian and English literature but avoided material on religion or on controversial subjects. The first edition carried articles on a range of topics, including 'The India Office Library by A. J. Arberry', which was probably based on his 1938 work, *The Library of the India Office: a Historical Sketch*.⁶⁸⁴ Subsequent issues contained English translations of modern Persian poets and Persian translations of English poets, possibly made by Arberry himself. In keeping with its policy, the magazines appeared as commercial products, sold at low prices (one shilling or 20 cents) and contained advertisements that emphasised British industrial and commercial prestige.⁶⁸⁵

Mojtabā Minovi, who worked for the BBC Persian Service, was engaged by the MOI to design posters in support of the British incursion into Iran. Minovi advised Arberry that any flamboyant display of glorification of the Allied presence using Western images would be counter-productive; rather, a subtle approach would be more likely to be successful. Arberry was told that, as Persian culture relied on allusion and understatement, utilizing familiar stories to impart new messages, the

⁶⁸³ Ursula Sims-Williams, *The New Age (Rūzgār-i naw): World War II cultural propaganda in Persian, Asian and African Studies* (2014), British Library, <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2014/05/the-new-age-ruzgar-i-naw-world-war-ii-cultural-propaganda-in-persian-html>. Also see Sims-Williams, *An A-Z of Arabic Propaganda. The British Government's Arabic-Language Output during WWII*. Asian and African Studies blog (London, British Library, 2016), <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/04/an-a-z-of-arabic-propaganda.html>

⁶⁸⁴ A. J. Arberry *The Library of the India Office: A Historical Sketch* (London, The India Office, 1938).

⁶⁸⁵ Holman, 2005, p. 217.

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use of stories from the *Shah-Nāme* to convey modern messages could appeal to Persian sentiments. The story of the tyrant Zahhak and Kāve, the blacksmith liberator, was already familiar in Persian culture, the obnoxious characters of the story could be adapted to represent Hitler, Goebbels, and the Japanese leader, Tojo, while the heroic characters would be obvious to its readers. The posters, designed by Kimon Evan Marengo (Kem),⁶⁸⁶ were widely distributed, and a postcard booklet of them was prepared for the public at the time of the Tehran Conference between Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt in 1943.⁶⁸⁷

Such was the success of *Rūzgār-i naw* that the MOI was encouraged to publish a similar magazine in Arabic, again under Arberry's editorship. *Al-Adab wa al-Fann* was first published in 1943 by Hodder & Stoughton under the initiative of the Middle East Division. The English title chosen for *Al-Adab wa al-Fann* was *Literature and Art*, but it became known as *The Arabic Quarterly*. It was to be of the same pocket size as *Rūzgār-i naw*, and the number of pages reached 112.⁶⁸⁸ The production of the text did not run completely smoothly, as Arberry, heavily engaged at the same time on work for the Arab Committee of the Political Warfare Executive, delegated production work to an unnamed assistant who, under pressure of work, suffered a breakdown.⁶⁸⁹ The Arab Committee, chaired by Professor Williams,⁶⁹⁰ had as its members Arberry and Rom Landau (described as a best-selling Faber author and traveller in the Middle East), the editors of *Islam Today* discussed below.⁶⁹¹ Other members were Sir Hanns Vischer, Kem (Kimon Evan Marengo, 1904–1988), 'the polyglot official MOI cartoonist of Egyptian origin', and Albert Abulafia, a spokesperson on Arabic cultural affairs.⁶⁹² Abulafia, a member of a Moroccan family of merchants living in Manchester, was involved in BBC Arabic Service broadcasts to the Maghreb.

⁶⁸⁶ Rachel Dickinson, *Kem Lives On*, www.cartoons.kent.ac.uk/KimonEvanMarengo gives details of his work and life.

⁶⁸⁷ Antony Wynn, 'The Shah-Nāme and British propaganda in Iran in World War II', *Manuscripta Orientalia (The International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research)*, Vol. 16, No. 1, June 2010.

⁶⁸⁸ Holman, 2005, fn. 86, p. 226

⁶⁸⁹ Holman, 2005, p. 218.

⁶⁹⁰ Laurence Frederic Rushbrook Williams (1890–1978), Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, Professor of Modern Indian History at the University of Allahabad, and Eastern Services Director at the BBC.

⁶⁹¹ A. J. Arberry and Rom Landau, *Islam Today* (London, Faber and Faber, 1943).

⁶⁹² Holman, 2005, fn. 84, p. 226. The footnote refers to PRO.FO 898/127, Abulafia's note to Dr Beck, *Arabic Production for North West and West Africa, 25 Aug., 1942 and FO 898/439, Rushbrook Williams to Rex Leeper on the activities of the Arabic Committee Nov., 1942.*

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Manpower shortages, the dearth of articles by Arab writers, the destruction by war damage of material obtained from the British Museum for the illustrations, and typesetting difficulties beset the magazine. According to Holman, the time taken for the production of the magazine was a serious issue, each copy taking about six months to produce, at a time of rapidly changing political and military events. However, the magazine was well received; the Director General of the Egyptian State Library in Cairo thanked the MOI for the magazine, referring to the 'crowds of readers who have been coming to read this valuable magazine'.⁶⁹³

Arberry can be seen as integral to the production of MOI material. In Chapter 2, consideration was given to Arberry's wartime publications *British Contributions to Persian Studies* and *British Orientalists*.⁶⁹⁴ Those publications followed the MOI policy of presenting positive aspects of British life but without apparent connection with the Government Department behind them. Arberry later wrote of the writers named in the publications, 'their patient researches, while still vividly remembered and highly appreciated in the East, were largely forgotten in their own country'.⁶⁹⁵ According to him scholars deserved an elevated appreciation: they had proved to be 'more effective in promoting international goodwill over huge areas of the globe than the more widely advertised endeavours of soldiers and politicians'.⁶⁹⁶ It can only be speculated whether Arberry had himself in mind when making those comments, as his wartime publications emphasised the work of scholars such as himself. However, his duty while in the MOI lay in promulgating the policy of the government, as can be seen from the following publication.

4.6 Arberry: Islam Today

Although not stated to be published on behalf of the government or the British Council, *Islam Today* was part of the effort of presenting British political thinking to the public at home and abroad during the war.⁶⁹⁷ Rom Landau, Arberry's co-editor, was described in the biographical notes as having 'written a number of philosophical, political, and religious books and has travelled and lived in Arab countries.

⁶⁹³ Holman, 2005, p. 218.

⁶⁹⁴ Chapter 4, p. 11.

⁶⁹⁵ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, 1960, p. 239.

⁶⁹⁶ Arberry, 1960 p. 239.

⁶⁹⁷ Arthur J. Arberry and Rom Landau, eds., *Islam Today* (London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1943).

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He had written and lectured extensively on Middle Eastern subjects, especially in relation to religion'.⁶⁹⁸ As described above, both the editors were members of the Arab Committee of the Political Warfare Executive and Rom Landau was stated to be a member of the Arab Committee of the Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office.

Under the editorship of Arberry and Landau, the sixteen chapters in the book were written by diverse authors: former high ranking diplomats and colonial officials who had governed British colonies, scholars of Oriental studies, broadcasters for the BBC on Arabic and Middle Eastern subjects, commentators on political and social matters in the Near East, as well as a chapter by Landau on Saudi Arabia. Included in the book were Chapters on modern Egypt by Taha Hussein (1889–1973) and a Chapter on India by Lt. Col. Sir Hassan Suhrawardy described as 'an adviser to the Secretary of State for India'.⁶⁹⁹

The dearth of specialists on Arabic and Persian subjects revealed a closely knit world. Suhrawardy, of the India Office, had invited Arberry to give the Suhrawardy Lectures of 1942. Taha Hussein was an eminent and respected Egyptian writer and educationalist who had overcome blindness to gain high academic distinction in Egypt and France. He established free education for Egyptian children, 'for Arab intelligentsia he [enlightened] the whole nation' despite his disability.⁷⁰⁰ Taha Hussein's works had been translated by Paxton, who was to become an editor of the *Arab Listener*, a BBC publication, which published written editions of broadcasted talks to which Arberry was a contributor.⁷⁰¹ In the main the authors of the Chapters in *Islam Today* represented the views of governing and political interests and, save for the two contributors named above, the preponderance of them were non-Muslim. Those with direct experience of Muslim countries had held positions of authority, influence and control over the subject societies. The countries described in the Chapters included areas in which Britain had either direct

⁶⁹⁸ Arberry/Landau, 1943, p. 241.

⁶⁹⁹ Arberry/Landau, 1943, pp. 240–242.

⁷⁰⁰ Amany Soliman, *leidenislamblog*, 2018, <http://leidenislamblog.nl/articles/a-blind-dean-of-arabic-literature-the-legacy-of-taha-hussein>.

⁷⁰¹ E. H. Paxton, an Arabist, and the translator of Taha Hussein's *Egyptian Childhood*, which represented the introduction to modern Arabic literature for a whole generation. (Peter Partner, *Arab Voices: The BBC Arabic Service 1938–1988* (London, BBC External Services, 1988) p. 34).

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relationships of governance, or those in which it held political influence and economic interests.⁷⁰²

The purpose of the book, according to the editors' introduction, was to assess the extent of the influence of the West on the Islamic world, the place of Islam within the countries studied and Muslim attitudes to the war. Its ambit was the Islamic world since the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and how Islam had responded to the development of its societies since the beginning of the twentieth century. The editors proposed that 'There is no denying that on the whole the influence of the West has been anything but favourable',⁷⁰³ although they recognised that the developments exported by the West were received in societies unready to absorb them, the ramifications of which 'necessarily brought a certain disintegration of Islamic forces'. This trend was prompted by 'the materialistic streak in their own mental make-up, conditioned, as it were, to some extent by the external circumstances of Arab life, willingly responded to Western materialism'.⁷⁰⁴ Having accepted 'superior' Western science and technology, young Arabs were prone to 'sever their ties with Islamic traditions', leading to the secularisation of 'native life', a process heightened by their 'antagonism to narrow-minded ulema',⁷⁰⁵ the religious scholars who influenced all aspects of life within Muslim societies by their teaching of the Qur'an and implementation of the *sharī'a*. The editors, however, detected a countertrend, advocated by Arab intellectuals, for a return to Islam to fill the 'spiritual vacuum' caused by Westernisation.⁷⁰⁶

The title of the book suggested an extensive account of the concept of Islam, a proxy metaphor for societies having the *sharī'a* in common for their social organisation, beliefs and culture. The book confirmed a bond between Middle Eastern societies and Britain based on colonial and imperial influence, a relationship meant to transcend elements in the past that had hindered the proper development of their cultures and societies. The Chapters followed a pattern: accounts of the history of the countries, geographical details, and descriptions of the economic, social and political developments since the beginning of the twentieth century. Each

⁷⁰² They included Aden, Saudi-Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Transjordan, Egypt, Sudan (Western Africa), Libya, East Africa, Algeria and Tunisia, Morocco, Persia, Afghanistan, India and Malaysia.

⁷⁰³ Arberry/Landau, 1943, p. 14.

⁷⁰⁴ Arberry/Landau, 1943, p. 14.

⁷⁰⁵ Arberry/Landau, 1943 p. 14.

⁷⁰⁶ Arberry/Landau, 1943, p. 15.

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writer referred to the benefits brought to the countries by British Imperial and governmental interventions. Islam was seen as a positive force for maintaining the cohesion of societies, for guaranteeing moral standards and as the significant factor for unifying Arab interests. A common thread seen throughout the book was that poverty held back Muslim societies, not the lack of aptitude or competence among their peoples. The contributors appear to be optimistic for their future development. The incursions by Axis forces into some of the countries were seen as obvious real threats, with predictably belligerent views expressed against past and current attempts by those forces to intervene in countries in which Britain claimed to have dominant interests.

The propagandist motivation of the book was to further British government policy. A return to the primacy of Islam, associated with the growth in potential political supra-nationalism in the form of pan-Arabism, was a policy supported by the government. The editors wrote that 'It is no secret that the British government, whose relations with the Arab world are particularly intimate, would view a harmonious and unanimous pan-Arab federation with sympathy', basing their views on a statement by Anthony Eden MP, the then Foreign Secretary, of September, 1941, in which he said that the government would give their full support to any scheme of an Arabic Federation that commanded general support.⁷⁰⁷ Plans had already been proposed in the 1930s for the political unification of Arab countries with some Muslim groups, represented by the Shi'a Persian Sheikh Al-Zinjani supported by the Sunni Sheikh al-Azar, even advocating the unification of the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam.⁷⁰⁸ The editors concluded that whatever form an Arabic renaissance might take, Islam would feature prominently, although traditional beliefs and superstitions would have to be abandoned if such a renaissance were to be achieved. According to the editors, Muslim thinkers thought that the 'purification of Islam is therefore necessary',⁷⁰⁹ to move away from the ignorance and superstition of the past. Although the editors emphasised that renewal of Islam could be brought about only by the Muslim community, Tibawi would have criticised Western advocacy of reform of Islam, albeit that such reform was to be achieved by Muslims.

⁷⁰⁷ Arberry/Landau, 1943, p. 15.

⁷⁰⁸ Arberry/Landau, p. 16.

⁷⁰⁹ Arberry/Landau, p. 16.

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Arberry's part in the editorship of the book, and possibly in commissioning the contributors, was jointly responsible for the views expressed in the Introduction. *Islam Today* was an expansive political Orientalist approach to the East, in the Saidian meaning an expression of Western hegemony over Eastern civilisations. The book was composed while Arberry's efforts were to strongly promote the views of the government as part of his propaganda work, and, while its arguments may with hindsight appear *in extremis*, he fulfilled his obligation to forcefully advance the interests of the state. The target readership the editors and the publisher intended is unknown; it was probably more aimed at overseas readership than a home audience, although the export of copies would probably have been very difficult in wartime conditions. It was therefore part of the wartime effort to confirm to the public the beneficial actions of the Empire which was under attack, to demonstrate that Islam was a positive force capable of bringing about improvements in society and that pan-Arabism was not a phenomenon to be feared as a threat, but a movement for the consolidation of Arab and Western interests. The contributors to *Islam Today* portrayed the relationships between the countries described and Britain as by and large friendly, although critically affected by the war itself. In 1960, Arberry recalled those relationships as they had appeared to him to be in 1947, when the Report of the Scarborough Commission was published.⁷¹⁰ He wrote that 'Egypt was still a monarchy, in reasonably good relations with this country; Iraq was still a monarchy, in close and harmonious relations with this country; Saudi Arabia was friendly, Jordan was our ally; Lebanon and Syria were rejoicing in their newly found independence, and well disposed towards Britain'.⁷¹¹

Islam Today provided an example of the way in which Western values and political aims were publicly articulated as part of the war effort. It was complimentary of the work and material achievements of the Empire; it retained the view of the West as superior over 'indigenous' societies and that the West was responsible for their development by improving conditions within their societies, although Westernisation was seen as having detrimentally affected Eastern spiritual values and practices, a lapse which could be rectified by Muslims reforming Islam. Revived

⁷¹⁰ The Report of the Inter Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies (London, HMSO, 1947). The Commission was established in 1944 by the Foreign Secretary to examine the facilities offered by universities and other educational institutions for the study of the languages of those areas and to recommend improvements.

⁷¹¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 242.

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Arab countries would be expected to accept continuing British influence, as they had done under imperial arrangements. The book can be described as a vehicle for advancing government policy through the authority of colonial administrators and commentators.⁷¹²

The absence of archived material relating to many of the MOI's activities between 1939 and 1945 has caused scholars to search for details among a variety of sources, yet the picture is incomplete, as it is also for the officials, including Arberry, who spent five intense years of work producing material for home use and for the Middle East and Persia. The MOI decided to aim at a mass readership who could be reached through attractive periodicals for foreign markets and appealing books for the home-based readers. The level of engagement was at a high intellectual level, as Arberry's work shows that he maintained his scholarly approach, using the skills of translation gained during the time spent in Cambridge and in the India Office. A similar approach will be examined in the other branch of his wartime activities, that of radio broadcasting.

4.7 Arberry and the British Broadcasting Corporation

The aim of this section is to discuss Arberry's involvement in the dissemination of information through the medium of broadcasting as an extension to his MOI work. Understanding the BBC's wartime activities is subject to the same problems of inaccessibility of information as we saw in relation to the MOI in Section 4.2, *supra*. According to Asa Briggs the history of the BBC's activities during the period 1939–1945 was 'complicated and neglected',⁷¹³ and he saw in 1970 that 'very little has been published concerning the detailed history' of British broadcasting during that period.⁷¹⁴ Since Brigg's history of the BBC, a more recent account of the BBC and

⁷¹² During my research, I managed to trace another work by Arberry, *The Moslem Attitude to the War* (London, HMSO, 1940). Attempts to purchase a copy were unsuccessful and an application made to the British Library for a copy was unsuccessful, firstly because of the heavy workload they were experiencing and secondly because in March 2020 it was decided, in the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, to cancel all requests for copies of documents for an indeterminate period into the future. This thesis would have assessed Arberry's views in the work. I suggest, without sight of the work, that it would have disclosed the pattern of attitudes seen in *Islam Today*.

⁷¹³ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London, Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 3.

⁷¹⁴ Briggs, p. 727.

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its Arabic Service has provided more information about its activities as we shall discuss in this Section.

As we saw in the discussion concerning the ways in which the MOI organised itself to meet the challenges of wartime conditions, the BBC was also subject to the need to adjust its operations and organisation, not least in the ways in which it viewed its operational freedoms. Established by the first Royal Charter on 1927, which was renewed for ten years in 1937, the BBC was a separate corporation outside central government, whose operations were answerable to its Governors and not to a Government minister.⁷¹⁵ Wartime conditions inevitably affected the way in which the BBC operated and its relationship with the government so that, according to Briggs, no account of what happened to the BBC during 1939–1945, however, would be complete without ‘persistent reference’ to the MOI: in effect ‘the whole apparatus of government ... impinged more or less directly on the BBC’.⁷¹⁶ The relationship between the MOI, the BBC Governors and the Government were not always easy in the early years of the war especially when the Government took the view that the BBC did not give it sufficient support, resulting in Brenden Bracken MP, then Minister of Information, making a statement to Parliament in 1941 that while the governors were responsible for the standards of broadcasting and the running of the corporation, they recognised that ‘in war time it is necessary and right that the Government should control the policy of the BBC in matters affecting the war effort, the publication of news, and the conduct of propaganda’.⁷¹⁷ While being aware that detailed control of its activities remained available to the Government, the BBC still exercised a considerable degree of independence. Relations between the MOI and BBC gradually became more co-operative after 1941 following the reorganisation of responsibilities and administrative arrangements within the BBC and by the appointment of MOI advisers to the BBC.⁷¹⁸ As the MOI became confident in the BBC's ability to broadcast government home publicity following the appointment of MOI officials to senior positions within the as BBC, the Minister was able to say in relation home broadcasting in 1943: ‘...I can say from my own personal experience that no attempt has ever been made by the Government to influence the

⁷¹⁵ bbc.com/history of the [bbc/research](http://bbc.com/research). Accessed 13 06 2020.

⁷¹⁶ Briggs, p. 31.

⁷¹⁷ Briggs, p. 336, quoting *Hansard*, vol. 374, cols. 1917, 1918.

⁷¹⁸ Briggs, p.35.

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news-giving or any other programme of the BBC'.⁷¹⁹ Overseas broadcasting, however, was subject to different considerations.

Overseas broadcasting of news by the BBC was controlled by the Political Warfare Executive, established in 1942 to improve co-ordination and dissemination of British propaganda, which included representatives from the Foreign Office Political Intelligence Department and the Department for Enemy Propaganda which met with the BBC.⁷²⁰ Whatever the formal liaison arrangements were Briggs suggested that what was communicated by broadcasts was ultimately more important than the institutional relationships between the BBC and other organisations.⁷²¹ Morris summed up the external image that was desired: 'the legend of the British patrician style, eccentric and assured, was assiduously cherished'.⁷²²

Continuation of this image of the BBC, while at the same time promoting Allied interests in an increasingly hostile propaganda war, was a challenge for policy makers in government and the BBC, a challenge met by a degree of presentational subterfuge. The output of the BBC was produced on a similar basis to the publications of the MOI: while the Government did not publish or broadcast itself, it remained in the background and used the medium of intermediaries – the British Council and the BBC, both promoted for their reputations for objectivity and truth – to convey its messages.

The BBC's main focus was on home broadcasting and, reflecting the course of the war, on broadcasting to Europe and later, as the war developed, to the Far East. Broadcasting to the Near East was only a small part of its operation.⁷²³ The inaugural broadcast by the BBC Arabic Service had been made on 3rd January 1938.⁷²⁴ In the early days of broadcasting, the BBC regarded the provision of a news service as its main purpose,⁷²⁵ but it received complaints that its output was

⁷¹⁹ Briggs, p.35, quoting Brendan Bracken MP's speech of 8 Dec. 1943.

⁷²⁰ Briggs, p. 36.

⁷²¹ Briggs, p.45.

⁷²² Jan (James) Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets, An Imperial Retreat* (London, Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 434.

⁷²³ Briggs, p. 540, shows that the Overseas Operational Division was one of the 21 units within the 1941 BBC structure. It was responsible for broadcasting in 23 European languages, over 14 Far Eastern languages and for the Arab Service.

⁷²⁴ Partner, p. 17.

⁷²⁵ Briggs, p. 6.

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unimaginative and lacked dramatic impact.⁷²⁶ It was considered to 'lack virility and incisiveness', according to Duff Cooper MP, the Minister for Information.⁷²⁷ Its poor performance was brought to the attention of the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden MP, who had studied Oriental languages at Oxford.⁷²⁸ He appointed a committee under Kingsley Wood in 1940 to examine whether further Government control over the BBC was required. German broadcasts to the Near East in the early years of the war were directed at the 'semi-educated and illiterate classes'⁷²⁹ and expressed sympathy with the Arab cause, while BBC news service did not attempt to counter German messages to the Arabic population. The BBC's approach was criticised by the MOI and the Foreign Office for not taking account of the 'Arab mentality'⁷³⁰ and for 'lacking punch'.⁷³¹ In July 1940, Rushbrook Williams (1890–1978),⁷³² Chair of the MOI's Arab Committee, and Arberry, as representative of the MOI, engaged in discussions with the BBC to seek to overcome these difficulties, the outcome of which was the attachment of specialists to assist the Arab News Editor and the organisation of Arabic programmes.⁷³³

The programmes broadcast were said to be too highbrow for the audience apart from the intelligentsia, for whom they were chiefly designed.⁷³⁴ The choice of the type of Arabic language to be used in the broadcasts was also the subject of debate: the options considered included Classical Arabic (the language of the Qur'an) and modern standard Arabic, as used in contemporary literature and by the Arabic press. Colloquial Arabic was used in broadcasts from 1941 onwards for Egypt, Palestine and Syria, for example a programme *Café Chaos* set in a Cairo coffee shop. Audience reaction showed that humorous programmes were more popular than serious programmes.⁷³⁵ Later broadcasts in dialectic Arabic were used when specific audiences were targeted.⁷³⁶ Arab listeners remained dissatisfied with the programmes of the Arab service: in 1942 it was reported that there were 'many

⁷²⁶ Briggs, p. 520.

⁷²⁷ Briggs, p. 282.

⁷²⁸ Arberry, 1960, p. 240.

⁷²⁹ Briggs, p. 282, BBC Overseas Intelligence Department, Memorandum on the Arabic Service, May 1940.

⁷³⁰ Briggs, p. 282.

⁷³¹ Briggs, p. 520.

⁷³² Laurence Frederic Rushbrook Williams, Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, and Professor of Modern Indian History at the University of Allahabad.

⁷³³ Briggs, p. 282.

⁷³⁴ Partner, p. 35

⁷³⁵ Briggs, p.522.

⁷³⁶ Partner, p. 30.

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Arab listeners who felt that they were more likely to get the truth from the material provided to the British audience than from that specifically aimed at themselves'.⁷³⁷ The problem facing the Service was a shortage of suitable Arabic broadcasters able to fulfil the needs of the service, even though the service began modestly with one hour's transmission a day.⁷³⁸

Wartime conditions in the Near East worsened in 1941. The combination of the effects of the suppression of the Rashid Ali regime in Iraq by British forces, movements for independence from France in Syria and Lebanon, the overturning of Reza Shah in Iran, the 1942 coup in Egypt, in which King Farouk was displaced by British forces, made the pretence of transmitting impartial and balanced views totally unrealistic as incursions into the sovereignty of other countries could not be sustained by a non-partisan stance.⁷³⁹ Broadcasting by the BBC abandoned the early ideals of the 'proper' role of the use of radio, and the transmissions became a political tool.⁷⁴⁰ According to Sigmar Hillelson, Director of Near East Service, radio 'became a weapon used in close co-operation with the armed forces and diplomacy'.⁷⁴¹ Broadcasting to the Maghreb adopted colloquial Moroccan instead of standard Arabic (although it is unclear whether Berber was used), using the services of Albert Abulafia, who, as noted above, was also a member of the Arab Committee of the Political Warfare Executive. A Near East Broadcasting station, the Sharq al-Adna (إذاعة الشرق الأدنى), was established at Jaffa, which issued broadcasts under the banner 'The Voice of Britain'. Partner wrote that, 'Few people who listened to the station were in much doubt that there was a British hand in its control, though no one, naturally, knew what official body in Britain was responsible'.⁷⁴²

It has been seen that Arberry and Landau in *Islam Today* had drawn attention to the Government's wish for pan-Arabism. The indirect effect of BBC broadcasting to the Arabic world was to engender a sense of Arabic unity which was brought about by working 'in harmony with the Arab urge towards the strengthening of their common nationhood'.⁷⁴³ A dilemma for the BBC, as Partner suggests, was how to

⁷³⁷ Briggs, p. 490, referring to a report by E.G. D. Liveing of 18 September 1942.

⁷³⁸ Partner, p. 17.

⁷³⁹ Partner, p. 38.

⁷⁴⁰ Partner, p. 46.

⁷⁴¹ Partner, p. 92.

⁷⁴² Partner, p. 92.

⁷⁴³ Briggs, p. 524 referring to Hillelson in the *BBC Yearbook* 1945, p. 101.

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advance government policy without becoming compromised by appearing to be making commitments such as those made to Arabs and Jews during the First World War. The Arabic Service reached listeners in all Arab speaking countries, using Palestinian, Syrian and Moroccan broadcasters and impliedly it became a proxy microcosm of the Arab world, appealing to the intelligentsia and others by drawing attention to the cultural and social traditions held in common by those countries.⁷⁴⁴ The promotion of Government policy remained in the background to the nuanced messages of the broadcasts. For the BBC, the issue required continuous careful managing. It took the view that in reality its programmes were heard by all social classes, by those of different educational backgrounds and of differing political and cultural outlooks, ranging from the highly westernised graduates of European universities to the 'tribesmen' of the Hadhramaut. Having been a contributor to the MOI's written propaganda, Arberry provided broadcast and articles at the BBC for the same effort as we discuss in the following part.

The BBC attempted to offer a variety of programmes – propagandist, instructional and cultural – including recitals of the Qur'an, light entertainment and features described by E. Marmorstein, Senior Assistant in the Arabic Service, as being 'elegant scholarly talks on Arabic culture' designed to gain the ear of 'leaders of thought'.⁷⁴⁵ Among Orientalist participants in the Arabic Service were Freya Stark (1893–1993) whose contributions included a broadcast on '*Famous Women of the East*', but whose body of writings, although described as being valuable for informing the West of the cultures and customs of the East, was doubted as being 'ideally suited to Arab listeners'.⁷⁴⁶ Stark's own account of her broadcasts differs: her involvement in Egyptian and Iraqi progressive movements, especially her participation in promoting the Society of the Brothers and Sisters of Freedom among young people in those countries, amongst whose aims was installing democracy and Western values, which, according to her, was well received.⁷⁴⁷

Arberry, from the MOI, participated in the Arabic Service in the company of fellow scholars who included Margoliouth (1858–1940), the former professor of

⁷⁴⁴ Neville Barbour, quoted in Partner, p. 55, a reference possibly taken from the *BBC Handbook* for 1945.

⁷⁴⁵ Briggs, p. 522.

⁷⁴⁶ Partner, p. 65.

⁷⁴⁷ Freya Stark, *East is West* (London, John Murray, 1945) (Series *The Century Travelers*, London, Century Hutchinson, 1986), p. 56.

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Arabic at Oxford (1889–1937), Gibb (1895–1971), then Professor of Arabic at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London, Bernard Lewis (1916–2018), lecturer at SOAS and a writer on Oriental studies who was seconded from military service to the Foreign Office, and Joseph Schacht (1902–1969), an expert on *sharʿa* who taught in Cairo until 1939 when he joined the BBC. Annual poetry competitions and discussion programmes, including the *Listeners' Forum (Nadwat al Mustami'in)*, featured as BBC's output to the Arab world.

Arberry, described as 'the collaborator' of Rushbrook Williams, Chair of the Arab Committee of the MOI, was portrayed as a 'good friend of the [Arab] Service from the start'.⁷⁴⁸ Arberry gave many 'learned talks' on subjects such as '*Professor Nicholson, the British Orientalist*' and '*Sufi Studies in Great Britain*' as well as a broadcast on 'Kushajim, the Poet of Cooking', the chief cook to the medieval ruler of Aleppo, Saif al-Dawlah. Arberry commented on the content of that talk:

'While we are engaged in the high enterprise of ridding the world of Nazi and Fascist barbarism, we can hardly spare the time or the money to partake in such orgies of rare dishes; nevertheless, there is no reason why we should not indulge our intellectual appetites...'⁷⁴⁹

In 1939, Arberry had translated the *Kitāb al-Tabīkh* which he described as a Baghdad Cookery Book, written by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad ibn al-Karim Al-Kātib al-Baghdādī for which he used a manuscript of 623 AH / 1226 CE found in the Aya Sofia Mosque, Istanbul.⁷⁵⁰ Arberry's other contributions included a talk on 'Four Poets' in 1941 in which he said: 'As the world reels under the brows of stark aggression, and one nation after another loses its liberty to inhuman tyranny... I turn to browse among the pages of the loved Arabian classics on my bookshelf'. In contrast to Marmorstein's appreciation of 'elegant scholarly' talks for 'leaders of thought', Partner remarked 'one may wonder what his [Arberry's] less learned listeners made of it all'.⁷⁵¹

Arberry's statement from the 'Four Poets' quoted above was redolent of the Orientalist attitude prevailing in the mid-twentieth century. It did not address the

⁷⁴⁸ Partner, p. 66, Eastern Services Director at the BBC.

⁷⁴⁹ Partner, p. 66.

⁷⁵⁰ Eds. Maxime Rodinson, A. J. Arberry and Charles Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery. Essays and Translations* (Totnes 1969). Arberry's contribution was based on his article *Kitāb al-Tabīkh* translated by Arberry in '*Islamic Culture*' 1939.

⁷⁵¹ Partner, p. 66.

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rapidly changing political and military dynamics facing the world, but it spoke of another world familiar in its certainties, closed to progressive thinking. The contributors chosen by the MOI and BBC to participate in programmes aimed at Arab listeners reflected conventional views of what might be of interest to those audiences. The contributors came from the Orientalist outlook found in the universities, diplomacy and home publishing. This was true in the case of Arberry's own broadcasts: scholarly and intellectual presentations on material of interest to the authors were not always suitable for listening audiences as, unlike material produced for a public who had a choice in what to read, programmes were broadcasted indiscriminately, reaching wide and diverse audiences and were subject to critical reactions as we have seen.

The commissioners of the programmes had turned to those regarded as experts in the field of Arabic studies, but few of the contributors had any experience of writing scripts for the purpose of broadcasting to a general audience, particularly for potential audiences in countries they had never visited or, if they had, their visits had not been recent. On the whole, their experiences of audiences had probably been confined to students in their lectures or their fellow scholars. The purpose of the talks was to support the Government's war efforts and to present images of Britain and the version of the Middle East and its political development that it wanted its listeners to accept but it appears from the information available they did little more than repeat scholarly subjects in the accustomed manner.

The direct experiences and involvement of the contributors in the day-to-day lives of the residents of Muslim countries had been limited: 'a weakness of British oriental studies had been that outside India they had tended to be directed to an exclusive western audience: for some orientalist scholars the delivery of their talks on the Arab Service was the first time they had ever addressed an oriental public'.⁷⁵² Partner's comments successfully sum up Oriental scholarship in the period immediately before and during the Second World War. It can be characterised as conservative in outlook, an inward-looking approach to the studies, a lack of wider engagement and attitudes of Western superiority over the field of learning combined with an overt propagandising intent. Partner described some of the contributors as being those, who according to 'Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* [had], some-

⁷⁵² Partner. 66.

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thing condescending and even monopolistic in their approach to the eastern world'.⁷⁵³

So far as the popularity of their contributions was concerned, audiences were small in number, and as we have seen, the 'the judgement of that public, when it came, was not always favourable'.⁷⁵⁴ As for the transferability of their skills of communication from higher education to the medium of radio 'their number and radio-geneity are limited. Some refuse to play, others are dull and academic'.⁷⁵⁵ In order to make progress, the BBC turned instead to more appropriate Arab broadcasters, mainly Egyptian graduate students studying in Britain.⁷⁵⁶

Broadcasting programmes was the obvious main activity for the BBC and MOI, but promotion of the content of the programmes was also carried out by publishing and distributing the *Arab Listener*. The periodical was created to popularise BBC Arab Service talks in print, being an Arabic Service equivalent of the BBC periodical *The Listener* published for home audiences. The *Arab Listener* appeared to have great success from the outset. According to Briggs the first number of this fortnightly periodical had appeared in April 1940; by July 1943, 10,000 copies were distributed throughout the world, with the majority sent to the Middle East. The most favourable reaction to the periodical was found in Iraq, but not in Egypt or Palestine. Arberry's contribution to the publication may be seen from what appears to be the back cover of the *Arabic Listener* (vol. iv, no. 6, June 21, 1943), published by BBC with an index in Arabic. Inside the copy are two poems in Arabic with translations by Arberry, one titled *Mortality* by Ibn Hani' al-Andalusi and the other by Ibn Hani' al-Hakami, the page being bordered by pencil sketches of Big Ben, a sun dial, oud and violin and on sides wreaths of flowers.⁷⁵⁷

4.8 Conclusion

This examination of Arberry's activities during the Second World War in the MOI and his work with the BBC has provided evidence of his personal approaches and his

⁷⁵³ Partner, p. 66.

⁷⁵⁴ Partner, p. 66.

⁷⁵⁵ Partner, p. 67.

⁷⁵⁶ Partner, p. 67.

⁷⁵⁷ Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Arthur Arberry: Correspondence and papers, MS Add. 7891, 'Box 1'.

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official output on behalf of the government. Government wartime activities and the part undertaken by Arberry, as a participant in propaganda work, show initial lack of preparedness on the part of Arberry and by the governmental organisations in which he worked, to cope with the wholly unfamiliar situations faced in 1939. The lack of administrative adroitness seems to be based on embedded hidebound conventions and the failure to adequately resource departments to meet the challenges of shortages of manpower and materials. All these combine to show that the MOI and BBC struggled under the unique pressure of events. On later reflection Arberry saw, that scholarship did not wholly enable him to understand the conditions of the wider world. He wrote:

‘Now I realised that pure scholarship, even in studies so humane as those of orientalism, had become progressively more remote and specialised, out of touch with the realities of everyday life’.⁷⁵⁸

The outcome of our examination of the available evidence shows that Arberry was initially personally unsuited for propaganda work and for addressing non-academic audiences of readers and listeners. The pressure placed on the managers of the MOI and BBC Arabic service in the early days of the war to create adequate services swiftly was such that they sought assistance from the obvious sources – specialists in the universities. The scholars provided material familiar to themselves, but their materials were unrelated and unsuited to meet new demands and they found difficulty in adapting to rapidly developing events. The material shows that Arberry gradually adapted to his new tasks: his editorship of *Rūzgār-i naw* and *Al-Adab wa al-Fann* were claimed to be successes. From what is known, his broadcasts were less successful, even displaying an other-worldly disconnection with reality. He delivered publications for the MOI that were recognised as useful (*British Contributions to Persian Studies* and *British Orientalists*), while his prominent work of propaganda, *Islam Today*, may be seen as an unrestrained elaboration of government policy. He saw himself as patriotic, using his skills ‘to the waging of a war against the forces of cruelty and oppression’.⁷⁵⁹

In assessing Arberry as an Orientalist, his wartime activities show that his attitudes towards the East were displayed to their utmost: underlying hegemonic

⁷⁵⁸ Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 239.

⁷⁵⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 238.

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perspectives were accentuated by the unique circumstances of the time and the political and military demands on government. The territory was not altogether foreign to Arberry – his father had been a Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy, his family home in Portsmouth had suffered from bombing by air raids, and he was in civil service employment in London in the 1930s and, like most people, must have been aware of contemporary political developments.

In a wider perspective, the evidence we have discussed shows that Arberry can be seen as readily and enthusiastically participating in the machinery of government which based its outlook on the interests of Empire and on values established since the nineteenth century. By creating messages which confirmed Orientalist attitudes towards the world he contributed to continuing imperialist and colonial assumptions so that Orientalism in the sense understood before the war and described by Said was the norm until displaced by later post-colonial developments and geo-political considerations that informed the ways in which the West viewed the East.

Chapter 5: Arberry's Translations: Theories of Translation and Arberry's Works

5.0 Introduction

This thesis aims to answer the questions of what a critical evaluation of Arberry's works can contribute to our understanding of Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century and what can be learned from an examination of his works regarding the prevalence of imperialistic and colonialist attitudes in the field. As Arberry's contribution to Oriental studies was made mainly through his numerous translations of Arabic and Persian writers and poets, the aim of this Chapter is to investigate how his attitudes towards Orientalism were revealed by his translations. This Chapter intends to identify theories of translation that can be used as analytical tools in order to evaluate critically how his works reveal his underlying attitudes.

Said's first category of Orientalists includes those who taught, wrote or researched the Orient, either in its specific or general aspects, including philologists, stating that their actions amounted to Orientalism.⁷⁶⁰ This broad description must apply to the Western translator of materials sourced from the East, amongst whom Arberry was a prominent exponent, as seen by his numerous publications of Arabic and Persian texts. However, it is necessary to question why the knowledge produced by translators and philologists falls within Said's categorisation, and how the translated works contributed to ways in which European cultures tended to manage the Orient in the way described by Said,⁷⁶¹ as comprising the 'relationship of power, domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'.⁷⁶²

Theories of translation aid the identification of the methods of translating, and reveal the ways in which translated texts communicate knowledge and interpretation of about the so-called start material, that is the material used by the translator as the basis for his work. They also shed light on the ways in which translations can influence attitudes of the target readership (that is the audience for whom the translation is made) towards the culture from which that material was derived. The theories distinguish, for example, between 'Domesticating' and 'Foreignising'

⁷⁶⁰ Said, 2003, p. 2.

⁷⁶¹ Said, 2003, p. 3.

⁷⁶² Said, 2003, p. 5.

strategies of translation.⁷⁶³ They show a dynamic tension being created between privileging the start text, and the intentions of the original author, on the one hand and the target text on the other. This contrast gives latitude for the translator to use the target text as a means to convey and confirm Western attitudes to the cultures from which the texts were derived. In this way the cultures of the East have been subject, consciously or unconsciously, to a filtering process to meet Western conventional views of the start texts. The process of translating by Oriental scholars, therefore, became a mechanism that was part of the process of managing the East as defined by Said.

The aims of this Chapter are to discuss recent theories relating to the methodology and practices of translating texts into English that were current during and after the period when Arberry published his works, in order to provide a framework against which Arberry's works may be evaluated for their disclosure of Western attitudes. By identifying distinctive aspects of Arberry's translations, we will be able to uncover his views on translation which will place Arberry's works within the wider school of Orientalism. Arberry's translations of Arabic and Persian texts were published between 1930 and 1969 when Western involvement in Middle Eastern countries became increasingly intense, exacerbated by wartime tensions and political change. Arberry's concerns with political developments in the post-war Islamic world are voiced in his translation of Iqbal's work, published as *The Mysteries of Selflessness*,⁷⁶⁴ which is discussed in a separate section because of the significance of his views. His translations of the Qur'an, among the most important of his works, merit separate consideration and are therefore discussed in Chapter 6. I argued in Chapter 3 (his works) and Chapter 4 (his period with the MOI and BBC) that despite cultural changes in society reflected in expectations of readers and wartime pressures Arberry maintained throughout his translating career a consistent style of translating and approach to his target readership.

In this Chapter I aim to demonstrate that his translations reflected prevailing stereotypical attitudes towards the cultures from which the original texts were

⁷⁶³ In this Chapter, the description 'foreign' texts is meant to refer to start texts in general that were not written in the English language and which were translated into English, mainly because that is the language into which Arberry translated the start texts. The description in the body of this thesis is not to be considered to be a value judgment of the start texts, except when the attitudes of translators towards the start texts are discussed. For the terms 'start text' and 'target text', see footnote 415.

⁷⁶⁴ A. J. Arberry, *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (London, John Murray, 1953).

derived. Arberry's views on the methodology of translation, the outcomes he envisaged as arising from his works, and their intended impact on the target readership, are held to be part of the orthodoxy of the Western approach to the East. In a technical sense, the act of translation required making choices of vocabulary, form and style specifically adopted for the target text and these choices were, as I argue, the outcomes of the underlying stereotypes envisaged by Western views of the East.

5.1 Translating Foreign Texts: Theories of Translation.

Academic theories developed from the mid-twentieth century onwards were aimed at explaining the phenomenon of translating and its processes. They were accompanied by analytical tools that sought to categorise those processes, to identify the techniques utilised and the outcomes resulting from different methods of translation. Translation studies, as an academic field, did not emerge, according to Venuti, until the middle of the twentieth century, with significant developments in the period after the 1960s.⁷⁶⁵ There were some academic works on the theory of translation published during the early period when Arberry was productive, and it is possible to illustrate the type of approach of which he might have been aware.

Translation studies as a field of theoretical analysis grew after the period during which Arberry was most productive and, consequently, although they would not have influenced his views of translating, his practices became formulated in translation theories. I will show the reasons why Arberry was not willing to consider translation theories, but they assist us in interpreting Arberry's motives and intentions and in identifying him as an Orientalist. This study will investigate relevant theories, followed by an examination of Arberry's statements on translating, and referencing his views to the theoretical literature of his period and that which was published later.

⁷⁶⁵ Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader*. Second edition (New York and London, 2002).

5.1.1 Early Theoretical Studies

Translation into English from other languages, and from Arabic and Persian in particular, was a long established practice, from early works on the Qur'an, to the translations of Sir William Jones and those who succeeded him, in the course of which many translators gave their individual views on the translation aims and methods. However, a canon of theoretical works on the general principles of translation did not emerge until the twentieth century.⁷⁶⁶ During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, methods and outcomes of translations were concerned with particular and isolated cases. Translations from Persian of the poems of Ḥāfiẓ, for example, had been the subject of discourses by his translators, Thomas Hyde (1636–1793) and John Haddon Hindley (1765–1827). They identified issues that were to be repeated in later theoretical frameworks, for example the difficulties surrounding literal translations and the structure of poetry in the original and in the translated text;⁷⁶⁷ their views represented an emerging discourse on the relationship between languages and texts.

In his Preface to *Persian Poems*, Arberry referred to what he called 'the art of translating', stating that there had been much written about the subject, and that opinions concerning it had varied widely.⁷⁶⁸ He referred specifically to two publications: J. P. Postgate's *Translation and Translations* (1922), and E. G. Bates's *Modern Translations* (1936). His only written comment on the works was that they 'supply plenty of food for thought'.⁷⁶⁹ That reaction may indicate that although Arberry considered the works to be important for the subject of translating, he was not prepared to engage with academic developments outside his personal area of interest.

John Percival Postgate (1853–1926), a classical scholar and philologist,⁷⁷⁰ defined translation (in his terms, 'metaphase') as a 'transference,' being the

⁷⁶⁶ The Chapter will discuss the works of Venuti, Catford, Schleiermacher, Nida Vermeer, Connolly, Lefevere amongst others.

⁷⁶⁷ John Haddon Hindley, *Persian Lyrics* arranged in a manuscript the works of Hafiz in the Chetham Library at Manchester, and other Illustrations (London, Oriental Press, 1800).

⁷⁶⁸ A. J. Arberry, *Persian Poems – An Anthology of Verse Translations* (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1954).

⁷⁶⁹ J. P. Postgate, *Translation and Translations: Theory and Practice* (London, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1922); E. G. Bates, *Modern Translations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1936).

⁷⁷⁰ Classical Lecturer at Girton College (1877–1909), Professor of Comparative Philology, University College London, Professor of Latin at Liverpool University (1909-1920) (*A Cambridge Alumni Database*, University of Cambridge).

transport of meaning from one medium to another, this process was to be distinguished from that of a 'version' which suggested a turning or change.⁷⁷¹ In early recognition of the dichotomies that formed a theme of later translation theories, Postgate differentiated between translations that were as close as possible to the original, a practice which Postgate called 'Faithfulness', and translations that were based on the principle of 'the pleasure of the reader', which was, in his view, closely aligned to the 'pleasure of the translator'.⁷⁷² By focusing on the appreciation of the translation by the reader, a translation should appear to be an original work, to such a degree that the reader would not necessarily be able to – or need to – identify the original language.⁷⁷³

The embryonic state of translation studies in the early twentieth century can be illustrated by Postgate's comment that 'it is unfortunate that usage has not provided distinctive names for translation which primarily regards the Author, and translation which primarily regards the Reader'. In order to fill that lacuna, he postulated a differentiation between a translation with primary regard for the author, termed *Retrospective*, while a translation concerned with the reader is, termed *Prospective*. The respective methods of translation were described as *Receptive* and *Adaptive*.⁷⁷⁴

Thus the translator, in a Retrospective form of translation, would be submissive to the author, in effect the receiver of the author's creation. The aim of that translation would be to impart knowledge of the original text to an audience to whom it might be previously unknown. In this way, the primary function of the translator would be to identify the meaning of the author, and to express that meaning in as close a way as possible in order to impart to the reader the impression that the original work would have made on a native reader. In the Prospective form, the translator would assume that, as the reader would have an understanding of the original text, and the primary concern would be the expression of the spirit of the original, its form would be secondary. Postgate wrote: 'We can now understand why good "translators" are not necessarily good "composers" and good "composers" are

⁷⁷¹ Postgate, p. 1.

⁷⁷² Postgate, pp. 3 and 5.

⁷⁷³ Postgate, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁴ Postgate, p. 18.

not necessarily good “translators”^{.775} With regard to the qualities of translators, Postgate wrote that they should possess ‘diligence and conscientiousness in the highest degree ... An infinite capacity for taking pains must be his substitute for genius’.⁷⁷⁶

In drawing these distinctions, and attempting to allocate primacy respectively between the author and the reader, Postgate formulated concepts that were to become the subjects of later translation studies, especially the concept of ‘equivalence’ and the contrast between ‘Foreignising’ and ‘Domesticating’ strategies, discussed later in this Chapter.

Arberry did not adopt Postgate’s analysis in his own approach to translating, having a rather insular approach, in keeping with his practice not to engage with other disciplines, such as economics, anthropology or sociology as we have earlier noted and discussed in Chapter 3. Despite his lack of engagement in academic discussions on translating techniques, he frequently expressed his views on the question of translating as will be discussed later in this Chapter.

5.1.2. Development of Translation Theories

The differences between the base or start text to be translated and the translated product, and the processes leading from the ‘start’ text to the ‘target’ text, have been at the core of theoretical studies. The tasks of the translator in judging how to approach the translation using original manuscripts as start texts would include investigating the sources of the material, the variations, omissions and additions made by copyists, and contemporary influences on the author. I adopt Pym’s use of the term ‘start text’ instead of ‘source’ text because the text undergoing translation may not be the actual source but an amalgam of different sources and influences, while the term ‘target text’ is used to refer to the translation produced.⁷⁷⁷ The next section discusses theories that deal with the relationship between the start text and the target text and the dichotomies that have been used to show that distinction.

⁷⁷⁵ Postgate, p. 23.

⁷⁷⁶ Postgate, p. 102.

⁷⁷⁷ Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Studies* (London, Routledge, 2014), p. 1.

5.1.3 Equivalence and Function

Translation theories have been concerned with the often unstable relationship between the 'autonomy' of the start text, as Venuti put it, and the actions of the translator, as well as with attempts to analyse that relationship in terms of equivalence and function.⁷⁷⁸ According to Pym, acceptance of the fact that words, syntax and grammar used in one language could have the same value, in terms of worth or function, as in another language, means that the relationship between the start text and the target text are of 'natural' equivalence, the values of the respective languages would be the same within the respective languages.⁷⁷⁹ Venuti, referring to equivalence, used the words 'accuracy', 'adequacy', 'correctness', and 'fidelity', descriptions similar to Postgate's distinctions. Equivalence of the relationship between the start text and the target text was variable in practice, as the translator's intention would determine the purpose and tenor of the target text.⁷⁸⁰ Within the concept of equivalence multiple choices were available to the translator, giving flexibility and discretion, shown by Catford's analysis.

Catford's categorisation of the forms of equivalence have shown that linguistic levels in different languages are not the same. The translator can achieve equivalence by varying the levels of translation appropriate to the start text.⁷⁸¹ He identifies categories of equivalence, with each having options to the translator for the full or partial translation of the start text. In the total translation of the start text all linguistic elements of the start text would be replaced in the target text material. Secondly, restricted translations of the start text are to be replaced in the target text at a level which does not necessarily convey all grammatical or lexical aspects of the original; that was a task which he described as 'difficult if not impossible because of the interdependence of grammar and lexis' unless a total translation is effected, and thirdly, rank bound or unbounded translations, discussed next.

⁷⁷⁸ Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York and London, Routledge, second ed. 2002), p. 5; see also *id.*, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London, Routledge, 1998).

⁷⁷⁹ Pym, p. 6.

⁷⁸⁰ Venuti, p. 5.

⁷⁸¹ John Catford, *The Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics* (London, Oxford University Press, second ed. 1980), p. 1, cited in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (London, Routledge, 1998).

Rank bound translations comprised consistent selections of equivalents in languages at the same rank or hierarchy of grammatical units. For example, this applies to the 'rank' of word, group, clause or sentence which is replicated as far as possible in the target text. Literal translations are therefore rank-bound at a lower level – a practice in accordance with the traditional method of rendering one word or phrase at a time. Unbounded translations, that is, those in which equivalence shifts up and down the scale, are usually at higher 'ranks', most prevalent in 'larger units than the sentence'. This latter category offered flexible choice for translators, as they would not adhere so closely to a single rank or textual segment of the original but, in dealing with larger segments of the text, gave them freedom to condense or expand sentences to convey the meaning intended by the author. This approach, according to Pym, shows that as the translator moves through a text, the level of equivalence can vary according to the constraints of the start text and the choices made by the translator.⁷⁸²

In this respect Koller has proposed a set of frameworks for identifying equivalence relationships which introduces the concept of defining the function of the start texts. The start text was fairly stable, and capable of being reduced to defined units or categories of language and textuality. Being dominant, the form of the start text can predict the choice of the equivalent target text in order to meet the identified function of the start text. Factual texts would be translated exactly, their wording being critical to the meaning of the author, whereas poems, which might depend on form for effect such as structure, rhythm, rhyme, would be translated in an equivalent level.⁷⁸³

Venuti views 'function' as the 'potentiality of the translated text to release diverse effects' which would include the communication and production of information, and the ways in which the translation connected with the receiving language and culture.⁷⁸⁴ The concept of function in translation is of relevance to the consideration of Orientalism, as it carries the potentiality of producing target texts that could be 'harnessed to cultural, economic and political agendas ... and colonial

⁷⁸² Pym, p. 16.

⁷⁸³ Werner Koller, *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft* (Heidelberg, Quelle und Meyer, 1979), cited in Pym, p. 17.

⁷⁸⁴ Venuti, p. 5.

projects'.⁷⁸⁵ We will see these factors emerging in our examination of Arberry's works in this Chapter.

Both Pym and Venuti share the view that, in the 1960s and 1970s, Western theories on translation were dominated by thinking about equivalence and functionalism. Pym contrasted equivalence with Structural Linguistics, in which it was argued that all languages expressed their own views of the world, their respective vocabularies carrying cultural and metaphoric connotations that reflected their particular social experiences. According to the Structural Linguistic theory, the differing values within languages make translation impossible as equivalence cannot be achieved. This would be a particular difficulty in the case of the translation between Arabic, a Semitic language, and Western European languages, which are mainly derived from common Indo-European roots. Where there is little syntactical equivalence between languages, literal translation as envisaged by Postgate, for example, is virtually impossible; translations tend to be based on 'transposition' and 'modulation'. Translators were faced with the issue of how the provenance of the start text might be transposed to the target text, and how the translator could convey the understanding of the position of the start text within the original, often ancient, culture.

The task of translation was not confined to the rendering of the text itself, but, as the text might represent a theological or social context or a history of a particular line of thought, the translator was confronted with the need to find ways to convey the meaning of a text in ways in which the target receiver could understand the intentions of the author. For the translator this means a conscious choice whether to give preference to the author or to the receiver, as demonstrated by the strategies considered in the next section of this Chapter.

5.1.4 Domesticising or Foreignising: Author or Reader?

Early attempts to formulate an understanding of the dynamics of the action of translating were diverse and individualistic: their origins lay in attempts to articulate the process in the translation of religious works. Already Jerome (395 CE) supported a 'sense for sense' translation: in his Letter to Pammachius he wrote 'In Scripture

⁷⁸⁵ Venuti, p. 5.

one must consider not the words but the sense',⁷⁸⁶ an approach that placed the onus on the translator to divine the true intention of the author, and which opened the possibilities of different interpretations of the start text, depending on the views of the translator.

Theological approaches continued to shape the classical view of translation, even with the emerging humanist thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by which cultures could be understood by reason and common human understanding. Translation was seen as Domesticising, as it contributed to the formation of national identities, redefining different cultural and social realities by assimilating foreign literature to the linguistic and cultural values of the receiving culture.⁷⁸⁷

Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747–1813), one of the early thinkers on translation, advocated that a translation should produce a target text that would transcend the differences between languages and cultures.⁷⁸⁸ The target text would be 'inscribed' by cultural and linguistic forms of the receiving language, for example in the use of vocabulary, dialect, idioms and form, so making the translation indistinguishable, for the reader, from the original. His view was that the target text would be 'so fluent as to seem untranslated'.⁷⁸⁹ Venuti criticised this view as representing standards that reflected the taste of the cultural elite of which he was a member as the expectations of the target readership would take inevitably take priority over reason and equivalence. Tytler's views proved to be anachronistic in the light of later considerations that introduced social and political motivations into the process of translation.

A major development in the concept of translation came with the writing of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). He was the first to identify the dichotomy between differing translation strategies which gave dominance either to the author or to the target text. Translations could, therefore, be either Foreignising (*verfremdend*) by which the target text took the nature of the start text or Domesticising (*verdeutschend*) which converted the start text to the identity of the target text. He

⁷⁸⁶ Jerome, *Letter to Pammachius 395 AD. Libra de Optimo Interpretendi (epistula 57)* (ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Lugundi Bravorum, Brill, 1980), cited in Venuti, p. 15.

⁷⁸⁷ Venuti, p. 16.

⁷⁸⁸ Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, *Essay on the Principles of Translation 1791*, reprinted with Introduction by Jeffrey Huntsman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1978), cited in Venuti p. 18.

⁷⁸⁹ Venuti, p. 18.

wrote, 'either the translator leaves the author in peace , as much as possible, and moves the reader toward that author, or the translator leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward that reader'.⁷⁹⁰ By adopting a Foreignising strategy, the translator could, according to Schleiermacher, beneficially influence the receiving language and enhance the receiving culture. The Foreignising strategy, in essence, puts the start language in a dominant status over the target language. This is achieved by using archaic vocabulary, and structural forms that emphasise the different nature of the original. Vocabulary, idioms and language styles unfamiliar to the receiving readership further emphasise the differences between the start text and the style of literature familiar to the reader.

The Domesticising strategy, on the other hand, creates a translation in a form, vocabulary and style that is familiar to the receiving readership, and conformed to its expectations, making the original language subservient to the target language.⁷⁹¹ In the early twentieth century, theorists took the view that language was not confined simply to communication but was a form of interpretation that could re-constitute the foreign text into the receiving culture. This is one of the features that Said has considered as constituting the hegemony over the original culture seen in the established Western approach.

A view prevalent in the nineteenth century, which placed value on the approach based on classical studies, can be seen in Arnold's view that translations of the classics should be aimed to please classical scholars, who he considered were the only readers qualified to properly judge translations from classical languages.⁷⁹² This Domesticising approach found later echoes in Postgate's Receptive and Adaptive models, described above. The choice between the two strategies, according to Venuti, lies in the identification of the values of the Target language, and of the intended readership, as against adherence to the original text.

⁷⁹⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens', in *Das Problem des Übersetzens, 1813–1963*, ed. H.J. Störig (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), pp. 38–70, cited in Pym, p. 31; reprint in: *Scientia traductionis*, Vol. 9 (2011), pp. 3–70, doi:10.5007/1980-4237.2011n9p3, accessed 01/11/2020.

⁷⁹¹ Venuti, 'Strategies of Translation', in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (ed. Mona Baker, London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 240–244.

⁷⁹² Venuti, p. 241, quoting Matthew Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (London, Longman, Green and Roberts 1861) also in *Essays Literary and Critical* by Matthew Arnold (London, J. M. Dent, 1906).

The subservience of the start text in relation to the target text is considered by Venuti to be the result of cultural differences and social change. Whilst Venuti focuses on the relationship between languages, particularly the dominance of English, his remarks strongly support the Saidian view of the Western hierarchical relationship with the Orient. He writes that start texts were subject to 'marginality and exploitation', whereas the fluent strategies chosen for the target text benefitted those texts by readability and the creation of an illusion of transparency.⁷⁹³ To the reader, the text appeared to be the original, the contribution of the translator rendered invisible. On this point Venuti shares Said's observation of the West's dominance over Eastern cultures in the way in which they are represented in writing and translations. Concentration on the fluency of the target text 'masks a domestication of the foreign text that is appropriate and potentially imperialistic, putting the foreign to domestic uses which, in British and American cultures, extend the global hegemony of English'.⁷⁹⁴ Domesticisation of foreign texts reduces the significance of the latter by supplying the reader with familiar features of the domestic language, designed to enable the foreign text to be easily received. For Venuti, 'the foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligence and interests'.⁷⁹⁵ In considering whether a translation can ever convey to the reader the understanding that the foreign text meant to its native readers, Venuti concludes that the communication would always be asymmetric, partial and incomplete, inevitably 'slanted towards the domestic scene'.⁷⁹⁶

An extreme example of the Domesticising approach would be to obliterate the fundamentals of the original in favour of a form of translation that has only a tenuous relationship with the original author's intentions, but which would satisfy a new audience. This could be seen in translations of Rūmī recently published in the West, for example by Coleman Barks.⁷⁹⁷ Barks 'reworked' material from other translators of Rumi, including Arberry; this created distances from the start texts from both adherence to the thoughts of the poet and the structures in which the meaning was originally expressed. The new versions are said to 'de-Islamise'

⁷⁹³ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York and London, Routledge, 2002), p. 334.

⁷⁹⁴ Venuti, p. 334.

⁷⁹⁵ Venuti, p. 482.

⁷⁹⁶ Venuti, p. 487.

⁷⁹⁷ Coleman Barks, *Soul-Fury: Rumi and Shams Tabriz on Friendship*, translated by Coleman Barks (New York, Harper Collins, 2014).

Rūmī's works, and, in so doing, remove contextual and theological references and allusions, creating a 'sanitised' version, that cannot be a true representation of the intentions of the author. According to Fatima B. Cihan-Artun, this 'De-Islamisation' of Rūmī created a field of 'imagined Islam' that might satisfy Western tastes for a 'good Muslim', but is no more than the reduction of Islam to Western accommodation.⁷⁹⁸ In addition, this approach itself creates a form of poetry that satisfies new expectations, not supported by any theological or philosophical validation, but appealing to a generalised, non-cultural, synthetic outlook.

The analysis by Cihan-Artun is compatible with the criticisms of Orientalism stated by Said, i.e. the reduction of the cultural, religious and social values of the East to a Western convenience. Domesticising creates an illusion of the East by taking the original text to situations, never envisaged by the authors. Transplanting ideas that could only be properly understood by those thoroughly grounded in their provenance by necessity creates a different form of literature. The choice for the translator remains between adherence to the start text, with a specialist receiving audience in mind, or in popularisation, or in yet some other kind of rendition that seeks to offer a varying combination of both, as described in Catford's unbound ranking I have previously discussed.

The dichotomy illustrated by the Domesticising and Foreignising strategies belongs to the discussion of the divergent paths that translations could take. Pym identifies that directionality was a key feature of translational equivalence, with the result that translations are the results of active decisions made by translators. In each case the translator is be faced with the choice between two opposed poles, e.g. 'free' versus 'literal'.⁷⁹⁹ The concept can be tested by seeking to re-translate the translated text back into the original. A comparison of the two is likely to show that the relationship was asymmetric. The choice between two strategies points to a

⁷⁹⁸ Fatma B. Cihan-Artun, 'Rumi, The Poet of Universal Love: The Politics of Rumi's Appropriation in the West' (2016) *Doctoral Dissertations My 214-current*. 555. http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/555, at the University of Massachusetts. The thesis uses Arberry's works, *Classical Persian Literature* (1958), *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (1950), *Mystical Poems of Rumi 1-200* (1968), *The Rubāiyāt of Jalaluddin Rumi* (1949) and *The Immortal Rose: An Anthology of Persian Lyrics* (1948).

⁷⁹⁹ Pym, p. 24.

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Western tradition of a choice, the reduction to two being a constant feature of translation practice.⁸⁰⁰

Pym gives examples of the typical choices available to the translator, which constituted constant features of the theories of translation. Such choices could vary across a wide spectrum from the works of Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE)⁸⁰¹ who made literal translations and translations that would appeal to a wider audience, *ut interpretes* (literalist interpreter) or as *ut orator* (like a public speaker).⁸⁰² A modern approach was that of Nida, a biblical scholar, who supports 'natural' equivalence of translation but in the case of a collection of disparate texts such as the Bible, there can be a 'formal' equivalence which closely follows the word and textual patterns as opposed to 'dynamic' equivalence which tries to create the function the words might have had in the start text.⁸⁰³ Newmark distinguishes between 'semantic' and 'communicative' translations. Semantic translations consider the formal values of the start text and retain them as much as possible, a choice he advocates especially in the case of 'authoritative' texts, while 'communicative' translations would look forward at the needs of the addressees, adapting to their requirements as much as necessary.⁸⁰⁴ Venuti, identifies 'fluent translations as being the type of Domesticating strategies found generally in English, as opposed to resistant translations'⁸⁰⁵ which, with reference to Schleiermacher (*v. supra*), import the characteristics of the start text and may thus present challenges to the non-educated readership.

The range of views can be summarised as follows:

Cicero 106–43 BCE	<i>ut interpretes</i> [literalist interpreter]	<i>ut orator</i> [like a public speaker]
Schleiermacher 1813	Foreignising	Domesticating
Nida 1964	Formal	Dynamic
Newmark 1988	Semantic	Communicative
Venuti 1995	Resistant	Fluent

⁸⁰⁰ As shown by Pym.

⁸⁰¹ John P. V. Dacre Balsdon, John Ferguson, eds. 'Marcus Tullius Cicero', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, July 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cicero>, access date, 07/04/2020.

⁸⁰² Cicero, *De optimo genere oratum*, in F. Lafarga (ed.), *El discurso sobre la traducción en la historia* (Barcelona, EUB, 1996), pp. 32–44, cited in Pym, p. 31.

⁸⁰³ Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1964), cited in Pym, p. 31.

⁸⁰⁴ Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (New York, Prentice Hill, 1988), cited in Pym, p. 31.

⁸⁰⁵ Pym, p. 31.

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In all these cases, the choices of form and style are available to the translator, who has regard to the status or function of the start text. The question of the intentions of the translator then arises, which would lead to the Saidian analysis of the outcomes of translation. Catford analyses the ways in which the translator can adapt the translation to reflect the constraints of the start text, but another paradigm of theories grew that was more concerned with the purpose of translation, a shift of balance from the author to the target audience.

Translation theories relating to biblical translations are based on hermeneutics: the way a text is construed informs the way in which it is translated.⁸⁰⁶ According to Chau, the benefits of a hermeneutical approach comes from the recognition that there can never be a fully 'objective' understanding of the start text, nor can the target text ever fully represent the start text since 'prejudices' would be unavoidable but potentially beneficial. The target text is therefore not definitive, and it is inevitable that the translator will change the meaning of the start text.⁸⁰⁷ This view has later been endorsed by Connolly, suggesting that the reader should collect a variety of translations of a text and compare them in order to come to some understanding of what the author intended.⁸⁰⁸

Equivalency theories were, according to Pym, in their 'heyday' in the 1960s and 1970s, the latter period of Arberry's writings, but they underlie much of modern understanding of translating.⁸⁰⁹ The theories were challenged by epistemological scepticism by which it was acknowledged that the analysis produced by equivalence might not be incorrect but there was no certain way of accepting it as being so.

5.1.5 The Purposes of Translation: *Skopos* Theory

Another paradigm of theories, differing from the equivalence approach, has developed the concept that translations should achieve a given purpose. Such translations are among the types that Said criticised, especially if their overt or covert aims are to produce a target text that, for example, privileges a body of

⁸⁰⁶ Pym, p. 99.

⁸⁰⁷ Simon Chau (Chau Suicheong), 'Hermeneutics and the Translator: The Ontological Dimension of Translating', *Multilingua*, Vol. 3 (1984), 71–77, cited in Pym, p. 99.

⁸⁰⁸ David Connolly, 'Poetry Translation', in Mona Baker, ed., *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 175.

⁸⁰⁹ Pym, p. 86.

thought: Western, imperial and colonial. The *Skopos* theory developed by Hans Vermeer and Katherina Reiss in 1984 gives priority to the target side purpose to be fulfilled by the translation (*skopos*, Greek for 'purpose', can also mean 'aim', 'goal', the 'intended function').⁸¹⁰

The *Skopos* theory indicates that the translator should work to achieve the 'communicative purpose' of the start text, and, as stated by the theory's developers, 'the dominant factor of each translation is its purpose'.⁸¹¹ Vermeer later writes that 'each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose'.⁸¹² The fundamental difference between the *Skopos* concept and earlier theories is that the translator is no longer deemed to be dominated by the start text. However, the theory includes the additional factor of the determining influence of the client, or commissioner, of the translator. The aim of the translator is to reach an identified group of addressees or to attain specific goals in the target culture, as instructed by the commissioner of the translation or as chosen by the translator. Vermeer envisages that the translator will be free to decide upon the outcome aimed for in the target text: 'what the *Skopos* states is that one must translate consciously and consistently in accordance with some principle respecting the target text. The theory does not state what the principle is: this must be determined separately in each specific case'.⁸¹³

When applied to Arberry's translation practices the *Skopos* theory helps us to show that his translation, for example, of *Scheherezade* or of Rūmī creates a certain view of the East, as the end purpose, thus representing the East according to some established Western norm. The translator directs his translation to that norm, choosing the vocabulary, the form of the target text, the images used, the metaphors and allusions adopted, all according to Western expectations. As the start text is no longer dominant, the original author's intentions and expression, envisaged for a totally different readership, have become secondary factors.

⁸¹⁰ Katherina Reiß and Hans Vermeer, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (Tübingen, Niemeyer 1984) = Katherina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, tr. by C. Nord (Manchester, St. Jerome, 2013), cited in Pym, p. 44.

⁸¹¹ Vermeer, p. 96

⁸¹² Hans Vermeer, *Skopos und Translationsauftrag* (Heidelberg, Institut für Übersetzen und Dolmetschen, 1989), cited in Pym, p. 44.

⁸¹³ Hans Vermeer, 'Skopos and Commission in Translational Action', in Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader* (third edition) (London and New York, Routledge, 1989), p. 227–238, cited in Pym, p. 44.

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The *Skopos* approach has been criticised by those who call for a closer alignment between the start and target texts, and who regard a looser connection between the start and target texts as a disadvantage. Nord places an expectation upon the translator to examine the start text in order to discover its function in conjunction with the wishes of the client or anticipated target group, although preference should be given to the start text in each case.⁸¹⁴ Mary Snell-Hornby regards an 'integrated' approach as preferable; the functions of the text should be translated, but not necessarily the words or sentences on the page.⁸¹⁵ In Pym's view the translator's freedom to decide on the aim of the target text and the reasons for undertaking the translation, go beyond the normal linguistic coherence between text and translation, but raise the consideration of the ethics of translating.⁸¹⁶

Skopos has introduced a new dynamic of translating, as it conceives the possibilities of recognising that translations could be propagandist or creating an Orientalist world according to the translator's choice, for example FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát* which its early reviewers took to reflect the pre-occupations of contemporary Victorian society.⁸¹⁷ It moves the focus of translating from the author's intentions to a point where the translator can choose a rendering of a finished text to serve a variety of purposes such as political, conventional, imperial, Westernising, cultural changing or representational. The motivation of the choice might come from the specific client who commissioned a translation, but *Skopos* also gives the translator the freedom to choose how texts should be translated and the purpose the translation served. Translations made at the initiative of the translator could serve the unarticulated intention of conforming with the expectations and conventions of, for example, academic translating, so furthering traditional attitudes of Orientalism.

Many of Arberry's works were translations of medieval Arabic and Persian poetry, a complex field for translators. The next section discusses the discourse on

⁸¹⁴ Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation Theory, Method, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 1988), cited in Pym, p. 47.

⁸¹⁵ M. Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, Benjamins, 1988), cited in Pym, p. 47.

⁸¹⁶ Pym, p. 49.

⁸¹⁷ Daniel Karlin, *Edward Fitzgerald Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: The Astronomer-Poet of Persia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xxiv.

the translation of poetry in order to identify the issues that can be used in the analysis of Arberry's translations.

5.1.6 Translation of Poetry

Connolly views the translation of poetry as the most challenging of tasks, and states that although translation of poetry has been undertaken for thousands of years, there has been a paucity of academic discourse on the actual process of poetry translation, and only discussions on the problems involved and methods of dealing with them.⁸¹⁸

Connolly argues that poetry would always be a special case in literature as it is being further removed from ordinary language than the most elaborate prose, and by reason of its expressions and deeper meaning. According to Connolly, 'poetry represents the most compact form of writing, condensed and heightened' and is 'connotational' rather than 'denotational' in which content and form are inseparably linked. His analysis accords with that of Koller whose frames for defining relationships in equivalence included the category of connotative translations, based on the way the start text is expressed.⁸¹⁹

Additionally in poetry, the inner 'musical' mode or rhyme of a poem, regardless of any formal metre or rhyming pattern, its sounds and associations, present the translator with formidable challenges. The translator is expected to produce a text that is recognisable as the original poem, if it is not an adaption or imitation, as well as conveying the intrinsic poetic value of the original.⁸²⁰

The expectations of the reader, as seen above in the discussion on Domesticising translations above, are important factors in any translation, as well as their demands for full explanations of the original, especially in the case of literal translations.⁸²¹ Connolly's conclusion is that only by the utilisation of stages of

⁸¹⁸ David Connolly, 'Poetry Translation', in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (ed. Mona Baker, London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 170–176, esp. p. 170.

⁸¹⁹ Koller in Pym, p. 16.

⁸²⁰ Connolly, p. 171.

⁸²¹ Connolly, p. 171: 'What an English-only reader wants is a good poem in English', quoting Tess Gallagher, 'Poetry in Translation: Literary Imperialism of Defending the Musk Ox Parnassus', *The Poetry Review* 9 (1), 1981, 148–167, here p. 149). Nabokov demanded full footnotes for each translation (Nabokov, Vladimir, 'Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English', *Partisan Review* 1955, 22(4), 496–512 (Reprinted at pp. 127–43 in Schulte and Biguenet (eds), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* 1992, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press).

translation is it be possible to seek to accommodate all the features of the original and to produce a form of language acceptable to the culture and tradition expressed in the target language.⁸²² Jones proposed that three stages would be followed by the translator: the understanding stage (involving close analyses of the source text); the interpretation stage (the translator working item by item with continual reference to the source and target texts); and the creation stage (where the target text is fashioned as an artefact that could be valid in the language used by the target culture).⁸²³ Connotative, or even denotative, meaning intended by the poet might not be obvious, nor does the translator have privileged access to it⁸²⁴ unless he works from explanatory documents of the original author. In these circumstances, the expertise of the translator can provide the reader with something of the spirit of the original.

Achieving an equivalent effect to the original in the target language is the better aim of the translator, according to Connolly, especially in the case of poetry. The best translation is that which comes nearest to creating on its audience the same impression that the original made on its contemporaries.⁸²⁵ He considered that there could be no theoretical formula for equivalence, as each poem and its translation is unique. The production of multiple translations of the same original would enable the reader to experience something of the sensations available to the reader of the original. That process would provide the reader with a range of experiences from a number of translators that would highlight different aspects of the source and bring each translator's individual insights.

Translating poetry, according to Nida, is a process whereby the message in the source language is decoded by the receptor (i.e. the translator) by means of a phenomenon called a 'transfer mechanism', and then re-encoded into the target language; however, it is difficult to fully understand the internal processes within the transfer mechanism.⁸²⁶ Treatment by the translator of the start language poem involves ascertaining the core of the poet's message that might be implicit (or

⁸²² Connolly, p. 171.

⁸²³ F. R. Jones, 'On Aboriginal Sufferance: A Process Model of Poetic Translating', *Target*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1989), pp. 183–199, cited in Connolly, p. 172.

⁸²⁴ Connolly, p. 171.

⁸²⁵ Connolly, *Poetry Translation*, p. 173 referred to Rieu, in Lefevre, *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (Assen and Amsterdam, van Gorcum, 1975).

⁸²⁶ Eugene Nida, *A Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden, Brill, 1964), cited in Connolly, p. 171.

connotative) or explicit (or denotative). The translator brings his own experience to internalise that message and then, in Nida's terms, re-encode it.

In contrast to attempts to replicate the original, Lefevere adopted an approach that regarded the translator as trying to recreate the original poetic text on his own supposition of the poet's intended meaning, and then seeking to produce a text that would convey how the poet would have written in the target language.⁸²⁷

5.1.7 Poetry: The Form of the Translated Text

When translating poetry, the translator faces the question whether it is more appropriate to convey the text in the form of poetry or prose in the target language due to the problem of translatability between two languages. And then, as the start language is poetry, the exact form in which the translated text should appear.⁸²⁸ This is an age-old question that also reflects the differences in forms of poetry in successive ages and depending on cultural expectations.⁸²⁹ The transfer of poetry from one age to another in a form replicating the original (Foreignisation) might produce barriers to the reader to properly understanding of the original, it might also offer opportunities to the translator to employ different stylistic forms. A variety of solutions might be considered, including adopting cultural equivalents, for example by using the English pentameter for French Alexandrines or by using temporal equivalents like modern free verse for classical verse.⁸³⁰

Holmes identifies four strategies for the translation of verse forms:

- a) Mimetic, where the original form is retained;
- b) Analogical, where a culturally corresponding form is used;
- c) Organic, where the semantic material is allowed to 'take on its own unique poetic shape as the translation develops', and finally

⁸²⁷ André Lefevere *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (Assen and Amsterdam, van Gorcum, 1975), p. 76, cited in Connolly, p. 175.

⁸²⁸ Connolly, p. 173, cites Joseph Brodsky: 'metres in verse are kinds of spiritual magnitudes for which nothing can be substituted. They cannot be replaced by each other and especially not by free verse', cited in Yves Bonnefoy, 'On Translation of Form in Poetry', *World Literature Today*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1979), pp. 374–379.

⁸²⁹ Connolly, p. 173, quotes Tytler: 'to attempt ... a translation of a lyric poem into prose, is the most absurd of all undertakings, for those very characters of the original which are essential to it, and which constitute its highest beauties, if transferred to a prose translation become unpardonable blemishes', Alexander Fraser Tytler, *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, cited in Venuti, p. 18.

⁸³⁰ Connolly, p. 173.

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- d) Deviant, or extraneous, where the form adopted is in no way implicit in either the form or content of the original.⁸³¹

It is for the translator, presumably following Connolly's 'understanding' stage to determine the appropriate form of the text in the target language.

Verse translators were highly gifted, as Connolly recognised, to varying extents providing the functions of both critic and poet, as well as additional tasks. While they may not be poets themselves, translators absorb the qualities of poets, based on affinity, inspiration, knowledge and sympathy. In this respect I suggest that Arberry was not a natural poet but that he attempted to absorb the intentions of the poet, as he wrote he 'tried to be faithful not only to the letter but to the spirit' of the work.⁸³²

Connolly draws attention to the differences in the use of different terms: translation, version, adaptation and imitation, all being descriptors frequently used in the context of works in the target language. The differences between them is in the degree of interpretation. He supports Lefevere's view that the translator's aim is to render the original author's interpretation of a theme in a form accessible to a different audience. Gallagher put it as follows: 'What an English-only reader wants is a good poem in English'.⁸³³

The writer of versions kept the substance of the source text but changed the form. The writer of imitations would *de facto* produce a poem of his own which only has the title and point of departure in common with the source text.⁸³⁴

According to Connolly, the reader in the target language would be best served when the translator stated at the outset the aims of the translation and produced a work consistent with those aims. Rather than a theoretical approach to the phenomenon of translating, Connolly seemed to have considered that the affinity of the translator with the poet and a personal sense of inspiration were more important, these matters fall outside scholarly attempts to impose artificial straightjackets upon the art of translating. Translating poetry involved issues of conveying the intention of the poet, as well as issues of form, rhyme and rhythm.

⁸³¹ Connolly, quoting J. S. Holmes, *Translated! Papers on Literary Translations and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1988).

⁸³² A. J. Arberry, *Kings and Beggars: The First Two Chapters of Sa'di's Gulistan* (London, Luzac & Co., 1945), p. 23.

⁸³³ Gallagher, 'Poetry in Translation: Literary Imperialism of Defending the Musk Ox Parnassus', *The Poetry Review*, 1981, p. 149, cited in Connolly pp. 170–176.

⁸³⁴ Connolly, p. 175, quoting Lefevere, 1975.

Literal translations, on the other hand, aimed at the simplest form of translating, as I discuss in the following section.

5.1.8 Literal Translation

The concept of literal translation frequently occurs when discussing how a translation should be made. It is also a term frequently used by Arberry to describe his main aim in a translation. But it is a notion not without difficulty. At its plainest, it comprises the transposition of individual words of the source language into the target language, a process described by Robinson as 'often literally impossible – an inflected word in an agglutinative Source Language, for example, can almost never be replaced with a single word in an isolative Target Language – and, even where literally possible, the result is often unreadable'.⁸³⁵ Robinson suggested that so-called literal translations were in fact compromises with the concept of word-for-word translations, relying on looser forms in the target language while adhering, wherever possible, to the word order of the source language. Catford's categorisation of translations based on 'rank bounded' and 'unbounded' classes⁸³⁶ did not overcome the practical issue of actual translation.

Nabokov regarded the near impossibility of translating a foreign text: both the start text and the target text being 'sedimented with different literary styles, genres and traditions'.⁸³⁷ Nabokov was strongly opposed to the use of 'poetical' language in English translations, which, in the Domesticising sense, relied on standard usages and stereotypes. In considering the translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Nabokov writes:

The person who desires to turn a literary masterpiece into another language, has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text. The term 'literal translation' is tautological ... since anything but that is not truly a translation but an imitation, an adaptation or parody'.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁵ Douglas Robinson, 'Literal Translation', in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (ed. Mona Baker, London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 125–127, at p. 125.

⁸³⁶ John Catford, *The Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics* (London and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965, reprint 1980).

⁸³⁷ Vladimir Nabokov, 'The Art of Translation', *New Republic*, 1941, cited in Venuti, p. 112.

⁸³⁸ Nabokov, Venuti, p. 113.

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To resolve the inherent problems of translating original texts, he considered it necessary to add 'copious footnotes ... so as to leave the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity. I want such footnote and the absolutely literal sense, with no emasculation or padding'.⁸³⁹

In the next section we will examine Arberry's style of presenting translated works in light of Nabokov's comments.

5.2 An Empirical Examination of Arberry's Views of Translating

This section aims to connect our analyses of translating practises and theories with Arberry's own views, using the concepts discussed in the preceding sections as tools for identifying and scrutinising the elements underlying his attitude towards translating. This critical evaluation of key areas of Arberry's work intends to uncover how Oriental studies of the mid-twentieth century, as shown by Arberry's works, display the prevalence of imperialistic and colonial attitudes in the field. The outcome is expected to show that Arberry was a representative of a Western mode of thinking about the Orient and that Said's criticism of Westernising foreign cultures are demonstrated by those translations.

5.2.1 Methodology of the Examination

Our method consists of examining Arberry's works of translation in order to ascertain whether he adopted strategies for his translations, whether his choice of the type of translation depended on the start text in form and content ('Foreignising'), or whether he translated for the receiving readership ('Domesticising'). Arberry's output can broadly be distinguished between translations and his editorship of books, which were mainly aimed at a general readership, and his scholarly works, found in journal articles for an academic audience. The section will identify and discuss Arberry's views found in works intended as contributions for the academic study of texts and those intended for a wider readership.

⁸³⁹ Nabokov, Venuti, p. 127.

5.2.2 Journal Articles

In numerous journal articles (listed in the Bibliography, Part I), Arberry provided scholarly translations, aimed at an academic and specialist readership. The articles provided material for the understanding of often rare works and were produced at a high level of academic and technical expertise. The purpose of those articles was to provide authoritative versions of texts many of which had not previously been translated into English. Apart from literal translations, Arberry provides technical comparisons between different copies and versions of the manuscripts, detailed notes on the contents, commentaries on authors, historical backgrounds to the texts and linguistic features of the works.

In terms of the translation theories outlined earlier in this Chapter, they can be considered as tending to be intentionally Foreignising in nature, not seeking to persuade readers already experts in the field, but giving the optimum expression of the original wording. Their purpose was scholarly and to share information not previously been available, often produced as resources for further studies. The articles were intended to offer an objective view of the literature, and, according to the Saidian analysis, they were produced by an academic member of a traditional institution, and represented the type of Orientalism that was in accordance with the conventions of Western academia for dealing with the East.

A *sine qua non* of all translators was an original manuscript that was accurate, authentic and clearly the work of the named author, and that texts used for translation should be original or exact reproductions of the original, without any subsequent omissions, additions or accretions by their copyists. However, as access to the original manuscript was not always possible, the term 'start text' has been used in this study to refer to the translated document. It was a matter for the translator to discuss the sources that fed into the start text, its attribution and provenance. Arberry was fortunate in being able to access a wide range of manuscripts at the library of the India Office and from the resources of the University of Cambridge and he was given privileged access to the Chester Beatty Collections. In his works, usually in the introductions and prefaces, Arberry offered explanations to the readers of the ways in which he undertook the work of translating. The explanations, analysed in the next section, were not always consistent and will be seen to vary

over the course of his translating career and in relation to the start text that were translated.

5.2.3 Arberry's Views on Translating

In an early work of translation, *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfis: Kitāb al Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al taṣawwuf*, Arberry wrote, 'My version ... seeks to provide as literal a rendering of the original as the English prose-style will permit'.⁸⁴⁰ His translation, in theoretical terms, falls within the Foreignising strategy, using a vocabulary that draws attention to the differences in style and allusions of the original, for the interests of scholars, but he envisages that they might also have a wider readership, although with a more limited appreciation of the work. In terms of Nabokov's comments extracted above, Arberry sought to provide the reader with some sense of the start text, writing that 'the scholar will, I believe, find these versions so literal that he will be satisfied that they are an accurate reflection of their originals: the general reader will, I hope, be able to catch through them some glimpse, however faint, of the spirit breathed into them by their composers'.⁸⁴¹ Arberry has primarily a specialist readership in mind.

Implicit in Arberry's statement lies the problem facing any translator as our theoretical discussion in Chapter 5.1 has shown, whether it is possible to render a literal translation of medieval writing from another civilisation while at the same time making the rendering accessible to both a scholarly readership and to the general public. A consequential question would be whether it was at all possible to satisfy the expectations of different readerships in a single translation, or whether the solution lay in having different versions, aimed at different readerships. He clearly opposed any 'pedantic prose dissection' of spiritual poetry. Arberry often expresses empathy with meaning of the start text being translated, as well as its literary value, which he draws to the readers' attention as we shall see in his works discussed below.

Arberry's views on the purposes of translation were expressed in his series of lectures, *An Introduction to the History of Sufism* (sic) intended for the University

⁸⁴⁰ A. J. Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfis Kitāb al Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al taṣawwuf*, translated from the Arabic of Abū Bakr al- Kalābadhī (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1935), Preface, p. x.

⁸⁴¹ Arberry, 1935, p. x.

of Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1942.⁸⁴² He draws attention to the differing target audiences requiring different types of translation. In considering different types of readerships of translations of the mystical works of Ṣūfī writers, he saw value in rendering their sayings for the benefit of the general public 'when suitably presented in a familiar idiom', in order to give the audience 'comfort and sure guidance in the perplexities of this materialist age', when he was writing the lecture material during the war. The 'more technical and recondite' aspects, he wrote, 'can have little attraction', but he recognised that there was 'a vast volume of fine sayings and inspired poetry which it is our duty to bring to the notice of our fellow men'.⁸⁴³ This view, consistent with the Domesticising strategy and the identification of the purpose of the translation, clearly demonstrates Arberry's belief in the function of the translator, under an obligation to translate for the non-scholastic public, whom he describes as the '*awāmm*, achieved by changing the start text to a target text in language familiar with readers.

He identifies a group of readers, the *khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*, ('the elite of the elite'),⁸⁴⁴ comprising students of mysticism within other religions, who wished to extend their knowledge of Islamic mysticism.⁸⁴⁵ As they were 'familiar with the jargon of one school of theosophy [they] will not be frightened by the technicalities of another'. He envisaged that the target text would be close to the start text as their existing knowledge made it unnecessary to create a form of language for easier understanding. In both cases the strategy would be Foreignising, the purpose being to bring the start text close to the readers. His use of Arabic terms for the envisaged audiences may have been made in recognition that the readers of his lectures at the University of Kolkata understood Arabic, but also relied on his scholastic reputation, and the institutional capital of his academic standing, demonstrating his credentials as one from the West who spoke with authority on Islam and Ṣūfism even to an Islamic audience.

⁸⁴² Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sufism* (sic) (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1942).

⁸⁴³ Arberry, 1942, p. 73.

⁸⁴⁴ The English translation is taken from the review by Elizabeth R. Alexandrin, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 2 (Oct., 2009), p. 122 of: 'Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics: The Qur'an Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī*, Qur'anic Studies Series, no. 3 (London, Institute of Ismaili Studies and Oxford University Press, 2006), in which Keeler uses the phrase at p. 80.

⁸⁴⁵ Arberry, 1942, p. 73.

The challenges of successfully conveying the equivalence of the meaning and form of the original, and the means of their resolution, may be seen to arise in his rendering of *Kings and Beggars: The First Two Chapters of Sa'dī's Gulistān*. In his Preface to the work he wrote that he had sought to put Sa'dī into a style of English that was close to the original Persian, as we have seen, by which he tried to be faithful not only to the letter but also to the spirit'. He reproduced prose as prose, and rhymed wherever the original was rhymed, and verse rendered into verse, adding that 'In seeking after this, the ideal of every translator, I have been bound to reproduce certain features of the author's style which, while wholly acceptable to the most refined Persian taste, do not entirely accord with the canons of English practice'.⁸⁴⁶ This statement indicates that the work falls within the meaning of the Foreignising strategy, which would place an onus on the part of the reader to accommodate the differences and to prepare adequately for a full appreciation of the work. The copious material of the Preface, in the form of a monograph, lends weight to the view that the work was aimed at a scholarly readership.

Arberry was aware that Sa'dī's moralising poetry was, 'a genre rarely practised in English' which presented challenges to readers of a wholly different society, suffused by Western attitudes and culture, and unfamiliar with even the basic assumptions of Sa'dī's civilisation. He wrote: 'It would be too arrogant of me to claim that I have done justice to my original in this important respect; it is perhaps impossible now to achieve perfection in the moralising style in English', a difficulty which he attributed to the fact that 'we have become too critical in our approach to life, and have experienced too much, to be naturally urbane and complacent in our treatment of simple ethical themes'.⁸⁴⁷ His comment recognises the challenge presented by a Foreignised text and reflected his experiences of the upheaval of war.

Arberry gave an extended extract by the noted Persian writer Mirzā Muḥammad-i Qazvīnī who celebrated Sa'dī's work. While this would suggest empathy with the author, Arberry's Preface contains references to the Westernising tendency of some scholars, whose views of Persian writing, however sympathetic and supportive, maintained the distinctly Western attitude criticised by Said. When

⁸⁴⁶ Arberry, 1945, p. 23.

⁸⁴⁷ Arberry, 1945, p. 24.

he talks about those who are 'looking at the European side of this matter', he refers to Browne's comparison of Sa'dī with Western writers like Eckhardt, Thomas à Kempis, Caesar Borgia and Heliogabalus, and compares the text to literary figures in the English (target) language.⁸⁴⁸ However, Arberry's attitude to translation, in his choice of vocabulary, archaisms and phrases found in the two works shows a Foreignising strategy, giving primacy to the start texts.

The fundamental issue of whether to make an 'exact' or adapted rendering of the original remained at the heart of the task facing translators, and this, in turn, raised other issues. The dichotomies identified by Postgate, and later shown by Pym in the works of Schleiermacher, Nida, Newmark and Venuti,⁸⁴⁹ were clearly represented. Questions arose as to the allegiance of the translator to the original text or to the potential reader, the choice between the Domesticising or Foreignising strategies, the potential audience, whether academic or general, the function of the texts, and their purpose as described by Vermeer in the *Skopostheorie*. A further consideration was the interest of commercial publishers, who undertook the financial risk of presenting the translator's work, unlike the private collector who was prepared to bear the publishing costs personally, as in the case of Chester Beatty, because of his personal interest.⁸⁵⁰

In an important journal article published in 1946, *Hāfiẓ And His English Translators*, Arberry set out his precepts for satisfactory translations.⁸⁵¹ The significance of the article lies firstly in the subject, as Ḥāfiẓ had been recognised as an outstanding literary figure in Persian literature ('Persia's greatest lyrical poet'⁸⁵²). Secondly, it is important because the task of translating the *ghazals* crystallises the challenges facing translators of rendering the original into English, and into other European languages, and, additionally, because Arberry, for the first time, sets out the salient issues concerning translation from Persian poetry.

⁸⁴⁸ Arberry, 1945, p. 13.

⁸⁴⁹ Discussed in the sections above.

⁸⁵⁰ For example, Sir Chester Beatty who bore the cost of publishing *The Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām. Edited from a newly discovered manuscript dated 658 (1259–60) in the possession of A. Chester Beatty, Esq.*, by A. J. Arberry. With comparative English versions by Edward Fitz-Gerald, E. H. Whinfield, and the Editor, pp. vii, 172; pl. 1 (London, Emery Walker, 1949).

⁸⁵¹ A. J. Arberry, 'Hāfiẓ And His English Translators', *Islamic Culture Board*, Issue 20 (1946), pp. 111–128.

⁸⁵² A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), p. 330.

Arberry states that one issue common to nearly all translations of Persian poetry is the recourse to expansion in the translated form compared with the original text as a result of the Persian style of compressed expression.⁸⁵³ In terms of the later translation theories, this practice is at variance with Koller's statement that the translator should adhere to the form of the original, as clearly the form of the *ghazal* was essential to the original. Arberry's approach does not conform either with Connolly's later connotational category in which the use of language and form are inseparably linked.

Some translators, according to Arberry, attempted, as far as possible, to reproduce the metres and rhymes of Ḥāfiẓ, but there were others, such as Sir William Jones, who were prepared to rely on conventional Western poetic figures, even importing new images into the translation rather than producing true versions of the original.⁸⁵⁴ Choosing the most appropriate form of translation required finding the solution to the imperfect balance of equivalence between languages, and between Foreignising and Domesticising strategies.

Arberry refers to the views of Richard Le Gallienne (1866–1947), who preferred that the author should be rendered in a way so that the reader would have a clear impression of the nature of the original even at the cost of the loss of the 'verbal or rhythmic fidelity'.⁸⁵⁵ The context of the original work was an essential element in producing a meaningful interpretation. Browne had advised Arberry when he translated Avicenna's *On Curing the Fear of Death* that

It is a dangerous thing to interpret a few verses of Sufic poetry in their literal and obvious sense, without reference either to the general principles and tendencies of the author's doctrine or to other passages in his writings which may suggest quite a different interpretation. Moreover, one has to consider the historical development of mysticism in Islam.⁸⁵⁶

To aid Western understanding of Persian poetry and how it was appreciated in its own culture, Arberry turned to Persian scholars, Riḍā-zāda Shafaq and Mirzā

⁸⁵³ Arberry, 1946, p. 113.

⁸⁵⁴ Arberry, 1946 p. 115. In his chapter *Hāfiẓ*, (pp. 239–36, *Classical Persian Literature*), Arberry undertook an analysis of the translations of his poetry from the eighteenth century onwards.

⁸⁵⁵ R. Le Gallienne, *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyam: A Paraphrase from Several Literal Translations* (New York, John Lane & Co., 1897), cited in Arberry, p. 116.

⁸⁵⁶ Arberry's Papers, Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Arthur Arberry: Correspondence and paper, MS Add. 7891, Box 3, undated note.

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Muḥammad Qazvīnī, for critical appreciations of the works.⁸⁵⁷ It is arguable that Arberry had a more sympathetic attitude than Said would have acknowledged. Arberry saw that at the central core of Ḥāfiẓ's works lay what he called the 'philosophy of unreason', described by Arberry as 'the utter incapacity of man to master the riddle of the universe', a view that, according to him, had far-reaching antecedents in Persian literature and religion, and which reflected traumatic experiences of Persian history.⁸⁵⁸ Seeking to link recent events to those of the time of the poet, Arberry related his own experiences of two world wars, which enabled him to 'appreciate the motives underlying his doctrine of intellectual nihilism'.⁸⁵⁹ Arberry offered his translations 'in the nature of an experiment' but did not explain further, except to note that attempts by previous translators to imitate the original were inevitable failures.⁸⁶⁰

Arberry contributed translations to a series of books published in the 1950s under the title, 'Wisdom of the East Series', the purpose of which the General Editor, J. L. Cranmer-Byng, described as being 'ambassadors of goodwill and understanding between East and West, the old world of thought and the new of action'.⁸⁶¹ His statement illustrated the subject of Said's overall criticism of the Western hegemony over the East, suggesting that all that the East had to offer the world were ancient abstract ideas that do not even necessarily include religion while making no contribution by way of science and technology, economics or modern philosophy, elements which, by implication, only the West could provide. From this disparity the West, according to Cranmer-Byng, would derive from the series a 'deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty ideals of Oriental thought' that might 'help a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour'. This revealing statement, however well-intended, reflected the prevailing Western attitude towards the East during the early post-war period, one that did fear other nations of the East and their religion, as well as being tantamount to racism. This was the conventional background against which Arberry was commissioned to undertake translations, as in Vermeer's work on the Skopos

⁸⁵⁷ A. J. Arberry, *Fifty Poems of Ḥāfiẓ* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 14.

⁸⁵⁸ Arberry, 1947, p. 31.

⁸⁵⁹ Arberry, 1947, p. 31.

⁸⁶⁰ Arberry, 1947, p. 34.

⁸⁶¹ J. L. Cranmer-Byng, *Wisdom of the East Series* (London, John Murray, 1950).

theory discussed above. The output was produced with the target language (and culture) in mind rather than a Foreignisation of the start text.

Arberry's translation of the *Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* from the Arabic appeared in the above-mentioned Series. Here he describes Rhazes's view of God as being a 'very rational and reasonable God, a God we might almost say, with a sense of humour, an eminently Persian God'.⁸⁶² Said's Orientalist critique would cast doubt on the place of a Western scholar to place such reductive interpretation not only on the thinking of Rhazes (864–925 CE) but on the Persian view of their deity. Arberry complied with the aims of the Series; his translation, intended for the general reader, could be regarded as having some of the attributes of the Domesticising strategy identified by the translation theories. However the content, phraseology and vocabulary of the translation suggest that Arberry envisaged an educated, near-scholarly readership, coming from his academic world in which conventional Orientalist attitudes were prevalent.

A similar outcome can be seen in Arberry's *Avicenna on Theology*, published in the same Series.⁸⁶³ He presents a translation with modern vocabulary and phraseology, clearly intended to meet the objectives of the Series of providing a Domesticising translation. As in Rhazes, he offers a personal opinion on the history of Persia by describing the fall of the 'old proud spirit and with it the rich and varied', Persian rule over Baghdad being 'crushed by the stunning shock of the Arab conquest'.⁸⁶⁴ These statements suggest his Orientalist tendencies and his academic view of Persian history. Arberry clearly favoured Avicenna's embrace of reason, philosophy and the power of the intellect rather than an unquestioning belief of the revealed faith, a position that can be interpreted as his Western humanist standpoint. The outcome of the translation of Avicenna is ambivalent, as was the case of the work on Rhazes, as it was in effect a Domesticising translation that would appeal to a limited target readership, rather than to the target readership suggested by the aims of the Series.

The similarities of the last two translations by Arberry show the influence of commissioning on the type of translation required, both clearly intended to be

⁸⁶² A. J. Arberry, *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London, John Murray, 1950), p. 11.

⁸⁶³ A. J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (London, John Murray, 1951).

⁸⁶⁴ Arberry, 1951, p. 4.

Domesticising, by contrast to his earlier works of the 1930s that were produced for a scholarly readership and thus privileged the start text by adopting a Foreignising strategy. The translations of the 1950s show an intention to reach a general audience of readers interested in specialist works, rendered in non-scholarly forms by the choice of language, and absence of the academic conventions of explanatory notes and references. However, despite the purpose of producing a Domesticising form of language, such translations displayed clear Orientalist tendencies as described by Said.

In contrast to the translation of medieval texts, Arberry worked with a group of students at the School of Oriental and African Studies to select examples of Arabic poetry written between 1920 and 1950, which he translated and edited.⁸⁶⁵ The works, selected by the group, rather than commissioned or chosen by the translator, were chosen by the efficacy of their translated form in the English language. Arberry wrote that in selecting the start material 'poems that seemed admirable in the original proved to lose much of their virtue when rethought in another language. Translation was found to be a most ruthless critic; poverty of invention, concealed from first sight by brilliant diction, now stood stripped and naked to the cold light of reason'.⁸⁶⁶ His remarks illustrate the difficulty of translating poetry, as we saw in our earlier discussion, and suggest that the start material were selected for their interest in their translated versions not for their intrinsic value in Arabic culture. He further wrote that modern Arabic literature had been strongly influenced by foreign elements, with the domination of external conceptions and values being striking, 'one felt that these compositions might equally well have been written by contemporary French, English, or German poet'.⁸⁶⁷ In terms of translation theories, this work can be seen to have been commissioned for an English-speaking target readership, following a Domesticising approach for the presentation of the material.⁸⁶⁸

A clearer example of the Domesticising strategy was to be found in Arberry's works on and translations of Omar Khayyam. FitzGerald's translation of 1859 was

⁸⁶⁵ A. J. Arberry, *Modern Arabic Poetry* (London, Taylor's Foreign Press, 1950).

⁸⁶⁶ Arberry, 1950, Preface, p. 1.

⁸⁶⁷ Arberry, 1950, Preface, p.2.

⁸⁶⁸ Arberry, 1950, Preface, p.2.

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established as the representation of Persian poetry in its most popular form.⁸⁶⁹ Describing FitzGerald's work as being far from the actual wording of the original, Arberry writes that the translation had 'been excused because Europe has adopted a somewhat colonial attitude to oriental writing ... also because it was fashionably supposed that Persian images were apt to be alien to Western taste as to be beyond accurate reflection', but FitzGerald was, according to Arberry, faithful to the spirit of the original.⁸⁷⁰ Arberry recognised the ubiquity of the work: 'there can scarcely be a household in Britain which has not at some time possessed a copy in some shape or form. British soldiers have taken it with them into action in two world wars',⁸⁷¹ demonstrating that the work was as an integral piece of domestic literature as any produced by local poets. It provided Western society with an Orientalist window on the East.

Arberry had produced a translation of supposedly the oldest manuscript of the *Rubāiyāt* that had been found, to be read alongside FitzGerald's work. His aim was to show the close connection with the original by replicating its metres and rhythms. This was achieved by adopting the metrical style used by Tennyson in his *In Memoriam*. The vocabulary and the form of verse were aimed at the target readership, based on the model of the former English Poet Laureate, all mirroring a high level of Orientalism, Westernisation and the Domesticisation strategy.

A translation by Arberry of an anthology of works written by Arabic poets from Andalusia, North Africa and Sicily, intended for the 'interested layman', showed, in choice of vocabulary and form of the translated verse, a continuation of the general trend of his translations of the 1950s.⁸⁷² When commenting on the spread of Islam, Arberry stated that it carried with it 'a surfeit of warfare, and a great surge of puritanism'; though his comment might have had some historical justification for the comment, it also voiced a Western perspective.⁸⁷³ His translation was intended to avoid dilution of the particular style of the original, forsaking clarity of expression in favour of a closer adherence to the original, 'matching obscurity with obscurity'.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁶⁹ Edward FitzGerald, *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām* (London, Quaritch, 1859, Oxford, World's Classics, 2009).

⁸⁷⁰ A. J. Arberry, *Omar Khayyām, A New Version Based on Recent Discoveries* (London, John Murray, 1952), p. 25

⁸⁷¹ Arberry, 1952, p. 7.

⁸⁷² A. J. Arberry, *Moorish Poetry: A Translation of the Pennants, an Anthology compiled in 1243 by the Andalusian Ibn Sa'id* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953).

⁸⁷³ Arberry, 1953, p. xii.

⁸⁷⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. xix.

Rhyming verse and a vocabulary close to the conventional English verse of the nineteenth century were used. Despite the stated aim of producing a translation for the non-specialist, the translation, similar to his other translations of the period, was academic and scholarly in nature.

The translations published in his books of the 1950s were seen to have the specific purpose, in accordance with the *Skopostheorie*, of reaching a general audience, and indicated, by implication, the adoption of the Domesticising strategy of translating. In *The Ring of the Dove by Ibn Hazm (994–1064): A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love* the target readership was clear: 'I have aimed at making an accurate and, I trust, tolerably readable translation for the perusal of the general public, and not so much for the consideration of experts'.⁸⁷⁵ He made the translation 'as faithfully as possible, given the difficulties posed by the task of rendering Semitic into an Aryan (sic!) idiom'⁸⁷⁶ recognising the 'sad but plain truth' that 'extremely few Arabic books translate well',⁸⁷⁷ remarks that lead us to conclude that the work Domesticises the author's work.

Arberry strongly endorsed the conventional Westernising approach to translations by which the reader's language would always be dominant, so making the foreign text subservient, almost to the degree that there was no other solution to be found to the conflicts over the optimum type and form of translation:

Those modern critics who decry the tradition, established in our own literature over centuries, of rendering classical poetry into the traditional forms of English verse, have yet to prove, so far at least as Arabic is concerned, that their alternative solution to the problem is either theoretically more sound, or in practice more successful.⁸⁷⁸

This statement, I suggest, confirms the conclusion that Arberry attitudes and practice were evidence of the established Orientalist method of treating the literature of countries of the East, which was in essence the adherence to Western norms and dubious of innovative approaches. His Orientalism, in the meaning of Said, can be seen in his rather patronising reference to '*ilm al-hadith* as 'paraphernalia,' which

⁸⁷⁵ Arthur J. Arberry, *The Ring of the Dove by Ibn Hazm (994–1064): A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love* (London, Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 10.

⁸⁷⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 14.

⁸⁷⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

⁸⁷⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 14.

'are considered to guarantee the authenticity of the sayings put into Muhammad's mouth'.⁸⁷⁹

However, despite his strictures expressed in *The Ring of the Dove*, Arberry adopted a different approach to the target language and the form of the translated text in another translation published in the same year, 1953. *The Arabian Nights (Alf Layla wa Layla, also known as Tale of One Thousand and One Nights)* had long achieved considerable popularity in the West, appearing in many editions and languages; it was instrumental in creating exotic visions of the Orient in the minds of the reading public that were to inform and influence their perceptions. According to Warner, 'The nights continued to be considered popular trash, written in impure Arabic beneath the attention of proper literati; and as pulp fiction the cycle of stories were excluded from the classical Oriental Arabic canon'.⁸⁸⁰ In his translation of *Scheherezade*, Arberry described the earlier translators who 'slavishly imitated the stylistic peculiarities of Arabic "who invented" a strange Eurasian sort of English' that had been 'caught up with the eddies of the Gothic Revival' and 'imported into their diction all the bogus flummery of Ye Olde Englysshe'.⁸⁸¹ The remarks of both Warner and Arberry reflect on the problem faced by translators or scholars who attempt the complex task of conveying the culture of one civilisation to another in terms of their social, historical, religious or literary traditions. This problem is not unique to Orientalists, but, I suggest, renderings of the literature of the East are encumbered by established attitudes and practices of Orientalist outlooks.

Arberry intended to adopt a different language in his translation, both in the target language and the form of his version, which would be a departure from the 'gymnastics of the Victorians' and which was 'not the kind of rigmarole they are going to find in these pages'.⁸⁸² His approach was based on his understanding that the original was never intended as serious literature, and that translations should reflect the tone of the original which he considered to be not far distant from contemporary Arabic conversation.⁸⁸³ He wrote:

⁸⁷⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. 12.

⁸⁸⁰ Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic, Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London, Chatto, Windus, 2011), p. 8.

⁸⁸¹ A. J. Arberry, *Scheherezade* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 9.

⁸⁸² Arberry, 1953, p. 14.

⁸⁸³ Arberry, 1953, p. 15

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The evidence before us appears to justify the supposition that these compositions were never intended as serious literature... but represent the amusement of a society overburdened with pedantic writings, and not ill disposed to turn for relief to the uninhibited speech of the market place.⁸⁸⁴

Arberry did not provide any evidence for his comments. We can presume they were made on the basis of his knowledge of Arabic literature and his expertise in the field. His conclusion was also justification for his choice of the tenor of his translation.

His aim was to match the colloquialisms of the original, giving allowance to the evolution of language over time, so that his translation would reflect the story in a modern conversational language. He would bring the stories in as natural a form as possible, so that the reading public would be presented with the work in a form that would help their understanding of the stories. As Warner later stated:

Alf Layla can be read as representing customs, beliefs and passions actually held and experienced in the countries where the stories are set (Iraq, Egypt, Syria, in the present day) or as fantastic inventions and fabrication – the begetter of magical realism.⁸⁸⁵

The risk of such a clear Domesticising approach would tend to create in the minds of the readers a false image of the East: 'The two modes have been confused at different times and dizzy flights of imagination taken as "true reports" or as documentary evidence'.⁸⁸⁶ The outcome of this way of translating was to present an image of the East chosen by the translator according to his or her objectives; the translator would become more than a converter of text, namely a creator of an imaginary reality.

This approach accorded with the Schleiermacher's Domesticising category of translating regarding its dependency on the use modern idioms. It also demonstrated how the choices of the translator conveyed incipient Orientalism, in confirming a Western view of the East. It is unknown how familiar Arberry was with contemporary Arabic conversational styles, although he commented that he had heard

⁸⁸⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 15.

⁸⁸⁵ Warner, p. 24.

⁸⁸⁶ Warner p. 24.

recitations of the work in the early 1930s⁸⁸⁷ and in the Jna el Fna in Marrakesh in 1952;⁸⁸⁸ he also had worked for the BBC Arabic Service during the Second World War on broadcasts in contemporary Arabic, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is therefore feasible that this was an attempt to present a version of the 'Stories' based on Arberry's imagination of how the work might appear be in twentieth century Arabia. Apart from the reductive nature of the translation in terms of choice of language, Arberry intended a different form for the finished translation.

His aim, described by him as a 'major revolution', would be to set out the narrative 'in the fashion of the modern novel' to assist the reader to better understand the movement within the text and the interchange between characters rather than relying on the unpunctuated and undifferentiated flow of the Arabic original.⁸⁸⁹ This approach was later endorsed by Warner:

The stories exist in a tangle of style and a polyphony of vocal registers; poetry and prose mingle; high flown court lyrics from the Persian tradition will interrupt a comedy... Stories also recall the world outside the story, bringing in voices from the larger culture to which the audience belongs.⁸⁹⁰

Arberry intended to transpose the stories to what a modern reader might imagine as how they might have been told in medieval Arabia, using language supposed to be modern, and done through a medium that did not exist at that time. To the view that Arberry aimed to present a classic story in a modern style, similar to Shakespeare's plays in modern scenery and dress, I suggest that the work was part of a pattern he had long established for translations. Placing priority on the text created for the reader, in language and form, accentuated the dominance of the target text over the start text. *Scheherezade* is an example of the type of work criticised by Said, despite attempts by the translator to avoid the 'Neo-Gothic excrescences' of the Victorian style of translations.

Domesticising a foreign text produced material that impacted not only on the perception of the culture from which it was taken, but conveyed messages about the culture of the reader, as identified by Warner:

⁸⁸⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. 20.

⁸⁸⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 21.

⁸⁸⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. 16.

⁸⁹⁰ Warner, p. 9.

5. Arberry's Translations: Theories of Translations and Arberry's Works

The reverse colonisation set in motion by the fascination of the Other have been powerfully at work in many respects. The attraction arises from encountering much that is revealing about ourselves and that then leads to "something understood" at home. There is recognition of sameness at work not only curiosity about difference.⁸⁹¹

This is a powerful point that Said missed. The interest in the East could spark connotations in the way the reader viewed and understood his/her own attitudes, and had potential for enriching not only the Other but the home. The idea of 'reverse colonialism' was evident in the concept of the Western imaging of Oriental art and design discussed in Chapter 3. In the same way as translations of Oriental subjects influenced literature, so did Oriental art influence domestic design and artefacts.

Arberry edited an anthology of the writings of poets writing in Persian, translated by renowned scholars, for the Everyman series under the title *Persian Poems* which was published in 1954.⁸⁹² The poets chosen were the most prominent of the authors of the early and medieval periods, including works by some modern poets. The translators represented the English tradition of Oriental scholars, including Arberry himself, who employed the language of classical English poetry, similar in style and appeal to the poems included in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* which itself included FitzGerald's *Rubāiyāt*.⁸⁹³ The anthology was arranged according to English literary forms of poetry, divided into styles of Quatrain, Lyric, Ode, Didactic and Idyll, unlike anything found in Persian literature.

Arberry wrote that 'one of the abiding glories of British rule in India' was that 'during the period of the East India Company, through the enthusiasm and skill of the British scholar-administrators', the 'beginnings were made in reducing the classical poetry of Persia to print'.⁸⁹⁴ He refers to the works of Postgate and Bates but does not discuss their analyses of translating.⁸⁹⁵ Arberry took the view that the reader should assume certain responsibilities with regard to translated texts, not only by learning something of the of the nature of the language and literature from which the translations had been made but also by not being 'over-gluttonous' in

⁸⁹¹ Warner, p. 25.

⁸⁹² A. J. Arberry, *Persian Poems, An Anthology of Verse Translations* (London. M. Dent, 1954).

⁸⁹³ Francis Turner Palgrave, *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1861; 1941 edition).

⁸⁹⁴ Arberry, 1954, p. vii.

⁸⁹⁵ Arberry, 1954, p. viii.

reading translations⁸⁹⁶ in much the same way as he wrote in 1953: 'The Koran, like the poetry which it resembles in so many ways, is best sampled a little at a time'.⁸⁹⁷ Although presenting a work intended for a general readership, Arberry seems to be addressing the readers as though they are his students in the rarefied world of mid-twentieth century academia.

The publication, and Arberry's views, places the book within the scope of the Orientalist tradition in Said's definition, by showing the Westernisation of Persian poetry, even of contemporary works, and the Domesticisation of original works to meet the expectations of the readership. In Vermeer's terms, the purpose of the work was to bring Persian poetry to the attention of the reading public, and the purpose of the translation was to render the poetry so that it could be assimilated into the existing expectation of acceptable poetry.

Arberry was heavily engaged in translating and publishing in the early 1950s; six books appeared in 1953 alone, as well as several journal articles. It has been seen that the function of the translations appearing in books were to expose the literature of the East to an informed public, while academic and scholarly works appeared in journal articles. The commonality of the works, as I suggest in this Chapter, can be seen from his standpoint of one who perpetuated and enhanced the Orientalist style of thought in whatever context his writings were placed.

In a later work on a translation by FitzGerald, Arberry considered the challenges of translation and the dilemmas faced by the academic translator. He recognised that a scholarly approach to translations, especially if the translations were of the literatures of Islam, were unlikely to be welcomed by the general public. Translating poetry that would do justice to the author required the translators to be poets, but at the risk of their translations being less accurate to the original wording or the spirit of the original.⁸⁹⁸

His analysis reflected what would later be seen as the essential difference between the Foreignising and Domesticising strategies. By the former he would have considered it to be the scholastic approach: accuracy of wording, replicating

⁸⁹⁶ Arberry, 1954, p. ix.

⁸⁹⁷ Arberry, *The Holy Koran*, 1953, p. 26.

⁸⁹⁸ A. J. Arberry, *FitzGerald's Salaman and Absal: A Study by A. J. Arberry* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 49.

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vocabulary and idioms, form and rhythms, to convey the innate character of the start text. The poet-translator might be the better choice for the Domesticising strategy, as the target text would be more acceptable to the general reader but at the cost of creating, in effect, a new text in language and meaning. His analysis is relevant in the context of translations of Rūmī as will be considered later in this Chapter.

Arberry's translation of *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ* appeared in the form of a monograph.⁸⁹⁹ It featured in a series of scholarly works, to which Arberry made substantial contributions, which translated and explained the manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library. Arberry's work was intended for a scholarly readership, as noted previously. The original poem was turned into a prose version, its verses closely analysed for their syntactical composition, rhythms, rhymes and metres were analysed and the figurative images used were categorised. Arberry ventured to imagine how the poem was received.

The aesthetic and psychological effects of these allusions must have been very great. The listener, already keyed up emotionally by the erotic imagery employed, and the passionate excitement of the mystical exercises, will surely have thrilled to recognise familiar lines and phrases torn from their original contexts and given a new and heightened significance in the transformation of material into spiritual beauty.⁹⁰⁰

It is clear that the purpose of the work was for a defined readership, possibly commissioned by the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Collection. As an academic work, it was a Foreignising in its form and effect, being clearly aimed at a target readership already familiar with the context of the work and the purpose of the translation.

Secular Arabic poetry, in the form of the *Mu'allaqāt*, had been the subject of numerous translations into English. Arberry's translation, *The Seven Odes*, followed that line.⁹⁰¹ The original poems, the *Mu'allaqāt*, were regarded as the most famous in Arabian literature, and the pinnacle of Arabian poetry, being prime examples of

⁸⁹⁹ A. J. Arberry, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (Dublin, Emery Walker (Ireland) Ltd. 1956), Chester Beatty Monograph No. 6.

⁹⁰⁰ Arberry, 1956, p. 10.

⁹⁰¹ A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London, George Allen & Unwin, Co. Ltd., 1957).

qaṣīda verse.⁹⁰² In Arabic poetry *qaṣīda* was a long poem in monorhyme, often referred to as an 'ode' (in English). Composed in the pre-Islamic social pattern of Arab societies, the *qaṣīda* was a poem of praise for the poet's tribe; it later became a panegyric to solicit gifts or favours, or appointments to position in royal courts.⁹⁰³ The poetic expressions and form challenged a translator, giving rise to Arberry's pessimistic conclusion that 'To some extent the quality of the poetic imagination can be reflected in the dark glass of an alien idiom. But it is when we come to look at the mechanics of the Bedouin ode that we realise most clearly the essential inadequacy of translation'.⁹⁰⁴ The difficulty might have been overcome by producing versions that managed to convey glimpses of the original genius produced by sympathetic translators:

Translation robs them of the greater part of their artistic and emotive force; yet what remains over is by no means negligible, provided the translator abandons all attempts to press them into a prefabricated mould of committed prosody and stylised diction... their dragomans ... should be men honest in scholarship, no pedants but with no extravagant literary pretensions...⁹⁰⁵

As Arberry did not state how he intended to translate the original, it is necessary to identify his aim, his target readership and his methods by examining the translation and associated comments. The translation can be seen as being aimed at a scholarly audience which is evidenced by the language used in the Prologue, and the artificial division of the original seven poems into 'chapters', unlike the original. Each chapter was introduced by an essay, in the form of a journal article, giving historical details and background information, but without footnotes, followed by the poem itself. Arberry used unrhymed free-verse for the medium of the translation, although the original *qaṣā'id* would have mono-rhymed line endings. The vocabulary of the translation is often archaic but with some modern colloquialisms (e.g. 'don't be so hasty with us/give us a breather').⁹⁰⁶

The translation has received detailed examination by Heba Fawzy El-Masry in her thesis *A Comparative Study of Arthur John Arberry's and Desmond O'Grady's*

⁹⁰² Arberry, 1957, p. 14.

⁹⁰³ Arberry, 1957, p.14.

⁹⁰⁴ Arberry, 1957, p. 249.

⁹⁰⁵ Arberry, 1957, p. 254.

⁹⁰⁶ Arberry, 1957, p. 205.

Translations of the Seven Mu'allaqāt.⁹⁰⁷ The thesis is a valuable contribution to the understanding of a work of particular importance in early Arabic writing and builds on the work of other translators including Sir William Jones.⁹⁰⁸ The thesis usefully compares the approaches towards translation from different periods which are based on diverging perspectives of the start texts and the appropriate methods of translating. Her analysis finds that Arberry's representations of Arab reality in the pre-Islamic era showed 'absence of order and progress and consequently ... otherness' which she states are features found in Western representations of the 'non-West'.⁹⁰⁹ El-Masry concludes that Arberry's *Mu'allaqāt* was primarily aimed at an academic readership, the *Skopos* of the work was to be found in his remarks in the *Epilogue* to the book, that it was not intended for the man in the street.⁹¹⁰ Arberry, quoting Nicholson, agreed that no translation could furnish European readers with a just idea of the original, least of all a literal translation, and that readers would need a full commentary to make the work intelligible.

The purpose of the translation, in Vermeer's terms, was to provide a text for an academic audience, it was Foreignising in nature, showing attributes of the Westernising approach to Eastern writings. El-Masry described Arberry's representations of Arab society in the poems as being consistent with Orientalist literature, shown by absence, otherness and essentialism which she attributes to an Orientalist discourse.⁹¹¹ She attributes Arberry's attitude as having been formed by propaganda campaigns at the times when the translations were produced⁹¹² by which she refers to the criticism of Egypt during the Suez Crisis which was contemporary to Arberry's writing of the *Mu'allaqāt*. We saw in Chapter 4 how Arberry produced propaganda for the MOI and BBC and we discussed in his translations of Iqbal his view of the Officers' Revolt in Egypt in 1952. I suggest that Arberry's view can be

⁹⁰⁷ Heba Fawzy El-Masry, 'A Comparative Study of Arthur John Arberry's and Desmond O'Grady's Translations of the Seven *Mu'allaqāt*', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, September 2017, supervised by Professor Cathia Jenainti. The thesis is unpublished and access to the thesis was granted to me by the author on 13th August, 2019.

⁹⁰⁸ Sir William Jones, *The Moallakāt, or Even Arabian Poems, which were suspended on the Temple at Mecca* (London, 1782).

⁹⁰⁹ El-Masry, p. 226.

⁹¹⁰ El-Masry, p. 190; Arberry, p. 245.

⁹¹¹ El-Masry, p. 256.

⁹¹² El-Masry, p. 257.

seen as integral to his underlying approach to the Middle East formed many years previously.

In the 1960s, Arberry's main focus was on the works of Rūmī, which appeared as prose and verse translations of the Persian originals. The prose translations may be taken together for the purpose of this Study.

The edition collated by Professor Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar of Rūmī's work was the basis of Arberry's translation of his *Discourses* (Fīhi mā fīhi).⁹¹³ The translation was intended as a work for scholars of Rūmī's poetry and, as Arberry states in the preface, the work, despite its difficulty in reading, was a necessary introduction in order to be able to appreciate Rūmī's poems.⁹¹⁴ Its purpose was academic, as Arberry intended it to be a continuation of Nicholson's voluminous translations of Rūmī's *Masnavi*, and a commemoration of Nicholson's work. The translation is supported by explanatory notes and cross references. The publication was intended for an academic readership, as Arberry thanked the publishers for undertaking the work and the Trustees of the Spalding Trust for partially financing the publication, indicating that the work might not ordinarily have been published.

Arberry refers to the difficulty of understanding the original, described by him as 'the impromptu outpourings of a mind overwhelmed in mystical thoughts ... welling up unceasingly out of the poet's overflowing unconscious'.⁹¹⁵ His prose translation follows a standard vocabulary of the time, changing the form of the original rhyming couplets into a prose, but with no attempt to make the prose attractive to the general reader. The purpose of the translation is to provide an academic contribution for a scholarly readership, as an aid to the study of Rūmī's works. As a commemoration of Nicholson's works, it is possible that it was Arberry who decided on the venture to translate, and it was not commissioned.

The intention to render a literal translation, together with the other indications referred to above, place the *Discourses* within the Foreignising category of the translation theories. In presenting his version of the thoughts of Rūmī, a mystic living in the thirteenth century, Arberry was in the tradition of Western Orientalists. He was

⁹¹³ A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rūmī* (London, John Murray, 1961).

⁹¹⁴ Arberry, 1961, p. ix.

⁹¹⁵ Arberry, 1961, p. 9.

not a Muslim or a Sufi, but relied on his scholarly capital to authorise the transposition of medieval religious experiences into a form communicable to fellow Orientalists, however respectfully and sympathetic he was to the original.

His approach to another work of Rūmī, *Tales from the Masnavi*, was similar, save that the target readership was different.⁹¹⁶ Arberry distinguishes the material of the *Masnavi* into two broad categories, theoretical discussions on Ṣūfi mystical life and its doctrines, and then the stories that illustrated those doctrines. His purpose in the *Masnavi* is to present extracts from the original stories in a form appropriate for popular reading as Arberry was of the opinion that the poem deserved a wide circle of readers.⁹¹⁷ Despite that, his Introduction is similar to the contents of a scholarly article, with explanations, sources and antecedents. He claims to have

liberated the translation from the somewhat pedantic encumbrances, the brackets signifying a word or phrase supplied by the translator, the unintelligible literalness mitigated by a sprinkling of footnotes, which are still thought by many scholars to be necessary, as proof of their academic integrity, when translating oriental texts.⁹¹⁸

This description of the type of scholarly translation showed the nature of past academic Orientalism, by which the traditions of Western learning transposed the written cultures of the East. The point he made, I suggest, was that in the past translators produced translations that were, in effect, intended for themselves and their own privileged academic circle. This was translation in isolation, the rendering texts for a Western purpose unconnected with the societies that gave rise to the start texts. This was not altogether an exercise in introversion as it made the translator's expertise available to scholars in general, their work to be studied with the caveat of acknowledging the context in which it had been produced.

Arberry, in his version, follows Nicholson's example by providing a prose form instead of the metre and rhyming couplets of the start text, but, to show the nature of the original Persian, he adopted 'loose rhythms corresponding very roughly with the rhythmical patterns' of the original. He used 'slang expressions' to reflect the

⁹¹⁶ A. J. Arberry, *Tales from the Masnavi* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1961).

⁹¹⁷ Arberry, 1961, p. 12.

⁹¹⁸ Arberry, 1961, p. 20.

original, although acknowledging the 'sustained seriousness and dignity' of Rūmī's writing.⁹¹⁹

The first volume containing the first one hundred tales was followed by *More Tales from the Masnavi* with the next hundred.⁹²⁰ The translation is along the same lines as the first, although the Introduction focuses on defending Rūmī from allegations of anti-Semitism directed at three tales in the first volume, without a discussion on the method of translation. The two volumes may therefore be considered together. Both fall within the Domesticising category of translations, clearly aimed at a wider target readership and therefore presented in a form that Arberry and his publisher considered to be attractive. Arberry himself drew the distinction between 'scholarly' translations and those for the non-academic. The purpose, in Vermeer's terms, was unambiguous. Both volumes fell within the mode of translation recognised by Said's description of Orientalism, shown, for example, by Arberry's 'slang expressions', indicating a reductive approach, aimed at a home readership.

In addition to the academic works discussed in this section, Arberry's translations *Humāy-Nāma*, *Muslim Saints and Mystics* and *A Sufi Martyr*⁹²¹ display the same conventional scholastic approach described by him in his *Tales*.⁹²² Their purpose was also scholarly, aimed at a specialist target readership, confirming that the production of works of erudition can be regarded as being within the category of Foreignising works as well as confirming the work of an academic Orientalist of the class described by Said in his Introduction to *Orientalism*.⁹²³

Whereas Arberry translated Rūmī's *Discourses* and *Tales* into prose form, his later publication was a translation of four hundred poems, selected from Rūmī's numerous poetic output, all translated into verse form. The translations appeared in a series of two, the first published in 1968 and the second posthumously in 1979, both are combined in the *Mystical Poems of Rūmī* with Arberry named as trans-

⁹¹⁹ Arberry, 1961, p. 20.

⁹²⁰ A. J. Arberry, *More Tales from the Masnavi* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1963).

⁹²¹ A. J. Arberry, *Humāy-Nāma* (London, Luzac & Co Ltd., 1963); *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes for the Tadhkirat al-Auliya (Memorial of the Saints) by Farid al-Din Attar* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966); *A Sufi Martyr, The Apologia of 'Ain al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1969).

⁹²² Arberry, 1961, see footnote 915 above.

⁹²³ Said, 2003, p. 2.

lator.⁹²⁴ Arberry wrote in the Introduction to the 1968 edition that the translations had been rendered in a way that was 'as literal as possible, with minimal concession to readability'.⁹²⁵ He appends notes of explanation 'to clarify obscurities and to explain unfamiliar allusions', linking the translations to the copy manuscript bearing the original, while advising readers to become familiar with Nicholson's translation of the *Mathnavī* and his own *Discourses*.

Arberry acknowledged that the poems were difficult to understand since the originals are 'ecstatic, unpremeditated and unrevised', recorded in a literary style that was 'basically colloquial', using the idioms of Khorasan (Rūmī's birthplace) expressed in the tongue of Konya (where he spent most of his life) in the thirteenth century. The poetry, the work of 'the supreme genius of Islamic mysticism', deserved close study by 'devoted scholars' to improve on Arberry's version.

The work, however, occupies a position somewhere between a scholarly work and a version for the general reader. Its purpose was stated to be a translation for the general reader, but its form, and the information attached to it, associates it with a scholarly work. It is indicative that the translations required further work to bring the poems within the reach of the general reader, as they formed the source for 're-translations' by others, such as Coleman Barks (1937–) and Robert Rye, who, in the words of Franklin D. Lewis, 're-imagined' Rūmī as a 'new-age American poet'.⁹²⁶ Coleman Barks reworked translations from the Persian by other authors to provide his versions of Rūmī's work, an example is *Rumi Soul Fury* in which he makes reference to Arberry's 'important collections of Rumi ghazals' which were reproduced in the 2009 edition.⁹²⁷

Lewis draws attention to Arberry's use of 'some archaisms' in his language, and added alternative readings to the translated text, after having consulted the original Persian. In terms of the translation theories we have discussed, the work is hybrid in nature, it has a Domesticising aim but is similar in form to the Foreignising category. There is no reference to a commission for the work, and appears to be

⁹²⁴ A. J. Arberry, *Mystical Poems of Rūmī* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁹²⁵ Arberry, 2009, p. 32.

⁹²⁶ Arberry, 2009, p. 10.

⁹²⁷ Coleman Barks, *Soul-Fury: Rumi and Shams Tabriz on Friendship* (New York, Harper One, 2014), p. 217.

undertaken at Arberry's volition, probably as a continuation of his *Discourses* and *Tales*, as a large project of translating Rūmī.

I suggest that the analysis Arberry's works intended for different target audiences, the academic and the general, demonstrates that he used the same techniques for both. His production of translated works was grounded on the outlook of academic translators that had taught him the standards and expectations of what he regarded as acceptable translations. The works show us that the approach of Oriental studies towards translations around the mid-twentieth century continued to be an exemplification of Western attitudes towards the cultures of the countries of the East. Academic scholarship set the standards for future works, the translations regarded as definitive statements in translation of the original works. In that context the translation of the Qur'an, as we shall see in Chapter 6, presented particular challenges to translators in providing definitive versions of the text, challenges that arose from the essential place of the text in Islam and the importance a translation would have in conveying to English readers the meaning of the text and the regard in which it is held by Muslims. Arberry used the opportunity of translating Iqbal for expressing his concerns at political developments in the Islamic world. His work stands therefore not only as one of translation but also as a platform for his views demonstrating that the vehicle of translation becomes also a medium for expressing the views of the translator to the target readership beyond a scholarly exercise.

5.3 Muhammad Iqbal: The Mysteries of Selflessness

By translating the works of Muhammad Iqbal (1873–1938), following the earlier translations by Nicholson and Browne, Arberry was recognised in 1972 as 'one of the leading western researchers of the present era' and esteemed for 'his painstaking labour' in translating Iqbal.⁹²⁸ His contribution to 'introducing Iqbal to the West may be even greater than his predecessors [R. A. Nicholson, E.G. Browne]'.⁹²⁹ Iqbal himself was acclaimed as 'the outstanding Muslim poet and thinker of the century'.⁹³⁰ His *Asrār-i Khudī*, a Persian philosophical epic, was first published in

⁹²⁸ Muhammad Riaz, 'Professor Arthur John Arberry and his Contribution to Islamic Literature', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* (Karachi), Vol. 20, Issue 2 (April 1972), p. 74.

⁹²⁹ Riaz, 1972, p. 77.

⁹³⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islām in India: A Social Analysis* (London, Gollancz, 1946; 2nd edition: Lahore, Ripon Print Press, 1947), quoted by Arberry, p. ix.

1915, in which he offered a theory concerning the position of the individual within society and published in translation in 1920 by Nicholson as *The Secrets of the Self*.⁹³¹ Arberry later published notes on that translation.⁹³²

The second part of Iqbal's theory, *Rumuz-i Bekhudi (The Mysteries of Selflessness)*, although first published in 1918, was not translated into English until Arberry's version of 1953. His translation was published in the *Wisdom of the West Series*.⁹³³ This publication gave Arberry the opportunity to discuss Iqbal's thinking in the context of contemporary political affairs in Muslim countries, especially in India and Pakistan.⁹³⁴ Riaz's description of Arberry's translation and annotations as providing 'good guidelines for his Western readers'⁹³⁵ clearly identified the target audience as well as the Domesticising nature of the English text.

In his introduction to the translation of the *Mysteries*, Arberry saw the sudden emergence of Pakistan, which claimed nationhood on the basis of Islam, as an extraordinary event in world history on which would have a significant impact on the course of history.⁹³⁶ He ascribed the emergence of the new state as principally due to the political will and influence of Iqbal, its spiritual founder. The essence of Iqbal's theory, according to Arberry, was that only in an Islamic society could an individual, as a member of a community of self-affirming individuals, realise his potential as a unique being.⁹³⁷ Iqbal developed further the view that Islam was itself an ideal society by 'applying the philosophical theory of individuality and community to the religious-political dogma that Islam is superior to all other creeds and systems'.⁹³⁸ Iqbal used his poetic genius to lead the 'revolt of Islam against internal corruption, and especially and most compellingly against external domination'.⁹³⁹ Arberry

⁹³¹ Arberry, 1953, referred to R. A. Nicholson *Asrār-i Khudi, The Secrets of the Self* (London, Macmillan, 1920), p. x.

⁹³² Arberry, *Notes on Iqbal's asrār-e-khudi* (New Delhi, Nusrat Ali Nasr for Kitab Bhavan, 1946, 2005 edition).

⁹³³ A. J. Arberry, *The Mysteries of Selflessness, A Philosophical Poem by the Late Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (London, John Murray, 1953).

⁹³⁴ Details of Iqbal's life and works were given by Arberry in his translation of Iqbal's *Javid-Nama* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966, re-printed on demand by Islamic Books, Ajman, United Arab Emirates, printed 2018), pp. 9–12.

⁹³⁵ Muhammad Riaz, 'Arberry and His Translation of Iqbal's Works', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* (Karachi, Vol. 29, Issue 4, Oct 1981), p. 234.

⁹³⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. ix.

⁹³⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. xi.

⁹³⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. xii.

⁹³⁹ Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilisation As Depicted in the Original Texts* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1964), p. 378.

illustrated Iqbal's attitude by extracts from his translation, *Persian Psalms* (a collection of extracts from *Zabūr-i-ajam*'), in which Iqbal used the refrain:

Revolt, I cry!
Revolt, defy!
Revolt or die!⁹⁴⁰

According to Arberry, Iqbal had originally argued in 1918 for the creation of a form of international Islam, a single theocracy under a revived caliphate, to govern all the Muslims of the world. However, political changes in the Middle East resulting from the aftermath of the First World War caused him to amend his view. In 1934 Iqbal called instead for Islamic countries to form a grouping of independent countries bound by a common spiritual aspiration, a view which became the basis of his arguments for the severance of Pakistan from India in order to create a separate Islamic state.⁹⁴¹ Arberry had already written in *Islam Today* (1943) on the movements towards Arab, or Islamic, unity and saw in Iqbal's philosophy another stage towards that objective, recognising that Iqbal was 'one of the ablest and most influential of its publicists'.⁹⁴² Although Wilfred Cantwell-Smith had admired Iqbal as 'the outstanding Muslim poet... of universal attention and veneration',⁹⁴³ Arberry was sceptical of Iqbal's approach: 'He supplied a more or less respectable intellectual basis for a movement which is in reality more emotional than rational'.⁹⁴⁴

Potential conflict between a resurgent Islam and the West was seen by Arberry as a real possibility as a result of the 'Black Saturday' events in Cairo in January 1952.⁹⁴⁵ Fires and demonstrations followed the shooting of Egyptian police by British troops on the Suez Canal zone, during which fifty policemen were killed. The events caused political instability in the Egyptian government and domestic instability in the country, leading to the Free Officers' coup of July 1952 which resulted in the abdication of King Farouk 1 and the eventual cessation of British occupation of Egypt in 1956. Arberry viewed the events with foreboding: 'the present threats to the peace and security of the world are certainly not few; among those

⁹⁴⁰ Arberry *Persian Psalms of Iqbal*, (London, Luzac & Co., 1948).

⁹⁴¹ Arberry, 1953, referred to Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1934), p. xii.

⁹⁴² Arberry, 1953, p. xii.

⁹⁴³ Arberry, 1953, p. ix, quoting Smith, *Modern Islām*.

⁹⁴⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. xii.

⁹⁴⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. xiii.

threats there are not many greater than the revival lately of that spirit of irreconcilable hostility which found its most dramatic and bloody expression in the Crusades.⁹⁴⁶ No longer an official of the MOI, his view differed from that expressed in *Islam Today*, written some twelve years previously. In his introduction, Arberry returned to the familiar Western trope of the 'otherness' of the Islamic East as being in direct conflict with the Christian West, a message resonating from the attitudes of the early Orientalists.

Iqbal's uncompromising message was in effect that Europe bore responsibility for impoverishing the East in the interest of the West's 'mutually intolerant democracies'.⁹⁴⁷ Iqbal wrote:

Against Europe I protest
And the Attractions of the West:
Woe for Europe and her charm,
Swift to capture and disarm!
Europe's hordes with flame and fire
Desolate the world entire;
Architect of Sanctuaries,
Earth awaits rebuilding; rise!
Out of Leaden sleep,
Out of slumber deep
Arise!
Out of slumber deep
Arise!⁹⁴⁸

Arberry, writing during the Cold War, saw Iqbal's message as attractive to advocates of communism. He recognised that Iqbal's depiction of the East opposing the West was aimed at domestic political consumption, but he criticised Iqbal's role: 'when a politician poses as a prophet, it is irresponsible of him to continue to indulge in the puerilities of the soapbox, unless he is ambitious, like Hitler, to stage a fantastic *Götterdämmerung*'.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. xiii.

⁹⁴⁷ Arberry, 1953, quoting Iqbal, p. xiii.

⁹⁴⁸ Arberry, 1948, p.381.

⁹⁴⁹ Arberry, 1953 p. xiv.

5. Arberry's Translations: Theories of Translations and Arberry's Works

Arberry attributed the 'present day Oriental contempt' for Europe, which he regarded as 'the most terrible and menacing aspect of contemporary politics', to the 'challenge flung down more than thirteen centuries ago in the deserts of Arabia,' in which 'Islam claims specifically to be the final revelation of God to mankind, and the overthrow of all other religions'.⁹⁵⁰ He acknowledged that 'Europe for centuries was unfair to Islam', the achievements of Muslim civilisations having being overlooked because in the past 'scholarship was the handmaid of religious partisanship', but in the nineteenth century, once European scholars began to recognise the extent of Western reliance on the arts, sciences and learning of the East, 'the inheritance of Europe from medieval Islam was duly admitted'.⁹⁵¹ Muslim apologists went as far as to claim that all that was good in European culture was due to the teachings of Islam, while 'all that was evil was due to other forces'.⁹⁵² Iqbal shared that view; Arberry quoted him as writing that 'Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical achievement' whereas Muslims were provided with all the necessary spiritual means to make them 'the most emancipated peoples on earth'.⁹⁵³ Arberry reflected that 'the tables have indeed been turned. Christian Europe, adventuring into the East upon its self-appointed civilising mission, is now informed that it itself is in need of civilising anew from the East'.⁹⁵⁴

Arberry saw attitudes that played down Muslim attacks on the West as being mere verbiage and rhetoric, as 'a dangerous delusion'.⁹⁵⁵ The events associated with 'Black Saturday' he saw as

the increased reactions against British imperialism, the widespread and growing support for communism from the Maghreb to Indonesia, would cause a close observer to be 'uncomfortably aware that Islam and Europe stand poised against each other, and that the choice between peace and war may not be far off'.⁹⁵⁶

Returning to his metaphor of the Crusades, he wrote, 'we live in dangerous times, and may well be heading to the greatest collision since Richard fought

⁹⁵⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. xiv.

⁹⁵¹ Arberry, 1953, p. xv.

⁹⁵² Arberry, 1953, p. xv.

⁹⁵³ Arberry, 1953, p. xv.

⁹⁵⁴ Arberry, 1953 p. xvi.

⁹⁵⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. xvi.

⁹⁵⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. xvi.

Saladin'.⁹⁵⁷ In his view, the avoidance of such apocalyptic events lay in seeking common ground between the viewpoints, diminishing tensions, seeking rational compromise and a commitment to work towards common ideals.

His translation of Iqbal was intended to make known the views of a 'remarkable thinker and a remarkable poet' to a Western audience. He sought to give an objective account of Iqbal's views, writing as 'a Christian not interested to persuade any Muslim to share my ancestral faith', but believing that it was possible to modify the 'present discord between Christianity and Islam... from the perilous arena of emotion to the more tranquil debate of reason'.⁹⁵⁸ He saw that the area of agreement between the faiths was greater than the area of disagreement, 'generating the reasonable hope that opposition may in time give way to co-operation'.⁹⁵⁹ He then turned to what he feared the most – the threat of communism: 'More especially is this [co-operation] likely to happen, if Christians and Muslims realise soon enough, and clearly enough, that they are confronted by a common enemy able to destroy them together, unless they resist him together'.⁹⁶⁰

The tone of his Introduction, and his pessimistic view of the relations between the West and the East, was the most negative stance Arberry had taken in his written works. He did not name Communism as the 'common enemy' but it is reasonable to deduce from the introduction that the fears created by the politics of the Cold War were a potent background to his comments. The book was published less than a decade after his time spent working in the Ministry of Information and it has been seen from other writing produced during and after the war that he strongly defended the established political view. Although the basis of that approach may not have changed, events since then must have informed his opinions.

His misgivings concerning Arab unity in this book contrast markedly from the supportive line taken in *Islam Today*, a difference that might be explained by the realisations that followed 1945 of the division of world politics, not by religion, but by power blocks in competition with each other. His fears of war between Christianity and Islam did not impede the significant works that followed, for example *The Koran Interpreted* and the translations of Rūmī. It is further remarkable that the pessimism

⁹⁵⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. xvi.

⁹⁵⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. xvii.

⁹⁵⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. xvii.

⁹⁶⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. xvii.

of 1953 was not repeated, in print at least, in any of his subsequent works, save for remarks in his autobiographical Chapter in his *Oriental Essays*.

*Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars*⁹⁶¹ was a collection of short biographies of Orientalists who had helped 'build a bridge between the peoples and cultures of Asia and Europe',⁹⁶² with Arberry himself being the seventh Orientalist described in the book. In the book, described as comprising 'elegant and romanticised lives of selected British Orientalists',⁹⁶³ Arberry had chosen those who had worked in his own field of study, scholars from Simon Ockley (1678–1720) to Nicholson (1868–1945), who represented attitudes towards the East traditionally held by British Orientalism. His inclusion of a short autobiographical Chapter confirmed Arberry's self-identification with that Orientalist tradition.

In *Oriental Essays*, Arberry described the impact the 1947 Scarborough Report had on him, which reviewed the provision of teaching Oriental languages in higher education and the standing of Britain in relation to the East. Returning to the fears he had expressed in his translation of Iqbal, he wrote: 'I have said repeatedly that I wish to have no truck with politics', but politics, albeit within academic circles, according to him, intruded even into the debate following the publication of the Report. Inadequate resources for education in Oriental studies had caused a situation to arise in which 'the rapid decline and virtual elimination of British influence in the countries [Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria] is surely almost without parallel in our political history'.⁹⁶⁴ His views were consistent with those expressed in his Introduction to Iqbal. His aim was to disarm the threat posed by Islamic activists and to promote a common cause against Communism by providing a cadre of educated specialists to work in Islamic countries: in his view would be the surest way of maintaining the interests of the West while making Eastern countries sympathetic with Western interests. Arberry's remarks were the clearest expression of his personal views on contemporary political events in the Middle East and on the danger, as he saw it, posed by a reinvigorated Islamic polity which could lead to the growth of communism, and leading to potential conflict between global powers.

⁹⁶¹ Arberry, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

⁹⁶² Arberry, Foreword.

⁹⁶³ G. Michael Wickens, 'Western Scholarship in the Middle East', *Comparative Civilisations Review*, Vol. 13, Article 6, 1985, p. 65.

⁹⁶⁴ Arberry, p. 242.

5. Arberry's Translations: Theories of Translations and Arberry's Works

In his *Mysteries of Selflessness* we see characteristics that marked Arberry's approach to translation and evidence of the Orientalist attitude to literature of the East. The Domesticating nature of the language used in the translation is intended to address a Western readership; the target audience, as defined by the *Skopos* concept, would be those engaged with relations between Britain and Pakistan, as a former colony and a secessionist state from India, in which post-colonial and post-imperial interests would be strong. The book itself was probably not intended to be a statement of formal positioning on these issues, but the translation taken together with the Arberry's comments contribute to a collective Western view of the East. The cumulative effect of this, and of his other works, reflects the state of the society in which Arberry worked, remaining in certainties established since the nineteenth century but fearful of the changes to which the status quo was being subjected.

5.4 Arberry's Translations: Conclusions

This Chapter has shown that Arberry's approach towards translation may be seen as a contribution to understanding Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century. Translation theories identified in this Chapter provide useful tools for analysing Arberry's output as a translator. Using the concepts of equivalence, Domesticising and Foreignising theories, as well as the function of the start text and the purpose of the translation, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

First, the survey of literature on translation theories has identified issues that assist in determining whether, and how, works of translation, while ostensibly the products of moving a piece of literature from one language to another, reveal aspects that are not apparent from reading either the start text or target text. The dichotomies identified by Postgate, and later shown by Pym in the works of Schleiermacher, Nida, Newmark and Venuti, are instruments for analysing the nature of the texts in question. The allegiance of the translator to the original text or to the potential reader, the choice between the Domesticising or Foreignising strategies, the potential audience, academic or general, to which the translation would be directed, the function of the texts, and the purpose of the texts, as described by Vermeer in his Skopostheorie, can provide indications of the intention of the translator, as well as revealing the place of the translated text in the cultural attitudes of the translator and reading audience.

5. Arberry's Translations: Theories of Translations and Arberry's Works

Secondly, by applying the translation theories outlined in this Chapter, it is possible to identify two broad categories in Arberry's translations, namely his scholarly works and those intended for non-specialist readerships. His works in journal articles and monographs were clearly intended for a scholarly readership and his early translations of the 1930s clearly fall into this category. His works were intended to be educative and add to the corpus of studies of the non-East, in El-Masry's terminology, in the European tradition. In a retrospective application of translation theories, they were Foreignising in intention, attempting to bring to specialist audience versions that were close to the start texts for the purpose of explanation and further study. They had a clear purpose in the Skopostheorie and conveyed the function of the original text to the readership. Arberry's approaches in scholarly works were fashioned in the terms of the intellectual dialogue about the Western understanding of Orientalism that had not progressed since the end of the nineteenth century. Oriental studies as expressed by Arberry can be regarded as a consolidation of conservative approaches without showing how the field could be developed to meet other scholarly disciplines such as sociology, economics, political and demographic studies.

The second broad category is more ambiguous. Arberry produced translations which were intended for the non-specialist readers, some are contributions to series of books while others are individual publications apparently commissioned by Arberry himself, which he intended to also meet the interest of that reading audience. Ostensibly, those works would fall into the Domesticising category, such as those for the 'Wisdom of East' Series, but no clear distinction is discernible between his approaches to scholarly works and the general works. He applied the same standards of translating and, apart from the use of archaic and abstruse language in certain cases, used an English vocabulary derived from contemporary usage.

Thirdly, the choice of works for translation, whether commissioned or selected by Arberry, were frequently obscure in nature and content, whatever their significance in their home cultures or the importance placed on them in the context of Western literary and philosophical canons. The content of the works would more likely appeal to an educated, non-specialist readership which was familiar with the

academic conventions and standards of the mid-twentieth century, often in educational institutions.

The form of the 'general' works merge with the academic, with numerous notes, cross-references, comparisons with other works, biographies of the original authors, and palaeographical investigations into manuscripts and their copies. The language used and, in the case of poetry, the rhymes and verse forms testify to the readership group of a certain class. The implication arises that Arberry translated for himself or for those close to him academically. The exceptions to this conclusion are his translations of the *Rubāiyāt* of Omar Khayyām, Scheherezade and the anthology of the Persian Poems which did not require supporting explanations of the meaning of their contents for their potential readers. Arberry regarded it improper to add commentaries to *The Koran Interpreted* because as a scriptural text the Qur'an should be presented in a form similar to the original.

Arberry works for a 'non-scholarly' target readership perpetuated the popular view of the East by transferring the expressions of the cultures of the Muslim countries into Western terms. Western images of the Orient were reinforced by the ways in which Arberry presented them, built firmly on his classical scholarly grounding.

In terms of his approach as a translator, there does not appear to be a discernible change from the style of his early works to his later translations. His overall approach is consistent, responding to the nature of the text, either prose or poetry, for form and structure. The practice of his translating adhered to the expectations of his target audiences rather than adopting innovating means of bringing the force of the start text to his readers.⁹⁶⁵ These issues lead to a consideration of the way in which Arberry's translations may be viewed in relation to Said's critiques.

Arberry was following a long-established Orientalist tradition whereby he produced works through the filter of the West, contributing to knowledge production about the cultures of the East fully in the Western tradition of Orientalism. Said's identification of the 'scholarly frame of reference' by which scholars created a latent

⁹⁶⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. 14: 'Those modern critics who decry the tradition, established in our own literature over centuries, of rendering classical poetry into the traditional forms of English verse, have yet to prove, so far at least as Arabic is concerned, that their alternative solution to the problem is either theoretically more sound, or in practice more successful'.

idea of the Orient in 'the imperial culture of their epoch',⁹⁶⁶ can be seen to some extent to apply to Arberry, although he was not among the Orientalists named by Said. His approaches to translating were consistent with the norms expected from university scholars of the mid-twentieth century, using the capital of the prestige of their academic positions to provide knowledge that was accepted as authoritative.

Arberry's translations presented the readers with ideas of the Muslim cultures based on a limited number of Arabic speaking countries of the near Middle East and ancient Persia, writing about an Orient that he considered to be real. In Said's words, he writes about an Orient, an entity imagined by him and about which he wrote about,⁹⁶⁷ but he did not venture to enquire into the social, political or economic conditions of those countries, while Arberry's use of references to historical events mainly serve to support explanations for the readers of the translated text.

Said asked how cultures were to be represented and what their nature was.⁹⁶⁸ Arberry's portrayal of other cultures rested on ways in which he created images of them from his choice of texts to be translated and the way in which he decided to represent them. The question for his readers would be whether they understood the translations as parts of the Western way of discussing ideas and philosophies or whether they were introduced to entirely different cultures. I suggest that, with exception of the works clearly intended to appeal to the popular image of the Orient, his other works could be regarded as forming part of the intellectual humanistic body of knowledge that was part of the Western tradition.

This Chapter has evaluated Arberry's translations in order to answer the question of how that evaluation can inform us of Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century. We have seen that those studies remained grounded in nineteenth-century ways of thinking by which conservative scholarly approaches and imperialist attitudes consolidated Oriental studies until they were overtaken by more dynamic approaches that came after the Second World War.

⁹⁶⁶ Said, 2003, p. 224.

⁹⁶⁷ Said, 2003, p. 308.

⁹⁶⁸ Said, 2003, p. 325.

Chapter 6: Translating the Qur'an

6.0 Introduction

As we saw in Chapter 3 (Arberry's works), his two translations of the Qur'an (*The Holy Koran* of 1953 and *The Koran Interpreted* of 1955) have been regarded as among his more important works. They also are of particular interest in our evaluation of his imperialist and colonialist attitudes in the context of mid-twentieth century Oriental studies. Building on our previous discussion of translating techniques (Chapter 5), we will now examine his approaches to translating the text of the Qur'an and scholarly critiques upon his versions.

The outcome of the Chapter is to demonstrate that, while the translations were received positively at the time of publication, recent studies, which we discuss below,⁹⁶⁹ expose shortcomings in the ways in which Arberry chose to convey the messages of the texts, his interpretation and translations of wording of the text and his choices regarding the presentation of the form of the texts. In the light of modern research, it will be necessary to re-evaluate his translations.

The first translations of the Qur'an into English, dating from the seventeenth century onwards, suggest that they were made for religious reasons and scholarly enquiry suggesting 'Orientalist' attitudes towards to Islam. But can Arberry's views be regarded in that light? He demonstrated that Alexander Ross, in 1657, aimed to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian religion over Islam and the supposed inadequacies of Qur'an, while Sale, in 1734, aimed to correct views which he considered too favourable towards what he called 'the imposture' of the Qur'an.⁹⁷⁰ These versions suggest an insular attitude towards the Muslim religion while

⁹⁶⁹ Abdur Raheem Kidwai, 'A Survey of English Translations of the Qur'an', *The Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer 1987), no page nos; Khaleel Mohammed, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (Spring 2005), pp. 58–71; Saudi Sadiq, *A Comparative Study of Four English Translations of Sûrat ad-Dukhân on the Semantic Level* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Ayaz Afsar and Muhammad Azmat, 'From the World of Allah to the words of Men: The Qur'an and the Poetics of Translation', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Summer 2012), 193–211; Muhammad Sultan Shah, 'Arthur John Arberry as an Interpreter of the Holy Qur'an', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, No. 6 (April–June 2017), pp. 1–21; Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik, 'A Critical Reading of A. J. Arberry's Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an (Koran Translated)', *International Journal on Studies in English language and literature*, Vol. 6, Issue 5 (May 2018); Sehrish Islâm, 'Semantic Loss in Two English Translations of Surah Ya-Sin by Two Translators (Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry)', *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* Vol. 1, Issue 4 (Nov. 2018), pp. 18–34.

⁹⁷⁰ Arberry, 1955, pp. 7–8, 10.

seeking to demonstrate the superiority of western Christianity. It was only later, as we shall discuss in this Chapter, that translations attempted to be more scholarly and objective, but can be seen to be made within the prevailing 'Orientalist' attitude of the West to Muslim religion and culture. The act of translating the Qur'an from Arabic into another language was itself the subject of debate.

Contrary to the view expressed for example by Pickthall in 1930, that translating the revealed text was contrary to the teachings of Islamic theologians,⁹⁷¹ Bruce Lawrence argued in 2017 that 'Arabic to English is no longer a mere option; it is a pervasive reality', with the result that 'the Arabic Qur'an has been rendered into the English *Koran* multiple times'.⁹⁷² During the twentieth century, 60 translations into English had been published, followed by another 45 translations since 2000, showing an accelerating rate of publications to meet the world-wide demands for English versions. Pickthall's view of 1930 has been overtaken by a modern impetus for translation. Lawrence's view that 'it is no longer a question of whether but how, and how well, the Arabic Qur'an will become the Koran in English',⁹⁷³ avoids the obvious point that, from the Muslim perspective, there cannot be an 'English Qur'an' as the text in Arabic only is the received message, a teaching that raises another important question: How can a foreign language version be produced to meet the respect of the Islamic religious community? This will be an issue that we shall discuss later in this Chapter as well as the re-evaluation by Muslim translators and scholars of approaches to translating. Many translations of the Qur'an in English are available on-line, enabling readers to search for verses and to compare versions and perhaps serving the needs of different branches of Islam throughout the world.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷¹ Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), who wrote 'The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of old-fashioned Skeykhs and the view of the present writer', at p. xxiii in the Everyman Library edition of 1992.

⁹⁷² Bruce Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017), p. xxii.

⁹⁷³ Lawrence, 2017, p. xxiii.

⁹⁷⁴ Lawrence, 2107, p. 188. He lists Tanzil.net, altafsir.org, alim.org and islamawakened.com. Databases available at the time he published the book are: <http://www.qurandownload.com> and <http://www.englishtranslationsofthequran.com/translations.htm>, which lists seventy-one translations into English. This aspect is explored in Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islam Environments are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

In the context of all his translation works, it was inevitable that Arberry attempted to present his own translations of the Qur'an to accord with his own understanding and interpretation of the text.

6.1 Rationale for this Study

Arberry produced two translations of verses of the Qur'an, the first, published in 1953, was a selection of verses while his 1955 version was a translation of the whole of the text. The first version was intended to be an experiment in presenting the text in a new form, while the second translation published in 1955 built on the experience gained from the first. In this Section we shall consider how Arberry approached the task of translating and the issues arising from his decisions for translating.

His translations of the Qur'an⁹⁷⁵ are worthy of particular consideration in our study, firstly among all his works of translation those of the Qur'an have been widely acclaimed as his finest and most enduring *works*. Secondly his approach to the text provides the link between his work as translator and his place as an Oriental scholar. A third reason is that in the 1950s Arberry had moved from the approaches seen in his earlier works, and especially from the works he wrote during the period with the MOI, to showing a clearly sympathetic attitude towards the Qur'an and an appreciation of its messages and style, possibly reflecting his experiences of the war years. Above all, it is necessary to re-examine Arberry's translations in the light of recent re-evaluations by Muslim writers who place different perspectives on the style, linguistic accuracy and form of his versions.

This Chapter will examine the principles he held as important for translating the essential sacred text of Islam and in what way Arberry's translations of the Qur'an exemplified and endorsed Orientalism in the mid-twentieth century.

Attention to Arberry's translations of 1953 and 1955 is justified if we wish to place his translation in the context of the theories of translating we discussed in Chapter 5. Islam and the Qur'an informed and inspired many theological writings and debates, which themselves were the subject of most of Arberry's scholarly publications. His views on the issues arising in the translation of the text are

⁹⁷⁵ In this Chapter modern references to the Qur'an appear as 'Qur'an', but the spelling 'Koran' is employed in quotations when used in the original.

distillations of his approach to translation and merit examination in the context of the phenomenon of translating.

The Qur'an's crucial role in all Islamic thought and literature, and its influence on the lives of Muslims, gives rise to particular challenges. One consists of the technical, linguistic and philological demands made on the translator. The greater challenge lies in the translator understanding of the text's ethos and its place in Muslim culture, as well as the translator's ability to convey the inherent nature of a spiritual text through the medium of another language, which carried its own latent implications and signages of meaning. While the theories of translation discussed above, by their categorisation of texts for different purposes, validly apply to the translation of texts in general, we can apply them to the Qur'an as a product of translation, though, because of its nature and significance, it is in a unique class of translation.

The academic literature in the field of Qur'an translation is vast and growing, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a detailed account of the history, methodologies and various translations published since medieval times. This Chapter focusses on Arberry's translations of 1953 and 1955, placing them in the context of other contemporary English translations and will review critiques that have compared his translations with others. By examining his views and approaches on the translations, the aim is to assess the translations as representative of Orientalist attitudes prevalent during the period in which he worked. It will also consider the phenomenon of Higher Criticism, and Arberry's views on that subject. Discussion of his two translations, and critiques of them, follows.

6.2 *The Holy Koran: Background to the Translation and Translation Theories*

Arberry's *The Holy Koran (An Introduction with Selections)* was published in 1953 as the ninth work in the series *Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West*.⁹⁷⁶ In a similar way to the objectives of the *Wisdom of the East Series* that we saw in Chapter 3.3, the motivation behind the venture, according to the un-named series editor, was to fulfil a need felt by people everywhere, brought about by the devastating effect of two world wars for 'a deeper understanding and appreciation

⁹⁷⁶ A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran (An Introduction with Selections)* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1953).

of other peoples and their civilisations, especially their moral and spiritual achievements'. The editor also considered that 'we need a new vision of the universe' and what was required was 'clearer insight into the fundamentals of ethics and religion' without referring to any specific code of ethics or types of religion.⁹⁷⁷ The Series therefore was intended as a popular guide to educate a Western readership, not to provide spiritual texts for the purpose of worship.

This objective was meant to be achieved by placing 'the chief ethical and religious masterpieces of the world' within easy reach of the 'intelligent reader who is not an expert – the undergraduate, the ex-service man who is interested in the East, the adult student, the intelligent public generally'.⁹⁷⁸ The value of the Series, according to the editor, would be moralising and uplifting, helping its readership achieve a 'fullness and harmony' which would overcome their disillusion and fear, so that a renaissance of man's spirit would be brought about, the folly of their egoism and strife would become clear to them, and they would see that the 'universe is Spiritual and that men are the sons of God'.⁹⁷⁹ The translations of the religious texts in the Series⁹⁸⁰ inevitably reflect the editor's and the translators' own cultural values as well as conveying their understanding of those religions.

In terms of translation theories, these statements indicate the purpose and intentions of the commissioning editor as we discussed in the of the *Skopos* approach (see Chapter 5.1.5), by which the communicative purpose of the work took precedence over the start text. According to the *Skopos* theory the importance of the end-user would motivate the translator and inform the translation strategy in which the dominant purpose of the translation would be to enable the non-specialist reader to gain an understanding of the text under translation as instructed by the commissioner of the text. These elements will be demonstrated in the critiques later discussed.

In Arberry's translations, we can identify a number of features where the requirements of the series influence his style. First, his choices of language and

⁹⁷⁷ Arberry, Editor's General Introduction p. 5.

⁹⁷⁸ Arberry, Editor's General Introduction, p. 5.

⁹⁷⁹ Arberry, Editor's General Introduction, p. 7.

⁹⁸⁰ Other titles in the Series included 'Rūmī: Poet and Mystic', 'Saint Francis in Italian Painting', 'The Poetry and Career of Li Po', 'The Mystics of Spain', 'Songs of Zarathushtra', 'Akbar's Religious Thoughts', 'The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghāzali', 'Thoughts of the Prophets' and 'Plotinus'.

style are intended to convey to the reader the rhythms and rhyming patterns of the start text with the aim to allow the reader to appreciate the nature of the Qur'an. In part, this resulted in the concept of equivalence, in that the translation would attempt to convey the impression of the cadences and rhythms of the start text, and the organisation of the structure of the lines would mimic what Arberry perceived as the expression of the start text. The translation was therefore clearly an example of the 'Domesticising' product in Schleiermacher's terminology, by moving the reader towards the text, in a form that was familiar and assimilable, conforming to the reader's expectations. For the translator, as we have seen, it is always a question of seeking to achieve a balance, on the one hand, between the intrinsic nature of the start text, its meanings, vocabulary and rhythms and, on the other hand, finding the appropriate language, form and structures in the target text that will successfully convey the messages and nature of the start text to the target reader. Arberry did not aim to make the translated text subservient to the start text, as would be the case in a Foreignising approach, but attempted to create as close an impression of the start text as his command of the language and his translation techniques would allow.

In the post-war period, the West faced an Islamic world in which, according to Arberry in his Introduction to his 1953 translation, 'no man seeking to live in the same world as Islam, and to understand the affairs of Islam, can afford to regard lightly, or judge ignorantly, the Book that is called the Koran'.⁹⁸¹ His aim was to enable the Qur'an to be more widely known and 'better comprehended'⁹⁸² in the West, which would be achieved by his selections from the text. His choice of the selections and the way in which they were presented would be the means through which the text would be brought to Western readers.

Although not intended to be a scholarly work, Arberry's approach to the translation would reflect the Orientalist approach to the eastern cultures. Arberry intended to bring an Islamic text to a Western audience by creating an impression that was appropriate to the expectations of a Western readership. The work was the product of Arberry's experience as a translator and gained capital from his privileged position

⁹⁸¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 33.

⁹⁸² Arberry, 1953, p. 33.

as an academic, in a way described by Said as complying with the principal dogma of Orientalism that is 'rationale, developed, humane'.⁹⁸³

As will be discussed below, Arberry attempted to convey the meaning and the literary style of the start text by an innovative approach clearly absent from the earlier translations. Arberry tried to reconcile the dilemma posed to a translator between a Western approach of translating the text simply as a manuscript, and Muslim belief that its divine origin made it unique. Despite Arberry's empathy with the text and its messages, the outcome of his work was the inevitable product of his accumulated knowledge of Islamic texts, his experience of translating and of his position as an Oriental specialist in the Western tradition.

6.3 Arberry's Views of other Translations and 'Higher Criticism'

Arberry recognised of the near-impossible challenge facing any translator because of the technical difficulties involved in making 'the study and understanding of the Koran easier for the general English reader'⁹⁸⁴ whilst conveying the tenor of rhythms and cadences of the start text. He wrote that 'having spent many years in studying the problems of translation, I know all too well that, within my own experience, no piece of fine writing has ever been done full justice to in any translation'.⁹⁸⁵ Arberry intended a clean break from what he considered to be the inadequacy of previous translations of the Qur'an into English. He was critical of the 1843 translation of selections produced by Edward William Lane (later revised by Stanley Lane-Poole), describing it as being a 'rather austere pleasure' and disagreed with Rodwell's 1918 'bizarre arrangement' of the material.⁹⁸⁶ He described versions by Indian scholars as being 'for those of a more adventurous turn of mind', with whom he associated Pickthall's 1930 translation.

Marmaduke Pickthall, as we saw, asserted that the Qur'an could not be translated and that only a Muslim could attempt the task.⁹⁸⁷ Though he wrote of

⁹⁸³ Said, 2003, p. 300.

⁹⁸⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 11.

⁹⁸⁵ A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1953) p. 28.

⁹⁸⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 12; J. M. Rodwell, *The Koran Translated from the Arabic* (London, J. M. Dent, 1861, reprinted by Everyman's Library, 1918).

⁹⁸⁷ Pickthall, p. xxiii.

Pickthall as one whom he 'respected and loved',⁹⁸⁸ Arberry's rebuked Pickthall's views as 'naïve', 'fanatical ... unworthy of a serious enquirer', 'insulting' and 'invalid'.⁹⁸⁹ Pickthall gave no reason for his assertion, except that he joined with the 'belief of old-fashioned Sheykhs'.⁹⁹⁰

In the Muslim world views differed: Sadiq suggests that Muslim scholars like Sheikh Muṣṭafa Ṣabry, Imâm of the 'Uthmânî (Ottoman) Empire in his *The issue of Translating the Qur'an* and Sheikh Muhammad Az-Zurqânî in his *Manâhil Al-'Irfân fee 'Ulûm Al-Qur'an* embraced the view that it is untranslatable. But a contrary view was held by the Muslim scholar Sheikh Muhammad Mustafa Al-Marâghî, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, in his *A Study on Translating the Qur'an and its Verdicts*, who declared that translating the Qur'an was compulsory to convey its message to non-Arabic speaking peoples.⁹⁹¹ The differences of opinions between Pickthall and Arberry illustrate the evolving approach, from 1930s onwards, towards the question of translating. We shall discuss later modern approaches to Qur'an translation.

Arberry later revised his views and modified his criticism of Pickthall by making the obvious acknowledgement that in a general sense nothing could ever be properly translated from one language to another.⁹⁹² Arberry justified his vehement reaction to Pickthall by defending the integrity of translators who had 'laboured honestly in the field of Koranic interpretation' but omitted reasons for making his claim of the 'invalidity' of Pickthall's views.⁹⁹³ Arberry's reaction is surprisingly strong, not seen in his comments on the works of others.

Arberry considered that Pickthall gave insufficient importance to the appeal to the emotion of the spoken recital of the Qur'an, an issue on which Arberry was to place considerable emphasis in his version. J.-C. Mardrus, who published his French translation in 1926, was castigated by Arberry for the 'appalling banality' of his description of the essence of the Qur'an as being the personality of God, which fascinated even the most sceptical.⁹⁹⁴ Nevertheless Arberry acknowledged that it

⁹⁸⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 12.

⁹⁸⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

⁹⁹⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

⁹⁹¹ Saudi Sadiq, in *A Comparative Study of Four English Translations of Surat ad-Dukhân* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 51.

⁹⁹² Arberry, 1953, p. 28.

⁹⁹³ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

⁹⁹⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 14.

came close to expressing what he considered to be the substance of the text.⁹⁹⁵ Margoliouth, Professor of Arabic at Oxford, held the view that the Qur'an was not of divine origin, but the work of Muhammad, a contention that Arberry described as tantamount to the Prophet issuing a 'deliberate fraud'.⁹⁹⁶ Gibb, like Margoliouth, believed that Muhammad was the author who used the poetic power of the Arabic language to sway his listeners with his own words.⁹⁹⁷ Arberry considered that the common accusation made by many non-believers that reading the Qur'an was 'toilsome' was a criticism on the quality of translations rather than on the Qur'an itself.⁹⁹⁸

It is possible to identify elements underlying the views of scholars discussed in this Chapter who wrote in the middle of the twentieth century. Pickthall may be regarded as adopting the orthodox Muslim approaches to translations, based on the religious integrity of the text and his beliefs as a practising Muslim. Despite his disapproval, he published his English translation, albeit with the intention of providing the 'meaning of the Koran' for English Muslims.⁹⁹⁹ The views of Mardrus, Gibb and Margoliouth towards the Qur'an can be seen as representative of the attitudes of Western Orientalist scholarship towards classical texts, but they acknowledged the particular importance of the Qur'an as a seminal text. Arberry recognised that his task was to create a new way of treating the text of the Qur'an which encapsulated the philological demands of translating the words while conveying the essence of its emotional power, a challenge which he called 'no easy task'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Arberry did not confine his misgivings with regard to the translation of the Qur'an to the style of translating, but was critical of the ways in which scholars had dealt with the form of the text, an approach termed 'Higher Criticism.'

Higher Criticism, in brief, is the term used to describe the hermeneutical attempts by scholars to discover the actual historical circumstances in which sacred texts were composed, bringing to the fore what was thought to be the realities of life and events surrounding the authors and the writings. As we have seen, Arberry criticised this methodology in his 1953 translation of the Qur'an, writing that it was

⁹⁹⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. 14.

⁹⁹⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 15.

⁹⁹⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. 16.

⁹⁹⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 17.

⁹⁹⁹ Pickthall, p. xxiii.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. 17.

not intended for scholars, and, that, if they were shocked by his 'inattention to Higher Criticism they may be assured that I am not ignorant of the ingenious literature that has gathered around Koranic studies in the West'.¹⁰⁰¹ For example, in his review of the history of translating the Qur'an, the translations by Rodwell and Bell, direct products of Higher Criticism, were given detailed attention.¹⁰⁰²

Arberry's comment is revealing. His entire academic work, one may argue, was, in effect, the result of Higher Criticism, and his major works are themselves the products of following its principles and processes. His works are characterised by their attention to the hinterland of each work, an inquisitive examination of the text's authenticity, detailed treatment of the life and works of the authors, with translations replete with footnotes, and appendices.¹⁰⁰³ He took great care, within the scope of the materials available to him, to give as complete accounts of the manuscripts he translated and published as possible. It is only in the translation of the Qur'an that commentary is absent.

To better understand the relevance of Higher Criticism for a critical analysis of Arberry's work, it is necessary to consider the origins of the approach. The use of Higher Criticism in biblical studies can be traced from the mid-eighteenth century, especially to German theological faculties, and became popular in the rest of Europe and America during the nineteenth century. The distinction was drawn, at this point, between textual criticism and historical criticism – or Higher Criticism. Textual criticism (or Lower Criticism) is a scientific approach used to establish the 'exact' text as originally created by an author, by examining various surviving manuscripts of the text itself. Based on this, Higher Criticism aims to investigate the authenticity (or authority) of the text, the identity of the alleged author, questions of authorship, the possible sources of the texts as well as the circumstances surrounding its composition.

¹⁰⁰¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰² Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, pp. 10–12.

¹⁰⁰³ Nabokov demanded full footnotes for each translation (Vladimir Nabokov, 'Problems of Translation: Onegin in English', *Partisan Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1955), 496–512, reprinted at pp. 127–43 in Schulte and Biguenet, eds., *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Succinctly put, the difference between these critical approaches was attributed to the questions asked of the text.¹⁰⁰⁴ The New Testament had been the subject of textual study (Lower Criticism), the Old Testament became the focus of extensive study in the nineteenth century as to its composition, historical authenticity and the integrity of the literary forms of ancient biblical writings. Higher Criticism was described in 1888 as modern in origin,¹⁰⁰⁵ a process, whereby the 'truth' of literary texts and the attributes of the authorship could be determined.¹⁰⁰⁶

The principles of Higher Criticism as applied to Old Testament studies were subsequently appropriated with reference to the study of the Qur'an, on the assumption that the comparable approaches were as valid. A fundamental difference between the gathering together of texts by several authors and the single text of the Qur'an lay in the divine nature of the entirety of the Qur'an, a difference that engendered considerable criticism against the application of the approach, not least from Arberry. Another area of Arberry's criticism of Qur'an translations concerned the ways in which scholars had re-arranged the text to accord with their conceptions of how it should appear.

In his *The Koran Interpreted*, Arberry must have had Bell and Nöldeke in mind when he wrote a scathing criticism of the 'brilliant detectives' who, having 'watched with fascinated admiration how their masters played havoc with the traditional sacrosanctity of the Bible, threw themselves with brisk enthusiasm into the congenial task of demolishing the Koran'.¹⁰⁰⁷ His words warrant citation in full:

Much of their work was done on sound lines, and the boundaries of knowledge have been notably enlarged by their labours... But having cut to pieces the body of Allah's revelation our erudite sleuths have found themselves with a corpse on their hands, the spirit meanwhile eluding their preoccupied attention. So they have been apt to resort to the device of explaining away what they could not explain; crushed between their

¹⁰⁰⁴ 'The Term Higher Criticism', *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (April 1884), pp. 310–311 (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press).

¹⁰⁰⁵ 'The Higher Criticism in Its Theological Bearings', *The Old Testament Student* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press) Vol. 8, No. 2 (October 1888), p. 64.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Willis J. Beecher, 'What Higher Criticism Is Not', *The Biblical World* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press), Vol. 6, No. 5 (November 1895), pp. 351–355.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 10.

6. Translating the Qur'an

fumbling fingers, the gossamer wings of soaring inspiration have dissolved into powder.¹⁰⁰⁸

A translator who came under Arberry's particular criticism was Richard Bell described as 'the most extreme representative of this school of thought which once tyrannized over Koran studies in the West'¹⁰⁰⁹ for his complete rearrangement of the Surahs: 'he quite literally took the Koran to pieces and put it together again'¹⁰¹⁰ to create what he, Bell, judged to be the chronological sequence of their revelation.

Arberry opposed this 'excess of anatomical mincing', writing that:

I argue the unity of the Surah and the Koran; instead of offering the perplexed reader *disjecta membra* scattered indifferently over the dissecting table, I ask him to look again at the *cadaver* before it was carved up, and to imagine how it might appear when the lifeblood of inspiration flowed through its veins. I urge the view that an eternal composition, such as the Koran is, cannot be well understood if it is submitted to the test of only temporal criticism.¹⁰¹¹

He considered that the attempts by the 'logic of the schoolmen' would never reveal the mysteries expressed by the Prophet, since the Higher Critics were 'ambitious to measure the ocean of prophetic eloquence with the thimble of pedestrian analysis'.¹⁰¹² Their loss would be profound:

Though half a mortal lifetime was needed for the message to be received and communicated, the message itself, being of the eternal, is one message in eternity, however heterogeneous its temporal expression may appear to be. This, the mystic's approach is surely the right approach to the study of the Koran; it is an approach that leads, not to bewilderment and disgust – that is the prerogative of the Higher Critic – but to an ever deepening understanding, to a wonder and a joy that have no end.¹⁰¹³

In terms of literary merit and accessibility to the text, in a comparison between the translations by Bells of 1937 and Arberry of 1955, Arberry's version

¹⁰⁰⁸ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 11; Richard Bell, *The Quran Translated* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1937), reviewed by Arberry, *BSOAS UL*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1955, pp. 380–381.

¹⁰¹⁰ Arberry, 1955, Vol 1, p. 23.

¹⁰¹¹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 12.

¹⁰¹² Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 15.

¹⁰¹³ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 16.

was preferred: 'English-language readers should be glad that they have the literary efforts of A. J. Arberry especially, for it would be difficult to convince students of the public at large to read the Qur'ān if they had to contend with Bell's approach to the translations as their prime source'.¹⁰¹⁴

As we have discussed, Arberry seems to have been writing from a sense that he, personally, had found the means of transmitting the essence of the Qur'an because of his intimate knowledge of the text and his writing skills, which he perceived were superior to others in its closeness of the meaning of the text and to its literary style. The critiques considered above have shown those views to be open to question. In summary, therefore, my assessment is that Arberry's translation does not fall into the category of Higher Criticism; it was his conscious decision to exclude exegetical commentary since he intended to give predominance to the start text.

6.4 The Form of *The Holy Koran* of 1953

Arberry's 1953 book is not a translation of the Qur'an as a whole, but an anthology of selected passages.¹⁰¹⁵ The first part comprised passages that represented his understanding of what the Qur'an said about God, the second part gave examples of Muhammed's personal experiences, and the third was a compilation of the experiences of earlier prophets. The selections commenced with the *al-Fātiḥa*, the opening Surah (Chapter) of the Qur'an,¹⁰¹⁶ while the following selections were taken from various parts of the Qur'an. The work was presented in a way intended to enable the reader to appreciate what Arberry considered to be the Qur'an's principal messages, an objective consistent with the overall aim of the Series in which it was published. We will now assess his methods for making a new approach to the presentation of the chosen text.

¹⁰¹⁴ A. J. Rippin, 'Reading the Qur'an with Richard Bell', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 112, No. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1992), p. 643.

¹⁰¹⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. 29.

¹⁰¹⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 34.

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6.4.1 Start Material used for the Translation

Arberry did not indicate the exact manuscript material he used for the 1953 anthology nor did he refer to it in *The Koran Interpreted* of 1955. However in the introduction to the 1964 edition, he stated that he had used the text of the Qur'an in the form established by a panel headed by the Prophet's amanuensis, Zaid ibn Thābit, and authorised by the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (644–656).¹⁰¹⁷ In view of the closeness of time between the 1953 and 1955 versions, it can be argued that the same text was used for those works and later editions, including those of 1964 and 1996.

The derivation and nature of the start material were important for translating the text. Early transmission of the recital of the Qur'an amongst those close to the Prophet was oral, being reliant on the memory of those who learnt passages or the whole of the Qur'an. Written records were made of the remembered passages, firstly by crude records until it was possible to make as an exact a version as possible, recorded and authorised by the Prophet's immediate followers in the decades following his death in 632 CE. The qualities of the written record therefore assumed importance in recording the start texts in order to capture alliterations, cadence, rhyme and rhythm, all of which were integral in the message received by Muhammad and conveyed by him to his Companions.

The written start text therefore was of a different paradigm from a conventional written text composed directly by an author. Translating a unique text that represented the spoken word gives rise to challenges of translating not only the apparent or immediate meaning of the words, but also capturing its inherent or latent messages. His strategy for the translation needed to take into account how to handle adequately these complex issues.

6.4.2 'A Fresh Beginning'¹⁰¹⁸

Arberry intended to move away from the translations of the past by adopting a new approach. Previous translations had tended to regard the text as one piece of literature that could be translated in the same way as any other extended text. His

¹⁰¹⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, Oxford University Press, 1964 edition), p. ix.

¹⁰¹⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 18.

innovative approach was to make an analysis of the various components of the text, the ways in which words were used to express meaning by way of literary style as well as the mechanical issues of rhyme endings, rhythmic qualities, line shape and pattern of thought.

Arberry drew attention to the differences in the styles of expression between the revelations received during the period when Muhammad was in Mecca and those received after his move to Medina in 622 CE (*Hijra*). The earlier Surahs are characterised by their brevity and intensity of expression, while the later ones were extended and explanatory.¹⁰¹⁹ Unlike explanations of the form of the text in earlier translations, Arberry experimented by analysing the Meccan Surahs in accordance with the incidence of syllabic stress placed on words, used to accentuate their meaning, by which means a sense of urgency would be brought to the attention of listeners. He applied this technique to the shorter verses and, by contrast, to the later, longer verses. His provisional conclusion was that the greater frequency of unstressed syllables and fewer rhythms in the Medinan verses emphasised the contrast between different circumstances in which the revelations were received, and their nature and purpose. He accepted that his approach could be described as only tentative when he was preparing the book owing to the lack of knowledge of how Arabic was actually spoken at the time of the revelations with the result that his proposal had to be based on his understanding of contemporary Arabic language.¹⁰²⁰ It will be recalled that he had lived in Egypt in the early 1930s and that he had experience of the use spoken Arabic while at the MOI and BBC, as well as in his university duties.

In addition to his choice of words to reflect his interpretation of Qur'anic rhythms, he went further by making changes to the structure of the start text by 'varying the indentations of the line to suggest the patterns of thought and expression'.¹⁰²¹ He acknowledged the 'considerable subjective element' in his interpretation, and, as we will see in the later Section on Higher Criticism, he deprecated the re-ordering of the start text but felt his adjustments were justified as he was able

¹⁰¹⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. 20.

¹⁰²⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. 21.

¹⁰²¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 29.

to demonstrate 'in some instances for the first time something of the artistry of the Koranic rhetoric'.¹⁰²²

The second departure from traditional forms of translations was to consider the use of rhyme-endings as in the Surahs. There was a difference in nuance between the use of rhyme in poetry on the one hand and the use of rhyme in oral incantations, by which it was intended to make the content and meaning memorable. The Prophet Muhammad was reported to have objected to being regarded as a poet,¹⁰²³ not only because it suggested that he had composed the verses himself instead of their coming from a divine source,¹⁰²⁴ but also because it implied that the quality of the verses could be compared with other Arabic poetry. The presence of rhyme and assonance in the Surahs conveyed the message to the listener, as well as making the verses easier to commit to memory.

For the greater appreciation of the Qur'an, Arberry advised its readers to abandon thoughts of it being written like other familiar scriptures and to limit the amount read at any one time, allowing each extract to form an impression, encouraging them to meditate on the extract, so that the character of the whole text would unfold over successive readings.¹⁰²⁵ The 'double veil' of a foreign language and Islamic culture would always be present for readers of translations, but understanding might be gained by appreciating the significance of those differences.

Arberry admitted that that Qur'an was an 'inimitable miracle' that defied replication even in Arabic and presented considerable challenges for the translator.¹⁰²⁶ Drawing on his experience, he was of the opinion that 'it is true in a general sense that nothing can be adequately translated from one language into another, if it possesses the slightest artistic merit and emotional appeal'.¹⁰²⁷ He recognised that the Qur'an presented the translator with special challenges from its combination of writing of high quality, the juxtaposition of simple and complex expressions and the mixture of rhythm and rhymes.

¹⁰²² Arberry, 1953 p. 29.

¹⁰²³ Arberry, 1953, p. 25.

¹⁰²⁴ Qur'an, Surah 59, 'The Indubitable', verse 40, 'It is not the speech of a poet', translated by Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 298.

¹⁰²⁵ Arberry 1953, p. 26.

¹⁰²⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 27.

¹⁰²⁷ Arberry, 1953, p. 28.

The methodology for selecting the portions from the Qur'an has been discussed above. Arberry gave further elucidation of the divergent treatment given in the groups of his selections. In the first Section, on the nature of God, he attempted to indicate the rhythmic qualities of the text and suggested patterns of thought by varying the length of the lines. In the second Section, which expressed the experiences of the Prophet, he tried to reflect the 'rhetorical artistry' of the start text. The third Section recounted the experiences of older prophets who regarded in the Qur'an as being the forerunners of Muhammad, in ways that invoked memories of past religious events. Arberry aimed to present an objective account of the text and its meaning, despite his obvious enthusiasm for the work.

In the concluding parts of his Introduction, Arberry moved away from the mechanics of translation and considered the work as an entity. Apart from adjustments to the indentations of the lines of the Surahs as we saw earlier, he avoided the textual dismemberment of the text undertaken by some scholars, such as who Nöldeke re-arranged the Surahs according to the order, as he understood it, in which the revelations were received by the Prophet¹⁰²⁸ and Richard Bell who entirely re-constituted the Qur'an's text.¹⁰²⁹ His statement, that his aim was 'to show what the Koran means to the unquestioning soul of the believer, not what it suggests to the clinical mind of the infidel'¹⁰³⁰ raises the obvious question, how, as a non-Muslim, he could have known the soul of a faithful Muslim? How could his personal sympathy with the messages of the text could be fully expressed when he was embedded in his Western cultural background?

He could not use Pickthall's advantage of being an Islamic convert, but his personal attraction to the text required some accommodation with his western beliefs: he gives the impression that he wanted to identify himself with the conveyed messages whilst at the same time being bound by scholastic habits gathered throughout his academic career. He attempted to reconcile the differences between being an outsider to Islam and simultaneously empathetic to the religious sweep

¹⁰²⁸ Arberry, 1953, p. 18. Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorâns* (Leipzig, Dieterich, 1860).

¹⁰²⁹ Arberry, 1953, p. 19. Richard Bell, *The Qur'ân. Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1937–1939).

¹⁰³⁰ Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

conveyed by the Prophet, by claiming to be, in his own words, 'fair' in the way in which he translated the text, 'philologically but also imaginatively'.¹⁰³¹

That attempt led him into another dilemma: to achieve what he regarded as his 'fairness' to the Qur'an he was forced to make a mental assumption, contrary to his own conclusion, that the text was actually divinely inspired. He had previously criticised scholars who had doubted the divine origin of the text (*v. supra*). Therefore the only avenue he open to him in order to bridge his empathy with the Qur'an's message with his doubt as to its origins was to make the pragmatic assumption of its divine origin, an assumption caveated by a convenient rider – 'whatever that phrase may mean'.¹⁰³² He was prepared to admit that the Qur'an was a 'supernatural production' for the reason that the expressions in the text differed from others recorded sayings of the Prophet.¹⁰³³

Arberry claimed that the sole point of difference between himself and a Muslim lay in the fact that a Muslim believed the origin of the text was divine without the need for proof, but that he confessed that he was 'unable to say what might have been its origin, in spite of the psychologists, and I am equally content not to guess at it'.¹⁰³⁴ Had he made that admission one might imagine that the impact and importance of his translation might have surpassed that of Pickthall. Recent commentators who recognise the value of his translation have suggested modifying it in order to bring it closer to the messages of the start text.

The difficulty of Arberry's approach was that a single translation of the text, unsupported by any explanatory notes and comments was not sufficient to bridge the gap between the meaning of the start text and an appropriate translation in another language in order to make its meaning easily understandable to its readers. As we have seen in earlier discussions of his works, especially those aimed at a scholarly readership, Arberry invariably provided copious notes and commentaries to support his translations. However, as the translation of 1953 was aimed at a 'popular' market, the translated verses stood by themselves, unannotated. Arberry took the view that as the original text was unencumbered by explanatory material,

¹⁰³¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

¹⁰³² Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

¹⁰³³ Arberry, 1953, p. 32.

¹⁰³⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 32.

the translated version should follow likewise. The same approach was adopted for the 1955 translation of the whole of the Qur'an.

A different approach to achieving the best possible translation of the Qur'an, advocated by recent commentators and scholars, will be discussed in Section 6.8. In his attempt to bring new dimensions and dynamics into his translation, he made certain judgements, albeit based on his long scholarly experience, about the meaning of the text and its structure and, based on those judgements, created a target text that was a reflection of his individuality as an Oriental scholar. It was that approach that was seen developed further in the translation of the full text of the Qur'an.

6.5 'The Koran Interpreted' of 1955

Arberry had expressed caution in the way he had presented his approach in the 1953 work, writing that a careful and systematic examination of the text would be necessary before any firm conclusions could be reached.¹⁰³⁵ However, with sufficient public encouragement he stated that he would attempt a complete translation of the Qur'an. He invited his readers to inform him of their reactions to the methods he had used,¹⁰³⁶ and although no reference is made in the 1955 work to responses to his invitation, reviews published soon after the work appeared were favourable, as we will see in Section 6.6.

The Koran Interpreted, a two-volume translation of the whole of the Qur'an, remains one of Arberry's most important works of translation, although he acknowledged that any translation of the Qur'an would only be a 'poor copy of the glittering splendour of the start text'.¹⁰³⁷ Arberry adopted the title *The Koran Interpreted* to comply with the Islamic convention concerning the inviolability of the revealed text, recognising the criticism directed at the title *Holy Koran* of 1953. In the translation Arberry aimed to go back to the start text, 'to produce something which may be accepted as echoing however faintly the sublime rhetoric of the Arabic Koran'.¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³⁵ Arberry, 1953, p. 24.

¹⁰³⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 31.

¹⁰³⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, George Allen & Murray, 1955), Vol. I, p. 24.

¹⁰³⁸ Arberry, 1964, p. x.

Arberry justified his translation on the ground that 'no previous rendering has a serious attempt been made to imitate, however imperfectly, those rhetorical and rhythmical patterns which are the glory and the sublimity of the Koran'.¹⁰³⁹ In adopting this methodology, which he had experimented with in the 1953 selections, he claimed that 'I am breaking new ground here'.¹⁰⁴⁰ He aimed to give effect to the subtle cadences of the start text by choosing rhythms and rhymes appropriate to convey its meaning. By seeking to understand the Qur'an in this way, he hoped to avoid the drawbacks of 'a certain uniformity and dull monotony'¹⁰⁴¹ of earlier translations, so that the 'stumbling blocks in the way of our Western appreciation will vanish in the light of clearer understanding of the nature of the Muslim scriptures'.¹⁰⁴² He deliberately refused to provide any explanations or commentaries on the text because 'notes in plenty are to be found in other versions' and in his 'the radiant beauty of the start text is not clouded by such vexing interpolations'.¹⁰⁴³ This decision was questioned by recent critics as discussed in Section 6.7.

An obvious contradiction lay between the view that the text of the Qur'an was the product of divine revelation, complete, unique, and incapable of being analysed by man, and, on the other hand, the treatment of the text as another manuscript amongst the wide range of extant ancient documents, that could be manipulated and dissected to suit scholarly conceptions. Arberry was moved by the contents and the form of the text, he was appreciative of and sympathetic to its messages as he understood them. Nevertheless, the translation still represented a way of seeing Islam on Western terms. He, 'the infidel',¹⁰⁴⁴ attempted to put himself in a position of mastering not only the technical interpretation of language, but also its essential meaning. He was part of the tradition of Western Orientalists who sought to understand the writings of Muslim theologians from a distance – despite his knowledge and long familiarity with the writings of Islamic authors, he could be only an outsider having no connection with the communities and cultures from which the texts came.

In describing the style of his translation he later wrote that 'I have tried to compose clear and unmannered English, avoiding the "Biblical" style favoured by

¹⁰³⁹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴¹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁰⁴² Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴³ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

some of my predecessors'.¹⁰⁴⁵ I suggest that this statement is an indication of his Domesticising approach in that, by recognising the drawbacks of re-creating what might appear another English-type scripture, he aimed to provide a text that had attraction in its closeness to contemporary English language. Despite his intention to avoid the use 'scriptural' language, critics maintained that this continued to be a shortcoming of the work. An example of the Westernising approach is found in his discussion of translations of extracts from Surah 29, 'Mary',¹⁰⁴⁶ which convey the messages of the Nativity. It is noticeable that Arberry used Roman numerals throughout his versions, arguably an 'Orientalist' attitude towards the text.

He described the theme of the start text in the Qur'an as recalling 'some mediaeval (sic) Christian carol', writing that the resemblance 'is surely not fortuitous... but I make bold the claim that the point escapes notice in any other kind of translation'.¹⁰⁴⁷ The choice of the extract, concerning a Christian event familiar to his readers, itself shows a Westernising Orientalist bias, an attitude emphasised by the comparison of the Qur'anic theme with Christian liturgy, and compounded by claiming that in some way the two were connected. He claimed that his version made a connection with the Surah by means of his rhythmical patterns,¹⁰⁴⁸ by which he implied that he had some 'ownership' over the subject, recalling Said's description of Orientalism as 'dominating, restructuring and having authority',¹⁰⁴⁹ in this case over the primary text of Islam.

As to the form of the translated text, Arberry followed the sequence of the Surahs as they appeared in the start text but added his versions of the titles of the Surahs and his own system of numbering the verses. Regarding sentence structure, rhythmic and rhyming features, Arberry wrote 'I have striven to devise rhythmic patterns and sequence-groupings in correspondence with what the Arabic presents, paragraphing the grouped sequences as they seem to form the units of revelation'.¹⁰⁵⁰ This shows again that he places his interpretation on what he considered to be the correct forms of the start text.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Arberry, 1964, p. xii.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Al-Qur'an, Surah29, verses 16 ff.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1., p. 26.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Said, 2003, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Arberry, 1964, p. x.

His treatment of the rhythmical endings of lines followed his view of the particular function of rhyme in the Qur'an, differing from the functions of rhymes in poetry, by varying the patterns of rhymes according to the subject matter. He likened the overall effect of rhythms and rhymes to the themes, variations and repetitions to a piece of Western music, by using the words 'rhapsody' and '*leitmotifs*',¹⁰⁵¹ allusions that indicate a Western-Orientalist attitude towards the Qur'an. Despite his innovations, designed to convey the experience of reading the Qur'an as close as possible to his interpretation of the start text, his statements, and the choice of language indicates an overall Domesticising approach, by which the value of the translation to the target audience was the uppermost consideration.

A comparison between his translations of Surah 24, verse 41, and that found in the translation by Muhammad Taqî-ud-Dîn Al-Hilâlî and Muhammad Muhsin Khân, authorised by King Fahd Âl Sa'ûd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, shows the difference between Arberry's Domesticising approaches of 1953 and 1955 and that of a Foreignising style used in the authorised version. In 1953, Arberry created a version similar in the vocabulary and form that was used in English poetry which would have been familiar to his readers, to the extent of including reference to a verse of the (Christian) Bible.¹⁰⁵²

Firstly, in *The Holy Koran*, 1953:

Have you not seen how God is glorified
by all who dwell in the heavens and earth,
and the birds likewise as they spread their wings?
Every one of them, He knows of old
his worship and his magnificat;
for God knows all that they do,
To God belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth,
and to God is the returning.¹⁰⁵³

As we saw in discussing the 1953 translation, he aimed to provide a style of language that retained simplicity in vocabulary and expression for his readers.

¹⁰⁵¹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵² 'My soul doth magnify the Lord', *The Bible Authorised Version* (London, The British & Foreign Bible Society, 1954), Luke 1:46-55.

¹⁰⁵³ Arberry, 1953, p. 38.

Secondly, *The Koran Interpreted*, 1955:

Hast thou you not seen that whosoever is in the heavens
and in the earth extols God,
and the birds spreading their wings?
Each – He knows its prayer and its extolling; and God knows
the things they do.
To God belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth,
and to Him is the homecoming.¹⁰⁵⁴

He defended resorting to 'antique (sic) usage' only for the absolute necessity of avoiding confusion by using the second person singular and second person plural.¹⁰⁵⁵ We shall discuss below the criticism of his claim.

Both versions differ from the translation sanctioned by the King Fahd Complex in their aim at making the text understandable to English readers. Published around forty years after Arberry's translation, the authorised¹⁰⁵⁶ version aims, as far as possible, to create the nature of the start text. Its characteristics are its choice of syntax and vocabulary intended to differentiate it from ordinary prose so drawing attention to the uniqueness of the start text.

Version by Al-Hilâlî and Khân of 1997:

See you not (O Muhammad) that Allâh, He who it is Whom glorify whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings outspread (in their flight)? Of each one He (Allâh) knows indeed his *Salât* (prayer) and his glorification, [or everyone knows his *Salât* (prayer) and his glorification]; and Allâh is All-Aware of what they do.¹⁰⁵⁷

This example clearly highlights the differences between a Domesticising and Foreignising approach, between a style aimed for the target readership and one which endeavours to convey the authenticity of the start text. The former is a version, I suggest, created for the convenience of the reader while the latter may approximate to what a Muslim worshipper or a student of Islam or of religious studies might require.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 52.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Arberry, 1964, p. xii.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Muhammad Taqî-ud-Dîn Al-Hilâlî and Muhammad Muhsin Khân, *Translation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an* (Medina, King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1997).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Muhammad Taqî-ud-Dîn Al-Hilâlî and Muhammad Muhsin Khân, 1997), Surah 24, verse 41.

6.5.1 Arberry and the translation by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali.

In his Preface, Arberry traced the history of translations.¹⁰⁵⁸ In 1649, Alexander Ross published an English translation of André du Ryder's 1647 French version of the Qur'an, which Ross described as 'Newly Englished',¹⁰⁵⁹ referring to the nature of the translation which is exemplary in its simplicity, avoiding the scholastic theorising of later centuries. After Ross, it was George Sale's translation, published in 1734, which became the primary means of accessing the Qur'an. His version was used until the late nineteenth century when Qur'anic and Biblical studies became subject to the attentions of those who promulgated the ideas of Higher Criticism, as discussed previously. The early translations became entwined with considerations of the provenance of the Qur'an in its wider aspects, as distinguished from the choice and appropriateness of the target language. The application of the ideas of Higher Criticism resulted in the sequence of the Surahs being altered according to the views of the translators, as we saw in the cases of Nöldeke, Rodwell and Bell.

Arberry refers to the rapid growth since 1900 in the study and interpretation of the Qur'an, from which a number of new English versions had appeared, including 'some by scholars whose mother-tongue was other than English', versions which he considered 'interesting and merit study'.¹⁰⁶⁰ He did not name those versions, but chose to limit his review to the newer translations, notably by Pickthall (1930), because he was a convert to Islam, and by Bell (1937), presumably because of his deconstruction of the form of the Qur'an and its re-assembly according to what he, Bell, considered to be the chronological sequence of the revelations. In a further reference to other versions, Arberry stated that they had been omitted because 'their examination would add very little to the discussion'.¹⁰⁶¹

No reference to the 1934 translation by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali¹⁰⁶² can be found in either volume of Arberry's 1955 translation, although he was aware of it: In the bibliography of his *'The Holy Koran'* (1953), he lists *The Holy Qur-ān. Arabic text*

¹⁰⁵⁸ Arberry, 1955, Vol.1, pp. 7–24.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶¹ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁰⁶² Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Lahore, Shaik Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1934; reprint: Ware, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature 2000).

with an English translation and commentary by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali. 2 vols. Lahore, 1937–8 in the section for Arab texts with English translations.¹⁰⁶³ Although no direct reference is made to the work or its author, an oblique reference to it may be found in his advice to readers of 'a more adventurous turn of mind' who might ask for an English translation of the Qur'an in 'one of the several versions made by Indian scholars'.¹⁰⁶⁴

Neglecting to engage with Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's work seems at first sight to be a serious omission especially when considering his public profile in Muslim affairs and the popularity of his translation. He was prominent in the management of the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking and in the development of the East London Mosque of which he and Hasan Suhrawardy were members of its Board of Trustees and Executive Committee.¹⁰⁶⁵ Arberry had close connections with Hasan Suhrawardy, as he was invited to present the Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy Lectures for 1942.¹⁰⁶⁶ Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, like Arberry, was engaged in promoting the British Empire as well as providing propaganda in favour of Britain during the Second World War.¹⁰⁶⁷ Arberry undoubtedly was aware of Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali as they must have moved in the same circles, and he certainly was aware of the popularity of his translation, especially when he was preparing his own translations of 1953 and 1955.

According to Ansari, the translation by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali 'commanded great respect'.¹⁰⁶⁸ In 2012, he described it as 'remaining, fifty and more years after his death, one of the two most widely used English versions (the other being the

¹⁰⁶³ Arberry, 1953, p. 138.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Humayun Ansari (ed.), *The Making of the East London Mosque, 1910–1951. Minutes of the London Mosque Fund and East London Mosque Trust Ltd (a heavily annotated edition of the 1910–1951 Minutes of the London Mosque Fund and East London Mosque Trust Ltd, with a detailed research-based introduction)* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011). In 1940, three houses were purchased on Commercial Road in East London and converted into a Mosque. It was opened on Friday, 1st August 1941 when Lt. Col. Sir Hussain Suhrawardy, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the London Mosque Fund, welcomed worshippers into the newly established East London Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre. The first prayer was led by the then Ambassador for Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Shaikh Hafiz Wahab. In 1948, the London Mosque Fund became the East London Mosque Trust. Among Arberry's papers is a poster published in 1943 by the Jamiat-ul-Muslmin opposing the proposal of the Board of Trustees of the East London Mosque, which included the names of Sir Hasan Suhrawardy and Abdullah Yusuf Ali, to cancel its appointment for managing the ceremonies of the Mosque (Arberry's Papers, Box 4, Cambridge University Library).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sūfism* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1942).

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ansari, Humayun, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London, Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 103.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ansari, p. 46.

translation by Marmaduke Pickthall').¹⁰⁶⁹ Bruce Lawrence points out that the translations by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali and Pickthall 'impacted millions of *Koran* readers', adding that 'while no other translator enjoyed their pre-eminence... of the two [Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali] has had the greater respect', his version having over 200 editions, considerably more than Pickthall's.¹⁰⁷⁰ However, Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's version, with its extensive commentary, was also considered to suffer from certain deficiencies: Lawrence refers to the 'bloated rendition... at once unconventional and hybrid', replete with references to works of English literature,¹⁰⁷¹ which did not command the respect of students of the Qur'an. Mohammad Iqbal, a close associate of Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, 'never offered a word extolling the new translation' and Pickthall was 'openly disdainful', deriding the translation as 'careless and inexact'.¹⁰⁷² Lawrence suggests that Pickthall was possibly attempting to protect his own version against a rival and that he might 'actually have believed that a stand-alone English translation was best advanced by one whose native language was English'.¹⁰⁷³

As we have seen, Arberry was a punctilious scholar who took considerable pains to produce what he considered to be accurate translations, despite sometimes making certain errors in his translating, as we will discuss later. He respected the views of Pickthall, whom he 'admired',¹⁰⁷⁴ and recognised Iqbal's intellectual approach in his writings,¹⁰⁷⁵ Both had adopted styles more to Arberry's liking than Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's 'intensely personal engagement' with the text of the Qur'an.¹⁰⁷⁶ There is no direct evidence that Arberry shared Pickthall's views on the native language of the translator; however, the view might be taken that there remains a suspicion of an unconscious element, tantamount to a latent racism, as suggested by the works of Renan, Le Bon and Spengler that we discussed in Chapter 3.3. Arberry's treatment of Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali was based on his and his fellow Orientalists' belief in their superior knowledge and the soundness of their inter-

¹⁰⁶⁹ Khizar Humayun Ansari, *Ali, Abdullah Yusuf (1872–1953)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2017), accessed online 16/05/2020 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/refodnb/95416>.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Lawrence, Bruce, *The Koran in English* (Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2017), p. 64.

¹⁰⁷¹ Lawrence, p. 62.

¹⁰⁷² Lawrence p. 63.

¹⁰⁷³ Lawrence, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Arberry, 1953, p. 12

¹⁰⁷⁵ Arberry, *The Mysteries of Selflessness*, 1953, p. xii

¹⁰⁷⁶ Lawrence, p. 63.

pretation of Arabic texts which, in this case, may have led to a cursory and insufficient consideration of Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's work. Arberry was probably one of those who 'did not embrace his magnum opus with the same enthusiasm as the larger English-reading Muslims public.'¹⁰⁷⁷

A more benign view of the omissions might be that Arberry showed scholarly disinterestedness, concerned only with the quality of the translation, not the translator's identity. It is arguable that Arberry chose not to engage with Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's version, not because of a belief that he was not sufficiently competent to make an English translation, after all Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali had received the best of English education, was 'ineradicably Anglophile' and had 'made enormous efforts to ingratiate himself with the establishment'.¹⁰⁷⁸ Even if Arberry did not consider his translation to be in the style and form he felt appropriate for the Qur'an, it would have been fairer to Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's version to have given it due consideration.

6.6 The Reception of Arberry's Translation

In this Section, we will consider evolving views of the work which will be related to the aim of the thesis in order to show how a critical re-evaluation of Arberry's works can contribute to our understanding of Oriental studies in the mid-twentieth century and to the aim of this Chapter in which we investigate how his attitudes towards Orientalism were revealed by his translations.

It is possible to identify a distinct change in the way the translation was received between views expressed at the time of publication, generally in the West and considering the book as an individual study of literature standing on its own, and more recent views by Muslim scholars who have applied a more detailed approach to the translation. Despite criticisms, the recent critiques retain some admiration of his translation.

The Koran Interpreted has been recognised as a leading English translation of the revealed work and has been frequently referenced since its publication. A 1958 review of the translation stated that Arberry brought 'a musical ear, poetic diction, and a touch of mysticism – all of which combine with the above to produce

¹⁰⁷⁷ Lawrence, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ansari, p. 102.

an interpretation of the Qur'an that is genuine and artistic to a degree unattainable by previous translators'.¹⁰⁷⁹ Laleh Bakhtiar made frequent use of extracts from Arberry's translation in her book *Sufi: Expressions of the Mystic Quest*.¹⁰⁸⁰ The continuing value of and reliance upon Arberry's translation was shown by Robert Irwin who described *The Koran Interpreted* as 'an outstanding achievement'¹⁰⁸¹ and chose Arberry's version of the Qur'an in his *Ibn KHaldūn*.¹⁰⁸²

Wilfred Cantwell Smith described it as 'certainly the most beautiful English version, and among those by non-Muslim translators the one that comes closest to conveying the impression made on Muslims by the start text'.¹⁰⁸³ Khaleel Mohammed wrote of Arberry that he

rendered the Qur'an into understandable English and separated text from tradition. The translation is without prejudice and is probably the best around. The Arberry version has earned the admiration of intellectuals worldwide, and having been reprinted several times, remains the reference of choice for most academics. It seems destined to maintain that position for the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁸⁴

Bruce Lawrence, in 2017, acknowledged Arberry as 'one of the most prolific Persian and Arabic translator of the mid-twentieth century', and 'an esteemed academic and prolific translator'.¹⁰⁸⁵ He wrote that the quality of the translation made is 'one of the best selling and most popular English renditions of the Noble Book'.¹⁰⁸⁶ As has been shown above, the use of online websites makes the book widely available to Internet users across the world. Lawrence identified Arberry's translation as being among the established translations included in the website of *Altafsir.org*, founded by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in

¹⁰⁷⁹ Nabia Abbott, 'Review of Koran Interpreted 1955', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol 17, No. 1, (January 1958), pp. 77- 78.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Laleh Bakhtiar, *Sufi Expressions of the Mystic Quest* (New York, Thames & Hudson 1976), pp. 9, 20, 27 and 28.

¹⁰⁸¹ Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing* (London, Penguin Books, 2007), p. 244.

¹⁰⁸² Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2018), p. xv. in which he wrote: 'Quotations from the Qur'an, if not reproduced from Rosenthal's translation of the *Muqaddima*, are taken from A. J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols. (London, 1955)'.

¹⁰⁸³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996 re-print).

¹⁰⁸⁴ Khaleel Mohammed, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 58-71.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Bruce Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 107-108.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Lawrence, p. 85.

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Amman, Jordan.¹⁰⁸⁷ According to the website that lists English translations of the Qur'an, Arberry's translation of 1955 'remains the scholarly standard for translations, and is widely used by academics'.¹⁰⁸⁸

A 2017 survey on Arberry's Qur'an translations,¹⁰⁸⁹ conducted by Muhamad Sultan Shah, Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Lahore, reveals that positive views were expressed by authors both in the East and the West, listing Devenny (1956),¹⁰⁹⁰ Katsh (1958),¹⁰⁹¹ Abbott (1958),¹⁰⁹² Rosenthal (1970), who paid particular importance to the Introduction of the work,¹⁰⁹³ Kidwai (1987),¹⁰⁹⁴ Falahi (1998),¹⁰⁹⁵ Adams (2000),¹⁰⁹⁶ Nawwab (2000),¹⁰⁹⁷ Christmann (2002),¹⁰⁹⁸ to which we may add Khaleel Mohammed (2005) discussed above. A trend of assessing Arberry's works has emerged in the last ten years in the re-evaluations of the translations by commentators from Muslim countries. They have applied detailed analytical scrutiny to his translations from which positive aspects of the work as well as its shortcomings have been identified, which we shall discuss in the following part of this Chapter.

Positive aspects of the translation were recognised by Sultan Shah who credited the translation with Arberry's 'careful rendering' of the Muslim scripture giving examples of acceptable translations and attention to the spelling of the name of the Prophet.¹⁰⁹⁹ A detailed analysis of Arberry's translation was published in 2018

¹⁰⁸⁷ Lawrence, p. 91. Altafsir.org accessed 05/06/2020.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Qur'an: Thematic English Translation* 2015, www.wikizero.com/Quran_translations.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Muhammad Sultan Shah, 'Arthur John Arberry as an Interpreter of the Holy Qur'an', in *Abha'th* (The American University of Beirut), Vol. 2, No. 6 (April/June 2017), pp. 14–16.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Joseph A. Devenny, 'The Koran Interpreted (Book Review)', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 17 (1956), pp. 440–441.

¹⁰⁹¹ Abraham I. Katsh, 'The Koran Interpreted (Book Review)', *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 20 (1958), p. 237.

¹⁰⁹² Nabia Abbott, Book Review, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 1958), p. 78.

¹⁰⁹³ E.I. J. Rosenthal, 'Arthur J. Arberry, A Tribute', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December 1970), p. 301.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Abdur Raheem Kidwai, 'A Survey of English Translations of the Qur'an', *The Muslim World Book Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Summer 1987. Also available at: www.islam101.com/quran/ansAnalysis.htm

¹⁰⁹⁵ Alam Towqueer Falahi, *British Studies in the Qur'an*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Charles J. Adams, *Qur'an in The Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York, Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 12, p. 175.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Isma'il Ibrahim Nawwab, 'Matter of Love: Muhammad Asad and Islam', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 39, No 2 (2000), p. 183.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Andreas Christmann, 'The Noble Qur'an; A New Rendering of its Meaning', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2002), p. 372.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sultan Shah, pp. 4, 5.

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in an article by Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik.¹¹⁰⁰ The article suggests that it was written in the context of a symposium held by the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an with the purpose of reviewing translations of the Qur'an with a view of analysing how best to defend Islamic beliefs.¹¹⁰¹

Abdur Raheem Kidwai (1956–) described Arberry in the following terms: 'a renowned Orientalist and Professor of Arabic at the Universities of London and Cambridge, has been, so far, the latest non-Muslim translator of the Qur'an. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (London, 1957) no doubt stands out above the other English renderings by non-Muslims in terms of both its approach and quality'. Despite this positive testimonial, Kidwai still found errors in the translation.¹¹⁰²

Siddeik, the former Head of the English Department of the Al-Zeem Al-Azhri University in Khartoum, Sudan, gave a detailed list of examples of what he described as 'bright' aspects of the translation.¹¹⁰³ He regarded Arberry's avoidance of using explanatory comments or detailed annotations as correct, as they did not appear in the Qur'an which 'indicated his integrity' and his wish to convey the meaning 'without deficiency or increment'.¹¹⁰⁴ He provided examples of 'models of accuracy' in Arberry's translation and in conveying the meaning of some Qur'anic terms and meaning.¹¹⁰⁵ Arberry's efforts to use 'high literary language' to 'combine precision and clarity of style' in order to create a 'fine translation' were also recognised.¹¹⁰⁶ Siddeik applauded the translation's freedom from 'distortion of Islam or interpretation that would challenge the Holy Qur'an or abuse the person of the Prophet, and, to avoid 'misperception', that the word 'God' was chosen instead of 'Allah'.¹¹⁰⁷ However, Siddeik then turned to what he regarded as the translation's

¹¹⁰⁰ Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik, 'A Critical Reading of A. J. Arberry's Translation of the Meaning of the Holy Quran (Koran Interpreted)', *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, Vol. 6, Issue 5 (May 2018), pp. 46–62.

¹¹⁰¹ Siddeik, p. 46.

¹¹⁰² Kidwai, 1987 (no page numbers given in digital edition). Examples of the 'mistakes of omission and mistranslation' given by Kidwai were found in Al Imran 111:43, Nisa IV: 72,147 and 157, Ma'ida V:55 and 71, An'am VI:20, 105, A'raf VIII: 157, 158 and 199, Anfal VIII:17, 29, 41, 59, Yunus X:88, Hud XI:30 and 46, and Yusuf XII:61.

¹¹⁰³ Siddeik, p. 49.

¹¹⁰⁴ Siddeik, p. 49.

¹¹⁰⁵ Siddeik, p. 49.

¹¹⁰⁶ Siddeik, p. 50.

¹¹⁰⁷ Siddeik, p. 52.

less positive aspects which were similar to other critiques which we shall now consider in groups of perceived shortcomings.

6.7 Critical re-evaluations of *The Koran Interpreted*.

As we saw above, Arberry claimed that the outstanding feature of his translations of 1953 and 1955 was that he was 'breaking new ground' by his rendering of 'rhetorical and rhythmical patterns'¹¹⁰⁸ of the Qur'an as he saw them. Siddeik quoted Arberry: 'I have striven to devise the rhythmic patterns and sequence-groupings in correspondence with what the Arabic presents, paragraphing the grouped sequences as they seem to form original units of revelation'.¹¹⁰⁹ According to Siddeik:

There is no doubt that this statement was one of Arberry's fallacies and represented a major imbalance in his understanding, because he mistakenly believed in his ability to simulate the rhythm of the sound in the Qur'anic verse, when he imagined that he could write a translation that seemed to be in harmony, to make the Qur'an as if it were revealed in English.¹¹¹⁰

The comment is revealing as it goes to the heart of a Westernising and Orientalist approach for a number of reasons. Arberry, a non-Muslim, assumed that he could validly interpret the dynamics underlying the surface of the start text. He identified what he saw as the 'patterns of thoughts and expressions' and, to assist in the understanding of the text, created a new structure for the verses. Siddeik's valid observation, that the translation was 'as if it were revealed in English', points to the intention of the translation, a Domesticising version of the Qur'an aimed to appeal to a Western target readership.

Arberry applied poetic structures from English literature in his version to deduce the patterns of the text, which he identified as 'always the iambic and the dactyl, with an occasional anapaest'.¹¹¹¹ Siddeik used an example from the translation (Surah 51, 'The Clatterer'¹¹¹²) to illustrate his view that the rhythm used in the translated verse did not match the Qur'anic text so that Arberry 'could not apply his

¹¹⁰⁸ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 25.

¹¹⁰⁹ Arberry, 1964, p. x.

¹¹¹⁰ Siddeik, p. 52.

¹¹¹¹ Arberry, 1953, p. 24

¹¹¹² Arberry, 1953, p. 56.

theory to the rhythm of the sound of his translation of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an'.¹¹¹³ Siddeik attributes the failure to properly reproduce the underlying nature of the Qur'an through its compositional structures and poetic senses as 'proof that the Qur'an as a Book of God' putting its imitation 'beyond the limited abilities of human beings'.¹¹¹⁴ While respecting the nature of the Qur'an, Arberry's version appears to create a literary text which, by its use of figures of speech and syntax, conforms to the expectations of the Orientalist sphere of knowledge.

Siddeik was not the first to criticise that approach. Shah quoted Abdel Moneim Hosni who had stated in more restrained terms than those of Siddeik, that 'Arberry's attempt to reproduce the sublime rhetoric of the original or to devise varied rhythms or rhythmic patterns to suit changes in subject matter or tone in the original had not always been successful'.¹¹¹⁵ In attempting to create his own version of the rhythms, Arberry omitted certain words from his translation, as Hosni demonstrated with reference to verses of Surah 51(The Scatterers), from which Arberry left out the phrase 'By (Allâh's) command' in order to achieve his parsing of his lines.¹¹¹⁶ Omission of words to achieve his aims was criticised by others as we shall discuss below.

The critiques of this aspect of the translation below fall into groups which we shall discuss in the next part of this Chapter. The first consists of those following the approach by Shah and Siddeik who analyse the translation from the standpoint of Qur'anic study by Muslim scholars. The second group, which develops religious criticism by comparing different translations, comprise Ayaz Afsar and Muhammad Azmat, Shah and Sadiq. Third, the critique by Sehrish Islam in which she applies Western translation theories to the Islamic analysis. In many cases the critiques inevitably overlap. Khaleel Mohammed's criticism of English translations and the critiques made of them was made from an entirely different basis: that the understanding of Islamic theologians, and hence reviewers who followed them, did not give sufficient attention to the Judeo-Christian influences on the original texts. We may also note that earlier, in Chapter 5, we discussed the critique of the linguistic

¹¹¹³ Siddeik, p. 53.

¹¹¹⁴ Siddeik, p. 53.

¹¹¹⁵ Abdel Moneim Hosni, 'On Translating the Qur'an: An Introductory Essay', *Journal of the King Saud University*, Vol. 2, Arts (2) 1990, p. 126, quoted in Shah, p. 12.

¹¹¹⁶ Shah, p. 13. The verse is found in Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 237. I have taken the phrase 'By (Allâh's) command' from *The Noble Qur'an*, approved by the King Fahd Complex for the printing of the Holy Qur'an. Arberry did not use the word Allâh but would have used 'God' had he included the phrase.

features in Arberry's translation practices in El-Masry's critique of Arberry's translation of the Mu'allaqāt (Seven Odes).

Linguistic and compositional shortcomings in Arberry's version listed in the critiques include misunderstanding semantic meanings of words, of which Siddeik refers to fifteen examples,¹¹¹⁷ to grammatical errors,¹¹¹⁸ to the repetition of words,¹¹¹⁹ and to the use of 'ancient words and Biblical terms'.¹¹²⁰ As we have seen, Arberry had sought to 'compose clear and unmannered English, avoiding the "Biblical" style' except when he used the 'antique usage' of the second person singular to distinguish it from the plural.¹¹²¹ In Siddeik's view the text used a mixture of 'modern and old language... to add fluency and privacy... to make the text look different' which, for him, 'constituted a major weakness' in the translation.¹¹²² Use of scriptural language was also criticised by Saudi Sadiq who wrote 'the language he uses is apparently affected by Biblical English in many aspects'.¹¹²³ Siddeik added examples by which he stated that Arberry 'was confused in the incorrect use of some of the Qur'anic words like other Orientalists who studied Arabic'.¹¹²⁴

Compositional shortcomings were claimed by the critics, including errors in naming the Surahs and in the meanings of those names. According to Siddeik, 'one of the most striking observations on the Arberry translation is his lack of understanding of the intended meaning of the names of the Surahs'.¹¹²⁵ As the Surahs refer to proper nouns not to abstract ideas, Siddeik suggested that the definite article should have been used throughout.¹¹²⁶ Shah added to the criticism regarding the use of names by providing a comparison between fifteen Surahs¹¹²⁷ in the versions by Arberry, Pickthall¹¹²⁸ and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934),¹¹²⁹ the last

¹¹¹⁷ Siddeik, pp. 53–54.

¹¹¹⁸ Siddeik, p. 54.

¹¹¹⁹ Siddeik, p. 57.

¹¹²⁰ Siddeik, p. 57.

¹¹²¹ Arberry, 1962, p. xii.

¹¹²² Siddeik, p. 57.

¹¹²³ Saudi Sadiq, *A Comparative Study of Four English Translations of Sûrat Ad-Dukhân on a Semantic Level* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 8. The book was based on his M.A. thesis submitted to the English Department of Minia University in 2007.

¹¹²⁴ Siddeik, p. 57.

¹¹²⁵ Siddeik, p. 58.

¹¹²⁶ Siddeik, p. 58.

¹¹²⁷ Shah, pp. 6, 7.

¹¹²⁸ Pickthall, 1930.

¹¹²⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Lahore, 1934, re-printed Ware, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 2000).

two being Muslim translators, though only the version of the latter had been approved by the King Fahd Complex.¹¹³⁰ Siddeik and Shah based their criticisms on their views of linguistic accuracy, but Arberry's aim was to provide a text understandable and accessible to English readers. This was the reason for his choice of form for his version.

The method of grouping and numbering of the verses was seen by Shah as a drawback as Arberry numbered the verses in series of fives, rather than numbering each verse as found in the start text.¹¹³¹ Although, as we saw, Arberry strongly criticised what he called 'anatomical mincing'¹¹³² conducted by translators who radically re-arranged the sequence of the start text, his aim throughout was to aid the English reader. Understanding the meaning of the text took precedence over absolute adherence to forms.

Scholarly analyses of the translation were developed in the work of Afsar and Azmat.¹¹³³ In their view, 'the Qur'anic language is *sui generis* and does not lend to easy translation',¹¹³⁴ with the result that 'every translation reflects a specific underlying ideology'.¹¹³⁵ They aimed to provide a 'reductionist, linguistic analysis of four selected verses from *Sūrah Yūsuf* in light of lexical, syntactical and punctuation choices from ten popular translations of the Qur'an'.¹¹³⁶ The versions selected were those by Muhammad Ali (1917), Pickthall (1930), Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali (1934), Arberry (1955), Asad (1980), Irving (1985), Mawdūdi (1988), al-Hilali and Khan (1994), Bewley and Bewley (1999) and Khan (2002). In their view, the versions 'represented different leanings and ideologies, because they represent different sensibilities of the era spread over the whole [twentieth] century [encompassing] specific historical contexts, aims and personal backgrounds'.¹¹³⁷ Arberry was described as 'a non-Muslim, Orientalist and Professor of Arabic at the Universities of London and

¹¹³⁰ Ayaz Afsar and Muhammad Azmat, 'From the Words of Allah to the Words of Men: The Qur'ān and the Poetics of Translation', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Summer 2012), p. 196. The article was published by the Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. The substance of the material in the article was the subject of their presentation to the sixth International Postgraduate Conference in Translation and Interpreting held in October 2010 at the University of Manchester.

¹¹³¹ Shah, p. 6.

¹¹³² Arberry, 1955, Vol. 2, p. 12

¹¹³³ Afsar and Azmat, 2012, fn. 132, *v. supra*.

¹¹³⁴ Afsar and Azmat, p. 193.

¹¹³⁵ Afsar and Azmat, p. 194.

¹¹³⁶ Afsar and Azmat, p. 195.

¹¹³⁷ Afsar and Azmat, p. 196.

Cambridge'.¹¹³⁸ As a basis for their analysis they note that the concepts associated with translation 'gained an objective and scientific foundation after the second half of the twentieth century'¹¹³⁹ as we saw in the discussion of translation theories in the first part of this Chapter.

The critics' conclusions on Arberry's translation can be summarised as follows:¹¹⁴⁰ all wording of the start text was seen as capable of translation with no text exempt from translation by reason of its religious status; he assumed a relation of dominance over the text which gave him the choice between literal or other versions in the target text. The translation followed the wording of the Bible, for example by using proper names, such as 'Joseph' for Yūsuf (for instance in Surah 12), and in the use of a tonality of Biblical language so that the Surah is treated as though a component of the Old Testament or the New Testament. Afsar and Azmat found that additional specific meanings were added to or omitted from the words of the start text, as well as advancing the words of start text beyond their recognised meanings in the interest of narrative flow. The translation added elements of certainty not found in the start text and by changes in the lexical meaning Arberry 'makes free use of language with consideration for the demand of the situation rather than the holy status of the Qur'an'.¹¹⁴¹ In the Surah under comparison, Arberry used particular words to emphasise his understanding – 'solicited' and 'take me' for *rāwadat* in Surah 12 otherwise rendered, for example by Pickthall, as 'asked of him an evil act' – thereby moving the sense of the start text to meet his desired target language rather than having consideration for 'the holy status of the Qur'an'.¹¹⁴² Arberry omitted any explanations or interpolations as they did not appear in the start text.

Their overall assessment was that the nine translations reflected the ideologies of the communities of the translators. Their treatment of the Qur'an was as a text like any other and capable of modification with the use of Biblical diction, archaic words and uncommon grammatical syntax. In their approaches towards translation, differences were seen in the relatively high or low degree of literal translation and

¹¹³⁸ Afsar and Azmat, p. 196.

¹¹³⁹ Afsar and Azmat, p. 198.

¹¹⁴⁰ Afsar and Azmat, pp. 204–209.

¹¹⁴¹ Afsar and Azmat, p. 207.

¹¹⁴² Afsar and Azmat, p. 207.

the level of reader-friendliness, for example by providing explanations of the contents and the narrative flow.

The value of Afsar and Azmat's research lies in its scholarly approach and rigorous examination of the translations based on the authors' intimate knowledge of Islamic religious culture. It made no assumptions to the regard in which the translation was held in the West and placed the work at the same level as other popular English translations from different countries and religions. It offered a critique from the perspective of Muslim scholars which drew on their understanding of what should constitute an acceptable translation.

The critiques by Muslim scholars present significant evidence for evaluating Arberry's Orientalism, revealing that he made some significant assumptions in his approach. In the interest of the English-speaking target reader, he decided that they required a full translation of the entire start text, that language, names and terms which were familiar to them should be used and that the text should be conveyed in a tone that met readers' expectations when reading the English rendering of a foreign scriptural text. As he regarded his task as being 'to report his findings to a largely indifferent and incredulous public',¹¹⁴³ it can be argued that he and the Series editor, placed priority on making his version understandable to that readership. As in any translation, and particularly in the case of translating the Qur'an, achieving an acceptable balance between faithfulness to the original wording and the interest of the reader was a matter of judgement for the translator, based on his experience and his objective for the translation.

Saudi Sadiq, of Minia University, Egypt,¹¹⁴⁴ undertook a similar semantic comparison of approaches in the case of the translation of the *Surat ad-Dukhân* of the Qur'an. He chose four translations into English, which, according to him, represented 'different orientations... in mother tongues, ages, religions, denominations, cultures [and] aims...'. The translations were by Pickthall (1930), 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934), Arberry (1955) and Muhammad Mahmud Ghâli (1997).¹¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁴³ Arberry, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹¹⁴⁴ Saudi Sadiq, Lecturer in linguistics, translation studies including Qur'anic translations, University of Minia, www.researchgate.net/profile/Saudi_Sadiq accessed 06/06/2020.

¹¹⁴⁵ Sadiq, p. 9. Muhammad Mahmud Ghâli, *Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'an* (Cairo, Dâr An-Nashr Liljâmi'ât, 1997).

Sadiq provided a detailed methodology for undertaking translations in which he specified the requirements for techniques for conveying the message – lexical, syntactical, semantic, stylistic cultural and scientific.¹¹⁴⁶ His findings contradicted many practices adopted by Arberry. In his view, translating 'Allâh' as 'God', as done by Arberry, was totality incorrect, suggesting that Christian readers might assume that 'Allâh' represented the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost). He was of the view that 'Allâh' should appear simply as 'Allâh' in a translation as it was in common usage in non-Muslim countries and was in accordance with the Muslim concepts of their Lord.¹¹⁴⁷ He dismissed the use of 'difficult syntactical constructions and relying on archaic words like *thee*, *thou*, *ye* and *worketh*',¹¹⁴⁸ which contradicted Arberry's defence of the use of the word 'thee'. He criticised the use of titles (as in *The Holy Koran*) that blurred religious connotations, such as the use of the word 'Holy' in connection with the Qur'an as it 'is always [used] in collocation with the Bible'.¹¹⁴⁹ He argued that translation should be subject to principles relating to techniques, style and format.

When it comes to the Qur'an, Sadiq proposed a radical departure from traditional translating methods by suggesting that there should be a specialised Committee of Translating comprised of a group of translators with scholars, specialised respectively in Qur'anic 'sciences', interpretations, theology, jurisprudence, linguistics and anthropology, to be responsible for translating the Qur'an. The Committee would act under the auspices of a proposed Authority of Translating the Qur'an (A.T.Q.) affiliated to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C.)¹¹⁵⁰ and be represented in all Islamic countries.¹¹⁵¹ The Committee, having provided an initial translation, would be charged to keep the text under constant review, its publication and distribution including by electronic means.¹¹⁵²

Having established principles for translating, Sadiq analysed the four versions in detail.

¹¹⁴⁶ Sadiq, p. 58.

¹¹⁴⁷ Sadiq, p. 33.

¹¹⁴⁸ Sadiq, p. 68.

¹¹⁴⁹ Sadiq, p. 72.

¹¹⁵⁰ 'The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation has a membership of 57 states and is the collective voice of the Muslim world', <https://www.oic-oci.org/home/?=en>, accessed 28/06/2020.

¹¹⁵¹ Sadiq, pp. 52, 76–77.

¹¹⁵² Sadiq, p. 77.

From the analysis he found that none of the English translations were free from mistakes, which included the use of proper names, choosing the correct tense, especially the past tense, word order, syntactical ambiguity, polysemy, semantic change, ellipses, redundancy, extra-position and culture-bound words.¹¹⁵³ In Arberry's case, his translation did not 'render[ing] the precise meaning of many words' but succeeded in 'transferring the beauty of the Qur'anic language into English by preserving the Qur'anic style'.¹¹⁵⁴ He concluded that, according to his criteria, Ghâli's 1997 translation was the most precise, having had the advantage of using the three earlier versions and correcting their mistakes, Pickthall followed because of his 'precision of meaning and easiness of style'. Although Arberry's translation was 'the best in style, it comes in third in terms of accuracy of meaning' while Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali was the least acceptable because of its 'redundant and paraphrasing' approach.¹¹⁵⁵ Sadiq recognised that 'each of the four translations... represents a great effort that cannot be mistaken and the mistranslations scattered here and there do not belittle their value.'¹¹⁵⁶

Sadiq's analysis is part of a developing trend of scholarship in Muslim countries of providing detailed analyses of English translations of specific extracts from the Qur'an. The critics naturally use the best tools available to them: their skill in interpretation, their intimate knowledge of the Arabic language, Islamic culture and study of the start text. Siddeik,¹¹⁵⁷ Sadiq,¹¹⁵⁸ Afsar and Azmat¹¹⁵⁹, Shah,¹¹⁶⁰ and Sehrish Islam¹¹⁶¹ wrote as Muslim scholars. They can be seen as following the methods of Western Orientalists of comparing texts as products of the processes of translation, which is itself a Western phenomenon. Absent from their analyses are the views of Islamic theologians or the practice of Islam as a religion, as they rely on their own knowledge of the meaning of the text. The audience for their articles is not confined to Muslim scholars as they appear in Western publications and aim to be considered as part of the general debate about Qur'anic scholarship, although

¹¹⁵³ Sadiq, p. 155.

¹¹⁵⁴ Sadiq, p. 156.

¹¹⁵⁵ Sadiq, p. 159.

¹¹⁵⁶ Sadiq, p. 159.

¹¹⁵⁷ See fn. 103, *supra*.

¹¹⁵⁸ See fn 126 and 147, *supra*.

¹¹⁵⁹ See fn 132, *supra*.

¹¹⁶⁰ p. 27, *supra*.

¹¹⁶¹ p. 40, *supra*.

from an Islamic viewpoint. So far, the critics discussed focused our attention upon lexical values and syntactical features of the Arabic language as well as to the inherent religious connotations of the text. Their 'westernised' approaches can be seen in the study by Sehrish Islam.

In a 2018 study, comparing Arberry's 1955 translation with that of Abdullah Yusuf Ali from 1934,¹¹⁶² Sehrish Islam, of the National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad, applied the tools of translation theories to her critique the translations.¹¹⁶³ Based on the above-mentioned theories by Catford¹¹⁶⁴ Nida,¹¹⁶⁵ and others, Sehrish Islam added the concept of 'semantic loss' by which the semantical systems of the target language may not be able to represent many of the same meanings of the source language because of differences in vocabulary and in cultural values associated with particular words and expressions. In translating the Qur'an, where conveying its allusions, nuances and shades of meaning in a way acceptable to Muslim believers was essential, the loss of meaning assumes critical importance.

Semantic loss, according to Sehrish Islam, can result in 'complete losses that change the meaning or give an opposite one,... partial losses are those losses in which the message of the [start] text is partially conveyed'.¹¹⁶⁶ Translators would tend to produce inadequate translations because of difficulties in understanding symbolic meanings, and this would be seen especially in the case in the Qur'an because 'its language is more cultured than literary texts'.¹¹⁶⁷ She saw that the 'role of the translator has been shifted from that of transferors of words and sentences between two languages to mediators of culture and cross-cultural communicative functions'.¹¹⁶⁸

To test her theoretical approach, she selected the translations by Arberry and Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali of Surah 36 of the Qur'an, Ya-Sin. She described Arberry as 'a

¹¹⁶² Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Koran* (Lahore, Shaik Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1934, re-printed by Wordsworth Editions, 2000).

¹¹⁶³ Sehrish Islam, 'Semantic Loss in Two English Translations of Surah Ya-Sin by Two Translators (Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Arthur John Arberry)', *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation*, Vol. 1, Issue 4, (November 2018), pp. 18–34.

¹¹⁶⁴ Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965).

¹¹⁶⁵ Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden, Brill, 1964).

¹¹⁶⁶ Sehrish Islam, p .25.

¹¹⁶⁷ Sehrish Islam, p. 22.

¹¹⁶⁸ Sehrish Islam, p .21.

non-Muslim translator whose translation is considered as the main source of reference on Islam by Western academics'.¹¹⁶⁹ Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, employed by the Indian Civil Service and who received part of his education at Cambridge University, published his translation in 1934 in Lahore, a translation which has been described as 'remaining, fifty and more years after his death, one of the two most widely used English versions (the other being the translation of Marmaduke Pickthall)',¹¹⁷⁰ although Afsar and Azmat noted that the translation by Taqi al-Din al-Hilal and Muhammad Muhsin Khan¹¹⁷¹ was 'meant to replace' that by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali.¹¹⁷² His translation had been endorsed by the Saudi authorities,¹¹⁷³ and was 'until very recently the most popular English version among Muslims' but, according to Khaleel Mohammed, had 'lost influence because of its dated language' and the publication of versions subsidised by the Saudi government.¹¹⁷⁴

The Surah Ya-Sin is described by Sehrish Islam as a 'type of religious discourse which consists of three types of messages: social, moral and religious'.¹¹⁷⁵ Following her examination of Arberry's translation she concluded that Arberry had 'translated the Surah Ya-Sin as translation by paraphrase and sometime literal meanings.'¹¹⁷⁶ She added:

The Holy Qur'an is the word of Allah Almighty; it cannot be translated by literal meanings. He has used the words that cannot convey the complete meaning. For the translation of the Holy Qur'an knowledge of Arabic language and its rich culture is required.¹¹⁷⁷

Her assessments of the two translations showed the existence of semantic loss in the two translations of the Surah, thus illustrating that 'every language is different from the other in terms of vocabulary items, grammar lexicons and, more

¹¹⁶⁹ Sehrish Islam, p. 25.

¹¹⁷⁰ Khizar Humayun Ansari, *Ali, Abdullah Yusuf (1872–1953)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography(2017), accessed online 16/05/2020, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/refodnb/95416>; Ansari, 'The Infidel Within'. *Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London, Hurst & Company ,2004), pp. 102–105.

¹¹⁷¹ Taqi al-Din al-Hilal and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Translation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English Language* (Madinah, King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1997).

¹¹⁷² Afsar and Azmat, p. 196.

¹¹⁷³ Afsar and Azmat, p. 196.

¹¹⁷⁴ Khaleel Mohammed, p. 62

¹¹⁷⁵ Sehrish Islam, p. 32.

¹¹⁷⁶ Sehrish Islam, p. 29.

¹¹⁷⁷ Sehrish Islam, p. 29.

importantly, difference in culture'.¹¹⁷⁸ Further, the verse contained three types of messages: the social message of the relation of man with society; the moral message of the relation between man and man, and the religious message by which the translator suggests to the reader what he sees as the religious beliefs of the text.¹¹⁷⁹ In each case the values of the translator would be conveyed to the reader through his perceptions and beliefs, so an Orientalist background like Arberry's would inevitably inform the type of translation produced.

She concluded that her research showed that semantic loss occurred because of non-equivalence problems caused mainly by cultural gaps. As the 'Qur'anic language has its own lexicons that are culturally bound' and its unique 'sciences' the selection of vocabulary for the translation that did not take these issues fully into account led to shifts in meaning, resulting in semantic loss in the final version.

Sehrish Islam, by recognising Arberry's objective of translating (he 'rendered the meaning of the source text in the target text in order to make it understandable for the target Western readers'¹¹⁸⁰), recognised not only a Domesticising intention but also that inevitable compromises would be made between the start text and the text produced. Although her analysis was technically correct in her application of the concepts of semantic loss or equivalence, she also saw that the particular challenges posed by the Qur'an required a different approach which we shall discuss in the next Section.

The value of Sehrish Islam's approach is that it uses translation theories to draw out underlying features of the start text in its translated form that might not be obvious from an uninformed reading and unquestioning acceptance of the veracity of the translation. Sehrish Islam's approach is, however, problematic for a number of reasons. Her overall approach is firmly based on the methodology of translation theories which provides a means of analysis, but is essentially a piece of Western scholarship. Her approach, like that of Sadiq, Afsar and Khan, is a critique of a single verse and her detailed application of the translation theories to the verse, while logical, is harsh: it does not give Arberry's own scholarship adequate credit, unlike Siddeik and other Muslim scholars discussed in the Section on the reception of

¹¹⁷⁸ Sehrish Islam, p. 32.

¹¹⁷⁹ Sehrish Islam, p. 32.

¹¹⁸⁰ Sehrish Islam, p. 26.

Arberry's translations. The critics have approached the evaluation of Arberry's work using the techniques of Oriental scholarship but informed by their knowledge as Islamic scholars which provides an additional essential perspective to Qur'anic studies. While the critics have drawn attention to the drawbacks of translations, we will discuss how more acceptable versions might be procured in the next Section.

In a similar way to the critiques discussed above, in 2005, Khaleel Mohammed, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University, California, compared a number of English translations but his approach to translations is entirely different. He argued that from the ninth century onwards, as Islamic theologians had moved away from the Judeo-Christian ideas and influences apparent from the of the early recensions of the Qur'an, knowledge of the original Qur'anic references was lost which led to loss of its knowledge of its essential meanings.¹¹⁸¹ As a result, translations follow the degrees to which translators have adhered closely to the 'medieval exegetical constructs' or have taken a more 'enlightened approach'. His selections include translations made to meet the needs of branches within Islam, the Ahmadi, Shi'a and Sufis. He differentiates between translations approved by Saudi Arabian religious authorities and those that are not bound by those constraints.¹¹⁸² Many of the translations chosen have been the subject of the critiques discussed above.

His choice of 'twentieth century classics' were *The Holy Qur'an* by Muhammad 'Ali of 1991,¹¹⁸³ *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* by Pickthall of 1930,¹¹⁸⁴ and Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* of 1955.¹¹⁸⁵ Under the heading 'Saudi-endorsed translations' he included *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali of 1934,¹¹⁸⁶ and *The Noble Qur'an in the English Language* by Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Lilali and Muhammd Muhsin Khan of 1996.¹¹⁸⁷ He grouped translations by Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*

¹¹⁸¹ Khaleel Mohammed, p. 59.

¹¹⁸² Khaleel Mohmmad, p. 60.

¹¹⁸³ Maulana Muhammad 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an. Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* (Columbus, Ohio, Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., 1991).

¹¹⁸⁴ Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (Hyderabad, Hyderabad Government Press, 1930).

¹¹⁸⁵ A. J. Arberry *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, George Allen & Unwin, 1955).

¹¹⁸⁶ Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (Lahore 1934-37).

¹¹⁸⁷ Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammd Muhsin Khan, *The Noble Qur'an in the English Language* (Riyadh, Darussalam Publishers, 1966).

of 1980,¹¹⁸⁸ and *Al-Qur'an, A Contemporary Translation* (1984) by Ahmed 'Ali¹¹⁸⁹ and Thomas B. Irving's translation *The Qur'an: The First American Version*¹¹⁹⁰ of 1985 as 'Bucking the Saudi Orthodoxy'.¹¹⁹¹ A further category that he judged as 'Sectarian Translations' included *The Holy Qur'an* by Syed V. Mir Ahmed 'Ali of 1988 which has become the standard Shi'ite translation,¹¹⁹² and, for Sufis, *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* by Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley (1999).¹¹⁹³ Lastly he placed two translations in a class 'Falling Short', those by Majid Fakhry, *An Interpretation of the Qur'an* (2002)¹¹⁹⁴ and *The Qur'an, A New Translation* by M.A.S. Abdel-Haleem (2004).¹¹⁹⁵

We see from the selection that Khaleel Mohammed approved works that tended to accord with the Western view of the Qur'an rather than those which fell under the influence of the Saudi authorities.

6.8 Towards a New Standard

Khaleel Mohammed noted that 'fewer than 20 per cent of Muslims speak Arabic; this means that most Muslims study the text only in translation'.¹¹⁹⁶ This places a premium on providing texts that are understandable and accurate. We shall discuss suggestions made by the critics to aid the readers' understanding of the text, including the use of explanatory notes, the best methods of numbering and naming the Surahs and verses, as well as arrangements for bringing the knowledge of experts together to agree a version in order to command wider acceptance of the translated text.

Arberry deliberately decided to avoid explanatory comments to preserve the integrity of the text. Shah saw a need to bridge the gap between understanding the

¹¹⁸⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar, Dār al-Andalus Press, 1980).

¹¹⁸⁹ Ahmed Ali *The Qur'an, A Contemporary Translation* (Karachi, Akrash Printing, 1984).

¹¹⁹⁰ Thomas B. Irving, *The Qur'an: The First American Version* (Battleboro, Vt Amana Books, 1985).

¹¹⁹¹ Khaleel Mohammed, 2005 pp. 63–64.

¹¹⁹² Khaleel Mohammed, 2005, p. 65 refers to Syed V. Mir Ahmed 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Arab Text with English Translation and Commentary. Special Notes from Ayatullah Mahdi Pooya Yazdi* (New York, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc., 1988).

¹¹⁹³ Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley, *The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* (Norwich, Bookwork, 1999).

¹¹⁹⁴ Majid Fakhry, *An Interpretation of the Qur'an* (New York, New York University Press, 2002).

¹¹⁹⁵ M.A.S. Abdel-Haleem, *The Qur'an, A New Translation* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1978).

¹¹⁹⁶ Khaleel Mohammed, p. 58.

depth of meaning of the start text and a target text that would lead to understanding of that meaning by the target readership by adding exegetical notes, similar to Watt's work of exegesis.¹¹⁹⁷ Siddeik also saw that the 'attaching of explanatory notes or commentaries' would help to avoid linguistic errors.¹¹⁹⁸ Sadiq noted that translations by non-Muslims avoided placing the Arabic text in their translations as 'they may have been affected by the tradition followed by the Bible translations of not incorporating the original along with the translation' but that 'lately ... most of the translations, especially those conducted by Muslims have incorporated the Qur'anic text with the translations'.¹¹⁹⁹

Both Shah and Siddeik recommended revising Arberry's text to number each verse¹²⁰⁰ and Shah suggested that the Arabic title of the Surahs should be added.¹²⁰¹ Sadiq recommended the use of the correct form of the title of the Surahs and the proper division of the text, and, in common with the views of others, stated that the target text should be supported by footnotes or endnotes.¹²⁰²

Siddeik concluded, as we saw, that Arberry's translation was the 'best English translation made by a non-Muslim' because of his 'fairness and objectivity' and for his literary language, the sweetness of style and its accuracy in conveying the meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English without deficiency or increment'.¹²⁰³ His overall assessment was that despite his criticism of text, 'most of the errors were purely linguistic' and 'all his mistakes are adjustable and can be corrected'.¹²⁰⁴

Having recognised that there were 'many factors of attractions and acceptance' in Arberry's translation which made it 'easy for the target reader to understand and enjoy', Siddeik proposed that The King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Qur'an should be entrusted with the work of its revision.¹²⁰⁵ He suggested that a committee of specialist and researchers should prepare a new version of Arberry's translation to be 'issued to serve Muslims and non-Muslims in various

¹¹⁹⁷ Shah, p. 16. William Montgomery Watt, *Companion to the Qur'an Based on the Arberry Translation* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1967).

¹¹⁹⁸ Siddeik, p. 61.

¹¹⁹⁹ Sadiq, p. 73.

¹²⁰⁰ Shah, p. 17, Siddeik, p. 61.

¹²⁰¹ Shah, p. 17.

¹²⁰² Sadiq, p. 72.

¹²⁰³ Siddeik, p. 60.

¹²⁰⁴ Siddeik, p. 61.

¹²⁰⁵ Siddeik, p. 61.

parts of the earth',¹²⁰⁶ a view that did not go as far as that of Sadiq, as we saw above, of creating a specialised international translating authority.

Sehrish Islam also saw that the particular challenges posed by the Qur'an required a different approach from previous translations. As we saw in our discussion on the translation of poetry by Connolly (Chapter 5), the production of multiple translations of a text by different translators would present the reader with a range of experiences which could give a better overall impression of the start text. Sehrish Islam, like Shah, Sadiq and Siddeik, suggested that a similar approach could apply to the translation of the Qur'an:

'In view of the complexities of the message conveyed in the Qur'an, it seems reasonable to state that the only acceptable translation is the exegetical translation; one that is based on exegesis books, which will guide a translator in attaining accurate meaning of the text... In addition, translation of the Holy Qur'an should be carried out by a team of scholars who are experts in the different branches of knowledge related to the Holy Qur'an'.¹²⁰⁷

These suggestions indicate an important change in the way translations would be produced. Above all, they indicate a preference for the responsibility to translate be vested in the King Fahd Complex, which supports a particular Wahhabi and Salafi Sunni interpretation of the Qur'an to the exclusion of other branches of Islam, for example Shī'a and other Muslim groups among the Umma. Sadiq's proposal may be subject to the objection that irreconcilable differences between Islamic branches would make consensus on a single text unrealistic.

From the discussion on Khaleel Mohammad's views above, his opposition to placing responsibility for producing an approved translation in the hands of a single, government-influenced authority would be objectionable. Were the function of translating be concentrated in a central authority, the danger would arise of promulgating versions that reflected the views of governments that financed and supported the production and distribution of agreed texts.¹²⁰⁸ This would also bring about a change in the relationship between the text and the translator.

¹²⁰⁶ Siddeik, p. 61.

¹²⁰⁷ Sehrish Islam, p. 32.

¹²⁰⁸ Khaleel Mohammed, p. 71.

We have seen that English translations used to be identified with the individuals who produced them, perhaps in the Western scholarly fashion of linking a work with its author where a work is often only by the author's name. The primary interest was therefore placed more on the translator's personal preferences, motivations and cultural ideology, while the original text becomes an object to be subjected to the scholarly knowledge of the translator. By contrast, placing responsibility on a group of experts for producing a translation the process is reversed: it should place emphasis on the primacy of the start text over individual translators. The authenticity of the translation could be guaranteed by the institution charged with the production, no longer being dependent on the individual translator, but as Khaleel Mohammed has warned, this process carries the possibility of its own dangers.

The criticisms made of Arberry's abilities must be regarded in the context of the particular exercises undertaken by the authors of the articles and the specific benchmarks they chose to evaluate the translations. Arberry was a competent Arabist, he was in his early fifties before attempting a version of the Qur'an, having gained decades of previous scholarly linguistic and translating experience. Khaleel Mohammed has suggested that Arberry's version will be 'for most academics the translation of choice'.¹²⁰⁹ Shah identified commentators who praised the translation, adding that 'Arberry's interpretation is the best translation of the Holy Qur'an into English among English renderings by non-Muslims'.¹²¹⁰ Siddeik recognised the translation's combination of 'eloquence and rhetoric ... and simplicity and clarity'.¹²¹¹

This discussion has shown that the conventional view of the quality of Arberry's translation has been challenged by Muslim scholars in the past twenty years. They have shown linguistic and semantical shortcomings that have frequently appeared to have been overlooked by non-Muslim commentators, possibly for the reasons stated by the critics: cultural differences caused by not being living Islamic society in which the religion but imbues all aspects of human life, distance in space from and understanding of Muslim society.

¹²⁰⁹ Khaleel Mohammed, p. 71.

¹²¹⁰ Shah, p. 16.

¹²¹¹ Siddeik, p. 49.

6.9 Conclusion

Our analysis of Arberry's 1953 and 1955 translations has shown that despite their importance to improve the English readers' understanding and appreciation of the Qur'an as well as the continuing appreciation they receive among scholars, the academic community and commentators, they have been subject to detailed critiques by Muslim scholars. We have seen discrete approaches to assessing the works: on the one hand, the reception of the translations as valid contributions to Qur'anic scholarship in the academic tradition of the West and, on the other hand, evaluations of the works against linguistic and hermeneutical standards to which they have not been previously subjected.

We have seen that Arberry showed confidence in his ability to successfully meet the challenge of translating the Qur'an, an approach based on his many years of experience of translating from the Arabic language and his skill of writing in a variety of styles for different target audiences. He saw little merit in the arguments of those who argued against translation of the Qur'an at all, nor for those who reorganised the original text according to their conception regarding its form and structure.

He had deep respect for 'the Book that is called the Koran' which he described as 'among the greatest monuments of mankind'.¹²¹² His objective was to bring the understanding, messages and beauty of the Qur'an to the 'general English reader'.¹²¹³ He held the view that the Qur'an should be celebrated, appreciated and understood in the West for its importance in world literature and world religion: for Arberry undertaking the translations and thinking about the messages of the texts as he worked on them gave him comfort at times of personal distress.¹²¹⁴ Providing a new translation of the Qur'an – and the particular method of translation – were influenced by the pressures and difficulties he experienced during the war years, which we saw in Chapter 4, and notably his concerns regarding the troublesome relationships between the Islamic and Western worlds in the post-colonial period and the dangerous turn towards Communism in world politics, which we saw in his work on Iqbal in Chapter 5. For Arberry, the text must therefore have held particular

¹²¹² Arberry, 1953, p. 33.

¹²¹³ Arberry, 1953, p. 11

¹²¹⁴ Arberry, 1964, p. xii.

significance which encouraged him to adopt new approaches to its presentation as we saw in our discussion on his approach to its presentation.

His translation was meant to improve on previous attempts to render the Qur'an into English, notably by Pickthall. One of his major innovations concerned the wish to replicate the rhythm and cadence of the original: for his English translation, he treated the text with different styles of rhythms, rhymes and arrangement of the form of the verses with the aim to provide accessible versions the Qur'an so that its messages would be understandable to readers and they would gain from the presentation of the text a clearer impression of its nature. In our earlier discussion on the reception of his translations we saw the continuing appreciation of them by the majority of scholars since their publication over sixty years ago.

His versions of the Qur'an show that he adjusted his overtly scholarly approach that we identified in his other more 'academic' works, to meet the interests of the target readership. He could not fully avoid his scholarly tendencies as we saw from the introductions and prefaces to the various editions, but he let the text speak for itself without detailed commentary. He was aware of his own shortcomings by attempting a translation of the Qur'an as a non-Muslim coming from a traditionally western educational background as an Oriental scholar. Despite any potential misgivings over the authenticity of the messages received by Muhammad, he validated his approach by adopting an attitude of 'fairness' to the text.

In this thesis, we assess Arberry's works in order to ascertain any presence of elements of Orientalism, imperialism and colonialism. His aim of 'fairness' in translating the text cannot abrogate them from being products of latent or unconscious imperialistic or colonialist connotations as that was the essence of Arberry's outlook. Typical attitudes attributable to Orientalism can be identified: apart from being a scholar well established in the Western academic traditions, we have also analysed Arberry's particular choices of imagery, vocabulary and metaphorical allusions in his translations (for example, his use of the name 'Joseph' for 'Yusuf', choosing the narrative of the birth of Jesus as a basis for comparison, and the numbering of the Surahs). Siddeik's observation that Arberry had envisioned that he could write a translation so that it would appear that the Qur'an had been

revealed in English,¹²¹⁵ points to an outcome that Arberry would have desired but also exposes how his translations were seen from a Muslim perspective.

The translations clearly meet Said's viewpoint of Islamic studies complying with the principal dogma of Orientalism that is 'rationale, developed, humane'.¹²¹⁶ Indeed, Arberry's approach to the translations display those attributes and the authority of his work also benefitted from his status as Cambridge Professor of Arabic. This suggests that he felt that he had some 'ownership' over the subject, recalling Said's definition of Orientalism as 'dominating, restructuring and having authority',¹²¹⁷ in this case over the primary text of Islam, the Qur'an. We can conclude that Arberry's works can be classified as being the products of 'Orientalism' as we find from the application to them of the structural analysis of translated works.

By using translation theories, we have uncovered even more tendencies that indicate elements of 'Orientalism' in Arberry's translations. Comparisons between various versions of the target text highlighted the differences of the Domesticising and Foreignising translation categories¹²¹⁸ showing that Arberry's works fell into the former. The *Skopos* theory assisted us in firmly placing the roles of commissioning and authorship of the translations. Arberry clearly intended the works to be non-scholarly and accessible and therefore less reliant on the start text. This reinforces our findings that despite the exceptional status of the Qur'an as the supreme religious work of Islam, Arberry's works demonstrate the failings of traditional Orientalist scholarship.

This can be supported by the analysis of a variety of scholars including Muslim translators of the Qur'an. Among the more positive peer responses discussed in Chapter 3, we have seen supportive views from the 2010s onwards. They pointed to the quality in Arberry's style of the translation and the clarity of conveying the messages of the Qur'an. We also saw a recent trend among Muslim scholars in Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia who displayed a common methodological approach in their analyses of English Qur'an translations, including their critique on Arberry's 1955 translation. By comparing different English translations of Qur'an

¹²¹⁵ Siddeik, p. 52.

¹²¹⁶ Said, 2003, p. 300.

¹²¹⁷ Said, 2003, p. 3.

¹²¹⁸ For Domesticising and Foreignising, see Chapter 5.

verses they identified problem regarding the linguistic accuracy of the translation as well as features, such as the naming and numbering of the Surahs, numbering of verses and the structure of the translated in relation to the original. They placed particular importance on the correct use of Arab terminology and interpretations of the meanings of the messages authorised by Islamic organisations, especially those in Saudi Arabia.

While the scholars we studied saw positive aspects to Arberry's translations, we can discern an approach within these critiques which appears to discount translations into other languages that do not accord with current Islamic understanding of the start texts propagated by institutions that follow the Saudi Arabian approach to translating the Qur'an. Khaleel Mohammed, for example, advanced the argument that Islamic theologians had lost valuable Judea-Christian cultural references and resorted to using archaic versions of the Qur'an; though this is his personal view of Islam and Muslim practices, it enables us to bring a focus for evaluating the recent critiques.

Interestingly the critics from Muslim countries clearly applied Western methodologies for analysing the English texts, like the textual critique and translation theories. In the case of Sehrish Islam, it was an exacting exercise of analysis as well as adopting 'Orientalist' approaches towards the interrogation of English texts.

The overall conclusion that we can draw from these recent studies is that, on the one hand, the scholars sought to discover what they considered to be the better way of translating but gave insufficient recognition to the problem that the translators' goal in striving towards what they regard as the purity of a translation, is unrealisable or result in creating versions difficult to understand because of their unfamiliar wording and syntax. Their studies, with some exceptions, do not take into account sufficiently the purpose of the translations: they are not intended to be the unachievable exact equivalent of the Qur'an in another language but they are linguistic vehicles meant to enable a readership of non-Arabic speakers and readers to appreciate and understand the messages of one of the seminal books of the world. That was Arberry's aim and purpose.

Résumé

This study of Arberry's translations of the Qur'an shows that they are consistent with the pattern of Orientalism we have seen present throughout his works. Arberry attempted a new approach to translating and admitted that he had been moved by the meaning of the texts. But despite his innovations and his sympathy for the text, his whole approach to dealing with Oriental texts has been seen to emerge in his treatment of the works.

Chapter 7: Overall Conclusions

‘His representation of the Arab reality in his translation of the *Mu’allaqāt* is characterised by essentialism, absence, and otherness...’¹²¹⁹

Heba Fawzy El- Masry

‘Through the careful and critical survey of the English translation of A. J. Arberry of the Holy Qur’an, we can say that this translation is the best English translation made by a non-Muslim.’¹²²⁰

Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik

7.1 Objectives of this Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate Arthur John Arberry’s contribution to Oriental studies and notably the changing prevalence of imperialistic and colonial attitudes in his work between the 1930s to 1960. Our focus was a critical re-evaluation of Arberry’s works from various perspectives: textual analysis, his own statements, the critiques of his peers, and critiques from a post-colonial and 21st century perspective. Our starting point was the post-colonial disapproval of the concept of ‘Orientalism’ as it had developed from the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century with its associated Western attitudes to Eastern studies. The analysis of Orientalism and its critics, the results of the study of Said and his ideas of imperialism and colonialism, the tools for linguistic analysis provided by translation theories, I suggest, provide methodological frameworks for undertaking evaluations of Arberry’s works in order to meet the objectives of this thesis.

¹²¹⁹ Heba Fawzy El Masry, ‘A Comparative Study of Arthur John Arberry’s and Desmond O’Grady’s Translations of the Seven *Mu’allaqāt*’, PhD thesis, University of Warwick, September 2017, unpublished, p. 297.

¹²²⁰ Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik, ‘A Critical Reading of A. J. Arberry’s Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur’an (Koran Translated)’, *International Journal of Studies in English Language and Literature*, Vol. 7, Issue 5 (May 2018), p. 70.

7.2 Orientalism: Critiques and Theoretical Frameworks

This study shows that critiques of Western approaches to Oriental studies and theories on the mechanism of translating are useful for identifying underlying elements of Arberry's attitudes and practices as an Oriental scholar.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, critics of Oriental Studies, as found in the Western tradition of 'Orientalism', identified major strands in its scholarly approach to the East. Abdel-Malek and Tibawi,¹²²¹ supported by post-colonial socialist analyses of Turner and Rodinson,¹²²² regarded that Western scholars of Oriental studies, trained in disciplines for the study of classical antiquity, created an 'idealised' an essentially romantic version of the Orient by focussing on medieval works. Contemporary Islamic countries were considered to be 'in decline' as a result of this approach. In most cases those scholars failed to embrace the new realities of the Near and Middle East but remained wedded to entrenched views and practices.¹²²³ We saw that Western scholars assumed the privilege of criticising Islam, both as a religion and as a force that sustained society, and argued that its reform according to Western perceptions was in the interest of Islamic countries. Western scholarship on the East was generally considered by the critics as having neglected to understand the work of scholars from those countries and to engage with their views. Colonial and imperial attitudes were described in the critiques as pervading Western thinking, resulting in a culture of assumed dominance and superiority that prevented proper understanding of the realities of Eastern cultures and societies. We saw that an alternative approach to the views discussed above was provided by Edward Said who presents a critique for interrogating how Orientalism had manifested itself up to the middle of the twentieth century.¹²²⁴ Although published first in 1978, Said's delineation of Orientalism covers the period during which Arberry was writing, making his analysis of the treatment of the Middle East by Western interests essential to our framework for evaluating Arberry's works. Said's investigation of Orientalism was undertaken from the perspective of literary criticism based on a logocentric methodology. His approach moves the critiques of Orientalism forward to debates about texts and the motivations of Orientalist writers

¹²²¹ Chapter 2.1.4, 2.3.

¹²²² Chapter 2.1.5.

¹²²³ Chapter 2.1.4.

¹²²⁴ Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

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and gives new perspectives for understanding how those writers contributed to forging the relationship between the West and the East. Although themselves the subject of scrutiny, Said's critiques provide analytical tools for investigating Western scholarship in his identification of the nature of that scholarship and its assumptions about the East. Based on his personal experiences he uses the effects of colonialism to inform an appraisal of Western attitudes which underlay its approaches to Eastern societies.¹²²⁵ Our discussion of Said's early life showed that British dominance on Egyptian society was so great that it was with difficulty that Said discovered Egyptian culture during his childhood.

The critiques of Orientalism we discussed can be summed up as: Orientalist attitudes towards Islam, the absence of consideration of societal issues, omitting due consideration to works of Islamic scholars, the prevalence of imperialist and colonialist assumptions and assumed superiority of knowledge in approaches to writing about the East. Issues found in these critiques point to a number of key elements which can be identified from the examination of Arberry's works.

7.3 Arberry – the Orientalist Scholar

Arberry can be regarded as a conservative Orientalist who follows the prevailing convention of Oriental studies and informed by the standards set by the cohort of late nineteenth century scholars.¹²²⁶ It is revelatory that Arberry's 1960 work on noteworthy Oriental scholars includes a chapter devoted to himself under the title 'The Disciple', which insinuates that he saw himself as a follower of the scholars who had gone before him.¹²²⁷ There was a book-based approach which treated texts as subjects for detailed philological examination, an approach which claimed solid antecedents, such as Sir William Jones, whose works set the pattern of Westernising Oriental literature. Arberry, like many of his fellow scholars, did not produce works that conveyed contemporary life in Eastern countries. Oriental scholarship became the medium by which knowledge of the literature of the East was transmitted to the West, and it was the scholars who set the tone of the messages as well as the nature of the material presented. Historical studies by

¹²²⁵ Chapter 2, 2.2.2.

¹²²⁶ Chapter 3.2

¹²²⁷ Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 233–257.

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Edward Lane on Egypt¹²²⁸ and E.G. Browne on life in Persia¹²²⁹ which described the lives of peoples of those countries, stand in contrast to works on medieval Arabic manuscripts in the West, including those by Arberry. His personal contribution to Oriental studies was considerable in terms of number of books, articles and reviews he produced during his career.¹²³⁰ We have seen the works chosen by his peers, notably as British Orientalists, as valuable additions to the knowledge of Islamic cultures as well as the positive remarks of Muslim scholars as diverse as Khaleel Mohammad¹²³¹ and Siddeik¹²³² on his translation of the Qur'an. According to Wickens it was Arberry alone, from among his generation of Orientalists, who could have produced such a contribution to Islamic studies.¹²³³

His main areas of interest in Oriental studies can be identified as his works on Persian poets and literature (Hāfez, Sa'dī), translations of Rūmī, Sūfism and his translations of the Qur'an.¹²³⁴ He often followed the works of others, for example Nicholson (in the cases of the *Mawāqif* and Rūmī), or used the opportunities arising from work purchased for collections (such as that of Chester Beatty). However, Arberry's text based approach appears to lack a systematic methodology. He was eclectic in the subjects chosen, as can be seen from the list of his published works,¹²³⁵ and produced works in response to events such as the bicentenary of the birth of Sir William Jones or the centenary of the publication of FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubāiyāt* of Omar Khayyam.¹²³⁶ Overall his works, produced invariably according to his scholarly standards and erudition, may be characterised by his concentration on individual works of a wide range of medieval authors instead of producing an extensive study on a single issue, unlike Massignon, who wrote

¹²²⁸ Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, Ward, Lock & Co., 1890).

¹²²⁹ Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1893, reprinted 1984 by Brepols, Turnhout, Belgium).

¹²³⁰ See Bibliography, Part 1 for a list of his works.

¹²³¹ Khaleel Mohammad, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2005.

¹²³² Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik, 'A Critical Reading of A. J. Arberry's Translation of the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an (Koran Translated)', *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, Vol .6, Issue 5 (May 2018), pp. 46–62.

¹²³³ Wickens, p. 372.

¹²³⁴ See Chapter 3.

¹²³⁵ Bibliography, Part I, below.

¹²³⁶ Edward FitzGerald, *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām The Astronomer–Poet of Persia* (London, Bernard Quaritch, 1859), reproduced in full in Arberry, *The Romance of the Rubāiyāt* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959), pp. 149–183.

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extensively on al-Hallaj¹²³⁷, or Watt who published on Muhammad.¹²³⁸ Arberry's works of translation, for example of the works of Rūmī, were accompanied by comments and explanations on the text, but the resulting product remained a translation of a text rather than an in-depth study of a particular author, a work that he was eminently capable of writing.

It was in the nature of Arberry's works, concentrated as they were on medieval Arabic and Persian literature, that they were not concerned with contemporary life in the countries from which his texts came. He did not demonstrate interest in how people lived or the conditions of their lives in their social, political or economic environment or how Western influence affected their societies, as the critics pointed out. His comments on the wider political issues were confined to passages in the introduction to his translation of Iqbal¹²³⁹ and in his *Oriental Essays*.¹²⁴⁰ Interestingly, Arberry made no recorded comment on the coup d'état in Iran of 1953 when Britain and the United States supported the removal of Mohammad Mosaddegh and his government.¹²⁴¹ El Masry's conclusion that his work showed essentialism, absence and otherness is a valid assessment which can be seen by his concentration on recondite texts, studied in isolation from the source countries, and his treatment of the material studied as abstracted objects of enquiry.¹²⁴² Said was acutely aware of the impact of Western hegemony on Palestine, describing what he had experienced and showing how that influence had affected his early life, while Arberry, on the other hand, remained focussed on the particular scholastic issues that arose from his study of medieval texts. Although few direct references to Arberry are to be found in Said's *Orientalism*,¹²⁴³ Arberry's approach can be seen to fall into the descriptions of the subject of Orientalism that comes through his works was of the type recognised by Said – a dominating Western discourse, started in the nineteenth

¹²³⁷ Louis Massignon, *La passion d'Al-Husayn-Ibn- Mansour Al-Hallaj: martyr mystique de l'Islam; exécuté à Bagdad, le 26 Mars 922: Étude d'histoire religieuse* (Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1922, published in four volumes in 1925).

¹²³⁸ Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1953), *Mohammed at Medina* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1956).

¹²³⁹ See Chapter 5; *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (London, John Murray, 1953), pp. xiii–xvi.

¹²⁴⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 242.

¹²⁴¹ Ali Rahnama, *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹²⁴² See Chapter 3.2.

¹²⁴³ Said, *Orientalism*, 2003, p. 78 in which Arberry is named as describing Sir William Jones as 'the undisputed ... founder of Orientalism', and footnotes on pp. 359, 366 and 367.

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century and continued by his works into the mid-twentieth century, that cumulated in a created image of the East.

This creation of an imaginary and 'other' East can be clearly seen from Arberry's approach to translation. As we saw in Chapter 5, translation theories can provide important criteria for identifying the nature of the translations in the context of Orientalism. The categories of Domesticising and Foreignising in target texts, the use of the *Skopostheorie* to reveal the purpose of translated texts, and the analysis of the theories relating to the translation of poetry are useful guides in assessing Arberry's translations. In this study we have recognised that Arberry uses different translation styles depending on his target audience. Works intended for a specifically scholarly readership were usually published in journal articles and monographs in which his translations were of a Foreignising approach by which the start texts and translations closely followed the original, supported by copious explanatory and philological information.¹²⁴⁴ He intended the works for a specific target readership, one which was already knowledgeable in the field and ready to accept new information presented on existing scholarly conventions: he was, in effect, writing for his own group of scholars. Arberry's style of communicating texts did not vary greatly from his scholarly studies as we find that his practices were reproduced in works intended for a non-academic readership.

This contrasts with the works intended for what he and his editors regarded as a general readership. Many of his works, published in the *Wisdom of the East* series, were intended to appeal to readers who were not knowledgeable in Eastern culture, theology or philosophy, but were assumed to have an interest in those subjects or wished to learn about them. In our assessment, the works published in the series primarily deal with subjects that would appeal only to niche readerships who, like the target audience of scholars, were assumed to have some existing familiarity or interests in Eastern cultures. However, the scholarly language used by Arberry might have limited their appeal somewhat as he seemed unable to leave his scholarly practices of writing aside in order to produce works that might have caught

¹²⁴⁴ See Chapter 5; Arberry's journal articles are included in the Bibliography, Part 1.

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the imagination and interest of his readers and to have been more effective 'ambassadors of good-will and understanding' between East and West.¹²⁴⁵

In 1953, we can recognise an attempt at reaching a wider readership in his *Scheherezade*, which, unlike his other works, was embellished by duotone illustrations by Asgeir Scott. Even that, together with Arberry's claim that his version was revolutionary in presenting the extract from the tales of the Arabian Nights as a 'modern novel',¹²⁴⁶ did not prevent the work from appearing to be another scholarly exercise. The introduction is scholarly, comparing at length previous translations with long extracts from other versions so that it resembles a monograph or a scholarly article rather than a popular work, even less of a resemblance of what might have been fiction of the time. Arberry could not escape from an intellectual way of thinking; he appeared to lack the versatility required to adjust to different readerships and unable to effectively communicate his field, which, by different and imaginative treatment, had the potential of bringing new experiences and literary pleasure to his readers. From this evidence we can conclude that the underlying Orientalist approach, critiqued by Said, was undifferentiated in his works.

We were able to identify Arberry's scholarly approach in the publications he produced for the MOI and the BBC during 1940–1944. His practices as a peacetime scholar and teacher of the cultures of the Middle East did not change when he was called upon to meet the demands of communicating accessible information to new audiences. He, with his fellow scholars, seemed incapable of recognising the necessity of adjusting the content and tone of their works and material from the world of university study and scholarly journals to a world in which other countries used sophisticated and effective propaganda methods. The cohort of scholars, who failed to produce satisfactory material for dissemination of their messages, took the place of effective Arab broadcasters and writers who were more closely attuned to their audiences.

It appears that his works and translations reflected the climate of his age – austere, heavily reliant on society's willingness to be deferential to the expertise of previous scholars who used the capital of their positions to dominate the nature and

¹²⁴⁵ Editorial Note to *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 1950, *Avicenna on Theology*, 1951, and *The Mysteries of Selflessness*, 1953.

¹²⁴⁶ Arberry, 1953, p. 17.

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content of discussion. I suggest that these assessments show that Arberry's Orientalist attitude in the period up to the mid-1950s was constrained by his adherence to the practices of scholars whom he regarded as setting the standards for the field by their choice of works and approaches to the study. We can see how essentially restrictive and conservative his approach to Oriental studies was by comparing his work with two contemporary scholars.

A wider and more inclusive approach was taken by H. A. R. Gibb (1895–1971).¹²⁴⁷ A frequent visitor to countries in the Middle East, he initially wrote on Oriental subjects according to the traditional scholarly approaches,¹²⁴⁸ but from about 1947 onwards turned increasingly towards modern and immediate issues affecting Muslim countries.¹²⁴⁹ Said regarded Gibb as a 'profoundly institutional figure' of scholarly Orientalism who developed a view of Islam as the ultimate force driving all aspects of Muslim society.¹²⁵⁰ Gibb wrote on government and society, encapsulating the relationship between political holders of power and Islamic theologians and the problems facing Muslim communities in the modern world. That interest was seen in his work as Director of the Center for Middle East Studies at Harvard where he initiated a multi-disciplinary approach to what became known as 'regional studies'. Using the expertise of specialists in anthropology, economics and sociology, combined with historical and literary studies, was part of the post-war view in the United States that aimed to understand the Middle East in terms of wider geo-political and economic considerations rather than sources for philological studies.¹²⁵¹

¹²⁴⁷ H. A. R. Gibb, Laudian Professor of Arabic in Oxford from 1937 until 1955 when he took the appointment as Professor of Arabic at Harvard University.

¹²⁴⁸ H. A. R. Gibb, *Arab Literature* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927), *Ibn Batuta 1304–1377* (1929), *The Arabs* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940), *Mohammedanism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949)

¹²⁴⁹ For example, H. A. R. Gibb, 'Wither Islam?', in *Wither Islam? A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb (London, Victor Gollancz, 1932), *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1947), *Islamic Society and the West. A study of the impact of Western civilisation on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London, Oxford University Press, 1950), 'Anglo-Egyptian Relations: A Revaluation', *International affairs (London)* Vol. 27, No.4 (1951), pp. 440–450, 'Oriental Studies in the United Kingdom', in *The Near East and the Great Powers*, ed. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 86–7, 92.

¹²⁵⁰ Said, 2003, p. 275.

¹²⁵¹ Albert Hourani, 'Gibb, Sir Hamilton Alexander Roskeen (1895–1971)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 24/06/2014.

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Expanding the parameters of Oriental studies was also seen in the work of William Montgomery Watt (1909–2007).¹²⁵² His approach to Oriental studies included diverse aspects of the study of Islam and society. As general editor of *'Islamic Surveys'* he instigated a series of over thirty volumes written by specialists on key areas, such as the history of Islamic law and Islamic philosophy and thought.¹²⁵³ He wrote biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad and on the inter-actions of Islamic thought with philosophy and politics,¹²⁵⁴ using a methodology that was described as combining philology with sociology.¹²⁵⁵

Both Gibb and Watt show that the dynamics of contemporary Muslim societies could be understood better by adopting wider and more inclusive approaches to Oriental studies enriched by cooperating with disciplines other than philology and Arabic classicism. Despite expressing an intention to write extensively on the life of Rūmī,¹²⁵⁶ which, had it been accomplished might have been comparable to Watt's works, Arberry concentrated instead on producing translations of Rūmī's works.¹²⁵⁷ In contrast to the approaches of Gibb and Watts, Arberry can be regarded as concentrating on translating existing works rather than a scholar who could have strengthened the scholarly discourse by applying his undoubted knowledge and judgement to issues facing Islam and Muslim countries and their relationships with the West.

His approach can be exemplified by two of his later works. The first is *Humāy-Nāma*.¹²⁵⁸ In it Arberry presents a monograph on a manuscript copy of a text by an unknown author, who described himself as 'a crypto-Zoroastrian', dated on palaeographic grounds to the 12th century and purchased by Sir Chester Beatty by auction in 1938. He gives details of the provenance of the manuscript and an account of the

¹²⁵² W. M. Watt, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1974–1979.

¹²⁵³ Watt, General Editor *Islamic Surveys* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1972 onwards).

¹²⁵⁴ Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1953), *Muhammad at Medina* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1957), *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1972), *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1978).

¹²⁵⁵ Todd M. Thompson, 'Watt, William Montgomery (1909–2007): Scottish Episcopal clergyman and scholar of Islam', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Jan. 2010, accessed 24/03/2014.

¹²⁵⁶ Arberry, *Discourses of Rūmī* (London, John Murray, 1971), p. 9.

¹²⁵⁷ Arberry, *More Tales from the Masnavi* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 11: 'This volume represents the second part of a task which it is hoped to complete in yet a third instalment'; no further instalment was published.

¹²⁵⁸ A. J. Arberry, *Humāy-Nāma* (London, Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1973) for the British Institute of Persian Studies: Texts and Monographs, No. 1.

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narrative of the poem, followed by the entire poem in Kufic calligraphy. It is a work of individual scholarship intended for academic study which undoubtedly added value to the corpus of knowledge of Muslim culture and history. The second example is *A Sufi Martyr*.¹²⁵⁹ This work, also a monograph, in which Arberry presents the work of al-Hamadhānī (1098–1131 CE), described by Arberry as the third Sūfi martyr (after al-Ḥallāj (d. 922 CE) and al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191 CE)). Arberry gives a biography for al-Hamadhānī's, lists his other works before giving a translation of his treatise 'Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home'. In the same fashion as *Humāy-Nāma*, *A Sufi Martyr* stands as an academic work of scholarship for scholars and students of Islam and ancient Arabic literature.

I suggest that the nature of Gibb's and Watt's Orientalism, in its day, was forward looking, opening discourses about the Middle East that advanced the scope of Oriental studies and enabled Western scholars and commentators to gain modern understandings of those countries. By contrast Arberry's approach was rooted in the conventions of nineteenth century scholarship. He was clearly sympathetic to Islamic culture, as noted by Tibawi, and he possessed unrivalled ability in some cases to present the theology of Islam to Western readers in accessible forms, as shown in his *The Koran Interpreted*, a talent that could have built bridges between the East and the West in times of changing political influences and interests in the 1950s and 1960s. He realised late in his career that, from his experience of working in the MOI between 1940 and 1944, Orientalism 'had become progressively more remote and specialised, out of touch almost completely with the realities of everyday life'.¹²⁶⁰ But, as we have seen from his works of the 1950s, he remained grounded in his familiar scholarly approach. His innate conservative approach informed his attitudes to matters outside the immediate scholastic studies, a trait that can be seen in his attitude to the place of Britain in the world where, again, he chose the familiar and conventional.

His intellectual conservatism extended to his view of Britain's position as an imperial and colonial power. While colonial domination had been the subject of criticism, as seen in the early critiques of Abdel-Malek and later by Said, Arberry's reaction to the growing disquiet over Britain's colonial position was to adhere to

¹²⁵⁹ A. J. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr: The Apologia of 'Ain al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1979).

¹²⁶⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 239.

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established values and practices. We discussed how Said reacted to colonialism; Arberry's reaction was one of support for the status quo and the social norms that underlay his scholarship as an individual and as a member of a prestigious institution. His professorship at Cambridge University enabled him to rely on the university's intellectual capital and status in Western scholarship, while, at the same time, the university was part of the social establishment that stood for Britain's place in the world as an imperial and colonial power. Arberry's support for British interests overseas can be most clearly seen in his work for the MOI and the BBC. He worked under circumstances that demanded strenuous efforts for the country's defence and although his propaganda work produced during 1940–1944 must be regarded in that light, we have seen that he regarded himself as 'a patriot', willing to offer his 'rare and somewhat exotic skill' to the war effort.¹²⁶¹ We saw in Chapter 5 how Arberry's attitude towards life in the Middle East was described as 'essentialism, absence, and otherness', which were regarded as the 'three features that characterised the representational recognition of the non-West in imperialist England towards the end of the eighteenth century'.¹²⁶² El Masry's robust criticism could be applied to features we have identified in Arberry's works as an Orientalist, in his continuation of established values, his view of Middle Eastern countries and his scholarly approach to the material he dealt with – manuscripts were objects for study rather than part of the social and cultural history of communities. Balanced against that view are Arberry's sympathy for the literary qualities he found in the Arabic and Persian literature on which he wrote and his appreciation of the messages of the Qur'an.

7.4 Times of Change

Although Arberry insisted that he wished 'to have no truck with politics',¹²⁶³ he was prepared to express his regret at the diminution of the Empire and foreboding at the growth of communism. More importantly, as a civil servant in the wartime MOI he had supported the government's policy for Arab unity as editor of *Islam Today* (1943), but we have also seen his disquiet a few years later that the Islamic unity

¹²⁶¹ Arberry, 1960, p. 238.

¹²⁶² El Masry, 'Translations of the Seven *Mu'allaqāt*', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, September 2017, p. 297.

¹²⁶³ Arberry, 1960, p. 242.

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advocated by Iqbal could present dangers to Western interests, notably in his introduction to Iqbal's *Mysteries of Selflessness* (1952). We note, in that discussion, of his regret at the changing Middle Eastern world and the relationships between its emerging nation states and Britain. In 1960 he went even further: 'The rapid decline and virtual elimination of British influence [in Middle Eastern countries] is surely almost without parallel in our political history'¹²⁶⁴ – a decline he called a 'catastrophe', a view that can be interpreted as being in support of continuing British influence abroad using political power based on its imperial and colonial history.

He did not elaborate on the reasons for that 'catastrophe' but suggested that one of the causes lay in the way Oriental studies had been taught in universities, which had been the subject of the enquiry chaired by Lord Scarborough (1897–1979).¹²⁶⁵ Arberry wrote that the root for the decline in British influence abroad lay very deep and that root was entangled, adopting the words of the Report, 'in a morass of ... superstition and ignorance'.¹²⁶⁶ The Report stated that Oriental studies as taught in British higher education failed to deal adequately with the 'interpretation to British people of the whole way of life of people' who were not of Western European origin and suggested that the studies should deal with questions not only of language but also of how those people lived and their histories.¹²⁶⁷ The criticism in the Report went even further, stating that the 'chief reason why [Oriental] studies have not prospered in the past and why previous attempts to remedy the position have failed to achieve success lies in a traditional exclusiveness which tends to disregard and even to look down upon culture which has little in common with our own'.¹²⁶⁸ That criticism, directed as much against politicians as the academic Orientalist establishment, was not lost on Arberry.

Arberry was aware of the need to establish the 'truth about the East and its peoples' and to bring that truth to the 'common consciousness of the West,'¹²⁶⁹ a task he saw as Herculean. He wrote that it would need a university based 'conscientious orientalist' to clear away the 'vast accumulation of nonsense and

¹²⁶⁴ Arberry, 1960, p. 243.

¹²⁶⁵ Scarborough Report, *Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies* (London, HMSO, 1947).

¹²⁶⁶ Arberry, 1960, p. 243.

¹²⁶⁷ Arberry, 1960, p. 243.

¹²⁶⁸ Scarborough, 1947, p. 23.

¹²⁶⁹ Arberry, 1960, p. 255.

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misapprehension and deliberate lies'.¹²⁷⁰ He responded positively to the call of the Scarborough Report for the expansion of Oriental studies both within his Department and outside. At his suggestion, the 'Association of British Orientalists' was founded to coordinate studies in response to the Report,¹²⁷¹ and he proposed widening the scope of Oriental studies in his department. The teaching capacity would be strengthened by adding new lectureships in Arabic and Persian and Islamic History, and he planned to create posts for the teaching of Turkish and Urdu and for the teaching of spoken Arabic and Persian, to which he would add facilities for the teaching of Islamic art and archaeology and the modern political and economic history and geography of the Middle East.¹²⁷² He saw the 1959 initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *East and West – Towards a Mutual Understanding?*,¹²⁷³ as a spur to widening the provision of Oriental studies and succeeded in 1960 in establishing the Middle East Centre at Cambridge to consolidate his earlier administrative changes.¹²⁷⁴

Arberry was faced with the challenge of how to adapt his knowledge to the world emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War. Growing pressures in a post-colonial world required a re-thinking of relations between West and East with the consequential need for Oriental studies to adjust to meet the changes. In the view of a former colleague, the challenges that faced Oriental studies were of a different nature and seriousness than Arberry's particular talents could resolve. He was in an almost impossible situation of holding the prestigious chair of Arabic in a renowned university yet not having the necessary imagination and flair to successfully meet challenges facing his field. According to that view, Arberry's personality, intellectual ability and dedication might have been better employed in other fields such as Platonic mathematics, but for Arberry 'in the circumstances of the development of Oriental Studies in Britain between about 1945 and 1970, this misplacement had truly tragic dimensions'.¹²⁷⁵ The Orientalist of the scholastic tradition had become overtaken by demands beyond his specialisms.

¹²⁷⁰ Arberry, 1960, p. 255.

¹²⁷¹ Arberry, 1960, p.246.

¹²⁷² Arberry, 1960, 248.

¹²⁷³ Georges Fradier, *East and West – Towards Mutual Understanding?* (Paris, UNESCO Publications, 1959) unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223, accessed 19/06/2020.

¹²⁷⁴ Arberry, 1960, p. 249, Rosenthal, 1970, p. 298, Skilliter, 1970, p. 367, Lyons, 1972, p. 2.

¹²⁷⁵ Wickens, p. 375.

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Arberry regarded himself as an able scholar and was proud of the extensive number of works he wrote and published. We have seen that his peers acknowledged the contribution that his works made to the knowledge of the West of the intellectual debates of medieval Islam while individual works, such as the translations of the Qur'an and Rūmī, continue to receive attention. To a modern readership the shortcomings of his scholarly conservatism and his attitudes towards the Middle East and the world may make him somewhat an anachronistic figure, but when assessed against the scholarly expectations of contemporary scholars we can see that his works were regarded as important.

In Chapter 6, we saw that, in contrast to the generally positive acceptance of his translations of the Qur'an, some more recent critics' detailed and careful analyses raised questions on the sufficiency of his understanding of the Arabic language and Islamic culture to successfully present the most challenging text for a non-Muslim, although, as we saw, his version was suggested as the basis for a translation under a Saudi institution. His version was recognised as having merit, but that merit rested on its own terms as not more than a Western version, although one of the more popular representations of the Qur'an. The translation confirms the attributes of Orientalism of the 1950s – knowledge of the Arabic language and culture to the level acceptable in the West, interpretation of Islam in accord with established Western scholarly understanding, readiness to provide translations for an ascertainable readership rather than as part of a religion.

7.5 Conclusions

I suggest that, from the material discussed in this thesis, the Orientalism in Britain in the mid-twentieth century can be seen in a number of aspects. The first is the continuation of the conservative approach of Arberry, supported by works of high scholarly value, the second is that represented by Gibb and Watt, of an inclusive and expanding field of study. Arberry can be seen as representing the established approach, Gibb and Watt looked to state-of-the-art ways of studying the countries of the Middle East. Arberry's work was based on his understanding that the continuation of British imperial interests in the Middle East and the exercise of colonial power were seen as positive forces for the good of countries coming within British influence.

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The works of Orientalists over a period of over two hundred years contributed to the creation of images of the East. The constituent elements of those images, including Arberry's works, relate to the society that created them and cumulatively reflect the state of that society. We saw that each work was not intended to be a formal statement of positioning in regard to issues of Western hegemony, post-colonial and post-imperial attitudes. The cumulative effects, however, of adherence to established ways of working, support for the status quo in scholastic attitudes, reluctance to use the knowledge of other disciplines, the privileging of the capital of universities and academic posts all present a picture of Orientalism that would be subject to many challenges as the twentieth century progressed.

In writing this thesis I have come across issues that can benefit from further study. The current inaccessibility to wartime records of the MOI and BBC suggest that a detailed study of the work of Oriental scholars in the war effort could give a richer understanding of Orientalism in Britain at the time. This work could be supported by the investigations by the Institute of English Studies, of the School of Advanced Study of the University of London. Scripts, broadcasts and recordings made by scholars for the BBC could be additional subjects for study. The collection of cartoons of Kem archived at the University of Kent could also be the subject of a study to analyse the use of wartime pictorial propaganda. A study into the psychological motivations of Said as evidenced by his *Memoirs* and other writings could enable a more complete understanding of the background to his *Orientalism* and his critiques of Western Orientalism. We have identified that the relationship between western-centric Orientalism and racism should be an area for further study. I hope this thesis will provide a useful basis for future research into Arberry and Oriental scholarship.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Chapter 1, John Arthur Arberry – a brief biography Footnote 15.

Arberry's upbringing recounted in *An Autobiographical Sketch* published in the *Mystical Poems of Rumi* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1968 and 2009), p. 21:

I was born the child of Victorian parents, strict believers of the Christian evangelical school. My early religious education was therefore of the same pattern: family prayers, church three times every Sunday, and a severe puritanical attitude to pleasure, especially on the Lord's Day. My parents were virtuous and, according to their light deeply sincere in their conformity; they were poor, but being industrious and thrifty they spared their children the full rigours of poverty only too prevalent in England at the beginning of the present century. They were also ambitious for their children, determined that they should benefit to the full from the rapidly improving educational opportunities of those times'.

Appendix 2

Chapter 1 The impact of handing manuscripts Footnote 23.

From A. J. Arberry, *FitzGerald's Salaman & Absal: A Study by A. J. Arberry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 43:

'We take the perfectly proportioned volume into our hands, and our eyes are at once entranced by the faultless taste and glorious artistry of the binding. The spine is of supple and severely plain leather, but the covers are ornamented without and within in a controlled riot of creative fancy; without, it may be, they are lacquer painted in miniature style to an arabesque frame, the scene a Sultan presiding over his court in a forest setting, pausing from the hunt, his ministers in attendance, his horsemen and beaters instantly awaiting his command, while gaily-plumaged birds shake their wings in the green and flowered branches; within, the covers may be inlaid with lace filigrane, gold and ruby, emerald and turquoise. We turn over the chaste end parchment, appraising their ivory sheen, to discover a double opening, a pair of exquisite miniatures, or two leaves dedicated to sheer illumination. We turn over again, and here the penmanship begins, the majestic flow of nasta'liq, loveliest writing that ever calligrapher invented, edged with broad decorative margins and surmounted by the frontispiece carpet. So page after page reveals its equal perfection to the delighted gaze, here and there a painting to vary the mesmeric symmetry of the sweeping script, until with final flourish of ornament we reach the end and close the volume.'