Rethinking Enlightenment Improvement: British Travellers along the Great Syrian Desert Route

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Abstract

This dissertation sets out to rethink, contextualise and historicise a commonplace notion in the Scottish Enlightenment which poses nations and societies as either improving or primitive. The Scottish Enlightenment philosophers were the eighteenth-century pioneers in an intellectual project of improvement pointing the light emerging in Europe, particularly in Britain. The Act of Union with Scotland (1707) and the process of modernisation in the Highlands of Scotland allowed for rhetoric of improvement which called upon Scotland with its Highlands to join the great British modernising project. The Scots literati were aware that joining this project jeopardises older cultural habits and values and also brings corruption into society but the other option was nothing but the dilemma of living in premodern, less commercially advanced age, one which, as they thought, prevailed in Arabian deserts and Islamic societies. Their rhetoric of improvement was one of difference between an improving Britain with technological and commercial progress and a backward Middle East with primitive modes of subsistence. For them, modernity did not cast its light on the eighteenth-century Middle East. They fixed Middle East on a lower stage of a universal grid of progress.

In the cross-cultural encounters between Britons and Muslims which took place on the Syrian-Mesopotamia overland routes to India, as this dissertation argues, the polarising rhetoric of the Scottish Enlightenment proves to be one of conviction. It was not necessarily the only way of referring to the modern moment of change taking place in Britain. The four British writers which this dissertation examines were interested in the Enlightenment question of improvement. They were believers in progress but had their own doubts about the dominant notions in the habit of interpreting improvement in their own culture. By writing on material
progress, commerce, manners and forms of morality which they encountered in Islamic lands they set out to offer their new understanding of the notion of progress. While doing so, they did not posit Islam and the Middle East as the fixed categories of backwardness the Scots literati had always celebrated in their defence of modern British commercial improvement. Rather they showed how Europeans can learn things and improve themselves by interacting with Muslims: caravan chiefs and merchants, political leaders and servants. All these cross-cultural scenes of interaction in which Britons gained improvement occurred in a period in which Britain was not a colonial power in the Middle East but rather a commercial and political partner with local Arabian and Muslim leaders. And writing about Islamic cultures, as this thesis demonstrates, was a way of rethinking British dominant views of the meaning of improvement in the modern age.
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INTRODUCTION

THE ENLIGHTENMENT INFATUATION WITH IMPROVEMENT

This dissertation analyses four key attributes of the Enlightenment’s obsession with progress and improvement: notably the improvement of knowledge, of manners, of trade, and feelings or sentiments. It does so by exploring how these four concerns directly shaped four neglected travel documents written between 1745 and 1808 by men who journeyed across the Great Syrian Desert Route between Great Britain and India. These were all educated men whose ideas were shaped by their times, and their challenging experiences led them to question the commonplace ideas of their times.

I demonstrate how, in significant ways, the Enlightenment discourse of improvement was designed by measuring how societies move from a state of nomadic barbarism into one of commercial civility. This movement or improvement was confirmed by the Scottish Enlightenment writers who were far from being “radical”, in Jonathan Israel’s term, in advocating change within their own societies but nevertheless were far from being non-radical in comparing the favoured change and progress in their societies with the backward social, economic and religious conditions of Islamic societies and cultures. In order to know how the self is seriously progressing, the self needs to construct the other as being inescapably bound to backwardness. This was the dominant view in the Scottish Enlightenment discourse of progress, particularly when the world of Islam is brought into the picture. Key Enlightenment figures (such as Adam Smith, David Hume, Lord Kames, Adam
Ferguson and John Miller) all viewed Britain as a modern commercial nation and convinced themselves this was so by viewing the Middle East as a space of primitive and un-improvable nomadic modes of subsistence and backward religious practices. For these figures radical differences between Britain and the Middle East confirmed their convictions that in these modern times only Europeans, particularly Britons, were able to show improvement in science, commerce, manners and also feelings or sentiments. This was not, however, entirely congruent with the accounts of contemporary travellers who lived and travelled in the region and whose encounters with Muslims allowed them to reflect on the meaning of improvement while showing the ability to rethink the dominant views of the Scottish Enlightenment. Their reaching out into the unfamiliar world of Islam and the Middle East further energised them to think of alternatives to the received wisdom in their cultures about what is likely to be improved in this modern period. In so doing they did not hesitate to rethink, although they sometimes confirmed, the dominant views in their cultures which posed Islam and the Middle East as clear manifestations of backwardness and barbarism.

Writing about what they encountered in the Middle East allowed travel writers to reflect on the dominant views regarding improvement in Britain. Here their views of Islam and Muslims were serious engagements with how improvement was interpreted at home. John Carmichael was concerned with improving knowledge about Biblical lands. Performing the role of a man of empiricism, Carmichael, in his *Journey from Aleppo to Basra* (1745), shows how he set out to examine the Biblical lands which had always fascinated previous European travellers to the region. In so doing, he repeats the common tropes in European writings which associated these
lands with ancientness and pre-modern times. This view of the Orient seems similar to the dominant discourse in the Scottish Enlightenment which posed the Arab and Muslim worlds as primitive and ancient and where people were still languishing in pre-modern times of lesser material progress. Nevertheless, Carmichael’s view of the Orient was not one of radical polarisation between a scientific and rational Britain and religious and backward Middle East. While repeating the older and dominant tropes in the Scottish Enlightenment, Carmichael also found the opportunity to mediate new information not previously known but also reveals a serious anxiety about how improvement was being seen in Britain. Travelling in the Orient here enabled him to reflect on the extent to which material progress can be a real progress with the prevalence of a spiritual gap within. Carmichael’s journey among older Biblical sights allowed him to doubt the views which called for a radical break from the past of religion by following the improving course of modern and secular times of science and rationality. By socialising with the people among whom he moved, Carmichael found the means to doubt the ability of the age of science to suppress religion while also showing how the radical and polarising views in the Scottish Enlightenment towards Islam and the Middle East were not things he constantly cared about. Travelling in Biblical sights, ruins, relics and also religious communities poses a challenge to the mind of the empiricist traveller of the age of the Enlightenment.

But if Carmichael was willing to recall elements from the past (religion) to the Enlightenment discourse of progress and thus becomes able to question the dominant meaning of improvement, another traveller in the Great Desert Route argued for an opening up of the discourse to accommodate a new form of
improvement not previously known. It is an idea primarily based on class and further associated civility with manners and behaviour, not status. Edward Ives’ *Journey from Persia to England* (1773) sets out to describe the encounter between a British middle class doctor and Muslims from different social backgrounds. His encounters with Muslims enabled him to rethink the view that civility only describes the status of the aristocracy. According to Ives, this view needs be rethought to accommodate newly emergent classes who were able to accumulate wealth and thus show polite and improved manners. In the world of Islam, Ives had the chance to practise these polite and improved manners among different people: the ‘barbaric’ as well as the polite. Travelling in the character of a civil and improved Englishmen among these people, Ives did not present Muslims as a monolithic group with no interest in progress and improvement whatsoever. Ives’ encounters with civil and improved men among Muslims complicate the dominant view in the Scottish Enlightenment that the world of Islam lacks commercial and technological progress, the phenomena which establish any nation as being civil and improved. Like Carmichael, Ives’ journey in the East allowed him to rethink the polarising aspects in the Enlightenment discourse of improvement, particularly those which put forward the argument that only European nations were able to show modern civility at the same time as Muslims were languishing in primitiveness. In so doing, Ives also set out to rethink the ways the notion of civility was associated with the British upper classes and aristocracy, the people who owned land and status. Rather than recalling a moment from the past so that he can rethink the marriage between the notion of civility and the upper classes, Ives relied on emergent cultural practices (the monied people from the middle and lower classes travelling in the East and returning with huge
fortune) for explaining how polite characters and behaviour are things acquired and practised, not necessarily inherited.

The rise of a culture of commerce in eighteenth-century Britain was something that many writers praised. The Scottish literati were enthused about it. But many writers railed against its deleterious effects on the morality of society. Abraham Parsons’ commercial speculations on the world of commerce in Islamic lands revealed the efforts of merchants to reconcile between commerce and morality. Parsons’ *Travels in Asia and Africa Including a Journey From Scanderoon to Aleppo, And Over the Desert to Baghdad and Bussora* (1808) narrates the commercial engagements of a British merchant whose moral and public spirit differed from what the enemies of commerce in Britain proposed on the character of the bourgeoisie and commercial individuals whose self-interests, as they argued, cancel social responsibility. For Parsons, the commercial world of Islam enabled him to reconcile the character of the merchant with the character of the moralist. Like Ives, Abraham Parsons showed how his journey in the world of Islam also allowed him to rethink the dominant notion during the Enlightenment that it was hard to reconcile common interests with individual gain. But in so doing, he also rethought the Scottish Enlightenment literati’s proposition that commercial improvement is something missing in Arabian lands where technological inventions do not exist. Parsons’ commercial engagement in the Levant showed how Islamic commercial life allowed for reconciling commerce with morality. Here the Scottish Enlightenment notion that commercial life does not necessarily lead to moral bankruptcy was upheld by Parsons but where he departs from the Scots literati is when he does not use a polarising rhetoric to stage Europeans as commercial and Muslims as primitive nomads.
Questioning the common notions of progress which the Scots literati attached to European modern times also appeared towards the end of the century, especially in a period when revolutions and political turmoil called upon writers to show some emotional responses to radical revolutionary politics which revealed entrenched ideals of progress. Donald Campbell was a Scots aristocrat. He believed that the burgeoning of a culture of commerce and rationality in modern times may lead to social and political chaos but also result in the disappearance of older social and political traditions associated with oral cultures and the rule of the aristocracy and the monarch. The political world of Islam allowed Donald Campbell, in his *A Journey Overland To India Partly by A Route Never Gone Before by any European* (1795), to find a way to advise Britons that to be modern and progressive does not necessarily mean getting rid of older cultural values and also political modes of governance. Instead of copying the model that the French were seeking to apply with bloodshed and radical politics in a disguised form of reason, they need to learn from Middle Eastern and Ottoman political institutions and cultures. Again, here Campbell was not completely in favour of the Scots discourse of improvement which saw the Middle East as a backward scene where Britons had nothing to learn from except the realisation that in pre-modern times before the Enlightenment age of reason, civility and commerce they were living in similar conditions.

These four travellers found in Islamic cultures and societies the ideas, people and landscape which enabled them to find alternatives to hegemonic cultural values and tropes in their own cultures. Their different interpretations of the meaning of improvement engaged the world of Islam as a fluid category, one far from being fixed and one in whose societies, cultures and landscape the European traveller writer finds what allows him to offer his own unique revision of common tropes associated
with the Enlightenment. They showed how Europeans can engage with and learn from other cultures, not only consider them the backwaters of primitiveness which had nothing to offer to European modern efforts to achieve progress.

This point needs to be emphasized here because I believe that the ways the European Enlightenment intellectual history, philosophy and literatures engaged with ideas of improvement (in science, commerce, manners and emotions) in a comparative, cross-cultural context are things understudied. Many Enlightenment writers engaged with the question of progress by referring to Middle Eastern cultures, societies, religions, modes of subsistence and also writings, a point missed in important studies of the Enlightenment age. Roy Porter in his *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (2000) was right in pointing out that “Progress was the ultimate Enlightenment gospel” (445). But he had nothing to say on how this gospel during the period was sometimes explained in a comparative cross-cultural context. Similarly Jonathan Israel in his *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (2010) divided the Enlightenment period between those radical minds demanding change and improvement and those moderate literati who believed in progress but were far from seeking to destroy older traditions and values. Israel saw the Scots literati as far from being radical but he had nothing to say about whether their moderation really works in a comparative-cross-cultural context in which they offered their fixed views about the radical differences between Europeans and Muslims. This project sets out to address this gap by studying the Enlightenment belief in improvement in a comparative context. And in so doing, it seeks to show two different views on progress. One offered by arm-chair philosophers whose discourse was polarising
and another more nuanced in which direct contact with Muslims allowed British travellers to rethink the polarising tropes in the Scottish Enlightenment.

Another understudied scholarly area which makes the argument in the four chapters here touches on the problematic of consistency in studying the European discourse of improvement. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is a clear manifestation of this. Said proposed that in setting out to know the Orient, “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). Orientalism focuses on “Ontological” differences between two different geographical spots and cultures, East and West. But it also attributes to East and West two different time zones, one of backwardness and another of modernity. Said observed that a French journalist who reported from a war torn Lebanon (1975-6) recalled how “it had once seemed to belong to...the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval” (1). This mode of engagement with the Orient as an ancient time zone expresses the “positional superiority” of the Orientalist, as Said shows, and also bears the features of consistent discourse, one which shows how the Orientalist ends up reiterating commonplace European perceptions of the Orient (5-7).

Said’s notion that the Orient was a backward scene for the modern Westerner inspired me to write this dissertation. But while researching the Enlightenment understanding of improvement in relationship with what Said called the Orient, I recognized that at least one important point about how Said understands the notion of Orientalism need to be rethought. The consistency which Said found in the discourse of Orientalism troubled me when I found that eighteenth-century British travellers used their travelling observations of Muslims as social and political comments on the changing social and political landscape of Enlightenment Britain.
and in doing so they learned how to rethink the dominant notion of progress in their own cultures. Here their travels in the Orient offered them some improving lessons which they showed interest to learn from, write about and emphasize in their efforts to challenge dominant cultural views. As this dissertation shows, these travellers were not consistent in their proposition that Muslims belong to a primitive and backward time zone, the non-European savages whose cultures had nothing to offer to rational, commercial polite and sentimental European travellers. Rather sometimes they found in the Orient what inspired them to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of living in a modern, commercial and scientific present. Mary Louise Pratt, in her *Imperial Eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (1992), in a quite similar approach to Said’s, observes that travel writing in this period was associated with a rationalist and scientific view of the world, a consistent view based upon the efforts to improve geographical knowledge under the patronage of and in alliance with European colonial schemes. Her coinage of the term “contact zone” expresses a polarizing discourse of progress:

[t]he space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (6)

In this thesis I shall move beyond the “unshakability” which Said found in the European discourse of Orientalism or the “coercion and radical inequality and intractable conflict” which Pratt located in the Anglo-American and African contact zones. Instead, I concur with the theses put forth by the studies in which the British eighteenth-century figures as global, fractured and discontinuous, one in which the
story of improvement, in the words of Kathleen Wilson, “facilitated the formation of cultural identities that resulted in pluralities and contradictions as well as unities and coherences” (71). And such complex story of improvement takes place across the Syrian-Mesopotamian commercial caravan routes trodden by the cosmopolitan eighteenth-century Englishmen.

The consistency of Orientalism, as Said thought, resembles what Raymond Williams calls “the dominant” and hegemonic stage in a cultural system. But as Williams notes “no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention”(125). In any historical period, one finds elements reaching back to its past and also practices newly formed, each reflects the human energies aiming at rethinking the dominance of one mode of production, class system and hegemonic social, political and cultural values. Williams called these alternative and oppositional stages in cultural systems “the residual” and the emergent”, the terms which allow us to refine and complicate Said’s notion of Orientalism as only a hegemonic discourse which poses the Orient as a backward space. The residual in the dissertation appears in chapter one and chapter four where it will appear that Carmichael and Campbell showed anxiety of the ideals of improvement which seeks to suppress cultural, social and political values relating to the past. And the emergent in the thesis appears in chapter two and three where both Ives and Parsons show how a rising new class, the commercially minded middle class, could become the bearers of civility and morality. But also the residual and emergent aspects here allow us to study the extent to which these four writers complicate the polarising aspect in the discourse of improvement which the Scots
literati proposed in their efforts to give themselves and their readers this solace that the modern age holds a great deal of progress to the Scots and the English.

The Scottish Enlightenment and the Rhetoric of Improvement

On the eve of the Union (1707), improvement became a hot topic in eighteenth-century Scotland. Science, commerce and agriculture were rapidly on the rise, and Scottish universities and literary clubs invited the literati to theorise a culture of improvement. Scottish philosophers frequently set about measuring progress by taking the Middle East as a negative example. But their cross-cultural polemic had a local concern. They were developing, and elaborating, schemes of improvement and progress even as Scotland, with its Highlands, was being irresistibly drawn into the political and economic demands of the union. They viewed the modern age as one of hope and optimism, although they were aware that commercial progress did carry with it unlearning older modes of subsistence and cultural and religious values. Their ideal of improvement displaced the values of antiquity and traditions; it even absorbed the Highland clans, symbols of tribal past, into the new class system of British commercial improvement. But what confirmed their optimism about modern times was not the fears of the regression of commercial England and Scotland back into pre-modern ages but rather the notion that there were some non-European nations still cherishing pre-modern modes of subsistence, traditions and culture. The primitivism and backwardness of the Middle East generated hope and optimism in Scottish Enlightenment thinking. But this is far from concluding that the idea of improvement during the Enlightenment constantly held a polarising rhetoric which sets out to contrast an improved Britain with a backward Orient. One needs to keep
in mind nuanced views of the question of improvement offered by those Britons who directly experienced travelling in the GDR.

David Hume, whose passion for travel would lead him no further than France and Switzerland, viewed the Middle East as a model of backwardness. By contrast to the unimproved Middle East, he found that “[t]rade, manufacture, industry, were nowhere, in former ages, so flourishing as they are at present in Europe” (449). Hume set out to show how “circumstances [in] ancient nations seem inferior to the modern, both for the happiness and increase of mankind” (449). Hume argued that “the ages of [commercial] refinement [are] both the happiest and most virtuous” (295). In order to promote his ideas and give them a comparative shape, Hume claimed that people in “Syria, and the Lesser Asia, as well as the Coast of Barbary,” could not achieve improvement: “I can readily own [that these lands were] desert in comparison of their ancient condition” (482). Hume was not sure that Asians cultivated benevolent sentiments and polite behaviour; rather most people there were still primitive. “[T]he Asiatic manners are as destructive to friendship as to love...”, observed Hume (203). The absence of commercial improvement opened up the door for moral backwardness:

The bad education of children especially children of condition, is another unavoidable consequence of these Eastern institutions. Those who pass the only part of life among slaves, are only qualified to be themselves slaves and tyrants and in every future intercourse either with their inferiors or superiors are apt to forget the natural quality of mankind. (204)

Polygamy in Muslim societies, he believed, obstructs sentimental and moral improvement. It leads to despotism since it does not promote a sense of equality in
social relationships. The state of emotions and morality in polygamous societies, Hume insisted, is bound to be primitive:

What attention, too, can it be supposed a parent, whose seraglio affords him fifty sons, will give to instilling principles of morality or science into a progeny, with whom he himself is scarcely acquainted, and whom he loves with so divided an affection? Barbarism therefore appears, for reason as well as experience, to be the inseparable attendant of polygamy. (204)

With all the knowledge he advanced about Asiatics and Muslims, Hume forgot to mention one thing. He did not mention that he did not travel in the East and consequently lacked direct and personal experience. Further, he did not mention his sources for what he considered non-improved Muslims and Asiatics.

Carmichael, Ives, Parsons and Campbell held the same hope of progress which Hume openly displayed but were far from understanding improvement as a one-way traffic, a polarising rhetoric. They journeyed in new lands but gained new knowledge on how other societies’ modes of subsistence and conditions of living can offer Britons new ways of thinking about improvement. One needs to think here about the direct experience of travelling and experiencing different cultures first hand, a thing which the Scot literati did not do although they showed massive interest in writing about other nations and cultures. With all the knowledge he offered about economics and morality, Adam Smith, like his friend Hume, did not travel in the East but he was interested in the trope of the Eastern merchant. For Smith, commerce, on a smaller scale, can be encountered in the Middle East. But the prevalence of primitive modes of subsistence and the lack of technological progress in Arabian societies refer to the difficulty which these societies face in moving towards modern commercial progress.
In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1762-3), Smith appears fascinated with what the barren spaces of Arabia can provide for the philosopher who is interested in tracing the economic and social causes and effects of human progress. According to his theory of progress, the inhabitants of the deserts of Arabia were primitive. He assigned the Arabs the second stage of historical progress: the shepherding stage. He called them “savage Arabians” (158). For Smith, progress in arts, sciences, government cannot be discerned among the Arabs since they have always been living in barren desert space where agriculture and commerce lack the material means to flourish:

For in the first place their soil is very poor and such as will hardly admit of culture of any sort, the one on account of its dryness and hardness, the other on account of its steep and uneven surface. So that in them there is no room for culture; the soil itself debars them. Neither have they any opportunity of commerce, if it should happen that they should make any advances in the arts and sciences. (223)

In *the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1768), Smith offered the view that the Arabs of the deserts appear hostile towards any notion of human progress. “Such nations have commonly no fixed habitation, but live, either in tents, or in a sort of covered wagons which are easily transported from place to place”(690). Like Hume, Smith did not travel in the Middle East and, like Hume, failed to mention his sources. The travellers whose accounts I study in this dissertation agree with Smith’s proposal that geographical bareness carries with it signs of backwardness. But they were far from confirming the value of this argument when pointing out how the commercial caravan routes in which they travelled and interacted with the locals in
Arabian deserts display different forms of commercial wealth constantly circulating between India and Europe.

Direct experience of travelling in these routes challenges the polarising rhetoric upheld by the Scottish Enlightenment. But the problematic of polarisation in the discourse of improvement sometimes takes us to consider how Oriental backwardness as a trope was something not only produced by those who were ignorant of the area about which they gave negative statements but also by the writers who were themselves readers of travel writings about the Middle East. These writers preferred to show their objective and professional stance on the question of improvement by citing travelling authorities. But although they were doing this, they showed no difference from their predecessors who rather preferred to give polarising statements about the backwardness of the Middle East without referring to travel accounts. Again the point here is not about whether or not the Scots literati backed their rhetoric by evidence but also about how they used travel writings to confirm their preconceived notions about the backwardness of the Middle East and Islam.

Henry Home (Lord Kames)’s views of the discourse of improvement confirms this point. His views of Islamic backwardness and European improvement did not show any change from what previously Hume and Smith proposed although he sometimes backed his argument by referring to a travel source. Home was a staunch defender of an ideology of progress in the tracts he wrote about British agriculture, law and education.\(^9\) It is in his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), nevertheless, that we find Kames mostly interested in non-European geographies. Here he divided nations into savage and civilized although he did not travel outside Europe but was interested in the genre of travel writing.\(^10\) For Kames, the march of any nation towards civil society is associated with economic prosperity and passes through four
stages: hunting and fishing, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce. According to Kames, as well as many Scottish literati, Europe proved singularly able of moving beyond the first two stages into that of the third and the fourth. “The bounty given in Britain for exporting corn”, for instance, suggests how such nation encourages agriculture and commerce (I, 50). Most of the nations living outside Europe nevertheless depend in their subsistence on the first and second stages: hunting and shepherding. Kames did not allow for the view that Muslims can also pursue commercial improvement. When the Ottoman Sultan “permitted corn to be exported more freely than had been done formerly...,” wrote Kames, “[e]very nation flocked to Turkey for corn” (II, 237). “Three hundred French vessels” arrived in Smyrna (II, 237). But “The Janissaries and populace took the alarm, fearing that all the corn would be exported and that a famine would ensue” (II, 237). Not famine but violence instead ensued, Kames sniffed. “In Constantinople they grew mutinous and were not appeased till the Vizir was strangled and his body thrown out to them” (II, 238). Kames found the “Turks” enemies of commerce and thus violent in their passions and emotions as their “mutinous” treatment of their leaders illustrated. But he did not mention his source on the prevalence of primitive commercial life in the Ottoman capital, a point which confirms the importance of studying how the rhetoric of improvement might show different, non-polarising tropes in the accounts written by the travellers who directly experienced the journey in the world of Islam. The denial of Muslim and Ottoman opulence here needs be compared with what Parsons’ commercial speculation, in chapter two, showed.

But regardless whether Home mentioned his travelling source or not, the Middle East and the Islamic world, as he showed, remain devoid of any initiatives of progress. In another account which he wrote on the importance of education as an
important tool for cultivating the hearts of children, *Loose Hints Upon Education Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart* (1780), Kames argued that Muslim rulers were despot, drug addicts and enemies of science, arts and commerce. In presenting them in this way, Kames points the reader to the idea that “Good education may be illustrated by comparing it with its opposite” (15). Kames did not travel in the East, and so had no opportunity to socialise and interact with Muslim rulers. Kames preferred to familiarise the reader with what Muslim rulers looked like, how they behaved and what spaces they inhabited by citing one travel account. His only source on the subject was Corneille le Brun’s *A Voyage to the Levant: or Travels in the Principal Parts of Asia Minor* (1702).

In the Scottish Enlightenment traditions, referring to a travelling authority does not make a difference in the ways they offered their interpretation of the idea of improvement in a cross-cultural context. The way Adam Ferguson’s *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) explained the meaning of progress in modern times supports this point. Ferguson’s views of modern commercial progress were influenced by the social and economic transformations which occurred in his native Highlands after the British crown was able to crush the Jacobite Rebellion (1745–6). Ferguson believed that economic and political progress which accompanies the rise of modern commercial states involves the loss of civic virtues and the emergence in commercial nations of a corrupting force called luxury. Ferguson was aware of the social ills that modern progress brought into commercial societies. The last three chapters of the *Essay* attest to the moral failure which most often accompanies the rise of commerce in modern nations. Nevertheless, Ferguson showed confidence while proposing that modern commercial Europe was now marching from a state of infancy into that of civilisation. “We are ourselves the supposed standards of
politeness and civilization,” Ferguson rejoiced, “and where our own features do not appear, we apprehend, that there is nothing which deserves to be known” (115). For Ferguson, some nations in other parts of the world, however, proved unable of moving beyond the stage of rudeness. His reading of travel accounts confirmed his conviction that Europeans were moving and the rest of the world was languishing far behind. Referring his reader to what Laurent D’Arvieux, in his *Travels in Arabia the Desert* (1718), reported, Ferguson noted how the Arabs, “this race of men, in their rude state, fly to the desert for freedom, and in roving bands alarm the frontiers of empire, and strike a terror in the province to which their moving encampments advance” (173).

The cultivation of the robbing profession in Arabia was radically different from European polish and refinement. “They may be indifferent to interest, and superior to danger,” Ferguson wrote, “but our sense of humanity, our regard to the rights of nations, our admiration of civil wisdom and justice, even our effeminacy itself, make us turn away with contempt, or with horror, from a scene which exhibits so few of our good qualities, and which serves to reproach our weakness” (237). European “good qualities” and sometimes “weakness” accompany the rise of commercial nations. The absence of these improvements marks life in nomadic Arabia as rude, destructive and primitive.

This is a polarising statement which brings into the fore the point that although Ferguson showed interest to know about the Middle East by referring his reader to a travel account and although he showed an objective way of confirming his conviction of the backwardness of the Arabs by referring to a travelling source, he was far from showing any sign of difference from Hume and Smith who failed to mentioned their sources on the backwardness of the Middle East, Arabs and Asiatics. This is what
John Millar of Glasgow who, as Murray Pittock points out, “was under the patronage of Smith and subsequently Kames” did by sometimes referring to the same source which Ferguson used although he was trying to confirm an entirely different point (264). In his *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; Or An Inquiry into the Circumstances which Give Rise to Influence and Authority in the Different Members of Society* (1778), Arabia constitutes an ideal space where ancient manners, customs and laws can be studied. “By the early laws and customs of Arabia,” Millar wrote, “every head of a family seems, in like manner, to have enjoyed an absolute power over his descendants” (117). Although a believer in “economic determinism”, rather than a divine one, Millar referred to the books of Genesis and Exodus to support his claim. In so doing, he concluded that a male parent in ancient Arabia had the rights to stone his sons “to death” and “sell his daughter for a slave or concubine to those of his own nation...” (117). But Millar also referred to Laurent D’Arvieux’s *Travels*, arguing that the “wild Arabs, who inhabit a barren country are accustomed to change their residence every fortnight, or, at least every month”, advancing the argument that they do not seek to acquire wealth by settling and cultivating lands (149). Poverty reflects the state of the law. Since they are not economic improvers, Arab leaders cannot enforce the law. Millar’s authority on how tribal leaders were relaxed in pursuing justice in their society was Thomas Shaw’s *Travels or Observations Relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant* (1738). With all his fascination with the primitiveness of Arabia, Millar was not a traveller in these lands. He rather preferred to advance an argument on the primitiveness of these lands by relying on what other sources reported on Arabian society. But apart from the lack of direct experience of travelling which makes the discourse of improvement more nuanced, as the chapters in this dissertation show, the polarising
rhetoric in the Scottish Enlightenment traditions support the argument of this section that the discourse of improvement in the Scottish Enlightenment was one of polarities regardless that the writers referred to travelling authorities or not. Travel writing here becomes a tool which confirms a conviction, not a tool which deconstructs one. In this project, I aim to show how another tradition of improvement sought to rethink polarities, thus offering us a more nuanced view of the Enlightenment.

Hume, Kames, Smith, Ferguson and Millar, did not visit the Middle East. Nevertheless, they posed the Middle East as radically different from what Britain was passing through at the time: the emergence of new commercial classes, land closures, and the association between civility and commerce. Writing about Arabian tribes and Muslim people who live in ancient lands which were, as Billie Milman notes, “the locus of Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian civilisations which had shaped Europe itself”, helped them to develop their teleological visions about the criteria which they set for themselves while speaking of the progress or primitiveness of a certain nation (105). However, for those who visited the GDR, the Middle East, this teleological argument about improvement or progress becomes a dominant view the traveller writer sets out to question by having it accommodate different views and ideas he developed while interacting with Middle Eastern cultures, religions and nations.

British Travels on the Great Syrian-Mesopotamian Desert Route
Here it is important to mention that the story of British overland communication with India through Syria and Mesopotamia goes back to the sixteenth century, and it is unfortunate that no serious scholarly work studied the nature of the cross-cultural contact taking place on these routes. This study thus seeks to draw scholarly attention to the importance of these routes as cross-cultural spaces where Britons set out to seek personal improvement and also reflect on the Enlightenment ideology of improvement.

It was the attempt of the Levant Company to seek to open a trade route with the Far East that drew the attention of some early-modern British travellers to the importance of the Syrian overland routes as the commercial arteries which connect Britain and India. In 1583, a group of Englishmen, close to the English Levant Company, embarked on a journey of self-improvement that would later be considered of lasting importance for the future British commercial presence in India. John Newberry, John Eldred, Ralph Fitch were the first British travellers who arrived in India after crossing the Syria-Mesopotamian overland routes. In Syria, they landed in Tripoli, a Mediterranean port, before heading to Aleppo. From Aleppo they travelled down the Euphrates passing through Bir, Baghdad, Basra, and Hormoz; from there they slogged onto the India Seas. Fitch wrote his observations on the traditions, manners, governments and commerce prevalent in the cities and deserts which he visited. Fitch’s account was written from the perspective of the merchant traveller. In 1599, another intrepid traveller crossed the same route taken by Eldred and his fellow travellers. Passionately enthusiastic for expanding the channel of trade with the East, Anthony Shirley undertook a difficult journey across the Syrian deserts, hoping to reach the court of Shah Abbas of Persia. Pinning his hope on the possibility of expanding trade with Persia and also boosting the enmity between the
Shah and the Ottomans, Shirley was willing to travel through these hard spaces where he knew he would be “farr from all friends, and further from counsell, not understanding the language of the people, into whose hands I was falne ...”(384).

Two merchant travellers crossed this route in 1599, moreover. John Mildenhall and John Cartwright crossed the desert routes, aiming to further trade with the Great Mogul in India. John Cartwright’s *Preacher’s Travels* provides a detailed observation of the different places which the travellers passed through on their way to India.

During the eighteenth century, the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to India were perceived by the British as important for delivering letters and dispatches to the East India Company stations in India at a time when sea hostilities between Britain and France were “retarding” the British “ships” and rather making them “wait for convoys and sail in fleets,” Charles Taylor of the East India Company in 1795 wrote. Unlike their early modern predecessors, most eighteenth-century Britons who crossed these routes were employed by or affiliated with the East India Company, the institution whose directors mainly set out to accumulate wealth in India. Most of the British who crossed the overland routes were military personnel, civil servants and merchants whose travels primarily involved the search for commercial wealth in the East. Significantly, they depended for their safety and security whilst navigating across the Indian Seas on a consolidated British presence, military as well as commercial, in India. Across the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes, nevertheless, they most often depended upon a network of relationships with local Ottoman and Arab rulers and caravan leaders. These local figures of authority, as we shall see, were good friends with the few Britons who resided in major cities on the overland routes.
During the century, there were three routes that the British, and particularly the EIC, used in order to deliver goods, messages, letters, passengers and dispatches to India. There was the sea route by the Cape of Good Hope which was a tedious, long and most often unsafe. Taylor did not think that such a route should have been seen by the EIC as an only route to India. For in this period, as Taylor wrote, “[t]he dangers and the anxieties arising from the want of such communication between Great Britain and her Indian settlements, during the last two wars, are fresh in the memory of many, and will not be easily forgotten” (11). Using such a route, Taylor added, will finally induce British ships to “sail at last with a risqué of falling into the enemy’s hands and thereby converting that intelligence intended for our safety, into an instrument of our destruction” (8). For the British, a ferocious enemy in the East and an avid competitor in the race for imperial “collecting”, in Maya Jasanoff’s term, was France.¹⁴

The second route is an overland route which Taylor considered as profoundly important for the EIC’s and the British government’s interests in the East. Such route links the Egyptian-Mediterranean ports with the Red Sea and cuts across the Sinai desert. EIC agents viewed this route as important for the communication between England and India to the extent that Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India, “opened a negotiation with the Beys of Egypt, and obtained their consent to a free intercourse, which in 1778, was of singular benefit,” Taylor noted. But the British government rejected such a measure, asserting that “the trade intended to be carried on by Suez, was deemed prejudicial to the interests of the East India Company, the political advantage of the measure were sacrificed to the Company’s exclusive trade” (13).
The British government strongly opposed the India-Suez trade. For as Taylor argued, “[a]n act of Parliament was obtained, prohibiting English subjects from exporting the produce of India by way of Suez, after the 5th of July, 1782” (13). It is important to mention that during the century the India Suez route was predominantly monopolized by Ottoman and Arab traders, and the Sharif of Mecca was active in plotting against the English passage to India through Egypt. The Cape and the Suez routes to India were outside the sphere of British dominance.

The third means of communication with India which the EIC found it also important to use during the century was the overland route which connected the Syrian-Mediterranean ports with the Persian Gulf and the Indian Seas by the Aleppo-Basra overland short cuts. Two short cuts towards Mesopotamia from Syria are noted during the century: one starts from the city of Aleppo in Syria and goes to Diyarbakir, a city located nowadays in Turkey, and from there into Mesopotamia through Mosul, Baghdad and Basra on the Persian Gulf; the second also starts from Aleppo towards the overland route across the Syrian deserts and from there to Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. Most Britons who crossed the Syrian overland routes during the century were affiliated with or working under the charter of the East India Company. Britons who crossed these routes during the eighteenth century, despite that most of them were engaged in British imperial schemes in India, were not travelling in lands which the EIC considered part of its sphere of dominance in the East. On the contrary, they needed local help and guidance while travelling across these tedious, hard and dangerous routes.

During the period under study, the EIC did not propose any imperial plan to control the lands connecting the Syrian-Mediterranean ports with the Indian Ocean. Not until 1831 do we find a report submitted to the House of Commons by Francis
Rawdon Chisney, about whom I shall say more in the conclusion, where we read that Chisney endorsed the efforts to open up a channel of communication with India through Syria by using steamships to navigate the Euphrates and Tigris.¹⁸ Yet such a scheme turned out to be impracticable: the *Mechanic Magazine* in 1837 reported that “[t]here has been a plenty of time and, and to spare, for a score of voyages and *nothing has been done*” (276). Various reasons contributed the sense that such a project is impracticable but these reasons are outside the scope of the current study.¹⁹

Suffice it to mention at this stage that nineteenth-century British efforts of disseminating railways across the globe were vital for such an imperial mindset set upon seeking profits and linking the centre to the colony. These projects reveal a new way of understanding improvement. Regarding nineteenth-century British interaction with the Middle East, the idea of improvement displayed an imperial gaze and was backed by governmental institutions and steamships. The Enlightenment idea of improvement was primarily rhetorical and its bearers were primarily hasty travellers who cared about social interactions and tactics of survival among the locals. During the Enlightenment Britain was far from being able to colonise the Middle East, a point which needs to be emphasised in a period when eighteenth-century British travellers were still in the process of knowing the self through regular contacts with the other, learning from the other and also rethinking the dominant views in one’s cultures as a result of these encounters. Knowledge here was totally dissociated from power although in different places in the world the knowledge-power nexus (Foucault, Said and Pratt) fits the analysis of how Europeans amassed and employed their knowledge in the service of colonialism. During the nineteenth-century European age of steam and railways, however, the rhetoric of improvement
did not show any signs of circulation from East to West. It rather took the opposite direction. It reflected what J. M Blaut termed “diffusionism”, a one-way traffic starting in London and ending in savage and uncivilised spaces. It is at this important stage in the history of improvement that this dissertation ends its analysis of the complexity surrounding the dominant view in the Enlightenment which proposed that the Middle East was beyond improvement.

Notes:

1 Felicity A. Nussbaum, Jonathan Lamb, Nigel Leask, Srinivas Aravamudan, among some others, showed how Said’s model which associated knowledge production with


⁴ A good account on this comparative project of the Scottish Enlightenment which aimed to regulate features in human nature through examining reports and histories written about different historical epochs and geographical spots, see Aaron Garret’s

5 John Dwyer rightly notes: “The much used phrase ‘the age of improvement’ needs to be understood as a cultural imperative rather than strictly factual observation. Its meaning rested in a critical way in the civic consciousness and discourse of those patriotic Scotsmen who linked economic advancement and polite learning with the creation of a stable modern polity”. Dwyer nevertheless did not mention how the philosophers’ patriotic feelings were not things which appeared out of thin air but rather expressed in a comparative rhetorical bent of which the primitiveness of Arabs and Muslims was an important trope, Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers), p. 2.

6 On the political changes in Scotland after the Union, Murray Pittock in his essay “Historiography” writes: “Scotland’s constitution had massively altered since 1603, possibly more than that of any other unconquered European country: the kind had moved his capital, the court had left, the Parliament had been abolished again; heritable jurisdictions and the powers of regality, the last echoes of the great Celtic mormaers, had vanished: the taxation system had completely altered and the establishment of the Church changed five times....The intellectual elite of what still in domestic matters a separate country under its own political management had to make sense of this extraordinary turbulence...to learn lessons of its history”, The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 258-279. The quote is from page 262.
The British government has been trying to settle the Highlands’ tribes since the seventeenth century. As Edward J. Cowan notes, “James VI, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, evolved a threefold policy towards Gaelic Scotland which can be summed up as—plantation, deculturalization, and extirpation”; see the essay ‘Contact and Tensions in Highland and Lowland Culture’ in Crossing the Highland Line: Cross-Currents in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Writing, ed., Christopher MacLachlan (Glasgow: the University of Glasgow, 2009), p. 1-17. This quote is from page 10.

For a good account on Hume’s background and life, see Henry Grey Graham’s Scottish Men of Letter’s in the Eighteenth Century (London: 1908), p.35-95.

On how Scottish and English laws were always in a state of change and improvement, Kames wrote Essays upon Several Subjects in Law (Edinburgh, 1732); proposing his plans on how agriculture in Britain needed to be improved, he published The Gentleman Farmer: Being an Attempt to Improve Agriculture By Subjecting it to the Test of Rational Principles (Edinburgh, 1776).

As Ian Simpson Ross notes, Lord Kames relied on “travel literature” as a source for “sociological and anthropological information”. He was friends with “James Lind ... an M.D of Edinburgh University, who late in 1772 accepted an invitation to accompany James Cook on his second circumnavigation of the Globe”. In a letter Kames wrote to Lind before the latter’s departure, Kames asks Lind to examine for him “the matter of adaptation of men and animals to different climate and inquire whether or not degeneracy resulted from movement from one climate to another”. His interest in the travel reports which will have to be written after James Cook’s second expedition...
comes to an end invites him to tell Lind even before the expedition commences that
“If I live till Mr Banks and Mr Solander’s return I shall certainly pay my Devotions to
them in London”. Ian Simpson Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day*

11 For instance, Fania Oz-Salzberger suggests that “unlike his contemporaries
Voltaire and Hume, Ferguson believed that even highly developed societies are in
near and clear danger of retreating into barbarian despotism, a phase far more
despicable than simple, egalitarian savagery”, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*,

Anticipation of Modern Sociology”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 3:1 (1952), p.30-
46. The quote is from page 39.

13 Fitch’s, Newberry’s and Eldred’s travelling observations and correspondences
were first collected by Richard Hakluyt who published them in his *The Principal
Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation....II*

14 Maya Jassanoff, *Edge of Empire: conquest and collecting in the East 1750-1850*

15 In 1778, James Capper, after he returned to England from India by the way of
Suez, noted the importance of opening up a speedy communication between
England and India. But he became disappointed when realizing that the British were
not yet able to get the approval of the Ottoman Sultan to carry out this plan. And the reason for such rejection, as Capper in his diary wrote, is “that the Shereef of Mecca very soon took alarm [from this plan], and used all his influence both spiritual and temporal to put a stop to its continuance: in his negotiation at the Porte in this business, he was also zealously assisted by a large body of Turkish merchants, who were apprehensive of suffering by the prices of India being lowered down in their markets, which must have totally put an end to the old established trade of Bosra and Aleppo.” *Observations on the Passage to India Through Egypt, and Across the Great Desert with Occasional Remarks on the adjacent Countries, and also Sketches of the different Routes* (London: 1783), p.vii.

16 On the geographies and social and political nature of the two caravan routes which travelled across Arabian deserts, see chapter five in Christina Phelps Grant’s *The Syrian Desert: Caravan, Travel and Exploration* (London: A. & C. Black LTD, 1937).

17 A good account on why the East India Company considered these overland routes important for it commercial as well as imperial project in India, see Douglas Carruthers’ introduction to *The desert route to India: being the journal of four travellers by the great desert caravan route between Aleppo and Basra 1745-1751*, ed., Douglass Carruthers (London: Hakluyt Society, 1928).

18 During the century Chesney was engaged in two schemes, seeking to open up a regular channel of communication with India through Syria. Between 1830 and 1837 he aimed to show how the Euphrates is suitable for navigation. In 1835, he led an expedition across Syria, aiming to survey the Euphrates. In 1850, he published his *The Expedition for the Survey of the Rives Euphrates and Tigris* in which he
described the arduous journey he undertook across Syria. In 1856, a new scheme for opening up a line of communication with India – from the mouth of Orontes to the Persian Gulf – is initiated by William Andrew who established the Euphrates Railway Company which Chisney was invited to take a position in it. Here Chisney set out for another expedition across the Euphrates valley where he surveyed the area, aiming to ascertain his previous conviction that the Euphrates overland route is suitable for a railway scheme. In 1868 he published *The Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition*. Here he emphasised the importance of the Euphrates route as a means of furthering communication between Britain and India through Syria.

In 1834, *The Quarterly Review*, noting the impracticability of opening up a line of communication between Britain and India through Syria, suggested: "We regard with no satisfaction the thoughtless and uncalled for recommendation of a Committee of the House of Commons to spend 20,000l. on an experiment to open up a communication between India and England, by means of steamboats on the Euphrates. The scheme is impracticable, for the lower part of the river overflows the flat lands at one season of the year, when all traces of the channel are lost—and at another season the numerous rocky ledges, nearly approaching each other from the sides, block up the stream, and are left almost dry; while, moreover, the marauding Arabs that infest its banks, never have been, and probably never will be, brought into subjection", *The Quarterly Review* 52 (1834), p.405.
In Scottish Enlightenment thought, the rise of nations is associated with the progress of commerce and science. Rational human beings are forward looking, men with ambitions and hopes to seek to improve the space in which they live. The Middle East was a chaotic space and the people living there have no willingness and the rational desires to stop moving downward instead of forward. Campbell was the kind of Enlightenment man of scientific thinking who set out to measure improvement by relying on the power of the mind. He considered improvement something inscribed on the physical environment. But he had doubts that the phenomenon of progress in modern times, one measured by concrete and material terms, is be able to divorce the present of scientific progress from the past of religious rituals. In travelling in Middle Eastern Biblical land, he sets out to reconcile the present with the past. In Islamic land, as Carmichael found, the past is never gone. Here he agrees with the Enlightenment philosophers that the Middle East is a space of ancientness. But unlike the Enlightenment literati, he does not accept that an ancient land is all about decay, savagery and superstition]

In 1757, the East India Company defeated local Indian rulers in Plassey and thus began showing an imperial agency of a modern form. It pursued monopoly, control and taxation. But before Plassey, as H. V Bowen writes, “Few within the Company harboured any territorial ambitions in India and only a limited presence was
maintained at the small coastal trading enclaves....at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras” (2). The limited power of the EIC in the East reciprocated the shaky personality of a former EIC Captain who wrote about his journey in the Great Syrian Overland Route. In 1751, John Carmichael was not travelling in the East on an imperial mission aiming to spread improvement in the world. He crossed the Syrian-Mesopotamia overland routes to India at a time when the EIC was in a moment of transition. Little is known about Carmichael’s life and career in India and Britain, except the little information which Henry Grose tells. In 1755, Grose, previously a writer in the East India Company presidency in Bombay between 1750-3, published his observations on India in an account titled *Voyage to the East Indies*. Carmichael’s travel account appeared as an appendix in the *Voyage*. Before undertaking the journey across the overland routes, as Grose in the preface recalled, Carmichael served in the EIC military station in Bombay and Anjengo. In the period when the EIC Britons in Bombay were unable to curb the raids of local Indian “pirates” and “Muskat Arabs” on British stations and incoming ships, as Grose mentioned, the Company presidency decided to dismiss Carmichael from service.¹ He left service when the Company was having tough time in India. In 1751, this decision was taken, Grose added, after some “disputes [he had in Bombay] with the Governor and Council” (10). Departing for London in the hope of seeking redress, Carmichael undertook a sea voyage via the Cape of Good Hope. In London, Grose continued, “[h]is conduct was so much disapproved that, instead of meeting with redress, he was dismissed the service; and on his application for leave to go back, in order to settle his affairs, was refused a passage on board any of the Company’s ships” (10). He therefore returned to India by land. After arriving in Syria, Carmichael joined an Arab trade caravan, setting out for Basra where he boarded a British ship sailing to India.
As his *Journey from Aleppo to Basra* shows, Carmichael’s Middle Eastern journey was one of what Donna Landry called “perpetual re-enactment” (447). Carmichael travelled in lands which were, in Landry’s words, “already familiar as the object[s] of representation” (447). According to Landry, the ruins as well as Biblical sites prevalent in these lands reminded European travellers in the Middle East of some historical moments which previous travellers had gone through, moments when “extreme conditions, bodily deprivations and various forms of painful perseverance and rare pleasure were at issue” (447). The experience of travelling in lands which Europe had long known very well, whether in religious Biblical history or through previous travel accounts, presses upon the new traveller to repeat what was transmitted before. That is, he was travelling in lands of ancient history and full of ruins, far from being susceptible to modern improvement. But in re-enacting previous historical moments while experiencing the hardship of desert travel, Carmichael also learned new things. As Landry writes, “Travel in a citational past thus brought alive old knowledge while possibly leading to new” one (448). This chapter aims to study how Carmichael responded to the Enlightenment notion of improvement: how his practices of knowing Arabia were not merely concerned with presenting it as a primitive space, what previous sources and reports had always confirmed, but also the lands where the British traveller found the relics, customs and habits which stimulated him to address a lack within, finding a way to accommodate the self with a changing and developing present. In the chapter, seeing Arabia, with all its ruins and Biblical sites, inhabitants, trade and caravans, offered Carmichael the opportunity to put forth some ideas on how to come to terms with modern change.

Carmichael was primarily interested in two things which modern Western Orientalists had always been concerned with: Biblical landscapes and sights of ruins.
Writing on these two curiosities of the Middle East shifts the mind of the Orientalist into what Said found in “the imaginative geography” of Orientalism. This imaginative geography is a repository of knowledge on the Orient, as Said has shown, where the traveller finds the words and rhetorical gestures which associate the Orient with primitiveness and backwardness (52). In examining how Carmichael represented Biblical lands and curious sights of ruins, this chapter complicates what Nigel Leask proposed that “European travel writers constantly ‘temporalized’ the antique lands (and especially their modern inhabitants) by comparing them with more familiar classical biblical and medieval worlds, at the same time as they incorporated them into a ‘universal’ grid of geographical orientation based on Europe” (2). This spatial and temporal understanding of foreign lands is one of “denial of coevalness”, in Johannes Fabian’s term, as Leask has seen it. It speaks of “a stream of time”, as Hume argues, which order the flow of historical narration between the past, the present and the future (267). This flow is “natural”, as Hume believes, and moves from the past into the future, showing an order which classifies nations: ancient and thus primitive and modern and thus progressing (267).

This divisionary understanding of the idea of improvement also appears in the Scottish Enlightenment’s views of Arabia. As Leask argues, Scottish Enlightenment philosophers “drew heavily on travel accounts in comparing diverse culture... [allowing in their work the emergence of] systematic mapping of the world on the axes of absolute’ time-space coordinates” (29). Proposing a universal grid of improvement which divided societies and nations into those who are improving and those who are not, the Scots philosophers presented a set of traits which they assumed that modern commercial societies in Europe developed in their journeying from barbarism into commercial civility. One of these improved traits which they
found in European commercial societies was the cultivation of sciences and encouragement of rational thinking. For the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers who were not travellers in the East but were good readers of travel writings on the East, the spaces in which the Arabs (and Muslims) in the Middle East inhabit belong to an ancient past of superstition and primitive modes of subsistence rather than an improved present of commerce and science.

Nevertheless, such a polarising gesture, one about a backward Middle East and a modern West, fails to account for what Carmichael personally gained at the same time as he set out to know the Arabian deserts. Even when he repeated some common tropes which constructed these lands as backward, he showed how his treks among degenerated lands helped him reflect on the meaning of progress: is it one of reason and material improvement, and can it be reconcilable with some old relics like religion? Searching for an answer for these questions occurred at a time when eighteenth-century Britain was going through a moment of change: land enclosures under the banner of agricultural progress, and also the efforts by the believers in rational thinking to reconcile religion with reason.2 Writing about the Arabian deserts, Carmichael sets out to find answers for these questions. Although Carmichael did not directly comment on these two important things, his travel observations on the backwardness of Arabian lands and the irrationality of Muslims clearly show how the question of land improvement and rational religion influenced the ways he viewed the deserts.

In seeking to know about the history and geography of the land, Carmichael made use of local forms of knowledge. While doing so, he showed how he was keen to learn from Arab and Muslims, thus complicating the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers’ polarising rhetoric of improvement. At the same time as he interacted
with locals, he learned about the commercial values of these lands and the historical and religious backgrounds of Biblical sites. Carmichael’s search for an explanation of the meaning and purposes of improvement in this modern age was not always an act of staging the deserts as backward and irrational. Sometimes it was one of a lived experience, cross-culture accommodation, adaptation and communication where polarising gestures about our culture and their culture simply disappeared. The social practices which accompany acts of knowing such as conversing with Arab, Jewish and Persian caravan travellers, finalising deals with Arab guards and helping curing a sickly Arab Sheikh appeared in the interaction between a British traveller of the Enlightenment tradition of experimental reasoning and the people with and among whom he travelled. In these practices, Carmichael was not holding superior attitudes to the Arabs. Rather he was proving himself to be an adaptable British traveller.

The Knowing Orientalist

Carmichael framed his observations according to an empirical view of the world, one which presented its finding in rational and empirical ways beyond the interference of providential or religious explanation. As we shall shortly see, Carmichael’s narrative can be likened to the work of the eighteenth-century natural historian, one who mainly set out to describe, categorise, systematise and collect natural phenomena by using analytical thinking and rational methods of inquiry. But Carmichael was not trained in natural history, the discipline whose practitioners, according to Mary Louise Pratt, showed “planetary consciousness...a basic element constructing modern Eurocentricism” (15). Nor was he travelling under the patronage of scientific
institutions such as the Royal Society which, as David Harvey notes, supported and funded explorers' diligent efforts to boost “geographical knowledges” of the globe (Cosmopolitanism 123). He was not under the patronage of the Crown or the government. Although the factors, consuls and military officers of the EIC were keen on having the lands in which they operated charted and mapped, they denied him a free ride to India despite his endeavours.

Carmichael was not an explorer in the institutionalised, technical, or imperialistic meaning of the word. In his account, he did not imagine himself as an agent of the British Empire. He did not set out to study the Orientals in the hope to mediate knowledge on how to subjugate or imperialise them. Rather his style of Orientalism resembles the one which Robert Irwin found in the works written by “lonely and eccentric men” whose search to know the Orient was not part of “an overarching and straining discourse...a single chronicle of Orientalism that can be set within clearly defined limits” (7). Interrogating the natural phenomenon which he encountered, Carmichael’s scientific performance was not undertaken from the position of the powerful man of science, one with “imperial eyes”. Rather he was a hasty passenger of enlightened character who made use of travelling in the Arabian deserts to present his excursion abroad as one of improvement, a self-styled way of travelling and improving one's mind by performing the role of the empiricist despite that that role sometimes entailed repeating old knowledge on the backwardness of the Orient.

Eighteenth-Century Scientific Quests of Improvement: Historical Context
In recording his journey across the Arabian deserts, Carmichael showed interest in measuring the distance between towns and villages. He presented himself as a scientific traveller with great interests in mapping the lands. He operated within the tradition of scientific and geographical improvement familiar to the early eighteenth-century reader of accounts of exploration and navigation. During the eighteenth-century, as Roy Porter argues, there were “unprecedented” British efforts to explore “the face of the globe and the bowels of the earth” (305). Most of the reports on navigation and exploration were produced by the Enlightenment travellers whose expeditions and voyages were funded by the Royal Society or the British Government. In this period, many explorers, navigators and surveyors, from Joseph Banks, James Cook, Alexander Dalrymple, to name just a few of them, were natural historians, maritime and land explorers. Having the necessary training, they set out with the intention to make all parts of the globe known to British people and their government. Many scientists and artists accompanied these navigators and explorers who also took with them the necessary scientific equipment for measuring the longitudes and latitudes of the oceans they navigated and the lands they travelled across. Most of them employed their scientific findings to the interest of imperial offices. Carmichael was far from any institutional or imperial affiliation while he showed some efforts to map the Arabian deserts.

Eighteenth-century voyagers and explorers operated within an Enlightenment tradition set upon classifying and categorising all natural phenomena. As Charles Withers points out, “Enlightenment voyages of explorations...emphasized methods and descriptions based on exact observation and reporting in ways not apparent before the late seventeenth century” (88). In Europe, Carl Linnaeus and Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon laid the foundation for the Enlightenment’s empire of
scientific improvement. They showed how the people involved in the progress of
science should taxonomise and categorise humans, animals, plants and other
phenomena in nature. In Britain, Robert Boyle, towards the end of the seventeenth
century, instructed travellers to record everything they encounter by using empirical
tools of inquiry and experimental reasoning. Boyle recommended that travellers use
sensory methods and scientific equipment in their efforts to reveal the hidden secrets
of nature. These efforts of achieving improvement influenced many travel writers,
navigators and explorers. Subscribing to this trend in the Enlightenment which drove
eighteenth-century explorers to travel abroad for surveying, collecting and measuring
places not yet known to Europeans, Carmichael, across the Arabian deserts, put on
the garb of the knowing traveller. During the eighteenth-century, improving the mind
was an Enlightenment habit the attainment of which, as this chapter argues, was
also achieved on the back of an Arab camel, in an Arab caravan and among Eastern
ruins. Recording the movement and improvement of the rational self among these
three curiosities of the Orient cultivates the mind and moulds the identity.

The Social World of the Arab Caravan

[Carmichael's interaction with the Caravan complicates the essentialising and
polarising views in the Scottish Enlightenment portrait of Arabia as an inferior
and primitive place]

The kind of knowledge which Carmichael was keen to advance while measuring
distances between cities and villages was later appropriated by a traveller in the
Syrian overland routes, Edward Ives, and the geographer of India, James Rennell. A
trained physician, Ives, about whom I will say more in chapter two, travelled on a
Syrian-Mesopotamian overland route in 1758 after he spent some years in East India Company service. Although he took a different route from Carmichael, he presented himself as an expert on all the routes connecting Syria and Mesopotamia to India, including Carmichael's. In his *Voyage From England to India* and a *Journey from Persia to England* (1775), Ives indexed a map of the overland routes which connect Syria with Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.\(^\text{12}\) He referred to the desert route which Carmichael travelled across but had no interests in the kind of material relationships which Carmichael developed while he was moving with the Arabian caravan. Some twenty two years later, Rennell used Carmichael’s travel report for advancing some improving advice about conducting geographical research. In 1797, Rennell in *On the Rate of Travelling as Performed by Camels and Its Application, As a Scale, to the Purposes of Geography* prepared a map for the London Royal Society. In it, the route which Carmichael crossed appeared useful for future travellers who want to know more about the geography of the Syrian deserts. In their readings of Carmichael’s *Journey*, both Ives and Rennell relied on knowledge provided by Carmichael. But while Carmichael, as we shall see, gained a great deal of information while interacting with the Arabs and Muslims in the caravan, cartographers relied on his reports without any direct experience or engagement with locals.\(^\text{13}\) In advancing new information not previously known to Europeans, Carmichael showed how doing so was an act of interaction with the locals. Pursuing acts of knowing here, as we shall see, does not entail a polarising rhetoric of improvement.

Carmichael joined the winter commercial desert caravan. The caravan was diverse, multi-religious and cross-cultural. According to Carmichael, there were in the caravan travellers from different religious, cultural and national affiliations and
backgrounds. It “consisted thirty-three Christians, merchants and passengers, seven Jews, and about twenty Turks, with Sheikh Mahauson [an Arab], our conductor” (138). The caravan was a haven for the well-being of the merchants’ goods as well as for the safety of the travellers. The caravan with which Carmichael travelled was heavily laden with merchandise. There were:

fifty horses, thirty mules, and about twelve hundred camels, six hundred of which were laden with merchandize, chiefly belonging to the Christians and Jews, amounting in value to near three hundred thousand pounds sterling; the remainder were either ridden, or loaded with provisions.(138)

Such large amounts of capital, in contemporary standards, needed good protection. In the caravan there are “240 Arab soldiers” whose job was to protect the travellers and the goods in the caravan (138). What brought all these diverse and different groups together was a desire for material gain combined with their willingness to cross the deserts in pursuit of it. For these Christian, Jewish and Muslim merchants and guards, theirs was one of commercial and financial improvement. For the most part, Carmichael aimed to achieve empirical, scientific and geographical improvement while performing the journey across these fatiguing routes.

While having a tough journey, Carmichael devised tactics which allowed him to enjoy the protection of travelling in the caravan right until the end of the journey, without causing offence to anyone. Despite provocation, he deliberately avoided acknowledging his fellow travellers’ faulty behaviour and attitudes. Across the desert patch of Ain Al Araunab, Carmichael regretted that “yesterday my handkerchief was conveyed away, and this evening they stole my blanket” (138). Realising that all his possessions might be soon lost in these spaces, Carmichael spoke with his fellow
travellers about what had happened to him. Rather than assuming “a positional superiority”, in Said’ term, Carmichael appeared reconciliatory, compromising, communicative and engaging:

Having suffered much last night (which was very cold) from the want of my blanket, I thought of the following stratagem to recover it. I entered into conversation with the Arabs on the subject of my loss, and took occasion to show how they were celebrated by travellers for their honesty; which made me conclude that my blanket had been taken away by some mistake, and would be returned as soon as the error was discovered. This had the desired effect; the Arabs who had it fearful for their national honour, returned it, pretending he had found it on a camel. On the recovery of my property, I complimented the thief on his not deviating from the integrity of his countrymen. (139)

For Enlightenment philosophers, the Arabs living in barren spaces had nothing to do except warring and robbing each other and those Europeans who travelled in their lands (see page 6). In the Journey, Carmichael’s attitude towards the Arabs who stole his handkerchief and blanket nuanced the essentialising picture which the Enlightenment philosophers drew on the character of the Arabs. A traveller in a caravan mostly controlled by Arabs, Carmichael was an adaptable and accommodating traveller. He was a man of conciliatory tactics. For Carmichael when finding it possible to regain his stolen possessions back, he conversed with the Arabs about how European travellers had always celebrated the Arab honesty. Following stratagems across the desert, Carmichael affected some sociable tactics that facilitated his secure and safe movement in such a difficult and different space. Unlike Captain James Cook who, as Withers argues, in 1779 was “killed by
[Hawaiian] islanders after unwittingly transgressing local customs”, Carmichael managed to cross the desert safely by inventing stories about how the Arab “local customs” of dignity and honesty were something the European travellers celebrated (110). In devising these tactics of adaptability, Carmichael appeared interactive and communicative. Rhetorical statements on the superiority of the British and the primitiveness of the Arabs tend to fade in the face of difficult conditions of travelling in the overland routes to India. Also Carmichael' reconciliatory and practical attitude in his interaction with the Arabs in the caravan allowed him to pursue, as we shall shortly see, some empirical and scientific interests that would never have occurred without the help and co-operation of the social world of the caravan.

Carmichael advised fellow British travellers that applying these tactics of adaptation of survival in the Arabian deserts would enable them to enjoy the profits of caravan travelling. Next time “I would bring both horses and camels,” Carmichael wrote, “particularly from Aleppo, where the former may be bought at such price as to be sold advantage at Busserah” (167). Even the passage on the way back from Basra can be profitable: “on a returning passage...,you may there buy camels at about forty rupees per head, and they commonly sell at Aleppo for as many dollars; which yields a profit of near cent. per cent” (176). As Carmichael’s statements on commercial activities indicate, the Arabian lands between India and Europe were economically vibrant. The economic transactions prevalent in these routes, as Carmichael noted, complicate the essentialising thinking of the Enlightenment philosophers who, when setting out to explain how societies in their primitive stages nurse nomadism, war and robbers, found in contemporary Arabia a fitting example. I shall see more on this point in chapter three, but what really matters for the purpose of this chapter is that Carmichael was aware that the advanced stage which a
society can reach, which is the commercial stage, were not only reserved for Enlightenment Europe as the Scottish Enlightenment celebrated. The Arabian deserts also accommodated the mode of subsistence which the Enlightenment philosophers believed that it improves the civilizational positioning of a certain nation.

So, in the caravan, Carmichael, as the Journey shows, did not represent the spaces of Arabia as de facto backward and barbaric. Rather the mode of caravan travelling, so the Journey tells us, revealed how the desert was a space of interaction and communication between Carmichael and the Muslims with and among whom he moved.

In the next section, we shall see how this border-crossing mode of travelling reveals what Isaac Watt in 1743 observed of the ‘proper’ use of the mind in the age of the Enlightenment: “[it] allows [people] much leisure and larger opportunities to cultivate their Reason, and to beautify and enrich their Minds with various Knowledge” (2). For Carmichael, cultivating the mind can also occur by developing social and cross-cultural relationship during a journey with an Arab caravan across Arabian deserts.

Caravan, Knowing and Sociality

[Cross-cultural practises of knowing improve the mind of the traveller, showing how the essentialising thinking of the Scottish Enlightenment was something which Carmichael was not keen to display]

In a barren space full of ruins, Carmichael was keen to know how civilisations achieve progress and improvement and what were the signs of progress in this modern age. He measured modern progress by using the power of the mind: by
seeking to know how people who reshaped nature by building on it or improving it were progressing and those whose lands are full of ruins must be of backward nature. In so doing, Carmichael expressed a view about progress that did not differ from the views in Smith’s four-stage theory that the Middle East was beyond modern improvement. Unlike the Scottish philosophers who saw progress as one-way traffic beginning and ending in Europe and Britain, Carmichael, nevertheless, offers a complex picture of improvement where gathering information about these barren lands was a social and cross-cultural act. The complexity of such a picture stems from the practical side of engaging with the people among whom he moved so that he gained personal improvement while searching the big question of how nations and civilisations improve. For Carmichael, his search of how nations develop has a practical aspect of engagement with space, the Arabian deserts with all its people and caravans. Such practical interactions with locals may not stop the rhetoric of polarisation familiar to the Enlightenment literati whose views of the primitiveness of the Orient were fixed. But sometimes it does postpone it or unlearn it in a moment when the British traveller cannot but depend on the locals in his efforts to gain new knowledge about the Orient.

For a curious European traveller of the Enlightenment such as Carmichael, interacting with the social world of the Arab caravan facilitates mapping practices. But it also improves experimental and empirical reasoning on spaces little known in the European print culture on exploration.15 While travelling in the caravan across the Arabian deserts, Carmichael was “hungry for knowledge” (36). These are the words which Lady Anne Blunt, who was in the Orient in 1878, used to describe the scientific traditions of European travels in the Orient. In order to satisfy this hunger, Carmichael pursued some practices of geographical improvement. He reported on
what he saw and also heard while travelling with the caravan. He owned a watch and carried a compass and telescope which, as David Livingstone argues, modern explorers and navigators used in their efforts to “discipline the senses by making their findings more trustworthy in the eyes of their readers” (148). Nevertheless, Carmichael’s scientific practices did not only depend on the use of European tools of inquiry. Engaging with locals helped Carmichael improve his knowledge. Carmichael hired Arab guards, used the Arab camel, and listened to what Arabs and Muslims fellow caravan travellers reported about the geography and history of their areas. In his efforts to improve his mind by interacting with different traditions, religions and cultures, Carmichael complicates the Scottish Enlightenment’s essentialising belief that improvement was something to be found and practised in contemporary Europe, not in primitive Arabia.

To know about Arabia, Carmichael had thus to pursue deals with the locals in the caravan. In a village which he called Rachelle, a town in the Syrian deserts, Carmichael bought “sixty pounds” of dates from the Arab merchants. Carmichael was keen to report on the volume of commerce prevalent in Arab markets and his curiosity led him to taxonomise the commodities prevalent in desert markets. In Cobassee, a town near Baghdad, Carmichael found “great plenty of mutton, fowls, eggs, and onions” (156). These notes were accompanied by acts of social and cross-cultural interaction and communication. In some towns in the deserts, Carmichael could not simply stroll inside the markets so that he could report his findings without being accompanied by his Arab conductors. He could not go to Cobassee without the help of those soldiers in the caravan. Before he went there with some Arab soldiers, he was fearful of the idea of going alone. Carmichael warned that “they [provisions] are not to be had without paying an exhorbitant price,”
and “it is not safe to go one’s self, strangers here being very liable to insults” (156).
The presence of an Arab soldier as a faithful companion was important for the empirical, fact finding practices and reporting which Carmichael pursued. Paying Arab soldiers in the caravan to accompany him to the markets, Carmichael participated in the contractual rituals relating to the prevailing mode of travelling in the caravan: exchanging money, commodities and also services. Interacting with the Arab soldiers in the caravan enabled Carmichael to investigate the markets of Cobassee as well as report on them. This practice of improvement could not have occurred without the help of the Arab soldiers. Carmichael made an effort to understand the rituals surrounding modes of interaction with Arabs and Muslims whom he encountered in the deserts as well as in the caravan. In so doing, he had the opportunity to pursue empirical and scientific improvement.

Scientific improvement is a cross-cultural act, one which demands from the traveller tactics of adaptation and survival but also invite signs of humility among and friendship with the locals. Not a doctor himself, Carmichael, nevertheless, offered to cure a sickly Arab Sheikh, one man of “considerable importance”, whom he encountered in the caravan: “a great fat fellow, a Sheik...came to our tent in search of a doctor” (151). Carmichael “felt his pulse, and finding it feverish, prescribed bleeding” (151). Carmichael could not perform the surgery because he was not carrying a “lancet” (151). Nevertheless, one of the Arab travellers in the caravan, a barber, performed the surgery which Carmichael suggested. This Arab barber used a “rusty razor [with which he] made a large orifice, or rather a hole, which with great difficulty was afterwards closed” (151). Carmichael, despite that he disliked the “rusty” tool which the Arab barber used, rejoiced that he himself suggested the operation. The operation at the end proved a success. “Had my friend Dr. Russell
seen him eat,” Carmichael boasted, “I am persuaded he would admit my knowledge in therapeuticks” (151). It is not clear who Carmichael’s friend was since both Patrick and Alexander Russell were serving at the British factory in Aleppo as physicians at the time. But more important here is how Carmichael showed his medical skills while interacting with the locals. He he was not engaged with showing the superiority and professional detachment of the Enlightenment scientific and empirical traveller. In offering to treat an Arab man of authority, a Sheikh, Carmichael aimed to gain the trust of the Arabs as well as show his reader how his travels among the Arabs was an act of scientific and medical improvement. Practices of improvement here are communicative; they were performed in a social space of interaction. They complicate the taxonomising statements in the discourse of improvement, the statements which the Scottish philosophers accumulated after digging in the archives rather than interacting with the social spaces of the Arabian deserts.

Carmichael opened a channel of co-operation with and adaptation to the locals and their modes of riding, habits and customs. Across the desert routes, Carmichael did not use European maps which were, according to David Harvey, “strictly functional systems for the factual ordering of phenomena in space” (*Conditions* 249). Rather than carrying maps previously prepared by European travellers in the deserts, he was a self-styled non-trained explorer who did not object to using knowledges for improving his knowledge about these spaces. Carmichael used the Arab camel in his efforts to conduct some geographical investigations. He calculated the steps of the camel before converting them into miles. In so doing, as Withers argues, Carmichael was “involved [in] bringing the world to light less by imposing a single universal standard—as is often argued—than by calibrating others’ local standards with a view to ensuring, in time, commensurability over space” (97).
The use of the Arab animal facilitated Carmichael’s scientific and geographical practises of improvement.

Rennell described how Carmichael used the camel in his efforts to code geographical signs in space. “[H]e was determined to keep a register of the course by a compass,” Rennell noted, “and to compute, comparatively, if not absolutely, the intermediate distance on each course; by computing the steps of the camel on which he rode, during a certain interval of time; and afterwards measuring a number of them on the ground” (3).

Although noting how Carmichael used local knowledge, Rennell was far from acknowledging that Carmichael’s efforts of measuring the deserts were socially situated. After spending some years surveying India with the help of the East India Company, Rennell returned to London. At home, he began recording some British geographical practices and measuring and calculating activities which British travellers conducted abroad. In *On the Rate of Travelling*, he showed how British travellers in the deserts of Arabia measured, classified, and ordered the spaces in which they moved. Commending their activities, Rennell had an objective in mind. He advanced the argument that these travellers can be emulated by British explorers in African deserts. According to Rennell:

> for it appeared to me, that if the African caravans are composed of the same kind of camel, and are governed in their motions and economy by the same circumstances, as those which cross the Arabian deserts; there is no scale, of the computed kind, that can be more applicable to the African geography, than that formed on the camel’s rate of travelling. (2-3)
In examining how Carmichael and other British caravan travellers tried to describe the geography of the Arabian deserts, Rennell did not mention how these travellers had to co-operate with the Arab conductors of the caravan. For Rennell the camel became a universal instrument by which the British explorer can improve British knowledge on all deserts, whether in Arabia or Africa. Like the Enlightenment philosophers whose readings of travel accounts did not allow for a social mode of interaction between Europeans and non-Europeans, Rennell’s conceptualisation of space was one of homogeneity rather than contingency or practicality. He did not see the practical and material conditions of travelling among locals who helped Carmichael know more about the Arabian deserts. In doing, he totally erased from the picture the question on how British travellers might have devised some social tactics of interaction in order to use their tools and methods of inquiry. Rennell only cared about the ways travellers used methodical and mechanised skills to chart and describe spaces. His main purpose was to “foster” geographical progress.

In the Journey, the way Carmichael utilised the camel indicates social and contingent practices of knowing: fostering geographical progress was a cross-cultural act. Near a heap of ruins in an unnamed spot of land across the desert, Carmichael reports that the caravan was “obliged to halt” for refreshments. It was a long and fatiguing march. Carmichael was nonetheless enthused when his fellow caravan travellers told him that there is a large fort nearby. Such reports “furnished” Carmichael “with the wished-for opportunity of visiting Al Kander” (161). Seeking to feed his curious mind by seeing ruins, Carmichael asked an Arab “camaller” to accompany him into the castle. This Arab rode with him to the castle but “declined entering for fear of serpents or wild beasts” (161). The lust for pursuing curiosity, however such pursuit might prove hazardous for the traveller, called upon
Carmichael to rush to the castle without being accompanied by an Arab guardian. “So taking a pistol in each hand,” Carmichael rejoiced, “I ventured alone, creeping thro’ a hole in the gate-way, which was nearly filled up with rubbish” (161). In the next section we shall see how seeing sights of ruins shifts the mind of the Enlightenment traveller into the textual world of Orientalism where the idea of improvement begins showing a distancing force splitting the traveller from the social world of the Arab caravan. But before Carmichael entered the curious fort, he appeared on the back of an Arab camel accompanied by an Arab guard.

Using the Arab working animal for a ride to a curious sight reveals the extent to which travelling and seeking improvement across the Syrian deserts involved communication and co-operation with the social world of the caravan. Local reports on the curious sights prevalent in the deserts helped Carmichael record his observations on the curiosities prevalent in the deserts. While in the caravan, Carmichael listened to a local story narrating the incidents which led to the founding of the castle of “Al Kander” (159). Before seeing this castle, Carmichael was curious to know about its history. His fellow Arab travellers told him what they know about this castle. According to Carmichael, as his fellow caravan travellers reported, a Christian queen gave orders that a castle needs to be built on this spot. In listening to the Arab’s stories on the castle, Carmichael showed interest in local reports, thereby revealing how improving knowledge on the deserts demanded that the traveller listen and speak to Arabs. The social world of the caravan gratified the curious European traveller’s desires to know more and also practise an exercise of knowing across the space in which he moved. Social practices of improvement cannot but be communicative and interactive. Such social practices complicate the narrative on improvement which the Scottish philosophers advanced in their
comparative projects which sets Europe as a story of improvement and Arabia a story of backwardness.

Although he travelled in a barren space, Carmichael demonstrated how the passage across the desert helped improve the curious mind. Sometimes the caravan leader did not stop at the places or sites where the curious traveller would expect to encounter curious articles of nature. He did not get the chance to visit these great sites of ruins: Urfa, known in the ancient sources as Edessa, in modern Turkey, or Babylon, in modern Iraq. Carmichael was a curious traveller in the East but the means of caravan travelling across the Syrian deserts would not allow him to gratify his curious inclinations of visiting and seeing these sites. If he was a grand tourist, like Richard Pococke, who visited Syria and Mesopotamia in 1738, Carmichael would have been able to find a way to visit these sites. But being a man of limited financial means, found a way of writing about them without visiting them or seeing them in person. As at the site of “Al Kander”, Carmichael could only listen to what his fellow travellers had to tell him about the history of Urfa, a city situated to the east of the Euphrates.

The local religious import about the history of this city grabbed the attention of the empirical Carmichael. Carmichael observed that Muslims, the “Mahometans” as he called them, “highly venerate [Urfa], on account of being the birth-place of Abraham [...]” (150). They “tell a great many marvellous stories about it” (150). A man of rational thinking, Carmichael distanced himself from the marvellous element of the Muslim reporting thus:

‘They say Abraham’s father was a gross idolater, and being a statuary by trade, used to carve idols for Nimrod. His son had frequently, in vain, expostulated with him on the absurdity of
worshipping gods he had himself made. One day he took the opportunity of the old man’s absence, and broke and deface his whole stock in trade. The father, on his return, finding his deities in this mutilated state, enquired into the cause; when Abraham answered him he supposed they had quarrelled and treated each other in that rough manner. The father, enraged at this sarcasm, and rightly guessing at the author of the sacrilege, complained to Nimrod, who ordered Abraham to be seized and thrown from a place raised on two high pillars into a great fire; which was accordingly executed. When God immediately changed the fire into a pond of water, and the billets of wood into fishes; so that Abraham fell into the pond without receiving the last injury.’ (150)

Carmichael doubted the story and set out to verify it: “I asked some Jews of the caravan whether they believed this story?” (151). Perhaps against what Carmichael had expected, “They answered they had tradition to the same import” (151). Interested in increasing his stock of knowledge about the Syrian deserts, Carmichael listened to his fellow caravan travellers’ reports.

He also listened to other travellers in the caravan who reported what they knew about the ruins of Babylon, a curious site which Carmichael was not able to visit since the caravan would not stop there. Some travellers in the caravan told Carmichael that “they had seen the ruins of Babylon about eight hours journey east of hence” (166). He doubted the reports of these travellers. He “imagine[d] [that] they mistook the ruins of Cuffa for those of that [Babylon]” (166). Unable to verify whether the ruins were of Babylon or Cuffa, Carmichael was nevertheless curious to listen to
local reports about the past of these ruins: “A Persian traveller in the caravan...mused me with [a] traditional story” (166).

The Persian who told the story recalled why the towers of Babel had always been associated with confusion in languages, seventy two in number. Carmichael reports him claiming that Nimrod brought seventy-two Armenian builders to build the towers. This order was taken “in defiance to the Almighty” (166). God punished Nimrod, causing the builders to speak different languages. “This caused great confusion, and ever since there has been seventy two different languages” (166). Although such reports were amusing, Carmichael doubted their occurrence, instead preferring to test the rational faculties of his Persian interlocutor. “I asked which were the languages then formed, but this exceeds his knowledge” (166). Although he doubted the Persian report, Carmichael’s interaction with his Persian fellow caravan traveller was of great importance for improving his knowledge on other curious sights found near Babylon. After listening to the Persian traveller’s report, he was able to offer his reader the following conjecture about the city of Baghdad. “[I]t is not improbable that Babel was hard by Bagdat, or Bagsdeth, which, as well as Babel, signifies confusion” (166). Seeing sights of curiosity proves improving for the mind. But the improvement of the mind can also be shown when Carmichael listens to local reports about ruins, a process of accumulating knowledge which includes social interaction. Although the Journey described these local reports as doubtful, these local reports were necessary for the test of improvement which Carmichael keeps undertaking while marching across the deserts. In the world of social interaction in the Arab caravan, Carmichael was willing to listen to his fellow travellers’ stories as well as debate with them the ‘real’ occurrence of their stories. He was not a detached
observer whose professional knowledge on the Arabian lands exceeds what the locals hold in their histories, stories and memories.

Carmichael saw travelling in the caravan among Muslims an improving exercise for the mind of the curious traveller. Learning from the social landscape of the caravan proved interactive and cross-culturally communicative: the British traveller was not travelling in a primitive world muted or subjected to mutation by the powerful apparatus of knowledge which the European explorer had internalised even before setting out on the field. Rather a British scientific and empirical improver on the field was a man of tactics and co-operations.

Nevertheless, as the next two sections show, when travelling in lands with material traces previously known to Europeans, Carmichael repeats the commonplace European views on the backwardness of the Orient. In examining these traces of backwardness, Carmichael still finds a way to show how his journey in the ancient and Biblical world was one of learning new things. In Biblical lands and among sites of ruins, he developed new ways to understand previous Biblical and ancient sources and devised new ways to improve the material conditions in the deserts.

Fascination with ruins

[How Carmichael's fascination with ruins pointed the backwardness of these lands but also allowed him to show the reader how as an army captain his skills in fortification were put to the test in the deserts]

The scenes of sociality in the caravan disappears once the Enlightenment traveller finds himself moving in a barren Oriental space where he encounters objects which
remind him of ancient Biblical and mythical times. In recalling stories and events
associated with these times, Carmichael fixed these lands in the past: once a
privileged past but now in ruins. But in seeing the Arabian deserts as backward,
rather than forward, places, Carmichael offered a political message. If progress in
modernising Britain is an idea which has supporters and doubters, then the
backwardness of the Arabian deserts offered Carmichael a stage to show to what
side he belongs.

In Arabia, instead of finding big urban cities with improved canal systems, for
example, Carmichael encountered ruins of once great civilisations. As a traveller in
this age of Enlightenment, the idea that time progresses, moving from the past into
the present and then into the future does not rightly describe the ruined conditions of
Arabia. Travelling in Arabia where ruins were there in abundance reminded
Carmichael that he was meeting what looks like the declined past, rather than the
present. While Enlightenment Europe was embracing the idea of modernisation
aiming to move beyond the troubles of the past, Carmichael found it disturbing that
the past in Arabia (ruins) is still hanging in the present. But witnessing the troubling
movement of history in these lands was not merely a way of confirming the polarising
rhetoric of the Enlightenment which presented Arabia as the land of the ancients
rather than the moderns. It was also an act of reflection on the ability of the empiricist
and rational individual to suppress the past by seeking to accommodate it with the
new motto of the present: improvement. Conceptualising new ways of developing the
ruinous villages and towns in the deserts, Carmichael, like the Scottish
Enlightenment philosophers, wanted to move beyond the troubled conditions of an
ancient past at the same time as he confirms its presence in the present. In so doing,
Carmichael desperately insisted upon recalling the past not as a ratifying and sealed
force but as an impulse to change. For Carmichael, Arabia with its ruins was this spark which allowed him to stage the self as one of change and progress.

During the Enlightenment, European travellers who wrote travel accounts on the Arab Middle East have recorded themselves travelling among its archaeological and historical sites, representing these sites as reminders of a past now vanishing.\textsuperscript{20} For these travellers, ruins, in the words of Ali Behadad, were “a subject of scientific contemplation” on the laws which explain human movement in history. But they were also, as the Anglican Bishop Richard Pococke found, a test for the antiquarian’s previous knowledge of the history of these lands. While touring the Levant, Pococke “almost entirely confined myself to the antiquities, and what relates to natural history…” (iv). Focusing on “antiquities” in his observations, Pococke saw these lands as part of a vanished past known only for its religious piety, wars, and great conquerors. No attention needs to be paid to those inhabitants who live on these lands. For Pococke, the lands of Syria and Mesopotamia “have delivered down to us from the earliest times, as they were inhabited by the patriarchs, and afterwards became the renowned scenes of actions of Persians, of Alexander the great, and of the Macedonian kings” (iii). Detaching himself from the present social reality of these spaces, Pococke showed interest in the past, rather than the present, of these lands. But while constructing these lands as remnants of past glory, Pococke was concerned to show his reader how his journey in these lands was a testament of personal improvement. As he writes, “The great relation antient geography has to antient history and medals, I am persuaded will plead my excuse with many, for frequently considering that subject” (iv). Constantin Volney, the French historian who toured Syria and Egypt between 1783 and 1785, explained why seeing these lands with their ruins was important for the curious European traveller of the
Enlightenment age. “Those are the countries in which the greater part of the opinions that govern us at this day,” Volney opined, “have had their origin” (ii, iii). In Syria and Mesopotamia, European travellers discovered how the ghosts of the past were still haunting the present, hindering it from progress. Volney set out across Syria and Egypt in order “to examine to what degree this [ancient] spirit, these manners and these customs, are altered or retained...” (iii). For Volney no material progress is noted in these lands. Just like Pococke, Volney wanted to expand his knowledge of history by associating his travelling observations with ruins and ancient customs. He was of the “opinion that travels belong to the department of history....” (vi). So for Pococke and Volney, encountering the past which the ruins symbolised was not itself a way of staging the Middle East as a backward space so much as it was way of proving to the reader that their travels in the Levant were exercises of intellectual improvement.

Like Pococke and Volney, encountering ruins sharpened Carmichael's understanding of the “natural” flow of history from the past into the present. He was really excited to see ruins. Carmichael recommended visiting ruins where “curious” travellers can find and “survey... antient buildings” (177). According to him, “they may hire a (bursie) boat, about three days journey from Aleppo, and come down the Euphrates to Bussersah, in which track they must undoubtedly find many noble ruins of antient cities on both sides of the rivers” (177). Such an excitement has its origin in his belief in the idea of progress. Seeing ruins was an act of narrating the self as a rational performer among sights of ruins: a way of contemplating the differences between improving and non-improved nations. Amidst reminders of an ancient past, European travellers could imagine how nations and men improve themselves or rather degenerate. Arriving at an area called Geboul, outside Aleppo, Carmichael
noted how this town “appears to have been more considerable village than any of the former, but is now almost in ruins” (136). On the 24th of October, two days march from Geboul, the caravan stopped at a town called Hagla. This town did have ruins. “I found several wells about twelve feet deep, built round with stone, the water very indifferent; notwithstanding which there seems, by the many remaining foundations, to have been formerly a large town here” (136). In an area close to the Valley of Slat, “there are many foundations of buildings, and several heaps of stones collected together, by which it appears that this country was formerly well peopled and cultivated” (137). Observing with his telescope the relics remained from the walls of Tibia, Carmichael “believes [that] Tibia was formerly very strong” (140). Near Tibia there is a valley “between the mountains” (143). In this valley there are some aqueducts. This valley is “arched over, and at proper distances had receivers with wells over [these aqueducts] to draw water, many of which still are to be seen, but all are defaced and ruined” (145). “Rackba is still a large place, but much inferior to its ancient condition”, sniffed Carmichael (147). In Oglet Harran, the observations are hardly different. “There are a number of graves with cut stones on the hill, on the south-east side, which make it probable it was formerly inhabited” (152). Sixteen miles from Baghdad, the caravan stopped near the fort of Al Kander where Carmichael noted that “it appears that these buildings were formerly very high” (163).

For the curious Carmichael, the prevalence of ruins confirms to him that modern improvement was an alien breed across these lands. But it clearly showed his allegiance to the common Enlightenment notion that the natural movement of societies starts from primitiveness into improvement.

For Carmichael, seeing ruins was not particularly a test about his knowledge of ancient history and civilisations. For he was not like Pococke who was an Oxford
don, a Chaplain, and a relative of a pioneering British Arabist. Nor was he like Volney, a philosopher, historian, politician and a friend of influential Enlightenment philosophers in France. Rather, encountering ruins added to his skills as someone trained in fortifying the land. In Cabesee, a desert village, the caravan stopped for refreshments. Carmichael took the opportunity to stroll around this site. He found a “deep aqueduct, cut in the rock thro’ the hill” (155). This aqueduct, although ancient, is still useful. In it “there is a run of water sufficient to work a mill,” Carmichael opined, before noting that the local inhabitants were not tending the water properly: “before it reaches the town, it is much ameliorated by the earth and air” (155).

According to Carmichael, this water can be better used if the inhabitants “work a mill” (155). He doubted that Arabs had the ability to use this water for useful projects. He would not know that Medieval Arabs and Muslims who lived in a large empire extending from Yemen to Spain built sophisticated systems of water management whose designs would later pass into the New World.²¹ Still, what mattered for Carmichael is the present sign of decay. After tasting the water and finding that “it has a disagreeable sulphurous taste”, Carmichael suggested that the Arabs need use this water to operate a mill (155). In encountering ruins, Carmichael confirmed what the Enlightenment philosophers suggested on the resistance of the deserts to the idea of progress. Nevertheless, such a repetitive moment of historical re-enactment allowed him to offer his conviction that backwardness is something not inherent but rather can be changed.

While travelling in Arabian deserts, Carmichael’s fascination with the ancientness and backwardness of these lands brings into the fore the tension between the residual and the dominant which Raymond Williams found at play in modernising Europe. The views which Carmichael offered about how these lands
can be improved clearly show how he was in favour of the Enlightenment dominant view of progress which aims to celebrate modernity as a forward force. But the presence of ruins made it clear that the present is not all about progress and improvement although Carmichael, by setting out to improve the ruinous conditions of the deserts, was clearly a believer in the idea of progress. Encountering ruins was like a shock for him that the natural movement of history was not one of universalism, moving from primitivism into modernity, as the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers believed. Rather there were the spaces which moved backward, a realisation which made him think of how one needs to make use of this new knowledge. One way to do this was to stage his travelling among sites of ruins as an exercise of learning how to develop some skills he previously acquired. Another way, as the next section shows, is to scrutinise and if possible improve what traditional sources of knowledge such as the Bible reported on the Middle East. The journey for Carmichael was an intellectual stimulation, driving him to reflect on grand narratives, aiming to complicate and nuance them.

The Bible, Britons’ improvement and Arabia’s Backwardness:

[Carmichael complicated the view in the Scottish Enlightenment that religious certainty was something which prevents progress]

Carmichael, as this section shows, saw the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland route as the familiar lands he read about in the Bible. He relied on the Bible for familiarising the reader with the towns and villages he visited. Here Carmichael did not need to associate the reports of the Muslims with truth, rationality and reason. Rather a body of knowledge on the Arabian deserts which the Bible offers produces the reports
which Carmichael considered as close to reason and empirical facts. But while staging these lands as Biblical and peopled by many irrational inhabitants, Carmichael learned a new thing, other than the ability of the rational mind to improve backward spaces. First, he developed the skill of examining the geographical precision of the Bible by relying on the truthfulness of the senses. Second, he found a way to reconcile faith and reason by mostly confirming the agreeable effects of the Biblical reports on the mind.

As a man of reason, he doubted what he considered irrational reports of Arabs and Muslims but he also showed an empirical passion to scrutinise Biblical reports. In so doing, Carmichael appeared as a believer in progress in a scientific and empiricist context but not one of staging Biblical reports as mere irrational and fake. Travelling in the Middle East stimulated reflection on the geographical precision of such a book as the Bible. Confirming Biblical reports and incidents in lands where the Christian faith was found was a common trope in European traditions of travelling in and writing travel accounts about the Levant. This is what the pious Christian chaplain to the Aleppo factory in 1600, William Biddulph, did in his *The Travels* (1609). For an early modern traveller such as Biddulph, the experience of seeing Biblical sights was a re-enactment of earlier travels of the patriarchs. While observing the present of these lands, he could not escape seeing them as parts of an ancient Biblical history. For Biddulph, the ultimate truth was the Biblical word, not the local knowledge. In comparing what the Bible mentioned and the present reality of these lands, Biddulph did not negotiate what later in the Enlightenment would be viewed as the tension between reason and faith. Carmichael later did. He, unlike Biddulph, was not a pious Christian. But in his efforts to scrutinise the geographical precision of the Bible he was envisaging himself doing something similar to what
early eighteenth-century theologians were doing: reconciling faith with reason. If the Enlightenment philosophers muted religious statements in their explanation of how societies reach the high stage of progress, Carmichael, in the Biblical lands, could not seek to know things about the deserts without the help of the Biblical reports. The staging of the deserts in his report as Biblical and ancient lands was an act of protestation against the common Enlightenment notion that man can reach the stage of happiness by discarding religion from the picture. For Carmichael, one develops intellectual progress when adapting the Christian religion to reason. This new way of approaching the ideal of progress was something which Carmichael developed while journeying in what he considered primitive Muslim lands.

In setting out to practise his empiricist skills on textual references, Carmichael brings into the four the question of temporal progress. In referring to the Bible, Carmichael suggested that the lands across which he moved were steeped in ancient rather than modern, improved times. Arriving at an empty patch of land called “Auro il Arauneb (i.e the country of hares), where [the caravan] encamped,” Carmichael observed that “The surface of the earth all this day was covered with a while scurf, which reminded me of the manna gathered by the Israelites in the wilderness” (138). For Carmichael, the desert space is a Biblical zone which belongs to a religious past of “Israelites” and “wilderness”. These lands were steeped in a state of nature. But constructing the deserts as lands of “wilderness” was not merely an act of superiority: a way of showing how these lands has nothing to do with modern times of progress. It was rather an enabling act which allowed Carmichael to stage himself as a modern curious traveller who set out verify the precision of the Biblical account.23 As a scientific traveller, Carmichael was keen to report first-hand knowledge by relying on observations. The Bible and the senses were part of the
tools which he needs to use in order to show how his movement across the deserts was also one of improving the mind by using empirical modes of inquiry. Upon recalling the Biblical image of the Israelites, he approached the “surface of the earth”. “[A]t first I took it for salt, but on tasting, found it only a kind of alcala, drawn from the earth by the heat of the sun” (139). Upon empirical work, the manna of the Bible turned out to be “alcala”. This new finding testifies to the way Carmichael’s desert journey was one of verifying the truth of the Biblical report.

Throughout the desert, Carmichael was engaged with finding new ways to authenticate the truth of Biblical references. Carmichael mentioned that the Arab towns of Tibia and Sakhne were the Biblical Tibhath and Chun “from whence David brought that great quantity of brass, with which Solomon made the brazen sea, pillars, and other works of the Temple” (143). Unlike the previously marvellous stories which the Arab guards mentioned on the origin of sites of ruins, these Biblical stories, Carmichael noted, were verifiable. He subjected them to the easiest and cheapest tools of inquiry: the senses. The sensory tool employed this time was auditory rather than visual. “My reasons for these opinions are found on the several passages in the Old Testaments, as well as on the similarity in the sound of Tibia and Tibhath” (142).

In narrowing down the ideal of improvement in the shape of a debate between an empirical traveller and a textual Biblical reference, Carmichael disengaged himself from the materiality of the journey. He presented himself as an empirical man of science travelling in Biblical land in which there was nothing worthy to be mentioned except the rational experiments and practical observations of the Enlightenment traveller. Nevertheless, in staging the lands as ancient and wild, Carmichael was able to comment on how things in the Bible were close to reason.
In addition to tasting the soil of the deserts and comparing the Biblical names of the desert towns with their modern equivalent, the Biblical textual references were also subjected to the critical power of effective tools bound to distinguish what Pratt called the “seeing-man” of the European Enlightenment (7). While for Pratt the seeing man was “he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess”, Carmichael’s eyes in Carmichael were tools of reconciling the Biblical report to rational faculties (7). Near Baghdad, Carmichael was standing in a barren field where his eyes confirmed it to him that what he read of the “pompous” reports of ancient historians who gave him to understand that Babylon was “once magnificent state... [with] stupendous walls and hanging gardens” were simply untrue (164). For the rational Carmichael, “it seems little less than miraculous that it should be totally eradicated as not to leave sufficient traces to determine, with any exactness its former situation” (164). Carmichael doubted ancient sources on the subject, including the Biblical report, the source which he simply set out to verify it. He referred to “the predicament of Jeremiah li.63, 64” which reads “it shall be, when thou has made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the middle of the Euphrates, and thou shalt say, thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil I will bring upon her” (165). For Carmichael, Jeremiah’s prediction is “the most possible” since the surveying eyes confirmed to Carmichael that “the country hereabout is a perfect bed of dry sand, and the river appears to have shifted greatly to the north-east of its antient channel” (165).

Practising one’s rational and sensual faculties in barren lands prove useful for verifying Biblical reports. Such practises staged Carmichael as a man who was concerned with pursuing knowledge and gaining improvement wherever he went. Carmichael’s seeing eyes were more concerned with reconciling the Bible to rational
and empirical thinking than they were with possessing the land or even constructing it as a wild place waiting the improving deeds of the white man.

Seeking to verify Biblical reports with the help of his rational faculties did not stop Carmichael from staging the people among whom he travelled as irrational and unwilling to improve. Indeed, it would appear that they have gone the other direction and degenerated. Arriving at Harran, an ancient valley full of ruins, Carmichael estimated that the city of Urfa, in nowadays Turkey, “should be only fifty-six miles from N.N.W. From hence”; he also imagin[ed] [that] Abraham and his family came thence thither; which seems agreeable to the Mosaick account in Gen. xi.3-4” (153). Carmichael previously thought that “Harran was in Mesopotamia; but on farther inquiry believe[d]” that Haran is in Syria (153). He based his conclusion upon some mathematical reasoning conducted upon some Biblical references:

Now when Jacob fled from Leban, he was only ten days in reaching Mount Gilead, and could hardly march more than twenty five miles a day, for the reason given his brother Easu, Gen. Xxvi.13. At which rate the distance from where Jacob passed the river to Mount Gilead cannot be supposed more than two hundred and fifty miles; and Leban came up with him in seven days. This agrees with the distance, at about the rate of thirty-five miles a day. (154)

Such a mathematical reasoning verified the geographical precision of the Biblical report. At the same time, it cast doubt on the Islamic geographical report:

I am right in my conjecture so to mount Gilead and Oglet Haran being on the way from Urfa to Cannan, near the river, and about the distance of Jacob's march from Mount Gilead, I am inclined to think Oglet Haran is the Haran of the Patriarch. Mahomet pretended to
affirm by inspiration that the Haran where Abraham dwelt was the very spot where the temple of Mecca now stands, and which the Mahometans still call Haran. (154)

Carmichael did not mention his source for what “Mahomet”, (the Muslim Prophet) mentioned about Harran. Also, he did not converse with Muslim travellers on this particular topic. Still, it was the Biblical report rather than what, presumably, “Mahomet” reported about Harran which was close to truth. If Haran were in Arabia and not in Syria, as the Muslims would like to believe, then it would have been impossible for Jacob to journey from Haran to Palestine in ten days:

It must be remembered Mecca lies six hindered miles south from Canaan. Therefore I may safely conclude Mahomet very boldly asserted a falsehood, and was influenced by a different spirit from Moses; but as this imposter generally enforced, his assertion by club eloquence, few cared to oppose such forcible argument. (154-5)

Holding a Bible across the desert allowed Carmichael to boost his self-image as a man of curiosity and empiricism who travelled in lands inhabited by superstitious, irrational and non-improved people who follow a false prophet and religion. But seeing Islam and Mohammad as simply unreliable reporters on the geography of the Arabian deserts allowed Carmichael to find a way to reconcile a Biblical report with an empirical method of measuring distances. The polarising rhetoric about the irrationality of Islam and the rationality of the European traveller confirms the view in the Scottish Enlightenment that Arabia and the Middle East were lands of primitiveness and irrationality. Nevertheless, the idea of the irrationality of Islam here was a way of showing how the Biblical report was something more agreeable to the
rational and calculating mind than the Muslim report. This is a new way of arguing that arriving at a stage of improvement can also happen without necessarily laying the Christian religion off, what exactly the Enlightenment philosophers were not quite sure about.

Conclusion

The *Journey* does not tell the story of a Briton who travelled in the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to India as an agent of British military and scientific superiority. Nor does it narrate the story of a man of scientific training whose travel across the deserts was part of a fully funded scientific expedition heralded by “the fathers of militant geography”, in Joseph Conrad’s phrase, “whose only object was the search for truth”(*Last Essays* 9). Rather, as this chapter shows, Carmichael was an Enlightenment traveller with an interest to improve his mind by applying empiricist modes of inquiry. Within the social world of caravan travelling, the idea of improvement was cross-culturally interactive and border-crossing, allowing spaces of communication, adaptation and cooperation. The idea of improvement shifts into a textual and discursive domain which presented the Orient as an ancient and unimproved space where irrational and superstitious people lived once the traveller found the self travelling in a Biblical space of ancient times. Studying the social and textual sides of the idea of improvement – as it was revealed in curious acts by a British man of empiricism across the Syrian deserts –this chapter recalls how the Enlightenment idea of improvement was of a global scene of interaction in Eastern caravan routes, among Biblical ruins and in conversation with Arabs and Muslims.
Notes:

1 Here we might usefully recall what Henry Grose who toured India in 1750 wrote about the fragile position of the English in Bombay: “The coast to the northward of
Bombay and Surat, was chiefly the harbour of a nest of pirates...who...were specially troublesome to the trading vessels bound in or out of the Gulf of Persia ...On the opposite coast, which forms the end of the Persian Gulf, were seated the Muskat-Arabs, whose first putting forth ships for cruising was purely put of revenge against the Portuguese...But having once got a relish of pillaging such enemies at sea, they began to extend their attacks indiscriminately on other nations, and among them on the English...It was then principally on account of Angria whose dominions stretched from the mouth of Bombay harbour, down a great length of coast without a material interruption, that the company was, in its own defence, obliged to keep on foot a very expensive maritime force”, *A Voyage to the East Indies Containing Accounts of the Mogul Government in general, the Viceroyalties of the Decan and Bengal, with their several Dependences*...(London, 1772), p.40-1-2. For the quote which appeared in the body of the chapter, see Grose’s *Voyage*, p.140-1.


3 In 1703 Thomas Sprat mentioned how the Royal Society celebrated the travel reports about foreign lands: “the *Royal Society* has made no scruple, to receive all inquisitive strangers of all Countries, into its number...thereby inviting them, to communicate foreign Rarities, by imparting their own discoveries. This has been acknowledged, by many Learned Men, who have travell’d hither; who have been introduc’d to their meetings, and have admir’d the decency, the gravity, the plainness, and the calmness of their debates. This they have published to the
...world...,” The History of the Royal-Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge (London, 1702), p.64-5. Reports which British travellers sent to the Royal Society can be found in the collection Miscellanea Curiosa Containing a Collection of Curious Travels, Voyages, And Natural Histories Of Countries As they have been Delivered to the Royal Society (London, 1707).


Gertrude Bell visited the Syrian and Mesopotamian deserts several times between 1899 and 1909. In her travel observations, she did not hesitate to express her opinions on, as Julia Emberley writes, “how Britain should best govern the area known as Mesopotamia, or modern day Iraq...”. For a good account on Bell’s imperial archaeological thinking, see Emberley “Gertrude Lowthian Bell in Mesopotamia” in Writing Travel and Empire: Colonial Narratives of Other Cultures, ed., Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall (London: I.B Tauris, 2009), p.119-146. This passage is on pages 119-120.

A very good account on the scientific traditions of travelling and writing travels is Bravo’s essay.

Porter, p. 296.

In this period, as Jonathan Lamb notes, “In botany and in all branches of natural history, classification provided a home, a history, and a relation for all discovered things”, *Preserving the self in the South Seas 1680-1840* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2001), p.80.


In this age of scientific improvement it was believed that uniformity rather than variance [that] characterised the laws governing nature and man. For example, it was widely assumed that improvement in science could, in the words of Richard Drayton, provide “a vision of Nature ordered by laws, and subject in turn to those who discovered these rules [...]”. Rennell, whilst aiming to project the topography of the desert upon that of African space, showed his participation in, or at the very least

14 Orientalism, p.7.

15 For example, George Keate, a fellow of the Royal Society and a grand tourist in 1754, celebrated the kind of improvements which Sir Joseph Banks' and Captain James Cook's Pacific travels offered their readers: “The relations of these several voyages having excited a great spirit of inquiry, and awakened an eager curiosity to everything can elucidate the history of mankind”, An Account of the Pelew Islands (Paris, 1789), p.vi.

16 For a good account on the Russell brother’s life and work in Aleppo, see Maurits van den Boogert’s Aleppo Observed: Ottoman Syria Through the Eyes of Two Scottish Doctors, Alexander and Patrick Russell (London: Arcadian Library, 2010).

17 Pococke, a Church of England Bishop, was in the Middle East between 1737 and 1742. He visited Urfa and wrote about what he considered curious articles of nature found there. According to Elizabeth Baignet, “Pococke’s family connections in the

18 The Arabs and Muslims with whom Carmichael communicated in the hope to gain knowledge on some spaces in the deserts did not appear in the narrative as those locals of the calibre of the “native informant” which Gayatri Spivak posited as “a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western model discipline) could inscribe”, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.6.

19 For Carmichael, as Donna Landry suggests, “Ruins were the primary stimulus to reflections on the contradiction between the desolation, or pastness, of the past and its lingering persistence in the present”, “Saddle Time” in *Criticism* 46:3 (2004): 441-58. This particular quote appears on page 448.

20 As Charles Withers notes, in using the essentialising rhetorical tropes prevalent in this repository of knowledge on the Orient, travel writers, including Carmichael, “had the temptation to pander” what the European public were familiar of finding in the European accounts written on the Middle East *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.111.


I agree with Behdad when he mentioned the famous discursive trope in European travel writings on the Middle East: “what is privileged in the scientific discourse of travel is distance... [the emphasis] on the importance of aloofness from one’s object of observation”, p. 88. Said also accentuates this trope, as Behadad shows. Quoting Said, Behadad writes: “‘The European’, as Edward Said has demonstrated in Orientalism, ‘is a watcher, never involved, always detached’”, p.88.

Louise H. Marshall argues that the “rejection of the 'Mahometan Religion' as the heathen worship of false idols continued to influence eighteenth-century perceptions of Islam”, *National Myth and Imperial Fantasy: representations of Britishness on the early eighteenth-century stage* (London: Palgrave, 2008), p.167. Carmichael, in viewing the Prophet, might have been entrapped within such a mode of rejection, but the rational argumentation he displayed, whilst seeking to falsify the Prophet, indicates how the eighteenth-century mode of viewing Islam was more complicated than just basing itself upon religious terms. Rational thinking and calculation, rather than religious prejudices, revealed how Mohammad was a false prophet, as Carmichael showed.
CHAPTER TWO

MANNERS: EDWARD IVES, *Journey from Persia to England* (1773)

[How reporting about one’s travels was a way of defining politeness: was it a quality of the aristocracy and gentry or was it something a man from the middle class can achieve by showing improved financial conditions, manners and behaviour? Ives set out to legitimate the inclusion of the middle classes into the social domain of politeness at the same time as he tries to exclude “the lower” classes from the picture]

At a time when many Britons were travelling in the East for gaining profits, the categorical differences and separation between the idea of home and the idea of abroad, “our culture” and “their culture”, although it was appealing to some, was nevertheless flawed in the eyes of Edward Ives. Ives was a British physician who served in British India between 1754 and 1757. He was in India at a time when alliances and animosities between Indian rulers and European powers were always shifting, depending on the profits calculated. It was also the great age when many Britons were making use of the opportunities which India provided as a place where they could improve their financial status. For Ives, the East was the stage upon which he projected the obsession of the Enlightenment with idea of improvement. In his *Journey from Persia to England* (1773), he appeared more concerned about improving social status than easing financial conditions despite that his main purpose of staying in the East was purely economic. He paraded British civil behaviour, voiced British worship of liberty and also expressed love of using luxurious objects and commodities in the presence of servants, shepherds and poor
people. He wanted to appear as a polite Englishman. He nevertheless knew that politeness was also something a man would have automatically acquired by the virtue of being from the aristocracy and the nobility, not only from displaying things he cultivated and acquired during his lifetime. In interacting with Muslims, Ives aimed to reconcile between two British interpretations of the idea of politeness: one was ancient which reserved civility and decorum to the nobility and aristocracy and the other was modern which democratised the concept of civility by opening it up to a new emergent social category in society, the middle class.¹ In favour of the second meaning of politeness, Ives was greatly concerned about showing the vigorousness of the middle class while arguing that a British doctor’s travel observations on Arabs and Muslims would improve the manners, conduct, virtue and morality of an aristocrat.

In India, Ives wore the robe of the physician for financial reasons:

Admiral Watson on the part of his majesty, entered into a written contact with me, for the establishing of an hospital in the several settlements of India, into which I was to receive the sick and hurt of the squadron, and providing them with medicinal and surgical assistance, and also with provisions, nurses, &c (18)

But the idea of having a British Admiral draw a contract with a British doctor entailed a form of interaction between two men from two different social backgrounds. This kind of relationship between a member of the aristocracy, Admiral Watson, and a doctor, Ives, was only imaginable within the context of Britons’ encounters with the East. For Ives, British India was the stage which addressed his ambitions of social mobility. These ambitions were predominant during what Maya Jasanoff called “the Clive era”, spanning the years between 1744, when Robert Clive made his first visit
to India as an army man, and 1760, when he returned to Britain with huge fortune (82). Clive set out to India as a Colonel of humble background. In Britain, after he finished his Indian service, Clive was, as Jasanoff showed, “a British aristocrat” (33). In Britain, his Indian wealth helped him to collect social status: he bought “property, political power, great houses, fine art, [and] stylish furniture” (33). In India, Ives was Clive’s friend.² For such men as Clive, Watson and also Ives, the East was definitely a career. But travelling in the East not only improved one’s financial conditions. It also facilitated the emergence of a new class in British society, the men whose wealth which they collected in the East was also a necessary tool for gaining honour and prestige at home, the polite gentlemen who newly arrived in Britain after spending some time in the East.

During the period, Britons viewed a gentleman as someone from a wealthy and respectable background, what Daniel Defoe in 1730 called “The born Gentleman” (3). But to aspire to be polite gentleman also involved, as J. Jefferson Looney argues, “a newly prosperous and numerous class of civil servants, army and navy officers, bourgeois and clergymen, even shopkeepers and craftsmen, all anxious to carve out and defend an appropriately respectable niche in the social pecking order” (485). Making his fortune in India, where he worked with Watson and met Clive, Ives acquired the necessary material means which would help him to appear in British society as a man of politeness, a gentleman. But to be a gentleman was not only a performative act of displaying one’s wealth. It also demanded the cultivation of manners and behaviour. This act of improvement was emphasised in the preface. Ives dedicated his encyclopaedic work, A Voyage from England to India and A Journey from Persia to England to Sir Charles Watson, the son of Admiral Charles Watson. Offering to improve Watson illustrates Ives’ main purpose of writing
his travelling observations. “[B]ut if what I have written of your excellent Father, and
other deserving Officer under him, or the Religion, Customs, and Manners of Foreign
Countries,” Ives moralised, “shall contribute to your improvement, and set you
forward in the paths of virtue, I then shall be beyond measure happy” (4). Ives hoped
that once Sir Watson reads these travelling observations he “may long live an
honour to [his] Family, a comfort to [his] tender surviving Parent, a Friend to Mankind
in general, and to [his] Country in particular” (4). Ives focused on instructing Sir
Watson about how to interact with society, emphasising words which referred to
improved manners, words such as virtue and honour. But the pursuit to improve Sir
Watson’s manners and behaviour reveals the aspirations of a trained physician to
join the social reformers and moralists of the period who by setting out to cultivate
noble youths were themselves trying to accommodate the ancient virtue of being
born as polite with the new spirit of politeness which called upon humans, regardless
of their backgrounds, to seek to improve themselves by cultivating manners and
behaviour.\(^3\)

Redefining British Manners

[Writing on Muslims’ manners and character was a means of redefining the
social map of politeness at home]

Ives was concerned about investigating the extent to which Muslims cared about
cultivating civil behaviour and also displaying signs of material improvement in their
lives. In so doing, Ives interacted with people from different social backgrounds,
finding a way to reflect on the social landscape of British society. He rethought the
old notion of civility which only allowed the upper classes and royalty to pose
themselves as the cultivators of polite manners and behaviour. The idea of seeing
the non-European other as improved or unimproved was like searching for things
which would confirm or quell the doubts within the self about whether or not to be
modern and polite meant that one needs to be from the upper classes, middle
classes or both. For a man who was not an aristocrat by birth but rather a middle
class doctor, there was no better space where such doubts can be confirmed or
banished than the Arabian deserts, the lands where Ives had the opportunity to meet
Muslims from the upper and the lower ranks, from the poor and the rich.

In an eighteenth-century Britain where the middle class was on the rise, the
notion of politeness concerned a wider section of British society. Politeness was no
longer the exclusive privilege of ancient families with titles of honour. It was rather
open to Britons from all social backgrounds. But joining the circle of politeness in
British society demanded from the modern individual certain efforts: a constant
search for improvement. One can be polite mainly through showing refined manners,
taste and comportment in scenes of social engagement and interaction with one’s
inferiors, equals and superiors. As the Polite Companion in 1794 noted, politeness
was a mode of behaviour: “an Art of life” (i-iii). Numerous anecdotes in Joseph
Addison and Richard Steele’s political writings attested to the importance of following
a certain mode of behaviour in the efforts of the modern man to gain polish and
gentility in an urban and commercial milieu. The French expert on manners and
improvement Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde wrote Reflections upon the
Politeness of the Manners with Maxims for Civil Society, a modern guide on
politeness which was translated into English in 1707. In this book, he argued that
politeness in any civil society revolves around the following improving traits:
“Discretion, Civility, Complaisance, Circumspection, to pay every one the Respects
they have a right to demand of us; and all this must be dress’d and set off with an agreeable and insinuating Air, diffus’d thro’ all our Words and Actions” (1). In the cultural imagination of the period, once a Briton, regardless of class background, follows these traits, they enter into the social realm of politeness.⁶

Even in the period in which Ives wrote his travel observations, the “Addisonian vocabulary” such as “taste”, “politeness”, “conversation”, and “improvement”, in the words of Nicholas Philipson, appeared in the records of scientific culture in Britain (27).⁷ A physician as he was, Ives invested in these “Addisonian vocabulary” and also with Bellegradian “Reflections upon Politeness” in his interactions with Arabs and Muslims. While so doing, Ives showed how politeness existed in Muslim society among the governors and rulers, rather than the peasants, shepherds, farmers and other ordinary people. Ives exchanged rhetorical and material civilities with the Muslims rulers he met while also showing a sense of superiority to the poor. In so doing, Ives posed the self as close, in its manners and behaviour, to the Muslim elites, not the poor. Here, a performative contradiction arises, however. Ives’s purpose of producing his travel observation was one of showing how a British doctor has enough politeness to improve a son of a noble lord. He thus wanted to pluralise the idea of politeness to include the people who were not necessarily from the aristocracy or nobility. However, in his views of Muslims’ manners and behaviour, he was far from accepting that politeness can be found beyond the dominions and social circles of the governing class, the elite in Muslim society. In Ives’ account thus the notion of politeness was a way of redrawing the social landscape of British society while dividing Muslims into two social categories: polite and vulgar, improved and primitive.
Politeness beyond the Polarising Rhetoric of the Enlightenment

[Redefining the notion of politeness entailed rethinking the polarising model of improvement which the Scottish Enlightenment literati advanced in their views of the Middle East]

While the culture of politeness in Britain primarily targeted city dwellers where middle class commercialism and industrial growth was on the rise, as Peter Borsay and R. H. Sweet argue, it also emerged in scenes of encounter between Britons and Muslims in Eastern caravan routes. Ives interacted with Muslims from various walks of life and was constantly willing to assess what he previously heard or learned about them, especially when the practical conditions of the journey required such a shift. (288). Most of the Scots literati who believed in Smith’s four stage theory of progress were either from the upper classes, men such as Lord Kames, or were ambitious minds preferring the path of intellectualism as a means of reserving a social status in society, men such as Smith, Hume, Ferguson and Millar. What they proposed on the ignorance and primitiveness of the lower classes, peasants and Scottish Highlanders makes sense if what they meant was inviting the whole British nation to set out to follow the path of improvement. Indeed, this particular stance about the importance of improvement flooded their writings. Nevertheless, when staging the notion of politeness in a cross-cultural context, they mostly saw it as a European and British phenomenon, not Arab or Middle Eastern. For these Scots, the notion of politeness was associated with modern technological inventions and
commercial and industrial growth, things which they thought they do not exist in Arab and Muslim societies. The essentialising rhetoric of the Scottish philosophers which staged the Arabs and Muslims as primitive and rude nations who had “uniformity of manners”, as Adam Ferguson wrote about the national character of barbarous nations, did not correspond to the nuanced picture which Ives drew of Muslim’s manners, traditions and behaviour. The way Ives defined politeness in social and material terms allowed him to see Muslims as a people whose manners, traditions and customs were far from being packaged as one thing: he did not essentialise them or looked at them as one cultural entity. For Ives, Muslims belonged to different social classes with different manners and customs. As this chapter shows, the cross-cultural practises which Ives performed while interacting with poor and wealthy Arabs and Muslims complicate the narrow and polarising view that the Enlightenment was a European age of rise and an Eastern age of primitiveness.

While Ives saw poor Muslims as primitive, he found politeness in the upper class circles in Muslim society. Ives’ narrative nursed a nuanced view of the Enlightenment idea of improvement in a period in which many British travellers in the overland trade routes had the opportunity to know Muslim rulers not from viewing portraits representing them or reading accounts written on their manners and dispositions. Rather they knew them from practical encounters: they socialised with them, enjoyed their generosity, dipped into their hospitality and witnessed their commitment to written contracts and letters of recommendations. These powerful Muslims controlled the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to and from India during the years when the East India Company was seeking local political and diplomatic alliances so that their employees and affiliates could insure a safe passage across a quick short-cut between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.
Ives’ travel observations which examined the social and material conditions of this section in Muslim society considered these people as polite and civil. The Scottish Enlightenment philosophers back in Britain would have shown an objection.  

11

Investment in Politeness Abroad

1. Appearance

[Scrutinising the carriages which Ives used allows us to rethink the Enlightenment essentialising notion that politeness was something of European invention in this age of light]

In 1758, Ives was accompanied by two English friends when he arrived in Basra on the way back from India to England. From Basra, they sailed across the Tigris to Baghdad. In Baghdad, they formed a small caravan for themselves heading onto Mosul and Diarbekir. In Diarbekir, they joined the Ottoman governor’s caravan which headed to Aleppo. Right at the start of their journey in Mesopotamia, the English travellers wanted to know about the means of transportation prevalent in these lands. For Ives and his fellow English travellers, the shape and size of their carriages, the number of servants accompanying them, and the quality and quantity of clothes and foods which they took with them were what mostly mattered for their self-perception as gentlemen. Displaying objects which one owns was a way of showing one’s polite status. In examining the rise of a consumerist culture in eighteenth-century England, Laurence Klein argues that the position of individuals in polite society was “intimately related to a range of material accessories” which he or she displayed while interacting with people in urban environment (828). For Klein,
the display of these accessories facilitated the entry of gentlemen and women into an English eighteenth-century world of urban sociability and refined human interaction. Across the Arabian deserts, the lands which the Enlightenment philosophers viewed as radically different from the urban, commercial and polite milieus of London, Bath, Glasgow or Edinburgh, to board fancy carriages, as Ives shows, tells about the social status of the travellers who used them. Politeness greatly depended on appearance.

For Ives, using well equipped, fancy and luxurious means of transportation facilitated a safe passage across the Arabian deserts. But the use of this object also indicates the refined character of the English travellers. Ives tells us a story of one Mr. Barton whose intrepid and restless spirit invited him to brave the deserts between Aleppo and Baghdad. According to Ives, Barton, during the journey, was accompanied by one “country servant” and “two or three camels” (233). Having a modest carriage while on the road to Baghdad, Barton was not immune to the hazards of the deserts. The Arabs robbed him. They confiscated his possessions. He had to beg the leaders of the Arabs, their Sheikhs, for help. Ives and his English fellow travellers learned a lesson from Barton’s account of his journey. They knew that they ought to equip themselves well before setting out:

After dinner Mr. Shaw [the EIC resident in Basra] carried us to see a long-boat of his, which he had fitted up as a little yacht, and was so obliging as to offer us the use of it to carry us as far as Hilla, in our way to Baghdad. We gladly accepted it as being much more commodious than any of the country boats; and Mr. Alms undertook to sit her for the voyage. We likewise hired a Sandal or boat for carrying our baggage and the two horses we brought with us from Karec, to which Mr. Shaw also laid in a very large stock of fresh provisions
before our passage up the river, and a letter of recommendation to the Roman nominal Bishop of Babylon. (234)

Travelling in a “long boat fitted up as a little yacht” indicates the social status of these English travellers who cared about the way their carriage looked. Ives was the first English traveller in the overland routes who mentioned how the English used “a long boat fitted up as a little yacht” while sailing across the Tigris.

When the traveller Ralph Fitch and his five English companions decided to sail across the Tigris in 1583, they had only “one boate”, a small Arab one, all the way down onto Basra (49). In 1799, Samuel Eversfield sailed with “four English gentlemen” across the Tigris. They, according to Eversfield, “departed from Basra in two small boats” (2). Eversfield and Fitch did not mention that they used any “fitted up” yachts owned by Englishmen residing in that part of the world. They did not set out to impress the Arabs by using fancy means of transportation. For Ives, nevertheless, the “yacht” was originally designed and used to impress the Arabs. And so it did. “What seemed cheifly to attract the eyes of the Arabs, and surprise them most,” Ives rejoiced, “was the form of the yacht, the manner of rigging her, and above all, the carved work of a horse’s head on the stem....”(242). Equipping the self with this “yacht” brings home the point that Ives was concerned about using a fancy means of transportation, a sign of refined status, at least in the eyes of poor people living on the banks of Tigris. Referring to this divide between the social status of the English travellers and the Arabs whom they encountered, Ives referred to the way English travellers in the East fancied themselves as men of importance and social weight.

But the reference to English polish in the deserts also emerged in the scene where Ives used another means of transportation which the locals utilised in their
efforts to secure a safe passage. In great rivers in Arabian lands, the English
gentlemanly travellers appeared commanding a yacht. With the little caravan passing
through the desert, the English mounted large wooden boxes which the locals called
*Takht Revans*. These boxes were designed to protect camel riders from the
scorching heat of the sun. In Baghdad, Cojee Raphael, an Armenian merchant who
worked with the British, bought Ives and his friends two small *Takht Rivans*. For Ives,
these small boxes did not fit the gentlemanly status of polite English travellers. They
are “too short and too little in every respect for our purpose”, Ives sniffed (287). The
Bishop of Babylon, their French friend, thus “sent us a carpenter to make new ones
out of the wood that Mr. Garden had bought for the occasion” (278). Mr. Garden, the
English resident in Baghdad, like Mr. Shaw before him, made sure that his fellow
countrymen appear well equipped while journeying the land between Baghdad to
Mosul. He ordered that two big *Takht Rivans* need to be made:

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each is to be large enough to hold two persons, and is to be six feet
long, four broad, and five in the height, arched at the top with thin
boards, over which we purpose to put hides, the better to shelter us
from the sun; the sides are to be latticed for the convenience of
admitting air; the inside is to be lined with green linen, and the
machines are to be fixed upon two poles, and carried by two mules.
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(287)

Ives was in a moment of joy. He rejoiced that these machines “are only
allowed to people of the first rank unless on very particular occasions, such as a
journey to Mecca.”(279). In 1789, Henry Abbot squeezed himself inside a wooden
box while mounting a camel across the Syrian deserts. He called this box a
“mahaffee”, a machine fixed on the back of a camel and used “for the convenience of
a European to stretch his legs” (36-37). Unlike Ives, Abbott found this tool inconvenient in desert travelling. For “far from answering the purpose they are intended for, the sharp corners of the upper parts of the boxes used to cut our legs most unmercifully, at every step the camel took” (37). Using a mahaffee across the desert, Abbot, unlike Ives, did not mention that he was travelling in the character of the gentleman “of the first rank”. In using ostentatious “Takht Revans”, Ives cared to mention how men of “the first rank” used this tool. For Ives, polite appearances across the overland routes depended on the aid of British as well as Muslim material accessories. Of importance, the language of politeness in the use and display of objects did not set a polarising cross-cultural rhetoric around the people who use them: a first man of rank who can afford to use these objects was one of refinement whether he was a Briton or a Muslim. Thus Ives did not mind using a riding tool which Muslims associated with a “Mecca” journey of Muslim pilgrims. Rather than thinking about the culture, religion and nationality of those who used these riding tools, Ives only cared about being equipped with material objects which only the people of “the first rank”, whether English or Muslims, normally used. Using objects from both cultures—an English yacht and a Muslim Takht Rivan- in order to present the self as polite, Ives complicates the essentialising views in the Scottish Enlightenment which posited the phenomenon of politeness as one of European origin and invention, one which the European gentleman expected to find, test and practise in commercial Europe, not in primitive Arabia. The staging of the self as polite then relied on using British as well as Muslim objects.

2- Behaviour

[Aiming to correct what he considered his servants’ unacceptable behaviour, Ives wanted to show how an Englishman can pose as a model of improved
manners or politeness. But in so doing, he did not entirely leave behind the British context: in his interactions with Muslims, he illustrated the new way Britons began to view politeness as a civil way of behaving, one open for all classes, not only the aristocracies]

Servants

Of genteel appearance, the material objects which the English travellers owned and displayed engendered patronising behaviour. Ives’s attitudes towards what he considered his inferiors showed deep division between polite English travellers and poor Muslim servants and shepherds. Here the social interaction between Britons and Muslims became one between master and servant. But the polarising rhetoric in Ives’ narrative did not illustrate a radical difference between civilisations, religions or cultures: one European and Christian and the other Muslim and Arab. Rather, it narrates the story of the encounter between a surgeon playing the role of the polite Englishman among the lower classes, Muslim servants and Arab shepherds. Among these people, Ives’s notion of politeness was loaded with a political commentary on how the display of polite behaviour and manners defined the gentleman. Ives offered a creative response to the change in eighteenth-century British understanding of politeness. For Ives, politeness was the privilege of those who seek to behave in civil ways, regardless that they belonged to the upper classes or not. A British doctor, Ives is a representative of the middle class. Assigning politeness to his characters, Ives denied the lower classes the entry into the social club of improvement. The representatives of the lower classes were poor Arabs and Muslims. Ironic, and rather contradictory, as it was that while Ives set out to democratise the notion of politeness
to include people from the middle class, such as a British doctor, he refused to see the lower classes as potential practitioners of the art of politeness.

Boarding the yacht where some Muslim servants worked, Ives and his English friends staged themselves as polite masters possessing the material privileges which their inferiors did not have. Possessing a yacht, the English travellers found the opportunity to perform as being masters: for example, they gave orders to their servants. As men of status, the English travellers also found the means to reward the servants. “[W]e tendered them a dram, which they rejected with a visible contempt; we then gave a Rupee among them, with which they were much pleased, and very thankful” (241). “We took this opportunity to hint to them,” Ives, illuminating his polite behaviour, wrote, “[that] we were such good masters, and had given them so much victuals and money too, [so] we expected that they would work well, and deserve our future favour, which they promised very readily” (241). Interacting with Muslim servants might have given Ives and his friends some experience of how to deal with their servants back in England, especially as most Britons who served in India during the eighteenth century acquired the material wealth necessary for living a comfortable life in Britain. But, on the overland routes, Ives understood politeness as a way of showing respect to one’s inferior, a way of displaying one’s gentlemanly behaviour.

Nevertheless, a menial servant’s rude and inconsistent behaviour needed a careful management. This servant was employed as a Chocarda, “an inferior Turkish officer...who is to protect us from all insult, and to carry with him orders to the several governors of those places we touch at, and to supply us with a sufficient number of men to track, or draw up our vessels against the stream, when the wind and current shall be unfavourable for sailing” (234). This officer’s behaviour was disagreeable to
Ives and his fellow English travellers. First, he kept provoking the trackers, asking them to rebel against their English masters. For the trackers suddenly demanded from the English “additional demands...concerning provisions (241). They “insist[ed] that we should stop and buy some cakes,” Ives complained, “which they expect to be supplied with at least twice a day, besides their usual allowance of rice and Ghee” (242-3). Second, this Chocarda was lazy. “While we were vexing ourselves at the unnecessary delay which this new demand for cakes had occasioned,” Ives sniffed, “he lay basking in the sun, upon the shore, and had many fellows about him, who *chamooed*, or stretched his joints, picked from his head and the collar of the coat his vermin, and at the same time entertained him with one of their chorus songs” (243). Third, he, like Donald Campbell’s Tartar guard as we shall see in chapter four, preferred to act as a man of authority and rank with no respect being shown to the people with whom he interacted. “Our rascal of a Chocarda,” Ives noted, “put the luggage boat on shore, and insisted that we should do the same with the yacht...” (243). When the English travellers opposed such rude behaviour, the Chocarda invited the trackers to pester and frighten the English. He offered them a “fresh proof of his insolence and endeavour for the mastery” (246). For Ives, the Chocarda was no more than a primitive and poor servant, far from being polite and improved.

As a polite gentleman, Ives felt that it was his responsibility to correct the rudeness of the inferior servant. Ives and his fellow travellers studied the causes behind the Chocarda’s vulgar behaviour. They determined to reform his primitiveness. First, they decided to report his insolent behaviour to the governor of Hasca, Ally Basha, who was a friend of Mr. Shaw of Basra and was a man of politeness, as we shall see later. English travellers hoped that this Basha will “prevail on him to hinder his going any farther with us” (246). But when the English found that
the Chocarda’s behaviour could not be tolerated any longer, they lectured him on how one needs to be civil in the presence of his superiors:

we assured him that we would be our own masters, and if we thought fit to go ahead, to be a stern near the shore, or in the middle of the stream, we should guide ourselves in conformity to our own opinions, whether it should please or displease him; that therefore if he chose to be on good terms with us, it was necessary he should reconcile himself to our resolution. (247)

Such a didactic sermon bore its fruits with the Chocarda. “He made a civil reply...He now laid aside his haughtiness, and said, he was sorry for what had passed, and promised a better look-out for the future” (247). The Chocarda’s “civil reply” and answers satisfied what Ives was looking forward to achieve while reporting on his Eastern travels. In barren deserts, Ives tested the belief that politeness should be open for people from all classes who wanted to behave in civil ways. The English travellers were not from aristocratic background. Nevertheless, they cultivated the necessary skills to appear as polite people. The Chocarda could also appear as a polite person. As Ives, speaking to the Muslim Chocarda, recalled: “work and not words display the man” (248). For Ives, “the man” should be one of politeness, one who cherished “virtue” and “honour”, as Ives addressing Sir Watson in the preface mentioned. For the rest of the journey into Hasca, the Chocarda, nevertheless, kept showing rude manners while interacting with the English travellers. In turn, the English resumed the practice of correcting his crude behaviour and character. They reported his inappropriate manners to the English resident in Basra. They also made it clear to the Muslim governor of Hasca that this Chocarda was not polite in his dealings with them. As we shall see later, the governor’s behaviour towards the English was different from that of the Chocarda. This governor was polite and knew
how to deal with his inferior servant. For the English travellers, the Chocarda was inferior to them. Encountering such an inferior creature helped Ives to understand what “the man” of politeness should be like.

Poor Arabs

[Among poor Arabs, Ives appeared a polite master with the necessary knowledge about those people who were far from being polite]

Most eighteenth-century British travellers in the Arabian deserts noted the wide prevalence of robbers and untilled, unused lands there. What the Enlightenment philosophers proposed on the primitiveness and lawlessness of Arabia resonated with the rhetoric of improvement in Ives’ observations of the modes of subsistence prevalent among the Arabs. For Ives, the word “Arab” refers to those “nation of moving” people who live in a state of restless movement (353). They do not have a fixed settlement which can furnish them with an opportunity to improve their economic conditions. The word Arab in Ives’ travel text entirely avoids racial, cultural or religious polemic, however. Ives’ views on the primitiveness of Arabs were primarily based upon the noted poverty among them and also the poor use of the sources in the lands where they lived. Near Hilla, a city situated on the Euphrates, Ives noted how the Arab inhabitants do not properly make use of their lands: “The land here is on the drain, it having been overflowed” (258). The absence of improvements in the use of lands among the Arabs tells a lot about the spread of poverty in this area. The Arabs live in “comfortless huts, some placed on the very water, but almost all on exceeding damp ground...” (258). Inside these poor huts, the Arabs live with their animals. Each hut “consists one apartment only [in which] are contained the man, wife or wives, children, dog, and now and then two or three
fowls” (258). These people are extremely poor: “One Buffalo-cow always belongs to this wretched spot, which every morning and evening is driven home to give sustenance to the family” (258).

The poverty of these people did not allow the cultivation of politeness. In a village situated near the river Tigris, “[t]wo or three Arabs with lances, came and made a great noise, and called in their cattle as if they were apprehensive of losing them” (265). For the polite Englishmen, such behaviour was rude and unacceptable. As we saw in the scenes of encounter with the servants and the Chocarda, Ives was passionate about seeking to point the rude behaviour of his inferiors and also giving them orders. He was patronising: “we let them know that they had nothing to fear from us, unless they should become troublesome themselves…” (265). Ives’s patronizing and corrective behaviour bears its fruit among poor Arabs and poorly equipped shepherds. As Ives himself noted, “on ordering them to go away, they complied” (265). The reason why Ives found it perfectly legitimate to treat his inferior in such a way was this: unlike these poor people who were not bothered to improve their material conditions and also their manners, Ives crossed deserts and seas for the sake of improving his material conditions and social status.

The way Ives represented himself as a man of politeness was an extraordinary testimony to the point that the Enlightenment notion of improvement was defined, practised and tested by a Briton who travelled on Arabian and Muslim caravan routes. But it also illustrated how in these lands a British doctor finds an opportunity to reflect on how British practitioners of politeness may not necessarily be from the upper classes. Rather they could be from the middle class, the class to which Ives belonged.
Arab Women

[Ives wanted to understand whether civility was something exclusive to European culture, admitting that the conditions of women in Arabia were similar to what women back in England experienced. This comparative analysis complicates the grand narrative of the Scottish Enlightenment. But it also gave Ives the edge to stage the self as a social being whose understanding of politeness was receptive to the other gender]

Within the intellectual circles of the British Enlightenment, it was commonly believed that men’s social encounters with the female sex softens the passions and refines the manners. As Barbara Taylor notes, “[w]omen, British Enlightenment thinkers all agreed, were primary bearers of the ‘affections’, meaning not just love of family and other intimates but the ‘social sympathies’ on which civilised progress depended, since it was through feminine influence that men, that bellicose and uncivil sex, became ‘softened’ into social beings” (37). In eighteenth-century Britain, acts of gallantry were seen as civil ways of interaction between men and women. Gallantry was the art of socialising in a polite, commercial and what David Hume called “Conversible society” (qtd in. Taylor 34). Hume and other Enlightenment philosophers viewed women, in the words of Karen O’ Brien, as “social beings” and useful citizens rather than objects of pleasure (2). In a modern, polite and commercial Europe, the view that women were social beings allowed their inclusion in some social spaces historically seen as the male dominions. For instance, European women were able to attend literary salons and join societies and clubs where polite learning and civil conversations prevailed. Improvements in commerce and arts facilitated the emergence of a culture of refinement and polish where men
politely interacted with women. In primitive Oriental societies the case was totally different. In these non-commercial and unrefined societies, as the philosophers argued, the patriarchal floor has always been open for jealousies, oppression and despotism. Here in these lands, the males see women as sexual objects, not social beings. While travelling in the GDR, Ives did not find a culture of refinement and gallantry. He confirmed the notion in the Scottish Enlightenment that in non-commercial Arabian societies, polite conversation and interaction between men and women were not things the European traveller would expect to encounter. While so doing, he staged his character as an improved Briton, one of a free and liberal spirit, a gentleman whose politeness was open to the other gender. But he was suspicious of the teleological discourse of the European Enlightenment. While admitting that Muslim society viewed women as objects, he reminded himself of how the conditions of working class women in England complicated the polarising rhetoric which the Scottish philosophers advanced about European civility and Middle Eastern rudeness.

Ives and his English friends encountered female peasants “in the plain in the land of Shinar, where Babylon once stood” (269). Here, in this ancient place, the kind of hard work which women did electrified the gentlemanly leaning of one Englishman. “Here, one of my friends,” Ives wrote, “was greatly hurt, by seeing one or two pretty women employed like horses or asses (as he in his tenderness expressed it) drawing water from a well” (270). The shock expressed upon seeing women labouring under harsh conditions staged this European traveller as a gentleman belonging to a polite society where equality, liberty and sociability, rather than oppression and servility, govern the relationships between the sexes. Ives was sure that the harsh conditions under which women operated in lands where massive
poverty prevailed had always been like this. For a gentleman, encountering women belabouring under the yoke of primitivism and oppression was something odd in this modern age of commerce and science. For him the ways women were being treated in Arabia did not conform to modern standards of polish and refinement. Rather, they were signs from ancient times. Recalling a line from Homer helped Ives understand why the Arabs were still treating their women in this way. According to Ives “Homer speaks of princesses drawing water from springs, and washing with their own hands, the linen of their respective families” (270). A good reader of the Iliad, as Ives wanted his readers to know, he nevertheless moved beyond Homer to argue that such a hard job prevalent in Arabian lands, “the drawing of water in all ages, and over all Asia, appears to have been the business of women” (270).

Seeing the Arabian women operating under harsh conditions in the deserts—“drawing water in wells”—brings onto the traveller’s mind an image of the ancientness and primitiveness of Arabia. Not only the errands which these Eastern women did remind Ives of modes of subsistence prevalent in ancient pre-Christian times. They also hauled his narratorial voice onto Biblical times: “we know that the women of Samaria, who met Jesus at Jacob’s well, came upon this very errand, and we have not the least intimation given us that it was deemed an hardship” (270).

Seeing the Arab women operating in these hard conditions where poverty and jealousy prevailed brings home the point that the character of the modern Briton would only know how far it moved beyond primitiveness and infancy by comparing itself with the people whose modes of subsistence and cultural traditions reflect ancient and unimproved times. Inventing a modern subject of polite and improved character could occur in primitive and unimproved East. But this modern subject who wanted to move beyond the barbarism of the past was troubled by the notion that the
situation of women in Arabia was not that different from those living in England. “[E]ven in England,” Ives noted, “we often see offices equally laborious and much more servile performed by women” (270). For Ives, civility may not necessarily be something exclusive to England.

Any European traveller who was interested in reporting the hard errands which Arab women were expected to perform would unlikely end the journey without noting the way they dressed up. For Ives, appearance mattered. In these barren spaces, the way women dressed startled the polished Ives. Since the modes of subsistence in the deserts, particularly for the poor Arabs, circulated within the sphere of necessity, rather than luxury, there was no hope that Arab women might look different from Arab men in the way they dressed up.

The dress of the women, with whose sight we have been favoured, but who indeed are only those that are on foot in the street, and consequently of the lowest sort, consists of a shirt, like the men’s shirts; a vest or two over than, and then a loose cover or veil from top to toe; their legs and feet are covered like the men’s. (287)

This unrefined way of dressing up, one of oppression, since the veil dangles from “tip to toe”, was common among the “lower sorts” of women who walked “on foot”. For a modern Briton, this style of covering the body was not a sign of refinement and polish.

In these unimproved desert conditions, Ives observed how Arab men viewed women as their “properties” rather than independent and reasoned human beings. According to Ives, Mr. Garden:

told us that one of his neighbours had been very troublesome on this head, and one swore to him aloud, that if he should ever again catch his eye
towards his territories, he was determined to throw himself instantly from Terrace, and dash out his brains, that his blood might rest on Mr. Garden’s head. (278)

A polite Englishman did not understand how women in the Middle East were seen by their husbands as objects. Such an extreme jealous spirit, as Ives stated, stifles the “free spirit” of an English gentleman. Ives himself poignantly reported on how “we are in this great city prisoners in a very strict sense; a circumstance, somewhat mortifying to the free British spirit” (288). In Baghdad, he was keen to socialise with Arab women. But Mr. John Shaw and also Cojee Raphael, the Armenian merchant working under the English, warned Ives that such a thing in these lands is not acceptable. Ives admitted that “[we] have difficulty to keep ourselves within rule...” (287). According to Ives, “Mr Garden and Cojee Raphael cautioned us on the subject” (287). The Englishman, Mr. Garden, knew a lot about what Arabs considered as acceptable behaviour. Throughout the journey across the desert route between Baghdad and Aleppo, Ives and his fellow English travellers confirmed the prevalence of a patriarchal spirit and jealousy. “Two or three females are fellow-travellers; they ride astride their mules,” Ives wrote, “but with the back horse-hair covering over their faces; and as the custom of the country forbids us even to look at, much less to speak to them, we remain entire strangers to each other” (310).

Holding the free English spirit in check in these jealous spaces was important. Ives noted how Mr. Shaw of Basra previously warned him: “it was not only the highest affront you could possibly shew a Turk to inquire for the health of the female part of his family, but that it was esteemed very rude even to mention the name of any of the fair sex” (310). In writing about how Arab men viewed and treated women, Ives confirmed the primitive and non-improved jealous spirit of the Arabs. But in so
doing he was able to ponder the extent to which the modern age for him and his nation was one of freedom. It was only among the Arabian primitive and jealous spaces that Ives was able to compose a statement on the “free British spirit”. It is in these different spaces, however, that Ives learned, from conversing with his fellow countrymen, how Muslims’ cultural expectations of women were different from those cherished by the English. Ives did not set out to liberate Muslim women from Muslim men. Rather he expressed his disapproval of the ways Muslim men treated Muslim women without necessarily breaching the codes of conduct prevalent in these lands.

Muslims of Rank and Authority

[For Ives, Muslim governors were polite and civil. He allowed for a different interpretation of politeness from the one which the Scottish philosophers proposed]

During the eighteenth century, the EIC Basra factory, first established in 1723, was important for the delivery of British dispatches and travellers onto and from India. It also served to supervise British commercial interests in the Persian/Arabian Gulf at the same time as the Ottomans and the Persians were intermittently fighting each other. For the EIC in Basra, the formal recognition of the Ottoman Porte came in 1764. But the British were able to boost their naval and commercial presence in the Arabian side of the Gulf after the EIC managed to gain the favour of the governor of Baghdad, Solyman Abu Layla, who during his reign was successful in establishing a Mamluk rule independent from—although in cooperation with— the Ottoman central authority based in Istanbul. During the eighteenth-century, the Mamluk rulers of Baghdad were successful in annexing most of the Iraqi provinces to their seats of
power. They curbed the raids of the desert Arabs. They, as we shall see in chapter three, encouraged trade with Europeans. In the period following Plassey, the British were interested more than before in establishing a network of friendship with the Arab Sheikhs and Mamluk and Ottoman governors who controlled the passage in the overland routes between the Arabian/Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea.

As most eighteenth-century Britons who had to brave the deserts of Arabia on their way to or back from India, Ives and his English companions showed apprehensions that the deserts were hiding danger and chaos: the fear of the Arabian robbers. But Ives was sure that another group of Arabs and Muslims inhabiting these routes cultivated politeness instead of robberies: Muslim men of authority and rank. Mr. Barton whom Ives met in Basra confirmed this point about the difference between two groups of people inhabiting the Arabian deserts. According to Ives, “a few years before [Barton] acquired a handsome fortune in the East Indies, with which he returned to England, settled at some distance from London in the character of country gentleman, and served the office of high-sheriff for the country in which he lived” (232). In England, some urgent business, Ives continued, invited Barton to go back to India: he preferred to travel across the Syrian deserts. Barton did not travel with a big merchant caravan led by an Arab caravan leader. Rather he set out across the deserts with a few servants and guards. He was thus attacked by Arab robbers. What drew Ives’s attention to Barton’ report was the kind of distinction Barton made between the marauding Arabs who robbed him twice on his way from Aleppo to Basra and the Arab Sheikhs, those men of rank, who were helpful and sympathetic to Barton. Barton mentioned to Ives how one Arab Sheikh who, after hearing “the melancholy story” of Barton and his few servants across the deserts,
was “touched with the relation of their distress” (233). He “offered them every help in his power” (233). This Arab Sheikh asked his son to escort them so far, as to put them under the protection of another Sheikh, by whom they were entertained in the like hospitable manner, and dismissed with other guards and passports; nor did they want friends as their journey lasted, each tribe seeing them safely lodged with it’s next neighbour, until they delivered them into the hands of our countrymen at Baghdad. (233)

The governor of Baghdad, who was friends with the British, delivered Barton to Basra. “From that city,” Ives reported, “Mr. Barton was carried in the Pasha’ galley down the Tygris to Corna and from thence to Bassora, where we met with him” (233). From Barton’s report, Ives distinguished between ordinary Arabs of the deserts, those robbers with unpolished manners, and the Arab Sheikhs and Ottoman rulers, those trustworthy and hospitable Muslims.

Ives, like Barton before him, affirmed that in these barren spaces there are a group of polite people in whose presence the English gentleman can feel at home. Not all English travellers were sure about this report. For the curious J. Griffiths who travelled overland from Europe to India in 1785, Muslims were all the same: “the Turk is every where a Turk” (ix). “Their civilities are offered with the insult of superiority; their protection granted under an injunction of their law, no on account of any one principle of humanity or kindness,” wrote Griffiths, “and their own comfort or convenience was never sacrificed, on the score of hospitality, in favour of an infidel” (ix-x). For Bartholomew Plaisted, who was in the Syrian deserts in 1750, “There is very little difference, either in dress or behaviour, between the lowest camel-driver and the Sheik himself” (94). The Arabs “gave no acquaintance with politeness or social virtue,” Plaisted observed, “and consequently have little regard for the
distinction among mankind, or the difference which is due from inferiors to their superiors” (94). Griffiths and Plaisted confirmed the thesis put forth by the Enlightenment philosophes: that is, Arabs and Muslims are all rude, primitive and thus not polite. For Ives, a “Turk” and an Arab were not “every where” a Turk or an Arab. Nor did he advance the argument that “Turks” and Arabs tend to view English travellers as “infidels” or “inferiors”. Among the Muslim men of rank, wealth and power, Ives found humane, kind, hospitable and most importantly polite behaviour and also elegant and refined styles of living. Among these people, politeness prevailed.

The English and Ally Agha

Near the river Tigris, Ives and his English friends set anchor at Hasca, in southern Iraq, where the Muslim governor resided. Mr. Shaw of Basra spoke with Ives about the character of Ally Agha. He praised the affable manners, hospitality and polite behaviour of the governor of Hasca. In Basra, Mr. Shaw handed the English travellers a letter of recommendation and he asked them to deliver it to his friend, Ally Agha, “[whose] power commences at Corna (which ends that of the government of Bassora) and extends up the river, as far as Hilla” (259). The power and authority of Ally Agha across the overland route between Hilla and Mosul was immense. Establishing friendly relations with this man was important for the British in their efforts to secure a safe passage to India. Ives knew this fact. Before meeting Ally Agha, Ives, when arriving in Hasca, wanted to impress this grand ruler, showing signs of British politeness. “At sun rise, which was a quarter past five,” Ives wrote, “we saluted the governor with six guns and eight bounces” (259). The English
travellers knew that these grand salutes fit the grand status of Ally Agha but they, by pursuing this formality, also showed how British politeness, now practised by people from humble background, contributes to boosting their social status abroad. Before they were granted the permission to access the palace, the English showed Ally Agha other signs of respect and friendship. “[A]greeable to Mr. Shaw’s direction,” wrote Ives, “we sent ashore his letter, and our compliment by Mr. Hamet [the interpreter], the Chocarda, and one of our European servants” (259). A letter of recommendation and some verbal civilities did not require this number of servants to deliver them to the Agha. Perhaps one person, the interpreter, could have done the job. But Ives knew how things operate within this Agha’s palace. “An intimation had been given us,” warned Ives, “that three would be the proper number to wait on this great man; such he really is, his government being the most important of any in this part of the world, the Basha of Baghdad excepted” (260). For the English travellers, no miscalculations or bad preparations were to be tolerated—as Mr. Shaw would have expected them to do—when a meeting with this Muslim man of rank and power was well gathering pace. That they cared to observe what was required of them to do before meeting Ally Agha indicated the sense of fragility in their characters, a weakness which they struggled to hide by pursuing practices of politeness. But pursuing politeness abroad, Ives complicates the rhetorical map of politeness which the Scottish Enlightenment drew. Ives showed how the man whom they were about to meet cared about external formalities: appearances, comportment and behaviour. In seeking to observe the politeness in the presence of Ally Agha, Ives offered a telling example on how sociability, exchanging material trappings and rhetorical niceties were not only things of European origin, invention and observance.
The rituals of respect the English performed in anticipation of a meeting with the governor of Hasca tell a lot about how these English travellers had previously planned to seek amity and cultivate friendship with Ally Agha. The English were sure that in practising politeness in the presence of the Agha—sticking to some formalities before meeting him—they will get a friendly and warm reception in his court. Cojee Pagoos, an Armenian trader residing in Hasca, conversed with the English travellers about the great respect Ally Agha held for the English. According to Ives, “he [Cojee] himself [was] happy to prevail upon us to stay a little while, and receive the civilities the governor would be ready to show to Englishmen” (259). This Armenian merchant witnessed the train of civilities the English received from Ally Agha:

Soon...a message came from Ally Agha, congratulating us upon our safe arrival at Hasca, with assurances of doing all in his power to forward our passage up the river; and excuses for having, on account of the strict laws of the Fast, kept us so long without his paying his compliments; concluding to drink coffee with him in the evening; added, that the governor would be obliged to deprive himself of the pleasure of our company till late in the evening; the reason assigned was, because he intended to present one of us with a Turkish vest, and as he had ordered that it should be a very handsome one, it would require some hours to make it. (260)

On friendly terms, Ally Agha, as Ives marvelled, sent the English travellers “a barge to attend” them to his palace (260). The Aga’s gifts and compliments were not inferior; rather they suited the rank of this great man. He treated Ives and his friends as men of rank. In preparing to drink coffee with and receive presents from the Agha,
Ives found a warm culture of politeness on the banks of the Syrian and Mesopotamian Tigris.\textsuperscript{17}

In Ally Agha’s palace, the English travellers visited a space which accommodated and welcomed British habits and manners. A friend with Mr. Shaw, the Agha of Hasca knew that Europeans, unlike Muslims, do not seat themselves on the ground. He advised them to bring their own stools with them since he had none. Ives was fascinated with what the interpreter reported from the Agha’s palace on the subject of seating. The Agha told the interpreter that “we should have cushions, and was he master of the chairs, we should be welcome to them” (260). The English travellers on their part knew how to respond to the Agha’s polite and welcoming statement. They told the interpreter, who emphasised that the English use chairs rather than cushions in the presence of the Agha, that “[t]his was a matter of the utmost indifference to us, we had no public character to maintain, and should have as well pleased with the cushion, as the stool” (260). For a Muslim ruler and English travellers, showing politeness involved cross-cultural adaptation and cosmopolitan behaviour. Of importance, for both parties, aiming to accommodate someone else’s culture and manners did not only signal respect and friendship but also involved abstaining from recalling national, cultural or religious sentiments.

Ives and his English friends, in the presence of Ally Agha, did not recall national and cultural uniqueness by asking to use certain material goods, such as the British stool or the chair. For Ives was sure that he was now going to meet a polite ruler with affable manners and accommodating behaviour and lots of other material civilities to offer to the English travellers. In the presence of such a grand ruler, as Ives suggested, the use of European material marks of refinement and politeness such as the chair and the stool could be relaxed. Such inclusionary, rather
than exclusionary, rhetoric of politeness disappears when scenes of cross-cultural interaction shifts into poor Arab villages. The reader of the Journey recalls how Ives and his friends “got our stools and table ashore” near a poor Arab village on the banks of the river Tigris. Furnished with these tools of civility, the English “let [the Arab] know, [that] they had nothing to fear from us, unless they should become troublesome themselves; and on ordering them to go away, they complied” (265). In carrying a table and stools with them to poor Arabian spaces, English traveller showed how improved they were in the presence of peasants and shepherds. In the Agha’s palace, nevertheless, these objects which defined their social status did not need to be displayed since the Agha himself enjoyed wealth and status as much as the English.

The patronizing attitudes of these English travellers towards what they saw as their inferiors and servants dropped from the narrative once these Englishmen found themselves in the Agha’s luxurious palace. In the presence of this Agha, the English sometimes felt at home. They were free to wear their English clothes and use their stools. On their part, the English showed a willingness to adapt to the codes of conduct followed in Muslim courts. Thus before entering the guest room, “[a]t our coming to the carpet,” Ives wrote, “we put off our shoes, which we had slipped down for that purpose before we left the vessel” (261). The English complied with another code of conduct followed in Muslim courts, one on how to converse with great men of authority. Immediately upon meeting the governor, there followed a pleasant conversation between the English and Ally Agha. The governor inquired after the health and safety of these English gentlemen. The Agha led the conversation and the English were just listeners or answerers to questions and inquiries. “He then changed the discourse to our company’s affairs at Bengal”, Ives wrote (261). He was
curious about “the revolutions which had lately happened there,…our fleet in India,…the several powers at war in Europe [and] the face of affairs there at present; and at last, the navigation of the river Euphrates of the latitude of Bassora, Dewana, &c.” (261). The English satisfied the curiosity of the Agha. They answered all his questions. In so doing, they showed how in Muslim courts they were sociable, adaptable and friendly; in short, they were men of politeness.

In the presence of such a powerful ruler, the English adapted to the etiquette of the table. Before familiarising themselves with the manners of eating in a Muslim palace, English travellers “were entertained, first, with a saucer of sweetmeats, of which some of us eat four or five very spoonfuls, and intended to have finished the whole”, Ives observed (26). Such an eating habit was not something Muslim rulers would consider polite. According to Mr. Hemet, the interpreter, who was familiar with eating manners in Muslim courts, “leave[ing] off…for dat one spoonful only, was de more polite” (261). Enjoying what Muslim hospitality granted them, the English familiarised themselves with what was seen as polite in the presence of this grand governor. Worried that they were now offending Ally Agha, they rushed into leaving one or two “spoonfuls” in “the saucer of sweetmeats”. In the palace of such a grand and hospitable ruler, English travellers were happy to adapt to Muslim eating and drinking rituals.

Throughout their stay in Ally Aga’s palace, Ives and his English fellow travellers continued adapting to the codes of conduct and behaviour prevalent there. After the meal, as Ives notes,

a small cup of coffee was brought, and after a short interval a small basin [basin] of warm sweet water scented with roses; lastly our handkerchiefs were
wetted with rose-water, and our nostrils fumigated with the smoke of Ambergrease and Agala wood. (261)

The English enjoyed the Agha’s material civilities. They paid him back in words. “[We] expressed in the best terms we were able, our sense of his favour; to which he replied very sensibly and politely”, Ives rejoiced (261). After complimenting the Agha for the various civilities he showed, “as soon as we got from our seats, Mr Doidge, our elected chief, had a silk Pelise or vest put upon him, lined with Ermine, worth about ten pounds, for which he made one of his handsomest bows to Ally Aga” (261-2). The English travellers did not object to following the rules of eating, drinking and behaving. It is thus normal for them to accept the Pelise as a way of practising their politeness. The exchange of civilities in this scene contributed the sense that the Enlightenment idea of politeness not only felt the trails of trade caravans in Arabian deserts but also revealed how eighteenth-century Britons were practising it in Muslim spaces.

These English travellers encountered a refined and hospitable Muslim. Ally Agha Aga was exactly the opposite character of the luxurious, excessive and despotic Oriental ruler which the Enlightenment philosophers produced in their grids on the rise of societies from the state of nature into that of civil society. Ives noted the improved style of government which Ally Agha followed in his territories. According to Ives, “the governor is obliged to pay into the treasury of the Basha of Baghdad, fifteen hundred purses yearly, it being the stated royal rent of the district” (262). The Agha, nevertheless, paid more than what the Basha of Baghdad, the Ottoman governor under whom Ally Agha worked, required of him: “I am well informed that Ally Aga remits at least three thousand purses” (262). These sums of money which he remitted to the treasury in Baghdad were collected from some Arab
robbers infesting the deserts. “[T]his additional sum is required by mulcts on the Arabs for different crimes, especially for robberies”, Ives wrote (262). Ives referred to the sense of justice in the Agha’s style of practising politics. “This conduct of Ally Aga in remitting more to the royal treasury than is required of him,” wrote Ives, “appears a very extraordinary circumstance at first sight; but it is truly a most refined stroke of policy…” (263). The Aga, collecting money from the Arab robbers whose style of life Ives considered wild and unimproved, was a witty ruler with a refined style of conducting politics. The Agha is a polite politician since he knows how to gain the favours of his superiors. He is also a polite gentleman since he does not approve off the way those lazy, workless robbers, the Arabs, run their lives. For Ives, Ally Agha’s refinement and politeness in practising politics also stems from his aversion to accumulating wealth by unjust means. According to Ives, “for knowing that immense riches in this country are the surest means to shorten a man’s days, he puts himself out of all danger by never presuming to accumulate them for his own use” (263). The Enlightenment philosophes of progress pointed out how despotistic Oriental rulers were lovers of luxury and despotism. Their corrupting traits mainly brought primitiveness in Arab and Muslim nations. For Ives, Ally Agha was not a typical Oriental ruler: he was “studious to be thought the generous and disinterested than the rich and opulent man” (263).

Chouder Agha

After leaving Hasca on May 12, Ives sailed across the Tigris. On May 15, they set anchor in Hilla, on the edge of the desert, where another Muslim ruler, Chouder Agha, resided. English travellers were carrying two letters of recommendation to this
Agha: one from Ally Agha of Hasca and the other from Mr. Shaw of Basra. Ally Agha and Mr. Shaw were friends with Chouder Agha whose “palace [was] situated in that part of the town which stands on the left, or south side of the river” (265). Not far from the palace of the governor, Ives appeared startled when he saw “very numerous company of people, of boys especially; even the women, who came down to the river with their pitchers for water, satisfied their curiosity by looking at us” (266). Like the barren spaces in which they live, these poor people, as Ives showed, were troublesome so much so that the English gentlemen could not handle them without the help of some Muslim men of authority. According to Ives, “[w]e had been but a very little while near the shore, before one of the governor’s officers came to bid us welcome; he sat with us on a stool by the side of the river, and took care the crowd should not press upon us” (266).

Unlike the Arab crowds of Hilla, the officers and their leader were friendly to European travellers. On their part, English travellers viewed these governors and officers as their equals in rank: they offered the officer whom the Agha sent to protect English travellers a stool, a sign of friendship between people from the same rank. The Agha showed polite manners in dealing with foreign travellers. The servants whom the English travellers sent “returned with the governor’s compliments” (266). Even the Agha sent them “an invitation... to repair to the Seraglio” (266). He sent them “an officer with a silver Battoon, and high cap,” to “conduct us” to his palace (266). In total detachment from the people of Hilla, a new round for the exchange of articles of politeness between English travellers and a Muslim grandee were taking shape across the overland routes.

In Hilla, Ives found an ideal space where polite manners and behaviour could be displayed and exchanged. This social space was found in the Agha’s palace, not
in the poor lodgings of the crowds. For Ives, a large section of the Agha’s palace was originally designed for purposes of socialisation and hospitality. This palace has “a porch” where the Agha received his guests. In this porch, there are “carpets” and “cushions” where guests sit down to socialise in the presence of the Agha. A space of sociability is a space free from religious bigotry and enthusiasm. “Notwithstanding it was the fast of the Ramazan,” Ives noted, “and before sun-set, we found the governor...seated on a carpet in his porch, at the entrance of his palace, ready to receive us” (266). In Chouder Agha’s palace, some Islamic rules were relaxed. Ives noted how “The rules of the fast, were still farther dispensed with, for coffee was brought to us, as soon as we were seated” (266). The Agha was versed in the open culture of politeness. Knowing that every people had their different manners, and he could not but be a stranger to our’s, he must desire the favour of us, but especially in what respected refreshments; he should therefore be glad if we would trouble ourselves to direct his domestics what sort of repast they should provide for our supper.

(266)

Unlike Ally Agha of Hasca, the governor of Hilla was a “stranger” to English manners. Nevertheless, he showed awareness and sensitivity to the cosmopolitan idea that people have different cultures with different manners. His cultural and material hospitality granted Ives and his English friends the freedom to choose for themselves the kind of foods and drinks they wanted to have in his palace. This particular scene of cross-cultural interaction explains how local polite manners and cross-cultural understanding stalked English travellers in the overland routes to India.
In Chouder Agha’s palace, Ives and his English friends did not ask to be served with special food suitable to English appetite. According to Ives, “[w]e replied to his civilities, but begged we might be admitted to be served only with a plate of what was the usual provision of his family” (266). It may well be that these English travellers considered themselves part of the family of this grand Muslim ruler. Even without thinking, as Ives noted, we “answered ‘nothing could be more acceptable than a common Pillaw,’ (boiled fowl and rice)” (266). Ives knew that “Pillow” was a famous dish among the inhabitants of these lands. “Pillaw” was a dish “made of boiled rice and butter”, the English merchant Abraham Parsons, who was in the Syrian deserts in 1772, wrote (103). For Parsons, who lived in the Levant for many years, the Arab guards who worked in the Aleppo-Baghdad caravan with whom he travelled in the overland routes “once a day” eat “pillaw” (103). In 1827, Charles Colville Frankland shared this dish, “pillau, or as the Turks call it pilaff”, with his Tartar guide, a servant, with whom he traveled across Ottoman Balkans (84). For Ives, “Pillow” was not the sort of food which humble guards and servants, as Parsons and Frankland recalled, normally eat in these lands. For the men of lower sorts normally eat what Ives and his English fellow travellers called “stinking Sable-fish” (241). The English travellers felt distressed when seeing the kind of “stinking” food which the poor trackers eat. Ives and his friends appeared, nevertheless, happy and comfortable when choosing to eat a local dish, “Pillow”, served in the Agha’s grand palace.

The English knew that in this governor’s palace other amenities are always laid in stock for foreign guests to use. “We begged indeed the favour of being accommodated with a warm Bagnio,” Ives rejoicingly wrote, “which he immediately ordered to be got ready, and directed his attendants to be there in waiting with
Sherbet...” (266). The Agha’s palace was a social space where polite tokens of friendship and respect were exchanged between the English gentlemen and a Muslim ruler. “We then took our leave, each paying the other, the most obliging compliments they could think of; but the Turk was very much our superior in this sort of conversation” (266). Such a statement on the Agha’s friendly and affable manner and words is a telling example on how practices of politeness could be found in the world outside Europe, in lands which the Enlightenment philosophers of progress considered primitive.

In Hilla, practices of politeness were pursued, showed, and cultivated by the people who considered themselves of advanced social status. They were devised to engage only those who have the power to access the palace of the Agha. Ives showed his readers how his Eastern travels facilitated his entrance into such a grand institution where Muslim customs, traditions and religious rituals and rules could be relaxed. Odd as it may seem in the behaviour of those “regular Turks” who, as Ives argued, are often superstitious in following what Islam requests the believers to do, Ives was, nevertheless, fascinated with the religious lenity of the Agha. As Ives recalled, the Agha allowed the English to drink wine in the palace. “An intimation was also given to us,” Ives noted, “that the governor made it his particular request, that in regard to our liquors, we would be quiet free and unrestrained” (276). Fearful that the Agha might not be serious about granting the English a permission to drink an un-Islamic drink in his palace, the English “doubted at first, whether we should send for wine...” (276). But “he [the Agha] interrogated our domestics, and learned our common practise, repeated his request by a message sent on purpose” (276). The Agha was serious about the matter, showing how his religion’s prohibition on the consumption of alcohol does not necessarily mean denying other people, of a
different faith, the freedom to enjoy consuming it. Like Ally Agha before him, as Ives showed, Chouder Agha was of a cosmopolitan nature, presenting himself as a cultivator of politeness through displaying material as well as rhetorical civilities to the English travellers.

The way in which Ives sought to fix polite social interaction in the Agha’s court, beyond the world of popular culture or “crowds” in Hilla, tells as much about practices of improvement across the Syrian-Mesopotamian deserts. In the villages and towns surrounding Hilla, Ives did not exchange rhetorical or material civilities with the ordinary people. He disliked the idea of staying for a night or two in their houses. “[I]n a poor village called Mahoul-Kaury, about twelve miles from Hilla,” wrote Ives, “the houses were dirty, and full of vermin, we spread our carpets, and bedding on the ground; trusting to the clouded canopy of heaven, while the soldiers kept a good look-out” (268). Arriving in “a Caravanserah... [which is] a structure erected for the convenience of all travellers”, Ives was disappointed when seeing how this place was inferior to the Aga’s lodgings. “[O]ur guards would not let us enter, it was so filthy...” (269). Avoiding such a filthy caravansera thus left Ives and his countrymen one option. They decided to spend the night in “a poor man’s house just opposite to it [the caravansera]” (269). For Ives it was unlikely that they would find palaces or wealthy mansions in such a road which was far from the Agha’s palace: “[there was] a large Caravanserah at the entrance of Horta, a small miserable village, with only five or six families in it” (269).Ives accepted to stay one night in a poor man’s house and another night in a large caravansera. But there was no exchange of compliments, presents and other civilities between Ives and the people living or working in these places. For Ives, exchanging articles of politeness
in these lands occurs only in wealthy and powerful Muslim governors’ palaces and courts. It did not occur in ordinary people’s poor lodgings.

In Hilla, Ives did not examine the style of politics which Chouder Aga pursued in his territories. Of importance, Ives did not tell us why these towns and villages were poor or rather impoverished. For instance, he did not mention, as most previous English travellers in the Ottoman Empire, the despotic and tyrannical economic policies of Muslim rulers which led to the impoverishment of ordinary people. Ives was an admirer and friend with Muslim men of rank-not the ordinary people. “Every Turk we have yet had to deal with, except Aly Aga and the governor of Hilla, has been rather indelicate in regard to money matters”, wrote Ives on the hospitality and generosity of the two Muslim governors whom he and his English companions met and befriended (332). For Ives, if there were rude manners and behaviour in these lands, rulers were exceptions. Ali Agha and the governor of Hilla were polite and refined rulers. In interacting with these polite rulers, English travellers were given the opportunity to practice their politeness. In practising politeness while interacting with Muslim rulers, Ives did not find it fitting to produce the same rhetoric of despotism and excessiveness which the Enlightenment philosophes of progress attached to Muslim rulers. Rather he found them polite men with refined character and improved manners.

**Solyman Basha and Abdulla Basha**

Ives and his friends arrived in Baghdad on May 20. On June 18, they set out overland onto Mosul and Diarbekir. In Baghdad, the English travellers did not meet Solyman Basha, “the chief commander at Baghdad under the Grand Seignior” (281). In Baghdad, Ives showed fascination with the power and grandeur of this ruler, a
telling example of the fragile position of the English in the Arab East in this period. The governor of Baghdad “in effect... [was] the supreme lord himself of this part of the empire”, not the English or other European force, as Ives noted (281). At the same time that Ives’ friends, Clive and Watson, were busy defending British interests in India against Indian troops backed by the French, Muslim Ottoman and Mamluk rulers of Mesopotamian provinces were engaged in war against Muslim rulers of Persia and other local Arab tribes. During the eighteenth century, there were profiteering, rather than religious or cultural, wars. Polarised East-West cultural and religious divided-if there is any in our days- did not exist in Ives’ days. Ottoman and Mamluk rulers of Mesopotamia pursued trade and diplomacy with Europeans at the same time that they were fighting Persia.

Ives observed how the Ottoman authority Solyman Basha treated the Europeans and Christians living in Baghdad “with the greatest respect” (282). He “restrained” the Janizaries’ rude behaviour towards “strangers” (282). He was an economic and military improver. “He keeps the province in good order, for all have a high opinion of his military skill and prowess” (282). Through the networks of Mr. Garden, the EIC resident in Baghdad, and Cojee Raphael the Basha was keen to protect English travellers and merchants who operated in his dominions. He assigned Ives and his English friends an officer who accompanied their caravan from Baghdad into Diarbekir. He gave this officer, “Aga Mahomet or Hamet”, as he was called, “four recommendatory letters from him to the Bashas of Mosul, Diyarbakir, Urfa and Aleppo...” (303). The Basha of Baghdad showed Ives and his fellow English travellers much polite signs of friendship: material as well as rhetorical. For Ives the art of politeness was not only English or European as the Enlightenment philosophers proposed.
Once in Diyarbakir, Ives was happy to know that Abdulla Basha, the Ottoman governor of this province, was now preparing to set out for Aleppo: “fortunately for us [he] is not gone” (345). In Diarbekir, Ives nursed some hopes that the Basha will open up his kitchens for him and his companions all the way from Diarbekir to Aleppo. Ives was sure that he was travelling with a strong, powerful, wealthy and improved Muslim. Abdulla Basha had the material means which makes a person polite. Ives peaked at the Basha’s “tents [which] are pitched without the city” (345). He found that the Basha’s tent “make a gay appearance: that which is intended for his own person” (345). The “gay appearance” of the Basha’s tent gave the English the impression that the Basha’ manners were also refined. Ives measured the Basha’s civility and politeness by the number of material civilities he was willing to grant the English travellers. He “ ask[ed] whether we had tents, mules, &c. fit for the journey, saying, if we had not, he would give orders that we should be supplied with them”, Ives wrote (346). Ives further measured the Basha’s civility and politeness by the kind of rank he assigned him and his English friends. The English travellers were happy to know that the Basha proposed to his deputies that across the route to Aleppo “we should be of the family of his chief Christian officers...among whom we find...his treasurer, chamberlain and some others” (346). This is what Ives wanted his reader to know: that across the overland routes he was seen by Arab and Muslim rulers as a man of rank. Positing Abdulla Basha as a refined Muslim ruler was not only practically useful across these dangerous routes but also socially improving for a doctor returning from India. In the presence of men of rank, Ives was a man of rank.

Throughout the road from Diarbekir to Aleppo, the English travellers did not get the opportunity to socialise with the Basha in his grand tent with the “gay
appearance”, as Ives observed. They did not eat and drink in the presence of the Basha. Nevertheless, the Basha kept showing them some material civilities. At the start of the journey, the Basha sent the English one sheep as a present (353). Another day, the Basha sent them, via his minister, “two small plates of ready made victuals...from his cookery tent” (360). The English gentlemen did not expect to find such confusion in hospitality:

As we knew not by whose orders these things came, we desired our Aga to make enquiry; for if they were a present from the Basha or Kahier [his prime minister], we very well knew that their directions in respect to the quantity, must have been but ill executed; if they came from any inferior person, we were desirous he should be acquainted that we could receive no more from him, though we were obliged to him for his good will, and should not be unmindful on our arrival at Aleppo, of any civilities that were either done or intended us on the road. (360)

If these small portions were sent by inferior servants, the English travellers would be able to deal with such an unpolished action. What they previously did when they tried to discipline their servants was perhaps useful to repeat in this part of the journey. Ives and his friends were surprised that Abdulla Basha and his Kahier (deputy) nearly crossed the line of unconditional hospitality which English traveller were accustomed to enjoy in Muslim rulers’ quarters. For Ives, politeness unites men of material means, civil behaviour and affable manners regardless of religion or race. But that Abdulla Basha’s hospitality was limited was a surprising fact for Ives and his English fellow countrymen. More surprising was it for Ives that Abdulla Basha once “proposed that Francisco, our servant and interpreter should be sent for to receive
the Bastinado, on the presumption that he had been chiefly instrumental in persuading us to set off by ourselves” (359).

At first, the English did not believe what the Basha’s servants told them: “We appeared to smile at this account, and told the Turks, that we were very sure a person of the Basha’s dignity and politeness could never think of carrying into execution such a step, therefore we took it for granted that if it was proposed, it was only in jest” (359). Ives was sure that the Basha’s politeness banishes him from pursuing such tyrannical activities. If improved people are prevalent among Arabs and Muslims who inhabit these barren routes, they should be from the ruling class. If Abdulla Basha was less polite then the English travellers were less polite. Cut across religious and cultural divide, only the solidarity between the men who belong to the same class, not culture, nationality or religion, posits Ives and a Muslim governor as men of politeness. Such a view was one of a practical, rather than discursive, engagement with the East. Ives was a man of the Enlightenment, a believer in improvement. The Enlightenment philosophers were also men of the Enlightenment and believers in the idea of improvement. Nevertheless, Ives and these philosophers differed in the way they used this idea to write on Arabs and Muslim rulers.

Unlike what the Enlightenment philosophes took it for granted that Muslim rulers were despotic and excessive, Ives presented a commodious and inclusive view on the refinement of Abdulla Basha. It is true that Ives found the scanty stock of provisions which the Basha sent him as unbefitting as the rude behaviour of the Chocarda, a servant. Yet Ives did not take it for granted that the Basha was an unrefined ruler. The way the Basha addressed the lack of heavy supply of provisions in these Englishmen’s tent, as Ives noted, was one of refined rhetoric. When the
English sent their guard to the Basha asking for more provisions, the officer came back carrying a polite response:

with the minister’s more ceremonious compliments, and expressions of sorrow for our uncomfortable situation, declaring at the same time, that the Basha and all his attendants laboured under the same scarcity of food, but that he would deny himself the scanty pittance that was allotted him, and send us a couple of plates of dressed meat from his own family. (361)

The English admitted that the response was one given by a refined person. These “couple of plates...barely served to take off the keen edge of my brother-travellers appetite [but] we looked upon them as infallible marks of...humanity and politeness”, wrote Ives (261). In these scorching deserts, English travellers faced tough conditions of travelling. There was scarcity in food and water supplies. The food which the Basha sent them was not enough. But the English travellers showed gratitude in addressing the Basha’ kindness. The relationship between Ives and Abdulla Basha was one of exchange of politeness: material and rhetorical. The exchange of material civilities was important. But equally important was the exchange of rhetorical civilities between the English travellers and their Muslim hosts. For Ives, the culture of politeness was a two-way traffic: it was Muslim as well as English. Improving manners across the overland routes required interacting with the ruling class in Muslim society.

In an eighteenth-century East and West in which social status was defined by material possessions and wealth, the English travellers and Muslims rulers appeared operating in the same polite and civil environment. Once the voice of opulence gets silenced, people doubted each other’s politeness. When Ives did not get the opportunity to relish these objects and niceties, the floor for a breach in politeness
became open. Accompanying Abdulla Basha without enjoying his table hospitality to the full, Ives and his English fellow travellers were slightly angry. They determined to leave the Basha’s caravan and travel alone to Aleppo as soon as possible. The Basha, nevertheless, did not grant them the permission to travel alone across these dangerous spaces. More than once the English sought to “solicit” the “good offices” of the Kahier, the Basha’s assistant, “to grant us an escort” to Bir where they would meet the English Consul in Aleppo, Alexander Drummond (356). But this Kahier was constantly refusing their offer, advancing the Basha’s recommendation, and in a way a decision, that “he neither could, nor would consent to our going one finger’s length before him” (359). “On the contrary, he desired, that during our future march, we would take care to keep more in the body of his guards than we had hitherto done, for the times were exceedingly perilous” (359). The English travellers were prepared to rethink their promises to accompany the Basha. The Basha was also prepared to withdraw the rank he previously assigned them. Contrary to what the English expected from such a grandee, “[he] told us with an air so haughty to be pleasing [that] ‘we must stay, and that we had one day more before we should arrive with him at Aleppo” (368). The English told their interpreter to inform the Aga why they needed to travel ahead of the Basha’s caravan: lack of provisions, health issues, “and the promise we had made to our consul of seeing him today” (368). The interpreter delivered first the issue on “the promise” which the English travellers “made to” the English consul in Aleppo. The Basha here was irritated:

Upon which, the great man probably conceiving his dignity to be hurt, replied with a Turkish monosyllable, tantamount to our English word, ‘Pshaw;’ adding ‘What signifies your engagement with the consul? Let that remain with me. (368)
Messing with rituals of politeness in front of this Basha was not something trivial. The English now wanted to explain this situation. “But it was all in vain: this Beglerbeg, this Lord of Lords, ordered his people to march on, and left us to digest his final resolve as we could”, Ives distressingly wrote (366). Once he knew that these Englishmen were unable to stick to their promise of entering Aleppo with him, the Basha stopped taking these Englishmen seriously.

Such an anecdote on the difference of opinions between English travellers and the Muslim ruler refers not only to the weak position of the English in the overland routes but also tells about how Ives’ understanding of the idea of politeness cuts across religion and culture. As Ives’s mode of interaction with the Chocarda and the Arabs, and servants previously showed, polite manners were the traits of the person who is practical enough to deal with the situation in which he finds the self engaged. The English were not practical enough when they determined to breach the promise which they made to the Basha. In Ives’ account on the transnational and transcultural reach of politeness, the people who reneged on their promises were the English travellers rather than the Muslim ruler; English travellers thus needed to learn from this grand rulers how to take words as contracts. In the presence of Muslim grandees, English travellers always kept revising and adding to the stock of sociable skills, civil manners, affable behaviour which the Scottish Enlightenment philosophes associated with the European age of rise and improvement.

According to Ives, Abdulla Basha cared about rhetorical civilities but also was in love with displaying objects which he considered signs of wealth, power and advanced social status. Abdulla Basha cared about his public appearance. “Abdallah Basha’s motive for...having us in the number of his retinue” was one of showing off, Ives wrote (369). He wanted to keep Ives and his fellow English travellers with him
in the caravan. When Ives and his friends “ran towards our horses, mounted, and in an instant got into the high road for Aleppo...,” the Aga, the Basha’s main guard, followed them (386). After he found them, he reported to these English deserters on what the Basha needed of them. As the Basha’s guard made it clear to Ives, if they stayed in the Basha’s caravan soon they would have been asked to join the parade designed by the Basha to make “his public entrance into Aleppo” (369). Abdulla Basha was aware of the importance of displaying things as a sign of his glory. He thus wanted to have Englishmen as part of his retinue, tents, camels, horses and other possessions which he intended to put on public display once he approached the city of Aleppo. The insistence of this Muslim ruler to have the English as part of his possessions not only testifies to the weak position of the English in the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes. It also illuminates the cross-cultural dimension in the Enlightenment idea of politeness. If material displays in Britain defined the social status of those seeking to join the culture of politeness, then this is no less true in the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to India.

Conclusion

In the Journey, Ives compared his mode of behaviour, comportment and taste with those of the Arabs and Muslims he encountered. In the long chapters which Ives wrote on his experience of travelling in the overland routes, his rhetoric of improvement, as this chapter shows, appears hugely influenced by class and social status. A believer in the Enlightenment idea of progress, Ives showed that politeness in manners and appearance was the privilege of those who pursue and show in their life material progress. Ives’ Journey advanced a unique comment on the idea of
civility and politeness of the age of the Enlightenment. It showed how these features which the Enlightenment philosophes of progress associated with European modern improvements were also prevalent in the manners and conduct of the Arab and Muslim elites and governors whom Ives encountered while travelling overland to India through Syria and Mesopotamia. In socialising with what Ives considers a civil and polite section of Arab and Muslim societies, Ives learned how a European traveller in the Middle East needs to move beyond the uniform, non-contingent rationale of the Enlightenment discourse of improvement. In Britain, the propagators of this discourse associated improvement in manners and sociability with the rise of European modern commercial nations who cultivate arts and sciences. In his travel account, Ives adopted an alternative rhetoric of improvement in which refinement in manners was not seen as exclusively European or associated with modern European commercial nations. Rather, improvement in manners as a trope in his Journey poses a comment on global civility to which the Arabs and Muslims who live in the cities and deserts which connect the commercial routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian/Persian Gulf contributed in their own ways. Interacting with Muslim society helped Ives mould his sociable skills. It offered him the platform to posit the self and body as polite, refined and civil. It gave the doctor an opportunity to stage the self as a man of rank interacting with men of rank. It further fixed his social status as a man of rank when encountering those Arab shepherds, servants, trackers, women whom he considered unrefined, still living in a primitive condition. For a returnee from India who belonged to the middling sorts by eighteenth-century British standards,¹⁹ the journey on the overland routes posits a preparatory stag for ascending up the social ladder of improvement in Britain.
Notes:

1 Daniel Defoe did the same thing by coining two terms “The born gentleman” and “The bred gentleman”. Defoe emphasised the importance of education and improvement as tools for achieving politeness, whether one was from the aristocracy, gentry or middle classes. In so doing, he captured the hopes of the middle classes to expand the notion of politeness to include people who can be gentlemen if they show merit through their work and education, not merely through inheritance and family background. See the introduction to Defoe’s *The Complete English Gentleman*, ed., Karl D Bulbring (London, 1890).


3 See Thomas Sheridan’s *A Plan Of Education For the Noble Youth Nobility and Gentry Of Great Britain Most Humbly Addressed to The Father of his People* (London, 1969); also see chapter two in Daniel Defoe’s *The Complete English Gentleman*, ed. Karl D. Bulbring (London, 1890).


6 In 1763, in his *Travels Through France and Italy*, Tobias Smollett wrote: “If I was obliged to define politeness, I should call it, the art of making one’s self agreeable. I think it an art that necessarily implies a sense of decorum, and a delicacy of sentiment”, (London: Oxford University Press, 1900), p.61.


Smith distinguished between what he called “A man of rank and fortune...the distinguished member of society who attends to every part of his conduct, and who thereby oblige him to attend of every part of his station...” and “[a] man of low condition...[who] is far from being a distinguished member of any great society”, Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (London: Harriman House, 2007), p.514

In India, after Plassey, the EIC, now heavily militarised, proved able to control large Indian territories. It did so by coercing local populations but also by signing political and commercial treaties with local Indian rulers. Interacting with the upper class in India was important for the British. The Britons who worked in India under the Company in this period, as William Dalyrample showed, “notably those East India Company officials who were posted to the more distant Indian courts,” acquired Indian manners and customs; they wore Indian clothes and smoked Indian pipes; some of them married Indian women from the upper and ruling classes. White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India (London: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 30-2. Across the routes to India, British performance of politeness was one of adaptability and accommodation in the presence of Arab and Muslim governors and Sheikhs. Among these men of rank and authority, the British encountered a culture of civility and politeness.

The Scottish Enlightenment philosophers of progress were also interested in the corrupt traits of the Muslim ruler. On the wake of the Union with England, they repeated ideas and anecdotes on the barbarism, despotism, excess and cruelty of Muslim rulers, illustrating to their Scottish readers what a barbaric political polity looked like in this modern age of commercial civility. In a period in which Scotland
and its Highlands’s old, traditional political systems were under the heavy modernising demands of the Union with England, these philosophers did not see the relationship between Scotland and England as one of master and slave. Rather they projected this relationship on the political and social relationship between the rulers and ruled in the Middle East. For these philosophers, the Middle East functioned outside the modern commercial age in which citizens with property had the power to defy the whimsicalities of rulers. For Hume, Ferguson, Kames and Millar, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in the East had always been of master and slave. But, as this chapter sets out to show, travelling in the Middle East allows the Enlightenment traveller to rethink this absolute vision on the Middle East in the Enlightenment idea of improvement.


13 See the section titled “Scottish Enlightenment and the Production of a Discourse of Improvement” in the introduction to this dissertation.


15 Ibid., 12
In 1772, the English merchant Abraham Parsons was in Baghdad. In his travel account, Parsons mentions how the governor of Baghdad was independent from the Ottoman Porte and also encouraged European merchants to trade in his territories: “The pasha obliges himself to make good all deficiencies upon any merchandise which the merchants may be robbed of between the ferry and Baghdad...as he exacts a duty from all Turkish subjects of eight per cent. on the value or current price of each article at the time of arrival, and three per cent. from all European or Franks, both on importation and exportation, into or from Baghdad, Bussora, or any other part of his own territories, where is as much a sovereign prince as the grand signior is in Turkey...”, Travels in Asia and Africa (London: 1808 ), p. 104.

Klein notes how the culture of politeness in eighteenth-century England accorded the practise of drinking coffee in the coffeehouse a touch of gentility: “it suggested not only that drinking coffee affirmed the gentleman’s credit but also that it gave the non-gentle a patina of gentility”. “Coffee-House Civility”, pp.35. Expanding the spatial thinking in Klein’s article, as the argument offered in the chapter shows, the social practices which the middling and upper classes in Britain considered as polite mirrored the social practices which the upper classes in Syrian-Mesopotamian lands considered as polite.

This idea of improving one’s manners by communicating and interacting with other people figures in Jean-Paptiste Morvan's tract on politeness, first appeared in English 1707. Morvan, a French Jesuit, states that refined manners and behaviour is noted in the interaction between rustic people from the country and refined and improved people from big cities: “Politeness is not to be obtain’d but by the Commerce of the polite People... 'T not sufficient to visit this City [Paris], to view its
Bridges, and the Hotel des Invalides; it is only the Conversation with the genteel Part of its Inhabitants, that can file off their rustical Adhaesions” in a country gentleman, *Reflexions Upon The Politeness of Manners; with Maxims for Civil Society* (London, 1707), p.32-3; in 1711 Lord Shaftesbury argued that rubbing off rusticity and acquiring politeness occur when a person interacts with refined and improved people: “If men are vicious, petulant or abusive; the magistrate may correct them: but if they reason ill, ’tis reason still must teach ’em to do better. Justness of thought and stile, refinement in manners, good breeding, and politeness of every kind, can come only from the trial and experience of what is best”, *Characteristics Of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London, 1714),p. 7-8.

19 See the chapter on eighteenth-century doctors in Penelope J. Corfield’s *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 1995).
CHAPTER THREE

COMMERCCE: ABRAHAM PARSONS, TRAVEL IN ASIA AND AFRICA INCLUDING A JOURNEY FROM SCANDEROON TO ALEPPO, AND OVER THE DESERT TO BAGHDADF AND BUSSORA (1808)

[In Scottish Enlightenment thought, the interest of the self primarily dominates the discourse of economics and the discourse of morality. The Scots literati believed that commercial societies nurse the idea of self-interest. But they also argued that self-interest can be reconciled with the benefits of society. For the Scots philosophers, this bridge between self-interest and society occurs in complex commercial societies, not in pre-commercial, tribal and Islamic societies. They proposed that in commercial developed nations, self-interest and private desires generate unplanned economic and moral order which reconciles personal happiness with the happiness of society. In his travel account, Abraham Parsons set out to complicate the character of the merchant, arguing that it is true that commercial individuals were materially driven but they were also sociable and humane creatures. In encountering commercial cultures of the Middle East, Parsons rethought the Scot literati’s views that British society was the only commercial society whose gentlemanly capitalism reconciled private gains with public happiness. He discovered how Middle Eastern society was also commercial and virtuous]

Abraham Parsons’ travel text, Travels in Asia and Africa Including a Journey From Scanderoon to Aleppo, And Over the Desert to Baghdad and Bussora (1808), reveals “the commercial speculations”—as the editor John Berjew described
Parsons’s travel observations—of a merchant traveller from Bristol (1). Between 1767 and 1773, Parsons served in Scanderoon, an Ottoman-Syrian port, as a “consul” for the English Levant Company. While working in Syria, Parsons befriended Europeans and local merchants, Ottoman janissaries and governors. In Scanderoon, Ottoman “men on guard… all knew me”, Parsons recalled (73). The governor of this commercial city, “my friend Abdarahman pasha welcomed me home and was very glad to see me, as we had always lived on good terms, and to whom every winter, I gave part of my house at Scanderoon, to pass a month or more during the extreme cold at Baylan” (74). Social networking, as this chapter shows, becomes important when the self hopes for advancing its own material interests. A life of a British merchant in the Middle East mainly focused on two things: unstoppable search for profits and also unceasing efforts to cultivate friendships with locals.

When Parsons was travelling in Syria and Mesopotamia, George Baldwin, a British merchant and also self-styled diplomat, was coaxing Egyptian rulers, hoping to gain some commercial concessions. He aimed to open up a trade route between British India and the Suez ports of Egypt. Baldwin’s efforts proved successful between 1773 and 1778. “[S]hips were arriving at Alexandria from England, and at Suez, from India, at the same time”, wrote Baldwin (6). Nevertheless, Baldwin and his British network did not enjoy this opportunity for long. The Sheriff of Mecca and the Ottoman Sultan did not accept British calls for opening up a direct trade link between India, Egypt and England, as Baldwin mentioned.¹ Still, this short term success, Britons in the Levant continued pursuing diplomatic and trade alliances with local rulers. Their eyes were now focused on the Syrian and Mesopotamian historic caravans and caravan routes to India.
Interested in their profits, Parsons joined one of these caravans. In 1773, Parsons quit his job. The “unhealthiness” of the weather in Scanderoon pushed him to leave his consular duties, as Berjew mentions, but Parsons did not choose to return to England (1). Rather Parsons preferred to continue trading in the East. He bought goods from the markets of Aleppo. He joined a moving network which plugged Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in a global circle of trade. The circulation of commodities across the caravan routes involved the networks comprising people from various nations, religions and cultures. Under the economic and social umbrella of this vibrant network, the Arabian caravan, Parsons set out to India.\(^2\)

On the Syria-Mesopotamian Great Desert Route, a British merchant or merchant-diplomat cannot be an island unto himself. When Britons began trading there, they found commercial and diplomatic posts in Scanderoon, Aleppo, Basra, Baghdad, in Arab-Ottoman dominions, and in Bandar Abbas, in Persia. The residents in these posts guarded British commercial interests in co-operation with local rulers and tribes. This testifies to the interests of the self to cooperate with a foreign host. But British residents also helped to accommodate, protect and entertain British travellers and merchants who passed through these cities on their ways to or from India.\(^3\) This practise testifies to the fact that the pursuit of riches in the East did not necessarily stop the individual from caring about fellow countrymen. The Britons who worked in the Middle East during this period were keen to further their material interests. But the pursuit of self-interest pressed the individual to find a way to secure the interests of society or at least care about the interests of the self within a context of co-operation, friendship and harmony.
Parsons’ account of his journey posed the character of the British merchant as one of sociable, practical and cosmopolitan nature. In so doing, he rethought the portrait of the greedy and selfish individual which the moralists back in Britain drew of the man of commerce, luxury and market values. Bernard Mandeville, George Berkeley and the writers of *Catto’s Letters*, as we shall see in the next section, were far from believing that commercial individuals can be exempted from being vicious to society. The critique of the social ills which commerce engenders was also aimed at the East Indies’ merchants who brought back great wealth but also, what the moralists considered, corrupt Eastern manners and behaviour. For these moralists, self-interest cancels the old virtues which bonded man to society. In Scottish Enlightenment thought, it was well known that these older virtues were no longer dominant in a society of rising commercial values. But there were the propositions that the idea of commercial exchange in the market not merely leads to economic prosperity but also further sociability, softens the wildest passions and encourages politeness.

Parsons was aware of this debate. His *Travels* responded to it. In his account we see how a merchant was running after profits in the East. But he was interested in balancing material and personal gain and profits with fellow feelings. Travelling in Middle Eastern commercial hubs helped him invent the character of the merchant whose responsibility towards bettering the self was not necessarily at war with society. As this chapter shows, Parsons’ commercial pursuits in the East offered him the opportunity to bridge the gap between self-interest and society. In the context of sociability and inter-personal relationships empowered by commercial networks, Parsons hoped to reconcile economics with virtue, personal gain and the welfare of
society, the discourses which some moralists and economists of the period viewed as radically different from each other.

Commerce, Virtue, Sociability

In eighteenth-century Britain, the debate over what makes nations, societies, individuals and citizens virtuous was momentous. In this period, the old political and social fabric centred on unequal relationships between the aristocracy and peasants and the city and the country was no longer dominant. The ownership of land as a sign of civic participation in a polity was not the only thing which made the citizen virtuous. The emergence of new commercial ways of life and classes whose operations in the market place involved the idea of the division of labour transformed society. The old citizen whose eyes were fixed on civic participation has now become the commercial individual whose eyes were fixed on commercial exchange, profits, luxury goods and pleasure. Virtue was thus bound to be redefined.⁴

Throughout the period, the idea of virtue served to express not only a civic purpose with a dominant political reach. It also set out to reconcile commerce with the general benefits of society. The tension between commercialism and civic humanism prevailed throughout the eighteenth century, however.⁵ It emerged in the accounts which served imaginatively to explain to the public how commerce changes older relationships between the citizen and the state, the ruled and the ruler. In these accounts, commerce sometimes appeared a negative force and leads to chaos and political revolutions against older monarchical systems centred on the ownership of land and possession of titles. Donald Campbell, whose travel account I study in chapter four, explored this particular point in a comparative context explaining the differences between British and Islamic political systems. In this section, however, I
take the relationship between the individual and society as what mostly matters in the debate over virtue, simply because Parsons was mostly concerned about the role which commerce plays in defining the relationship between the self and society, not the citizen and the state. In so doing, I wish to show how travelling in the Middle East offered Parsons an opportunity to participate in the debate in Britain over what makes a commercial society virtuous.

In eighteenth-century Britain, many voices celebrated, and also many others lamented, the expansion of commercialism. In a society where pleasure, luxury and profits were what mostly mattered, it becomes difficult to reconcile self interest with virtue. Bernard Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* (1717) recalled the tension between these two different ways of living. For, Mandeville, luxury and wealth in commercial societies do not generate moral standards. It is impossible to enjoy “all the most elegant Comforts of Life that are to be met with in an industrious, wealthy and powerful Nation, and at the same time be bless’d with all the Virtue and Innocence that can be wish’d for in a Golden Age" (12). To live in wealthy, powerful and industrious society means that one needs to be aware of the fact that commercial times were those of modernity and progress, a new period which had departed from “Golden” ages of moral and Christian virtues. A modern commercial man is one of competition and greed rather than sociability, fellow-feelings, affability or charity. “[H]is vilest and most hateful Qualities are the most necessary Accomplishments to fit him for the largest, and, according to the World, the happiest and most flourishing Societies”(9). For Mandeville, self-interest may not necessarily be virtuous. But self-interest in a commercial context leads to economic prosperity and spreads wealth to all members of the public.
In his *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721), George Berkeley was aware of the gradual disappearance of public spirit in commercial societies. Berkeley published his Essay as a response to the first financial crash of the century, the South Sea Bubble (1720). He invited the readers to “have Recourse to those old fashioned trite Maxims concerning Religion, Industry, Frugality, and public Spirit, which are now forgotten [...]” (31). Although he denounced commercial wealth, Berkeley, like Mandeville, agreed that morality and virtue are things currently “forgotten” or from “the Golden Ages”, not part of what makes Britain commercial and modern.

Between 1720 and 1723, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon reflected on this tension. Their *Catto’s Letter* denounced the modern spirit of luxury and corruption, hoping in publishing their moral observations to remind Britons of the importance of civic virtues and “raise [the] Spirits” of those who were still in “deep Lethargy” (121). As with Berkeley’s Essay, “Spirits” is concerned with the public, not merely the self. Commercialism causes tension between personal interest and public virtue.

The debate in Britain over how publicly responsible a commercial individual can become was illustrated by the examples of the men who returned from India loaded with Eastern wealth. Britons called these East India men Nabobs, a word which indicated luxury and corruption. A modern commercial British Nabob, as Samuel Foote’s *The Nabob* (1772) showed, was far from being virtuous. Lady Oldham, an aristocratic character in the play, objected to the idea of marrying off her daughter to a British Nabob, Mathew Mite. Addressing him, she said: “I would much rather see my child with a competence, nay, even reduced to an indigent state, than voluptuously rioting in pleasures that derive their source from the ruin of others” (65).
Mite’s character confirmed the general opinion of the public that the individuals who pursue riches might not necessarily be virtuous. “Ruin! what, you, I find, adopt the popular prejudice, and conclude that every man that is rich is a villain?”, Mite complained (56). The tension between Lady Oldham, an aristocrat who cared about her daughter, and Mite, a merchant who cared about advancing the self, showed how the play attempted at caricaturing Mathew Mite and rather presenting him as a mere upstart with excessive Eastern wealth and rare British virtues. But Foote’s description of the corruption of English merchants was just one interpretation of the role which commerce plays in setting the context for individuals’ interaction with society. Parsons offered us a completely different description. Parsons was one of those who pursued riches in the East but, as we shall shortly see, his commercial pursuits were far from corrupting his manners, behaviour and social circle. He did not collect riches at the backs of slaves or at the expense of colonised nations. His Eastern commercial engagements reconcile virtue with commerce, bringing into the fore cross-cultural practices of sociability, cosmopolitanism and adaptability.

The intellectual guardians of a general theory of rise and progress, the Scottish literati, were aware of the tension between commerce and virtue. Smith, in his Wealth of Nations, shows how greediness, competition and self-interest top the efforts of bourgeois capitalists. All the merchant can do is to see how “his money go from him, and return to him again with a profit” (264). This spirit “naturally affect[s] temper and disposition” (246). “The merchants and artificers...acted from a views to their own interest, and in pursuit of their own pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got” (269). For Smith, merchants only cared about self-interest. “A merchant...is not necessarily the citizen of any particular country. It is in a great measure indifferent to him from what place he carries on his trade; and very
trifling disgust will make him remove his capital, and, altogether with it, all the industry which it supports, from one country to another” (271). But Smith was aware that self-interest does lead to public benefits. He proposed that “no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of members are poor and miserable” (63). Division of labour in commercial society “occasions...that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people”(63). The idea of self-interest does not only bring wealth but also checks cruelty and despotism and leads to good government.9

The reconciliation between self-interest and society in *The Wealth of Nations* also resonates in another work written by Smith. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* speaks of the innate desire of sympathy. But Smith believed that the self can only show or collect sympathy—itself an individual desire—while it interacts with or imagines itself in society. “However selfish man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (1). In moral terms, virtuous human beings are sociable creatures. Sociability here poses morality as something a person can gain by either showing or collecting sympathy from another person. In economic terms, as *The Wealth of Nations* recalled, sociability is also a bridge between an individual and society. In order to gain profits, an individual enters into a market where he exchanges commodities in an environment of trust and consent, not despotism and cruelty.10

David Hume was also interested in sociability as a civilised practise which reconciles self-interest with society. Although Hume was aware of the social ills of commercial society, he found that luxury also has it benefits. First, the rise of
commerce and luxury advances science and arts. And then “The more...refined arts advance, the more sociable men become...” (297). In an age of commercial refinement, men “flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge; to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture...Particular clubs and societies are everywhere formed...” (297). Sociability in this age of commerce generates virtue. Hume was sure that it is impossible but they must feel an increase of humanity, from the very habit of conversing together, and contributing to each other’s pleasure and entertainment. Thus industry knowledge, and humanity are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages. 297-8.

In non-commercial societies, one might find some ancient virtues being preserved but it would be hard to find the institution and environment which cultivate and encourage sociability and address the lack of morality. The weakening of commerce necessitates the absence of markets, clubs, and scientific societies where men and women socialise and refine their manners. Muslims, Moors and Tartars lack the virtue of sociability since they were not far advanced in cultivating commercial infrastructure which itself brings the state of order in society. “I believe every man would think his life or fortune much less secure in the hands of a Moor or Tartar, than in those of a French or English gentleman, the rank of men the most civilised in the most civilised nations”(305).

Adam Ferguson considered commercial wealth and division of labour the signs of a flourishing and improving nation. He believed that it is normal to find unequal distribution of wealth in commercial nations: “the beggar, who depends upon
charity; the labourer, who toils that he may eat; the mechanic, whose art requires no exertion of genius, are degraded by the object they pursue, and by the means they employ to attain it” (283). Nevertheless, the division of labour in such society creates the class of professionals who sets out to reconcile private wealth with public spirit. “Professions requiring more knowledge and study; proceeding on the exercise of fancy, and the love of perfection; leading to applause as well as to profits, place the artist in a superior class, and bring him nearer to that station in which men are supposed to be the highest” (283). These people do “follow the disposition of the mind” but they also “take that part in society, to which they are led by the sentiments of the heart, or by the calls of the public” (283). In pre-commercial and barbarous nations, according to Ferguson, the simple social fabric which consisted of “freemen” and “slaves”, the ruler and the ruled, does not allow this modern form of balance between self and society, simply because the main interest of the tribal chiefs were to pursue war rather than maintain the flow of commercial profits. “The enjoyment of peace, however, and the prospect of being able to exchange one commodity for another, turns, by degrees, the hunter and warrior into a tradesman and a merchant”, Ferguson rejoiced (277). The exchange of commodities becomes a sociable act leading to the refinement of manners and behaviour. “In the bustle of civil pursuits and occupations, men appear in a variety of lights, and suggest matter of inquiry and fancy, by which conversation is enlivened, and greatly enlarged” (281).

The Enlightenment literati set out to reconcile virtue and commerce by advancing the idea of sociability. They primarily attached sociability to advanced societies of commercial Europe. Parsons, like the Scots philosophers, had the same aim of reconciling virtue and commerce. Nevertheless, he was far from seeing commercialism and sociability as things which only occurred in European societies
and were only cultivated by British middle classes. In the *Travels*, the Middle East, the area which connected London with Calcutta, the cities of great commercial interaction, as Smith saw them, did not figure as non-commercial and thus barbarous and primitive. Rather it was commercial. Commercial practices across global trade routes carried social meanings and cross-cultural significance. Sociability, adaptability and, what Alison Games called, practices of “cosmopolitanism” emerged in commercial transactions.

This chapter contributes to what this dissertation sets out to show; that is, rethinking what the Enlightenment philosophers proposed on what made Europe and Europeans unique in their efforts to champion a modern moment of improvement and rise at the same time as many peoples and cultures were either slowly progressing or still living in primitive, infant and savage conditions. As this chapter shows, in the commercial world of the desert caravan, scenes of sociability become integral to the circulation of goods, as Arjun Appadurai’s work informs us. Acts of cosmopolitanism, adaptability and co-operation were part and parcel of the world of gaining profits on the overland routes to India.

The Grand Caravan

[Parsons’ fascination with the complex structure and leadership of the Arabian caravan complicates what Smith proposed about the primitiveness and ancientness of caravan travelling and the inability of Arabia to reconcile virtue with commerce]

1-Complex Structure
During the eighteenth-century, Britons who had commercial and imperial interests in the East were aware of the important strategic positions of Syria and Mesopotamia, the conduits which connected London with India. For Britain and other European powers, mainly France, these lands, nonetheless, were far from being ready for colonialism. Although British imperial rule was now expanding in India, Britons were seeking all sorts of peaceful tactics for securing safe passages to India. In economic terms, British commercial practices in Syria and Mesopotamian were part of a global commercial network. Again it was a long way before Britain could contemplate replacing an older commercial system, the caravan, by a new one, steam navigation. One word may better describe eighteenth-century British commercial practices in these lands: participation.

Before we had a nineteenth-century global world system run by a commercial and industrial London, there was an eighteenth-century commercial system of global circulation, one in which Britons were on an equal footing with everyone else. This system organised the movement of commodities between Europe, the Middle East and India within the political and economic context of balances, interaction and convergences, not hegemony and domination. Parsons’ account of the trade caravan which travelled between Syria and Mesopotamia loaded with European and Asian commodities carefully described this system.

In his Lectures, Smith saw that an ancient mode of commercial circulation, the trade caravan, may not necessarily be an adequate modern medium of commercial improvement. “This is still the case in Asia and other eastern countries; all inland commerce is carried in by great caravans, consisting of several thousands, for mutual defence, with waggons, etc.” (303). Caravan travelling, which is a
manifestation of ancientness, rather than modern commercial times, formed an “obstacle to the improvement of commerce” and proved the difficulty of conveying merchandise and merchants “from one place into another” (303). With the caravan, the safety and security of merchants and their capital cannot be insured. Successful commercial circulations in modern times primarily depended on a good government which builds “highways” and improve “navigable rivers” where protected goods and merchants can easily flow into their targeted destination. The great obstacle which travelling in the caravan created to commercial improvers, as Smith observed, was that “the country” across which the caravan usually moved was “filled with retainers, a species of idle people who depended on the lords, whose violence and disorders rendered the going from one place to another very difficult” (303).

For Smith, Asian caravan travelling is different from modern European technological improvements in sea travelling. Caravan travelling is all about ancientness, “disorder”, “violence”, “idle people” and warlords. The caravan represents the primitiveness of ancient times when the weakness of commerce necessitated poverty, violence and rude behaviour. Here the absence of the strong spirit which cultivates technological improvements encourages despotic relations and widens the gap between self-interest and society.

Smith had never travelled with a commercial caravan in Arabian or Asian deserts. He did not get the opportunity to see how, as James Mather observed, eighteenth-century caravan routes were the Islamic “highways” and “comprehensive transport network” which connected Eastern “major hubs of trade” with each other (26). He would not know that, as Donald Campbell who was in the Syrian overland routes in 1795 pointed out, “the collection of such a number [of people in the caravan] requires time, and the embodying of them is a serious concern, it is
concerted with great care and preparation...” (40). It was not a sign of ancientness, primitivism and the prevalence of simple modes of subsistence in society, but rather the economic artery which served the commercial aspirations of all the trading parties involved in it, connecting different cultures, societies, nations and continents. It was a global system of commodity exchange. The caravan goods included, according to Thabit Abdulla, “Indian spices”, “cotton”, “Syrian swords”, “Persian silks, “Arabian coffee”, “perfumes”, “horses”, and “camels” (58). European goods mostly include, as Parsons himself noted, “corals, ambers, glass beads, brass and iron, wire, brass flattened into long plates, needles, looking glasses, toys and trinkets...” (262). The circulation of commodities in these caravans most often connected the markets of Europe, the Ottoman Empire with the East Indies. As Kirty Naryan Chaudhuri notes, “transcontinental oceanic and caravan trade remained the economic mechanism through which the economies of the Indian Oceans were linked to the rest of the world” (38).

During the eighteenth-century, the circulation of commodities in the caravan brings into the fore the image that India, the Middle East and Europe were not economically separated from each other. In Aleppo, European merchants, as Parson observed, bring European goods for sale; (chiefly from Venice,) which they sell, and return with piece goods from India, coffee from Mocha, and many kinds of drugs from different parts of Arabia and Persia; all which are conveyed from Bussora to Aleppo, either directly by caravan of camels, first to Bagdad by water, and from thence by Camels to Aleppo. (155)
Indian spices, Arabian coffee and horses, and Persian drugs travelled to Scanderoon, where the English Levant Company has a station, before they got “shipped for London, Venice, Amesterdam and Marseilles, and Leghorn”, wrote Parsons (155). Large quantities of these commodities also “goes first to Bagdad, and from thence to Damascus, to Constantinople (by the way of Ezerum), and to Trbisond, in the Black Sea” (155). This global circle involved a complex structure and network of local and foreign merchants and caravan leaders, all of whom participated in the caravan for purposes of gaining profits.

Parsons travelled as a merchant in the caravan. He noted the complexity of its structure. The division of labour in the caravan mainly insured the organisational success of this trading venture. In addition to the leader of the caravan, who normally was an influential Sheikh from a leading tribal force ruling the area, as Parsons pointed out, there were in the caravan a number of merchants, scouts and soldiers. There were some “Turkish merchants” whose tents numbered “twelve” (76). The trade caravan in which Parsons travelled had “one hundred and five Arab soldiers, with their officers hired to guard the caravan; some of every tribe which is to be met with on the desert” (76). There was also the “cameliers” who were “to attend, feed, load, and unload the camels” (76). Sometimes the caravan included, as Campbell noted, “Mathematicians... [who] perform the offices of both quarter-masters and aides-de-camp; leading the troops when the caravan is attacked, and assigning the quarters where the caravan is appointed to encamp” (42). The material benefits of the caravan system posed the lands and societies where it operated as commercial. But the prevalence of this amount of people who did different tasks refers to an organised and complex system of travelling across regulated commercial spaces, a
system where individual success depended on the safety of the whole of the caravan.

The complexity in the system of caravan travelling appeared in the ways the merchants cooperated with various workers in the caravans. Caravan merchants, including Parsons, meet and “agree among themselves,” wrote Bartholomew Plaisted who travelled with a trade caravan in 1750, “who shall be their Bashi [leader]; by which means they avoid impositions, and pay no more than what is necessary for the good of the whole company, and everyone contributes his share in a just proportion”(98). Merchants here belong to different nations and cultures. But what brought them together were their efforts to protect their individual interests. Self-interest, nevertheless, did not occur outside the context of cooperation, consultation and consent. “We halted, and after the sheik, his officers, and the Turkish merchants, had consulted for some time, it was resolved to unload our camels,” Parsons observed, “and from our little camp, but not to pitch any tent, which was done, and we all were under arms before noon” (77). Merchants were not those corrupt creatures who only cared about their individual interests. They also cared about the safety of the whole of caravan. Participating in Middle Eastern commercial life offered Parsons the opportunity to stage the self as one of commerce and also sociability.

2-Leadership

For Smith, in highly commercialised economies people exchange commodities in the context of voluntarism and consent. In non-European, non-commercial nations however, it is true that people have innate desires for sympathy; nevertheless, the
absence of commerce in their lives engenders chaos and exposes the vulnerable among them to the tyranny of the powerful. The absence of the division of labour allows relations of superiority-inferiority among people, even in scenes of social harmony. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith recalled what Richard Pococke, the English bishop, who travelled in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia in 1737, mentioned: “I have seen...an Arabian chief dine in the streets of a town where he had come to sell his cattle, and invite all passengers, even common beggars, to sit down with him and partake of his banquet” (213). As this scene of “rustic hospitality” indicates, commercial exchange which generates profits in the contexts of equality does not exist. Although the Arabian chief accepted to dine and thus socialise with beggars, this does not detract from the fact that he was the “chief”, a rich man who could afford to invite his inferiors to his table. In turn, the beggars showed up in the Arab chief’s party because they do not have the means to buy food, not because they wanted to do business with him so that they could improve their economic conditions and refine their behaviour. The virtue of hospitality here was “rustic” because it did not show the same modern forms of exchange, equality and sociability which commercialism encouraged.

Like Smith, Parsons was concerned about the tension between virtue and commerce. But he did not solve this tension by using the example of a primitive Arabian Sheikh, a non-commercial man whose virtue cannot be something compatible with economic improvement. On the contrary, Parsons described the character of an industrious caravan leader whose commercial pursuits were conducted in an environment of peace, harmony and sociability.

Parsons marvelled at how the Arab leader of the caravan became able to supervise the movement of the caravan. Whilst insuring an “unmolested” passage for
the caravan across the desert routes, the leader of the caravan figured as industrious, pragmatic and of “great experience,” as James Capper wrote in his diary (58). According to Parsons, “Our sheik,” made sure that the caravan encamp on the safest spots in the desert; for he, the Arab Sheikh, used to send “two men, mounted on dromedaries, to reconnoitre” the lands surrounding the caravan camp (76). The leader of the caravan acted wisely and judiciously when the caravan was in peril. He ordered the soldiers in the caravan to apply some rituals of safety and sociability. He “ordered four musquets to be fired successively, and” when seeing strangers approaching the caravan, “Mahomet’s flag on the pike” is shown” (87). Here “immediately the four men from each party advanced toward each other” (87). They spoke to each other. They realised that they belonged to the same tribe. They ended up “embracing each other” (88). This scene of peace and harmony mainly depended on how the caravan was organised and managed. It depended on the great experience and leadership which the Arab Sheikh usually showed.

The leader of the caravan, as Parsons noted, fostered sociability, peace and harmony between Arabian tribes. His commercial character had a sociable side. “The sheik sends an express to Annah, with instructions to send them from thence as many messengers as are requisite to the inland Arab tribes” (103). The messengers sent by the caravan leader “summon such a number of each tribe, with proper arms and ammunitions, to repair to the ferry at an appointed time to meet the caravan” (103). According to Caper, in every caravan there were “reeks [who] are taken from different tribes, in order to lessen the risque of being attacked; for each of them carries the colour or ensign belonging to his tribe, all which colours are displayed upon the appearance of a party on the desert” (85). Parsons added:
A caravan cannot pass the desert in safety without hiring Arabs of each of the tribes which inhabit the borders; so that when any horde of Arabs meets a caravan, they are sure to find some of their own tribe as guards. All is safe, otherwise it is sure to be robbed, if not entirely carried off. (103)

If the attacking party belongs to “the same tribe as any of the refeeks,” Caper recalled, “the principal Sheick or Chief of each tribe, having generally half of what each refeek receives from the merchants; the caravan of course passes unmolested” (58). The leader of the caravan supervised this profitable and harmonious transaction. Parsons travelled with this man whose job was primarily centred on pursuing self-interest in co-operation with local tribes. Parsons’ account on the commercial and virtuous character of the Arab Sheikh not merely rethinks the Scots literati’s views of Arabian Sheikhs. It also brings home the point that Parsons’ commercial character was not something of corrupt nature since his work in the East was primarily focused on dealing, interacting, trading and socialising with the kind of men who were self-interested but at the same time virtuous, humane, sociable and amicable.

Commercialism

[Parsons travelled amidst industrious people. Among these people, commerce breeds civility and sociability. This argument complicates what the Scottish literati proposed of the primitiveness of the Middle East]
Commerce cultivates peace and harmony. The Scottish Enlightenment literati could not agree more. But they would disagree that this phenomenon exists in the Middle East. For them, commerce and human sociability only exist in European commercial societies.

1-Commercial and Industrious People

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith believes that commercial wealth accompanies technological improvement and leads to greater order in society. He regrets that “In those unfortunate countries, indeed, where men are continually afraid of the violence of their superiors, they frequently bury or conceal a great part of their stock, in order to have it always at hand to carry with them to some place of safety, in case their being threatened with all those disasters to which they consider themselves at all times exposed” (181). He found that this less commercial, non-contractual spirit was “a common practice in Turkey, in Indostan, and, I believe, in most other governments of Asia” where commerce is not aided by the structures and technologies suitable for its improvement and development (181). Smith mentioned how despotism in the East accompanies the lack of commercial improvements and technological developments. And living in an environment where exchange of commodities is not widely associated by strong division of labour makes the individual only cares about fulfilling basic desires without developing contractual relationship with society.

Smithean arm-chair economic observations which posed the East as a space which is less advanced commercially differ from what Parsons observed. In Parsons’ account, commercialism was not seen as this modern trait, one exclusively attached to Europe or Britain. It is true that Parsons noted the lack of commercial spirit of
improvement among the plundering Rashwans, “the sturdy beggars” who lived in “the wastes of Syria, for about thirty miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea” (76). But he, unlike Smith and other Scots literati, did not generalise about the weakness of commercial improvements in the Middle East. Commercialism was something which Muslims cultivated and practised in their economic transactions with locals and foreign merchants. In economic terms, exchange produced the people who were after profits and wealth in a commercial environment where the division of labour existed. In moral terms, exchange produced a society who cared about its poor members.

In Aleppo, Parsons was fascinated with the kind of commodities imported from “India, Constantinople, Smyrna and Damascus” (60). Strolling in the markets, he noted how Muslim commercial spirit requested a sense of professionalism and order. This sense was reflected in the ways the markets were organised. “The bazars, or markets, are streets near the center of the city, strongly arched over, with apertures on the sides of the arches, so situated as to give sufficient light, and at the same time exclude the sun and rain” (60). “Each bazar is occupied by one sort of trade only, as they do not mix with each other in the same bazar: for example, the boots and slipper makers occupy three streets; box-makers (including trunkmakers) two...” (60).

The commodities which ended up in the markets of such a commercial city like Aleppo first circulated in barren spaces where the inhabitants and tribes also cultivated a common spirit of commercialism. Whilst the caravan began encamping after a nine hour march on the desert-route between Aleppo and Basra, on the eighth of April, Parsons, and the rest of the caravan, “were visited by some of those friends who were with us yesterday, who brought some sheep and lambs to sell”
"[I]n the evening about fifty or sixty women and children came with butter and milk to sell," Parsons noted, "after which came the men with sheep and lambs, and firewood, which is brought from a greater distance" (92). Finding the prices reasonable, Parsons never hesitated to buy "a lamb for sixteen paras, (one shilling English money)..." (92).

The inhabitants of these caravan routes were not those nations of professional shepherds and robbers with no commercial sensibilities. Arriving at "a handsome town, well built of stone, called Rava," he noted the bustling commercial activities prevalent there. This town was most famous with camel trade, as Parsons himself observed, that "This day two hundred and sixty camels were ferried over the Euphrates" (97). In addition to selling and buying camels, Parsons further noted, the people in Rava and the towns surrounding it traded the produce of their lands.

Parsons was amazed how "many people from Annah (which is three thousands distant) came to our camp, with cotton, cloth, dates, eggs, apples, and barley to sell" (99). Even after the caravan left Rava, the inhabitants of this town and also those of Annah, came to the caravan to sell their goods. Parsons rejoiced at such a commercial move: "we had a little fair at our camp" (100).

Near Baghdad, Parsons was struck with the amounts of riches found amongst these people: "This horde is esteemed very rich" (112). The tribe’s wealth, as Parsons noted, mainly came from their participation in large commercial networks operating between deserts and cities. According to Parsons, "This is a mutual advantage to the city of Bagdad and the Arabs, as the city receives greater supplies of provisions of all kinds from this tribe alone, than from any three others in the neighbourhood" (112). "Horses and greyhounds they breed and train up for sale" (110). All members of the tribe were encouraged to work, to seek to improve their
material conditions. Even their females, Parsons further noted, traded with the caravan. “A little Arab girl brought a young antelope to sell,” Parsons observed, “which was bought by a Greek merchant, whose tent was next to mine, for half a piastre” (113). Despite living in barren lands which the Enlightenment literati mostly associated with nomadism, despotism and robberies, Arabs showed a commercial spirit of improvement. As William Beawes, an English traveller in these lands in 1745, noted, “cattle and labour are no small articles of profit…” in these caravan routes (38).

The urge for gaining profits further encouraged manufacturing. In Rava, near the river Euphrates, Parsons noted how “two manufactories” operated in town: “one of cotton, the other of hair-cloth, with the latter that make tents, and loose long robes to travel in, whether on foot on horseback” (102). Parsons was amazed when he checked the quality of the products of these “manufactories”: “those for summer are fine and light, those for winter (or rather the rainy season) are strong and close wove, so as to keep out rain much better than any woollen cloth” (102). In observing how Arabs used cotton and hair-cloth to make tents, Parsons learned how the “woollen cloth”, the pride of eighteenth-century English factories, was not the best material for producing water-proof tents.  

Parsons was amazed of the kind of inventions, tools and machines the inhabitants used whilst seeking to extract profits from labour. For instance, he observed how Arabs fixed water machines on the banks of the Euphrates, a river which is sometimes “as broad the river Thames at Greenwich” (91). Here there were seven water machines, Parsons noted, “which work without any trouble when once fixed, by the means of the current in the river” (95). He did not see these machines as primitive or far from being equal to English ones. In Rava, a town located on the
banks of the river, moreover, “There is a machine, containing six wheels, to raise water at the west end of the town, behind which is a beautiful extensive lawn in all the pride of nature” (98). Sixteen miles from Annah, Parsons encountered “ten water machines, on both sides of the river: there are two between our camp and Annah, for the use of the long piece of ground now sown with wheat, which will they reap in ten days” (100). Here the inhabitants’ industriousness appeared in Parsons’ observations of the amount of labour they spent in the efforts to haul water from the Euphrates. Contrary to the Scots literati’s view of Arabia as the lands of idleness, beggary and robberies, Parson showed how the lands where the caravan travelled was also one of human and commercial progress, human industriousness and inventiveness.

For Parsons, the inhabitants knew how to extract profits from nature. Near a lake in a town he named Hagley, Parsons, noted how collecting salt was a good source of income for the people living in this area. The surface of the lake “is covered with a cake of salt, about one third of an inch thick, which appears like ice,” Parson wrote, “when hundreds of people are employed to collect it, and send it to Aleppo and other cities and towns in Syria, as far as Damascus” (73). The abundance of nitre in deserts’ soil never went unnoticed by the inhabitants, as Parsons observed, who normally were employed to

gather it when the dews subside (about the latter end of June and in July), and, as much dirt is gathered with it, it is carried to the place where we encamped on Tuesday the 12th, where they refine it by boiling, and send it for sale in the adjoining countries, as far as Bagdad, which is three hundred miles distant. (95)
Finding huge sources of profits amongst the desert tribes, Parsons further noted how idleness associated with begging and plundering the caravans and travellers was not a common phenomenon in these spaces. The cultivation of commercial spirit in these lands encouraged a sense of industriousness and discipline.

For Carmichael, as we saw in chapter one, the salt in this area reminded him of an ancient Biblical image of the manna sent to the Israelites. Carmichael saw it as a metonymy of ancientness and a repository of Biblical stories. His scientific eyes, nevertheless, wanted to confirm to him that Biblical stories are true and thus religion and empirical thinking can be reconciled. Parsons’s reconciling eyes were concerned with other things, other than science and religion. Parsons was more concerned about the present commercial practices of extracting profit from nature and how commercialism does not necessarily stop the society from contributing humanely and morally to alleviating social ills. While travelling in a town named Coote, near the Euphrates, Parsons noted how the tribes living there were industrious and rather supportive of each other particularly when some members amongst them could not work or were in distress. “Not any lazy people amongst them, nor any beggars,” Parsons observed, that “[even] [t]he poor are very industrious, and the aged, sick, blind, and lame, are maintained by the public, when they cease to be able to work” (147). Parsons’s experience of travelling in Arabia introduced him to a kind of commercial people whose search for material wealth did not necessarily affect their common humanity. For Parsons, his Middle Eastern journey introduced him to the societies whose commercial and industrious spirit did not necessarily extinguish public spirit.

2-Commercial and Sociable People
For Parsons, commercial interaction includes a great deal of sociability and promotes human civility and peace. But this phenomenon should not be viewed as exclusively British or European. In the market of Aleppo, Parsons was far from experiencing local cultural prejudices, jealousies and religious bigotry. Even he mentioned how the environment of commercialism in Aleppo fostered peace and harmony among European residents. “Upon the whole, the French, English, Italians, and Dutch, live as comfortably....as there is always a good harmony subsisting between them, and even if their countries are at war at home, they not only live peaceably, but amicably there...”(66). Such a spirit of amicability was fostered by commerce. It occurred in a tolerable, tolerating and accommodating city where Europeans and Muslims cared about profits--not religious and cultural differences.

The prevalence of the same spirit was also noted in Baghdad and Basra. Arriving at Baghdad, Parsons noted that this city “is the grand mart for the produce of India and Persia, Constantinople and Aleppo, and Damascus; in short, it is the grand oriental depository, there being a continual intercourse by caravan[s]....” (127). At the same time as the Muslim Persians were besieging Basra in 1775, Parsons was strolling in its rich markets, noting the kinds of commodities found in its khans and souks where the caravan disposed the goods brought from Aleppo, Damascus, Constantinople, and Europe. For Parsons, Basra was “a place of very great trade, owing to its convenient situation, as merchants can here purchase the produce of most parts of India, Persia, and Arabia, at the first hand...” (154). For Parsons, the trans-connectivity and globality of the caravan fostered cosmopolitanism. He noted how Muslims, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Ottomans, Indians and Europeans participated in a global circle of trade. In Basra, as Parsons confirmed, “[i]n
consequence of these [trading] advantages, there are many rich Armenian and Jew
merchants, as well as Turks and Christians, both natives and foreigners, who
purchase either on commission, or on their own account on speculation, and resell to
such merchants as come here at stated times to purchase” (154). An environment of
credit needed an atmosphere of trust. No cultural, religious or national prejudices
could make these transactions profitable.

Parsons observed how Ottoman and Arab rulers encouraged trade. The
Muslim governor of Baghdad, as Parsons confirmed, “obliges himself to make good
all deficiencies upon any merchandise which the merchants may be robbed of
between the ferry and Baghdad” (104). Like what Parsons noted about the European
consuls and residents in Aleppo, the commercial spirit of improvement among the
Ottoman officials required that they be communicative with and civil to foreign
merchants. After the caravan left Baghdad, as Parsons observed, “four custom-
house officers from Baghdad paid us a visit; they numbered the bales, cases, and
packs of merchandize of the whole caravan, and behaved very civilly” (111). The
Muslim rulers of the big cities across the overland routes to India invited Europeans
to trade in their territories. Their tax policies revealed their commercial aspirations.
According to Parsons, the Muslim governor of Baghdad:

- exacts a duty from all Turkish subjects of eight per cent. on the
  value or current price of each article at the time of arrival, and three
  per cent. from all European or Franks, both on importation and
  exportation, into or from Baghdad, Bussora, or any other part of his
  own territories....(104)

Across these routes, Muslims rulers encouraged commerce and trade; they were
commercial improvers. Rather than agreeing with the Enlightenment philosophers
who proposed that Oriental rulers were generally despotic and therefore unwilling to nurse a spirit of commerce, Parsons showed the complete opposite. The prevalence of a spirit of commercial improvement in these spaces affected the ways the inhabitants interacted with foreigners. Nursing a commercial spirit of improvement granted the commercially minded among the Arabs some sociable skills and practices of cosmopolitanism and civility. An Arab Sheikh from a wealthy tribe, as Parsons mentioned, was interested in conversing and communicating with the European merchants in the caravan. He was “more inquisitive and particular in his enquiries after European customs,” Parsons wrote, “than any Arab or Turkish I had hitherto been acquainted with, which brought him often to my tent, when he would be very communicative” (110). Parsons, a merchant himself, also interacted with the Arab Sheikh. In communicating with the Arab Sheikh about how the modes of subsistence prevalent in the area, Parsons learned that a spirit of economic improvement also exists among these tribes. Parsons showed fascination when hearing how

the young men of his and his two brothers’ caravans serve for three years; after which they return to the tribe with the money they have saved, where those who are not married procure themselves wives, while an entire new set of men return to serve another three years in the same service, bringing with them a recruit of young camels for the use of the caravan, on which they ride. (111)

In this commercial environment, Parsons learned how members of a tribe set out to seek self-interest by working for some years in the caravan. But self-interest here does not lead to harm in community since once they return back the money which they collected goes into fostering harmony within the tribe.\textsuperscript{16} They spend the money
on weddings. This tribal habit offered Parson a glimpse on how the pursuit of individual interests contributes to public benefits. Parsons travelled in the spaces where its inhabitants were continually showing how the interests of the self and society are things far from being contradictory. These are the people with whom Parsons socialised and traded. His travels in the East were far from being solely premised on self-interest.

The Commercial Camel

In great numbers, Eastern camels had always been used as deliverers of travellers and commodities between deserts and cities. The camels, on whose backs Parsons loaded his commercial goods and provisions, were agents of economic progress. But around these animals merchants and other travellers in the caravan socialised and exchanged services. Within a commercial context, the use of camels facilitated profitable circulation and exchange. But human co-operation and communication were integral to the commercial practices occurring around the camel.

The common Enlightenment view of the Arabian camel was nonetheless different: scenes of exoticism and non-commercial primitivism dominated these views. In fiction, the former prevailed. William Beckford's Vathek (1786) presented the Oriental camel, one named Alboufaki, as a lazy animal who “delighted in solitude [and], constantly snorted whenever he perceived himself near a habitation” (172). Among the exotic Oriental paraphernalia in the enchanting universe of the book, the caliph's mother, Carathis, appeared to have constantly been “spoil[ing] him with indulgence, as constantly turned him aside” (172). The density of Beckford's fictional
enterprise generated fertile prose saturated with imageries of witchcraft, despotism and savagery. Beckford’s efforts to exoticise the East were far from posing the camel as a commercial animal. The laziness of the camel corresponds to the view in the book about indolent, non-industrious and non-commercial Orientals.

Still viewing the East within a polarising context, the Scottish literati posed the camel as an animal which belongs to primitive societies. Smith viewed the camel as a sign of an Arab age of nomadism, one far from reaching the civilised stage of commercialism where ethos of profits requests self-interest but at the end leads to the welfare of society. In the Lectures, he associated the possession of the camel, in addition to other animals such as sheep and goats, with pre-commercial nomadism where the absence of commercial, contractual relationships opened the door for oppression. In the second stage of human progress, as Smith noted, “Those who have not any possessions in flocks and herds can find no way of maintaining themselves but by procuring it from the rich” (202). When there is a gap between the rich who owned “flocks and herds” and the poor who did not own or owned less “flocks and herds”, despotic relationships prevailed. “The rich therefore, as they maintain and support those of the poorer sort out of the large possessions which they have in herds and flocks, require their service and dependence” (202). As nations move into the fourth stage of progress, which is commerce, master-slave relationships shift into a contractual domain of interaction in a law-based age of private property. Smith was aware of the corrupting effects which commercialism brings to society but he was sure that with all the corruption it shows commercial society was far from being despotic. “For when luxury and effeminacy have once got a footing in a country, one may expend in different manners a very large fortune without creating one single dependant” (202). In non-commercial, nomadic society,
the more the tribal leader owns camels, the more he becomes able to oppress the inferior members of the tribe.

Referring to the significance of the camel for Eastern despots, Ferguson agreed with Smith. Ferguson mentioned how the late seventeenth-century Italian travel writer Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri described Aurangzeb, the Indian emperor. Ferguson was particularly interested with how this ruler used his animals, including camels. In public, as Ferguson notes, the Indian despot used the camel to display his diamonds, aiming to impress his subjects, not to use his wealth to accumulate more wealth by entering the domain of exchange and sociability. The public display, Ferguson wrote, struck “an abject and admiring crowd” (390). The camel was a carrier of wealth and was employed for terrorising the public. In the presence of “that awful majesty... they [the people] were to strike the forehead on the ground, and be overwhelmed with the sense of his greatness, and with, that of their own debasement....” (390). For Ferguson the camel was shrouded with a sense of oppression, not labour and exchange. The camel was not a commercial tool in a market where the pursuits of wealth and exchange keep the ghost of despotic relations at bay.

Smith and Ferguson fixed the possession of the camel within the context of non-commercial despotism. Such a view appeared in an age when Britons emphasised the importance of equestrian cultural practices in their self-image as modern, commercial and polite people. According to Landry, “equestrian cultures and its offshoots, the sporting culture of hunting and racing, and the artistic culture of equine portraiture and sporting art, served imaginatively to express Britain’s ‘gentlemanly capitalist’ version of mercantilism during the nation’s rise to global
economic important between the late sixteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century” (Noble Brutes 3).

Based on this cultural perception of themselves as a people of the horse, many eighteenth-century English travellers in the deserts of Syria and Arabia did not like to ride the camel. Before Parsons was in the Levant, William Beawes, in 1745, showed a bit of discomfort when he was offered to ride the camel, observing that “this manner of travelling [is] nothing so commodious as we had imagined” (10). Even six years after Parsons undertook the journey, riding a camel was a considerable source of irritation for an English female traveller in Egypt. Eliza Fay, travelling in the Egyptian deserts in 1779, complained that “the motion of the camel and the uncouth manner in which the vehicle is fastened to them made such a constant rumbling sound among my provisions, as to be exceedingly annoying” (97). Fay, although accepting to ride the desert animal, showed slight aversion to the camel with, in Landry’s term, the “technology of discomfort” mounting its back, the Mahafee, a pannier attached to either side of the camel’s hump (“Saddle Time” 444).

The horse, on the contrary, was the animal that Mrs. Fay loved the most: “partial I ever was to these noble animals...” (99).

Henry Abbot’s fellow countryman and travel companion, Captain Richfort, had “a prejudice against the animal,” the camel, as Abbot himself told us in his travel narrative (52). J. Griffiths, an English sentimental traveller who crossed the Syrian deserts in 1785, reported that Mr H, “A gentleman, in whose family I had passed almost every hour,” in Aleppo, had “[t]he urgency of his affairs [compel] him to determine upon braving the dangers of the Desert” (347). Mr H, who was accompanied by Griffiths across the deserts, agreed to travel in a caravan comprising camels “the whole number [of which] approached two hundreds” (350).
But Mr. H, like Mrs. Fay, was “partial” to the horse—not the camel. As Griffiths pointed out, “Mr. H, determined to take with us a horse of great value, to which he was partial” (351-2). Such partiality which Mr. H showed in favour of riding the horse, rather than the Arab camel, reveals the extent to which the English in the eighteenth century saw themselves as modern people with equestrian sensibilities. These English travellers who felt discomforted when they were offered to ride the camel showed how the Enlightenment cultural perception of the camel was prejudiced.

Parsons, unlike these travellers who showed a prejudice against the camel, saw the animal as a powerful agent of industriousness, commercialism and also sociability. For Parsons, the camel was a perfect vehicle of commercial transportation across the deserts where food and water resources were scarcely available. Commenting on the capacity of the camels to withstand the fatigue of carrying heavy weight and even marching without food and water for a long time, Parsons wrote, “Our camels drank but once in twelve days, which was owing to their moist diet, as, excepting three days, they had plenty of good grass” (82). Even little amounts of food would perfectly satisfy the camel. In spring the camel eats the various grasses available alongside the river Euphrates, Parsons reported, but in summer “all is burnt up, and then the camels are fed with balls made of flour, water, and millets […]” (90). In summer “horses, mules and asses” could not “travel the desert” without having “water at least twice in a day,” Parsons observed, “whereas a camel, even without grass, can march four, five or six days without it” (90). He observed how the camel could cope with “not having food” for a long period of time. They “had been obliged to chew the cud” (92). “It is surprising to observe how docile these poor animals are,” Parsons wrote, “and how freely they travel whilst they have strength to do so, without beating […]” (108). These camels were sturdy and tough,
nevertheless, Parsons went on, that “they will continue their pace until they either drop dead on the spot, or as so much exhausted” (106). The camel was not exotic. It was rather an industrious and useful creature. Its labour fits the hard weather conditions prevalent in the deserts.

The utility of this animal struck Parsons. “[T]he camels [served] as a rampart, being sometimes, in numerous caravans, three or four ranks deep,” Parsons wrote, “in case of being attacked by a superior force” (82). The camel would become extremely important when the safety of the merchandise and the people in the caravan were at the line:

The camels are then made to lye down on their bellies, and the leg and thigh on one side are tyed together with a cord, to prevent their rising, and are so disposed as to encircle all the goods belonging to the caravan, within a void space sufficient to contain the provisions and water, and for the men to retire, and defend the same in case of being attacked by a superior force […]. (82)

In 1750, Plaisted noted the greater service the camel offered the travellers. He mentioned how the camel was a strong tool for protecting the goods and passengers in the caravan. “When the caravan is out-numbered, they make the camels lie down in a ring, and as it were intrench themselves in the middle; insomuch that they generally come off conquerors […]”, he marvelled (96). Caper moreover showed how the camel was important for the safety of the caravan. The camel was important for what Capper called “[t]he useful mode of encamping” (61). Here is this “useful” mode:

when the caravan comes to the ground, the camel which carry the tent, the provisions and the baggage are drawn up in the centre,
and those with the bales of merchandise form an outer circle round them, by which means their loading makes a kind rampart; and the camels themselves having one of their fore legs tied up from another outer circle round the goods…. (61)

As the travel reports of these Englishmen showed, the Arab camel in the commercial spaces of the deserts was not only a vehicle for transporting goods and travellers across the commercial hubs prevalent there but also a weapon which the caravan travellers utilised in the efforts to defend themselves and their goods from robbers’ attacks. Here the camel was used as a medium of sociability, a medium which reconciled personal interests with the interests of the community of travellers in the caravan. The travellers in the caravan—regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds—worked together towards insuring “the useful mode of encamping”. This is a powerful way of rethinking the views in the Scottish Enlightenment that the camel was a sign of non-commercial despotism. But the social life surrounding the figure of this animal indicates the kind of people with whom Parsons travelled. These people were not those selfish merchants who only cared about their individual self-interest.

Dressing like a Local

[The Middle East was not this despotic and non-commercial space as the Enlightenment philosophers saw it. It is the spot where commercial processes occurred in the context of sociability]
An adaptable and cosmopolitan habit which Parsons nursed while travelling across these commercial routes and cities was wearing the local dress. Before the caravan set out across the deserts, the British residents in Aleppo or Basra and also the Arab leader of the caravan advised British merchants in the caravan to wear the Arab dress. Since wearing local dresses protects the European merchants from potential local insults and assaults. English travellers did not mind wearing the local dress. John Jackson, who crossed the desert in 1799, reported that in Basra “[e]very thing having been prepared, under direction of Mr. Manesty”, an East India Company representative, “for our departure to Bagdad” (37). These preparations included a contract drawn with “an Arab Sheikh, named ABDALLA TEER, a very respectable man” who promised “to conduct us safely thither; for which we paid him 1300 piastres” (37). For Jackson, what appeared mostly important whilst preparing to set out across the desert was the wearing of the Arab clothes: “[t]he clothes [were] provided for each person[…]” (38). He lists the local items as following:

1 Arab cameline or riding cloak.
2 Under coats.
2 Pairs of drawers.
2 Shirts.
1 Cumberland.
1 Turban.
1 Woollen cap; and
1 Pair of yellow slippers (138).

Ten years before, Henry Abbot also wore these items. For Abbot these items make “A complete Arab dress” (109). Even before Jackson and Abbot, Parsons mentioned how the strong winds in the deserts invited him to place “a gauze handkerchief under
In commercial caravan routes where the search for profits provided the merchant an opportunity to improve his material conditions, drawing contracts with locals proved necessary. Applying the terms found in these contractual relationships mostly depended on some social practices involving accepting local customs. A merchant in the East was not all concerned about gaining profits without caring for what the local society demanded from foreigners. In wearing the local turban, Parsons was able to show a sense of sociability beyond the narrow line of self-interest.

Wearing the turban here is a practise which insured personal safety within the context of adaptability. Nabil Matar and Gerald Maclean showed how early modern English accounts of Islam and the Ottoman Empire considered the turban “the most dominant, the most feared, and most awe-inspiring symbol of Islam” (215). For those Englishmen who wore the turban or wrote about it, Matar and MacLean added, two cultural attitudes appeared. There was “an attitude of fascination that took shape at the late Tudor court leading to entertainments at which aristocrats and royalty took pride in wearing turbans and other Muslim dress” (215). In addition to posing it as a source of entertainment, English representations of the turban revealed “rivalry and antipathy resulting from commercial and religious fears” (215). In many English writings, “The turban identified the Englishman who wore it as a compatriot who had chosen to separate himself from the community and join the unbelievers” (218). Such attitudes of antipathy towards an Islamic symbol did not figure in the Travels. For Parsons, the turban was not an exotic sign of Arabia or Islam. Neither wearing it was a sign of fear from the danger of the loss of one’s religious or national identity. As Parsons’ commercial observations and accommodating behaviour tell, wearing
the turban was rather a sign of British adaptability in commercial spaces of the Middle East.

Donning the turban was, to recall Abbot again, amongst the “[n]ecessaries for one, or two Gentlemen, on their Journey across the Grand desert of Arabia” (108). Jackson observed that foreign travellers, whilst across the desert, needed to “equip [themselves] like the Arabs” (x). Eliot, travelling across the desert in a desert caravan in 1750, emphasised the importance of wearing the native dress. “[A] turban and an outside coat will be sufficient, for it will be proper to conform a little to the custom of the country” (117). Particularly for a European merchant, wearing the turban was rather important, Eliot continued, “since [a European] hat will in some degree expose you to the insults of the children in the town in which you pass through” (117). As Eliot pointed out, across these commercial routes, habituating the self to local customs and dresses was what the English merchant needed to do. For the safety and security of the self and the goods demanded that the traveller follow some practical tactics of survival. From a practical travelling perspective, wearing the Arab dress, as the Travels shows, facilitated commercial practices. But it also revealed the accommodating and sociable character of the English merchant.

In Aleppo, Parsons wore the clothes which local rulers asked the European to wear. He donned the English hat, not an Arab turban. For Parsons, wearing the English hat was not a sign of national or religious pride. Rather he wore the English hat because “in case of non-compliance, should he be beaten by a Turk, or otherwise insulted, his consul could not obtain any redress for him, as the Turk who abused him would say that he did not know him to be a Frank […]” (57). Avoiding this sort of trouble, Parsons did what he was asked to do. Parsons’ flexible character was moulded in Aleppo where he bought the goods which he would later deliver across
the desert routes. When there was profit to be made, there was adaptability to local rules. The absence of objection to the rules of dressing up once the European traveller finds the self in an Ottoman or Arab territory demonstrates how a self-interested British traveller who is commercially driven does not disprove the idea of cooperating with local Arab and Muslim society.

But in Basra, where the European residents and travellers were expected to wear European dresses, Parsons and some English merchants, “the gentlemen” in the city, were attacked by the inhabitants. Whilst Parsons was strolling in Basra, the Persians were preparing to put the city under siege before capturing it in 1776. The inhabitants of Basra thought that these gentlemen were Persians wearing English dresses. They thus:

threw tiles and stones at us from the top of our houses, though we called to them in Arabic to forbear, as we were English; they answered we lyed, for that we were Agema (Persians) in English dress; but as it was so very dark, that we could not see each other at four yards distance, we were obliged to run the gauntlet, and we were so lucky as to escape without being knocked on the head, although we received many blows on the arms and shoulders, which left their marks for some days. (172)

Parsons and his English companions could not restrain such an attack except by using other tactics of survival such as speaking to the locals in their own language and also running away from the attackers. Conforming to local rules of dressing up was not a successful tactic of survival in Basra. But the commercial wealth which these lands afforded the English merchant proved worth taking the risk of complying with what local rulers asked the Europeans residents in their lands to wear. Joining the networks of trade prevalent across these lands, Parsons adapted the self to local
rules of dressing up regardless that these rules sometimes did not insure the safety of the English merchant. Across these commercial spaces, Parsons was not immune to local hazards and insults, a significant testimony that not all eighteenth-century British commercial improvers and self-interested capitalists abroad were men of empire and power. But it is also a testimony to the point that commercial improvement abroad was accompanied by exposing the self to perilous circumstances and also involved cultivating friendly relationships, tactics of adaptability and survival and practices of communication and cosmopolitanism. Parsons showed how his commercial life was not about corruption. It was not merely about self-interest. It was also engaged with cosmopolitan and sociable behaviour. Pursuing profits in the Middle East was thus not without its sociable effects and virtues.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we saw how Parsons was not travelling in the area imagined by the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers as nomadic, barbarian, rude and beyond the civilising stage of commerce. He was rather travelling in areas where commerce prevailed. Parsons wrote about commercial and industrious Muslims living in the Grand Desert Route. His contact with Muslims allowed him to reconcile commerce and public spirit. He found that commercial life did not deter people from finding a way to bridge the gap between self-interest and society. They were willing to do this by cultivating the notion of sociability. They traded and socialised, collected profits and exchanged ideas. This is what living and travelling in trade routes bring into the character of individuals. Commerce polishes individuals and makes them humane
creatures whose love of the self was not something which blocks their attachment to society. On the contrary, the pursuits of personal benefits call the individual to enter into a contractual relationship with his fellow commercial beings. These sociable relations occur in a context of voluntarism and consent, not cruelty or despotism. Parsons was a great believer in the importance of commerce as a reforming force in society. Telling what he saw in the Middle East helped him to affirm his beliefs.
Aleppo, the city from which Parsons bought his merchandise, is not on the Mediterranean. And the trade caravan that travelled overland to India used to operate between Aleppo and Basra, a city on the Persian Gulf. The commodities in this caravan moved back and forth between India, Mesopotamia, Syria and Europe. During the eighteenth century, there were also trade caravans that operated between Syrian coastal ports, such as Latakia, Antioch, and Tripoli. From these coastal cities, many India and Syrian commodities set out for Europe. The caravan journeys which J. Griffiths performed in 1785 from Antioch to Basra reveal how the caravan trade routes during the period plugged Europe, the Levantine Mediterranean, Aleppo, Basra and the Indian Ocean into a global circuit of trade. See Griffiths' *Travels in Europe, Asia Minor and Arabia* (London, 1805).

In Aleppo, the British Pro-consul “Charles Smith...and his nephew, Mr. William Smith, and the reverend Mr. Foster, chaplain to the factory...” accompanied Parsons “part of the way” to the place from which the caravan was meant to set out across the deserts, *Travels*, p.75.


On this tension, see J.G.A Pocock’s *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

In 1731, Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, a Tory leader and political philosopher, showed his anti-commerce sentiments. He considered that "Money, the Root of all Evil...binds together Persons of the Most opposite Complexions, and is a more lasting Tie than Honour, Friendship, Relation, Consanguinity or Unity of Affections", The Craftsman, Vol I (Russell-Street, Covent -Garden: R. Franckif, 1731), 125. William Collins in his 1742 poem Hassan; Or the Camel Driver contrasts the virtue of poverty and the dread of wealth: “Thrice Happy they, the wise contend the poor/ From Lust of Wealth, and the dread of death secure!/ They tempt no desert and no griefs they find;/ Peace Rules the day, where reason rules the mind”, The Complete Works of William Collins, Thomas Gray and Oliver Goldsmith, ed., Epes Sargent (New York: G.P Putnam& Sons, 1871), p.32.

On the nature of this tension in the Scottish Enlightenment, see the collections of essays in Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment, ed., Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

On how commercialism improves the political order, see part two in Albert O. Hirschman’s The Passions and Interests: Political Argument for Capitalism before Its Triumph (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

On how the tension between commercialism and virtue can be solved in a context of sociability, see John Dwyer’s Virtuous Discourse: sensibility and community in eighteenth-century Scotland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987). For James R. Otteson, the marketplace was an ideal space in Smith’s work where humans interact and exchange commodities and also refine the passions. See his Adam Smith’s Marketplace of Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

This chapter draws on what H. Furber found in his study of the commercial interaction between Britain and India in the period before the high age of imperialism. See H. Furber, “Asia and the West as Partners Before ‘Empire’ and After”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 28:4 (1969): 711-21


Smith was proud of the superiority of English woollen cloth. “But the hardware and the coarse woollens of England are beyond all comparison superior to those of France....”, *The Wealth of Nations*, p.5

As James Mather noted, “the [Levant] Company placed formal restrictions on bringing wives and families”. So “The general expectation,” Mather continued, “was for the Levant merchant to sustain bachelorhood until he made his fortune, then marry upon his return”, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p.80.

We do not know if Parsons was married in the Levant or not, but one might claim that his observations on the way the Arab guards aim to get married after a period of hard work was an inspirational moment for Parsons to further seek financial improvement in the East so that he could return to England with the enough money which would enable him to obtain a partner from a socially advanced class.

On the social, commercial and even literary significance of the Arabian camel in different historical stages, see Robert Irwin’s *Camel* (London: Reaktion, 2010).
CHAPTER FOUR

SENTIMENTS: DONALD CAMPBELL, A JOURNEY OVERLAND TO INDIA PARTLY BY A ROUTE NEVER GONE BEFORE BY ANY EUROPEAN (1795)

[Campbell agrees with the Scots literati that the interaction between self and society tames wild passions and polish the manners. But he did not allow that this interaction should occur in the context of commerce. Indeed, Campbell believed that modern commercialism encourages cultural prejudices, political radicalism, colonial conquest, despotism and slavery: these social ills express wild and untamed passions. For Campbell, a sentimental rhetoric of sympathy, pleasure and pain focuses on public duty, seeking to reform the excess of economic individualism and expose the prejudices of the rationalists. His critique and satirical account of modern change strives to reawaken the purity, morality, innocence of the past and traditional values, showing how the old idea of public spirit contradicts the new forces of materialism and individualism. Campbell’s desires of defending the established political order in Britain and also reforming the corrupting grip of modern commercialism in Britain and in India used features of sentimentalism to negotiate the tension between the forces of change (modernity) and conservative reactions to them (ancientness). A political, social and economic stage upon which these desires and sentiments were projected was the Syrian and Mesopotamian overland route to India. Muslims used ancient traditions based on public spirit and social responsibility in their efforts to reform new self-interested and individualistic practices. Narrating his travelling experience, Campbell sets out to rethink and re-evaluate the common idea in the Scottish Enlightenment that the past is primitive and present is progressive]
The last three decades of the eighteenth century witnessed dramatic political events which deepened the tensions between those who believed in the need for radical change and those who preferred preserving ancient ideas, beliefs and political structures without denying the importance of reforms. The context here was the emergence of some political changes which shook Britain but also had some implication on the nascent British imperial engagements in the East. In 1776, some North American colonies became independent from Britain. In 1789, the French rebelled against the monarchy, aristocracy and the church. They pursued a tough revolution which changed the political landscape into one of bourgeoisie republicanism, a form of political rule which had its supporters among the radical rationalists in Britain. In the two decades after Plassey (1757), the East India Company also changed its old structure, one primarily based on commerce. The EIC began matching commerce with military expansion. The old maxims of the Scottish Enlightenment which proposed that commercial relations between peoples and nations leads to peace—not war, conquest and oppression—were no longer convincing for many late eighteenth-century moralists. During this period, Donald Campbell, a Scottish Highlander of rank and property, was one of those moralists who found it deeply distressing to accept change in its current radical form. In 1783, he crossed the Syrian-Mesopotamian between Britain and India. He recounted his observations of Muslim character, politics, and culture in an account titled A Journey Overland To India Partly by A Route Never Gone Before by any European, first published in 1795. Two editions were published between 1795 and 1796. Between 1796 and 1797, moreover, two abridged editions appeared under this sensational title: A Narrative of Extraordinary Adventures And Sufferings by Shipwreck & Imprisonment of Donald Campbell, EsQ. Of BARBRECK with The Singular Humours of His Tartar Guide, Hassan Artaz Comprising The Occurrence of Four Years and Five Days, Overland Journey To India.
From an aristocratic background, Campbell belonged to a clan which had a long history of service in the British army and state. Campbell served as a captain in the East India Company. His father also served in the East India army before him. At home the Campbell clan fought with the Hanoverian Crown against the rebellious Scottish Highlanders during the Jacobite Rebellion (1745). After the Rebellion, clan Campbell led the efforts of the central government in London to annex the Highlands of Scotland into market capitalism.²

Campbell was no Mandevillian and thus was sure that self-interest leads to corruption and despotism, not to public benefits. Despite being a supporter of an expanding British empire in his native Highlands, Campbell nevertheless was far from believing that a model of political rule primarily dependent upon commercialism and conquest establishes a healthy and just polity. This mode of governance not only encourages excess but also endangers local and native traditions, and fuels people’s hatred to the ruler. It also poses the character of the ruler as one of despotism and cruelty, rather than virtue and honour. Defending the ancient traditions of the Highlanders while supporting the Union with England, Campbell did not believe that the idea of change necessarily demands silencing the traditions of the past. Here passions (sympathy, pleasure and pain), as we shall see, step in to negotiate this tension between modern progress and older values, cultural forms and even social structures. Passions, not commerce or reason, allowed Campbell to move beyond self-interest in the hope to reform modern corruption.

Campbell thought that passions bridge the gap between self and society. In A Letter to the Marquis of Lorn on the Present Times (1798), Campbell recalled how a life of an aristocrat and statesmen in a commercial London weakens the sense of duty and dulls public spirit. A statesman should not go on behaving and acting like a bourgeoisie individual, one whose life borders on material excess and economic individualism. “You
are called upon, then, by every public principle, as well as every private motive, to reside a great deal in that country, of which you are one day in the course of nature (if the active energy of Jacobinism, and the unjustifiable indolence and supineness of the propriety of the land, do not overturn all property), to be chief” (Campbell, *A Letter* 56). For Campbell, the private life of the Duke of Argyll, one mostly spent in London, allowed a “spirit of revolt” among the common people in Scotland (*A Letter* 57). “Those things could not well happen, if every great man remained upon his estate, by his presence and counsel to give a proper direction to the sentiments and opinions of his people” (*A Letter* 57). An aristocrat had a moral duty towards the people below him in rank and status. The ordinary people’s sentiments might go wild and thus need the guidance of the aristocrat who is willing to move beyond the narrow life of individualism and set out to embrace public responsibility. This political comment needs to be emphasised in an age of individualism, excessive reliance on reason and political radicalism.

The supporters of the French Revolution who called for the replacement of the old monarchical regime by adopting a new bourgeois republican rule frightened Campbell. The duty of British statesmen here is to oppose the arrival of this terror on British soil. And this can only happen when a leader guides the emotions and moral sentiments of the public, not indulge the self in private and material concerns. The Enlightenment idea of progress which inculcated this spirit of change within the people’s minds was partly responsible for causing a revolutionary spirit in North America and Europe. But Campbell was sure that reviving the old duties of the ruler checks the spreading of this bourgeoisie spirit of revolt in Britain. Public spirit thus needs to be strengthened. A political contract of duty and love needs to be redrawn between the rulers and the ruled so that the idea of changing the current political scene can prove impractical—unlike what happened in France. Passions act the role of the political citizens, not economic individuals.

Campbell’s views of the relationship between the Highlands and Britain, and Britain
and France, were not different from what he previously proposed on the nature of Britain’s interaction with India. In the part of the Journey which recounts his political observations of India, Campbell shows himself to be a believer that India should be part of the British Empire. But he was not a supporter of a policy of conquest, one which allows the ruler to interfere in local traditions and customs. In India, Campbell corresponded with Warren Hastings, aiming to mediate the delivery of the province of Bidanore to the East India Company “without drawing a sword” (151). Despite the awareness he showed when speaking of how Hastings “now stands for the judgement of the highest Tribunal”, he praised “the liberal and great system of [Hastings’] administration” in India, his “politeness”, his “sound, acute and brilliant talents,” his “vast and comprehensive mind”, his “sociable, amiable, meek and unaffected” manners and his “truly benevolent disposition” (Journey 155; 162). But he challenged the policy of conquest and aggression which the Company now began pursuing in its efforts to annex Indian territories into its own jurisdiction. For Campbell, Britain should not rely on a policy of conquest and commercial excess in India. Rather Britain should put forward a policy of moral responsibility and honour when dealing with Indians and their local rulers.  

The traits which Campbell found in Hastings contradict those which Edmund Burke, who led a campaign in the British parliament to impeach Warren Hastings, proposed when declaring that the governor general’s practices in India were “Crimes and Misdemeanour”. But Campbell was in total agreement with Burke that Britain needs to move beyond a policy of conquest and oppression in its dealings with India. Conquest is not the solution. Campbell was in favour of negotiating and ratifying agreements between the Company and local Indian rulers, most notably Tippoo Sahib and Hayat Sahib, who governed the provinces of South India. He was also far from allowing for British intervention in local Indian traditions, even that one of these traditions such as burning widows after their husbands die was not something he agreed with. Campbell was an advocate of British
imperialism in India, but he was far from accepting cruel and corrupting activities in British policies drawn from the idea of defending commerce. For him, the character of a ruler, whether in Britain or India, should focus on public honour, rather than narrow self-interest. Railing against the cruelty of Indian rulers and also against the policies of conquest and self-interest of some British military rulers in India, Campbell sought to reconcile an emergent form of rule, one of imperialism and commercialism, with an old civic one, one of public duty and honour, which poses the ruler as a benevolent patron who cares about the interests of his subjects.⁶

Campbell’s account of Muslims’ culture, religion, rule and rulers helped him to redefine virtue and morality in an age when many in Europe were suspicious of and hostile to older political, cultural and economic values, habits and traditions. Campbell found it timely to tell the British public that in the land stationed between Britain and India, namely the Middle East, he encountered a culture, society and political rule which cultivated, rather than curbed, older habits and traditions. Unlike the Scots literati, he did not view Muslim customs, habits and traits as the ways which perpetuated older primitive ages and ancient modes of subsistence. For Campbell, ancient modes of life and cultural habits were not signs of primitivism and savagery. Muslim cultural habits and customs address and critique corruption, despotism and excessive commercialism. Here desires emerge as bearers of political messages which warn against the idea of improvement in its modern, commercial and rational form, one previously adopted by the Scottish literati. Campbell posed the Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to India as the stage upon which he projected his political conservatism, fears of modern commercial change and also hopes to redefine moral improvement.

Sentimental Discourse between Commerce, Politics and Virtue
Campbell was a father of two children, John and Fredrick, whose moral improvement was his main concern while writing his travel observations. To that end, Campbell affiliated his narrative with this generic tradition in fiction called ‘sentimentalism.’ Sentimentalism in literature marked the scenes of tears, emotions, sympathy, suffering and pleasure which explain the relationship between a feeling individual and unfeeling world. In most of the sentimental works which appeared during the period, sentimentalism seems to be a moral virtue. But sentimentalism also emphasised the subjectivity and private space of the virtuous being who, instead of setting out to change the corruption of the world, withdrew into his inner moral self. Sentimentalising the genre of travel writing, showing emotional moment of sufferings, feelings and tears in the narrative, arguably began with the effect which Lawrence Sterne’s semi-fictional *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) had on the literary scene in Britain. Like Sterne, and other sentimental writers of the period, Campbell presented his feelings and emotions in a moral message, one delivered about the changing economic and political landscape in modern times. But the difference between the old sentimentalism and late eighteenth-century sentimentalism was that instead of presenting a moral message by allowing for withdrawal from the world into the inner self, Campbell found it important to adopt the idea of reform; that is, to immerse himself in the problems of the world.

A conservative moralist such as Campbell was not a late eighteenth-century revolutionary Jacobin who cared about reason, not passions. Nor did he resemble the anti-Jacobin writers who cared about the cancelation of passions and instead cultivate public duty: sentimentalists here are looked at as supporters of individualism and passive reactions towards modern corruption. Rather, Campbell was the kind of anti-Jacobin writer who cared about reconciling emotions with public duty in the context of reforming the social, political and economic ills of economic individualism and radical beliefs in reason and rationality. His sentimentalism was political and reformative and its main enemies...
were commercialism, individualism and modern radical changes in government and the old class system.\textsuperscript{12}

Eighteenth-century political thought, as J.G.A Pocock argued, emphasised the “tension” between the discourse of commerce and the discourse of virtue (49). For the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, people who set out to exchange money and commodities among themselves have shown refined and sociable manners and polite behaviour. The commercial minds of the Enlightenment noted that moral corruption and the loss of old views of autonomy and liberty were things to be expected in this modern age of commerce and specialisation. But “any loss of virtue which specialisation entailed,” as Pocock notes, “was a price well paid for the increase in economic, cultural and psychic capacity” (122). The idea of progress primarily focused on accumulation and circulation: capital, paper credit and movable property. The anti-commerce camp, whom Pocock called “civic humanists”, devised a common ground in which the citizen, rather than the merchant, “needed a material anchor...in the shape of land [which] guaranteed him leisure, rationality, and virtue”: a virtuous man was a man of “diversification” rather than specialisation (111). Immovable property secured the individual liberty and stability in the face of what Smith in \textit{The Theory of Moral Sentiments} called “the invisible hand” of the market, one of “caprice”, “luxury” which, in Smith’s sympathetic designation, contributes in enriching society but was far from allowing the old sense of “justice” or “humanity” to gain a firm hold over it (273). Around notions of ownership of land gather ideas on autonomy, traditions, religion, values and morals which the civic humanists saw as disappearing in this age of commercial rise. Suspicious of commercialism, Campbell was a defender of the older aristocratic system of landed property and monarchy, a system “too deeply entrenched, imaginatively and in fact,” Wolfram Schmidgen writes, “to be run by what we have come to recognize, with good reason, as the commercialisation of eighteenth-century England” (7).
Campbell negotiated the tension between new and old political and social regimes, traditions, values and morals. His travel observations represent a thought experiment on how one can preserve the old, ancient traditions and political structures and habits in the presence of a dominant ideology of commercialism and political radicalism, one which allowed for self-interest and private will to change one’s current conditions in the form which one sees suitable. For Campbell, using the discourse of the sentimental strengthens the traditions and habits of civic humanism and public spirit in a society of market driven values and radical political demands for changing the old political order. The feelings, passions and desires which he projected on Islamic society allow Campbell to pass a political message on how Europeans and Britons need to rethink their relationship with bourgeois values, economic individualism and excessive use of reason, the means to seek political and social change.

Sympathy

In the wake of the French Revolution, the print scene in Britain became politically polarised: there appeared the views which supported the French republican model and also the views which opposed it. One common theme which appeared in the rhetoric of both those who supported and also those who opposed the Revolution was the role of religion in the polity. Richard Price was a preacher and also politically active. His religious sermons were politicised. One of them appeared in his *Discourse of the Love of Our Country* (1789) where he primarily set out to guide people into “Truth, Virtue and Liberty” (11). Price was a rationalist preacher and a dissenter from the established church. He was a great believer in the idea that true religion cannot be separated from reason and liberty: "a rational service, consisting not in any rites and ceremonies, but in worshipping God with pure heart and practising consciousness.....gloomy and cruel superstition will be abolished
which has hitherto gone under the name of religion, and to the support of which civil
government has been perverted” (13). Writing in the wake of the American and French
revolutions “in which every friend to mankind is now exulting”, Price believed that “An
enlightened and virtuous country must be a free country. It cannot suffer invasions of its
rights, or bend to tyrants” (14-19). A man of religion can be one of reason, not superstition.
But also a man of religion can be one of political radicalism and revolutionary politics.
Although being no part of the institution, the clergy, as Price’s career shows, do have a role
to play in the political sphere.

In the newly emerging political scene of radicalism, Thomas Paine, whose support
of the French and American revolutions was based on optimism and reason, did not
believe that the clergy can be libertarians and further argued that religion has no role to
play in people’s efforts to gain political justice. In The Age of Reason (1794), Paine spoke
of the existence of a supernatural architect who creates order in the universe, but he,
unlike Price, did not believe in revelation. “I do not believe in the creed professed by the
Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek Church, by the Protestant church, by
the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of” (3). Any
form of organised religion parallels corruption, and morality stems from the voice of
reason, a conscious willingness of humans to do good deeds to their fellow humans. “My
own mind is my own church”, rejoiced Paine (3). Because he suspected the totalitarian
role which religion can play in politics and society, Paine became a deist.

In 1790, Edmund Burke published his Reflections on the Revolution in France, a
rebuttal to republican and revolutionary politics which associated enlightenment with
divergence from the old political model associated with cherishing institutionalised religion,
the aristocracy and monarch. Responding to Price’s revolutionary politics, Burke was
particularly concerned with how the clergy have now begun participating in the political
scene by showing radical dissent from the old alliance between the clergy, aristocracy and
monarch. Seeing this change, Burke rushed into showing how it is importance that people separate politics from religion: “politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement” (94). Showing discomfort of the intermixture of religion with politics, Burke replied to Dr. Price thus:

No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties. Those who quit their proper character, to assume what does not belong to them, are for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave and, and of the character they assume. Wholly unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in all its affairs, on which they pronounce with so much confidence, they have nothing of politics but the passions they excite. (94)

Whereas Price saw the ideal role of the clergy as one which advocates reason and liberty, Burke saw it as a moral force which tames wild passions, one far from meddling with politics. Thus three views of the role of religion and the clergy appeared just during the period before Campbell’s journey was published: Price’s political activism; Burke’s conservatism which posed the clergyman as a moral healer, not a political activist; Paine’s deism which associated morality and liberty with the voices of reason, not religion or religious people. Campbell was aware of these views which directly relate to the new tension between the old and emergent political rule and thought, one between older social and moral coherence of the monarchy and another based on private consciousness and personal rights of pursuing change by installing a republic.

In travelling in lands where religion and the clergy were part of the structure of a monarchy, the Ottoman and Arab Middle East, Campbell responded to the tension in the late Enlightenment between religion and politics. As I will show, Campbell reconciled the three views: he defended a religious creed which upheld love, fellow feelings and morality,
not the prejudices of the liberal minded and the religious enthusiasts. But he also posed the role of the Muslim clergy in a Muslim monarchy as a moral and political force which allows virtue, banishes prejudices, removes despotism and checks the inhumanity of the market. The clergy do not fuel revolutions. Rather they strive to meet the political rights of the people. His observations of the moral and political function of religious figures and structures in the Middle East offered Campbell the opportunity to prove the mistakes of the new voices calling for the importance of moving beyond religious teachings and instead relying on the voice of reason. But he also responded to the views which spoke of the depoliticised role of the clergy.

Campbell begins his travelling observations with a response to the emerging view after the French revolution that the cancelation of the role of religion in the public sphere and also in the state grants people the freedom of choice to decide what is good for them without an external power affecting their lives. The views of the liberals, according to Campbell, were far from being benevolent. Here his knowledge of the politics of Islam becomes a means with which he aims to expose the ignorance of the liberals. Liberals “must think” that the manners, religions, government of the “Turks”, argued Campbell, were nothing but an “absurd” system:

unaided by enlightened philosophy which learning and learned men, acting under the influence of comparative Freedom, and assisted by the art of Printing, have diffused through the mass of Europeans; and living under a climate most unfavourable to intellectual or bodily exertions, they exhibit a spectacle which the philosophic and liberal mind must view with disapprobation, regret and pity. (Journey 5)

Campbell did not find much difference between non-religious liberals and also Christians when both use their views of the role of religion in the public sphere to rail against Islam. He recalled the “unalterable errors” in the ways many European Christians think that
irrationality in Muslims stems from “the artful intertexture of religion with Government” (11):

It would be wonderful, then, if the Turkish Constitution, founded on the Koran, was not looked upon with abhorrence by the bulk of the Christian world; and more wonderful still, if the outrageous zealots of the Christian Church, who for so many centuries engrossed all the learning of Europe to themselves, should not have handed down with exaggerated misrepresentation every circumstance belonging to the great enemies of their faith. (11)

The radical rhetoric of secularism and liberalism which views all religions as being superstitious and backward and also the conservative views which saw religion as a moral, rather than political, force were both prejudiced towards Islam and Muslims. For secular liberals, Islam does not encourage the use of the mind: in other words, it does not allow for individualism. For conservative moralists, whom Campbell viewed as the confiscators of learning “to themselves”, Islam interferes in politics and thus could not grant moral healing in society. These views express contemporary British thinking of the role of religion in modern life. The new liberal view of religion may cause chaos, and the French liberals’ brutal acts against the clergy attest to this. But the old ways are no longer useful in an age when all Britons, whether clergy or otherwise, felt the need of the nation to increase political rights.

Campbell set out to rethink these views. In so doing, he projected contemporary desires of achieving improvement on Islam and Muslim clergy. For Campbell, the rhetoric of sympathy was the right way of approaching Islam. Campbell’s rhetoric of sympathy passes a political message on how the new and old biases need to be rethought in such an immensely important moment in the history of the British nation. “Should Mahomedanism and Christianity ever happen to emerge in Deism,” Campbell wrote, “the inhabitants of Syria and Europe will agree to consider each other even as fellow creatures”
(5). For Campbell, a deistic vision was loaded with fellow human feelings, not prejudices and bigotry which appeared in the discourse of those rationalists, non-religious liberals and also zealous Christians. Also it appears free from political rhetoric which fuels revolutions. But Campbell’s sympathetic sentimentalism was deeply political. It aimed to deter the clergy from participating in political and ideological rancour aiming to change the old system. In the Letter, Campbell, viewing the corruption of the Scottish clergy, took the gauntlet:

I had left [Scotland] with a well-found reverence for that body-learned, meek, and pious; charitable, sober, and diligent...But I must avow my disappointment was great and mortifying, to find, on my return, so many exceptions... In part of that body I found a sad reverse; a total revolution seemed to have taken place in their habits, their morals, their manners, and their professional conduct. In some of them the meek sanctity of the sacerdotal office was exchanged for the rancour of the republican, the furious enthusiasm of the democrat or Jacobin, and the restless, turbulent deportment of the factious politician. The mild precepts of religion were laid aside for the petulant, invective and self-sufficient dogmas of the new philosophy; and their piety, truth, and sincerity of the Christian were abandoned for the craft, dissimulation, and treachery of the French Jacobin.

(29-30)

The new philosophy of reason, individualism and contractual relationships—which were originally the creation of a life of commercialism—captured the minds of the clergy. His sympathetic deism, as his Journey shows, originates from this political vision centred on stripping revolutionary and republican reason, advancing the proposition that religion should not be utilised as a tool of change. It is rather the role of the clergy to spread humanity and operate morality, rather than revolution, within the hearts and minds of the
common people.

Campbell was aware that Britons have now encountered a new republican and ‘secular’ reality which the revolutionary force in France ushered in. The old regime comprised the clergy, aristocracy and the monarch. It is now gone. The new regime advocated the rule of the labourers and bourgeoisie. Rather than supporting the new French model, however, Campbell praised the Muslim’s clergy’s political and social work. Instead of fuelling revolutions, the clergy preserved order. Campbell found the role of the clergy positive in protecting the liberty of the people against the occasional whimsicality of the monarch as well as against the aggressive hegemony of commercialism. The Ottoman judiciary, mainly composed of the clergy, does not act as lackeys to Oriental despots. When the Ottoman Sultan, Mustafa III, in 1755, formed a plan to rebuild his “burnt down” palace in Constantinople, “it was determined that the only certain means” to prevent future accidents like this was “to leave a space of clear ground all around it, for which purpose the contiguous houses should be purchased from the proprietors, and demolished” (15). One of the owners of these houses, a woman, refused to sell to the Sultan, advancing the claim that “she was born and had lived here all her life, in that spot, would not quit it for any one” (15). The Sultan could not force her to leave the house. This is different from what one would expect to find in the English political system, mainly the parliament, where an institution originally designed to protect the people acts against the interests of the people. “Now in England,” Campbell protested, “for the convenience of a private canal, the Parliament would force her to sell” (15). A civic humanist, Campbell’s political rant shifts into one of protestation against the policy of commercialism which the British government backed.

This is the period which Markman Ellis has called “the canal age” (144). The mania for building canals in Britain, mainly in England, allowed the connection between different parts of the kingdom: the interior lands and also the agriculturally rich southern parts were
connected with commercial cities and ports. As Ellis notes, “The canal-building period was a significant financial and commercial event in itself, combining private capital and commercial speculation of the highest order (and profitability) with the promotion of works improving the public good (lowering the price of coal or wheat, for example) and effected by the first use of enforced purchase by Act of Parliament” (141). Critiquing the commercialising efforts to transform land into a space of production and labour, Campbell showed how in an Islamic state where the clergy checks the power of the monarch, the old view of the land as a space which insures liberty and honour was preserved. Islamic system of governance preserves landed liberty against the encroachment of the market forces, one facilitated by the building of canals— what Ellis calls “the magical facilitator[s] of trade” (142). The Ulama and Magistrates in Constantinople, Campbell argued, sided with this woman against royal authority, advising that “No...it is impossible! It cannot be done! It is her property” (15). For Campbell, the Muslim clergy operating in a monarchical system preserve people’s property and thus contribute to securing order in society. Of importance, in praising and showing sympathies to the ways the Muslim political system operates, Campbell posited himself as a defender of a limited system of a monarchy which gives the clergy the authority to check the monarch. He was in favour of this limited monarchical system during a British age of high commercialism and revolutionary politics.

For Campbell, the role of the clergy should not be totally depoliticised. Nor should it take the path of revolutionary politics. Rather the clergy should work towards curbing the excesses of monarchs, revolutions, and modern commercialism.

In addition to exploring the virtuous role of the clergy, Campbell rethought the views in radical circles in Britain that a monarchical rule is a despotic form of governance. Campbell’s familiarity of the nature and function of political rule in Islamic polities allowed him to rethink republican radical sentiments:

Were our opinions to be directed by the general belief of Europeans, we
should suppose that the life and property of every being in that vast Empire were irremediably at the mercy of the Grand Signiore—and that without the laws to protect, or any intermediate power whatever to shield them, they were entirely subject to the capricious will of an inexorable tyrant, who, stimulated by cruelty, sharpened by avarice, and unrestrained by any law human or divine, did everything to oppress his subjects, and carry destruction among Mankind. (11)

These are familiar rhetorical gestures which the Enlightenment philosophers and later radicals such as Paine projected on the character of a Muslim ruler. “I firmly believe, that, from the combination of ideas arising from those prejudices,” Campbell interjected, “there are few Christians who think or hear of the Grand Turk, that do not, by an involuntary act of the mind, instantly think of blood and murder, strangling with bowstring, and slicing off heads with cimeters” (12). For Campbell the Ottoman ruler is not an Oriental despot with limitless power over his people, one unchecked by the law, or even by the clergy and the holy religious book of Islam. “It is obvious his power is limited and under controul”, Campbell observed (12). The Quran, “Koran” as Campbell wrote, although being the constitution of the country, does limit the influence of the ruler. “[H]e is as much bound by the institutes of that book as any subject of his realm-is liable to depositions as they to punishment for breach of them, and indeed has been more than once deposed, and the next in succession raised to the Throne” (15). Rather than autocracy or theocracy, “[it]is equally certain that the Turkish Government is partly Republic”, not fully a republic as it was in France (18). Here Campbell rethought what was commonly known in Europe about the character of Islamic rule. But in so doing, he passes a critique on the republican sentiments which many radical thinkers, writers and clergymen in Britain adopted before and after France executed its own king. Campbell did not want to see a new execution of a king in Britain.
According to Campbell, rather than looking up to France where civil unrest and the reign of terror accompanied the transformation of the country into a republic, Britons need to look East where a limited monarchy guaranteed the people freedom and made them less fearful of despotism. Unlike common European prejudice that the “the People at large have no share in the legislation,” Campbell advised, “the Koran...precisely ascertained their rights, privileges, and personal security” (18). The Ulama, a body of scholars “composed of all the members of the Church and the Law, superior to any Nobility, jealous of their rights and privileges, and partly taken from the People, not by election but by profession and talents” form “an intermediate power which, when roused to exertion, is stronger than the Emperor’s, and stands as a bulwark between the extremes of Despotism and them” (13). The political system in an Islamic state was not totally monarchical; nor was the intertexture of religion and government designed to terrorize and ignore the legitimate claims of ordinary people. Campbell cited “one of the best and most liberal of our Historians on the subject, and which is of too great notoriety to be doubted”, arguing that people’s property is better secured in “Turkey” than in England.\(^{14}\) Campbell did not confirm what the Enlightenment philosophers, notably Millar and Kames, proposed that in the East the character of the ruler was one of absolute nature and rather unchecked by law or the clergy. In so doing, he forwarded a political message to the British group of radicals, such as Paine, who totally rejected older regimes which the monarchical system represented.

In addition to finding the power of the monarch limited and the security of the people ascertained, Campbell also finds that the empire of the Ottomans is not only a machinery of conquest which mainly sets out to spread Islam as many Europeans interested in the topic saw it. Rather “the energy of the Empire in its external operations is...very frequently” checked. Campbell mentioned how “Declarations of war have been procrastinated, till an injurious and irrevocable act of hostility has been sustained; and peace often protracted,
when peace would have been advantageous” (14). Campbell’s political observations of the nature of the “external operations” of the Ottomans conforms with his political vision of the nature of British rule in India. For Campbell modern empires should not sacrifice the old duty of the ruler at the altar of new commercial greed based on conquest and exploitation. Islamic imperial model is a useful model to be adopted.

In the Scottish Enlightenment discourse of improvement, the rights of people which are generally secured in Europe are never guarded in Asia. As the Scottish historian William Robertson in 1791 observed, “Institutions destined to assert and guard the rights belonging to the people of Europe, never formed a part of the political constitution in any great Asiatic kingdom” (264). For Campbell, this was self-evidently not true. Campbell was fascinated by the extent to which people’s properties were protected in the Ottoman Empire. He delivered this news to his son, wanting him to learn “that the common people are more, free, and that property and life are better secured in Turkey, than in some European countries” (16-7). “Their internal policy is, in many respects, excellent, and may be compared with advantage to that of any Nation in Europe” (17). For example, “Highway robbery, house-breaking, or pilfering, are little known and rarely practised among them; and at all times the roads are as secure as the houses” (17). There is here a sound of virtue which rails against the corrupting hand of commercialism. Seeking to reform the social disruption which commercialism caused in Europe, Campbell found in the political system of the Ottoman Empire a virtuous model to be emulated: one rarely finds commercial frauds being practised among people there. Campbell mentioned how Muslim governors punished frauds in the marketplace: “Bakers are the most frequent victims of justice” (17). Also gambling is rarely to be found in their midst, unlike what the “ladies” in the polite culture of commercial England were now fond of doing (18). Campbell mentioned how the Ottoman ambassador in London would probably have a lot to say about moral corruption in commercial England.
The trope of sympathy in Campbell's narrative often disguises this rhetoric which defends the established monarchical order and also aims at exposing the injustices caused by modern commercialism. Campbell set out to defend the old traditions, mediating a conservative message on the importance of taming the ill effects of contemporary political radicalism and commercialism. But Campbell was aware that old systems of landed virtue could not simply hold firm in a changing age. First, he liquidated the authority of religion by advancing the deistic model, one in which fellow feelings cancel self-interest and cultivates a public and cosmopolitan spirit. Second, he allowed that the power of the monarch can be curbed by the clergy who were chosen from the people because of their “talents” in managing the affairs of the state. They were not those who inherit lands and also political positions in the state. Setting out to offer a political message by using a sentimental discourse of sympathy, Campbell had the political system in an Islamic state as a model to be emulated by Britons. Here Campbell did not use essentialising tropes about despotic Muslim rulers, unlike those Enlightenment philosophers who were eager to express their optimism by way of contrast with the new political, social and economic changes in Britain. Fear of change in Britain, as Campbell showed, invites the idea of sympathising with what he considered useful political rule in monarchical government, one which mostly cared about the happiness of people and aimed at rooting out corruption from society.

Pleasure

In Aleppo, Campbell, was a man of virtue and feelings, not wealth, money and commerce. He socialised with people from different backgrounds and religions, not caring about ranks or status. Sometimes, “with an intelligent native” he walked about the town “in order to amuse away the time and see what was going forward, notwithstanding the cry of ‘Frango
Cucul!’ or ‘Cuckold Frank!’” (52). Campbell loved to stay in Aleppo: he described the city as “an Elysium”, an escape from the corrupting life prevalent in modern European cities (56). Campbell did not live with English residents and merchants who were operating under the economic and diplomatic umbrella of the English Levant Company. He stayed in the house of a French merchant whom he met while travelling in the Arab caravan between Latakia and Aleppo. The Frenchman was Campbell’s guide in Aleppo. He introduced him to the spaces where the traveller often finds entertainment and edification (coffeehouses), not wealth and profits (the markets or the bazars). The Frenchman once asked Campbell if he wants to join him for a walk, “observing that he thought I should be entertained with a view of” the coffeehouses (60). Unlike Parsons, as we saw in chapter three, Campbell was not interested in pursuing any trade or business in this commercial city. Because from a civic humanist’s perspective the accumulation of money parallels corruption, Campbell tried to keep away from it and rather find the spaces where he could get instruction and moral improvement.

Even the French merchant was far from discussing commercial deals with Campbell. Belonging to a nation whose revolutionary aspirations were based on the idea of looking forward into modern, free and prosperous future, the Frenchman appeared totally entrenched in the language of emotions and feelings, finding the tools to pass a political message on the excesses of the modern commercial and political scene in Europe.

Documenting the various cultural activities he encountered within the coffeehouse, Campbell went through a journey of moral enlightenment. He began by setting the stage for mainstream cultural perceptions of the value of print. He recalled how the people in Europe associate modern times with individualism and print culture, not oral traditions. Oral cultures and traditions directly link to a pre-commercial, pre-modern ages when people naively believed in the power of fairies and witches, rather than reason. But then
Campbell rethought these prejudices in the context of his friendship with the Frenchman whose company enlightened Campbell and informed him about the best unprejudiced way of understanding these people’s cultures and traditions. Living for some years in Aleppo and knowing the local language, the Frenchman explained to him how Muslims’ oral traditions do not necessarily relate stories about fairies and witches. Rather social, political and economic topics and concerns were part of what storytellers and shadow shows’ performers debated, negotiated and also introduced to their listeners.

Arriving at this moment of appreciating oral cultural activities, Campbell passed a political message on how the excessive use of reason in Europe fuelled social fragmentation and unrest. In this moment of excessive commercialism, reason and order which the culture of print disseminated, there is something missing: it is this moment of enjoying the pleasure of learning by listening to what people tell and narrate. Listening to other people’s stories and watching their performances encourage social interaction and coherence whereas reading print material encourages individualism and leads to social fragmentation and prejudiced rational thoughts. Differentiating between print and orality, Campbell notes that “when letters deny their friendly aid, we find among ourselves the deficiency supplied from the less ample resources of the memory; and story-telling, love talks, fairy tales, and goblin and ghost adventures, are recited around the villagers’ fire or the kitchen hearth in as great number, with as much ingenuity, and to as great effect, as they are found written in the innumerable volumes on the shelves of our circulating libraries” (59-60).

1-Arabic Storytelling

Accompanying his French host across the city, Campbell became now determined more than before to find out what kind of entertainment one may encounter in Aleppo. The
coffeehouses of Aleppo, Alexander Russell wrote in 1756, “naturally attract the notice of a stranger, more than any of the objects he meets with in rambling over the city.” (23). The emotions which emerge from viewing such a novelty carry political commentary on the social value and utility of oral traditions in this modern age of print culture, commercialism and individualism. “Come hither,” says the Frenchman, Campbell's friend, “come into this coffee-house, here is something going forward that may amuse you” (60). The Frenchman was keen to introduce Campbell to this kind of entertainment in Aleppo. He knew that this show was something which Campbell would not easily find at home. During the period, Paul Hunter notes, British “cultural energies ...resisted the past and sought new directions yet to be defined”, finding in the printed novel what satisfied new aspirations and ambitions, not in ritualised story telling (100). Campbell doubted the social benefits of adopting anything new. He mediated this political comment by introducing to his readers a literary model which, although in British Enlightenment terms of improvement reminded the people of the irrational past of fairies, magic and unreal life and romances, he thought to be socially and politically useful and grounded on the idea of reforming modern corruption.

Upon entering the coffeehouse, Campbell at first retained what later he would consider the prejudices which modern and commercial Britons attached to pre-commercial and oral cultures. “In Turkey”, Campbell noted, “the art of printing has not been known, where the circulation of literary production is chained down within the narrow compass of manuscript, and where therefore the efforts of genius are repressed by discouragement” (60). Oral storytelling is the product of cultures which do not encourage private reasoning, the cultural trait which Campbell found in nations which preserve their literary heritage in print. So the printed material refers to rationality whereas oral tradition indicates primitivism.

Here the people in the coffeehouse began debating the conclusion of the story: “the buzz grew loud, and soon increased onto clamour; when a scene ensued of so very
ludicrous a kind as forced me to cram my handkerchief into my mouth to suppress a laugh, or at least so to stifle it as to avoid observation” (61). Oral cultures are beyond reason. “They were disputing violently...and the beards were [...] ALL WAGGING” (61). Witnessing this enthusiastic performance, Campbell was entertained and elevated: “I became more convulsed with mirth” (61). At first glance, Campbell thought that this tradition of oral storytelling in coffeehouses breeds violence, excessive passion and irrationality. This is exactly what the Enlightenment philosophers attributed to the absence of commercialism in countries where people do not find the material means to join literary clubs and scientific societies, the spaces where they find the opportunity to develop their intellects and learn how to curb wild and irrational behaviour. “Is it possible [...] that a group of twenty or thirty rational beings,” Campbell wrote, “can be so far bereft of all common sense, as to dispute upon the result of contingency, which absolutely depends on the arbitrary fancy of an acknowledged fabricator of falsehood?” (63-64). In Muslim coffeehouses there is no “common sense” and contingency, the traits which allow people to use their private intellect to judge things (64). Oral traditions in coffeehouses do not improve people’s rational faculties but lead to forms of sociability unknowable in European societies.

The Scottish Enlightenment philosophers would not disagree with what Campbell noted of Muslims’ excessive passions and emotions. But for Campbell, a Highlander whose culture was proud of its oral traditions, a moment of agreement with the polarising discourse of improvement was a way of engaging with it in order to rethink modern calls for adopting the idea of the new (print) at the expense of the old (oral). This constructive way of engaging with the discourse of modernity greatly depends on the importance of social engagement, conversation and argument, rather than private reasoning, as guiding tools for reaching a stage of moral enlightenment. A sentimental hero cannot but seek moral improvement in the world, one free from polarising rhetoric or prejudices. Seeking pleasure in the coffeehouse offers Campbell the ability to test the practicality of the
polarising thinking about oral traditions delivered by the Enlightenment discourse of commercial improvement. In so doing, he forwarded a political message to those who believe in a commercial and modern scheme of improvement.

“You must know,” said the Frenchman to Campbell, “that he whom you took to be a madman, is one of the most celebrated composers and tellers of stories in Asia...” (62). Asians appreciated stories and storytelling. For the Frenchman, the Muslim storyteller “only wants the aid of printing, to be perhaps as eminent in reputation as CONTES, as Marmontel or Madam D’Anois” (62). The Frenchman was aware of the importance of the printed book as a tool which brings fame, but he was far from thinking that an ancient mode of story-telling cannot raise public spirit and thus seeks to reform modern corrupting practices. This oral tradition which Campbell encountered in the coffeehouses originally came from pre-Islamic Arabs’ passion for reciting poetry and heroic tales of love and chivalry. The tellers of these tales usually set out to amuse and entertain their listeners but also aim to convey moral messages. According to the Syrian poet Adonis, delivering stories and poems by reciting them to an audience was part of the “duty [of the poet] to give to the collective, to the everyday moral and ethical existence of the group” (14). The scene in the coffeehouse where the storyteller was able to reach beyond the self in order to improve and instruct the people was of important relevance to Campbell and his French host, the two Europeans whose fellow citizens were increasingly becoming enchanted by modern economic and political ideologies of rationalism and individualism.

In praising the genius of a Muslim storyteller as well as the sense of literary taste prevalent among Muslims, Campbell and the Frenchman negotiated the consequences of living in a culture of commercialism, print and individualism. As the Frenchman explained to Campbell, the story is about a man named Cassem “whose misery and avarice are represented in it as bringing him into a variety of scrapes, which waste his wealth...” (63). Cassem was not satisfied with what his fortune brought him. He sought to enrich the self
by using all possible means. After “having suffered a thousand whimsical misfortunes and
dilapidations of fortune, he is brought before the Cadi for digging in his garden, on the
presumption that he was digging for treasure” (64). The fall of Cassem was a moral lesson
for modern Britons. Campbell critiqued modern commercialism by referring to the medium
of ancient cultural practice, oral storytelling. In so doing, Campbell not only used an
ancient cultural expression to mediate a political message on the corrupting hand of
market values in the modern times, but he also showed how an ancient cultural form, oral
storytelling, can be a fitting medium which reflects on modern commercial society. Oral
traditions are not only designed to narrate stories about chivalry, adventurers and heroic
lovers.

Campbell viewed oral storytelling as a tradition which offers entertainment. But at
the same time it offers a critiquing commentary on modern corrupting practices. Oral
nations and cultures, as Campbell in his conversation with the Frenchman put it, have their
literary geniuses who seek to improve and enlighten their audiences as well as critique
commercial practices of corruption without the help of the medium of the printed book or
the newspaper. Satirists in England most often use the medium of the press to lash
against the government or party politics, Campbell noted, and in Aleppo the medium of
oral storytelling in the coffeehouse similarly proves “incredible, as it may appear” (66). For,
in the coffeehouse, Campbell remarked, it is no surprise to find “the magistrates [...] held
up to ridicule in public exhibition, satirised with all the extravagant vulgarity of coarse
humour and unpolished wit, and exposed with all the bitter exaggeration or envenomed
genius” (66). For Campbell, thus, the art of oral storytelling in Aleppo does not constitute a
primitive profession of unlettered nations and tribes whose cultures are politically primitive
or illiterate. Oral traditions in Aleppo are reforming tools.
Coffeehouses were the space in Aleppo where its inhabitants showed passion for music. Many eighteenth-century British travellers in Aleppo noted how the inhabitants of this commercial city loved music and cultivated musical talents. Russell observed that most coffeehouses in the city had “regular bands” (147). People from different ranks were frequent goers to musical concerts. Russell noted how people in Aleppo were not required to pay large sums of money to attend musical concerts. Bands, storytellers and puppet shows, “exhibit at different hours of the day,” and “the audience, by a voluntary contribution,” pay “a trifle towards defraying the expence” (147). Even “[a]t inferior coffee houses, not provided with a regular band,” added Russell, “the company are occasionally entertained by some volunteer performer, who sings gratis” (147). Three years after Campbell left Aleppo, J. Griffiths recorded the flourishing artistic and musical scene in Aleppo coffeehouses. Griffiths was fascinated with the regularity and harmony in musical notes played by Muslim musicians whom he encountered in one of them.

The Musical performance is conducted by six persons; whose instruments are, an Arab fiddle, two small drums, which are beat occasionally with the fingers instead of drumsticks, a dervish’s flute, a guitar, a tambour de Barque, and a dulcimer. They play in unison, and make no pause even when they change their tunes; appear to be tolerantly good timeists. (336)

Although Griffiths showed some fascination with this musical performance, he, as his travelling observations revealed, preferred socialising with the European “polite society” (336). He admitted that “the whole” musical scene in Aleppo “is to me, I confess, a very indifferent and uninteresting exhibition” (336-7). Campbell, unlike Griffiths, sought to find some pleasurable encounters in musical scenes in coffeehouses.

Entering the coffeehouse in the hope to entertain the self by listening to some
Arabic music, Campbell found the people there of “motley appearance”. While they were listening to music, they raised “numberless ludicrous images to the imagination of an English or French man” (68). Campbell emphasised the lack of rationality in the space of the coffeehouse. He noted the primitivism of Arabic music, associating their musical notes with the voices of the “ass” and the “owl”. For Campbell “no combination of sounds that I know on earth, but the screeching of the one, and the braying of the other, could form anything to resemble this concert, which the auditory seemed vastly pleased, though I was obliged to betake myself to flight, in order to get relief from the torture it gave me. (68). In showing how their music lacked harmony and order, Campbell confirmed what the Enlightenment historians of music, drawing on the Smithian four-stage theory of progress, proposed in their efforts to trace the origin and progress of music from a state of barbarism into that of refinement.

Someone from outside, a moral guide, needs to remind Campbell that by advancing these views on the irrationality and primitivism of Muslim music he uncritically follows what the forward-looking minds of the Enlightenment believed in: that is, reasoning moves people beyond ancient modes of superstition and barbarism. The Muslims whom Campbell encountered in the coffeehouse, however, were the first to draw Campbell’s attention to the European prejudices against Muslims’ music. They noted the kind of discomfort he expressed while listening to the concert and then reminded him “that we [Europeans] were Frangi Dumus (Frank Hog) and had no more ear than that filthy animal for music”(68). Campbell’s prejudices against Muslims were countered by Muslim prejudices against Europeans. If Campbell considered the sounds which their musicians produced as resembling those of assess and owls, then the Muslims likened the sounds in European music to those of “filthy hogs”. The Frenchman instructed Campbell on how to learn to appreciate other people’s music without necessarily liking it. He advised him not to give a personal opinion about the absence of rationality and lack of order in every kind of
music which does not conform to the musical traditions prevalent in Europe.

The Frenchman, who had stayed long in Aleppo, taught him to appreciate and understand, rather than be prejudiced to, Muslim music. By refusing to understand that “there is nothing, however discordant or detestable, which habit will not reconcile to us,” as the Frenchman argued, we cannot then comprehend how “the best piece of Handel or Correlli, performed by the best band in Rome, would appear as ridiculous to them, as their concerts did to us” (69). The Frenchman did not have any doubt that if Europeans were not willing to appreciate Muslim music, the Muslims need not show appreciation of European music. This non-polarising view was not inconsistent with what Campbell previously delivered to those British criers against traditions and the past in favour of modern commercial and rational present.

Musical traditions within oral cultures were not necessarily primitive and barbarous. And modern confidence of the power and utility of reason and rationality do not allow for appreciating oral and ancient cultures and traditions. Many years after the publication of The Journey, the Scottish cultural critic Donald Campbell published A Treatise on the Language, Poetry, and Music of the Highland Clans with Illustrative Traditions and Anecdotes and Numerous Ancient Highland Airs (1862) and An Essay on the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems (1825). In these works, Campbell showed apprehensions of the increasing and changing force of commercialism. In the Treatise, he valorised older Scottish music, traditions, culture, and also literature. Developing the same rhetoric in the Essay, Campbell responded to Samuel Johnson who spoke of the barbaric and savage traditions of the Highlanders. Johnson considered their language primitive and barbaric and thus unable to produce highly elegant and refined poetic verses. Johnson doubted the authenticity of a collection of poems known as the Ossian poems which James Macpherson translated from the Gaelic into English in 1760. Campbell, finding the opportunity to pass a critique on the naïve scienticity of the enlightenment which
associated the refinement of a certain nation with the prevalence of print culture and commercial and material progress among them, set out to defend the authenticity of the Ossian poems. For Campbell it is true that the Highlanders knew little about commerce and print culture but their patriotism and humanity did not show that they were barbarous and savage people. Campbell later in his Essay mentioned how order and harmony in modern music decreased “the attachment of sense and sound, until music has become so whimsical, or mountebankish, so estranged from all natural and hereditary feeling...” (148).

Unlike the Enlightenment believers in progress who favoured modern over ancient traditions, customs and music, Campbell:

> can scarcely forgive Harmony, although she is the offspring of Genius, for having thus perverted and denationalised Melody, as to render her no longer capable of thrilling the hearts and elevating the lives of people; and when she puts forth her hand to manipulate on my own dear, wild, wayward, touching native airs,—altering, substituting, shortening, lengthening or sliding notes into one another, or rendering them into quavers or demi-quavers of all sounds and dimensions, I abhor her very shadow! (148-9)

Campbell wrote the section on Highlander’s national music in the Essay, aiming to contribute in the efforts of “Rev. Mr Macdonald and Messrs Gow, Marshall, and others” to “rescue so much of the music of their ancestors from comparative obscurity” (194). Campbell’s views on the “dear wild, wayward, touching native airs” of ancient music of the Highlands rethink the polarising rhetoric of improvement which favoured everything modern against ancient traditions, music and literary form. To that end, Campbell advanced a critique on the modern project of commercial improvement which aimed to dissociate the Highlanders from their native traditions by advancing the claim of modern progress. This political position is similar to what Donald Campbell, the traveller in the Levant, previously set out to do in his comments on the musical traditions of Muslims.
Practices of daily life in the Aleppo coffeehouse expanded Campbell's imaginative understanding of how Europeans can reconcile ancientness (orality) with modernity (rationalism, order and print culture), a thing which Campbell was sure of the difficulty of its success as commercialism was increasingly occupying the cultural imagination of the British nation.

3-Shadow Show

The third adventure took place in the theatrical space of the Aleppo coffeehouse. “I do assure you,” said the Frenchman, “that so zealous am I to procure you entertainment, I would rather than a couple of loui’s you could understand what is going forward: your hearty mirth and laughter, added he, are sufficient to put one in spirits” (69). Accompanied by the Frenchman, Campbell went to watch a shadow show, which, as Donald Quataert postulates, “was perhaps the most popular entertainment in Ottoman Times” (161). Witnessing the social bonding which accompanied the setting up of this show, Campbell was “pleased very much” and thus “put in spirits” (69). The inhabitants of Syria knew the heroes of these shadow shows by the name of Karagoz and Hacivat. The performances of these figures brought entertainment but also offered instruction and raised the level of political literacy. For example, “Karagoz masters in Aleppo ridiculed the Janissaries who were returning from their failed campaign in the Ottoman Russian War 1768”, as Quataert notes (168). Shadow shows were political commentaries. In strolling in the social space of the coffeehouse with one European among many Muslims and Arabs and without the companionship of English merchants, gentlemen or consuls, Campbell learned how a culture which debates political and religious issues was not exclusively something of European origin, nor was it something only cultivated and nursed in print. It also prevailed in Muslim coffeehouses where oral traditions encouraged social bonding and also called
for reforms. It can certainly works towards healing the wounds of emerging social and political practices: individualism and excessive commercialism.

Before advancing such a political comment, however, Campbell was in conversation with the Enlightenment rhetoric of improvement. Ferguson in the *Essay* noted how “animal sensibility” prevails in non-commercial and barbarous nations (2). For Ferguson barbaric and savage people, “mankind in their first conditions”, posses this sensibility “without any exercise of the faculties that render them superior to brutes....and even without possessing any of the apprehensions and passions which the voice and the gesture are so well fitted to express” (2-3). Among Muslims and Arabs, Campbell rehearsed this essentialising rhetoric before he set out to rethink it. Seeing the performance, Campbell noted contradictory actions and loud animal voices. Campbell observed how:

> [t]he piece was introduced with a grand nuptial procession, in which the master displayed the powers of his voice by uttering a variety of the most opposite tones in the whole gamut of the human voice; sometimes speaking, sometimes squeaking like a hurt child, sometimes huzzaing as a man, a woman, or a child; sometimes neighing like a horse, and sometimes interspersing it with other such sounds as commonly occur in crowds, in such a manner as astonished me. (71)

Campbell finds irrationality in the excessive performative scenes associated with “horse kicking and throwing their riders, asses biting those near them, and kicking those behind them, who retire limping in the most ridiculous manner” (71). Like Ferguson, Campbell used non-human metaphors. For Campbell, the voices “huddled” together, and at one time, by Kara-ghuse reveals how “it was scarcely possible to resist the persuasion that they were the issue of a large and tumultuous crowd of men and animal” (73). Like what he first noted on the performance of the storyteller and the musicians, Campbell found Karagoz’s performance and the voices he used as “nonsensical” and unappealing to the
rational sensory faculties of the European man of the Enlightenment. “[W]hile their great
standing character KARA-GHUSE (the same as our Punch), raised a general roar of
obstreperous mirth even from the Turks, with his whimsical action, of which I must say
that” it is nothing but “nonsensical,... indecent, and sometimes even disgusting”(71).

When the scene came to an end, however, Campbell’s views of the irrationality and
nonsensical performance of Karagoz were transformed. Familiar with the language,
manners, and traditions prevalent in Aleppo, the Frenchman informed Campbell about the
political and social role of this form of entertainment. The Frenchman mentioned how this
master was “the champion of Freedom” in the Middle East. “KARA-GHUSE had from time
to time created a great deal of uneasiness, not only to private offending individuals, but
also to the magistracy itself –,” the Frenchman noted, “that no offender, however
entrenched behind power, or enshrined in rank, could escape him –that Bashaws, Cadi’s,
nay the Janissaries themselves, were often made the sport of his fury” (73). Even the
ordinary people in Aleppo do respect him “(as we venerate the liberty of the press) as a
bolder teller of truth, who with little mischief does a great deal of good, and often rouses
the lethargic public mind to a sense of public dangers and injuries” (73). Campbell’s
previous feeling of distaste is transformed. “Well then, said I, it appears upon the whole
that Monsieur KARA-GHUSE is a very great background, but a very witty, and a very
honest one”, wrote Campbell (73). Shadow shows were a medium for improving the public,
introducing them to the excesses of the government, politicians and the clergy.

For Campbell, Arab and Ottoman coffeehouses appeared not unlike European
coffeehouses, the spaces of socialisation which Habermas associated with the rise of a
culture of rational debate in the British Enlightenment.19 But also they were the cultural
spaces where ancient practices and traditions were used as tools for critiquing current
political and social problems. For Campbell, the political world of the shadow play offered
lessons which Europeans, including the English, perhaps need to learn. “[I]f Master Kara-
ghuse was to take such liberties in France, Spain, Portugal, or Germany,” the Frenchman suggested, “all his wit and honesty would not save him from punishment” (73). The Frenchman’s view on England, as it turns out, is different. For “[i]n England you do not want him; every man there is a KARA-GHUSE, and every newspaper is a puppet show” (73). Campbell approved of what the Frenchman proposed and yet added: “we complain sadly of want of liberty” (73).

Campbell’s source of annoyance is that with the increasing dominance of this culture of commercialism and accumulation in England, Britons are no longer satisfied with what they acquired after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The radicalism in print which appeared after the French Revolution was just an example on how Britons were no longer content with the old political system. “Liberty is like money,” the Frenchman responds to Campbell, “the more we have of it, the more covetous we grow” (74). Campbell, a defender of civic liberty against the expansion of commercialism, quoted from Lilley’s Grammar: “Crecit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit”. The accumulation of money is not dissimilar to the accumulation of political rights: “Crescit amor libertatis, quantum ipsa libertas crescit” (74).

Campbell’s efforts to recover ancient political virtues were accompanied by the awareness that the hand of commerce was dominating the social and political landscape of the nation. The association between the radical demand for liberty and the modern efforts to accumulate capital testifies to Campbell’s anxiety about how modern commercial wealth enthused people to seek to gain more political rights. But, as with accumulating money, increasing liberty often leads to excess and bloodshed. France of the 1790s is a case in point. For Campbell, Britons need to rethink and value their own liberty rather than seek to increase it. Since increasing it might lead to chaos and unrest. For Campbell and the Frenchman, Europeans have the Islamic political system to learn from: there in the East, the monarch can be curbed, the clergy operate under the law, commercial excesses in the
marketplace are checked, and traditions and oral practices are defended and preserved. To be an advocate of modernity, as the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers certainly were, does not mean one needs to rail against traditions and ancient non-commercial times by advancing this rhetoric which posits Muslim nations as commercially weak and politically despotic. For Campbell, the political culture in Aleppo has a lot to offer to a Briton, as well as to a Frenchman, who care about the political future of their nations in this modern European age of commercialism and radical politics.

Pain

Campbell recalled Job’s Biblical journey of suffering which took place in the Middle East, inviting the reader’s imaginative engagement with the plight of the unfortunate hero. Identifying [the self’s experience of] suffering with the plight of Job was an attempt to raise sentimental sympathies in his readers. Tears are expected to be exchanged between Campbell and the readers. In his *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the Book of Job in the Eighteenth Century*, Jonathan Lamb notes that the story of Job was “a recurrent cultural antinomy that emerges in fields as diverse as monumental sculpture and voyages of discovery, as well as in politics and literature, whenever the interpretation and the point of first-person testimonies are at stake” (3). In Syria and Mesopotamia, Campbell, unlike Carmichael, was not one of those eighteenth-century travellers who cared to tell the truth about what they encountered by using the language of empiricism. He did not recall the story of Job so that he could use some empirical tools to authenticate or falsify the Biblical account of the geography of the land where Job travelled. Rather, the story of Job here allowed for a sentimental rhetoric which posed Campbell as a commentator on the tense relationship between the past and the present, self-interest and society, economic individualism and public spirit. Campbell’s rhetoric of suffering becomes an alternative and a response to the Enlightenment scheme of progress which assigns specific stages and
temporalities to the natural growth of man, the period of rise from a state of barbarism into one of maturity and reason.

Campbell, performing like selfless Job, recalled the past of innocence and glory and the present of corruption and despotism, a way of reacting against the social and political ills of the present. Campbell staged “the rhetoric of suffering” in Islamic lands, in Lamb’s phrase, as one of lament over the loss of ancient virtue, liberty and religious piety in modern times. He brings a story from the past to rail against the corruption of the present. Campbell’s journey of suffering begins on the road between Aleppo and Basra. In Aleppo, the controversy surrounding Campbell’s emotional engagement with a Frenchwoman, his host’s wife, blew out of proportion within the circles of the European community based in the city. He knew how the European community in Aleppo “trumpeted it out with many exaggerations to my injury”. After he saw his bad action in people’s eyes, he therefore wanted to leave the city. Campbell accepted to accompany a Muslim guide, a Tartar, across the Syrian deserts. Cultivating hope to unburden the self of what he considered the opposition between “passion” and “reason and principle”, Campbell could not wait more for the Arab caravan to depart onto Baghdad and Basra (79). The road from Aleppo to Baghdad, as Campbell knew, “was so unsettled” (108). Before leaving Aleppo, Campbell was “haunted...with all [the] terrors” of “accident, interruption, and above all sickness” which might “intercept me on my way” (407). He chose to travel in the desert route in the hope to reach India soon but also in the hope to prove it to the reader that one’s suffering in life could atone for the harm which one’s selfish actions might have done to other people. Moving beyond the self for the sake of others is what the civic humanist likes to do. Across the desert, Campbell found the perfect opportunity to do this given that he was helpless and alone with a ferocious Muslim guide and also given that he was travelling in lands which the spotless Job tried before him.

The hard journey which Campbell performed across this scriptural route is not
unlike what Job experienced. According to Campbell, one of the difficulties which a traveller needs to consider in this route is “the horrid wind” which was “called by the Turks Samiel [and] mentioned by holy Job under the name of the East Wind” (132). This hurtful wind “extends its ravages all the way from the extreme end of the Gulph of Cambya up to Mosul,” Campbell warned, “[and] it carries along with it steaks of fire, like threads of silk, instantly strike dead those that breath it, and consume them inwardly to ashes; the flesh soon becoming black as a coal, and dropping off from the bones” (132). This wind is dreadful and carries a lot of damage: “even the skins, which it blisters and peels away from the flesh, affecting the eyes so much, that travellers are obliged to wear a transparent covering over them to keep the heat off” (132). When encountering these words, the reader may shed some tears. The route of sympathy is now open between Campbell and his readers.

Campbell’s journey of suffering carries a political message and a commentary on the Enlightenment infatuation with the idea of improvement. Campbell recalled the Biblical story of Job, engaging imaginatively with how the past in these Oriental lands was primitive and innocent, one different from the corrupting present of excess. Campbell mentioned how the fertile land of a Biblical paradise has now become barren: lost Eden. Much of it is now inhabited by a bunch of Muslim zealots:

I could not help reflecting with sorrow on the melancholy effects of superstition, and regretting that the place, which in the times of primitive simplicity was called Terrestrial Paradise; that place where God first planted Man after the Flood; where the god-like Abraham and the holy Job breathed the pure air of piety and simplicity; that place which from all those circumstances ought to be considered above all others as the universal inheritance of mankind, should now be cut off from all but a horde of senseless bigots, barbarous fanatics, and inflexible tyrants. (99)
Not only the people living here are lazy, indolent and bigoted—since they “suffer millions of the richest acres in the universe to be untitled, and spend their sweetness in the desert air, with wicked jealousy…” (99). They also “begrudge to others the little spot on which they stand, and chase them as they would a ravening tiger from their country” (99). Commenting on the innocence and religious simplicity of Biblical times and the dominance of jealousy, bigotry and tyranny in the present, Campbell saw Muslim land as a symbolism of the corruption and perversion of the Enlightenment idea of progress. It is true that he agrees with the Enlightenment philosophers that the present conditions in these lands indicate barbarism and despotism. Nevertheless, he contradicts the approach in the Scottish Enlightenment which posed the Middle East as being the embodiment of barbaric past. For Campbell, the present Middle East embodies the lost past of innocence and purity: it is now a present of barbarism and savagery. Both groups, the supporters of improvement and change and the criers against these ideas, projected their own desires on the Middle East. For the former the Middle East resisted change. For the later, it is this idea of change which corrupted the Middle East.

Campbell favoured an innocent, primitive and selfless past against the despotism, bigotry, jealousy and excess of the present. Noting the prevalence of commerce across the overland routes, Campbell was particularly interested in the commercial circulation of the caravan. Unlike Parsons’s views of the hardworking and virtuous life of the commercial people living in these lands, Campbell railed against the phenomenon of commercialism whenever he encountered it. According to Campbell, the “Princes” in Arabian deserts “have no other means to subsist but by their robberies” and the Arabian merchants “notwithstanding all those horrible circumstances of terror and danger-trade and the desire to gain... induce” them to “run the hazards” (43; 47). Unlike what the Scottish literati proposed, Campbell did not believe that commerce and the pursuit of material riches civilise and improve the passions. Rather, they increase the lust for material acquisition
and commodify humans, allowing the views that humans are things which can be sold and bought.

Campbell was appalled when he found that Hassan, his Tartar guide, bought and sold slaves while performing his duties as a messenger for the Ottoman Sultan and a guide for Europeans across the deserts. The excessive pursuit of wealth turns the Tartar into a tyrannical slaver and the ordinary people who live in the deserts into slaves. No wonder that these lands become barbaric since Job first performed his journey of suffering. Hume who saw in the Asiatics, Arabs and Muslims nothing but a mixture of despots and slaves was a precursor of Campbell. To recall again Hume's comments on Muslims: "Those who pass the only part of life among slaves, are only qualified to be themselves slaves and tyrants and in every future intercourse either with their inferiors or superiors are apt to forget the natural quality of mankind"(204). Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between Hume and Campbell in their agreement over the prevalence of despotism and slavery among Muslims. Hume’s views on Muslim despotism and slavery were consistent with his understanding of how the Middle East has not reached the fourth stage of progress: commercialism. For this stage refines the passions and increase the dose of humanity in the prosperous and affluent commercial society. For Hume any nation which could not reach a stage of commercialism would not be qualified to be free and improved in their manners and sentiments. Campbell’s view on the slavery and despotism of Muslims was different from Hume’s. He attributed the prevalence of practices of despotism and slavery among Muslims to their practises of excessive commercialism, not to the absence of commercialism in their lands. But noting commercial practices in Syrian-Mesopotamian overland routes to India offered Campbell the opportunity to reflect on how modern commercialism was not something which brings improvement in society. It rather brings corruption.

After spending much time riding with his Tartar guide, Campbell finds in the British
nation the same kind of excess and degeneration which he previously attached to Muslims. “A Briton!—Hold! Have I not been uttering a most severe satire upon the British nation?”, asked Campbell with a grieved heart. “Yes! Imputing to me a virtue which they want is the worst kind of satire”; therefore, “Britons deserve the lash of satire...a worse lash: for the traffic in human bodies still stands a bloody brand of infamy on her great National Councils” (113). For Campbell, commercial nations are not necessarily morally improved, given the state of excess that the nation is now showing. “Great God!—What a horrible though!—what an indelible stigma! that a Legislator shall, in the cold blood of commerce, make a calculation of the probable profit upon human lives—put commercial expediency in the balance against murder—and make convenience an excuse for crime!” (114). For Campbell thus presenting the self as a suffering Job not only makes him sympathize with all victims of commerce in the world. It also allows for exposing the prejudices and falsities which the received wisdom of the Enlightenment attributed to non-commercial nations and cultures.

But shall Britons, generous Britons, whose boastful claim precedence of the world in freedom, humanity and injustice—shall they look on and see inferior nations spurning from them with horror the debasing traffic; and stimulated by avarice, or misled by a wicked policy, retain the blot that other States have wiped away and live at once the curse of one part, and the scorn of the rest of mankind? (114)

The rhetoric of sympathetic suffering is a reforming tactic which satirically aims to improve the morality of those Britons who, while claiming that they are the most liberal and free nation, allow trading in slaves. The rhetoric of suffering is thus a political cry against the excess of the commercial mentality which permits trading in humans. It is worth mentioning that this political commentary appeared in a period when British anti-slavery movement and rhetoric was increasingly proving to be popular in Britain.\textsuperscript{21}
Campbell offers the British reader a reversed pattern of suffering in which a Briton rather than an African is now overpowered and enslaved. As the journey from Aleppo to Baghdad showed, the master is now a Muslim Tartar and the slave is a Briton. The Tartar did not treat a Briton better than what he did with the rest of his slaves. When arriving in a caravanserai in Diyarbakir, Campbell showed preference for spending the night “in the sweet salubrious air” outside the confines of the building. For the Tartar, such a request does not seem rational. “As soon as this communicated to the Tartar, he remarked that the open air was the fittest place for the beasts of the forests, and therefore suitable to a Frank” (105). The Frank here is seen as an irrational animal, a beast. The Tartar was “surprised at my abstemiousness remarking that he never saw a Frank before that was not a downright hog when he got the cup to his lips” (121). Bearing with the bad treatment of his Muslim master across the overland route, as the Journey shows, was the British Job’s political comment on the hypocrisy of Britons who were involved in slave rade. A political commentary on the excess of the commercial mentality in Britain which led to the enslavement of humans was also a way of rethinking the Enlightenment views on the softening and civilising effects of commerce. Campbell’s story on his experience of living a moment of slavery in Islamic lands reverses the commercial optimism of James Thomson, a Scotsman, who some decade earlier expressed how “Britons never will be slaves”. Suspicious of what commercial optimism could do for improving the morality of the nation, Campbell noted that if Britons continue worshipping commercialism rather than embracing humanity and fellow feelings they will be slaves. In narrating this experience of suffering, he aimed to offer a solution to the moral dilemma which faces the advocates of modernity and a new culture of commercialism.

Excessiveness in modern commercial times was something which can be countered by some virtuous practices which show how the self can reach into society. The tension between dominant commercialism and residual virtues from the ancient non-commercial
past was what Campbell was after in delivering his message to the believers in modern commercial progress. With all its commercial excessiveness, Campbell nevertheless found a middle way in Islamic lands. He noted how commercial excess was encountered by sympathy. For Campbell, his Tartar guide was an avaricious slave trader. Nevertheless, he was a trustworthy companion. He cared about the safety of Campbell in areas inhabited by Kurdish robbers. According to Campbell, “In short, the poor fellow seemed to take interest in my safety, and to wish to alleviate the pains of my mind” (133). In the face of the dangers now accumulating on the road to India, Hassan, a despotic master of excessive commercialism, is now transformed into a man of sympathy. For Campbell then, sentimentalism was a reformative tool for the ills which modern commercial times ushered in.

Conclusion

The Journey was written in the form of an epistolary narrative in which a father—Campbell—told the story of a pleasurable but instructive journey of sentimental and moral improvement in the Middle East. Campbell posed his text as a tool of education through the power of feelings. To that end, Campbell, as this chapter shows, redraws the despot-slave portrait of the Muslims and Arabs which the Enlightenment philosophers were fond of showing in their projects on the rise of man. Campbell saw in Arab and Muslim political structures, arts and cultures some improved practices which Britons might need to emulate to avoid the social and political disruption which the revolutionary climate in Europe as well as the unchecked force of commercialism in Britain ushered in. Here Campbell countered the radical late eighteenth-century ideas which demanded social and political change in an age of revolution and excessive commercialism.
Notes:

Ian Hampsher-Monk describes the language of radicalism of the period in these words: “In the context of a new political and economic order characterised by the growth of empire, a military establishments, the explosion of commerce and credit, a court-dominated Commons, urbanisation, rural enclosure, and creeping if never secure secularism, such ‘radicalisms’ were dispositionally nostalgic”, “British Radicalism and the anti-Jacobin” in The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought, ed., Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.260-287. This quote is taken from page 260.

For a good account on the political alliances between clan Campbell and the British state, see John Tweed’s The House of Argyll And the Collateral Branches of the Clan Campbell from the Year 420 to the Present Time (Glasgow, 1870). Sir Archibald Campbell (1682-1761), was the fourth Duke of Argyll. He was an avid supporter of the act of Union between England and Scotland. In 1711, as Tweeds notes, “he was made Justice-General of Scotland; in 1711 he was called to the Privy Council, and in 1714, upon the accession of George the First, he was nominated Lord Register of Scotland. Though he had given up all command in the army, yet, at the breaking out of the Rebellion in 1715, he took to the field in defence of the House of Hanover, and was of signal service to the cause”, p. 68.

On the EIC rule in India, Campbell writes: “A temper and intellect of this kind were rendered still more incapable of the enlarged views any Representative of a great Nation in a distant Colony should possess, by a mercantile education and habits, which narrowed even his
circumscribed mind, and left him not a sentiment, not an idea, that was not merely commercial. The administration of such men was exactly what might have been expected; and, instead of asserting the Dignity of Great Britain, or promoting the advantage of their employers—narrow policy, selfish views, and efforts arising from mistaken notions of conquest, made the whole tissue of their conduct in India”, p. 94.

4 Articles of Charges of High Crimes and Misdemeanours Against Warren Hastings, EsQ, Late Governor General of Bengal Presented to the House of Commons on the 5th Day of May, 1786 By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke (London, 1786).

5 He mentioned that “I had an opportunity of being eye-witness to that extraordinary and horrid ceremony, the burning of a Gentoo woman with the body of her husband”. Campbell knew that “this is a point which has occasioned much speculation and some doubt among Europeans” but he was far from calling for a British intervention in Indian local customs. See page 138.

6 A major part of the scandal surrounding the Company during the last three decades of the century focused on the changing nature of its rule in India. As Nicholas Dirks’ argues, “What was supposed to have been a trading company with an eastern monopoly vested by Parliament had become a rogue state: waging war, administering justice, minting coin, and collecting revenue over Indian territory”, The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p23. On the eighteenth-century debate surrounding civic humanism in the context of commerce and empire, see chapter fourteen in J.GA Pocock’s The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

7 Campbell hoped the Journey would entertain his son but also “may excite in your heart” what shall be called “serious reflection [...] making every event [...] an example to promote either emulation on the one hand, or circumspection and caution on the other …”, p. 2-3.
Andrew Rudd notes: “Sentimental literature was addressed to a modern readership and, in portraying scenarios that were rooted in modern life, aspired to be an instrument of moral edification”, Sympathy and India in British Literature 1770-1830 (New York: Palgrave, 2011), p 7. Interesting as it is that The British Critic, A New Review in 1795 mentioned how Campbell was “a man of...not a little delicacy of sentiment” who “appears in the character, not of a philosopher, but that of an affectionate and fond parent, pouring forth all his mind to his son” (London: 1795), p. 112; 116.

Janet Todd notes how “Sentimentalism entered all literary genres—the novel, essay, poetry, and drama. But the cult of sensibility was largely defined by fiction from the 1740s to the 1770s”. According to Todd features of the cult of sensibility include: showing “people have to behave, how to express themselves in friendship and how to respond decently to life’s experience. Later, it prided itself more on making its readers weep and in teaching them when and how much to weep. In addition, it delivered the great archetypal victims: the chaste suffering woman, happily rewarded in marriage or elevated into redemptive death, and the sensitive, benevolent man, whose feelings are too exquisite for the inquisitiveness and vulgarity of this world”, Sensibility: An Introduction (New York; London: Methuen, 1986),p.4

One might extend Todd’s historical and generic specification by noticing how the cult of sensibility in travel writing had appeared late in the eighteenth century. Published in 1795, Campbell’s account bears all the features of the cult of sensibility which Todd listed.

As John Mullan argues, “The flurry of novel declaring themselves to be sentimental seems to have been set off by the success of Laurence Sterne’s A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick....Many works specifically acknowledged allegiance to Sterne’s model”, “Sentimental Novels” in The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996),p 236-254. The quote above is from page 238.
In their different ways, Markman Ellis, Lynn Festa and Andrew Rudd explored famous tropes in the genre of sentimentalism in fiction, poetry and economic and political tracts. In their illuminating works, they showed how commercial and imperial expansion shaped British (and, in Festa, French) sentimental works; see Ellis’ *The Politics of Sensibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Festa’s *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); and Rudd’s *Sympathy and India in British Literature 1770-1830* (London: Palgrave, 2011). Within a domestic context, Gillian Skinner studied how eighteenth-century economic thinking impacted the sentimental novel, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel 1740-1800* (New York: Macmillan, 2009); Janet Todd in her illuminating study of the genre had nothing to say on how a cross-cultural context impacted the sentimental writers of the period, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London : Methuen, 1986); Paul Goring associated sentimental writings with contemporary obsessions with rhetorical performance through the use of the human body, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). John Brewer in his magisterial *The Pleasures of Imagination* rightly points out that sentimental writings “passionately engaged and highly sententious....overtly committed to a cause”. Brewer lists some causes which sentimental writers were interested to debate in their works: Christian morals, “variety of human nature”, and “the pleasure of rustic simplicity” in contrasted to urban upheavals. However, on how these themes might have also been illuminated within a cross-cultural context, Brewer had nothing to offer, *The Pleasures of Imagination* (Harper Collins, 1997), p. 116-18.

Marilyn Butler writes: “The middle of the eighteenth century was a period of growing insight into the subjective mind, so that when, for example, its novelists became engrossed in the triangular relationship between hero, author, and reader, they were reflecting an intellectual innovation of great importance. With few really good novels to its credit, the movement known
as sentimentalism is nevertheless fascinating for the contribution it makes towards the representation of the inner life, and its active engagement of the reader's imaginative sympathy”. In two chapters of the book, Butler studies the Jacobin and the anti Jacobin writers’ reaction to the phenomenon of sentimentalism during the late eighteenth century, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 7

13 In 1755, Francoise Baron de Tott was in Constantinople. He visited the city after being appointed a secretary to the French ambassador. In his travel account of the great fire in the city, he confirmed what Campbell proposed that the people refused to sell their properties to the Sultan. But unlike Campbell, who never visited Constantinople, Tott did not mention that the clergy were the bulwark between the people and the ruler. He did not confirm the point which Campbell made that the Muslim clergy were defenders of people's properties. See his *Memoires of Baron De Tott....of The Manners and Customs of the Turks and Tartars*, Vol 1 (London: Printed for G.J And J. Robinson, Pater-n otster-row, 1786), p.18

14 Campbell did not mention the name of this historian who he cited.

15 A sentimental traveller, Yorick, Sterne’s heroic traveller in *A Sentimental Journey*, observes that “an Englishman does not travel to see Englishmen”, p.15

16 For a good account on the way Scottish folks traditions were represented by Musical specialists in eighteenth-century Britain, see chapter two in Mathew Gelbart’s *The Invention of Folk Music and Art Music: Emerging Categories From Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).


18 Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans., Thomas Burger and Fredrick Lawrence

In 1791, Anna Letitia Barbauld published a poem defending the abolition of slavery and critiquing the spread of luxury in commercial Britain, *An Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq.* (London, 1791). Other literary voices appeared in the 1790s. Robert Southey and William Coleridge were also critics of the excessiveness and cruelty which the expansion of commercial culture ushered into Britain. A good analysis on these two romantic writers’ views on commercialism and slave trade is Carl Bolton’s first chapter in his *Writing the Empire: Robert Southey and Romantic Colonialism* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007).

In the second half of eighteenth-century, the English print market witnessed a notable boom in the literature of conduct. Many accounts appeared in which the state of morality in society was put under scrutiny. They offered their views on how the conduct, manners and sensibilities of the British youth, male and female but mostly female, could be improved. Such a shift refers us to the kind of transformation occurring in the experiences of reading and writing which emerged in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth-century. The champion of such a transformation is the sentimental novel in which feelings, tears and emotions do tell us about the kind of reader the writer is aiming to address. Significantly, in the *Journey* Campbell shows an interest in such “a delicacy of sentiments” when, addressing his son Fredrick, he relates: “I am determined to indulge you without further delay” (2). Like Richardson, Campbell aims that by indulging and entertaining his son, the *Journey* “may excite in your heart” what shall be called “serious reflection [...] making every event [...] an example to promote either emulation on the one hand, or circumspection and caution on the other [...]” (2-3). Literary figures in Scotland, where Campbell was born, such as Henry Mackenzie and in England such as Samuel Richardson published their novels in which their
heroes’ emotions, sensibilities were experimented with so that the readers can learn from
their plights and thus seek to improve their moral well being in their communities.
Richardson’s Clarissa is representative of the female heroine whose emotions and
sensibilities were put under a test of moral improvement. Mackenzie’s Harley shows how men
can show moral improvement when they sympathise with poor and colonized people.
CONCLUSION

FROM COMMERCIAL TO INDUSTRIAL IMPROVEMENT

In this dissertation, I have tried to show how eighteenth-century British attitudes towards Middle Eastern Muslims were never stable and fixed. In this period, two views of the Middle East appeared in Britain. First, there was the view that the Middle East was primitive, superstitious, non-commercial and thus non-modern. Second, there was the view that Britons can reflect on the pros and cons of modernity by seeking to know the Middle East. As the previous four chapters emphasized, knowing Middle Eastern geography, commercial resources, social customs, and styles of political governance enabled four Britons to rethink the Scottish Enlightenment’s essentialising proposition of commercial progress. The Enlightenment discourse of improvement, as this thesis argued, was in a state of flux, coming into being, and never fixed, resembling the circulation and exchange of commodities in a European age of commercialism and a Middle Eastern age of caravan trade. In this age of commercial circulation, knowing the Orient was not an act of “power” with “no limits, either in its enslavement of creation or in its deference of worldly masters”, as Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno wrote about the Enlightenment lust for accumulating knowledge (2). Rather it was an act based upon the Enlightenment obsession with reflecting upon how humans seek self-improvement. Therefore, studying the Enlightenment rhetoric of progress in a cross-cultural context takes us into a new conceptual terrain where the views about the “destructiveness”, homogeneity and fixed categories of the project of modernity, as David Harvey saw it, do not express the only way of explaining the Enlightenment infatuation with improvement (16).¹ In eighteenth-century Scotland, the efforts of modern British
commercial minds to eradicate the Highlanders’ older modes of subsistence, traditions and customs attest to the destructive effects of modernity. But, as Timothy Mitchell reminds us, European modernity was never a complete process, and the more its champions sought to incorporate local pre-modern traditions within the homogenous frame of modern ideas, the more they have to bear with ruptures, dislocations and displacements. In this dissertation, I was primarily concerned with tracking these dislocations in the various ways some Britons reacted to the Enlightenment obsession with progress. Whether we agree or not of the prevalence of a moment of homogeneity and polarisation in the Enlightenment philosophers’ rhetoric of development, we cannot ignore that their efforts to confirm the pre-modernity of the Middle East by contrasting it with modern Europe was far from being supportive of this rhetoric of power and domination. Their idea of improvement was primarily concerned with the kind of commercial and technological advances which distinguish Europe from barren and nomadic spaces of the Middle East.

So Enlightenment modernity in the context of British interactions with and writings about the Middle East need not be constructed as those of “creative destructiveness”: destroying older traditions, cultural habits and habits of minds for the sake of living a moment of modern improvement. In the philosophers' chart of improvement, the Arabs were fantastically pre-modern, far from achieving modernity or even imitating the project of modernity which eighteenth-century Britons championed. Nevertheless, “the denial of coevalness” towards the Middle East in these philosophers' works, in Johannes Fabian’s term, can only operate at the level of discursive gestures, citationality and desires (38). They did not express colonial relations of power. These philosophers were never travellers in these lands: they were rather readers of European travel accounts written about these lands. The
Middle East during the eighteenth century was on its own, trading and interacting with modernising Europe on an equal footing. The rhetoric of improvement in the Scottish intellectual energies based on a comparative context was disseminating polarising and essentialising views but it was never a carrier of a civilising mission of spreading improvement in the East. The philosophers' universal views on modern improvement were not, in J.M Blaut's term, “diffusionist” (11). It was not a mobilising force for bringing modernity into backward Oriental spaces.

In the Scottish philosophers' works which showed a polarising rhetoric of improvement, it is this tension between the residual, *Natural*, pre-modern and the emergent, *Cultural* and modern which allowed, in their views, the emergence of a universal grid which posits Britain at the top of modernity. But the polarising rhetoric of improvement which they adopted should never be seen as complete, absolute and stable since the presence of the Middle East in their rhetoric was not only important for confirming the progressive views which they proposed on the economic and intellectual energies of modernity, one which seeks to consolidate itself against pre-modern darkness, superstition, primitiveness which the Middle East represented.

They were constant reminder for the believers of commercial modernity that the pre-modern is always there haunting the present. Hence the rhetorical gesture which haunts most Enlightenment writings on the Middle East: that is, these lands had always been unchanged since the times of Christ. But the grid of improvement which strives to disguise the terror of the past which threatens to disable the forces of modernity opens another venue through which the homogeneous and polarising rhetoric of the European Enlightenment poses a question mark. The Enlightenment philosophers whom this dissertation studied were never travellers in the Middle East. And yet they were concerned about Middle Eastern pre-modernity. If we allow that
the process of modernity is an emergent rhetoric which employs itself in textual practices which seek to code pre-modern moments, then we are here engaged with one interpretation of the cross-cultural Enlightenment. Another interpretation of the cross-cultural Enlightenment focuses on the tension between dominant, residual and emergent practices and habits explaining the relationship between modern and premodern times in relationship to the self and the other, a dialectic which this dissertation studied.

Writing their observations on Arab and Middle Eastern spaces, the travel writers which this dissertation examined complicated the polarising views the Scottish universal paradigm of improvement expressed. Like the Enlightenment philosophers, they were interested in exploring non-European nations and cultures. Carmichael, Parsons, Ives and Campbell showed the extent to which the ideas of the modern and the pre-modern were fraught with tensions with one voice trying to unlearn the presence of the other. Nevertheless, their rhetoric of improvement which most of the time shifted their travelling subjects to actual and practical encounters with Arabs and Muslims showed a new version of the European Enlightenment. It is this Enlightenment of improvement in which human beings cannot be restrained to a universal grid, one propounded by the Enlightenment philosophers.

Now that the journey in this dissertation has come to an end, I wish to show how British cultural attitudes towards the Middle East began to change during the nineteenth century when commercial capitalism gave away to industrial capitalism. The nineteenth-century age of industrialism marked a fundamental change in the ways Britain interacted with the Middle East. In the eighteenth-century age of mercantilism British attitudes posited the Middle East as pre-modern and different. Yet it was a space from which Europe learned many things. In the age of industrial
capital, Makdisi notes, the Orient was “no longer the immutably different space
governed by Hastings, ‘defended’ by Burke, and fervently studied by Jones”; rather,
“the Orient became a space defined by its ‘backwardness’, its retardation; no longer
a region or a field offering materials for extraction, exploitation, and exchange, it
became a field to be rewritten and transformed; it became ‘undeveloped,’ a region
whose ‘development’ suddenly became the European burden” (131). For Makdisi,
the development of capitalism into a new phase of manufacturing, as an alternative
to importing commodities, marked a new era in British views of the Orient, primarily
India. As the demands in British factories for cheap raw material, instead of
procuring expensive exotic commodities, increased, British cultural attitudes
expressed the emergence of a new conception of “history”, one “constructed as a
unilinear stream teleologically pointing ‘towards’ modernity and Europe, into which
other histories are incorporated as subordinate elements in a larger universal History
—a History henceforth to be narrated and controlled by Europeans” (110).

With the emergence of Britain after Waterloo as an imperial and industrial
power, there appeared the voices within the East India Company circles, in the
British government and the Commons which called for improving the means of
communication between Britain and India across Middle Eastern, Arabian-Ottoman,
lands. Thomas Love Peacock was a poet, a friend of the romantic poet Percy
Shelly. In his The Genius of the Thames: A Lyrical Poem (1810), he was fascinated
with the imperial wealth which the Thames’s global reach secured England:

“Throned in Augusta’s ample port/ Imperial commerce holds her court/ And Britain’s
power sublimes:/ To her breath of every breeze/ Conveys the wealth of subjects
seas/ And tributary climes (26). British steam vessels, symbols of “Britain’s power”,
brings wealth from inferior “climes”, underdeveloped and “retarded” nations, in
Makdisi’s term, and delivers them to the centre of “Augusta”. Peacock’s muse glimpsed at some rivers around the world. It stretched its wings from the Thames into the Euphrates, “to whose lone wave the night-breeze sings/ A song of half forgotten days” before going back to England when she found that “Her eye shall not stream discern/ To vie, oh sacred Thames/ with thine” (20;22). As these lines revealed, Britain was the improving centre and her imperial possessions were the inferior climes. An advocate of imperial expansion, Peacock wrote this poem before he won the job in the EIC. In 1830, he, with Captain Francis Chisney, advanced a plan to connect Britain to India via the Euphrates where Chisney was expected to steam-navigate the rivers by using two flotillas made in British factories. Peacock’s imperial vision in the previous poetic lines was actualised in the Euphrates Expedition which Chisney prepared. An imperial project on the overland routes to India is now being devised: it was entrenched in the efforts of the EIC personnel, the government, Chisney and King William IV to open a direct route between Britain and India via Syria and Mesopotamia.

Captain Chisney’s narrative on his expedition testifies to the restlessness of Britain to pursue an imperial project across these lands so that it could make use of the advantages of securing a safe short cut to India. Unlike what we saw in the chapters, imperial rhetoric was now emerging and the Orient was fixed on a lower stage of a scheme of progress. In his *Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition* (1868), Chisney shows how his journey primarily aimed to inscribe an improving project on a primitive Oriental land. He amassed all British tools necessary for such work: steam ships, maps, charts, expertise, and money. But before he navigated the rivers, Chisney explored the lands lying between the Syrian coast and the banks of the Euphrates near the Syrian deserts. He was impressed with the kind of primitivism he
encountered across these lands. Not only their lands were barren, their eating manners were far from polite, their music is barbarous: one Arab Sheikh, “Hattib produced a primitive guitar” with which he showed “his barbarous attempt at music” (26). In chapter four we saw how Campbell’s dislike of Arabic music was countered by the Frenchman’s opinion about how Arabic music was just different from, rather than inferior to, European music. For Chisney, Arabs, whom he called “the children of the deserts”, are not merely different from Europeans; they are also inferior and barbarous with inability to show any sign of improvement in their lands, lives, modes of subsistence and arts (28). When seeing the British steamer floating in the Euphrates, according to Chisney, these Arabs showed “surprise”. “There was no idea in this part of Asia,” Chisney asserted, “that iron could be made to float...” (223). With the absence of rational thinking which encourages people to set out in the world to seek improvement, the power of imagination with all its disabling force which strives to found dependable, rather than independent, individuals filled up Arabian lands, cities and deserts. In Bir, near the Euphrates, once the steamer was “off, however, and stemming a rapid current, their astonishment knew no bounds; ‘ten Englishmen,’ they said, ‘could take their town,’” (223). Taking the entirety of the lands and rivers which stretched from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf was what Chisney’s project aimed to achieve so that the British passage to India could be secured at a cheaper price. Nevertheless, regardless that such a project in Syria and Mesopotamia did not see the light and a number of Britons in Chisney’s expeditions died while sailing across the Euphrates, such an imperial project was more of a practical engagement with, rather than persecuting and terrorising, local inhabitants, chiefs, and authorities. Before setting out to navigate the Euphrates, Chisney went to Istanbul “to obtain the Sultan’s Firman for a Railway from the mouth of the
Orontes to the Persian Gulf; and once to Syria, to examine de novo the country between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates” (ix). Among the locals, Chisney used the Arabic language: “as well as my scanty Arabic would permit...” (15). He sought local help and knowledge. “As the best means of accomplishing our object,” he wrote, “we enlisted the services of a travelling apothecary, Sheikh Woofa, who, in his capacity of a wandering practitioner, was well acquainted with the people of the country through which we had to pass” (22). So as a traveller backed by an imperial government back in England, Chisney, unlike the previous travellers whom I discussed in this dissertation, did not find in the Orient something which needs to be learned so that the British self would be improved. Rather he sets out to inscribe improvement on these routes, a project expressing British industrial magnificence carried out in primitive and barbarous Orient. However barbarous and primitive the Orient appeared in Chisney’s narrative, it was not silenced, purged and reinvented in British terms and for British use in total isolations from practical engagements with its people, chiefs and authorities.

Notes:
1 In his comments on the mercilessness of the Enlightenment project, Harvey writes: “All the Enlightenment imagery about civilization, reason, universal rights, and morality was for naught. The eternal and immutable essence of humanity found its proper representation in the mythical figure of Dionysus: ‘to be at one and the same time “destructively creative” (i.e. to form the temporal world of individualization, a process involving the reaction of unity)’...The only path to affirmation of self was to act, to manifest will, in this maelstrom of destructive creation and creative destruction even if the outcome was bound to be tragic”, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change (Cambridge; Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1989), p.16.


3 For Eric Hobsbawm the turning point for the industrial rise of Europe was 1848. He believed that during this period “[r]oughly by 1848 it was clear which countries were to belong to the first group [advance nations] i.e Western Europe...” and which to belong to the “underdeveloped” group of nations. Hobsbawm’s thesis appeared in the English writings on the less developed Levant of the 1830s. Captain Chisney’s project of improvement in the Levant was a clear evidence of how Britain now began to view the Middle East as immutably primitive. The quote of Hobsbawm is taken from his The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848 (London: Vintage Book, 1962), p.148.


5 John S. Guest called Peacock’s ambitions to connect India with Britain via the Middle East “Peacock’s Dream”. See chapter one in his The Euphrates Expedition (London; New York: Kegan Paul International, 1992).
In his *Narrative*, Chisney wrote a chapter describing the interview which he had with King William IV. The interview took place on April 16, 1833 at St. James'. Chisney brought with him to the interview “the maps and papers relating to the Euphrates”. During the interview, which lasted “more than an hour”, as Chisney wrote, it appeared that King William was interested in the project. According to Chisney, this interview “terminated with the confident expectation on my part that the Royal support thus promised would be continued until the Overland Route should be fairly established”, *The Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition* (London, 1868), p.14; 146.

Still what Eric Hobswam called the “the iron age of gunboat diplomacy” in Western colonial practices between 1875 and 1914 needs not be inscribed onto the imperial mindset to which Chisney’s project of exploring the Euphrates subscribed, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), p.16.
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Edward Ives, Ms G 37/67/4

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*A Narrative of the Extraordinary Adventures, And Sufferings by Shipwreck & Imprisonment of Donald Campbell, ESQ of Barbeck with the Singular Humours of His Tartar Guide, Hassan Artaz Comprising The Occurrences of Four Years and Five Days in an Overland Journey to India*. London: Printed for Vernor and Hood, Birchin Lane, Cornhill, 1797

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