THE ORIENT IN AMERICAN POETRY FROM THE BEGINNING TO 1900

by

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PREFATORY NOTE

My interest in the Oriental material in American literature began one day when, in reading the Bhagavad-Gita for a course in comparative literature, I came across a passage which reminded me of Emerson's "Brahma." The enthusiasm aroused by the recognition of Emerson's borrowing was not materially lessened by the subsequent discovery that some eight or ten persons had already remarked the similarity and had hastened to enlighten the readers of magazines and newspapers. In this study my purpose has been to satisfy a desire to know the extent to which the Orient has influenced American poetry, and to organize into a fairly readable form a survey based upon observations in that field.

It was my original intention, when I began the work upon this study, to make a survey of Orientalism in American poetry from the beginnings to the present day; indeed, the relations of the twentieth century poets to the Orient and their use of Oriental material were to form a most important part of the paper. However, I soon found that a study of the whole field of American poetry would grow beyond the limits which must be set to this thesis. I have, therefore, put aside all notes on the recent poets, and in this paper have confined myself to an investigation of the use made of Oriental material by American poets prior to nineteen hundred.

I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation to Professor J.H. Nelson of the University of Kansas for his kindness and willingness to aid me in the preparation of this paper. Others who

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to present within a limited compass a survey of Orientalism in American verse from the beginnings to 1900. It is well known that the lure of the East has been felt by many of our poets, and that they have made frequent use of Oriental material. Few people realize, however, the extent to which the Orient has entered our national literature, and know little of the manner in which the East has affected our thought. It is a matter of surprise to them that the thin trickle of Orientalism in the literature of the American colonial period has grown into no insignificant stream during the passing of the decades. It is the purpose of the present writer to trace the course, the growth, and the windings of this river of the East.

In this thesis the term, "The Orient," has been used somewhat loosely to include not only Asia (except Siberia) and the neighboring islands, but also Turkey in Europe and Northern Africa. These latter regions, although not strictly of the Orient, have been settled by peoples of Oriental blood, customs, and religion; and, therefore, it seems logical to recognize them as at bottom largely Asiatic. For the purpose of investigation, the negroid element in African life has been ignored, despite the frequency with which the Negro is identified with Oriental civilization. Further, it has been impossible, since it has been necessary to limit the scope of the thesis,

to consider the Asiatic element in Russian life and literature. On the other hand, although Spain does not form a part of the Orient, much of its life and literature has been definitely and strikingly colored by an Oriental people, the Moors. Hence, American translations of Spanish poetry which deals with the Moorish elements in Spanish life, and original verse by American poets which presents the Moors in Spain, or the relations of Spaniard and Moor, have been included in this study.

"Orientalism" has also been somewhat broadly interpreted in the present study. It includes, first, the presentation of the Orient in general, in descriptive and narrative verse; second, the expression of Oriental thought in American poetry; third, the employment of Oriental literary models, or of Oriental diction, imagery, or style; and, fourth, translations from the various Eastern tongues. Of the first and fourth meanings no explanation is needed. The second meaning covers expressions of Oriental philosophy and systems of religion such as are found in the work of Emerson and other Transcendentalists. The third phase of Orientalism would be found in such diverse poets as Whittier, with his poems based directly on translations of Hindu writings, and Bayard Taylor, with his sensuous melodies. No exhaustive study has been possible of Oriental theme and diction, but an attempt has been made in the course of the narrative to indicate their appearance in the work of various poets.

The problem of the Hebraic element in Orientalism in American poetry has been perhaps somewhat arbitrarily handled. The Hebraic element derives from both the Biblical writings and the

Apocryphal books and their influences, and these have been accepted as equally Oriental. However, the writer of this paper has excluded all poems dealing strictly with European or American Christianity, and has ignored most, not all, of the American poems treating incidents in the life of Christ or arising from a contemplation of that life. The Christus of Longfellow is the most notable exception in this field. For the rest, themes drawn from the Old Testament (like Willis's "Scriptural Poems") and from the books of the Apocrypha have been treated as definitely Oriental, although of course only the longer poems with such themes and the chief writers have been discussed at length. These distinctions were made necessary by the complexity of the material and the limited scope of the thesis.

Another distinction may be mentioned. In this study certain treatments of the Orient are characterized as "conventional." By this has been meant not only such treatments as are commonly found, but also those which are commonplace, being neither striking nor original. The Orient is presented as a land of mystery, wealth, tyranny, and licientiousness, or as an idyllic unreal region, a luxurious Arcadia. There is in such representations no real comprehension of Eastern thought, religion, or life in general. The Orientalism in the conventional or pseudo-Oriental poem is largely a matter of Asiastic names and expressions hung like bangles around the brow of a very ordinary muse.

With these things in mind we may proceed to survey the pleasant Eastern land of our poetry. We may linger here; we may

pass on hurriedly there with averted gaze. Or we may pause with mingled feelings of delight and disappointment at those places where our poets have attempted to scale the mountain tops and look upon the temples of the gods.

CHAPTER II

THE COLONIAL AND EARLY NATIONAL POETS

Those who followed the paths broken by Columbus found not the rich, glamorous Orient, which he also sought, but the virgin forests of Virginia and the Carolinas and the rocky shores of New England. Instead of garnering the vast treasures of the Far East both in natural products and in literature, they set about subduing the American forests and shores to their own uses. They were through necessity men of action, and even when they dreamed, it was, in New England at least, or heaven not of the sensuous joys of this earth.

In New England the dreamers might make known their visions of an awful God and his angels, and we have in consequence, the lugubrious poems of Michael Wigglesworth. In the South the case was quite different. For a hundred years after the founding of Jamestown, literature "of any sort was tabooed. No native poet worthy even a relatively conspicuous place in our literature appeared in the South prior to the Revolution."[1] The South, however, aside from the depressing censorship of the Virginia governors, was not much worse off than the rest of America. "Such flowers of poetry as succeeded in taking root in the forbidding soil," Onderdonk says of the colonies in general, "are now generally interesting as historical curiosities rather than for any intrinsic beauty."[2] In the almost barren field of American colonial poetry, one cannot expect to find, then, the exotic blossoms of the Orient.

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1. James B. Onderdonk, History of American Verse, p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 16.

Indeed, throughout the entire colonial and early national period (to 1800) of American letters, was found little real knowledge of or interest in the true Orient. This was not entirely the fault of the colonists. Aside from Asia Minor and the contiguous countries, little was known of the Orient, especially the lands of the Far East. Do we not even today regard China and Japan as being somewhat mysterious, regions measureless to the white man? What chance had little isolated groups of settlers along the Atlantic seaboard in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of knowing of the East, except as its subtle fragrance drifted over to them from Europe, losing thereby much of its freshness and vitality?

Lack of facilities, however, for becoming acquainted with the Orient was not the only reason for the meager part which that region of the world played in the intellectual life of early America. Other and more immediately powerful interests were holding the attention of her inhabitants. The pioneering immigrants were absorbed in the problems of social security and the conquest of the wilderness at their doors. An American Indian sneaking into the maize patch behind the cabin was undoubtedly twice as stimulating to the colonial imagination, poetic or otherwise, as an East Indian rajah lolling on his jewelled throne. The interest in this latter gentleman came later when the descendants of the hardy colonials had become considerably more accustomed to the refinements of civilization. When a man spent six days a week felling trees and trying to raise enough food on his own little farm for a family, and devoted the seventh day to prayer to a stern deity, he had little time left to think about foreign lands unless he

lived near the French colonies in America. If he expressed his thoughts at all in poetry, he was more likely to sing of the strange new land in which he lived and produce a Nova Anglia or a True Relation of the Flourishing State of Pennsylvania. On the other hand, the less pictorially minded poet might give us God's Controversy with New England. The interests of the colonists were, one may note, legitimately provincial.

In a sense the self-centeredness of the colonies increased after 1765. The main interest of the country became political. Patriotic and controversial poems appeared in comparatively large numbers. The political disturbances which swept over the country between 1765 and 1789 nearly submerged religious questions and the more frivolous belletristic themes. The dominance of political subjects in literature hardly lessened before 1800. In a country fighting for its independence we cannot expect to find much of the exotic and foreign. The hearts and minds of poets were devoted to the services of the community, to the glorification of heroic leaders, and to the encouragement of armies. The Orient had no place in the struggle for American independence; hence, we find little mention of it in the literature of the period.

ii

One phase of Orientalism, nevertheless, persisted in the literature of New England from the earliest times down through the Revolution to as recently as the late nineteenth century: the Hebraic influence and inspiration. This force in the literature and life of New England had for its chief source in colonial times the Bible, both in the English translation and in the original tongues. Whether the Hebrew imagery influenced the poetry of New England is perhaps a matter

for conjecture or for thorough investigation. In any case, whatever its verbal and stylistic influences might have been, the Bible proved a fount from which the poet might draw waters the taste of which was certain to be sweet to his colonial readers.

The earliest flowering of the Hebrew inspiration was The Whole Booke of Psalms (The Bay Psalm Book) of 1640, the product of religious devotion and ecclesiastical needs.[3] This book is a poor (one might say deplorable) metrical version of the Psalms. The beautiful sonorous cadences of the King James version were discarded for a frequently warped and tortuous language in an attempt to fit the words into a form considered suitable for singing. Sung it may be, but not read for pleasure. Although the translators say "it hath beene one part of our religious care and faithfull indeavour, to keepe close to the original text,"[4] and the verses, as a consequence, retain much of the Hebrew imagery and coloring, one wishes for less literalness and more "divine fluidity." It is surprising to learn that "this portentous metrical fabric was the joint production of 'the chief divines in the country', each of whom took a separate portion of the original Hebrew for translation. . . ."[5]

The extraordinary, paradoxical feat of translation from Hebrew in the raw colonies need not astonish us when we remember the

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3. E.E. Leisy, American Literature, pp. 12-13.
4. The Bay Psalm Book, Facsimile Reprint of First Edition, Preface, p. x.
5. Moses Coit Tyler, A History of American Literature, I, p. 275.

early founding of colleges in the New England colonies by men who were themselves graduates of Oxford and Cambridge.[6] And Hebrew was one of the standard studies of the curriculum. At Harvard, "no one was deemed 'fit to be dignified with his first degree', until he was 'found able to read the originals of the Old and New Testament into the Latin tongue, and to resolve them logically'."[7] Other appalling performances, such as the rendering of Chaldee and Hebrew into Greek, were also apparently common.[8]

iii

In the midst of such erudition it is not alarming when we find the "Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America" calmly invading Clio's domains and indulging in a rhymed chronicle, one of the minor breaches of poetic decorum. Of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet's The Four Monarchies, which appeared in 1650, and of which the first two parts deal with the Assyrian and Persian empires, Charles Eliot Norton writes in his introduction to her collected poems:

> She made some little use of North's "Plutarch" in her poem on "The Four Monarchies". But this poem is mainly a mere, dry abridgment of Raleigh's "History of the World." . . . The poem is entirely tedious, being little more than a rhymed summary of events, with no spirit of exaltation in recounting the fates of great nations, and no touch of animation in the narrative of the heroic deeds of individuals. . . It is a long, conscientious, laborious work. . .I have looked in vain up and down its pages to find a verse which has the genuine tower-stamp of poetry; but I have not found one.[9]

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6. Tyler, A History of American Literature, I, p. 98.
7. Ibid., II, p. 308.
8. Ibid.
9. The Poems of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet (edited by Chas. E. Norton, 1897), Introduction, pp. xix-xx.

Being thus fortunately prepared by the editor, one may proceed to read the poem without fear of being dazzled by brilliant displays of pyro-technical rhetoric or of being disturbed by overwrought and hysterical emotion. This dreadful poem, indeed, would have been considerably improved by a somewhat milder rhetoric. The fatal humdrum beat of the lines is occasionally annoying. The work would also have been much more lively had not the respectable lady handicapped herself by deliberately avoiding those frivolous legends and stories about Cyrus (and others) which

> Are fit for such whose ears for fables itch. . .[10]

The ear of the modern reader is likely to be constantly itching during his reading of the poem.

Nevertheless, the poet at times unconsciously relieves the irritating sensation in the present-day reader's ear. Consider the startling news conveyed in the following terms:

> The Four Monarchies, The Assyrian Being the First, Beginning Under Nimrod, One Hundred and Thirty-One Years After the Flood.[11]

Mrs. Bradstreet's naïve speculations concerning the fate of the Lost Tribes of Israel (the Hebrew inspiration, again) and their possible reappearance as Indians or Chinese are also fraught with interest. In the couplet, expressing a part of this ethnological meditation,

> Or else those Chinese rare, whose wealth and arts
> Have bred more wonder than belief in hearts,"[12]

the last line states our own mental condition concerning that knowledge of the Orient which had, it is apparent, finally leaked out in

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10. The Poems of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet (edited by Chas. E. Norton, 1897), Introduction, pp. six-xx.
11. Ibid., p. 87.
12. Ibid., p. 100.

New England. The reader may spend an amusing quarter of an hour pondering upon what the good lady meant by "Chinese rare."

If one turns, however, from these and other choice bits to a search for Oriental coloring, one will be disappointed. The treatment of theme and character is purely conventional. The allusions and images are drawn from the worn-out literary stock of Europe. The poem is replete with Oriental names, highly suggestive and connotative, but the persons of the poem are mere names attached to dates and deeds. A badly woven tapestry in black and white, The Four Monarchies is without warmth and color, without the subtle fragrance of the Orient. It is dessicated ancient oriental history, nothing more.

A much more animated piece of ancient history, Thomas Godfrey's Prince of Parthia, was produced in Philadelphia about a hundred years after the composition of Mrs. Bradstreet's The Four Monarchies. The play, written in 1759 and acted in 1765, is, as its name implies, a tragedy on an Oriental subject. A prince's envy of his older brother's military prowess and nobility of nature, the rivalry of the princes and their father for the favor of a captive princess, and the jealousy and hatred of the queen, constitute the springs of the action.

The Oriental intrigue and the Oriental scene are misleading. Though the play is much more vivid than Anne Bradstreet's poem and has an emotional warmth which her chronicle lacks entirely, it is actually hardly more Oriental in background or atmosphere. The tragedy is wholly innocent of Oriental imagery. The language is rather that of a frequently unskillful mixture of Elizabethan rhetoric and Restoration rant. The setting is Oriental in much the same way that the

setting in Hamlet is Danish, or that of the Duchess of Malfi, Italian.

The play, indeed, is Elizabethan in form and manner. The blank verse is good, with not infrequent patches of some excellence. Lines here and there echo passages from the Renaissance drama of England.

See, see what streams of blood flow from its wounds,[13]

for example, recalls Marlowe's.

See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament.

But most characteristic of all of the Elizabethan manner is the song which comes in the first scene of Act V.

> Tell me, Phillis, tell me why,
> You appear so wond'rous coy,
> When that glow, and sparkling eye,
> Speak you want to taste the joy?
> Prithee give this fooling o'er
> Nor torment your lover more.[14]

By the time we have read this the Orient has faded quite away. Whatever else the play may be, a crude but sincere drama, Elizabethan in manner, touched perhaps with the extravagance of the "heroic" plays of the seventeenth century English stage, it is certainly neither Parthian nor even Asiatic. Orientalism was still coming into American literature by way of Europe.

V.

Poems on Oriental themes, however, continued to be written even in the troublous times preceding and during the War for Independence. Philip Freneau, "the poet of the Revolution," dabbled in

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13. Prince of Parthia, Moses's Representative Plays by American Dramatists, 1765-1819. IV, v. (p.92).
14. Act V, Scene 1.

Oriental material. In 1770 he wrote "The Pyramids of Egypt--A Dialogue." This discourse upon the age, use, and durability of the pyramids is an imaginative survey by a poetic tourist. The poem is somewhat romantic and elegiac in tone, Freneau indulging in a mood of pleasant melancholy over the inevitable fate of mortals. Further, the poem is Oriental only in the names. Babel, Babylon, Thebes, and Memphis are mentioned. For the rest it is colorless; even the "local color" of the pyramids is subdued to the point of extinction. The poem is interesting as a foreshadowing of the later, more romantic, enthusiasm for Oriental things.

The Orient fares no less badly in his "The Jewish Lamentation at Euphrates," a short lyrico-narrative with a Biblical atmosphere. The piece is, in fact, an imitation of Psalm CXXXVII, rather, a metrical version of it; and is another manifestation of the Hebrew element in American poetry. It must be remembered, however, that the Hebrew sacred literature had been so absorbed in the thought of Western Christianity that its distinctive foreign character had been obscured, and remained vital to some extent only in the Apocryphal literature.

A more vivid and less literary and religious treatment of Oriental material is found in Freneau's later poem "On the First American Ship, Empress of China, Capt. Greene, That Explored the Route to China, and the East-Indies, after the Revolution, 1784." An amusing mixture of patriotism and Orientalism pervades the poem, which also shows evidence of the nascent spirit of American commercial enterprise.

For us the Indian looms are free,
And Java strips her spicy tree....
Great pile proceed!--and o'er the brine
May every prosperous gale be thine,
'Till freighted deep with Asia's stores,
You reach again your native shores.

The poem, one may note, is more businesslike than romantic, but Freneau can not resist revelling a bit in the names of the exotic lands and riches of that mysterious East.

To countries placed in burning climes
And islands of remotest times
She now her eager course explores,
And soon shall greet Chinesian shores.

* * *

From thence their fragrant teas to bring
Without the leave of Britain's king,
And Porcelain ware, enchased in gold,
The product of that finer mould.

The combination of business and romantic interests deplorable as it may appear, was really one filled with possibilities and hope for the enrichment of literature. Commerce, it seemed, was fated to be one of the agencies which should bring the Orient into American poetry--and that was no little matter. Adventurous ships--romantic in themselves--were moving out to distant lands and climes. Interest had been aroused in the wonderfully rich field of the Far East. India's looms and Java's spicy trees were honeyed words upon the poet's tongue. One could but look forward to the time when the ships would return "freighted with Asia's stores."

vi.

Many years were to pass before the ship returned from "Chinesian shores" laden with the plunder of Cathay. In the meanwhile the Hebraic spirit, fully naturalized, surged up again. In 1785 appeared at Hartford, Connecticut, an ambitious epic poem by Timothy Dwight, The Conquest of Canaan, a grandiose Biblical narrative based on certain chapters from Joshua. This laborious piece, which long ago entered the dark realm of oblivion, is faintly reminiscent of a bad translation of Homer in the style and manner of an imitator of Pope. "The poem on the whole is extremely dull. The couplets grow monotonous. As biblical narrative it is not historically exact, for the author has, for artistic purposes, so he says, changed the position of the incidents and varied the story. Then, too, historic perspective is frequently marred by contemporary allusions."[15] An angel, even more obliging than Chaucer's eagle, vouchsafed to Joshua a prophecy of America, which must have no little astonished that worthy. Besides, not only contemporary allusions but also contemporary settings played their part in this remarkable work. "Into the heroic biblical narrative are woven the loves of Irad and Selima and of Iram and Mina, who take their evening strolls through the lanes and meadows of Connecticut."[16] The Hebraic spirit, so far as its material derived from the Old Testament, had become thoroughly Americanized.

Certainly the poem is lacking in any suggestion of Oriental coloring. Dwight had no intention of attempting to convey the at-

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15. James Otis, American Verse 1625-1807, p. 73.
16. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 165.

mosphere of the Near East. In his preface to the poem he admits that

> In the manners, he has studied a medium between absolute barbarism and modern refinement. In the best characters, he has endeavoured to represent such manners, as are removed from the peculiarities of any age, or country, and might belong to the amiable and virtuous, of every age.. ...Of such manners, he hopes he may observe, without impropriety, that they possess the highest advantages for universal application.[17]

After reading this statement, we are no longer disturbed over the fact that the only suggestion of the Oriental in the poem is in the names and in the purely conventional background. The Hebraic spirit despised the frills and frivolous trinkets of the more languorous regions of the East.

vii.

The colorless verse of Dwight's The Conquest of Canaan is representative of the state of most of American poetry before the nineteenth century. Color in general, and Oriental color in particular, was notably lacking in the early verse productions in this country. That Oriental color was lacking is to be expected. Little was known of the Oriental literatures aside from the Hebrew. The imagery of the Orient had not yet become familiar to Western ears.

The scarcity of poems on Oriental themes is likewise not unusual in the earliest periods of American poetry. The colonial era was one first of settlement and slow expansion, and then later of political disturbances. Religion and colonization and early occupied the attention of American writers, and later these subjects

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17. Timothy Dwight, The Conquest of Canaan, (1785), Preface.

were displaced by the excitement attendant on the founding of a new nation. The interests of the colonists and the citizens of the new republic were limited by their circumstances and environment. Their attention to home problems prevented their becoming absorbed in other and more ancient civilizations and literatures. In these early times the cultural and material foundations of the country were being laid. That energetic curiosity concerning foreign people and foreign thought which was to enrich our literature to a great extent was to come only in the following centuries.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY ROMANTIC POETS

Throughout the nineteenth century interest in the Orient increased among American poets. Although in the early part of the century the Hebraic inspiration with its double fountain of Biblical and Apocryphal lore continued in importance, the growing influences of the Romantic impulse not only gave more animation to Hebrew scenes but also turned the attention of the poets to the rich treasures of the far-away lands of the Orient proper. The faint romantic tint in the Oriental poems of Freneau deepened in color by the middle of the century, but attained the most vivid and exotic hue only with the publication of Bayard Taylor's Poems of the Orient. Perhaps under the stimulus of the English Romantic poets, especially Byron and Campbell, the nineteenth century poets of America attempted to handle themes drawn from Oriental history and romance, and as a consequence, the number of poems with Oriental titles grew steadily during this century.

Most of these poets, aside from Emerson and the Transcendentalists, had only an incidental interest in the Orient. The romantic glamourof the East attracted them for the most part, not the fundamental Oriental thought which irresistibly drew Emerson to the study of Hindu philosophy. Forming no school and having little personal contact, they have nothing in common save their slight use of Oriental themes and settings. A discussion of them is necessarily, then, somewhat disjointed; they form no group, and must be considered individually.

ii.

The Hebrew inspiration was continued in the nineteenth century chiefly by poets who, with the exception of Bryant, are little read today. Further, Hillhouse is the only one of the group in the early nineteenth century whose Oriental studies form an important part of his poetical work. "The work by which James A. Hillhouse (1789-1841) is chiefly remembered, if he is remembered at all, is his so-called 'sacred drama' of 'Hadad', written in 1824. In this the agency of the supernatural is invoked."[1] This mingling of the supernatural and the human, and especially the appearance of an evil demon in human form, gives the poem something of the atmosphere of Poe's work. Although the Oriental coloring is more conspicuous in the drama than in the "Tamerlane" or "Al Araaf" of the latter, it is still comparatively slight, and is chiefly given in the speeches, in which ornate adjectives and highly significant nouns are superabundant. The distinctive Hebrew character is given the play by the dramatis personae, among whom are David, Absalom, and Solomon, and by the loftiness of moral tone.

The stern Hebrew temper which had begun to soften in the romantic drama of Hillhouse became wholly flaccid in the sentimental sensibilities of Mrs. Lydia Sigourney. In a shadowy Palestine are laid the scenes of her "Aaron on Mount Hor," "Abraham at Machpelan," "The Ark and the Dove," "Barzillai the Gileadite," "Filial Piety of David," and "The Prince of Edom." Of these the "Prince of Edom" is one of the best. Least sentimental of the group, it is developed with

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1. Onderdonk's History of American Poetry, p. 152.

the right amount both of feeling and of restraint. But even here the Oriental coloring fades away in emotionalism. Mrs. Sigourney indeed represented pseudo-Orientalism at its worst.

A "vague intensity of feeling that verges on the absurd"[2] also characterizes the Oriental poem of Mrs. Maria Gowen Brooks, Zophiel, or the Bride of Seven (1833). The subject of this long poem "was suggested by the story of Sara in the Apocryphal book of Tobit. The incidents turn upon the love of a fallen angel, Zophiel, for a beautiful and passively lovely Hebrew maiden. . . ."[3] The "whole performance is marred by a constant striving for effect, a lavish display of second-hand learning. . . ."[4] "Amid much that is strained, overdrawn, and obscure, in this strange jumble of classic and oriental mythology, is an occasional passage that narrowly misses being beautiful."[5] The modern reader is perhaps inclined to overlook these passages and to note particularly the lush, sirupy quality of the work. Such sweet luxuriance brings something of the Orient into the poem; but in general, the poet attempts to suggest the Oriental atmosphere by the use a profusion of adjectives and the introduction into the action of daemonic creatures having an intimate acquaintance with Jehovah.

In contradistinction to Mrs. Sigourney and Mrs. Brooks, William Cullen Bryant handled Biblical themes with the proper dignity and restraint. His manner probably resulted from his metaphysics, which was "predominantly that of the Old Testament."[6] The austerity with

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2. Onderdonk, p. 159.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 266.

which he treated the story of Rizpah--the feeling intensified by his very restraint--shows his kinship with the writers of the earlier portions of the Bible.

"Rizpah" represents one of Bryant's rare strayings from the fields of the meditative poem and the descriptive nature poem. Three other poems on Oriental subjects intrude into these quiet pastures: "Fatima and Radman" and "The Death of Aliatar," translations from the Spanish, and "The Massacre at Scio." All of these lack the austerity of "Rizpah." The former two have something of the soft shimmer and delicacy of Irving's The Alhambra; while "The Massacre at Scio" is a sympathetic poem on one phase of the Greek struggle for independence against the Turks. Having little obvious Orientalism in them, these poems illustrate Bryant's ability to stray widely within restricted bounds rather than add anything new to American poetry.

iii.

A more vigorous poem than Bryant's "Massacre at Scio" is Fitz-Greene Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris" (1825), "a spirited martial lyric on the Greeks' struggle for freedom from the Turks."[7] The poem, while notable for its stirring meter and its glowing enthusiasm for the prowess of the heroic Greek leader and his companions, is lacking in Oriental material entirely, except for the "flashing falchion" of the Turk. Even less Orientalism enters into Halleck's attempt to produce

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7. Bronson, Walter, Short History of American Literature, p. 114.

a metrical version of Psalm CXXXVII. His paraphrase of this deservedly popular psalm is decidedly less smooth than the earlier version of Freneau. The willow trees (salix babylonica) alone are fresh and vivid and Oriental.

iv.

When we turn from the sterility of the Biblical and Apocryphal poetry of the early nineteenth century to the Oriental poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, we enter a thoroughly different world. No Old Testament saints or sinners are forced into a semblance of life in the melodies of the Southern poet. A conqueror of the Middle East, a Mohammedan angel, or strange spirits who dwell between earth and sky glide through the dim dusk of his Oriental poetry. The austerity of a Bryant, the sentimentality of a Lydia Sigourney give way to the "honeyed fancies that cloy the too sweet lines of Al Araaf."[8] A new poet has turned the East to his own artistic purposes.

It was long, however, before his artistry in the Oriental field reached its maturity in the mellifluous grace of "Israfel." Tamerlane (1827, afterwards revised) and Al Araaf (1829) are somewhat crude performances. Nevertheless, despite their obscurity and overrichness, the two poems have the subtle, mysterious quality which we are prone to associate with the half unknown regions of the Middle East. Perhaps growing out of the Gothic romanticism which influenced Poe in his fiction,[9] this quality was yet one which had been lacking heretofore in the Oriental poetry produced by Americans.

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8. Allen, Hervey, Israfel, I, p. 173.
9. Cambridge History of American Literature, II, p. 68.

A comparison of "Tamerlane" and "Al Araaf" will reveal that the former is somewhat deficient in this authentic atmosphere. Here the leonine hero of Marlowe becomes a strangely meditative king, weighing love and ambition in the balance of life. Such a change is not uncharacteristic of Poe, but is perhaps one of the factors which prevent the poem from having the purely Oriental coloring which is rather more conspicuous in "Al Araaf". But even in this latter poem, turgid and somewhat incoherent, the bright Oriental stars are obscured by a mass of clouds. The Orient is lost in the mid-region of the air. The melody of the lines is interwoven with general and inexact allusions. The dwelling of the star goddess is adorned with

> Freizes from Tadmor and Persepolis--
> From Balbec, and the stilly, clear abyss
> Of beautiful Gomorrah! [10]

"Persian Saadi in his Gulistan" also contributes to the heterogenous collection of scraps of Oriental material. Oriental as the poem is in spirit, there is in it

> Nothing earthly save the ray
> (Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eyes.. [11]

"Nothing earthly" appears in the beautiful lyric "Israfel" (1831), for

> In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
> Whose heart-strings are a lute. [12]

Israfel treads the skies

> Where the Houri glances are
> Imbued with all the beauty
> Which we worship in a star. [13]

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10. "Al Araaf" (1829), ll. 194-6.
11. Ibid., ll. 1-2.
12. "Israfel" (1845 text), ll. 102.
13. Ibid. ll. 25-28.

The Houri and Poe's note at the beginning of the poem help us to locate both the heaven in which Israfel dwells--the Mohammedan Paradise--and the country to which the heaven belongs--Arabia. Of course, the quotation from the Koran is not authentic. "Professor Woodberry points out... .that the quotation: 'And the angel Israfel, who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures,'. . .which is prefixed to Poe's poem Israfel and attributed to the Koran is not in the Koran at all but in Sale's Preliminary Discourse, which is quoted in an explanatory note to Tom Moore's Lalla Rookh, from which Poe took it."[14] The clause "whose heart-strings are a lute" was added by Poe; it is found neither in Moore, Sale, nor the Koran.[15] Poe's inaccurate scholarship certainly does not affect the poetical quality of his work, and only illustrates here how he might turn the Orient to his own uses.

Orientalism in Poe is so blended with his own poetic personality that it merges into the general scheme of his work. He merged Orientalism with his peculiar imagination and in doing so he added a new element to the former--the subtle mysteriousness which pervaded so much of his poetry as well as his prose.

V.

Poe's individual use of Oriental material had little immediate influence. His contemporaries were still concerned overmuch with didacticism. Scriptural themes, which easily lent themselves to

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14. Krutch, Joseph Wood, Edgar Allan Poe, p. 96.
15. Ibid.

the inculcating of a moral, were used to the point of excess throughout the nineteenth century. Now and then a poet like Bayard Taylor burst the constricting bands of Hebrew-Puritan conventionality, but his colorful song was almost lost in the moral chant of the New England poets. It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that the immorality of Poe was revived in the cult of the East among the Late Romantics.

Among the most indefatigable of the "Scriptural" poets was Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-1867). "It is the fashion nowadays," says Bronson in his Short History of American Literature, "to sneer at Willis' 'milk-and-water' paraphrases of Scripture stories."[16] But although Willis was not particularly strong and original in his treatment of his themes, he does succeed in giving an Oriental quality to his poems by his use of imagery and his specific allusions. Frequently, as in "Jephthah's Daughter" and in "Rizpah and her Sons," his sketching in of the psychology of the characters and their background makes a poem not without interest. A mere restatement of Scripture stories, however, will not produce Oriental poems. Furthermore, even in "The Scholar of Thebet Ben Khorat," the Arabian setting and imagery of which add color to the poem, Willis has little real interest in the Orient. The moral Hebrew literature attracts him, not the sweet melodies of Persia and the Far East.

Although his poetical interest in the East was much wider than Willis's, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's most ambitious work in this

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16. P. 115.

field was in Scriptural poetry. The Divine Tragedy (1871), which forms the first part of Christus: A Mystery, is a dramatization of the chief events in the later life of Christ from the Wedding at Cana to the Resurrection. It is in part a paraphrase of Biblical passages and also contains almost exact quotations from the New Testament. Christian in spirit, the definitely Oriental element is not noticeable, for the setting is general and formal. Many passages are characterized by parallelism in thought and phrase, but it is impossible to determine whether Longfellow was directly imitating the Hebrew poetical device or not.

The Judas Maccabaeus (1872), based on the Apocryphal story, is a series of scenes, loosely connected, with some emotional depth. The Eastern coloring and setting are prominent, but the saccarhine ending is reminiscent of other endings effected in the Golden Age of New England poetry.

Luckily, Longfellow did not confine himself to Scriptural and Apocryphal themes. The numerous shorter poems in which he tried his art on Oriental subjects are decidedly more interesting than the weak pseudo-dramas. In the Tales of a Wayside Inn, two of the tales of the Spanish Jew are taken, so the poet tells us, "from the Talmud old."[17] "The Legend of Rabbi Ben Levin" is a Jewish legend of the man who entered into Paradise without dying; while "Azrael" touches upon the magic powers of Solomon. These two poems and "Kambalu," a vigorous metrical version of a tale of a miserly caliph, are without much obviously Oriental

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17. Collected Poems (1893), p. 213 (Interlude)

decoration, yet have a distinctly Eastern flavor, subtle and hard to analyze.

Among his minor poems on Oriental themes are "Sandalphon," a poem of Talmudic origin on the angel of the same name; "Belisarius," a piece of ancient history versified; "Keramos," a song of the potter, concerning imaginary journeys through lands famous for ceramics--the Oriental countries included are Egypt, China, and Japan; "King Trisanku," a didactic poem on a Hindu subject; and "Haroun al Raschid." None of these is particularly notable, except the last-mentioned, which is written in couplets, perhaps reminiscent of the Persian couplet. All of them are more or less conventionally Oriental. Longfellow strikes a more genuine note in his "Translations from Eastern Sources." Among these poems, "The Fugitive, a Tartar Song," with its swiftly flowing meter, gives one an impression, at least, of the music of the East. "The Seige of Kazan" also has something of the East in its

> Black are the moors before Kazan
> And their stagnant waters smell of blood.[18]

Despite a not infrequently genuine note in his Oriental poems, Longfellow's contribution to the Orient in American poetry is inconsiderable. Judas and The Divine Tragedy are practically forgotten today. While many of the shorter poems have more strength and Oriental vividness, they have for the most part also fallen into obscurity. The time was perhaps not ripe for the man who had introduced so much

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18. Collected Poems (1893), p. 639.

of European culture into American thought and poetry to make known also the rich literary spoils of Asia.

Another of the Brahmins of Boston who tried his hand at Eastern poems was James Russell Lowell. His work in this field, however, is disappointing. Practically all of his poems on Oriental themes are heavily didactic. Even "The Oriental Apologue" has no sparkle; it is a curious mixture of humor and Orientalism with a strongly moralizing tone pervading the whole. There is in it a considerable amount of Asiatic color freely mingled with a great deal of nonsense, nonsense being, nevertheless, only a lace frill to the poet's disapproval of alien religious practices. Besides the "Apologue" and an insignificant quatrain, "In a Copy of Omar Khayyam," Lowell wrote a few pieces of the pseudo-Oriental type: "Mahmood the Image-Breaker," "Yussouf," and "What Rabbi Jehosha Said." These are, for the most part, general in setting and atmosphere, with no particularly Eastern note, and are weighted down with New England didacticism, the curse of the era.

vi.

We are inclined to think, before we examine his work, that the New England Whittier is the least likely of American poets to have anything Oriental in his poetry. We are not surprised that the widely read Longfellow and other more "romantic" poets made use of Oriental subjects in their poetry; we are not surprised that the eclectic Emerson turned to the Orient for literary models in his poetry; but, says Mr. Arthur Christy in an article on Whittier, "that Emerson's

contemporary, Whittier, a Quaker who staunchly held to his ancestral faith, should offer in his poetic work more poems on Oriental themes, more paraphrases of Oriental maxims and more imitations of Oriental models than may be found in Emerson's verse, is a distinct anomaly."[19] Nevertheless, throughout his whole poetic career, from the immature "Judith at the Tent of Holofernes" in 1829 to "Hymns of the Brahmo Somaj" in 1885, Whittier made constant use of Oriental themes, subjects, and models.

Whittier's Oriental poems fall into two different classes. The first has been termed the "Abou Ben Adhem" class,[20] "in which would be placed such poems as 'The Khan's Devil,' 'Rabbi Ishmael,' 'Requital,' and 'Miriam,' poems which have pseudo-Oriental settings and themes or general and inexact allusions and narratives. The second class consists of poems which have a definite literary model or text taken from the English translations of Oriental scriptures which began to appear in the first half of the nineteenth century."[21]

Whittier's earliest poems belong to the first class. Many of them are Hebrew in origin and inspiration. "Judith at the Tent of Holofernes" (1829) is one of his first attempts in the field. It, like the equally immature "Evening in Burmah" (1833), is somewhat stumbling, and is characterized by a conventional use of Oriental material. Although Whittier never seems thoroughly romantic, he shows in these two poems an early interest in the names of Oriental birds,

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19. Arthur Christy, "Orientalism in New England: Whittier," American Literature, (January, 1930), p. 372.
20. Ibid., p. 375. Abou Ben Adhem, the hero of Leigh Hunt's poem learned from an angelic vision that one who loved his fellow-man stood first in the regard of God.
21. Ibid., p. 375.

flowers, and cities, and in the use of appropriate adjectives accompanying them. Between 1830 and 1859 Whittier produced a series of religious poems, inspired by the Bible and by Christian missions. These reveal a mingling of religious emotion and a delight in the far away and long ago:

> Strange birds up on the branches swung,
> Strange insect voices murmured there.[22]

Whittier was evidently feeling the lure of the Orient, which came to him through his reading and perhaps through his interest in missionary activities. In another poem of this early group, "Haschish" (1854), Whittier oddly mingled his interest in the Orient with his attack on slavery. He writes

> Of all that Orient lands can vaunt,

including Dervishes, Almeh dances, and the "poppy visions of Cathay" which haschish can produce, and then turns to strike at the slaveholders:

> O patent plant! So rare a taste
> Has never Turk or Gentoo gotten;
> The hempen Haschish of the East
> Is powerless to our Western Cotton!

Whittier thus began his practice of turning the Orient to his own uses. Nevertheless, with all his easy playing with highly suggestive and connotative Oriental terms, except for "The Star of Bethlehem," "Judith," "Evening in Burmah," and "Haschish," he makes little use of Oriental material in his early poems of the first class.

More nearly of what Mr. Christy calls the "Abou Ben Adhem"

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22. "Star of Bethlehem", Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier, II, p. 188.

type are "The Two Rabbins" (1868), "King Solomon and the Ants" (1877), "The Khan's Devil" (1879), "Rabbi Ishmael" (1880), and "Requital" (1885). Predominantly of moral interest, they are concerned with problems of human conduct rather than with conveying a picture of the East. Although the poems are filled with desert, mosques, the maids of Samarcand, and Oriental queens, they contribute but little to Orientalism in Whittier's poetry. They reveal, however, a nascent realization of the imaginative value of Oriental names and places.

Several other poems, which for the sake of convenience may be assigned to Whittier's earlier manner in the treatment of Oriental material, indicate the poet's growing interest in the religion and thought of India, the material of his later method. These transition poems are not based upon Hindu models, but give evidence of his familiarity with Hindu thought. "The Over-Heart" (1859), one of the earliest, is in part a poetic statement of one phase of Hindu mysticism.

> And India's mystics sang aright
> Of the One Life pervading all,--
> One Being's tidal rise and fall
> In soul and form, in sound and sight,--
> Eternal outflow and recall.[23]

As is usual with him, however, Whittier turns the poem into a praise of Christianity and its law of Love. (Of this particular method we shall see more evidence later.) "Miriam" (1870), a poem of a quite different type from "The Over-Heart," is the natrative of Shah Akbar and his Christian favorite. It is concerned with religion in general rather than Oriental life and thought. Again, Whittier attaches a "moral"

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23. Writings, II, pp. 249-50.

to his story:

> Truth is one;
> And, in all lands beneath the sun,
> Whoso hath eyes to see may see
> The tokens of its unity.....
> In Vedic verse, in dull Koran,
> Are messages of good to man.....[24]

This didactic and Christian attitude of Whittier is further shown in "The Vision of Echard" (1878), a later poem which must be classed with the "transitional" group. Gone, he writes,

> is the Mount of Menu,
> The triple gods are gone,
> And, deaf to all the lama's prayers,
> The Buddha slumbers on,[25]

and then he asserts a doctrine which is reminiscent of that expressed by Emerson in "Brahma":

> The eye shall fail that searches
> For me the hollow sky;
> The far is even as the near,
> The low is as the high.[26]

Whittier, however, makes a different application of the idea. His is the orthodox Quaker view. "The far and near" is Christ in the heart, the inner light of the Quaker.

"The Vision of Echard" was the last of Whittier's poems in the pseudo-Oriental manner. By 1872 he had begun writing the series of poems of the second class, poems based directly on Oriental (Hindu) sources and literary models. Whittier prefaced most of these with introductory notes, indicating, usually indefinitely, the source of

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24. Writings, I, p. 293.
25. Ibid., II, p. 319.
26. Ibid., II, p. 320.

his inspiration. Mr. Christy has followed up the poet's hints and has succeeded in locating most of the passages in translations of the various Oriental works on which this set of poems is based.

"It is not generally known", Christy writes, "that the 'Brewing of Soma'. . .is based on a passage from the Vedas. The poem commences with what purports to be a quotation from the Vashista, translated by Max Muller:

> These libations mixed with milk have been prepared
> for Indra: offer Soma to the drinker of Soma."[27]

In a footnote to his article the investigator adds: "I do not find the passage in The Sacred Books of the East. Whittier credited the passage to Max Muller, probably as the editor of the series and not the translator, for it was Georg Buhler who rendered the Vashista into English."[28] Whittier's poem begins with a description of the brewing of Soma-juice by the Brahmins and the wild orgy of the priests which follows the sacrifice to Indra. Disapproval of this practice is mingled with appreciation of

> The simple prayers to Soma's grace,
> The Vedic verse embalms.[29]

The poem concludes with a Christian turn, part of which is expressed in

> And yet the past comes round again,
> And new doth old fulfil;
> In sensual transports wild as vain
> We brew in many a Christian lane
> The heathen Soma still.[30]

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27. American Literature, I, p. 375-6.
28. Ibid., p. 376.
29. Writings, II, p. 292.
30. Ibid., p. 293.

This poem clearly illustrates Whittier's usual method: "he starts with a passage or a situation in Oriental literature which interests him, restates this briefly, and then concludes with a Christian moral."[31]

"The Cypress-Tree of Ceylon" follows the general plan of "The Brewing of Soma." There is the picture of the Yogis watching patiently, undisturbed by the life around them, for the falling leaf with its magic properties, and the concluding moral, containing the stanza,

> Or shall the stir of outward things
> Allure and claim the Christian's eye,
> When on the heathen watcher's ear
> Their powerless murmurs die?[32]

Like the "Brewing" the poem is introduced by a prose passage concerning Ibn Batuta, "the celebrated Mussulman traveller of the fourteenth century." Christy comments in a footnote on this reference as follows:

> In my search for the source from which Whittier drew this information, I was able to secure only one English translation of Ibn Batuta's book, The Travels of Ibn Batuta, translated by the Rev. Samuel Lee and published by the Oriental Translation Committee in London, 1809. Whittier's poem appeared in 1841, and this is very probably the edition he read.[33]

"The poem ends with a prayer characteristic of Whittier's religious verse."[34]

Another religious poem in which the "moral" is an integral part of the poem instead of being grafted on at the end is "Giving and Taking" (1877). Whittier introduces the poem with the following note:

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31. Christy, American Literature, I, p. 376.
32. Writings, I, p. 52.
33. Christy, p. 376.
34. Christy, American Literature, I, p. 377.

> I have attempted to put into English verse
> a prose translation of a poem by Tinnevaluva,
> a Hindu poet of the third century of our era.[35]

Christy asserts the name of the Hindu poet should be Tiruvalluvar instead of Tinnevaluva, and thinks that it is most likely Whittier used the Rev. W.H. Drew's translation, The Cural of Tiruvalluvar, First Part; with the Commentary of Parimelaragar (American Mission Press, Madras, 1840).[36] Aside from the mention of "seven-fold birth," "lives to come," and "Sivam's mercy," there is little that is strictly Oriental in the poem. It has, rather, a general theistic and ethical import not pertaining to any particular religious system.

The ethical interest is predominant in a group of poems in which is seen a "resemblance to Emerson's treatment of excerpts from the ethnic scriptures in verse, particularly in 'Brahma' and 'Hamatreya'."[37] This group, "Oriental Maxims", consists of three paraphrases from Sanskrit translations. Whittier gives his general source for each poem, but neither the translator nor the exact lines. "The Inward Judge" (1875) is from The Institutes of Manu;[38] "Laying up Treasure" (1881), from The Mahabharata;[39] and "Conduct" (1881), from The Mahabharata.[40] As in "Giving and Taking," practically no Oriental coloring appears in these three poems. Only their sources are Oriental. Mr. Christy has also attempted to solve the problem of the exact sources. He says in part:

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35. Writings, II, p. 314.
36. Christy, p. 383 and footnote.
37. Ibid., pp. 377-8.
38. Writings, II, p. 329.
39. Ibid., p. 330.
40. Ibid., p. 330.

> In 1875 there appeared in London John Muir's Religious and Moral Sentiments Metrically Rendered from Sanskrit Writers, with an Introduction, and an Appendix Containing Exact Translations in Prose. This volume was followed four years later, 1879, by an enlarged edition which was entitled Metrical Translations from the Sanskrit Writers, with an Introduction, Prose Versions, and Parallel Passages from Classical Authors. These volumes contained brief translations of maxims, proverbs, and famous passages from Sanskrit literature. . . .And that they were his models seems conclusive not only from the closeness in certain instances of the phraseology, but from the fact that the excerpts generally correspond in length. . .These considerations, taken in conjunction with the dearth of translations similar to Muir's at the time Whittier wrote, leave little room for doubt that Whittier's source has been discovered. . . .[41]
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> Even if the closeness in diction between Whittier's "Oriental Maxims" and Muir's prose translations does not entirely preclude the possibility of Whittier's having secured his models from another source, the exact lines in the Institutes of Manu and the Mahabharata which were used have been unquestionably determined.[42]

Strikingly different from Whittier's moral and religious poems is the poem which he wrote in 1879, "The Dead Feast of the Kol-Folk." This eerie piece is entirely objective and free from any moral or religious preoccupation on the part of the poet. "Here," says Christy, "is Whittier in what might be termed the role of the poet-anthropologist."[43] Whittier felt it necessary to explain this peculiar chant in a prose preface, which follows in part:

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41. American Literature, I, p. 378-9.
42. Ibid., p. 382. Christy quotes parallel line and passage in his article.
43. Ibid., p. 385.

> E.B. Taylor in his Primitive Culture, chapter xii, gives an account of the reverence paid the dead by the Kol tribes of Chot, Nagpur, Assam. . . .[Here follows a detailed description of the rites.] . . . In the Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal, vol. ix., p. 795, is a Ho dirge.[44]

The indefatigable Mr. Christy has examined the dirge to which Whittier refers, and indicates that the American poet drew from the explanatory context of the article in the Journal of the Asiatic Society as well as from the dirge itself.[45] The stanza quoted below will illustrate the manner of this singular poem:

We have opened the door!
For the feast of souls
We have kindled the coals
  We may kindle no more!
Snake, fever, and famine,
The curse of the Brahmin,
  The sun and the dew,
They burn us, they bite us,
They waste us and smite us;
  Our days are but few!
In strange lands far yonder
To wonder and wander
  We hasten to you.
List then to our sighing,
  While yet we are here:
Nor seeing nor hearing,
We wait without fearing,
  To feel you draw near.
O dead, to the dying
  Come home!

In the quoted stanza appears most of the obvious Oriental coloring of the poem.

Almost as peculiar as "The Dead Feast of the Kol-Folk" are the "Hymns of the Brahmo Somaj" (1885). In the preface, quoted below, which indicates his source, as well as suggests the reason for his

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44. Writings, I, p. 375.
45. Christy, p. 385.
46. Writings, I, p. 378.

interest in the hymn, the appeal to a Quaker of a "fresh revelation of the direct action of the Divine Spirit upon the human heart":

> I have attempted this paraphrase of the Hymns of the Brahmo Somaj of India, as I find them in Mozoomdar's [Mozoomdar was one of the leaders in the modern theistic church, the Brahmo Somaj, founded in India in the second quarter of the nineteenth century][47] account of the devotional exercises of that remarkable religious development which has attracted far less attention and sympathy from the Christian world than it deserves, as a fresh revelation of the direct action of the Divine Spirit upon the human heart.[48]

Concerning this prefatory note, Christy states: "I have been unable to find in Mozoomdar's books any trace of hymns that Whittier could have used as models for his paraphrases. . . .There is the possibility that because of his intense interest in the Brahmo Somaj, Whittier in some way secured first-hand information of the ritual and hymnology of the movement."[49]

In the "Hymns" Whittier reiterates his steadfast Christian faith in the presence of alien religions. His interest in Oriental literature, unlike that of Emerson's, was permeated with his Christianity.[50] His attitude toward Oriental thought was that of the Quaker orthodoxy of his time.[51] Emerson worshipped at the shrine of Oriental philosophy, but to Whittier the Brahmins were "dark-minded" and the Bible was

> Fraught with sublimer mysteries than all
> The sacred tomes of Vedas. . .[52]

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47. Christy, p. 390.
48. Writings, II, p. 340.
49. Christy, pp. 391-2.
50. Christy, pp. 392.
51. Christy, p. 372.
52. Writings, IV, p. 355. ("Evening in Burmah").

The Christian element which Whittier introduced into his poems based on Oriental models was one thing which distinguished them. Another thing was the prevailing ethical element in his poetry. "It was the moral tone which appealed to him in the selections from The Institutes of Manu and the Mahabharata for his 'Oriental Maxims.' It was again from Tiruvalluvar, reputed to be the foremost ethical writer of the Hindus, that he chose the passage which was rendered into the poem 'Giving and Taking'. . . .He was a humanitarian, tolerant and kindly in spirit, who took from the stream of Oriental influence which entered the thought-life of his time the ethical and moral principles with which he sympathised. But he never relinquished the Christian spectacles through which he read."[53]

vii.

Even before Whittier had begun his later series of Oriental poems, Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-1886) employed Oriental material; in no distinguished manner, it must be confessed. His "Krishna and His Three Handmaidens" is an Oriental narrative, entirely devoid of Oriental color, except for the bare mention of lands and gods. It is somewhat didactic in tone, as are most of Hayne's Oriental poems. In this respect they are not entirely dissimilar from Whittier's, except that they show a lighter touch and are not as definitely Christian as those of the New England poet. In "Gautama," a later poem, Hayne, like Whittier,

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53. Christy, p. 392.

voices his disapproval of alien religions:

> Millions of souls hath this dread creed enticed
> To wander lost through realms of baleful breath.[54]

On the other hand, "Queen Galena, or the Sultana Betrayed," a youthful poem, is entirely lacking in didacticism as well, one may add, as in sensuousness and Oriental imagery. "Cambyses and the Macrobian Bow" is of the same general type as "Queen Galena," as is "The Lotos and The Lily," which is introduced by the following note:

> The little poems which follow were suggested by an Oriental idea developed in Alger's "Specimens of Eastern Poetry." The moon is strangely spoken of as masculine.[55]

Two other poems, "The Visit of Mahmoud Ben Suleim to Paradise" and "The Valley of Anostan," are of the "Abou Ben Adhem" type. They are general or inexact in setting and atmosphere, and implicitly didactic in tone. It is indeed not unfair to say that Hayne contributed nothing original to Orientalism in American literature.

Hayne's compatriot, Sidney Lanier, also made a very slight contribution to this field. His early poem, "Nirvana," which appeared in The Southern Magazine in 1871, has an Oriental basis and has a considerable amount of Oriental imagery. Lanier has used a Hindu religious conception to express his own feelings:

> The storm of self below me rage and die.
> On the still bosom of mine ecstasy,
> A lotus on a lake of balm, I lie
> Forever in Nirvana.[56]

The poem, while original and unusual at this time, is of very little importance. It merely serves to show the growing familiarity of American poets with Oriental ideas.

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54. Poems of Paul Hamilton Hayne, (1882), p. 329.
55. Ibid., p. 144.
56. Poems of Sidney Lanier (1888), p. 212.

viii.

In spite of the dominance of the romantic impulse, the East in most of the early romantic poets of America was inextricably mingled with didacticism. In Poe alone was the ethical element entirely wanting. The Southern poet represents the continuation of the purely aesthetic treatment of Oriental material which was begun by Thomas Godfrey. This line of development reached the "art for art's sake" stage with the late romantics at the close of the nineteenth century, and the consequent freedom from ethical questions is preserved in the Oriental poetry of the twentieth century.

Another phase of Orientalism developed during the time of the early romantics. With the earlier poets, the Orient was a subject for poetry, but with the advent of Whittier into the field a change was made. In Whittier, the Orient was not so much a subject as an influence. He based his later poems directly upon Eastern sources, often producing paraphrases of various Asiatic writings. From Whittier's day on the influence of the Orient has increased immensely. Before the cult of the East among the metropolitan poets at the end of the century, Oriental influence perhaps attained its greatest power in the work of Emerson, the romantic philosopher.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMANTIC PHILOSOPHERS: EMERSON AND THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

The religious changes in New England in the eighteen twenties provided one of the main channels through which the stream of Orientalism entered American poetry. The complete decay of Calvinistic Puritanism and the resultant Unitarian revival brought newer and wider interests to the people of the region. Dissatisfied with the limitations of empiricism as a compensation for the breakdown of faith, "thinkers like Emerson turned to the idealistic philosophy of Kant that had come to them by way of Coleridge and Carlyle. Unitarianism thus modified by European idealism became known as Transcendentalism."[1]

"Transcendentalism," says Frothingham, "its most penetrating historian," "was a distinct philosophical system. Practically it was an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically it was an assertion of the immanence of divinity in instinct, the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind."[2] Upon this basis was erected a metaphysical structure "similar in its main outlines to the leading Platonic and idealistic philosophies of the past."[3] In addition to the contributions to transcendental thought not only of Platonism but also of American idealism, there were "distilled in the New England alembic" French Revolutionary dogmas, German

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1. E.E. Leisy, American Literature, p. 77.
2. O.B. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England, p. 136.
3. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 335.

philosophy, and Oriental mysticism.[4]

"This mention of the East is suggestive of all the weaknesses of transcendentalism: its tendency to neglect proximate and to refer everything to primal causes; its attempt to attain the spiritual not by subduing but by turning its back on the material; its proneness to substitute passivity and receptiveness for alertness and creative force; its traces of a paralysing pantheism and fatalism; its ineffectualness; its atrophy of will. . . .

"But who can doubt that there is in it also something of the precise opposite of all this, the strange union of which with its Oriental elements makes it precisely the unique thing it is? Who can doubt that in speaking the last word of transcendentalism we should come back from India, even from Europe, to Concord and Boston? For, at bottom, it is the strong local flavour of it all, a smell of the soil through the universal generalizations, a dash of Yankee practicality in the midst of the Oriental mysticism, a sturdy Puritan pugnacity and grasp of fact underneath its serenest and most Olympian detachments, that gives this movement its reality and grip, and rescues it in large part not only from the ineffectiveness of the East but from the sentimental, the romantic, and the anarchic excesses of many of its related European movements."[5]

American Transcendentalism, however, had much of the complexity of these kindred movements in Europe. The "interest in German thought

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4. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 346.
5. Ibid., I, p. 347.

and in English romantic literature. . .was but the beginning of a wider literary and philosophical awakening which brought with it increasing attention to general European literature, a revitalized attitude toward the classics, and considerable exploration in the realms of Neo-Platonic philosophy and Oriental 'Scriptures.'"[6]

The widely varying interests of the Transcendentalists were well represented in the Dial, a quarterly magazine, which first appeared in 1840, with Margaret Fuller as editor. In 1842 Miss Fuller resigned the editorship, and Emerson assumed the position until the magazine was discontinued in 1844. "Under his management its character changed considerably, becoming less literary and more reformatory. . . .The first number of the third volume also begins a series of selections from the great bibles of the world, made by Emerson, Thoreau, and others. Probably this was the first effort to bring to the notice of Americans the wisdom and the beauties of other scriptures than those of the Hebrews and Christians. It was a most notable indication of the spirit and temper of Emerson's thought."[7] The first of these selections, one from the Veeshnoo Sarma, appeared in July, 1842, prefaced by the following note:

> We commence in the present number the printing of a series of selections from the oldest ethical and religious writings of men, exclusive of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Each nation has its bible more or less pure; none has yet been willing or able in a wise and devout spirit to collate its own with those of other nations, and sinking the civil-historical and the ritual portions to bring together the grand

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6. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 332.
7. G.W. Cooke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 85.

> expressions of the moral sentiment in different ages and races, the rules for the guidance of life, the bursts of piety and of abandonment to the invisible and Eternal;. . .[8]

In subsequent issues were selections from The Laws of Menu (January, 1843), and under the title of Ethnical Scriptures, "Sayings of Confucius" (April, 1843), "Extracts from the Desartir" (July, 1843), "Chinese Four Books" (October, 1843). "The Preaching of Buddha" and "Chaldean Oracles" were published in January, 1844, and April, 1844, respectively. Besides these morsels, Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem" and Ferdinand Freiligrath's "The Moorish Prince" (translated by C.T. Brooks) were also offered to the readers of the Dial for their delectation, as were several poems from Emerson's pen. Among other contributors to this rare publication were Henry Thoreau, Amos B. Alcott, George Ripley, and C.P. Cranch. The Dial was, indeed, the literary organ of the new intellectual movement in American and the special mouthpiece of the Transcendental Club.

ii.

The chief figure not only of the unique club which met in Concord but also of the whole New England Transcendental movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). He was also perhaps the one among the group who was the most deeply steeped in Oriental thought and literature.

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8. Dial, III (July, 1842), p. 82.

"It is natural," says Arthur Christy in an article on Whittier, "that to a Transcendentalist like Emerson the sacred scriptures of the Orient should be the wisdom of the Over-Soul, strange to his inmost thoughts only in that the oracle speaks with a foreign accent, though the substance is perfectly familiar. Emerson is beyond doubt the one writer in American literature in whose philosophy and art Orientalism is inextricably woven. The premise on which all his philosophy rests and the eclectic methods which he pursued do not make this surprising."[9] Emerson, indeed, seems to have derived the greatest nourishment from his studies in the literatures of the ancient East. His Journals from 1832 on, at least, contain numerous references to Oriental writings, sacred and profane, and many of his poems and essays reveal his interpretation of Eastern thought. As George Willis Cooke indicates in his study of Emerson's life and philosophy:

> His readings of the Oriental mystics, especially those of Persia and India, have had their effect on Emerson's writings. He has found there a wide affinity with his own speculations, and a presentation of all his leading ideas. The intensity with which these ideas are there presented, the imaginative power of these writings, and the absoluteness of the soul-trust which they indicate, has attracted and deeply interested him.[10]

The poetry of these ancient writings doubtless was gratifying to Emerson, but even more deeply compelling of his interest was their thought-content. Imbued with the idealism of Kant, he joyed in the Asiatic thinkers, from whom he supposed his beloved Plato to have im-

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9. American Literature, I (January, 1930), p. 372.
10. Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 283.

bibed many of his ideas.[11] In his essay on Plato, Emerson really describes himself and the food upon which he feeds:

> In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Geeta, and the Vishnu Purana. Those writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it.[12]

It was Emerson's interest in the "fundamental unity" and in the problems which that unity seemed to solve that drew him to the Oriental literatures. The philosopher who wrote "The Over-Soul" found stimulating and strengthening the divine assurance of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. Further, Emerson's pursuit of unity led him into other literary bypaths of the Orient, as Mr. W.T. Harris pointed out in his lecture before the Concord School of Philosophy:

> He delights in the all-absorbing unity of the Brahmin, in the all-renouncing ethics of the Chinese and Persian, in the measureless images of the Arabian and Hindoo poets. . . .It is the problem of evil that continually haunts him, and leads him to search its solution in the Oriental unity which is above all dualism of good and evil. It is his love of freedom that leads him to seek in the same source an elevation of thought above the trammels of finitude and complications. Finally, it is his love of beauty, which is the vision of freedom manifested in matter, that leads him to Oriental poetry, which sports with the finite elements of the world as though they were unsubstantial dreams.[13]

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11. "Plato", Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (edited by Edward Waldo Emerson), IV, pp. 53-4.
12. Ibid., p. 49. Subsequent references to the complete works will be entitled Emerson's Works, etc.
13. "Emerson's Orientalism," Genius and Character of Emerson (F.B. Sanborn, editor), pp. 372-3.

It would seem, then, to be an easy task to separate the Oriental element in Emerson from his work in general, but this is not true. It will not do to say glibly that Emerson derives his philosophy from the East, and that all the ideas on unity and the over-soul are entirely Oriental. As John S. Harrison has stated in The Teachers of Emerson, the Orientalism of the Sage of Concord is, for the most part, inextricably mingled with the philosophy of Plato. Wherever "the teachings of the Orient enter into his thought they are intellectualized and restated in the terms of Hellenic philosophy."[14] Even in the treatment of the Hindoo doctrine of illusion, Emerson interprets it "from the standpoint of those teachings of Platonism which appear constantly throughout his work."[15] The idea of transmigration of souls is likewise held by Emerson to imply the Platonic doctrine of Reminiscence.[16] Mr. Harrison, after discussing the problem of the interrelations of Eastern thought and Platonism in the work of Emerson, draws the following conclusion:

> In certain other points of indebtedness to the Hindoo philosophy the persistency of Platonism is still noticeable. The name Over-Soul may well have come from the Bhagavat-Gita, as one critic has pointed out [W.T. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism"]. There the Supreme Spirit is called Adhyatma (Adhi meaning above, superior to, or presiding over; and atma, the soul,--not the soul that presides over all, but that which is above the soul itself). But the meaning which Emerson gives to the expression in his

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14. Harrison, p. 266.
15. Ibid., p. 271.
16. Ibid., p. 272.

> essay, The Over-Soul is. . .that which Platonism had taught him concerning the One and its relation to the other hypostases. A Hindoo term has thus been filled with Greek thought; or Greek thought has been capped with an Hindoo name. . . .And so it is plain that in the fusion of Hindoo teaching with Platonism the latter retains its own form and is often felt as an influence transforming the Hindoo philosophy into a new product. At times the language is that of the ancient East but it veils Greek thought. . . .the underlying intellectualism of Emerson's mind will still claim a nearer kinship with Plato and the Platonists than with the writings of the Hindoos.[17]

For the foregoing reasons, consequently, it is dangerous to attempt to separate much more than the obviously Oriental from Emerson's poetry in general. Hence, in this study only those poems have been classed as Oriental which are based directly on Oriental models, which are translations from Asiatic poetry, or which deal with definitely Eastern themes.

Much of Emerson's interest in the Orient is represented in his poetry. His finest thought in poetry, if not his finest poetry, is concerned with Oriental material. "He used the poetic form sparingly and only for his most perfect thoughts. He spoke ever in verse when he wished to speak at his best. No one can know the purest and most ethereal part of Emerson's domain until he has lived for a season with Emerson's poems."[18] His theory of poetry is based on an idea which is in part, at least, Oriental, according to George Willis Cooke:

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17. Harrison, pp. 277-9.
18. F.L. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 219.

> Emerson has a theory of poetry, and in accordance with it most of his poems have been written. It is, that mind is central, the source of an infinite unity; that the outward world is symbolical of the spirit expressed through it, and that every fact in nature carries the whole sense of nature. . . .It gives a mystic character to his poetry, . . .No poet beholds spirit so universally present as he does, or finds God so truly an indwelling life in all things.[19]

Considering this theory, it is not surprising that Emerson is more concerned with the inner thought of his poetry than with the outward form. His verses are frequently harsh and inartistic, and atrocious rhymes are not uncommon. At the same time that one condemns much of his versification, one can but agree somewhat with Mr. Cooke that many of his poems are "inspirations, gathered in the hours of richest thought," and that "they are full of quotable sentences, strong, apt, wise, and exquisitely expressed. His felicity of expression is remarkable, . . ."[20] Mr. Firkins is somewhat more sparing in his praise of the philosopher's poetic art:

> Few people would contradict us if we affirmed that for minds in whom the instinct of sequence preponderates over the feeling for poetry, Emerson cannot perform the service of a high poet; while, contrariwise he can do the work of a high poet for minds in whom the poetic receptiveness is strong and the instinct for sequence merely normal or subnormal.[21]

Professor Pattee sums up the worth of Emerson's poetry rather happily:

> But after criticising his sense of melody and his occasional mysticism, the reader of Emerson's poems has little ground left for accusation. No one can deny that he had a brilliant imagination, a sensitive sense of beauty, and keen poetic insight.[22]

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19. Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 237-8. [These ideas are paralleled in the Upanishads, particularly the Katha-Upanishad.]
20. Ibid., p. 254.
21. O.W. Firkins, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 296.
22. History of American Literature, p. 219.

iii.

Like that of Whittier, Emerson's interest in Oriental material had two different aspects. The philosopher did not write "Abou Ben Adhem" poems, but the verse of Persia, which had a special attraction for him, occupied something of a corresponding secondary position in his work. In it he found much of the mysticism and poetic fervor which he encountered in the Hindu Scriptures. Some of his best known poems, however, and his best Oriental poems are those based on literary models from the writings of India.

Emerson had been reading the literature of the East for many years before he finally published "Brahma," his most striking poem based on Oriental models. From the time at least of his resignation from the pastorate of his church, his Journals show numerous references to the Hindu Scriptures. His poetry shows his familiarity with the doctrines and language (in translation, of course) of these writings, and his thorough assimilation of their thought. So thorough, indeed, was his grasp of the obscure teachings of the Eastern world that a Hindu religious leader, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, could say of him:

> He seems to some of us to have been a geographical mistake. He ought to have been born in India.[23]

Emerson had justified Mozoomdar's observation by what is perhaps his most famous and most charactoristic expression of Hindu

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23. "Emerson as Seen from India," Genius and Character of Emerson, p. 367.

thought in poetry,--"Brahma," which appeared in the first number of the Atlantic Monthly in 1857.[24] The poem reads as follows:

> If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain,
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep, and pass, and turn again.
>
> Far or forgot to me is near;
> Shadow and sunlight are the same;
> The vanished gods to me appear;
> And one to me are shame and fame.
>
> They reckon ill who leave me out;
> When me they fly, I am the wings;
> I am the doubter and the doubt,
> And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
>
> The strong gods pine for my abode,
> And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
> But thou, meek lover of the good!
> Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.[25]

This poem was not accepted peacefully and trustfully by the Athens of American as "simply one of the intense, cryptic utterances in verse to which Emerson resorted when he despaired of making himself clear in prose."[26] For "one day all Boston was set agog by the rumor that Emerson had 'gone Brahma.' Proof was offered in the form of the poem entitled 'Brahma,' . . .Boston thought that Emerson was becoming wilfully freakish, and a raucous outburst of ridicule followed."[27] Parodies galore blossomed in the periodicals of the day.[28]

The poem, however, puzzling as it is, excited not ridicule alone. It became the object of much intelligent interest and crit-

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24. Volume I (November, 1857), p. 48.
25. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 195.
26. Phillips Russell, Emerson: The Wisest American, p. 257.
27. Ibid., pp. 256-7.
28. Ibid., p. 257.

ical comment. From the time of its publication down to the present day, various attempts have been made to explain its origin and significance. Dr. W.T. Harris was one of the earliest critics to essay unravelling the mystery of the genesis of "Brahma" in a serious and capable way. His analysis of the poem is in part as follows:

> There is no subject farther from the thought of the average commonsense of the modern European or American than the all-absorbing unity which the East Indian conceived under the name Brahma. Hence the mirth excited at first by the strange conceits of the poem in question. To the reader of the Bhagavat Gita, "Brahma" seemed a wholly admirable epitome, or condensed statement, of that wonderful book. One may illustrate each stanza by parallel passages from the Indian episode.
>
> "If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain,
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep, and pass, and turn again."
>
> Brahma is pure Being, the same in all things that exist, the same under all changes. In the second chapter of the Bhagavat Gita (J. Cockburn Thomson's translation), the following passage occurs:-
>
> "He who believes that this spirit can kill, and he who thinks that it can be killed, both of these are wrong in judgment. It neither kills, nor is killed. It is not born, nor dies at any time. It has no origin, nor will it ever have an origin. Unborn, changeless, eternal, both as to future and past time, it is not slain when the body is killed."[29]
>
> In the same chapter the "subtle ways" of Being are described thus: "All things which exist are invisible in their first state, visible in their intermediate state, and again visible in their final state." The visible state is the passing state, and the invisible state is that which Being returns to and keeps.[30]

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29. v. Sacred Books of the East, (Max Müller, editor), VIII, "Bhagavad Gita", pp. 44-45. (This contains the Telang translation of the same passages.).
30. v. Ibid., p. 46.

"Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame."

To pure being there is no distinction. Even one so important as separation in space and time is nothing, and all is"near". Light and darkness, too, the most wonderful of material distinctions, are the same to pure being. Even the invisible ("vanished") gods are pervaded by Being, and invisibility has no validity. But a far deeper distinction to humanity is that between good and evil, shame and fame. Even this, however, does not enter the divine essence of Brahma; to him one is the same as the other. This moral indifference is Indian, but not Persian. . . . In the ninth chapter of the Bhagavat Gita Krishna says:-

"I am same to all beings. I have neither foe nor friend. But those who worship me with devotion dwell in me and I also in them. . . ."31

In the thirteenth chapter we recognize the indifference of space and time in this: "It [spirit, or pure being] cannot be recognized, on account of its subtility, and it exists both far and near."

The network of distinctions in the world forms a divine illusion (Maya), by which those men are deluded who do not take refuge in Brahma. This is described in the seventh chapter of the Bhagavat Gita. Here, too, occurs the mention of the Over-Soul, or Adhyatma, an expression which Emerson used as a title for one of the greatest of his essays. . . .

"The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn they back on heaven."

The "strong gods" are: Indra, the god of the sky, the wielder of the thunder-bolt; Agni, the god of fire; and Yama, the god of death and judgment. These and all the inferior gods are absorbed into Brahma at the close of the Kalpa, or day of Brahma; . . .The "sacred Seven" are the seven Maharshis (Maha, great, and rishi, saint), or highest saints. . . .

In the eighteenth chapter is this injunction:-

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31. v. Sacred Books of the East, p. 85.("Bhagavad Gita").

> "Place thy affections on me, worship me, sacrifice to me, and reverence me. Thus thou wilt come to me. I declare the truth to thee. Abandoning all religious duties, seek me as they refuge. I will deliver thee from all sin. Be not anxious."[32] [33]

Mr. Harris apparently did not settle the "Brahma" problem, for in The Critic for February 4, 1888, appeared an article on the poem by Mr. William S. Kennedy,[34] followed in the number for February 11, by a letter to the editors from a correspondent in Philadelphia.[35] In the article and letter the writers announced they had discovered parallel passages in the Katha-Upanishad.

In Poet-Lore in 1900, Mr. Kennedy in the second of a series of papers on Emerson's mystic verse, enlarged upon his statement in The Critic concerning "Brahma" and the Katha-Upanishad. He said in part:

> In 1886 I discovered a volume of the Bibliotheca Indica (Calcutta, 1852) the particular translation of the Katha Upanishad used by Emerson in writing his 'Brahma.' . . . In Vol. XV. No. 41 of the Bibliotheca may be read:- "If the red slayer thinks I slay, if the slain thinks I am slain, then both of them do not know well. It (the soul) does not slay nor is it slain." [Here he quotes the first stanza of Emerson's poem.] . . . Dr. William T. Harris finds the source of 'Brahma' in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita. This work

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32. v. Sacred Books of the East, (Max Müller, editor), VIII, "Bhagavad Gita", pp. 129.
33. The entire passage quoted is from "Emerson's Orientalism," Genius and Character of Emerson, (edited by F.B. Sanborn; 1885) pp. 373-7.
34. "'Sartor,' 'Brahma,' and the 'Forest Hymn,'" The Critic, XII, (IX, new series), pp. 57-8.
35. "L," "Letter to the editors," XII (IX, new series), p. 70.

> is a dialogue between Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, which embodies, it is true, the doctrines of the Vedic Upanishads written two thousand years previous, and which virtually quotes the passages above given from the Katha Upanishad. But the English translation quoted by Dr. Harris contains few or no words used by Emerson in his poem. . . .Nor in any other citations does Dr. Harris show much, if any, closer identity between Emerson's poem and the Bhagavadgita selections than a general resemblance in thought. But listen to what the Calcutta translation says of Self: "It is far beyond what is far and near here." Emerson: "Far or forgot to me is near." The Upanishad says: "If Brahma is known to be the nature of every thought, he is comprehended." Emerson: "I am the doubter and the doubt."36

Mr. Kennedy's solution somewhat complicates the problem of the origin of "Brahma." Undoubtedly, even in the Müller edition of the Hindu Scriptures (Sacred Books of the East), in translation, the language of the Katha-Upanishad is nearer to Emerson's poetry than that of the Bhagavad Gita, but the question of Emerson's source was still not completely solved.

It remained for a recent investigator to give more definite information concerning Emerson's use of the various Oriental Scriptures. Frederick L. Carpenter, of Harvard University, in an article in American Literature, gives an interesting explanation of Emerson's method in writing "Brahma:"

> Emerson did not read any single Hindu work, and then forthwith sit down to write "Brahma." Once he tried to do something of this kind, but after that attempt he had to wait for eleven years, and to read and think over many more Hindu books before he finally was able to produce his perfected poem. And meanwhile he had

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36. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XII, pp. 71-2.

written an essay on Plato, in which he spoke of the idea of immortality. [See page 47 of this study.] . . .The first two lines of the poem

> If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain, . . .

are probably the most interesting of all, because the thought behind them offered itself to Emerson in three forms before he finally composed his own verses. First, in 1845, he copied into his Journal a passage from the Vishnu Purana: "What living creature slays or is slain? [Journals, VII, 127]; and immediately versified the thought as follows:

> What creature slayeth or is slain?
> What creature saves or saved is? . . .

At about this same time he was reading the Bhagavat Gita, where he must have seen the same thought reëxpressed: "The man who believeth that it is the soul which killeth, and he who thinketh that the soul may be destroyed are both alike deceived; for it neither killeth, nor is it killed." [Chapter II, verse 19. Emerson was using the translation by Sir Charles Wilkins, 1785.--Footnote, page 235.]

Neither of these readings, however, produced the first two lines of "Brahma." In 1856, eleven years later, when Emerson was reading from the Katha-Upanishad, he came on the following: "If the slayer thinks that I slay or if the slain thinks that I am slain, then both of them do not know well. It (the soul) does not slay, nor is it slain." [Emerson was probably using the translation by Dr. E. Röer, Upanishads, p. 105, published in the Bibliotheca Indica (Calcutta, 1853). --Footnote, page 236.] Here for the first time he found the thought put into the mouth of "Brahma," the god of life, who spoke in the first person--as Emerson made him speak in his own poem. But by this time Emerson had become so familiar with the thought that he no longer copied this passage into his Journals. The only proof we have that he read it is in the fact that he copied other passages from this same translation of the Upanishad into his Journals, along with his poem "Brahma," which he evidently composed at the same time. These passages furnished some of the thought for the later verses of his poem, although in them the parallelism is not so exact. . . .

> Finally, the last, striking line of the poem: "Find me, and turn they back on heaven," is paralleled in the Bhagavat Gita by: "The high-souled ones, who achieve the highest perfection, attaining to me, do not again come to life. . . .All worlds, O Arguna! up to the world of Brahman, are destined to return. But . . .after attaining to me, there is no birth again." [Chapter VIII, verse 17.--Footnote, page 237.]
>
> Thus it becomes clear that "Brahma," perfectly adapted and expressed as it is in the verse of Emerson, was developed out of snatches of the ancient Hindu Scriptures. The fundamental idea had been present in Emerson's mind for many years before the poem was composed, and during this time he himself had once expressed it in prose.[37]

Another poem of Emerson's which has created almost as much interest as "Brahma," and which like it, "is also based on the Hindu idea of absolute unity,"[38] is "Hamatreya." The poem reads in part as follows:

> Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
> Saying, 'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.'
>
> . . .
>
> Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:
> And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough,
> Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
> Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
> Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
> Clear of the grave.
>
> . . .

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37. "Immortality from India," American Literature, I, pp. 234-37.
38. "Immortality from India," American Literature, I, p. 238.

Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.
Hear what the Earth says:--

EARTH-SONG

'Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide--
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen. . . .

'They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone,
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?'

When I heard the Earth-song
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.[39]

Unlike "Brahma," "Hamatreya" attempts to express both sides of the idea of absolute unity--"both the Eastern feeling for 'essential identity,' and the Yankee feeling for 'difference'--for distinction and property. Thus 'Hamatreya' is dual in tone and feeling, and is perhaps less great as a poem than 'Brahma.' It is like 'Brahma,' however, in that it is largely based on the Hindu Scriptures; except that it is traceable to one single passage, taken from the Vishnu Purana, which Emerson copied into his journal in 1845."[40] ["Journals, VII, 127."--Footnote, page 238.] Col. T.W.

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39. Emerson's Works, IX, pp. 35-7.
40. Carpenter, American Literature, I, p. 238.

Higginson in a letter to The Critic first pointed out the passage on which Emerson based the "Earth Song."[41] Mr. Kennedy has summarized the passage as follows, at the same time pointing out the ways in which Emerson employed the material:

> Maitreya is a disciple of Parasara, who relates to Maitreya the Vishnu Purana. Among other things he tells Maitreya of a chant of the Earth, who said, "When I hear a king sending word to another by his ambassador, 'This earth is mine: immediately resign your pretensions to it,' I am moved to violent laughter at first; but it soon subsides in pity for the infatuated fool." Again, the Purana says, "Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers, to behold her kings unable to effect the subjugation of themselves"; which is Emerson's
>
> "Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
> Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs."
>
> And again: "These were the verses, Maitreya, which Earth recited, and by listening to which Ambition fades away, like snow before the sun." Here are Emerson's lines:--
>
> "When I head the Earth-song,
> I was no longer brave;
> My avarice cooled
> Like lust in the chill of the grave."[42]

"'Hamatreya' beings with a striking expression of 'difference' (from the Yankee point of view)," says Carpenter, "works around to the statement of (Hindu) identity, expresses this in the 'Earth Song' and closes with a rather trite moralistic quatrain . . ."[43] That "Hamatreya" developed out of the Hindu dialogue between Vishu and Maitreya is obvious from the closeness of phrase and idea between

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41. The Critic, IX, (February 18, 1888), p. 81.
42. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XII, pp. 279-80.
43. "Immortality from India," American Literature, I, p. 238.

the two works.[44]

Besides "Brahma" and "Hamatreya," others of Emerson's poems are based on the philosophical doctrine of the identity of being. "The Sphinx," which appeared in the Dial for January, 1841, is another expression of the teachings of the Katha-Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita.

> Uprose the merry Sphinx,
> And crouched no more in stone;
> She melted into purple cloud,
> She silvered in the moon;
> She spired into a yellow flame;
> She flowered in blossoms red;
> She flowed into a foaming wave;
> She stood Monadnoc's head.
>
> Thorough a thousand voices
> Spoke the universal dame;
> "Who telleth one of my meanings
> Is master of all I am."[45]

This poem is one of the proofs of "Emerson's recognition of the fact that there are things which cannot be uttered by the human tongue. These things are in the possession of 'The Sphinx,' who gazes but does not speak. Brahma is only another name for this being. But what Emerson meant to convey was his central belief that all things emanate from a unity, and to unity all things return."[46]

Brahma, or the idea for which the term stands, seems to pervade the greater part of Emerson's Oriental poems, except those based on Persian subjects. "In the 'Song of Nature,' Brahma may again be imagined as speaking."[47] The one passage, however, which

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44. "Immortality from India," American Literature, I, p. 240.
45. Emerson's Works, IX, pp. 24-5.
46. Russell, Emerson: The Wisest American, p. 258.
47. Ibid., p. 258.

may be directly paralleled in the writings of India is the couplet:

> I rest on the pitch of the torrent,
> In slumber I am strong.

"The Upanishad [in the Biblioteca Indica edition] says: 'Sitting, it (the soul) goes afar; sleeping, it goes everywhere.'"[48]

One of the most explicit statements of the unity of all things, even good and evil, occurs in "Initial, Daemonic and Celestial Love," in the passage concerning the high, pure realm

> Where the starred, eternal worm
> Girds the world with bound and term;
> Where unlike things are like;
> Where good and ill,
> And joy and moan,
> Melt into one.
>
> There Past, Present, Future shoot
> Triple blossoms from one root;
> Substances at base divided
> In their substances are united[49]

The last lines are thought by Kennedy to derive from the Upanishads:

> So in the Katha Upanishad. . .the sixth "Valli" begins, "It (the world) is like an eternal holy fig-tree whose root is upwards and whose branches go downward" ('Bibliotheca Indica').[50]

Mr. W.S. Kennedy has, indeed, been indefatigable in his pursuit of Emerson's Oriental sources for other poems besides "Brahma" and "Hamatreya." He has further dissected "Initial, Daemonic and Celestial Love" with great zeal. The "sublime passage"

> 'Deep, deep are loving eyes,
> Flowed with naphtha fiery sweet;
> And the point is paradise,
> Where their glances meet;

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48. Kennedy, "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XII, p. 72.
49. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 115.
50. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XI, pp. 250-1.

Their reach shall yet be more profound,
And a vision without bound:
The axis of those eyes sun-clear
Be the axis of the sphere;
So shall the lights ye pour amain
Go, without check or intervals,
Through from the empyrean walls
Unto the same again!

Higher far into the pure realm,
Over sun and star,
Over the flickering Daemon film,
Thou must mount for love:
Into vision where all form
In one only form dissolves; . . .[51]

contains, he thinks, the whole Hindu and Ptolemaic cosmogonies in a nutshell.[52] He also attempts to explain the following passage:

In a region where the wheel
On which all beings ride
Visibly revolves;
Where the starred eternal worm
Girds the world with bound and term,
Where unlike things are like;. . .,[53]

saying:

> Is this "wheel" the primum mobile on which you may be supposed to be looking down from the always immovable empyrean? We might think so if, knowing Emerson's Oriental studies, we had not our eyes sharpened for Hindoo imagery in his lyric oracles. The whirling of the stars athwart the sky of night early suggested to the Hindoos the wheel-symbol of the universe, their fire-wheel myth. I think I have put my finger on the very passage in the 'Rig Veda' which Emerson had in mind,--i.e., the lines which speak of "the triple-naved everlasting Wheel that nothing can arrest, on which repose all beings" ('Night of the Gods,' ii. 597). I find, also, in the 'Smetaswatara Upanishad,' that the Universal Soul is spoken of as a wheel. Indeed, it is a frequently used symbol

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51. Emerson's Works, IX, pp. 114-15.
52. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XI, p. 246.
53. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 115.

> in Brahminical literature, and especially common in Buddhistic books. It was also a symbol of metempsychosis, or the continuous births of individual souls, . . .[54]

He elucidates further the two lines of the poem,

> Where the starred eternal worm
> Girds the world with bound and term;

remarking that they

> are unquestionably the most difficult in the whole body of his poetry. . . .It is in the stupendous serpent-god Sesha of the Hindoos that I find a more probable clew [than the Midgard serpent, etc.] . Sesha is described, in H.H. Wilson's translation of the Vishnu Purana, (pp. 204-206), which we know Emerson used for his poem 'Hamatreya,' as a thousand-headed serpent floating on the fathomless sea of immensity; on these heads of Sesha, Vishnu sleeps in the intervals of his creative activity. "Sesha," says the Purana, "bears the entire world, like a diadem, upon his head, and he is the foundation on which the seven Patalas (under regions) rest. His power, his glory, his form, his nature, cannot be described, cannot be comprehended, by the gods themselves." . . ."The thousand jewels in his crests give light to all the regions"; "he shines like the white mountains topped with flame." Coiled about the universe, his head blazing with innumerable lights, this serpent is clearly the "starred eternal worm" Emerson vaguely limns.[55]

In addition to the idea of absolute being, the Hindu doctrine of illusion, certainly a teaching not foreign to the Occident, finds expression in Emerson's poetry. This idea, which is implicit perhaps in "Brahma," "Hamatreya," "Initial, Daemonic and Celestial Love," and other poems, is explicity stated in one of the "Fragments on

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54. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XI, 248-9.
55. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

Nature," published in the Appendix to the Poems. In the section called "Maia" [a form of the Sanskrit word for illusion] Emerson writes:

> Illusion works impenetrable,
> Weaving webs innumerable,
> Her gay pictures never fail,
> Crowds each on other, veil on veil,
> Charmer who will be believed
> By man who thirsts to be deceived.[56]

Here, as so often in Emerson, it is the thought alone, not the manner of expression, which is Oriental.

iv.

The moral indifference (resulting from the belief in the identity of being) to "shame and fame" and "good and ill," which Emerson illustrates in "Brahma" and "Initial, Daemonic and Celestial Love," and which Mr. W.T. Harris characterizes as "Indian, but not Persian,"[57] gives way to a more Persian--even a more Occidental--attitude in "Uriel." Here the "problem of evil and finitude receives a solution. . . .In this poem the substantiality of evil is denied and the supremacy of good asserted. . . .The form of this poem is a suggestion of Persian or Arabic poetry. It refers to Seyd (sultan), suggesting a favorite Persian poet Saadi , and hints at the seven archangels, of whom Uriel was one, by the term Pleiads (the famous seven)."[58] Something of the same idea is presented in "Spiritual Laws," in which the "living Heaven"

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56. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 348.
57. Genius and Character of Emerson, p. 375.
58. Ibid., p. 381.

> --by the famous might that lurks
> In reaction and recoil
> Makes flame to freeze and ice to boil;
> Forging, through swart arms of Offence,
> The silver seat of Innocence.[59]

In these poems, it may be noted, Emerson seems to desert the Hindu idea of unity for the Persian duality of good and evil, with the ultimate victory of the good. Emerson had been familiar from an early date with the Persian Scriptures, as the Journals for 1822 and 1832, for example, show, and the two poems mentioned above apparently embody thoughts contained or implied in the Avesta and kindred writings.

When one examines his poetry and his essays, however, one finds that Emerson was immensely more interested in the medieval Persian poets than in the older religious writers. He seems to have derived much of his information concerning these poets from the work of Baron von Hammer-Purgstall. This German Orientalist translated "into German, besides the Divan of Hafiz, specimens of two hundred poets who wrote during a period of five and a half centuries, from A.D. 1050 to 1600."[60] Emerson, whose best poetic efforts, as Paul Elmer More has pointed out, were "spiritual ejaculations,"[61] pithy quatrains and couplets, must have been greatly attracted to the gnomic verses of the Persians, "rules of life conveyed in a lively image, especially in an image addressed to the eye and contained in a single stanza, . . ."[62]

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59. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 275.
60. Emerson's Works, VIII, ("Persian Poetry"), p. 237.
61. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 358.
62. Emerson's Works, VIII, p. 243.

Saadi's poetry, at least, caught his attention early. In the Dial for October, 1842, Emerson published a poem called "Saadi," which is rather a general characterization of the Persian poet than a work painting the outward show of the East, although there are numerous expressions suggestive of the Orient. Doubtless he refers to this poem in the note in his Journal of 1843:

> In Saadi's Gulistan I find many traits which comport with the portrait I drew.[63]

This remark, thinks Edward Waldo Emerson, editor of the Collected Works, "seems to imply that his knowledge of Saadi had come from some other source and that the Gulistan had only lately come into his hands."[64] In any case, "it pleased him to find that the real Saadi approached his type of what the poet should be."[65] The editor of the Poems in the Collected Works of Emerson gives further information concerning Emerson's interest in Saadi:

> It does not appear in what year Mr. Emerson first read in translation the poems of Saadi, but although in later years he seems to have been strangely stimulated by Hafiz, whom he names "the prince of Persian poets," yet Saadi was his first love; . . . In 1865 Mr. Emerson wrote the preface to the American edition of Gladwin's translation of the Gulistan, published by Messrs. Ticknor and Fields, in Boston. This explains the omission of an account of Saadi and his poems in the lecture written soon after on "Persian Poetry," now included in Letters and Social Aims.[66]

As Mr. E.W. Emerson points out, the Concord poet later turned to Hafiz for inspiration, but "Saadi and he continued close friends.

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63. Journals, VI, p. 465.
64. Notes to "Persian Poetry," Emerson's Works, VIII, p. 414.
65. Editor's Notes to Poems, Emerson's Works, IX, p. 447.
66. Ibid., pp. 446-7.

He adopted the name to typify in his own verses the ideal poet, though, perhaps for metrical convenience, he often used the monosyllabic form Seyd or Said. This first occurs in the poem 'Uriel.'"[67] Under this name and its modifications, Emerson "describes his own longings and his most intimate experiences. . . .Saadi, guarding himself from entangling alliances, living apart and simply in the great sunny Present, recognizing living and pervading Deity, affirming only, and giving freedom and joy to human souls, might be Emerson in Oriental mask."[68]

In the "Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift," gathered into the Appendix to the Poems, the name of Saadi appears many times. These fragments, it may be noted in passing, while they contain much general exposition of the poetic life, have many words and expressions descriptive of the Orient. These are lacking, however, in the poem, "Beauty," in which Seyd (Saadi) again represents the poet sensitive to beauty in every form.

Emerson's studies of Hafiz also helped to give a slight Persian tinge now and then to his verses.[69] His acquaintance with the work of Hafiz perhaps dates from 1841, when a note in his Journal for that year would seem to indicate that the translation of the Persian poet into Germany by Von Hammer-Purgstall had caught and held his attention.[70] That his enjoyment of Hafiz was enduring is shown by the great amount of space which he devoted to him in the essay on

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67. Notes to "Persian Poetry," Emerson's Works, VIII, p. 414.
68. Editor's Notes to Poems, Emerson's Works, IX, p. 447.
69. W.S. Kennedy, "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XII, p. 276.
70. Notes to "Persian Poetry," Emerson's Works, VIII, p. 414.

"Persian Poetry," in which he says of him:

> After the manner of his nation, he abounds in pregnant sentences which might be engraved on a sword-blade and almost on a ring.[71]

And further on in the same essay, he adds:

> The other merit of Hafiz is his intellectual liberty, which is a certificate of profound thought. . . . His complete intellectual emancipation he communicates to the reader. There is no example of such facility of allusion, such use of all materials. Nothing is too high, nothing too low for his occasion.[72]

Emerson gave other evidence of his interest in Hafiz in the numerous laudatory references to the poet in the note-book called "Orientalist," in a translation from the poet in the Journal of 1846, and in two translations from the Persian's work included in the first book of poems, published in 1847.[73]

Emerson, tending toward the gnomic style, naturally found the Persian poets congenial. Mr. W.S. Kennedy even sees the influence of Hafiz in certain poems:

> In his fine lyric cry 'Bacchus,' in which he calls for a wine of life, a cup of divine soma or amrita, that shall sinew his brain and exalt all his powers of thought and action to a godlike pitch,--
>
> "Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
> In the belly of the grape. . . .
> That I intoxicated,
> And by the draught assimilated,
> May float at pleasure through all natures; . . .
> Quickened so, will I unlock
> Every crypt of every rock,"--

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71. Emerson, "Persian Poetry," Works, VIII, p. 245.
72. Ibid., pp. 248-9.
73. Notes to "Persian Poetry," Emerson's Works, VIII, pp. 416-18.

> he unconsciously gave his lines, I think, the outward form of some verses by Hafiz, in which the singer intimates that, give him the right kind of wine, and he can perform wonders as if with Solomon's ring or Jemschid's wine-cup mirror. Emerson himself in one of his early editions gives a spirited translation of Hafiz's poem. Mr. William R. Alger ('Specimens of Oriental Poetry,' Boston, 1856) translates Hafiz thus:-
>
> "Bring me wine! By my puissant arm
> The thick net of deceit and of harm
> Which the priests have spread over the world
> Shall be rent and in laughter be hurled.
> Bring me wine! I the earth will subdue.
> Bring me wine! I the heaven will storm through.
> Bring me wine, bring it quick, make no halt!
> To the throne of both worlds will I vault.
> All is in the red streamlet divine.
> Bring me wine! O my host, bring me wine![74]

Edward Waldo Emerson, editor of the Poems, in considering "Bacchus," thinks the "influence of Hafiz is apparent in the poem, though it is no translation, and the wine is more surely symbolic than his."[75] Little suggestion through imagery enters into the poem, and it is Oriental in its inspiration rather than in its language and atmosphere.

The same sparing use of Oriental material characterizes "Hermione," which "was written at a time when Mr. Emerson was taking pleasure in the study of the poets of Persia and Arabia,"[76] and "Compensation," which is based on a sentence of Ali, son-in-law of Mahomet, as quoted in Ockley's History of the Saracens.[77]

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74. "Clews to Emerson's Mystic Verse," Poet-Lore, XII, pp. 276-7.
75. Notes to Poems, Emerson's Works, IX, p. 445.
76. Ibid., p. 436.
77. Ibid., pp. 494-5.

Although they have little Oriental color, the "Quatrains" published in the Poems (Collected Works, vol. IX) under the heading, "Quatrains and Translations," may have resulted from the taste which Oriental studies gave Emerson for this kind of verse.[78] The editor of the Poems thinks the quatrain "Hush!" for example, may have been suggested by a similar quatrain from the Persian. "Hush!" reads as follows:

> Every thought is public,
> Every nook is wide;
> Thy gossips spread each whisper,
> And the gods from side to side.[79]

The Persian quatrain is:

> The secret that should not be blown
> Not one of thy nations must know;
> You may padlock the gate of a town,
> But never the mouth of a foe.[80]

"Most of the quatrains seem to have been written between 1850 and 1860; one or two much earlier."[81] This was at a time when Emerson was quite familiar with the Persian poets.

Emerson's interest in Persian poetry is further seen in the numerous translations he made from the works of various poets, but particularly those of Saadi and Hafiz. These translations were made "through the German, of course," as the editor of the Poems informs us.[82] Besides the two translations from Hafiz, mentioned above, which Emerson placed in his first volume of poems in 1847, the several

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78. Notes to Poems, Emerson's Works, IX, p. 497.
79. Emerson's Works, IX, p. 291.
80. "Persian Poetry," Works, VIII, p. 243.
81. Notes to Poems, Works, IX, p. 497.
82. Ibid., p. 499.

translations included in his preface to Saadi's Gulistan (Gladwin's translation), and in the essay on "Persian Poetry" (translations from nine poets), seventeen translations appear in the Poems of the Collected Works (1904). Of Emerson's skill as a translator, the remark made by Joel Benton (in Emerson as a Poet) in comparing the quatrain "Hafiz" with the translation "from Hafiz" in the Poems may prove illuminating:

> If the translation here seems (as it evidently does) a little more like Emerson than it does like Hafiz, the balance is more than preserved by his steeping his own original quatrain in a little tincture of the wine and spirit of Oriental thought. When he translated Hafiz, he was probably thinking of his own workmanship; when he described him, he was simply absorbed in the milieu of the Persian poet.[83]

The poems, indeed, contain only a moderate number of words which paint the Orient. The melodious couplets, however, have something of the style of Persian poetry, and their gnomic quality is certainly as much Persian as Emersonian.

v.

What is true of Emerson's quatrains and translations from the Persian, is true of most of his Oriental poetry. It is the Oriental thought which is important in his poetry, not the Oriental coloring. The coloring is often there, but it is incidental to the main theme of the poems. Emerson's Oriental poetry

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83. As quoted in the Notes to the Poems, Emerson's Works, IX, p. 500.

seems, indeed, to lack much obviously Eastern imagery and material, in spite of his frequent adoption of almost the exact language of translations from the Oriental Scriptures. This lack is perhaps accounted for by his adaptation of an Eastern thought or teaching to American conditions or setting, as in "Hamatreya," where he localizes the poem in New England. In many poems the universality of the ideas which Emerson selects from the teachings of the East prevents their retaining much suggestion of their exotic origin. It was perhaps also the universality and sublimity of his ideas and his deep philosophical interest in the Hindu and Persian doctrines which banished sensuousness and the suggestion of Eastern luxuriousness from his poetry. But asceticism flourishes in India as well as luxuriousness, and Emerson's poems are more truly Eastern than the pseudo-Oriental melodies of Bayard Taylor. Furthermore, when we consider Emerson's work as a whole, when we remember his theory (expressed in "Merlin") of subordinating the poetic form to the thought, we see the eminent fitness of his method whereby it is the inner spirit of his poetry which is Oriental rather than the exterior decoration.

vi.

Considering the intense interest which Emerson, as leader of the Transcendental movement, had in the Hindu and Persian Scriptures and poets, and the large number of Oriental poems which he wrote, we are surprised when we turn to other Transcendentalists to find that they show so little of the Orient in their poetry. Their

verse is for the most part generalized, abstract, and colorless; and contains only the smallest quantity of Oriental material. The influence of the East, which inspired the Sage of Concord to some of his loftiest (if esoteric) strains, is seen in Transcendental poetry as a whole only in a poem here and there and in a scattered passage or so. Whether or not, as in Amos B. Alcott, Transcendentalism in some of the poets of the movement volatilized into clouds of Oriental mysticism,[84] not much definitely Oriental poetry was produced by them.

An approximation of Hindu doctrines, it is true, is found in Alcott's "Approaching God," which contains the following stanza:

> When thou approachest to the One,
> Self from theyself thou first must free,
> They cloak duplicity cast clean aside,
> And in they Being's being be.[85]

Whether Alcott based his poem directly on an Eastern model or not (the thought, of course, is not too far removed from "He who loseth his life shall save it") is uncertain, but the thought of the poem is paralleled in the Katha-Upanishad (Sixth Valli, especially verses 12-15 and the Bhagavad Gita (especially Chapter II, but also Chapters III-V).[86] The theme indeed runs through the whole of the "Celestial Song."

Christopher P. Cranch presents a somewhat similar idea in his poem, "Gnosis":

> We, like parted drops of rain,
> Swelling till they meet and run,
> Shall be all absorbed again,
> Melting, flowing into one.[87]

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84. Cambridge History of American Literature, I, p. 345.
85. George W. Cooke, The Poets of Transcendentalism, p. 53.
86. The references are to the edition by Max Müller of the Sacred Books of the East (Katha-Upanishad, Vol. XV, and Bhagavad Gita, Vol. VIII.).
87. Cooke, Op. cit., p. 86.

The thought embodied here parallels the Vedic and Buddhistic idea of the absorption of the individual soul into Brahma, or Brahma-Nirvana,[88] or the entrance into Nirvana. Cranch's "Human Helpers" mentions "The voices of mystical Vedas,"[89] but has little of the East in it.

"The Ideal Wins" of George S. Burleigh expresses the equally Hindu teaching that those who attain to Brahma, or the highest heaven, are freed from the process of transmigration.

> And souls that soar beyond their simple need,
> To grasp the highest, are made free of all![90]

His "Immanuel" reiterates the thought of Emerson's "Brahma"--that of God everywhere.

> The Law which spheres the highest sun
> That blazes in the deeps of blue,
> And binds unnumbered worlds in one,
> So rounds the tiniest drop of dew.[91]

John W. Chadwick has applied the term "Nirvana" to a state of Occidental contentment and freedom from desire in his poem of the same name. The poem, with its mixture of Vedic material and Buddhism, represents the eclectic nature of Transcendental thought.

> Along the scholar's glowing page
> I read the Orient thinker's dream
> Of things that are not what they seem,
> Of mystic chant and Soma's rage.
>
> The sunlight flooding all the room
> To me again was Indra's smile,
> And on the heart the blazing pile
> For Agni's sake did fret and fume.

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88. Bhagavad Gita (Sacred Books of the East), Ch. II, p. 52.
89. Cooke, Op. Cit., p. 94.
90. Ibid., p. 200.
91. Ibid., p. 200.

Yet most I read of who aspire
To win Nirvana's deep repose. . .
He hears the voice of Nature.
"Oh! leave," it said, "your ancient seers;
Come out into the woods with me;
Behold an older mystery
Than Buddhist's hope or Brahman's fears!"

. . .

My heart was full as it could hold;
The Buddha's paradise was mine;
My mountain-nook its inmost shrine,
The fretted sky its roof of gold.

Nirvana's peace my soul had found,—
Absence complete of all desire,—
While the great moon was mounting higher,
And deeper quiet breathed around.[92]

The poet (proceeding in a somewhat Wordsworthian manner) has evidently given the term "Nirvana" its Buddhistic meaning, the summum bonum.[93]

Curiously enough, the Hindu themes of absolute being, illusion, and absorption into Brahma were ignored by the Henry Thoreau who could stop in the middle of a description of nature to lecture his readers on ancient literature. His poems bear no evidence of his interest in Oriental Scriptures. India comes into his poetry in a surprisingly humble fashion. In his lines "To a Stray Fowl," he writes:

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92. Cooke, Op. cit., pp. 289-92.
93. Translator's Footnote 1, Introduction to Bhagavadgita in Sacred Books of the East, VIII, p. 27.

"The word Brahma-Nirvana, which occurs so often at the close of chapter II, 72, seems to me to indicate that Nirvana had not yet become technically pinned down, so to say, to the meaning which Buddhism subsequently gave to it, as the name of what it deemed the summum bonum."

dim memory of days of yore,
By Brahmapootra and Jumna's shore,
Where thy proud race flew swiftly o'er the heath,
And sought its food the jungle's shade beneath,
Has taught thy wings to seek yon friendly trees,
As erst by Indus' bank and far Ganges.[94]

His poem "Lines," on the other hand, harks back to the theme of Freneau's "On the First American Ship, Empress of China, . . . That Explored the Route to China, and the East-Indies," etc.

Whether she bears Manilla twine,
Or in her hold Madeira wine,
Or China teas, or Spanish hides,
In port or quarantine she rides;
Far from New England's blustering shore,
New England's worm her hulk shall bore,
And sink her in the Indian seas,—
Twine, wine, and hides, and China teas.[95]

Here is only an indirect Orientalism, a casual playing with the rich, suggestive words redolent of Asia.

From an examination of the poetry of the Transcendental movement as presented in Mr. Cooke's anthology, The Poets of Transcendentalism, one can say that there is much less Orientalism in the poets of the group in general than one might reasonably expect, considering the great interest of the times in Oriental thought and the prominence which Emerson gave it in his poetry. As in his poetry, so in that of the less renowned poets of Transcendentalism, the Eastern element is in the thought-content of the poems rather than in the imagery or the words. These strollers in ethereal realms were too much engrossed in the spirit to heed the things of the flesh,

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94. Henry D. Thoreau, Poems of Nature (ed. by Henry S. Salt and Frank B. Sanborn), p. 95.
95. Ibid., p. 42.

the sights and sounds and illusions of the material Orient. They sought to cast off desire and to pierce through the mayas of the world to the eternal Brahma.

Chapter V

WALT WHITMAN

It may seem strange to us that Walt Whitman (1819-1892), one of the most original of American poets, should borrow some of his inspiration from Asia. Nevertheless, scholars are coming more and more to find in his work qualities and ideas similar to those of Oriental writers; and even Rabindranath Tagore, when he visited America, declared that no American had caught the Oriental spirit of mysticism so well as Whitman.[1] Further, "Thoreau and Emerson had both noted the resemblance between Leaves of Grass and some of the sacred writings of India; and the latter once humorously described the Leaves as a mixture of the Bhagavad-Gita and the New York Herald."[2]

A moot question, however, is whether "Whitman derived his inspiration from Emerson's poems, or whether he got it more directly from the Hindu books. . . ,"[3] and also from Persian sources, Whitman's indebtedness to the latter not being definitely established. Probably Whitman owed a great deal of his Oriental mysticism to Emerson, with whose work he early became acquainted and by whom he was much influenced. "The mind and soul of Whitman, the American, lay fallow, and ready for the seed sown by the germinative mind of Emerson."[4] Whitman would have found in Emerson the Hindu doctrines of

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1. Emory Holloway, Whitman, p. 156.
2. Henry Binns, Life of Walt Whitman, p. 115.
3. Frederic Carpenter, "Immortality from India", American Literature vol. I, p. 241. (November, 1929).
4. Holloway, op. cit., p. 102

the identity of being ("Brahma") and the identity of matter ("Hamatreya"), and a delight in the Persian poets. Furthermore, although critics and biographers indicate that Whitman read in the Hindu bibles and epics, they do not mention that he delved in the poetry of Persia, and they are pretty well agreed that his acquaintance with the literature of the Orient was not great. Both Emory Holloway and Henry Binns imply that in 1856, after the first edition of Leaves of Grass had been published, Thoreau gave new interest to Whitman's reading by advising him to become acquainted with Oriental literature.[5] Frederic Carpenter states that Whitman told Thoreau he had never read the Orientals and asked Thoreau to tell him about them.[6] On the other hand, Whitman in A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads lists among the books he read during his first New York period (approximately 1841-1848) the "ancient Hindoo poems."[7] In a note to "Democratic Vistas," in speaking of the heroes and gods to whom poets have given attention, he mentions Yudisthra, Rama, Arjuna, "Roustam in the Shah-Nemah," and the goddesses of the Egyptian and Indian mythologies.[8] In another note to the same piece he writes in part:

> The altitude of literature and poetry has always been religion—and always will be. The Indian Vedas, the Naçkas of Zoroaster, the Talmud of the Jews, the Old Testament, the Gospel of Christ and his disciples, Plato's works, the Koran of Mohammed, . . . —these, . . . exhibit literature's

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5. Holloway, op. cit., p. 156; Binn, op. cit., p. 115.
6. Carpenter, op. cit., p. 241.
7. Leaves of Grass. vol. III, p. 55.
8. Complete Prose Works, pp. 221-222.

> real heights and elevations, towering up like the great mountains of the earth.[9]

In fact, Whitman makes frequent mention in his prose works of the "interminable" Hindu epics, usually along with the Greek epics and the Old and New Testaments.[10] One might believe, then, that he was inspired partly by Emerson and partly by translations of the literature of the East.

He did not owe to Emerson, however, the peculiar quality of his style and method. Critics early noted the similarity between the form of Whitman's poetry and that of the poetical parts of the English Bible. Nevertheless, this style is not exclusively Oriental. Pattee says of it:

> It is possible that he got a hint from his reading of Ossian or of the Bible or of Eastern literature, but we do know that at the end it came spontaneously.[11]

Stedman, while he is more explicit, affirms much the same thing:

> . . . in his chosen form there is little original and new. It is an old fashion, always selected for dithyrambic oracular outpourings,—that of the Hebrew lyrists and prophets, and their inspired English translators,—of the Gaelic minstrels,—of various Oriental and Shemitic peoples,—of many barbarous dark-skinned tribes,—[12]

Considering the models which Whitman probably had, one cannot say dogmatically that his style derives entirely from the Orient.

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9. Complete Prose Works, pp. 242.
10. See Notes Left Over and November Boughs.
11. Pattee, History of American Literature since 1870, p. 171
12. Stedman, Poets of America, p. 371.

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Whether or not Whitman borrowed his style from the Orientals, nevertheless his work in general reflects several dominant qualities of the Asiatic writers. In an essay in The Open Road Mrs. Elsa Barker has made a study of Whitman's poetry in order to bring out the similarities between it and parts of the literature of the East. Her work is summarized by a writer in Current Literature for August, 1907. She notes at once in Whitman the Oriental "tendency to meditate, to ruminate an idea till it is thoroly assimilated, which she finds exemplified in the 'Salut Au Monde.' Outside the works of Whitman, she says, this contemplative identification of self with the All that surrounds and penetrates the self is almost unknown in the Occident."[13] The gift of rhapsody, of ecstasy is, Mrs. Barker feels, another Oriental quality in Whitman; and she calls to mind the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, the Odes of Hafiz, and the "Bird Parliament" of Attar. "With the Oriental this ecstasy generally flows toward the Divine Being or the expression of the Divine Being in human form; with Whitman it is sometimes the joy in the Divine, sometimes the joy in another human being, sometimes the ecstasy in nature, as in his rhapsody to night and earth, beginning 'I am he that walks with the tender and growing night.'"[14] Throughout his work we find ecstasy, ranging from the mystic-sensual "deliria" of "One Hour to Madness and Joy" to the poignant and spiritual tenderness of "Come lovely and soothing death."

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13. Current Literature, Vol. XLIII: 166.
14. Ibid., p. 166.

Two other qualities in which Whitman resembles the Orientals are his passiveness of soul in the power of God and his great calm.[15] A passage from the "Song of Myself" will illustrate these qualities:

> I exist as I am, that is enough,
> If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
> And if each and all be aware I sit content.
>
> One world is aware and by far the largest to me,
> and that is myself,
> And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten
> thousand million years,
> I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheer-
> fulness I can wait.[16]

A "fifth quality that marks Whitman's relationship to the Orientals, the one most foreign to the Anglo-Saxon consciousness, is his simplicity and frankness in approaching the mystery of sex. He speaks of it as simply and as naturally as he speaks of the sunrise or the sea, the day or the night. . . . As he would say: That, too, is in its place—for reasons. . . . The 'Children of Adam' poems are Oriental in feeling, in conception, in development. No Western poet except Whitman ever would have written them or ever could have written them."[17]

Even in his literary method, Mrs. Barker finds Whitman approaches the writers of the East.[18] In the first place, Whitman calls himself by name a number of times in his poems. The Persians frequently do the same thing, and in some forms of Persian verse convention requires the poet to mention his own name. The practice served in

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15. Current Literature, Vol. XLIII: 166.
16. Leaves of Grass, Vol. I, p. 57.
17. Current Literature, XLIII: 166.
18. Ibid., p. 166.

place of a copyright; and Hafiz and his fellow poets did not hesitate to follow it. Again, the "long lists of things in his poems that have so troubled the critics we find in the Oriental epics. No Western poet except Whitman writes in this way."[19] Among those catalogues of things, one may note the passages which pertain to the Orient. The "Salut au Monde" is filled with catalogues of peoples, mountains, seas, lands, and cities, in all of which lists are many Asiatic names. "Old Chants" enumerates among other things the chanting of the Egyptian priests and "those of Ethiopia," and the "Hindu epics, the Grecian, Chinese, Persian;" while in "Proud Music of the Storm" we are told of the dances and music of the Orient. "A Broadway Pageant," celebrating the reception of Japanese envoys in New York, contains a swarm of adjectives expressive of Oriental scenes, as well as several lists of Asiatic temples, countries, and peoples. Even the "Song of Myself" has much of the East in its catalogues:

> Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps
> of the idols,
> Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a
> gymnosophist,
> Drinking mead from the skull-cap, to Shastas and
> Vedas admirant, minding the Koran, . . . ;

In this poem as in the "Passage to India," where the Orient dominates the cataloguing, the lists are well woven into the general fabric of the poem. They are at least essential designs if they are not part of the warp and woof.

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19. Current Literature, XLIII: 166.

"Another Oriental--and especially Persian--characteristic of his method," says the writer in Current Literature, "is the throwing in here and there of a story with no apparent relevancy to the poem he is writing. The epic poets of Persia do this,--Firdousi, Attar, Nizami, Jami and others. . . . "Would you hear of an old-time sea fight?" asks Whitman in the midst of his "Song of Myself." Then he proceeds to tell us of the sea fight."[20]

iii

Aside from these general Oriental qualities in Whitman's poetry, certain ideas similar to those of the Hindu, and Persian, writers appear in individual poems. It is sometimes difficult to determine, however, whether an idea is Oriental or Greek, Hindu or Platonic.

Among the poems which more or less defy strict classification as expressions of Eastern thought are "Eidolons" and "Chanting the Square Deific." Both deal with the problem of illusion and reality. To Whitman, in these poems, the external world is not the real world; the spiritual only is the true reality. "Eidolons" is a more personal expression of the reality of spirit.

> Thy body permanent,
> The body lurking there within my body,
> The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,
> An image, an eidolon.[21]

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20. XLIII: 166.
21. Leaves of Grass, Vol. I, p. 8.

On the other hand, "Chanting the Square Deific" is broader in scope, and more nearly represents the Hindu teachings than the former poem. The poet presents the Being behind all being.

> Santa Spirita, breather, life,
> Beyond the light, lighter than light,
> Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
> Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
> Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Saviour and Satan,
> Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all what were God?)
> Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive (namely the unseen,)
> Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the general soul,
> Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
> Breathe my breath also through these songs.[22]

A more definite Hindu idea manifests itself in the "Salut au Monde," in which Mrs. Barker sees the influence of Whitman's reading of the Bhagavad-Gita.

> In the poem, "Salut au Monde," Whitman identifies himself with the earth, his soul with the soul of the earth, his identity with the identity of every animate and inanimate thing upon the earth or in the atmosphere around the earth.
>
> In the Bhagavad-Gita, the Lord Krishna, speaking to Arjuna, says: "I am the ego that is seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all existing things. . . . I am the origin and the dissolution, the receptable, the storehouse, and the eternal seed. . . . I am the cause unseen and the visible effect. . . . I am all-grasping death and the birth of those who are to be. . . . I am the taste in water, the light in the sun and moon, sound in space, the masculine

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22. Leaves of Grass, Vol. I, p. 224-5.

essence in men, the sweet smell in the earth, and
the brightness of the fire."[23]

The Hindu doctrine of the identity of being which finds expression in the "Salut au Monde" dominates several other poems of Whitman, the most noteworthy of them being "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing."

Pensive on her dead gazing I heard the Mother of All,
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering the battlefields gazing, . . .
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while she stalk'd,
Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you lose not my sons, lose not an atom, . . .
My dead absorb or South or North--my young men's bodies absorb, and their precious, precious blood,
Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again give me many a year hence,
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries hence,
In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my darlings, give my immortal heroes,
Exhale them centuries hence, breathe me their breath, let not an atom be lost,
O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an aroma sweet!
Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries hence.[24]

Of this poem, Frederic Carpenter writes:

> Whitman's conception of the "Mother of All" is one which is close to Hindu thought, even though it may not be purely Hindu. It is parallel to Emerson's idea of Brahma as the creative source of all life--"energy" personified. Whitman's "Earth" is of course the same as the speaker of the "Earth-Song" in "Hamatreya." In Emerson the idea: "If the slain think he is slain," is still somewhat mystical, as is the Hindu. In Whitman

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23. Current Literature, Vol. XLIII: 166.
24. Leaves, II, 282.

> the energy from the bodies of the slain is to be absorbed by the earth and transformed into "the unseen essence and odor of surface and grass."[25]

The fusion of the two ideas of the identity of being and the identity of matter found expression in Whitman's work throughout his life. It appears in "On the Beach at Night Alone," in a fairly obvious form:

> A vast similitude interlocks all,
> All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
> All distances of place however wide,
> All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
> All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds, . . .
> All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe, . . .[26]

On the other hand, "This Compost" ("Autumn Rivulets") clothes the same thought in vivid and startling dress:

> Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
> It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
> It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseas'd corpses,
> It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,
> It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,
> It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.[27]

Over and over again this teaching of the East appears in the early "Song of Myself." A quotation or two will suffice to show the various modes in which the idea finds utterance:

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25. American Literature, "Immortality from India", Vol. I, p. 241.
26. Leaves, II, 22.
27. Leaves, I: 142.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the
house-sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her
teats,
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-
spread wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.[28]

* * *

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass
I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-
soles.[29]

Although the idea may be borrowed, the manner of expressing it is nearly always Whitmanesque. Usually the poet does not make an impersonal statement of the "similitude" underlying all; nor does he put oracular sayings in the mouth of a god; he sings himself: it is he, Walt Whitman, who tends toward all things, and to whom all things tend. He embraces them; he knows the likeness of all things to himself. He is himself the Kosmos. Occasionally, however, the expression of the identity of being has a Persian rather than a Hindu flavor, when Whitman borrows the imagery of Hafiz and uses it in his own fashion. Sings Hafiz:

God the Creator mirrored in thy face
Thine eyes shall see, God's image in the glass
I send to thee. . . . ,[30]

and again,

See now, I hold a mirrow to mine eyes,
And nought but thy reflection therein lies;
The glass speaks truth to them that understand.[31]

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28. Leaves, I:47-48.
29. Ibid., I:109.
30. Poems from the Divan of Hafiz (translated by Gertrude Bell), No. III, p. 70.
31. Ibid., No. XV, p. 84.

Centuries afterwards the bard of Camden reiterates:

> Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
> I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
> In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass, . . .[32]

As in the "Song of Myself" the idea of the identity of being is frequently allied in Whitman with the ideas of immortality and reincarnation, the union of these three giving a distinct Hindu quality to much of his poetry. However, Whitman will not endure the trammels of a rigid system of reincarnation. As is usual with him, he takes his own where he finds it and gives it the stamp of his vigorous imagination. Nevertheless, traces of the older Asiatic teaching may be found scattered through the "Song of Myself." There he makes a definite, if perhaps figurative, statement concerning reincarnation:

> Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years, . . . [33]

and further on, he affirms:

> And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
> (No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)[34]

Moreover, although he may return to earth merely as the grass under our boot soles, the poet is content:

> To be in any form, what is that?
> (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)
> If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell were enough.[35]

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32. Leaves, "Song of Myself," I:106.
33. Leaves, I, p. 95.
34. Ibid., p. 106.
35. Ibid., p. 68.

Nevertheless, he seems to approach somewhat vaguely to the Hindu idea of a gradual progress to union with the supreme being:

> . . . myself waiting my time to be one of the supremes.[36]

We may gather that reincarnation is not to him a part of a systematized Brahmanistic scheme of reward and punishment, but simply a natural consequent of the identity of being. It would seem that the essence of Walt Whitman today, might tomorrow be the essence of the grass, or of a god. As in modern science, so in his belief, matter is never destroyed; energy is always conserved.

Perhaps the poem which best sums up most of Whitman's Orientalism is the "Passage to India," in part an expression of the intellectual significance of the opening of the Suez Canal. The poem contains catalogues, one of which deals with the conjunction of modern science and the ancient thought of the East, symbolized by the opening of the canal:

> Passage O soul to India!
> Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.
> Not you alone proud truths of the world,
> Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
> But myths and fables of eld, Asia's Africa's fables,
> The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
> The deep diving bibles and legends,
> The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
> O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun![37]

Another lists the mental and spiritual aspects of the bringing of the East nearer to the West:

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36. Leaves, I, p. 92.
37. Leaves, II, 186-7.

> Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward, . . .
> The flowing literatures, tremendous epics,
> religions, castes,
> Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the
> tender and junior Buddha, . . .[38]

The poem becomes a vision of the voyage of the spirit to "the elder lands of wisdom and art":

> Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
> Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
> The young maturity of brood and bloom,
> To realms of budding bibles.
> O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
> Thy circumnavigation of the world begin, . . .[39]

Then the vision broadens to include the universe; the poem rises to the rhapsodic ecstasy of Whitman's "Mystic passion for the union of the past and future in an eternal present":[40]

> Passage to more than India!
> Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
> O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?
> Disportest thou on waters such as those?
> Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas? . . .
> Passage to more than India!
> O secret of the earth and sky! .
> O day and night, passage to you![41]

Thus, like the writer of the Bhagavad-Gita, Whitman sounded below the Sanscrit and the Vedas to find the secret of the earth and sky. Whether he took ideas directly from the literatures of the Orient, or whether his own ideas were merely shaped by contact with them, is a matter for conjecture. One may say, at least, that he did not paraphrase the Orientals as Emerson so often did; nor did he dream of the sensuous beauty of the East as did the later ro-

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38. Leaves, II, p. 192.
39. Leaves, II, p. 193.
40. Holloway, Whitman, p. 251.
41. Leaves, II, p. 196.

mantics, borrowing the richness of her external life. If he borrowed, he took the sublime conceptions of her mystics and interpreted them in his own way. In brief, we cannot determine definitely whether the qualities of his poetry which seem Oriental were really in fact such, or were innate in his genius. Perhaps the solution may be found in his own tendency to embrace all: he belongs both to the East and to the West.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATE ROMANTIC POETS

In 1854, before Emerson had written "Brahma," and Whittier and Longfellow had begun their series of poems on Eastern subjects, Bayard Taylor published his exotic Poems of the Orient. Taylor, however, played no part in the age dominated by these poets, and his work is generally associated, like himself, with those exquisite and languid poets who flourished in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

The later nineteenth century poetry dealing with the Orient was probably subjected to two American influences: travel and the increasing critical and esthetic interest in Asiatic literature. Many of the literary figures of the nineteenth century made extensive tours in Europe and Asia; and numerous literary essays of this period are reflections of foreign travel. The older writers of the New England group wrote of Europe in a romantic or sentimental strain, expressing no little nostalgia for the older civilizations. By the middle of the century, however, poets and other sensitive travelers had ventured into Egypt, Asia Minor, and even the Far East. George William Curtis wrote gracefully of his journeys in Nile Notes of a Howadji, 1851, and The Howadji in Syria, 1852. Taylor was also the author of many entertaining books of travel. Besides visiting India, China, and Japan, he explored the lands of the Saracens, a journey which inspired much of his poetry. Some twenty years after the publication of Taylor's earlier travel books, we find Charles Dudley Warner writing with cultivated ease of his winter on the Nile (1876). It is clear, then, that if the poet

could not personally visit the countries of the East which he wished to poetize, he could find a plenitude of well-written sketches on which his inspiration might be nourished. In addition to the general interest in the lands, peoples, and customs of Asia, there was also at this time an interest in her literature. The American Oriental Society had been founded in 1842 and had been growing steadily. Articles on Oriental literature, particularly on Persian poetry, began to appear in the magazines. In the Atlantic Monthly for April, 1878, Thomas B. Aldrich discussed a translation of Omar Khayyam which had recently appeared. In the issue of the same magazine for May, 1885, was an article dealing with "Modern Imitations of Persian Literature." From October, 1887, to June, 1888, the Chautauquan published a series of articles on the literature of the East, informative essays, making use of the researches of Legge and others. Fairly accurate, the articles were introductory and made no comparisons of one literature with another, but they were indicative of a growing interest in a rich field.

A third influence on the poetry of the latter half of the century was that of the English Romantics,[1] several of whom had employed Oriental themes or touched upon subjects in a romantico-Oriental manner. As early as 1797-98, Coleridge had written the unsurpassable Oriental dream-picture, "Kubla Khan," in which Orientalism and romanticism are splendidly fused. Far more important than Coleridge's poem

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1. Pattee, History of American Literature Since 1870, pp. 127-8.

as a manifestation of romantic Orientalism were Byron's "lurid verse-romances", published between 1813 and 1816,--The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, Lara, and The Siege of Corinth, which are noteworthy, not only for their popularity in England, but also for their influence abroad. In 1817, Thomas Moore had published the honeyed Lalla Rookh, which shows romanticism as a literary fashion. Free from the cloying sweetness and tinsel decoration of Moore's poem, but no less sensuous, was the "Indian Serenade," written by Shelley in 1819. Much later, Tennyson wrote his "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," but it remained for Edward Fitzgerald to bring authentic Orientalism into English literature during the period. In 1859 he published a translation, or paraphrase, of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khyyam. It attracted little notice at first, but was soon taken up by Swinburne and Rossetti and through their introduction became exceedingly popular.

ii.

The group which was most affected by the various currents of Oriental influence in the latter half of the nineteenth century is known as the "Late Romantics" or the "Metropolitan Poets." These lesser poets kept alive the romantic impulse throughout a transition period in American literature, after it had largely spent itself in the work of the major writers of the century.[2] Although they centered in New York City, most of the poets "were not born in the metropolis, nor did they have much to say about it, but they were drawn together by mutual

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2. E.E. Leisy, American Literature, p. 146.

interests somewhat as the more intimate Knickerbocker group had been drawn together a quarter of a century before them."[3] "The second generation of poets in America, those later singers born during the vital thirties in which had appeared the earliest books of the older school, began its work during the decade before the Civil War. It was not a group that had been launched, as were the earlier poets of the century, by a spiritual and moral cataclysm, or by a new strong tide in the national life. It was a school of deliberate art, the inevitable classical school which follows ever upon the heels of the creative epoch.

"It came as a natural product of mid-century conditions. America, hungry for culture, had fed upon the romantic pabulum furnished so abundantly in the thirties and forties. It looked away from the garish daylight of the new land of its birth into the delicious twilight of the lands across the sea, with their ruins and their legends and their old romance. . . .Its dreams were centered in the East, in that old world over which were hung the glamour of romance.[4]. . . [Its poets] added sentiment to the music of Keats and dreamed of the Orient with its life of sensuous surfeit. . ."[5]

Thus, these men, whose poems showed no heed of the stirring national life around them, sang with delicacy and finish of the remote and strange, of things far away and long ago. And though the Orient was one of the most delightful of those remote and strange things, it

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3. E.E. Leisy, American Literature, p. 147.
4. Pattee, op. cit., p. 116.
5. Ibid., p. 120.

became something more: it became the object of a cult. Emerson had been carried away by the spirituality of the Indian philosophers; Whittier drew from Asiatic writings great moral lessons; but the metropolitan poets saw in the glamorous East a way of escape from the harshness and ugliness of contemporary life. To them, the Orient represented beauty, art, a gorgeous mixture of the sensual and spiritual; they identified themselves with its rich nature; and poetizing the Orient became with them a sort of religion. Some of them were captivated by Asia through their travels; some saw her beauties through the eyes of others; some found her glories in their own imaginatinns; but all felt a compulsion to sing her praises, to burn the incense of verse before her altars.

Although their Orientalism represents a craving for the freer range of the imagination, a craving to escape the local, the practical, these poets did not flee to the lofty heights of Emerson, or even Whittier. The lesser romantics paid little heed to the ethical or religious thought of the peoples whom they sang. They spoke not of spiritual realities, but of externals. With all their reverence for form and perfection, they carried sentiment and sensuousness even beyond the limits set by the English romanticists. It may be significant, too, that these later poets turned their attention from the philosophical and religious India and Persia of Emerson and Whittier, from the heroic Palestine of the religious writers, to the luxurious Middle East, the land of zither and lute, of silken Samarcand, of syrups tinct with cinnamon. The poetry of the metropolitan poets was chiefly

the poetry of sensuous enjoyment and delight.

The leading spirit of the group and the one who introduced his confrères to the cult of the East was Bayard Taylor. Others who with Taylor formed the nucleus of the metropolitan writers were Richard Henry Stoddard, Richard Watson Gilder, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. A few minor writers, although not members of the New York group, had an interest in the Orient which was akin to theirs, and may, for convenience, be classified with them.

iii.

Most of these minor writers wrote only a poem or so on Oriental subjects. Edward R. Sill wrote "An Oriental Adage," an undistinguished bit of verse containing a warning against drink. Charles De Kay wrote "The Vision of Nimrod" (1881), portraying a scene in Babylonia, and showing the conventional East. On the other hand, the sensuous and passionate "Cleopatra" of William Wetmore Story has something of the glamour of the Orient as seen by the later Romantics. In the West, Bret Harte (who should be mentioned at this time, although he has nothing in common with the rest of the group) was portraying the average man's reaction to the "yellow peril." "Plain Language from Truthful James" (or "The Heathen Chinee"), 1870, established for some time to come the conventional idea of the Oriental in California.

> Which I wish to remark,
> And my language is plain,
> That for ways that are dark
> And for tricks that are vain,
> The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
> Which the same I would rise to explain.[6]

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6. Bret Harte, Writings, XII, (Riverside Edition), p. 129.

His "Latest Chinese Outrage" is in much the same humorous vein.

Written in a thoroughly different manner was the work of Richard Watson Gilder (1844-1909), who, so far as Orientalism is concerned, must be counted among the minor poets of the period. His output in the field was slight, but he had a "love of the Orient,--an artist's love as well as a reflective poet's,--that led him to add In Palestine, and Other Poems (1898) to New York's considerable body of literature of the East."[7] His two-fold love was expressed in a two-fold way. He had an eye for the colors and loveliness of the Eastern lands, and for the striking detail, the significant object. His poetry, however, is not merely sensuous;--it departs from the orthodox poetic manner of the cult of the East. To Gilder, as to Wordsworth in a greater degree, the external suggested the inward, the mean flower the deep-lying thought. The mingling of reflection and description is well illustrated in the poem "In Palestine". The poet looks out over the land and sees

> That long, straight, misty, dream-like
> violet wall
> Of Moab--lo, how close it looms!.

The sight immediately suggests to his mind the thought that

> The same
> Quick human wonder struck his holy vision.
> About his feet the flowers he knew so well.
>
> . . .
>
> I tell you when I looked upon these fields
> And stony valleys,--through the purple veil
> Of Twilight, or what time the Orient sun

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7. Cambridge History of American Literature, III, p. 49.

> Made shining jewels of the barren rocks,--
> Something within me trembled; for I said:
> This picture once was mirrored in his eyes;
> This sky, that lake, those hills, this loveliness,
> To him familiar were; this is the way
> To Bethany; the red anemones
> Along yon wandering path mark the steep road
> To green-embowered Jordan. All is his:
> These leprous outcasts pleading piteously;
> This troubled country,--troubled then as now,
> And wild and bloody,--this is his own land.[8]

In this poem as in "The Birds of Bethlehem" and "The Supper at Emmaus" there is little of the Orient. Religious in tone and sincere in feeling, the poems contain descriptive passages, but the poet leaves the East behind and goes on to a consideration of the Christ, the Christian religion, and even of theism in general.

"The Ottoman Empire" is a protest against a "false, imbecile, and cruel" empire, but the poet reverts to his characteristic manner in "Karnak." He turns from a description of Karnak to religious and ethical considerations.

> Of all earth's shrines this is the mightiest,
> And none is elder. Pylon, obelisk,
> Column enormous--seek or east or west,
> No temple like to Karnak 'neath the disk
> Of the far-searching sun. Since the first stone
> Here lifted to the heavens its dumb appeal,
> Empires and races to the dread unknown
> Have past--gods great and small 'neath Time's
> slow wheel
> Have fallen and been crusht;--the earth had shaken
> Ruin on ruin--desolate, dead, forsaken.[9]

"The Desert," too, has none of the color of the East; and "Egypt" and "Syria" are almost purely philosophical and religious in character.

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8. R.W. Gilder, Poems, pp. 240-1.
9. Ibid., p. 247.

In "Shelley's "Ozymandias'" and "The World's End," however, the poet suggests the Orient as a land of mystery.

One must admit that the Oriental coloring in Gilder is rather slight. Further, it is of a rather general type and lacks the strength which comes from sensuous impressions. Gilder is not interested in the perfumes and the incense of Asia, nor even, for that matter, in the thought of her teachers, but in the reflections, or religious feelings, which the scenes, peoples, and objects of the East arouse in his own mind.

iv.

Unlike Gilder, Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907) was interested in the East for itself, in its appeal to all the senses. "Aldrich loves colors, sweet odors, and mere sensuous beauty as passionately as Keats did. He is a worker in words,—a painter using words as pigments."[10] Like Taylor and Stoddard, he delighted in dreams of the East. "What a wealth of fancy are in 'Dressing the Bride,' and 'How the Sultan Goes to Ispahan;' what passion and languorous beauty in 'Pepita,' 'The Sultana,' and 'Pampina'."[11] Too frequently Aldrich's passion and languor were a matter of obvious verbal artifice, and his weakness in this particular called forth the criticism of Oliver Wendall Holmes:

> Your tendency to vanilla-flavored adjectives and patchouli-scented participles stifles your strength in cloying euphemisms.[12]

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10. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 373.
11. Ibid., p. 372.
12. Greenslet, Life of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, as quoted in Pattee, History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 129.

C. Hartley Grattan, writing in the American Mercury, is inclined to agree with Holmes in his less polite criticism: "He wrote 'escape' poetry of the most vapid sort."[13]

This vapid quality which Mr. Grattan finds in Aldrich's verse may be partly accounted for, at least so far as the Oriental poems are concerned, by the fact that the early portion is derivative to a great extent. One source of his inspiration was his reading of the other poets of this group, particularly Taylor and Stoddard. "Taylor's Poems of the Orient, inspired by Shelley's 'Lines to an Indian Air' and by Tennyson's 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights,' made a profound impression upon him. Stoddard, who soon was to issue his Book of the East, was also to the young poet like one from a rarer world."[14] However, Aldrich did not depend entirely upon what other people wrote about the Orient for his knowledge of it, for travel played an important part in his later years. "He wandered through Spain, one of his old castles in the air, and through the rich Orient, where his poetic fancy was always at ease, and he travelled round the world twice."[15]

Aldrich's poetic fancy is perhaps less at its ease in his few Oriental poems of the philosophical type. "The Crescent and the Cross" deals with the symbols of the two creeds and the poet's choice of the cross. In "Flower and Thorn" he presents the complexity of life thus:

> At Shiraz, in a sultan's garden stood
> A tree whereon a curious apple grew,
> One side like honey, and one side like rue.

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13. V., p. 42; May, 1925.
14. Pattee, History of American Literature Since 1870, pp. 127-8.
15. Cambridge History of American Literature, III, p. 36.

> Thus sweet and bitter is the life of man,
> The sultan said, for thus together grow
> Bitter and sweet, but wherefore none may know.[16]

The poem contains a bit more of Eastern imagery than "A Turkish Legend," in which is brought out the idea that "Only God is great."

Although scarcely more Oriental in diction and hue than the philosophical type of poem, the brief lyrics, "Two Songs from the Persian," "Quatrains from Eastern Sources," and the quatrain on "Omar Khayyam," are among the most graceful of Aldrich's productions.

More Oriental in content, setting, and diction are the lyrics included in Cloth of Gold. "An Arab Welcome" is an attempt to describe the Arabian character, and the subject and diction harmonize well. "The Unforgiven," "Dressing the Bride," and "Tiger-Lilies" are largely pictorial in character, abounding in 'vanilla and patchouli.' "The Unforgiven," although not dealing strictly with an Eastern subject, makes use of Oriental terms and material: "lute of amber," "Heavy-branched banana," "citron-trees," etc. "Dressing the Bride" (a fragment) shows a charming welter of terms redolent of luxurious Asia, a bit of description filled with slave-girls, pearls, "misty izar from Mosul," "attars, nedd, and richest musk." The Orientalism in this poem is mainly a matter of diction and of sensuous appeal. "Tiger-Lilies" is the expression of the poet's love for strange, exotic flowers, reminding him of the warmth and color of the East.

The dreaming which is suggested in "Tiger-Lilies" finds its highest expression in "Latakia," a dream fantasy, and, incidentally, one of Aldrich's best poems.

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16. Aldrich, Poems, 1885, p. 13.

When all the panes are hung with frost,
Wild wizard-work of silver lace,
I draw my sofa on the rug
Before the ancient chimney-place.

* * * * *

I hear the hemlock chirp and sing
As if within its ruddy core
It held the happy heart of spring.
Ferdousi never sang like that,
Nor Saadi grave, nor Hafiz gay:
I lounge, and blow white rings of smoke,
And watch them rise and float away.

ii

The curling wreaths like turbans seem
Of silent slaves that come and go--
Or Viziers, packed with craft and crime,
Whom I behead from time to time,
With pipe-stem, at a single blow.[17]

"Latakia" contains the essence of Aldrich's Orientalism, as well as that of most of the other poets of the group: a dreaming of an idealized and romantic East, a land of warmth, color, and splendor.

In "The Sultana," however, Aldrich turned from dreaming about the East to romancing about it on a bird-in-a-gilded-cage topic. He pictures the seraglios and harems so strange to Western minds (including Aldrich's) in a richly ornamented style. Highly pictorial, the poem abounds in purples, jewels, and the scents of rose and jasmine. "A Prelude" also pictures an Eastern scene, the audience of the wise singer, Hassan Ben Abdul. Although the poem is less striking in pictorial and other sensory effects than "The Sultana," it has an Oriental tint.

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17. Poems, 1885, pp. 26-7.

One of the most highly colored of Aldrich's poems of the Orient and perhaps the most melodious of all is "When the Sultan Goes to Ispahan." Thomas Beer refers to this poem in The Mauve Decade when he mentions Aldrich--"who once so upset a session of the Radical Club by reciting some satirical verses about an improper woman in a harem."[18] Although its clear-cut imagery is reminiscent of Keats' "The Eve of Saint Agnes," a quotation will show that it has something of the quality of Poe's work but lacks something of his fluidity.

When the Sultan Shah-Zaman
Goes to the city of Ispahan,
Even before he gets so far
As the place where the clustered palm-trees are,
At the last of the thirty palace-gates,
The flower of the harem, Rose-in-Bloom,
Orders a feast in his favorite room--
Glittering squares of colored ice,
Sweetened with syrop, tinctured with spice,
Creams, and cordials, and sugared dates,
Syrian apples, Othmanee quinces, . . .

Then at a wave of her sunny hand
The dancing-girls of Samarcand
Glide in like shapes from fairy-land,
Making a sudden mist in air
Of fleecy veils and floating hair
And white arms lifted. . . .[19]

This gorgeous picture, scented with all the perfumes of Arabia, is characteristic of the lesser romantics and represents Aldrich's art at its height so far as poetry dealing with the Orient is concerned.

Less notable among Aldrich's shorter poems are the sonnet, "Egypt," which suggests the mystery of that weird land; "Hascheesh," which lacks any suggestion of the East although it deals with an

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18. Page 18.
19. Poems, 1885, pp. 28-9.

Asiatic drug and the dreams derived from its use, dreams which the poet wishes to avoid; and "The Metempsychosis," an expression of the Hindu doctrine (a bit out of Aldrich's line), containing nothing of the outward semblance of the East. Also somewhat less characteristic of Aldrich's work are the two poems, "The World's Way" and "In the Far East," which make clear that he was not too enamored of the Orient to take a humorous view of it occasionally. "The World's Way" recounts the fate of poets who lose their skill:

> Poets! not in Arabia alone
> You get beheaded when your skill is gone![20]

"In the Far East" is written in an amusingly conventional manner, beginning,

> Clarinda and Ann they have gone to Japan
> To study the language and see what they can;
> And when they return we shall probably learn
> An infinite deal about Primitive Man. . . ,

and after going on for some eighteen facile stanzas, ends with

> For aught that one knows, yonder saturnine crows
> Are souls of dead ancestors flying in rows:
> All blossom-like things once were maidens, so sings
> Old Omar--in peace may his ashes repose![21]

This latter poem was written late in his career, and one may legitimately wonder whether the champak odors had not begun to fail.

Aldrich's most ambitious work in the Oriental field, so far as length and complexity are concerned, comprises the two versions of a well-known story from the Apocrypha, the narrative poem, "Judith and Holofernes,"

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20. Poems, 1885, p. 26.
21. The Century Magazine, LXIV: 546-7. August, 1902.

and the blank-verse drama, Judith of Bethulia (produced in Boston, October, 1904). In the first poem, also written in blank verse, Aldrich makes the story of Judith more romantic than the historical version. He adds a love interest in the feeling of Judith for Holofernes, and also brings in angels and other supernatural powers. The long passages of description present a Hebrew setting, colored by the presence of the Assyrian army. The robes, equipment, and other trappings give the poem an Eastern richness and luxury. However, the stern atmosphere of duty to God frees it from the cloying sweetness of Lydia Sigourney or Maria Gowen Brooks, and differentiates it from the ordinary conventional poems on Oriental themes. Hardly more dramatic is the play, of which one reviewer wrote:

> The production was sumptuous; the audience was large; the performance was followed with enthusiasm. . . .Instead of writing a powerful tragedy, he chose to present a series of scenes, beautifully poetic, full of sensuous charm and tenderness of feeling, but deficient in coherence, vigor, and in the deeper human complications that appeal to the heart and thrill the imagination. He had the courage to write in blank verse, and throughout he has maintained an extraordinary smoothness and a grace of diction that frequently rises to an impassioned eloquence.[22]

The play is weak in several respects; Aldrich made use of the melodramatic device of a drug to render Holofernes helpless before Judith slays him and of the expedient of a soliloquy in the third act to reveal the Hebrew woman's love for the foreign general.[23] Both the versions

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22. Barry, J.D. "Mr. Aldrich's Dramatic Poem, 'Judith of Bethulia.'" The Critic, 46:70. January, 1905.
23. Ibid., pp. 70-3.

of the story have some of the Oriental imagery and sensuousness of the lyrics, but are less perfect and less interesting than the latter.

We see, then, that Aldrich was well adapted to his excursions in Orientalism by his "vivid fancy and fervid language."[24] His poetry on Eastern subjects is notable for its beauty of form and its sensuous appeal. The sensuous appeal, however, was that of a land of dreams, of fantasy. "Even as Taylor and Stoddard, he dreamed that his soul was native in the East."[25] And his native East he idealized and made romantic; it was a land transfigured by his imagination. Like the gods in Arnold's poem, he saw the rich harvest of sweet melons, not the gnawing worms.

V.

Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903) was another of the major figures among the Later Romantics. An intimate friend of Taylor, Stoddard was like him a devotee of the cult of the East, and though he "lacked the advantages--and disadvantages--of much travel,"[26] he poetized the magical Orient just as Taylor and Aldrich had done. He is akin to the other romantics not only in his devotion to the Eastern lands but also in his seeking after perfection in his verse. Pattee says of him:

> He has a passionate love of the beautiful that reminds one of his early master, Keats. His poems are spontaneous and impassioned, yet in them all is not a single

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24. James Onderdonk, History of American Poetry, p. 364.
25. Pattee, History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 128.
26. Cambridge History of American Literature, III, p. 44.

> inartistic or faulty line. Like Poe
> and Aldrich, he has pruned his work
> with remorseless care.[27]

This perfection is not too apparent in his early Oriental poems, included in his Songs of Summer, 1857. These were, no doubt, inspired by Taylor's work, as was one in particular, the sonnet "'Poems of the Orient,'" a tribute to the Pennsylvanian. Two semi-narrative poems in the same volume are "The Flamingo" and "The Abdication of Noman." In the first the story is merely suggested, not related in full. The content and style are well harmonized, the revengefulness of the narrator being reflected in the colors of the picture presented:

> And where their hues are most like blood,
> Mirrored in the sluggish flood,
> Down the long, black neck of land,
> I see the red Flamingo stand.[28]

On the other hand, the coloring of "The Abdication" is less lurid, and the story of the king's death is more fully told. The poem is of the "Abou Ben Adhem" type, the thought-content being of great importance. The idea is reminiscent of Emerson's "Earth Song" in "Hamatreya":

> Earth hides her gold in veined rocks and hills,
> Packs it in river sands: we dig it out,
> And stamp our Kingly faces in its light,
> And call it ours. Does Earth give up her claim?
> Not she, she calmly waits, and takes it back.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Not mine, but Earth's; for I shall pass away,
> I, and my race, but Earth will still remain,
> And keep my gems; . . .[29]

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27. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 363.
28. R.H. Stoddard, Poems (Complete Edition), p. 138.
29. Poems, p. 99.

The idea of the poem is important; but the poet does not emphasize it at the expense of the concrete suggestiveness of the diction, which is very rich. Stoddard presents in the setting a picture of the wealth and luxury of the East, of royal palaces and splendid gardens, of jewels, fabrics, and graceful slaves. The refinements of late romanticism temper the stern thought which Whittier and Emerson published unadorned.

In "The Lost Lamb (Tartary)," "The Divan (Persia)," and "We Parted in the Streets of Ispahan (Persia)," Stoddard writes a type of poems of which twenty years later he was to turn out a distinguished collection. In the poem first mentioned, the "tent" and the "Tartar maiden" are the Oriental elements; otherwise the poem is only a charming little song. The last two poems are melodious love songs with Oriental settings and trappings. The diction is highly Oriental. A bit of "The Divan" will illustrate their quality.

> A little maid of Astrakan
> An idol on a silk divan, . . .
> Thou little girl of Astrakan,
> I join thee on the silk divan:
> There is no need to seek the land,
> For rich bazaars where rubies shine;
> For mines are in that little hand,
> And on those little cheeks of thine.[30]

In the same volume of 1857 an exotic interloper appeared upon the pseudo-Oriental scene of the metropolitan poets: "The Serenade of Ma-Han-Shan." Of this poem a writer in the Revue de Littérature Comparée says:

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30. Poems, pp. 63-4.

> Richard Henry Stoddard, fils d'un capitaine au long cours, protégé de Bayard Taylor, employé à la douane de New York, auteur comme lui de romances arabes et persanes, est, je crois, le premier poète des États-Unis à chanter l'Extrême-Orient. . . .une Serenade of Ma Han Shan se trouve dans ses Songs of Summer, de 1857:
>
> "Come to the window now, beautiful Yu Ying!.
> The new moon is rising, white as the shell of a pearl.
> Your honored father and brother
> And the guests are still at table,
> Tipping the golden bottles,
> But I have stolen to you!
> The rose looks over the wall
> To see who passes near:
> Look out of the window, you
> And see who waits below.
> I am a Mandarin: my plume is a pheasant's feather:
> The lady who marries me may live at court if she likes."
>
> On sentira, d'après ma citation de cette première strophe, que les vers de Stoddard laissent à désirer, et comme interprétation exacte de la Chine, et comme poésie. Mais n'est-il pas piquant de signaler que ce débutant se sert déjà pour sa chinoiserie de cette "unrhymed cadence" qu'Amy Lowell, poète vers-libriste, devait mettre à la mode pour les traductions du chinois soixante ans plus tard?[31]

Almost twenty years later, in 1871, when Stoddard published his Book of the East, dealing with "a land which he had never visited save in dreams,"[32] he did not abandon the poetry of the Far East. "Stoddard fit paraître d'autres "poèmes chinois" dans ses Songs of the East (1871) et mit en vers quelques traductions d'authentiques poésies chinoises, dues sans doute à quelque sinologue anglais."[33] The present writer has been unable to discover the exact source to which Stoddard is indebted for

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31. W.L. Schwartz, "L'Appel de l'Extrême-Orient dans la Poésie des États-Unis," Huitième Année, No. 1, Janvier-Mars, 1928. (29), pp. 114-15.
32. Pattee, History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 16.
33. W.L. Schwartz, op. cit., p. 115.

the material in The Book of the East. The poet calls one of the sixteen "Chinese Songs," "She King," which is the name of the Chinese Book of Odes. Possibly, Stoddard used the James Legge translations of the Chinese Classics, which had begun to appear in 1861. The subjects of the poems of the group are those of the poems in the Confucian Book of Odes. They are not so musical as the other Songs of the East, their style being that of unrhymed translations; and their atmosphere is different from that of the others. A quieter note pervades them; they have less sensuousness and more dignity. The passionate burning of the conventional Oriental poetry gives place to the calm expression of the restrained emotion of a wife, or to the quiet idyllic atmosphere of a drinking song, reminiscent of Li Po. There is in them an avoidance of harshness, and a dwelling on the pleasant. Further, the Chinese coloring is strong; lutes, peach trees and blossoms, pagodas, willows and mulberry trees, and tender bamboo shoots abound.

> Millions of flowers are blowing in the fields.
> On the blue river's brink the peony
> Burns red, and where doves coo the lute is heard,
> And hoarse black crows caw to the eastern wind.[34]

As numerous as the "Chinese Songs" are the "Persian Songs." In quatrains, couplets, and unrhymed verses, the poet sings of wine, women, and poetry. Light and graceful, they have occasionally, as do authentic Persian poems, a note of sadness:

> It is a morn in winter,
> The air is white with snow,
> And on the chinar branches
> Jasmines seem to grow.
> * * * *

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34. Poems, p. 225.

No flower-girls in the market,
For flowers are out of date;
And the keepers of the roses
Have shut the garden gate.[35]

One poem on Saadi is a graceful bit, as is the one from which the following quotation is taken:

Two strings for my guitar
I will spin from your hair;
What else can you expect,
From a lover in despair?[36]

The imagery in all these poems is authentically Oriental and Persian, and the Eastern quality is strong while at the same time lacking the romantic voluptuousness of Mrs. Sigourney, or even Taylor. The sentiment resembles that of the poetry of Omar Khayyam, Saadi, and Hafiz.

The "Tartar Songs" are swiftly moving quatrains, suggesting the movement of horses and the fluidity of strong emotions. They are passionate in tone and more fleshly than the Persian or Chinese poems. The songs of love frequently celebrate a wild ardor; and although occasionally they have a deeper note, they always have a gallant dash and lilt. A citation will show much of their quality.

Yes, we are merry Cossacks,
Though not the Russian breed;
But bring a steed from Ilmen,
And fatten the lean steed.

When we come back with plunder,
We are true Cossacks then:
We sleep in the arms of beauties,
My merry, merry men.[37]

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35. Poems, p. 207.
36. Ibid., p. 203.
37. Poems, p. 210.

The "Arab Songs," while they also are passionate love songs, are much tamer than the Tartar ones. Some of the imagery is Eastern, but there is little Oriental coloring except for the exaggeration, which is perhaps not entirely Oriental. No exclusively Arabian sentiment is presented: lovers have grown thin and gone into declines at least since the time of Chaucer's Arcite.

It is difficult to account for the origin of these poems. Of course, Edward Fitzgerald's translations of Omar Khayyam, Jami, and other Persian poets were available to Stoddard; and von Hammer-Purgstall had translated many of the Oriental poets into German before 1835. (Emerson, it will be remembered, used the Hammer-Purgstall translations.) However, the present writer finds no exact source for Stoddard's "Songs."

Included in the Book of the East are also two conventional Oriental poems, "The King's Sentinel" and "The Children of Isis." The former embodies the story of the sentinel who gave his son's life for the king's; while the latter is the story of the Egyptian gods, of the dismembering of Osiris and the collecting of his body by Isis. Both poems have a general and rather inexact setting, and little Asiatic semblance.

Stoddard's Later Poems (1871-1880) also contains a number of poems on Oriental subjects. "Brahma's Answer," a poem of the philosophical type, is Stoddard's only poem with a Hindu setting. "The Voice of Earth," Mohammedan in setting, deals with the transitoriness of human life. In the group Hymns of the Mystics are several poems with Eastern

subjects, themes, or references. "Shall We, O Master, Ke Loo Said" is based on a saying of Confucious, but most of them are "Moslem" poems. They are of the moral type, and didactic, but not heavily so. Their Oriental quality is very slight. Among them are "There was of old a Moslem Saint," "Said Ibn Abi Wakkoo, whose strong bow," "There came to Nushervan, surnamed the Just," "Let me a simple tale repeat" (a story of Sadi), "He needs a guide no longer," "Walking along the shore one morn," and "'How many, many centuries.'" Stoddard expresses no disapproval like that of Whittier for an alien religion. The poems are used to point a general moral, the attitude represented being that of the "Abou Ben Adhem" type rather than that of Emerson's "Brahma."

The "Guests of the State," written to celebrate the centennial of the United States, is a sort of national ode. It passes in review all of the nations, including the Oriental ones, and contains catalogues of each nation's history, exotic names, plants, and so on, all of which is not particularly interesting.

In spite of Stoddard's never having visited the East except in his imagination, much of his poetry seems more authentically Oriental than the richer melodies of his compeers. However, he takes the romantic attitude toward the East, and we find him portraying a land of magic and exotic beauty. Occasionally his New England heritage seems to find expression in a "moral" poem, and frequently he verges on reality, as in his "Chinese Songs," but he is never far from the Orient of Aldrich and Taylor. If he is less sensuous and honied than they, he is also less melodious.

vi.

The fitting leader of all these poets who sang of the Orient, the man who first held the gorgeous East in fee, was Bayard Taylor (1825-1878). With the publication of his Poems of the Orient in 1854 he introduced the cult of the East to his associates and heralded the opening of a new realm to the poets of America. The mixture of realism and romanticism in his poetry and its sensuous beauty put him in the forefront of the writers who have brought the Orient into American literature, and have made him the high priest of the romantic cult of the East.

No one was better fitted than he to hold the position he did among his contemporaries. Doubtless he was influenced in his poetry on Oriental themes by the English romantics, early and late, and by the Goethe of the West-Östlicher Divan, but he was not content to be merely deriviative. "He knew the East as no one can possibly know it from books, or Moore would have reflected it with greater fidelity in 'Lalla Rookh.'"[38] He was a born traveler, and few "poets of any land have gathered sweets from fields more numerous and diverse. One can trace his trail from his first journey to his last by the lyrics that he dropped at frequent intervals."[39] Between 1844 and 1854 he travelled extensively in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The prose fruits of his wanderings are some half dozen books of travel, dealing mainly with Asia and Africa, for of "all the lands that he lived in or roamed

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38. Stoddard, as quoted in Hansen-Taylor and Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, I, p. 220.
39. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 356.

through, the countries of the Orient captivated this eager romanticist most completely."[40] Starting in 1851, he visited Egypt, Constantinople, Syria, Palestine, and other parts of Asia Minor. Later, he went across India ("All the guide-books contain passages from his descriptions as still the best."),[41] and visited China and Japan before returning to the United States.

However, important as is the fact that Taylor actually traveled through the lands he wrote about, what is more important is his almost complete abandonment to the East and Eastern ways. Although remaining a Christian, he is sympathetic toward the Oriental religions and religious customs, and his sympathy and even enthusiasm for the East are shown in the following letter written to James T. Fields from Constantinople, July 14, 1852:

> Europe is tame after this grand and gorgeous Orient, wherein I have now been reveling for nearly nine months. If you could see me now you would swear I was a disciple of the Prophet. I am become
>
> "Long and lank and brown
> As is the ribbed sea-sand,"
>
> But I pray you mislike me not for my complexion. I wear the tarboosh, smoke the Persian pipe, and drop cross-legged on the floor with the ease of any tailor whatever. When I went into my bankers' they addressed me in Turkish. . . . I have gone into the holiest mosques in Asia Minor with perfect impunity. I determined to taste the Orient as it was, in reality, not as a mere outside looker-on, and so picked up the Arabic tongue, put on the wide trowsers, and adopted as many Eastern customs as was becoming to a good Christian.[42]

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40. Cambridge History of American Literature, III, p. 39.
41. Life and Letters, I, p. 247.
42. As quoted in Hansen-Taylor and Scudder, Life and Letters of Taylor, I, p. 232.

Even his personal appearance and traits show a kinship with the Orient. Stedman says of him:

> . . .he seems to have been born for the Orient, and if his Songs do not set forth the East as Orientals know it, they do set forth Taylor in the East. . . .It needed not Hicks's picture of the bronzed traveller, in his turban and Asiatic costume, smoking, cross-legged, upon a roof-top of Damascus, to show how much of a Syrian he then was. Others saw it in those down-drooping eyelids which made his profile like Tennyson's; in his aquiline nose, with the expressive tremor of the nostrils as he spoke; in his thinly tufted chin, his close-curling hair; his love of spices, music, coffee, colors, and perfumes; his sensitiveness to out-door influences, to the freshness of the morning, the bath, . . .It is to be found in the "Poems of the Orient," where we have these traits reflected in diverse lyrics that make a fascinating whole. . . .[43]

The poetic results, then, of the months he spent in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor were the poems which form the best and most remarkable part of his lyric work,[44] the Poems of the Orient.

The tone of these poems "is by turns glowing and languorous, and usually rich in color and sound. The poet's intellect keeps him above the race he celebrates. A western Epicurean, he gets the best out of the East, --its finest passion and wisdom and its changeless soul. . . .The varying skies of Egypt, the Desert, the Syrian Coast, of Damascus, of Persia, free these poems from the honeyed monotony of Moore's Orientalism, and the bookishness of Southey's. In manner,

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43. Poets of America, pp. 406-7.
44. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 357.

however, they sometimes remind us of Byron and Hunt, and even of Tennyson, whose melodies have haunted so many singers, and whose 'Maud' appeared in the same year with the lyrics" of Taylor.[45]

In this volume of 1854, which contains both narrative and lyric verse, the poet leads the way into the enchanted realm of the Orient with the lyrico-narrative, "The Poet in the East":

> The Poet came to the Land of the East,
> When spring was in the air:
> The Earth was dressed for a wedding feast,
> So young she seemed, and fair;
> And the Poet knew the Land of the East,—
> His soul was native there.
>
> . . . . .
>
> The Poet said: I will here abide,
> In the Sun's unclouded door;
> Here are the wells of all delight
> On the lost Arcadian shore:
> Here is the light on sea and land,
> And the dream deceives no more.[46]

In a poem of the same type, he describes the "Garden of Irem," a magic region of idealized luxury.

Among the narrative poems in rhymed pentameter and octosyllabic verse are "Amran's Wooing," "The Birth of the Prophet," "The Temptation of Hassan Ben Khaled," "Shekh Ahnaf's Letter from Bagdad," and "The Wisdom of Ali." "Amran's Wooing" is a tale of the Desert, an Arabian love story. Written in octosyllabic couplets and possessing ease of motion, it is reminiscent of the translations of authentic Arabic verse. It contains a great deal of Oriental coloring and some Oriental imagery.

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45. E.C. Stedman, op. cit., p. 407.
46. The Poetical Works of Bayard Taylor, p. 38.

"The Birth of the Prophet" is a recital of the miracles attending the birth of Mohammed and is of no particular distinction, except for one phrase which shows Taylor's attitude toward the East: "the gorgeous region of the Orient."

Of a different type of narrative is "The Temptation of Hassan," characterized by Stedman as the "longest and best, the model of a narrative poem."[47] The poem begins somewhat like the "Abou Ben Adhem" verses of Whittier, but Taylor substitutes for the rabbi or wise man of Whittier a Mohammedan poet; and the austerity of Whittier and Bryant gives way to the gorgeousness of the cult of the East. Here the moral and didactic poem is thoroughly romanticized; and the "sin" of Hassan, instead of being merely referred to, is described in great detail in glowing and passionate terms. The story is surrounded with the magnificent ostentation of the Arabian Nights.

> From splintered cups the ripe pomegranates spilled
> A shower of rubies; oranges that glow
> Like globes of fire, enclosed a heart of snow
> Which thawed not in their flame; like balls of gold
> The peaches seemed, that had in blood been rolled;
> Pure saffron mixed with clearest amber stained
> The apricots; bunches of amethyst
> And sapphire seemed the grapes, so newly kissed
> That still the mist of Beauty's breath remained, . . .[48]

In spite of the passion the poem ends on a half-didactic note. Entirely free from the extravagance and rich hyperbole of "Hassan," the verses of which almost sink beneath the weight of gold and precious stones and heavy brocades, is the "Shekh Ahnaf's Letter," a not unsym-

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47. Poets of America, p. 407.
48. Taylor, Poems, p. 40.

pathetic picture of the religious intolerance of a conservative Mohammedan. The setting is general and inexact, and the poem is as bare of decoration as any of Whittier's. "The Wisdom of Ali," another didactic poem on an Arab legend concerning the value of wisdom and riches, is written in couplets and has an epigrammatic flavor, but little Oriental coloring.

The best portion of the Poems of the Orient is, of course, the delightful collection of lyrics. Among the less known and more restrained of these are the "Proem Dedicatory," "El Khalil," "An Oriental Idyl," "Desert Hymn to the Sun," and "Camadeva." "El Khalil" pictures and emphasizes the kinder side of Mohammedan love. "An Oriental Idyl" is an expression of an escape from reality:

> Depp-sunken in the charmed repose,
> This ignorance is bliss extreme:
> And whether I be Man, or Rose,
> Oh, pluck me not from out my dream![49]

The "Desert Hymn" is in a fairly lofty strain, and though it deals with Eastern material, it is rather general in theme, diction, and setting. "Camadeva" is a "faultless idyl in quatrains, celebrating the Hindoo legend of the coming of Camadeva, that affords a fine instance of a quality which marks the 'Poems of the Orient,' that of restraint--the reserved strength which will not give one stroke too much."[50] This is the only poem of Taylor's on a Hindu subject, and strangely enough the only poem which recalls his travels through India, China, and Japan. Aside from his prose work, Taylor left no literary record of his sojourn in the Far East.

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49. Poems, p. 55.
50. Stedman, Poets of America, p. 408.

One of the interesting groups of the lyrics is what might be called the geographic group: "Smyrna," "Tyre," "Nubia," and "Kilimandjaro." "Tyre" is an evocation of the forgotten glories of the historical Orient, and is rich in concrete expression.

> Where is the wealth of ages that heaped
> thy princely mart?
> The pomp of purple trappings; the gems
> of Syrian art;
> The silken goats of Kedar; Sabaea's
> spicy store;
> The tributes of the islands thy squadrons
> homeward bore, . . .[51]

"Nubia" is a sonnet celebrating

> A land of Dreams and Sleep,--a poppied land![52]

"Kilimandjaro," an apostrophe to the African mountain and a pictorial poem, lacks the warmth of most of Taylor's work.

"To a Persian Boy," "Hassan to his Mare," "The Arab to the Palm," and "Aurum Potabile" deal with people and objects in fairly definite geographical settings. The first-named poem has a partly literary inspiration, compounded of recollections of the Arabian Nights and a knowledge of "immortal Hafiz." "Hassan to his Mare" expresses the Arab's devotion to his horse. As in the real Arabian poems, there is in Taylor's bit an extravagant praise of the horse by her owner, who addresses her in poetic language as a mistress. Taylor records thus a tribute to the authenticity of his realism in this particular poem:

> In Washington I saw Yusef, Ross Browne's
> Syrian dragoman and a friend of Achmet.
> He brought over some Arab horses for a
> Kentucky friend of mine. This Kentuckian
> told me that he read some of my "Poems of

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51. Poems, p. 65.
52. Ibid., p. 57.

> the Orient" to Yusef,--among others, "Hassan to his Mare." Yusef was greatly excited, sprang up with tears in his eyes, and swore that the Arabs talked just in that way to their horses. He is going to write the poem in Arabic, take it back with him this summer, and give it to the Aneyzeh Arabs in the Syrian Desert. So, perhaps my songs will be sung by the Bedouins.[53]

The Orientalism here is a matter of imagery and style as much as anything else. "The Arab and the Paem" is a praise of the palm tree, which is personfied; while "Aurum Potabile" is a celebration of the vino d'oro of Lebanon. An enthusiastic poem on the "golden blood of Lebanon," its Eastern element is constituted of proper names and a reference to the "glorious Persian," Hafiz.

The most famous of the lyrics in Poems of the Orient is the individual "Bedouin Song," which, in spite of its general setting, has a definitely Oriental atmosphere as well as a beauty of melody.

> From the Desert I come to thee
> On a stallion shod with fire;
> And the winds are left behind
> In the speed of my desire.
> Under they window I stand
> And the midnight hears my cry!
> I love thee, I love but thee,
> With a love that shall not die
> Till the sun grows cold,
> And the stars are old,
> And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold![54]

Somewhat of the same nature as this charming song is the "Song" beginning

> Daughter of Egypt, veil thine eyes!
> I cannot bear their fire;
> Nor will I touch with sacrifice
> Those altars of desire.[55]

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53. Letter of July 9, 1885, to His Mother, as quoted in Hansen-Taylor and Scudder, Life and Letters, p. 301.
54. Poems, p. 55.
55. Ibid., p. 48.

A great deal less light and graceful is "Charmian," which repeats the theme of the "Song." The poet is careful not to give way to the fleshly seductions of the East, although he is under the spell of her glamour. In the face of temptation he shows an admirably Puritan restrain, a quality peculiar to American romanticism. Like "Charmian," the "Nilotic Drinking Song" is set in Egypt. It is less truly melodious than the others, and is a tour de force, abounding in interior rhyme and so on. It is a bit of Oriental "fooling," and Taylor employs comic double rhymes like "doat on" and "Croton"; and "swam on" and "Ammon." In a different strain is "To the Nile," an apostrophe to the river, which presents a different attitude from that of the New England poets--an abandonment to the East itself:

> Thy godship is unquestioned still; I bring
> No doubtful worship to thy shrine supreme;
> But thus my homage as a chaplet fling,
> To float upon thy stream![56]

These few poems together form one of the most enjoyable of the lyric groups in Taylor's first volume of poems on Oriental subjects.

Among Taylor's earlier poems is one on the "Continents," written in January, 1848. In a vision of the personified continents, the poet sees "queenly Asia" and "s@art Africa." The material and manner of the poem are conventional, and lack the spirit of the poems of 1854. A few years before the publication of the latter volume, in 1851, Taylor brought out Romances and Lyrics. Four of the poems included had at least Oriental references. "Porphyrogenitus," mention-

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56. Poems, p. 61.

ing "Hafiz in Orient," is a lyric poem on the poets, but the other three poems are narratives. "The Palm and the Pine," written in couplets relating the meeting of East and West (rather North and South) in love, is hardly more Oriental than "Porphyrogenitus." "The Soldier and the Pard" presents the Occidental in the East. The eerie and improbable story recounts a man's companionship with a leopard in the Egyptian desert. The monologue is interesting, but the piece does not rank high as poetry. "Kubleh" is the best and most Oriental of all these poems. The swiftly moving narrative, in good blank verse, represents a scene in the Assyrian desert and tells in a simple and straightforward manner the story of a wonderful mare. The poem is an expression, like "Hassan to His Mare," of the Arabian love for the horse, and is full of the sound and color of the East.

The Oriental poems in the Lyrics of 1875 are the least interesting of Taylor's productions. They are only partly Oriental in inspiration, and Taylor's early passion for the East seems to have exhausted itself. "In My Vineyard" shows

> . . .Saadi, from his Persian home,
> And Hafiz in his turban. . . ,

encouraging him, along with the English poets, to appreciate wine. A somewhat vague poem about the "hidden truth" is "Harpocrates," in which the poet visits the temple of Horus in his pilgrimage to seek the true knowledge. "Canopus," which recalls the sights and sounds of the East, has something of the sensuous quality of the earlier Poems of the Orient. The star Canopus awakens longings:

> To sit at feasts, and fluid odors drain
> Of daintiest nectar that from grapes is caught,
> While faint narcotics cheat the idle brain
> With phantom shapes of thought, . . .

and

> To lie beneath that mellow lamp again
> And breathe its languid fire. . .[57]

"Gabriel," on the other hand, is general and inexact in setting, but the general impression is that of the East.

A consideration of all of Taylor's poems which have a trace of Oriental inspiration reveals that the narratives and lyrics of the volume of 1854 are superior to any of the earlier or later work. The verses of this collection, "poured out in rapid succession during his months in Egypt, Syria, and the far East,"[58] give him his reputation and his leadership among the writers who poetized the Orient. "Taylor was indeed 'a Western Asiatic.' Beneath his new-world exterior he had

> 'The rich, voluptuous soul of Eastern land,
> Impassioned, tender, calm, serenely sad.'

He caught at once the true spirit of the Orient,--its languorous beauty, its passion and its dreams. . . .His passionate 'Bedouin Song' is worthy of comparison with the best of Byron's Eastern lyrics or with such a gem as Shelley's 'Lines to an Indian Air.' Where in America are there lines so full of passion and fire?"[59] This praise may be over-enthusiastic, for it is true that some of Taylor's work seems imitative, and that even in the favorite "Bedouin Song" parts are reminiscent of

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57. Poems, p. 200.
58. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 357.
59. Pattee, History of American Literature, p. 357.

Shelley's "Indian Serenade," and perhaps even of certain choruses in the Prometheus Unbound, but there is in the song and in his other poems a fire and realism which is lacking in Shelley's Oriental poetry. Taylor had seen what he wrote about, and though the East which he presents is an ideal and romantic land, it was based on fact and experience. If his Orientalism was a pose, it was a pose in keeping with his character; and his attempt identify himself with the East was productive or genuine poetic results. His "L'Envoi" to the Poems of the Orient well expresses the sum of his existence:

> Unto the Desert and the Desert steed
> Farewell! The journey is completed now:
> Struck are the tents of Ishmael's wandering breed,
> And I unwind the turban from my brow.
>
> . . . . .
>
> I found, among those Children of the Sun,
> The cipher of my nature,--the release
> Of baffled powers, which else had never won
> That free fulfilment, whose reward is peace.
>
> . . . . .
>
> And if the temper of our colder sky
> Less warmth of passion and of speech demands,
> They are the blossoms of my life,--and I
> Have ripened in the suns of many lands.[60]

vii.

By 1890 the cult of the East of the metroplitan poets was growing obsolete, and the stream of romantic poetry on Eastern themes was running thin. Taylor was dead, and his associates were turning to other fields. Interest in the Orient would have to be nourished on something stronger than literary derivation or imitation before it could again become a force in American poetry.

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60. Poems, p. 65.

In the middle of the "Mauve Decade" a shift in the interest of a few writers from the Middle East to the Far East gave promise of this revitalization. Articles by Lafcadio Hearn and about him began to appear in the magazines. He had begun to introduce Japan to America and to interpret her spirit and culture to the West. In 1894 he began his series of books on Japanese subjects with Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan. Throughout, the volume contained bits of poetry, examples of street songs, popular songs, labor songs, and so on. Besides several translations of ballds and poems in the text of Kokoro (c. 1896), he gave in an appendix "Three Popular Ballads." In Gleanings in Buddha-Fields (1897), he devoted a chapter to "Buddhist Allusions in Japanese Folk-Song," providing examples. In Ghostly Japan (1908) contained a chapter on "Bits of Poetry," with examples and a discussion of the qualities which were to have no little influence on the American poetry of the twentieth century. This turning away from a glamorous land of the imagination to the actual literature and life of other peoples gave to Orientalism in American poetry promise of a new vitality. Perhaps even more important in its effects on American poetry of the twentieth century was the French interest in Far Eastern literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century,—an influence which is just now beginning to be evident.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In his introductory chapter the present writer touched upon the difficulty attendant upon the separation of Hebraic material from Orientalism in general. After one has studied the course of the Eastern influences in American poetry, one will readily agree that the Hebrew element in American literature certainly cannot be ignored, for it is one of the four main threads of Orientalism in our poetry. Beginning with the Conquest of Canaan in 1785, poems on Hebrew themes appeared continuously throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Aldrich's Judith, published near the end of the latter period, closes the procession as far as this study is concerned.

Pseudo-Orientalism, or the conventional treatment of Eastern themes, is another thread in the development of the Oriental element in American poetry. Mrs. Bradstreet's Four Monarchies is, as has been indicated, the earliest (and one of the worst) examples of pseudo-Orientalism, and Whittier's "Abou Ben Adhem" poems are among the best. Except for the best work of Emerson and Whittier, the majority of Oriental poems in the first half of the nineteenth century were, as we have seen, rather more or less of this type.

Whittier and Emerson, however, departed from the paths of convention in the presentation of the East. Both of them became acquainted with the Hindu Scriptures and expressed their interest in them in poetry. Although Whittier used Asiatic writings as a basis for several

of his poems, it was really Emerson who most fully represented the most genuine element in Orientalism in American poetry before the twentieth century. He cut through the veils of illusions, through the tourist externals of Oriental life, through the languor and luxuriousness of the traditional East, to find the eternal heart of things, to kneel before the pure shrine of the eternal Brahma.

Not for long, however, was the philosopher's spiritual vision held up before America for its contemplation. The air of Emerson's poetry was too rarefied for general taste; the romantic poets led the way down from the heights. The poems produced by these late romantics, the poetry of "the cult of the East," while akin to the pseudo-Oriental verses of their contemporaries in many respects, were of a somewhat different type. They belong to a fourth constituent of Orientalism in this period--the presentation of the sensuous Middle East, of Persia, Arabia, Egypt--and "Arabian Nights Land." The romantic treatment of the East, while discernible faintly in Thomas Godfrey's Prince of Parthia and Freneau's lyrics, and becoming more noticeable in the work of Longfellow and the early poets of the "Golden Age," came into its own only with the work of Taylor and his friends. In them American romanticism bore its most luscious fruit,--its most decadent fruit.

The life of Orientalism in American poetry was sapped by lack of real nourishment, by the bookishness and overrefinement of its cultivators. It would be necessary to revitalize it by going back, as Emerson had done years before, to the real thought of the East,

to the genuine literature of the Asiatic nations. This would mean a serious study of the poetic art of the Eastern poets, a preoccupation with translations from the Oriental tongues, especially from the rich fields, almost unknown in American literature before the twentieth century, of the Japanese and Chinese. It remained for the twentieth century poets of America to accomplish this task. Already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Lafcadio Hearn, in Gleanings in Buddha-Fields and In Ghostly Japan, had pointed out the way to them.

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A profusion of blossoms
On my cherry tree--
Ah, who will see them
Tomorrow?

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