



Pilgrimage in pra...



Pilgrimage in Practice

Narration, Reclamation and Healing

Edited by Ian S. McIntosh, E. Moore Quinn and Vivienne Keely



CABI RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE SERIES



©CAB International 2018 – for Aaleka Khan

Pilgrimage in Practice



CABI Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Series

General Editors:

Dr Razaq Raj, Leeds Business School, Leeds Beckett University, UK
Dr Kevin Griffin, School of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

This series examines the practical applications, models and illustrations of religious tourism and pilgrimage management from a variety of international perspectives. Pilgrimage is not only a widespread and important practice in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, but also in other major religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

The series explores the emergence and trajectories of religious tourism and pilgrimage, inclusive of all denominations, religions, faiths and spiritual practices, it covers evaluations of religious tourism and pilgrimage, management guides, economic reports and sets of represented actions and behaviours within various cultural, management and marketing contexts. A key strength of the series is the presentation of current and diverse empirical research insights on aspects of religious tourism and pilgrimage, juxtaposing this with state-of-the-art reflections on the emerging theoretical foundations of the subject matter.

The series illustrates the principles related to religion, pilgrimage and the management of tourist sites. It aims to provide a useful resource for researchers and students of the subject, and increase understanding of this vital aspect of tourism studies.

Titles available

Pilgrimage and Tourism to Holy Cities: Ideological and Management Perspectives
Edited by Maria Leppäkä and Kevin Griffin

Conflicts, Religion and Culture in Tourism
Edited by Razaq Raj and Kevin Griffin

The Many Voices of Pilgrimage and Reconciliation
Edited by Ian S. McIntosh and Lesley D. Herman

Local Identities and Transnational Cycles within Europe
Edited by Fiorella Giacalone and Kevin Griffin

Religious Pilgrimage Routes and Trails: Sustainable Development and Management
Edited by Anna Trono and Daniel Olson

Risk and Safety Challenges for Religious Tourism and Events
Edited by Maximiliano Korstanje, Kevin Griffin and Razaq Raj

Pilgrimage in Practice: Narration, Reclamation and Healing
Edited by Ian S. McIntosh, E. Moore Quinn and Vivienne Keely

Titles in preparation

Religious Tourism in Asia
Edited by Shin Yamada, Razaq Raj and Kevin Griffin

Islamic Tourism: Management of Travel Destinations
Edited by Ahmad Jamal, Kevin Griffin and Razaq Raj

Managing Religious Tourism
Edited by Maureen Griffiths and Peter Wiltshire

©CAB International 2018 – for Aateka Khan

Pilgrimage in Practice

Narration, Reclamation and Healing

Edited by

Ian S. McIntosh, E. Moore Quinn and Vivienne Keely



Contents

Contributors	vii
Introduction: Pilgrimage in Practice – Narration, Reclamation and Healing <i>Ian S. McIntosh, E. Moore Quinn and Vivienne Kerly</i>	ix
PART I – GROUNDING PILGRIMAGE	
1 The Experience of Medieval Pilgrims on the Route to Santiago de Compostela, Spain: Evidence from the 12th-century Pilgrim's Guide <i>Tessa Garton</i>	1
2 Pilgrimage: A Distinctive Practice <i>Richard LeSueur</i>	16
3 Meshworks, Entanglements and Presencing Absence: Pilgrimages, Eastern Free State-style <i>Shirley du Plessy</i>	26
PART II – NARRATING PILGRIMAGE	
4 Pilgrim Writers in Dialogue <i>Suzanne van der Beek</i>	46
5 Medieval Pilgrims in Modern Times: Buñuel's <i>The Milky Way</i> <i>Alison T. Smith</i>	60
6 Richard Burton: Disguise as Journey to the Self and Beyond <i>Aateka Khan</i>	70
PART III – RECLAIMING PILGRIMAGE	
7 Children's Processions to Glasnevin: Contestation, Education, Recreation <i>Vivienne Kerly</i>	80
	v

8 'Non-Sacred' No More: The Pilgrimage Path <i>Crucán na bPáiste</i> and the Re-evaluation of Irish Cultural Practices <i>E. Moore Quinn</i>	91
9 Spain's Mystical Adventure: Walking in the Footsteps of Teresa of Ávila <i>Mary Farelly</i>	112
PART IV – HEALING AND RECONCILING THROUGH PILGRIMAGE	
10 Dreaming of Al-Quds (Jerusalem): Pilgrimage and Visioning <i>Ian S. McIntosh</i>	122
11 The Future Generations Ride of the Lakota Sioux <i>George D. Greenia</i>	137
12 Pilgrimage and the Challenging of a Canadian Foundational Myth <i>Matthew R. Anderson</i>	148
Index	165

6 Richard Burton: Disguise as Journey to the Self and Beyond

Aateka Khan*
University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

This chapter interrogates the act of pilgrimage as undertaken by the celebrated British Hajj, Richard Burton, in 1853, and recounted in the *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*, a work he penned shortly after. What motivated Burton to undertake such an enterprise: Glory? Adventure? Curiosity? Perhaps it was an eagerness to appease imperial authorities to further his career. Probably one can never know the truth just even of one's own self, but I attempt this interrogation of pilgrimage from a postcolonial consciousness, which I find deplorably under-represented in studies on Burton. By bringing to bear in this discourse a voice from the other side of the fence, I hope to enrich the understanding of the pilgrimage adventure that Burton undertook and to draw attention to anomalies in Burton's narrative that have been, not surprisingly, glossed over. Most writers on Burton fail to question his claim that disguise as a Muslim other, with the paraphernalia of cultural markers, was a prerequisite to performing the Hajj. This chapter shall offer an alternative reading, countering the widespread Eurocentric acceptance of this claim and supported by a close textual analysis. Another interesting aspect of the pilgrimage that will be explored is the peculiar role that Burton played by embarking on a pilgrimage funded by imperial Britain, yet displaying the ability to surpass the restrictive view of Islam which such an orientalist enterprise would encourage.

Introduction

Richard Burton (1821–1890) is the infamous, indefatigable British traveller whose interest and 'expertise' in all things oriental was phenomenal. His prodigious linguistic skills, anthropological rigour, cartographical findings, insatiable wanderlust and enigmatic personality have won him an extraordinary place in the genre of travel writing. Burton's was an extremely checkered career. His childhood was spent in different parts of the European continent. His father's belated attempt to settle in England failed to create that sense of belonging which one associates with home. It also resulted in a lifelong struggle for

Burton to find acceptance and recognition in a society he failed to accept wholly as his own. His itinerant and carefree childhood made it hard for him to fall in line with authority. Unable to cope with the regulatory control at Trinity College, Oxford, he left triumphantly after having himself expelled. Similar problems of alienation persisted as Burton sought to find a career in Britain. As an outsider in the country, he had to work his way upwards. Having bought himself a place in the East India Company Army, Burton put his linguistic skills to good use and carved out a niche for himself as an anthropological interpreter during Britain's imperial heyday. Imperial interests in the 19th century resulted in

* Address for correspondence: aatekas@yahoo.com

the creation of anthropological societies whose funding ensured that Burton could use his linguistic skills to secure monetary assistance for another related interest: adventure. While he travelled – and represented a plethora of regions from different continents with the exceptional detail that his myriad interests allowed – the most enduring of all the accounts that the exceedingly prolific Burton produced was that of his Islamic pilgrimage in which he was disguised as a Muslim pilgrim. In Burton's scholarship, the pilgrimage to the Islamic heartlands of Mecca and Medina that he undertook has become little more than critical shorthand for extreme daring. However, as I shall attempt to depict it, Burton's Hajj was literally the *tour de force* of a life full of astonishing achievements, wherein every act was part of a performance, a complex negotiation of liberal thought with a Eurocentric worldview. My chapter attempts a close textual study of Burton's personal narrative of his pilgrimage, which traverses the contradictory stances of awestruck reverential piety and moves to the other extreme of absolute and complete disdain and disassociation.

Burton as Travel Writer

Edward Said says of Burton in his monumental *Orientalism* that 'in his writing we can find exemplified the struggle between individualism and a strong feeling of national identification with Europe' (Said, 1995 [1978], p. 195). My intent is to explore the ramifications of such a tension in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the pilgrimage undertaken by Burton than the customary and reductive view allows. The latter finds currency in the Western imagination, which regards it as a triumph of the imperial and Christian West over the Islamic East. Said, whose adept exposure of the politics behind oriental practice resulted in the creation of a new field of study, was uncharacteristically soft on him when he said, 'Burton's freedom was in having shaken himself loose of his European origins enough to be able to live as an Oriental' (Said, 1995 [1978], p. 196). Said notes the nuances in Burton's imperial role, which is interpolated with a conscious sense of rebellion against Europe. I find this equation mirrored in his association with Islam. In his writing, Burton veers

from the predictable, stereotypically derogatory and homogenized view of Islam to a spirited defence of the religion. In effect, I shall attempt a more nuanced appreciation of Burton the pilgrim from an alternative perspective – that of someone with the consciousness of a postcolonial. Though a postcolonial position would appear redundant in the literal sense of the word, I use it here to express the oppositional stance offered by my interpretation while at the same time challenging the hegemonic imperialist discourse surrounding Burton's celebrated narrative.

Much of the triumph that is attributed to Burton is predicated on his breaching, as an Englishman, of the frontiers of the *Heja* (as it was referred to in the Victorian period), the Islamic centre of pilgrimage, which was – and still is – off limits to non-Muslims. Three years subsequent to the commencement of his pilgrimage, Burton wrote *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*, which was first published in 1856. It is interesting to note at this point that, while other erstwhile religious pilgrimage sites have exceeded their primary purpose, the pilgrimage sites that are visited to become a Hajj remain rooted in traditional parameters; they are guarded jealously so as to conform to the exemplary Muslim pilgrim, the last Prophet of the Muslims, Muhammad. Suzanne van der Beek notes how the Camino to Santiago de Compostela has reinvented itself in modern times to accommodate pilgrimages of a spiritual nature; these are independent of the original Catholic associations that formed part of the Camino's genesis (see Chapter 4, this volume). On the other hand, the Hajj, obligatory for all adult Muslims at least once in a lifetime (provided that one can bear the expense), is prescribed by Quranic injunction and conforms even today to its pristine form. Because Muslims regard the Quran as a revelation of the voice of Allah, devout believers regard Muslim ritualistic practices – of which the Hajj is one – as inviolable.

Burton as Orientalist

As an orientalist, Burton had studied one account, and certainly he was aware of additional accounts written by five European travellers. Interestingly, what Suzanne van der Beek represents as established practices of regular pilgrim

writers undertaking the Camino applies equally well to practices at other pilgrimage sites, even if they are undertaken by 'outsider pilgrims' whose cultural and religious affiliations lie elsewhere. My intent in using the term 'outsider pilgrim' is to highlight Burton's cultural alienation from the Hajj, notwithstanding his years of learning Arabic during his Oxford days. Later still, the years he spent among Muslims in India, even dressing as them, served as a preparation for the journey. Even though Burton is usually perceived to be the first European to undertake the Hajj, in reality he is only the most famous. Burton's keen textual awareness of at least one of the preceding European narratives is evident in his constant allusion to and reproduction of Johann Ludwig Burckhardt's narrative, which he upholds as authoritative, although at times needing correction. Often enough, Burton's descriptive narrative situates itself vis-à-vis Burckhardt's by way of clarification, when, for instance he differs on the estimate of the population of Mecca or when he offers what, according to him, is a more accurate description of the Kaba. On other occasions, he informs the reader of the cultural changes that have taken place since Burckhardt wrote: 'this is a modern custom: the accurate Burckhardt informs us that in his day the women of Mecca did not wear mourning' (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 160).

In Burton's case, the distinctive characteristics that define the 'personal pilgrim writer' and the 'institutional pilgrim writer', both outlined by van der Beek, are collapsed into a single category. Indeed, although van der Beek outlines three different categories of pilgrim, she does not consider them definitive; rather, she recognizes the possibility of subversion in the delineated structure. In Burton's case, the merging of the 'personal' and the 'institutional' owes to the fundamental indeterminacy of Burton's pilgrim status that accommodates the contradictory trajectories of the imperial preoccupation of objectifying and representing the oriental other on the one hand and the experience of a Victorian whose spiritual quest knew no bounds on the other. Burton's decision to pen a personal narrative thus produces an indeterminate text, one which recounts the personal pilgrim writer's spiritual experience alongside the institutional pilgrim writer's detailed orientalist information.

The latter covers the widest spectrum possible of the demographic, ethnographic, architectural, geographic and cultural peculiarities of the Islamic other, recorded in a carefully concealed notebook. This facet of his narrative is apparent in the multiple references to orientalist accounts against whose observations he posits his own. In one particular instance, Burton refers to no less than four orientalist on a single page:

De Wilson (Lands of the Bible), repeated by Eliot Warburton (Crescent and Cross), lays stress upon the Tawarah tradition, that they are Beni-Israel converted to Islam, considering it a fulfilment of the prophecy, 'that a remnant of Israel shall dwell in Islam.' With due deference to so illustrious an orientalist and biblical scholar as De Wilson, I believe that most modern Moslems, being ignorant that Jacob was the first called 'father of Israel', apply the term Beni-Israel to all posterity of Abraham, not to Jews only. A wonderful change has taken place in the Tawarah tribes, [while] portrayed by Sir John Mandeville as 'folke full of alle cyllle condicions,' Niebuhr notes the trouble they gave him....

(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 140)

It is this peculiarity of Burton's situation that produces an account that exceeds the utterance of a pilgrim. It provides a plethora of detail, much like the 12th-century *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, whose rich fabric of detail is brought into focus by Tessa Garton (see Chapter 1, this volume). The comprehensive *Pilgrim's Guide* prepares prospective pilgrims not only for the spiritual awakening, but also for the earthly facts of physical travel, rest and food. As a result, it prepares pilgrims for the encounters with cultural difference on the four principal routes, and it dwells upon the significance of the churches to be encountered on the journey. Likewise, Burton's narrative, in tandem with the detail provided in the *Pilgrim's Guide*, contains a wealth of architectural, cultural and religious detail.

Distinctions of Burton's Account

Yet Burton's guide differs dramatically from regular pilgrim guides because it veers towards the more secular genre of travel writing. The orientalist feature of Burton's narrative relates to its function as a voyeuristic device. Not written

in order to be read in preparation for a similar journey, the text that Burton produces is, instead, written for passive consumption; its primary goal is to be representative rather than preparatory. This difference in function is rooted in the fact that Burton's narrative is indisputably written from an outsider's perspective. The author's intended readership, too, falls beyond the pale of belief in terms of the depicted religion and its customs. To characterize the readers of Burton's pilgrimage narrative as 'virtual pilgrims' (to borrow van der Beek's terminology) would therefore be technically inappropriate because Burton's narrative of the Islamic pilgrimage would not be read as a vicarious fulfilment of a deep-seated spiritual need but rather as an amused and authentic peek into the exotic rites of the principal other of Western consciousness.

Other writers on the Hajj

Ludovico de Varthema, the incessant traveller from Portugal, is the first known European to have left an eye-witness account of the Hajj which he performed disguised as a Syrian as early as 1501. Domingo Badia Leblich, alias Ali Bey, was a Spaniard who performed the pilgrimage in 1807; he was disguised as an Arab prince, although in actuality he was working as an undercover imperial agent. In writing his account of the pilgrimage under the pseudonym of his fictional identity, Ali Bey, he kept up the pretence of being a born Muslim. Like Ali Bey's, the Swiss Johann Ludwig Burckhardt's expedition was sponsored; supporting him was the African association of Great Britain, an auxiliary cultural body of the British Empire.¹ In his writing, Burckhardt claims he had proselytised and gained access to the forbidden cities only after having convinced Mohammad Ali, the Pasha of the Ottoman Empire, and his clergy of his veracity.² Thus unlike the former two orientalist travellers, Burckhardt completed the rites of the Hajj in 1809 without taking recourse to subterfuge. His case had illustrated that professing the Islamic faith, whether sincere or not, would very simply open up this guarded religious space without any controversy. Later still, within a decade of Burton's visit, Herman Bicknell, an Englishman, completed the sacred journey as a convert and without any financial support; he perceived that

there would be no danger for his compatriots in doing the same, provided that they were conversant with the prayers and tenets of Islam (Bicknell, 1874). Despite such testimonies, Burton, like his Spanish and Portuguese predecessors, chose disguise in order to fulfil a primarily Imperial mission, which was sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society of London on dubious grounds:

But to pass through the Moslem's Holy Land, you must either be a born believer, or have become one; in the former case you may demean yourself as you please, in the latter a path is ready prepared for you. My spirit could not bend to own myself a Turk, [Burton] a renegade – to be pointed at and shunned and catcalled, an object of suspicion to the many and of contempt to all. Moreover, it would have obstructed the aim of my wanderings. The convert is always watched with Argus eyes, and men do not willingly give information to a 'new Moslem,' especially a Frank.

(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 23)

Usually, converts to Islam and other proselytising religions are welcomed and treated as exemplary in recognition of the intrepid struggle the act of conversion entails: going against the religious community into which one is born. The case of William Henry Quilliam, who, after a brush with Islam in Morocco, changed his name to Abdullah Quilliam, bears out in vivid detail the difficulty of professing Islam in 19th-century Britain (Greaves, 2010). Interestingly, Burton's description of the new believer's reception in the religion of his choice better approximates such a person's adversarial relationship with the religion he has forsaken. Indeed, the better part of Burton's preface to the third edition is devoted to taking on those who were critical of his 'turning Turk', even for appearances sake, in order to undertake the Islamic pilgrimage. As successful as his personal narrative was, it was not to grant him immunity from vicious personal attacks that accused him of relinquishing 'Western' values of integrity of character and delivered the ultimate opprobrium: the accusation of apostasy. Burton quotes extensively from one such source, the author of *A Narrative of a Year's Journey in Central and Eastern Arabia*:

To feign a religion which the adventurer himself does not believe, to perform with scrupulous exactitude, as of the highest and holiest import,

practices which he inwardly ridicules, and which he intends on his return to hold up to the ridicule of others; to turn for weeks and months together the most sacred and awful bearings of a man towards his Creator into a deliberate and truthless mummery ... all this seems hardly compatible with the character of a European gentleman, let alone that of a Christian.
(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], pp. xiv–xv)

What this position in effect does is question the shared Eurocentric and Christian space that Burton inhabits with his readers, a space that grants him the licence to voyeuristically consume an alien experience without the necessity of real participation. Burton's position as a European undoubtedly conferred upon him, as most orientalist would believe, the licence to appropriate material (in this instance through masquerade) by hook or by crook. But here the concern filters down to the operative word: 'Christian'. Burton's account becomes problematic for some because it puts his Christian credentials under the scanner, with some of his contemporaries not taking kindly to his ecumenical attitude towards different systems of faith. In his defence, Burton refuses to fend off the allegations or to assert his religious conformity, even by way of appeasement:

My object is not to defend myself: I recognise no man's right to interfere between a human being and his conscience. But what is there, I would like to ask, in the Moslem Pilgrimage so offensive to Christians – What makes it a subject of 'inward ridicule'? Do they not also venerate Abraham, the Father of the Faithful? Did not Locke, and even greater names, hold Muhammadans to be heretical Christians? ... The fact is, there are honest men who hold [that] Islam, in its capital tenets, approaches much nearer to the faith of Jesus than do Pauline and Athanasian modifications. ...
(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. xvi)

Burton offers a collective defence for his tribe of crossover pilgrims, whose cultural inclusiveness, as he sees it, should not be mistaken for a vacuity of morality. Burton's argument, however, belies the seamy side of his fully sponsored reconnaissance trip, which was to help open up trade, further anthropological investigations and add to the orientalist exercise of cartography, to name but a few of the listed purposes in his own expansive catalogue. Burton is acutely aware

that his undertaking was part of a 'sponsoring, if truth be told, to set foot on that mysterious spot which no vacation tourist has yet described, measured, sketched and photographed' (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 3). This colonialist desire to establish a knowledge base of the 'mysterious penetralia of Muhammadan superstition', as mentioned by Thomas L. Wolley in the preface to the first edition, is in tandem with the imperialist climate that prevailed in Victorian England and that offered an invaluable opportunity for personal advancement for Burton, whose itinerant childhood produced a strained identification with England where he stayed intermittently (Wolley, cited in Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. ix). According to Elleke Boehmer, Burton's colonial gaze is an admixture of 'both ... conquest and ... a form of research' which can be regarded as exemplified in the *Personal Narrative* (Boehmer, 2005 [1995], p. 69).

Richard Burton's Ambivalence, His Critics and His Retorts

The decision to write a 'personal narrative' is a very conscious one; it suggests an attempt to carve out a subjective space of experience beyond the pale of colonialist compulsions. Over and above the associations of undying faith and reverence – both springboards for religious travel – pilgrimage for Burton offers the opportunity for an intrepid foray into forbidden territory:

What can be more exciting? What more sublime? Man's heart bounds in his breast at the thought of measuring his puny force with Nature's might, and of emerging triumphant from the trial. This explains the Arab's proverb, 'Voyaging is a Victory.' In the Desert even more than upon the ocean, there is present death, hardship is there, and perils, and shipwreck – solitary, not in crowds, where, as the Persians say, 'Death is a festival.' – and this sense of danger, never absent, invests the scene of travel with an interest not its own.
(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 142)

While one cannot lose sight of the fact that Burton hoped to add to the limited cartography of the area, and especially to represent the hitherto elusive 'Empty Abode', his description of travel in the desert is posited as a spiritual experience

irrespective of the religious rites of the prescribed pilgrimage he had set out to undertake. Burton's near monomaniacal passion for travel, particularly travel in desert spaces, is perceived by him as exhilarating in its daring proximity to death (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 3). It is, in itself, a surrendering of one's being into the hands of a poignant dependency of divine providence in the most immediate manner possible. Arguably, this mystical attitude towards travel renders the purest expression of Burton's sensibility as a pilgrim.

On the other hand, in a more mundane sense, travel also acted as a reprieve from the tedium of civilised existence, which Burton unequivocally associates with the West. Even as he dissociates himself from 'European effeminacy', he does not uncritically attach himself to the East, where he feels ill at ease with the pernicious oriental habit of incessant socialising (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], Vol. 1, p. 1: 134). Burton's lack of complete identification with the West, coupled with a highly individualistic cast of mind, allowed him to draw parallels between Eastern and Western cultural practices (instead of summarily denouncing them, as most orientalist would). His ability to exercise a Keatsian negative capability, not only in thought but also in practice, no doubt made experiments in disguise possible; this ability set him apart from contemporaries like Charles Doughty, who disdained the moral degradation of even appearing like orientals (Keats, 1817).

Burton's pilgrim account underscores the tenuous nature of his appropriation of oriental identities for the purpose of impersonation; moreover, his account is at odds with the Western circulation of the masquerade as an unmitigated success. From the very start of his journey, Burton frequently code-switches, a behaviour which suggests a fundamental indeterminacy of the cultural identities he attempts to portray. When he sails from England, Burton assumes the persona of an Indian/Persian prince named Mirza Abdullah. After a month of preparation at Alexandria, he switches his name to Shaykh Abdullah, choosing instead to be a dervish who practises medicine. Once in Cairo, his persona undergoes yet another transfiguration, this time he metamorphoses into an Afghan. It is the advice of Haji Ali, whom he befriended in Cairo, that prompts him to undergo the final

transformation of becoming an Afghan; his friend's remarks indicate the transparency of Burton's true identity:

By his advice I laid aside the Durward's gown, the large blue pantaloons, and the short shirt; in fact all connection with Persia and the Persians. 'If you persist in being an "Ajami," said the Haji, 'you will get yourself into trouble: in Egypt you will be cursed; in Arabia you will be beaten because you are a heretic; you will pay the tribute of what other travellers do, and if you fall sick you may die by the roadside.' After long deliberation about the choice of nations, I became a 'Pathan'.
(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 145–146)

I am in this deduction taking the liberty of presuming Burton did not take Haji Ali into confidence. Nowhere in his account does he narrate having done so; on the contrary, to all appearances Haji Ali astutely sees through the facade of Burton's doctor's persona. He ostensibly congratulates Burton on his doctor status repeatedly in the most rhetorical manner while simultaneously alluding to the inordinate proliferation of the creed of doctors in Egypt. It takes a while for Burton to be able to appreciate Ali's very humour. Though Burton is at great pains to convince the reader of the success of his costume, without which the whole edifice responsible for constructing the narrative of glory would fall through, this quick succession of proliferating personas belies his claims to be in possession of an undetected and seamless masquerade. Interestingly, Salih, an Arab commentator, speaks of Burton the pilgrim as someone who 'would be known as a devout British Muhammadan just as easily as we recognise an Arab convert on a missionary platform' (Salih, 1891, cited in Kennedy, 2005, pp. 64–65). Dane Kennedy, paying lip service to this crucial observation but sidestepping it, follows it up with a facile attempt to understand the compulsions behind Burton's subterfuge. He even suggests that 'he still harboured a desire to go from Mecca into Arabia's Empty Quarter, which would have been difficult to do as an Englishman, even one who [had] sincerely converted to Islam' (Kennedy, 2005, p. 65). Implicit in this remark is the ingenuous belief that visiting the Empty Abode, the uncharted desert land that was adjacent to the Hejaz, was as perilous a destination to a non-believer as were the sacred cities. Would it

make it any easier if one pretended to be a born Muslim, however transparent the subterfuge might be? Would such devious behaviour win favour and help? Kennedy would appear to believe that it would (or else he merely records perfunctorily the most insightful remarks that give a credible perspective into the culture of the depicted orient). Although he is aware of Burton's penchant for making truth-claims which have no backing (he refers to Burton's claim of passing the order of a marshid, pointing out, though, that he only supplies a nameless document as proof), he seems to confuse Burton's narrative with the inviolable truth. In addition, Kennedy persists in upholding Burton's version of events rather than let Salih's perception open up a new perspective on the whole affair. Kennedy states:

There was one further consideration that made any thought of undertaking the pilgrimage as a self-proclaimed English convert to Islam impossible: it would invalidate his accomplishment and destroy his reputation in the eyes of the British public.

(Kennedy, 2005, p. 65)

Kennedy collapses two potentially separate categories of disguise and reputation into one. Salih's contention, which has great potential for a resistant postcolonial interpretation, fails to make a mark; instead, Burton's account is taken for granted, even though there are strong indications of his fictionalizing.

Moreover, Said demonstrates the long-standing tradition wherein orientalist have taken liberties with matters concerning the objectified orient, 'freely inventing' with impunity (Said, 1995 [1978], p. 171). The decided preference to maintain an orientalist's narrative over other non-Western voices perpetuates an orientalist discourse predicated on the simultaneous study and exclusion of the objectified other. The trust invested in Burton's narrative owes, no doubt, to the latent belief in his loyalty to the Imperial West. His deception is accepted and celebrated when directed at the oriental other, but when he addresses his own folk, in its stead stands a tacit understanding of shared trust and allegiance to a common culture and politics. It is true that Burton's 'personal' account is sprinkled with notes towards expanding and consolidating the Imperial hold (he even packs in recommendations for British policy in India by

vociferously speaking against the experiment of socializing with Indians). Yet his strategy of establishing a contact zone with other cultures, and the peculiar and radically protean quality of his personality, allow him occasionally to perceive the double standards of Western practices (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 40–41).¹ By virtue of his ability to absorb alterity and then comment on it with an insider's insight, he fostered a more nuanced appreciation of difference than did most of his contemporaries. He lies in an intermediate zone wherein he vacillates between positions of denunciation and those of unqualified acceptance, which he directs at both the orient and the occident. For instance, he bitterly rues British consular policy in Egypt, which in his view denies the Eastern government the power to apprehend British subjects. He hypothetically recreates the same situation within European boundaries to bring home the fact:

What, however, would be the result were Great Britain to authorize her sons resident in Paris, or Florence, to refuse attendance at a French or Italian court of justice, and to demand that the police shall never force the doors of an English subject? I commend this consideration to all those who 'stickle for abstract rights' when the interest and progress of others are concerned, and who become somewhat latitudinarian and concrete in cases where their own welfare and aggrandisement are at stake.

(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 115)

In addition, Burton's journey, amid a potpourri of such variegated expressions that both uphold Imperial authority and questioned it, yielded an undeniably sacred sentiment which pours forth the instant he lays eyes on the Kaaba:

I may truly say, of all the worshippers who hang weeping to the curtain, or who pressed their beating hearts to the stone, none felt for the moment a deeper emotion than did the Hajj from far North. It was as if the poetical legends of the Arab spoke truth, and that the waving wings of angels, not the sweet breeze of morning, were agitating and swelling the black covering of the shrine.

(Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 3: 39–40)

Burton's embodiment of the Muslim pilgrim's persona was often more than a ventriloquist's exercise. It served as a lever to an inalienable religious experience – 'sublime it was,' he states, despite his primary function as an imperial

agent sent on a reconnaissance mission (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 52).² The emphasis of this compelling aspect of his experience of the pilgrimage should not eclipse his antagonistic observations of the oriental other. Paradoxically, these contrary strains coexist in the complex negotiation between the two antagonistic positions of Burton the pilgrim and Burton the orientalist. Many of his observations were in tandem with the general body of orientalist, whose work, more often than not, served to provide justification for Europe's self-righteous expansionist aggression, which was couched in the rhetoric of the 'civilizing mission'. For instance, he is capable of sweeping generalizations like: '[I]n none of the Eastern languages with which I am acquainted is there a single term conveying the meaning of our "gratitude"' (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 1: 51).

On the other hand, the considerable knowledge of Islam acquired to undertake the enterprise no doubt left Burton with a sympathetic attitude towards the religion. 'The most extreme act for the scholar of Muslim theology is conversion to Islam, pure and simple,' states Middle East specialist Rodinson (Rodinson, 1988, p. 107). Burton's immersion into the mores and rites of the Muslim world exposes him to the Islamophobic suspicion of having genuinely converted. Many of his contemporaries harboured the belief he had embraced Islam, as did some of his later biographers. There is no way of ascertaining the truth of this conjecture, first, because Burton finds ways of puncturing the reverence he speaks of; for instance, in one account he shifts his religious focus in order to relate an abortive amorous affair which he describes tongue in cheek as leaving the pilgrim 'in ecstasy' (Burton, 1874 [1855–1856], p. 3: 78). Second, Burton's rationalist thought, as expressed in his extended poem *The Kasidah*, written in 1853 on his return from the Hejaz under his Eastern nom-de-plume Haji Abdul-Ya'udi, though not published until 27 years later, opens up a parallel trajectory regarding his personal belief system. The poem is saturated with existential angst: 'Why must we meet, why must we part, why must we bear this yoke of MUST, / Without our leave or ask or given, by tyrant Fate on victim thrust?' These words from Burton the poet are his answer to the Victorian crisis of faith and doubt: an all-embracing

humanistic creed (Burton, 1900, p. 2). Burton's personal creed seems to be close to the sentiment expressed in another phrase from the same poem: '[A]ll Faith is false, all Faith is true' (Burton, 1900, p. 12). In the poem, Burton fills the void created by his scepticism towards faith with an all-embracing humanitarianism which allows a neutral and open stance of the suspension of judgement.

Further, Burton's understanding of religion was rooted in geographical and racial underpinnings. As a dedicated ethnologist, he sought anthropological explanations for religious rituals and practices. For instance, he interpreted the elaborate ritual with which a pious Muslim drinks water (holding it with both hands, reciting the verse *Bismillah*, which is Arabic for 'in the name of Allah' and then drinking it in three gulps and concluding with *Allhumdillillah* (Praise be to God) to the scarcity of water in the Hejaz; in other words, Burton was not content with solely religious explanations (such as how the Prophet taught by example). Likewise, in his anthropological treatise *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam*, Burton defends Islam against many pernicious European prejudices even as he asserts its relevance purely within Eastern confines: 'El Islam prospered amongst kindred races[,] it fell flat elsewhere' (Burton, 1898, p. 343). This assertion stems from Burton's belief in the contiguous existence of a religion within a specific geographical territory and ethnic community.

In effect, Burton's assumption was that religions are the product of geographical and racial confluences. As an anthropologist with an appreciation of religions, he saw them as connected to a temporal continuum, differentiated by cultural markers, yet innately similar. His radically open and inquisitive nature led him to master practically the different religious practices he had access to while in India. Yet despite his dispassionate levelling of all religiosity to a more-or-less equal footing, in his writings he does not live up to the 'suspension of judgement' he celebrates in *The Kasidah*; instead, he often obliquely indicates an evaluative ranking in which Islam appears to figure favourably for its 'noble simplicity' which 'endears the modern' (Burton, 1898, p. 344).³ 'The Saving Faith', as Burton refers to Islam, offered much that endeared him to it, but as a free thinker, he was beyond the pale of prescribed dogmas.⁴

Conclusion

In the final analysis, Burton and his writings are best described through the metaphor of the palimpsest, wherein lie different layers of interpretation, contrary and antagonistic, coexistent and assertive. Burton de-centered Eurocentric discourse even as he upheld

Europe's imperial monopoly; he defended Islam even as he often ridiculed those who represented it. However, these dualistic and seemingly incompatible roles have one thing in common: behind them stood a transgressive individual whose ideas, resistant to the imposition of prescriptive discursive practices, were his own.

Notes

1. All of these travellers' accounts are anthologized in Michael Wolfe (ed.) (1997) *One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage*. Grover Press, New York.
2. I have not mentioned the other two authors as they are not relevant to my chapter. Joseph Pitt's pilgrimage was thrust upon him after a forcible conversion, and Giovanni Finati was not favourably referred to even by Burton: '[H]is moral character as it appears in print is of that description which knows no shame: it is not candour but sheer insensibility which makes him relate circumstantially his repeated desertions. ...' See Finati (n.d.).
3. Burton (1874 [1855–1856]), *Personal Narrative* p. 1: 40–41. Burton's recommendations are at odds with his own practice of going native:

[A]n Indian adds an especial spite to oriental coarseness, treachery, and Tyranny. Even the experiment of associating with them is almost too hard to bear. But a useful deduction may be drawn from such observations; and as few have had greater experience than myself, I venture to express my opinion with confidence, however unpopular or unfashionable it may be. I am convinced that the natives of India cannot respect a European who mixes with them familiarly, or especially who imitates their customs, manners, and dress. The tight pantaloons, the authoritative voice, the pocomant manner, and the broken Hindustani impose upon them ... have a weight which learning and honesty, which wit and courage, have not.
4. Burton (1874 [1855–1856]), p. 3: 52. The complete sentence gives a more accurate picture of Burton's admiration:

One object, unique in appearance, stood in view – the temple of the one Allah, the God of Abraham, of Ishmael, and of their posterity. Sublime it was, and expressing by all the eloquence of fancy the grandeur of the One Idea which vitalized El Islam, and the strength and steadfastness of its votaries.
5. Burton (1898, p. 344). Burton appreciates a simplicity that allows for no intermediary between man and his God in Islam. He notes how that belief system is free from the Calvinistic sense of an invincibly debased humanity; how baptism is not required; how an ordinary fellow believer can bathe, bury and pray over a co-religionist, etc.
6. Burton's strident individuality was more at home with the liberties of Sufi thought. Traditionally, Sufism is the mystical Islamic belief in a divine love, which is achieved through the purification of the soul. In a more modern sense, it can be interpreted as a dogma-free belief in an omnipotent God unfettered by any constraints of ritualistic practices.

References

- Bicknell, H. (1874) *The Mecca Pilgrimage*. Collection of British Authors: Tauchnitz Edition, Volume 1402. Bernhard Tauchnitz, Leipzig. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/personalnarrativ1874burton> (accessed 13 September 2015).
- Boehmer, E. (2005 [1995]) *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. 2nd edn. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

- Brodie, F.M. (1967) *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton*. W.W. Norton, New York.
- Burton, R.F. (1874 [1855–1856]) *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*. Collection of British Authors: Tauchnitz Edition, Volume 1400–2. Bernhard Tauchnitz, Leipzig. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/personalnarrativ1874burton> (accessed 13 September 2015).
- Burton, R.F. (1898) *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam*. Herbert S. Stone, Chicago, Illinois. Available at: <http://www.jbooksonline.com/view.php> (accessed 13 September 2015).
- Burton, R.F. (1900 [1880]) *The Kasidah of Hāfi' Abū'l-ʿAlī-ʿIzādī*. H.J. Cook, London. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044010254630> (accessed 15 September 2017).
- Finati, G. (n.d.) Appendix VI. In: Burton, R. (ed.) *Personal Narrative of Meccah and Medina*. Available at: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/burton/richard/067p/> (accessed 19 September 2015).
- Greaves, R. (2010) *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam*. Kube Publishing, Leicester, UK.
- Keats, J. (1817) *Selections from Keats' Letters*. Available at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/237836?page=2> (accessed 19 September 2015).
- Kennedy, D. (2005) *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Rodinson, M. (1988) *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (trans. Vireux, R.). L.B. Tauris, London.
- Said, E. (1995 [1978]) *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, London.
- Wolfe, M. (ed.) (1997) *One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage*. Grover Press, New York.