

# FUNDAMENTALISM AND LITERATURE

EDITED BY  
CATHERINE PESSO-MIQUEL  
AND KLAUS STIERSTORFER



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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION: FUNDAMENTALISM AND LITERATURE

CATHERINE PESSO-MIQUEL AND KLAUS  
STIERSTORFER

Ever since September 11, 2001, and the so-called war on terror subsequently declared by the U.S. government, fundamentalism has probably been one of the most used words and most discussed phenomena in the media worldwide. The continuing unrest in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Madrid train bombing of 2004, and the London bombings of 2005 have all contributed to keep an enormous pressure on this discussion. The dazzling limelight of this media attention has also cast into bold relief other instances of fundamentalist activities in recent history, from earlier bombings in the United States to the most incisive instances of fundamentalist political activity, starting with Khomeini's cataclysmic takeover of Iran (1979), events in Sudan (1993) and in Afghanistan and Turkey (1996), mass violence unleashed on Muslims by Hindu nationalists in the Indian state of Gujarat (March 2002), as well as the ongoing battle in Palestine. Also, journalistic comments, cultural analyses, and historical works on these earlier developments have not only been reprinted and reread with renewed and heightened interest, but appeared to be confirmed as quasi-prophetic statements through the events of 9/11 and its aftermath. Samuel P. Huntington's catchphrase of the "clash of civilizations" has received new currency, and the 1990s Fundamentalism Project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which resulted in seventy-five case studies and comparative essays published in five monumental volumes between 1991 and 1995,<sup>1</sup> is consulted by students



worldwide. As many readers, awakened to the new realities by the pictures of the tumbling twin towers in New York, have noticed with surprise, a pattern has begun to emerge: fundamentalism is a force that is here to stay and one that is to be reckoned with in any account of, in the title phrase of Anthony Trollope's Victorian novel, "*the way we live now*."

For people concerned with literature, be they authors, publishers, or literary and cultural critics, the urgency of these developments had certainly been driven home long before by the "Rushdie affair" of 1989 when Khomeini pronounced the death penalty against the author of *The Satanic Verses* for the book's supposed blasphemy against Islam. As a particularly drastic example, the *fatwa* against Rushdie has not only left a lasting impression on the vulnerability of the arts in the face of grim fundamentalist coercion; the very fact that fundamentalists such as Khomeini and his ilk bother with writers of fiction and their works also shows how much, to put it simply, literature matters in this context and how strong an intervention authors apparently can be seen to pose for any fundamentalist agenda.

This is why further investigation into the strategies and wider engagements of literary negotiations with fundamentalism in recent years seems such a particularly promising field of study: It is not only that new light may be shed on our understanding of fundamentalism as a phenomenon specific to our own time, but also that new perspectives may conversely be opened on literature as a discourse and a function within a cultural context characterized by postmodernist concerns with art as well as by attempts to question and transcend positions vaguely summarized as "postmodern" in the widest sense.

What this volume presents in the following contributions, then, has two major trajectories. First, readers are presented with a wide view of the complexities of various fundamentalisms in their diverse historical, cultural, political, and religious contexts, as cast into relief and refracted in their literary negotiations. Black-and-white dichotomies, generally seen as typical of fundamentalist discourses, are to be broken up into negotiable units and understood in their various contingencies. Second, the contributors to this volume provide in-depth studies of various literary negotiations of fundamentalism, which appear especially powerful and revealing and can be understood as representative of particular patterns or contexts. In order to structure the work of individual contributors and suggest coordinates for the reader's orientation, the volume has been subdivided into three major parts. Needless to add that comprehensiveness is impossible in a study of this kind and scope, but every effort has been made by its editors and contributors to open its range as far as possible

and to provide as representative and illustrative samples in the individual contributions as it was possible to achieve within the limits of this project.

Part I, titled “The Many Guises of Fundamentalism: Expanding Visions,” is specifically designed to enhance the understanding of fundamentalism in various historical, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions. A widening of horizons is the major objective pursued by the contributors assembled here. Thus, the discussion is opened by Gordon Campbell, who establishes a wide historical link from John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* to the attack of the U.S. Navy on Tripoli (1801) under conditions that Campbell projects as striking historical parallels to the events of 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror. Whereas Campbell had Milton as his starting point, Anne Barbeau Gardiner moves the focus to eighteenth-century Britain and to Jonathan Swift. Gardiner identifies a concept of Christian fundamentalism that informs Swift’s thought and can be traced in his writings, both fictional and nonfictional. Returning to our own time, Axel Stähler explores approaches to fundamentalism in recent Jewish fiction in English, presenting his readings of major, representative novels in that highly specialized and stimulating field.

“Beyond the Binary: Literary Interventions in Polarization” delineates the program of the second part of the volume. Here, contributors concentrate on investigating literary interventions against fundamentalist tendencies toward dyadic patterns, notably black-and-white dichotomies and other instances of “tunnel visions” of the world. Three outstanding writers are scrutinized for this purpose. Wendy O’Shea-Meddour approaches Hanif Kureishi’s contribution to the subject through his novel *The Black Album*; Catherine Pessa-Miquel focuses on Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters*; and Susanne Peters zooms in on Arundhati Roy’s conflicting roles as novelist and political critic.

In part III, finally, the discussions of part II are continued, but now move from an emphasis on binaries and dichotomies to postmodernist contexts. Klaus Stierstorfer takes Tariq Ali’s *Islam Quintet* as his point of reference and compares it to works by Flannery O’Connor, Salman Rushdie, and others. Helga Ramsey-Kurz returns to Kureishi’s seminal *The Black Album* and foregrounds its variations on the sacredness of the text and literature. Kevin Cope rounds up this volume by taking a close look at the phenomenally successful *Left Behind* novels by LaHaye and Jenkins as apocalyptic fiction and their reverberations of fundamentalist ideologies.

The parts of this volume mark the trajectories of a field study that clearly shows not only the astonishing variety of fundamentalisms and the wide range of the phenomena involved, but also the richness in literary responses to and the multifaceted engagements with fundamentalist agendas and movements writers have felt stimulated to undertake.

The writers in this volume have taken an open approach. They do not see themselves as politicians but as literary and cultural critics, so that their critique and investigations are aimed at literary negotiations with and in fundamentalism; they do not see it as their main objective to pass judgment on ideas and religious convictions of any kind, much less on the people who hold them. They all share the hope that the contributions in this volume may stimulate further discussion and study of fundamentalist positions in an atmosphere of tolerance and openness, and they also share the conviction that literature, past and present, has a role to play in this undertaking.

As always, the enterprise of this volume itself would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of many persons who cannot all be named here. The editors wish to express their particular thanks to Amanda Johnson, senior editor at Palgrave Macmillan, for seeing this project through its many stages into print; to Dr. Axel Stähler, now project coordinator of an ongoing project on fundamentalism at the University of Münster, for also coordinating the editorial process of this book; and to Ludwig Perick, cand. phil., for his assistance in producing an acceptable typescript.

#### NOTE

1. Martin E. Marty, ed., *The Fundamentalism Project*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991–95), I: *Fundamentalisms Observed* (1991), II: *Fundamentalisms and Society* (1993), III: *Fundamentalisms and the State* (1993), IV: *Accounting for Fundamentalism* (1994), V: *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (1995).

PART I

THE MANY GUISES OF  
FUNDAMENTALISM:  
EXPANDING VISIONS

## CHAPTER 2

# “TO THE SHORE OF TRIPOLI”: MILTON, ISLAM, AND THE ATTACKS ON AMERICA AND SPAIN

GORDON CAMPBELL

Our history is characterized by silences. Literary historians of the early modern period in England have, in recent decades, become aware of the silence of women and the silence of the underclass, and have started to dig for evidence; there has been some success with women, because there is a documentary record, but little with the underclass, who for the most part eluded officialdom. In the case of Islam, we have until recently been completely silent, despite a documentary record in official archives and an imaginative record in the drama of the period. The issue of Islam in England received its first serious treatment in 1998, when Cambridge University Press published Nabil Matar's study *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685*; one reviewer commented that the most amazing aspect of the book was its title, which begged the question: Was there any Islam in Britain during this period? We have been encouraged to think of women as the only obscured other, but at least there is a general awareness that women existed. The same cannot be said of Muslims, who have been written out of much history. In our world of literary study, one of the most interesting recent books is Daniel Vitkus's *Turning Turk*, published in 2003, which examines the representation of conversion to Islam on the English stage. On the specific subject of Milton and Islam, there was a pioneering work called *John Milton and Arab-Islamic Culture*, published in 1987 by Eid Dahiyat, who is now president of a university in

Jordan. The topic is still alive, in part, because of the ending of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, about which I will say more below.

I come to the subject with two interests that I should like to declare. For the past thirty years I have been writing about Milton, but in the course of these three decades I have also been traveling in the Islamic world, to which I have made an uncounted number of journeys that must run well into three figures, and ranges geographically from Indonesia in the east to Morocco in the west. I do not, I should make clear, propose to make a distinction between "true Islam" or "true Christianity" and the religious beliefs of those who commit acts of terror. Although subscribers to both religions are on the whole peaceful, I see nothing to justify constructing a sentimental notion of any religion as "true" simply because it is peaceful. In the case of Christianity, its founder declared that he came not to bring peace but a sword, and the sword has been similarly important in the history of Islam. It follows that I am not willing to ignore the link between religion and violence. Believers are for the most part eager to deny any such link, but that is another way of saying that they are in denial. Muslims who insist that 9/11 was such a dreadful crime that it could not have been committed by Muslims and must instead have been the work of the Mossad are guilty of the same evasion as Christians who deny that the Holocaust was a crime committed by Christians; in my view, 9/11 was only a Muslim crime in the same sense that the Holocaust was a Christian crime. In both cases it is true in the limited sense that the perpetrators were members of those religious groups and acted from motives that were rooted in religious bigotry (the Christian charge of deicide and the Muslim hatred of the hegemonic infidel in the West); in both cases it is untrue in the larger sense that most Muslims and most Christians deplore those crimes unequivocally. It is also worth remembering that not all terrorists with religious affiliations are religious: some IRA terrorists were secular nationalists, and two of the 9/11 hijackers went to a lap-dancing club on the evening of September 10.

I should like to consider a narrative set in the first year of a new century. A group of Muslim terrorists armed with knives has attacked America in a campaign financed by a wealthy enemy of America; American citizens have been hijacked and murdered by bandits who have no respect for human life. The president of the United States, faced with a national cry for vengeance and a need to ensure that such incidents never happen again, bombs the miscreants and sends in American ground troops backed by troops from America's allies. The enemy is destroyed.

The new century that I have in mind is the nineteenth, of which the first year was 1801. The president was Thomas Jefferson, that most

Milonic of presidents, the president who extracted many passages from *Samson Agonistes* in his commonplace book. The wealthy Muslim who bankrolled the attack was Yusuf Karamanli, Pasha of Tripoli, then one of the Barbary states of North Africa, the one of which the successor state is Libya. The tradition of Barbary piracy was centuries old; when Edward King, Milton's *Lycidas*, made his will just before setting out for Ireland, he did so in the knowledge that five years earlier a ship sailing on the same route had been captured by Barbary pirates, and its crew and 150 passengers sold into slavery in North Africa. After America broke away from Britain, Britain made it clear to the pirates of North Africa that American shipping was fair game and that it would not intervene to protect attacks on American ships.

At the time Jefferson became president, some 2 million dollars a year, which was one-fifth of the tax revenue of the United States, was being paid to ransom American citizens who had been captured by Barbary pirates. Pasha Yusuf thought that his share of this amount was insufficient, and demanded a lump sum of \$250,000 and an annual payment of \$25,000. The American press, which presumably reflected popular opinion, adopted the slogan "millions for defense, not one cent for tribute." On May 16, 1801, Jefferson ordered the U.S. Navy to attack Tripoli. The memory of this assault has faded, but it is enshrined in the opening line of the U.S. Marine Corps Hymn; I wonder how many Americans could now identify the halls of Montezuma or the shore of Tripoli. Despite a successful commando raid by Lieutenant Stephen Decatur (after whom ten towns in America are named), America came close to losing the war, and might have done so had William Eaton, the distinctly unwholesome American consul in Tunis, not decided to overthrow the pasha. The USS *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") shelled Tripoli, and Eaton invaded with his international force of sixteen U.S. marines (hence the hymn), Greek and Italian soldiers, Arab cavalry, and 190 camels of unknown nationality. This was the first time that America's troops had been used to defend American interests abroad, and when Eaton's force stormed Derna and raised the American flag (the first time an American flag had been raised on a captured outpost), the pasha, fearing that they would do the same in Tripoli, surrendered. In the peace treaty that followed, the American captives were released, the pirates promised not to attack American shipping, and the pasha was paid \$60,000 and allowed to keep his job. I shall not go on with the story, save to note that the United States continued to pay tribute to Barbary pirates until 1815 and to note Decatur's words the following year: "Our country, in her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right, but [she is] our country, right or wrong."

I raise this historical precedent among fellow academics, because I think that academics have a role to play at times of national crisis. Academics can offer specialist expertise in politics, religion, geography, and even structural engineering. Universities are places in which balanced discussions can take place, and academics in the humanities, who always take the long view, can resist the rush to judgment and the demonizing of what our theoretical colleagues call the "other." As it happens, I receive half my salary as a Milton specialist and half as a Middle East specialist, but it is not simply the latter interest that has been engaged by the events of 2001, the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the attacks on Madrid and London. To put it another way, the teaching of literature is not just a job; the literature that we study and teach intersects with the values by which we live. This raises the question: How should we respond to literature that seems to endorse terrorism?

For a Miltonist, the obvious locus for such questions, as has been clear from debates on both sides of the Atlantic and in a series of conference sessions on "Milton and Terrorism," is Samson's suicide attack on Philistine civilians. Samson believes that he has been instructed by his god to pull down the theater, killing thousands of Philistines and in the process killing himself. In the moral perspective of the play, killing civilian Philistines is unproblematical, but killing oneself in the process raises questions about the legitimacy of suicide for a noble cause. Milton's answer seems to be that God is not subject to his own rules (he "made our laws to bind us, not himself," 309), and so "hath full right to exempt / Whom so it pleases him" (310–11): Jesus was allowed voluntarily to give his life, and so was Samson. Milton's account of the massacre differs from the equally barbaric biblical account in Judg. 16 in one significant detail, which is Milton's insistence that "the vulgar only 'scaped who stood without" (1659); in Milton's poem, the victims are the "choice nobility and flower" of Philistian society, not the ordinary people.

I do not wish to linger for long on this episode, as others have done so at length, but would like briefly to consider the perspective of the Philistines; in doing so I remind you that just as modern Israelis claim descent from ancient Israelites, so modern Palestinians claim descent from ancient Philistines; in most European languages, though not in English, the word for Palestinian is also the word for Philistine. I would not presume to comment on the truthfulness of either of those claims, but that is not my point: I am simply arguing that there is more than one perspective implied by the action of the play. From the Philistine perspective, Samson is a suicidal fundamentalist member of the ascetic Nazarite sect. He is prompted by the rousing motions of a god in whom the Philistines do not believe to commit mass murder in the name of



that god and at the cost of his own life, which he sacrifices in the foolish belief that the act will earn him a place in paradise.

Clearly one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. In our own time, we might think of Menachim Begin, Nelson Mandela, Gerry Adams, and Yasser Arafat, all of whom have been accused of using terrorism to achieve political ends and all of whom have been excused because of the legitimacy of those ends. Think how difficult it was for Israelis to watch Bill Clinton shaking hands with Yasser Arafat; think how difficult it was for Britons to watch Bill Clinton shaking hands with Gerry Adams. To many of us their handshake seemed to be a symbol of America's willingness to harbor and finance IRA terrorists. Britain, in turn, harbors a great many people intent on committing terrorist acts in other countries—think of all those organizations in South London representing the democratic front for the liberation of any number of third-world countries, and of our collection of radical mullahs. And so it is with Samson. Indeed, I can assure you that in Libyan historiography the Tripolitan war of 1801–05 is viewed rather differently.

I do not subscribe to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" hypothesis, but I do see some continuity between the events of 2001 and the events of 1801. The origins of that antagonism can be traced back to late antiquity, when Islam expanded into the political space vacated by the collapse of the Roman empire. I propose to ignore the first millennium of Islam for the purposes of this chapter, and instead to construct a sketch of Islam in seventeenth-century England, a background against which we might consider Milton. The caliphate was not yet centered in Turkey (that claim did not arise until the late eighteenth century), but the Ottomans ruled the eastern and southern flanks of what we call Europe and contemporaries called Christendom, and to Christians, Ottomans represented Islam. The lines between those territories were and are disputed: Islamic scholars distinguish the "territory of Islam" (*dar al-Islam*) from the "territory of war" (*dar al-harb*). A country is deemed to be *dar al-harb* if it has been conquered by infidels, and the list (as articulated, for example, by Abdallah Azzam, the Palestinian academic and terrorist) includes Eritrea, the Philippines, Spain, and Uzbekistan, all of which have suffered Islamist violence arising from this doctrine.

The mention of Islamist violence leads me to mention one last distinction before turning to the seventeenth century. The piracy of seventeenth-century Muslims was primarily driven by the profit motive rather than religious conviction, and those involved were not markedly religious. Fundamentalist Islam came later: the Wahhabi movement emerged from the sands of Arabia in the mid-eighteenth century. Fundamentalist religion is not necessarily militant (there are millions of peaceful fundamentalists

of varying religious persuasions), and the mutation that produced a militant fundamentalist movement appeared in Sudan with the rise of Muhammad Ahmad, who claimed to be the Madhi. The Madhists were slaughtered by Kitchener in 1898, but the movement lived on, and in 1989 its inheritors (who included the Madhi's great-grandson) organized the Islamist coup in Sudan. It was this government, through the political Islamist Hassan al-Turabi, that sheltered Osama bin Laden and fostered al-Qaeda. The relevance of this potted history to my argument is that we must beware of reading backward from our present perceptions. For centuries Islam was tolerationist, famously giving shelter to Jews expelled by Christians, whereas Christianity was intolerant, burning those deemed to be heretical. In the twenty-first century the positions are in some measure reversed, because Christianity is largely tolerationist, but some strands of Islam are not: there are no churches in Saudi Arabia.

Milton knew none of this, but Islam nonetheless impinged on his world, and he was certainly aware of the conflict. I have already mentioned the pirate raid of 1632, the one mentioned in Milton's collection of elegies *Justa Eduardo King* (1638). We should, I think, acknowledge the scale of such raids, of which Matar has assembled a daunting list. In the first eight years of Milton's life, 466 English ships were captured and their crews and passengers enslaved. In June 1624, when Milton was a pupil at St. Paul's School, there was a national appeal for funds to ransom 1,500 English captives being held in North Africa. In the following summer, August 1625, there was a Sunday morning raid on a church on the Cornish coast, and sixty worshippers were captured. By May 1626, when Milton was finishing his first year at Cambridge, there were 1,500 British captives in Sali and 3,000 in Algiers. In 1640, the families of 3,000 English captives in Algiers petitioned the king for assistance. Throughout the early 1640s, a series of ordinances attempted to regulate the payment of ransoms. In addition to this considerable corpus of legislative material, the state papers are filled with appeals from the families of kidnap victims: to give but one example, when sixty sailors from Dartmouth were captured off Lizard Point in September 1635, the mayor appealed to the Privy Council for assistance in looking after the wives and children. Why, I wonder, is this material so unfamiliar? Have we perhaps occluded our historical memory of Muslims in early modern England even more successfully than we have of women?

What happened to all these captives? Many were released and returned to England on payment of a ransom; others died in captivity or embraced Islam and assimilated. Some, of course, embraced Islam and returned to England. The spirit of the conversions is hard to judge. Some may have been faked to secure early release or the chance of escape, but

that pretence was less likely at a time when apostasy was a capital offence and religion was something more than a childish toy. It seems more likely that a considerable proportion of conversions was genuine. The difficulty for converts who returned to England was that English Christianity was intolerant. The penalty for apostasy was death, and the only god one could worship was the Protestant one. The very existence of English Muslims is an inference, because they could not confess their faith publicly.

This narrative of the Tripolitan war is one of many that I could have chosen. I picked this one not only because of the 9/11 parallel, but also because it points to an important feature of the West's relationship with the Islamic world. In the case of European contacts with native Americans or sub-Saharan Africans, the narratives are of conquest; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it is possible under the umbrella of orientalism to construct similar narratives of exploitation. In the early modern period with which we are concerned, however, the orientalist model does not work, because Christendom did not self-evidently have the upper hand. Indeed, just as Columbus captured native Americans to present to his king, so did Barbary pirates capture native Europeans for financial gain and in some cases for presentation to their rulers. Said's orientalism hypothesis only works from the point at which he started his analysis, the mid-eighteenth century. Before that the Islamic world was not a place that the West conquered, but one that threatened to conquer the West. Vienna, you will recall, was besieged by Ottoman forces in 1529 and 1532, and attacked again in 1683. In North Africa, piracy continued to be a threat until 1830, when France conquered Algiers. Many of the pirates were Muslims, but it is worth pausing to note that some were Christians (e.g., the Oxford-educated Sir Francis Verney, who was based in Algiers) and some were apostates, bad angels who had once been good angels: the pirate responsible for the infamous raid of 1631 on the Irish town of Baltimore, whose inhabitants were sold into slavery, was Murad Reis, a Flemish convert to Islam who was quartermaster of the Algiers fleet. His commanding officer, the admiral of the pirate fleet, was also a Flemish renegade.

In considering Miltonic references to the Islamic world, we should jettison Said and orientalism and think in terms of fear and apostasy. As a preliminary to that, we should attend to geography, because what we think of as the Islamic world is not what Milton thought it was. Britain now has 1.6 million Muslims, Germany has 3 million, and France has almost 6 million; I live in a city with a large Muslim community, and indeed sit on the advisory board of our local Islamic foundation. Europe, in some measure, is now part of the Islamic world. When we look back

to the early modern period, we imagine a Europe that is Christian, with a Jewish minority, and a non-European world that in the Middle East and North Africa is Islamic. That overly simplistic view sometimes leads us to misread Milton. I propose to illustrate the point with four examples: Arabia, Ormus, Almansor, and the Ottomans.

First, Arabia. If you were to ask an educated modern Westerner where Islam is centered, the reply would be Saudi Arabia, the land of the two holy mosques at Mecca and Medina. If you were to say "Arabia" to someone of Milton's class and generation, the association would not be with Mecca and Medina or even the haj port of Jeddah, where Eve is buried, but with Arabia Felix and Arabia Deserta. Arabia Felix, which was centered in what is now Yemen, was associated with frankincense and balsam, the smell of which was deemed to drift out to sea. That idea is articulated in Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, and appears in book 4 of *Paradise Lost*; the only additional fact that you need to know is that the Sabeans were one of the four tribes in that part of the peninsula, and that it is better known as Sheba, whose queen married Solomon and founded the royal house of Ethiopia. As Satan approaches Eden, which was traditionally placed in Arabia Felix, he can smell the odors of the garden:

As when to them who sail  
 Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past  
 Mozambique, off at sea north-east winds blow,  
 Sabean odours from the spicy shore  
 Of Araby the Blest, with such delay  
 Well pleased they slack their course, and many a league  
 Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles. (4.159–65)

This is not Saudi Arabia the birthplace of Osama bin Laden, but Araby the Blest, the Arabia Felix that constituted a blurred pagan adumbration of the Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden. Milton's lines are of course a commonplace: think of Fletcher (in *The Bloody Brother*) talking about "the sweetness of Arabian wind" or Massinger's comparison of a lady's breath to the "smooth gales that glide o'er happy Araby" (in *The Great Duke of Florence*) or, elsewhere in Milton, "of gentlest gale Arabian odours fanned" (*Paradise Regained* 2) and the phoenix, which Milton associates in *Samson Agonistes* with "the Arabian woods."

In addition to Arabia Felix, there are the Arabias of the north, which were controlled in antiquity by the Romans in the West (Petraea) and the Persians in the East. These areas were known as Arabia Deserta. Here the associations are hostile, but they are again not Islamic. In early

Milton one thinks of the "remote wastes and rough desert of Arabia" in *Elegy 4*; in late Milton the story is the same: think of the Jesus of *Paradise Regained* looking south toward "the Persian Bay / And inaccessible th'Arabian drough" (3.273-74). This is not the Empty Quarter (*Rub'al Khali*) beloved of British explorers (and me), but rather large tracts of the Middle East, which Milton and his contemporaries thought to be one big desert. Arabia, we may conclude, was not associated by Milton's generation with Islam.

The next example on which I should like to pause is Ormus, which is too often given the orientalist treatment. It is, like the odors of Arabia the Blest, a commonplace. Think of Marvell's "jewels more rich than Ormus shows" (Bermudas) or Ben Jonson's ship coming from Ormus laden with drugs (*Alchemist* 1.3.59); there was even a play set in Ormus, Fulke Greville's *Alaham*. At the beginning of book 2 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton associates Ormus with Satan's throne in hell ("High on a throne of royal state, which far outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind"), and so echoes a passage in the final scene of Greville's play in which the usurper cries: "Is this Ormus? Or is Ormus my hell,/ Where only furies and not men doe dwell?"<sup>1</sup>

Where, I hear you ask, is Ormus? If you look on a map, you will find it spelled Hormuz, and it is an island in the Strait of Hormuz, which is the narrowest part of the Persian Gulf; I last flew over it in February to inspect it. The key fact about Hormuz now is that it is a desert island that belongs to Iran. The key fact about it at the time of Jonson and Greville and Marvell and Milton is that it was neither Arabian nor Iranian, but European. It was captured by Albuquerque in 1507, and he wrote the name in Portuguese, which is why it was spelt in English, including Milton's English, without an aitch, despite the fact that the "o" was breathed. In the course of the next century, Hormuz evolved from being a strategic link on the Portuguese sea route to Asia into a jewel and spice market through which goods from the East were traded. Shah Abbas, the ruler who built the world's finest square in Isfahan, resented the Portuguese occupation of his island, and in 1621 his agents entered into an agreement with the English East India Company. On February 18, 1622, the English besieged Hormuz, which fell on May 1; you recall that this was the period during which Portugal was annexed by Spain, with whom England enjoyed a fragile peace that was strained by this episode. Whatever the political cost, there was a financial gain. Both King James and the Duke of Buckingham required sweeteners, and they received £10,000 each. You will by now see my point. The association of the throne of Milton's Satan with the wealth of Ormus has nothing to do with orientalist myths about fabled wealth

and ruthless warriors and hubble-bubbles and belly dancers, but is rather an allusion to the Catholic Portuguese and the corrupt English monarchy. It has nothing to do with Islam.

Thus Arabia and Ormus, neither of which is in Milton's eyes Islamic. Almansor, however, qualifies. At the end of *Paradise Lost* Adam is led by Michael to a hilltop from which he can see

. . . Atlas Mount,  
The kingdoms of Almansor, Fez and Sus,  
Morocco, and Algiers and Tremisen. (11.402-04)

Atlas Mount is Mount Toubkal, in the High Atlas, and in March 2005 I hired a mule to explore it. The difficulty with Almansor is that it is not a name or a place, but a title (meaning "the victorious") borne by any number of Arab conquerors. Let me help you with the names of the five kingdoms. Fez, which some readers will know through *The Spider's House* by the American novelist Paul Bowles, was the imperial capital until the French shifted it to Rabat; the Kairaouine University in Fes was founded in A.D. 857, which makes it the world's oldest university, and it was through this university that much Islamic learning passed to the West. Sus, with apologies to the editors of the Oxford World's Classics Milton, who get the passage entirely wrong, is not Tunis, which has never been known as Sus, nor is it the holiday resort in Tunisia known in English and French as Sousse and in Arabic as Susah, but is rather a province of southern Morocco that was until the twentieth century an independent sultanate. "Morocco" is Marrakesh, a sultanate in what is now Morocco; Algiers had been freed from the Ottoman yoke by Barbarossa and had fended off Spanish attacks, and in Milton's time was the principal port of the Barbary pirates. Tremisen, now Tlemcen in western Algeria, was an Arab sultanate from 1282 to 1553, when the Ottomans conquered it. And who was Almansor? The Victorian scholar David Masson said that it was the eighth-century Abbasid caliph Abu Jafer bin Mohammad, the man who founded Baghdad and never went anywhere near the places that Milton mentions. Alastair Fowler comes up with a tenth-century amir of Cordova, who never ruled the places that Milton lists; indeed, he was a chief minister, not a caliph, so he did not rule anything. In the Oxford Milton, Orgel and Goldberg follow obediently behind, making up a few facts to support this improbable assertion. In fact the only al-Mansur described in the accounts of North Africa that could have been known to Milton (all of which derive from Leo Africanus) was a twelfth-century ruler, the Almohad emir Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur. I make the point in order to suggest that one of the barriers to an understanding of the