Introduction

Why Re-Orient?

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder.
>
> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*[1]

Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, Giovanni Paolo Marana's *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, and James Justinian Morier's *Hajji Baba*: novels about Eastern travelers in Europe and Britain that encouraged eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British readers not only to see themselves as foreign but also to locate their national home in pan-Eurasia. They were not merely exoticizing the Orient, they were living its fiction. By the 1810s, many people in Britain were strutting in "Mirza turbans," dancing to Persian music, speaking Persian, and raising toasts to the shah of Iran, with ladies displaying Eastern-style hairdos, riding Arabian horses, and sporting elegant Kashmir shawls. Most of these revelers were native-born Britons who had discovered foreignness within themselves, a borderless sense of belonging that Julia Kristeva considers the condition for an ethical and political reckoning with alterity in nationalist self-understandings. Unruly crowds swelled by the hundreds in London, from Mansfield Street to Piccadilly, to pay homage to their fashion guru: Mirza Abul Hassan Khan Ilchi Shirazi (1776–1846), the Iranian envoy to Britain in 1809–1810 and 1819.[2] Morier, a British diplomat in Iran at the time and Abul Hassan's friend, satirizes this xenophilia in *Hajji Baba*. Yet Morier's disdain for fellow citizens' bizarre performances (as discussed in my Epilogue) is reoriented affirmatively toward the Islamic Persian-speaking world in the pre-1858 writings of Central and South Asian travelers to England, Scotland, and Ireland; the genteel men who have received less attention than their fictional counterparts. Joseph Emin, Sake Dean Mahomet, Shaykh I'tesamuddin, Abu Talib Khan, Yusuf Khan Kambalposh, and Lutfullah Khan reveal how national space and time are coterminal with the Anglo-Persian parity that rendered Abul Hassan a media celebrity.

[1] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1.

[2] See *The Morning Post*, December 21, 1809, 3, and March 19, 1810, 3; "General Observations of Fashions and Dress," *La Belle Assembleé: or Court and Fashionable Magazine*, July 1819, 276.

Scholarship since Edward Said has emphasized the impact of a philologically-based orientalism on Western ideas of Eastern difference. What this approach has concealed is the ways in which other forms of English knowledge about the world also provided the resources through which non-Britons could negotiate their place in a hybrid polity. The previously named travelers found in their cordial interactions with Englishwomen and men a strategy for negotiating East-West relations and for inhabiting a critical agency that appropriated various media to make Europe commensurate with Asia. Drama, dance, masquerades, visual arts, music, optical recreations, and newsprint enabled these citizens of the world to recalibrate Eurasian ways of behaving and knowing. These mediums gave them the tools to refashion themselves in metropolitan publics that were more accommodating than in territories ruled by the British East India Company. Their remediations expose an enchanted third space between empires, an inter-imperial modernity in which the European episteme was non-hegemonic.[3]

As such, this book joins a recent wave of scholarship on how print and visual mediations transmit love between strangers: histories of xenophilia that vex imperial, artistic, and literary borders.[4] Journeys to faraway lands and oceans acquire textual form in the encounter with the unknown, embedding travelers' textured experiences in their social surroundings. Such processes are at work among Asian and Muslim traveler writers fixated on commensurable understandings of religious and ethical comportment. In their narratives, Europe is continuous with greater Eurasia, spanning north Africa, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Hindustan.[5] Likewise, the featured travelers participate in a foreign mediascape that links their homeland to a pluralistic Britain on the political,

[3] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[4] See, for example, Kathleen Wilson, *Strolling Players of Empire: Theatre and Performance in the British Imperial Provinces* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Su Fang Ng, *Alexander the Great from Britain to Southeast Asia: Peripheral Empires in the Global Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Daniel O'Quinn, *Engaging the Ottoman Empire: Vexed Mediations, 1690–1815* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Nile Green, *The Love of Strangers: What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen's London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*; Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*; Wendy Laura Belcher, *Abyssinia's Samuel Johnson: Ethiopian Thought in the Making of an English Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[5] See Hamid Dabashi, *Reversing the Colonial Gaze: Persian Travelers Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Mary Searle-Chatterjee, "Travel Writing in a Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspective," in *The Interwoven World: Ideas and Encounters in History*, ed. Burjor Avari and George Gheverghese Joseph (Champaign, IL: Common Ground Publishing, 2016), 117–28; Somdatta Mandal, "Introduction," in *Journeys: Indian Travel Writings*, ed. Somdatta Mandal (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2013), 1–31; Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma, eds., *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing* (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2013); Sohrabi, *Taken for Wonder*; Tabish Khair, "A Multiplicity of Mirrors: Europe and Modernity in Travel Writing from Asia and Africa," *Indian Literature* 52, no. 6 (2008): 211–22; James Mather, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

economic, and military ascendant. They locate the Indo-Eurasian frontier in its female-dominated contact zones – the salons, drawing rooms, and theaters in which a genteel masculinity was fiercely contested.[6] What their cosmopolitanism reveals is a hyper-mediated history of orientalism as a discourse of powerlessness that is profoundly gendered. Epistemic mastery over the Orient is a compensatory fiction vis-à-vis a resilient Persian manhood, as in Londoners' fandom for Abul Hassan.

To flesh out this history, Chapters 2 through 7 each focuses on an Asian traveler writing about his metropolitan life in English, Persian, or Urdu, for European or Asian readers or both: Joseph Emin, an Iranian-Armenian freedom fighter who traveled from Calcutta to London in the 1750s; Mirza Shaykh I'tesamuddin, the Mughal emissary who visited England from 1767 to 1769; Abu Talib Khan, the Lucknow nobleman who reveled in Anglo-Irish and London high society; Dean Mahomet, the Patna native who settled in Cork, Ireland in 1783 after resigning from the Bengal army; Yusuf Khan Kambalposh, the Afghan military captain from Lucknow who toured London in 1837–1838; and Munshi Lutfullah Khan, an elite Muslim from Malwa on a mission to England in 1844 with the royal heir of Surat. Their writings respond to connected crises of gender and empire: the masculine impotency resulting from British military setbacks during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763); the Company's 1757 conquest of Bengal, which alienated Mughal aristocratic men; the paternalistic subordination of India and Ireland to England with the 1801 Act of Union; effeminate male monarchs and their domineering courtesans during the Regency period; uncertainty about Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837; and paranoia over the unmanly colonial violence that drove South Asians to rebel in 1857–1858.

In response to such crises, these travelers direct their gaze toward what I call "alter-Europe": the communal feelings, shared behaviors, odd reciprocities, and ironic performances that transmit Eurasian values multilaterally. To "re-orient" Britain – a composite state composed of various classes, faiths, and ethnicities – is to integrate it within a diverse Indo-Eurasia rather than a Europe that had

2009); Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2008) as ed. and trans., *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*; Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*; Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Simonti Sen, *Travels to Europe: Self and Other in Bengali Travel Narratives, 1870–1910* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005); Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth-Century Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Nasrin Rahimieh, *Missing Persians: Discovering Voices in Iranian Cultural History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Dale. F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, eds. *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[6] I am invoking Mary Louise Pratt's definition of contact zones: "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination." See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

never crystalized into a cohesive cultural, political, and territorial unit.[7] Applying Sarah Ahmed's queer phenomenology, I examine the "Orient" as an exotic geography bound to the dynamic interplay of bodily proximities and distances that gather social force affectively by switching directions or orientations. The process by which bodies are sexed, raced, and classed in strange environments made familiar starts with a disorientation – getting lost or dumbfounded. Finding a home away from home depends on which specific spaces one occupies, which mediums one thinks through, and who or what one turns to.[8] This homemaking journey blurs national and geographical borders. The "alter" in "alter-Europe" works like a rehoming device: the quest for an alternative non-Eurocentric universality becomes internal to Britain through the liminal spatiality that appears when social actors contest patriarchal norms by behaving like someone else. The hyphen between "alter" and "Europe" signals the indeterminate queering dynamics at stake in these contestations.

Although the quest for another homeland unfolds differently for each of the travelers I discuss, their experience of Britain as alter-Europe pivots on how they and their metropolitan interlocutors are oriented toward one another as gentlefolk, strangers, and mediators. The trans-imperial valences implicit in these three subject positions will be historicized in the next chapter. In this introduction, I will sketch the book's three interlocking themes: elite transcultural homosociality, male bonding over women's alienated bodies, and the different modes of theatricality that mediate these social performances.

Historical Reorientations

Joseph Emin, Shaykh I'tesamuddin, Sake Dean Mahomet, Abu Talib Khan, Abul Hassan Khan, Yusuf Khan Kambalposh, and Lutfullah Khan were among the few Asians who wrote about their travels to Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, greatly outnumbered by the European officials, soldiers, diplomats, scientists, traders, and missionaries traveling east and writing about their foreign adventures.[9] These Asian travelers arrived in a traveling nation; British men and women obsessed with reading guidebooks and tours of other lands, writing about their personal travels, and, most of all, having foreigners

[7] On Europe as an indeterminate, contradictory, and contested idea, see the essays in *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, ed. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2002); Bo Stråth, "Introduction: Europe as a Discourse," in *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, ed. Bo Stråth (Bruxelles: PIE Peter Lang, 2001), 13–44; Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Palgrave, 1995); the essays for the special issue of *Past and Present* 137 (1992); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Fictions of Europe," *Race and Class* 32, no. 2 (1991): 3–10; Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968).

[8] Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[9] See Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism*; Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto, 2002).

write about them as if they were strangers in their own country.[10] These Asians' accounts, whether written in or translated into English, were published in imperial entrepôts like London, Cork, and Calcutta to meet the market demand for touristic sightseeing, within and outside Britain.

Because these Asians possess different class, regional, and religious backgrounds, they would not consider themselves the same people. However, they share a familial history of Eurasian migration: well-connected families who had left Persia, Arabia, and Afghanistan to serve South Asian rulers in a civil or military capacity, as they had mastered Persian – a transregional lingua franca that granted them access to networks of power and patronage. Because the Company inserted itself within these networks after its 1757 conquest of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, Persophone travelers to Britain identified this governing body with male-to-male affection in recreational spaces unhampered by differences in religion and language. These spaces affirmed their Persian linguistic orientation across diverse societies, east and west of the Iranian plateau.

The regime change that these travelers had witnessed in Hindustan is grounded in a Eurasian patriarchal governmentality, as evident in their admiration for "gentlemen." Since the fifteenth century this word had gained currency in the English language as a complimentary designation for men who were not necessarily born into the nobility but, in bearing arms and acting chivalrously, acquired social distinction, as if they had belonged to the sovereign's household.[11] For the seven Persophone travelers, this performative identity is not unique to Britain and Europe. Noble-like English, Scottish, and Irish men remind them of cosmopolitan soldiers or leaders who adhere to the Persian ethical ideal of *javanmardi* (youth-manliness): men – and potentially women – from varying walks of life whose honesty, courage, generosity, and prowess qualify them to be just rulers.[12] These travelers therefore understood as congenial the conquest led by youthful British gentlemen in 1757. Claiming to have restored sociopolitical order after a century of Mughal decline, the Company gradually replaced Persian-acculturated patriarchs responsible for managing their territory and household, parallel to how propertied gentlemen in Britain had assumed the aristocracy's traditional prestige. This change in administrative personnel never made early Eurasian travelers sensible of European superiority overall. While they praised Europeans' martial, political, scientific, and technological supremacy, they did so under the impression that these foreigners were of the same racial stock, committed to the same principles of benevolent rule, and bred with the same norms of gentlemanly self-restraint. It was not until after the 1857 Indian rebellion that South Asians began to perceive Europeans as fundamentally distinct.

[10] See Benjamin Colbert, "Britain through Foreign Eyes: Early Nineteenth-Century Home Tourism in Translation," in *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Benjamin Colbert (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 68–84; Turner, *British Travel Writers*.

[11] *OED*, s.v., "gentleman, n.," Oxford, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/77673?redirectedFrom=gentleman.

[12] See the essays in Ridgeon, *Javanmardi*.

Before then, Britons were considered the latest conquerors to inherit a multilingual Islamic imperium. Marshall G. S. Hodgson was one of the first scholars to map onto this imperium "the rise of Persian" that had initiated "a new overall cultural orientation within Islamdom." Persian is not synonymous with an Iranian ethnic identity, as Hodgson elaborates: "the more local languages of high culture that later emerged among Muslims likewise depended upon Persian wholly or in part for their prime literary inspiration. We may call all these cultural traditions, carried in Persian or reflecting Persian inspiration, 'Persianate' by extension."[13] To be precise, New Persian written in Arabic script (as distinct from earlier variants, Pahlavi and Avestan), mainly by and for imperial bureaucrats and the literati, provided educated Eurasians traveling west a heuristic paradigm. They assimilated the English they heard and (for those who did) wrote in a recognizable pan-elite, Persian-fluent multiverse, which encompassed the vernaculars spoken in Britain, Russia, India, and China and from the Balkans to Southeast Asia. Up to 1900, the Persianate world was pluralistic and permeable, booming at its geographical and social frontiers: the dynamic spaces of cultural *métissage*, where linguistic, literary, and artistic fusions were most intense.[14] For the writers I will be discussing, this world's westernmost frontier was in England and Ireland, where languages in contact, they thought, had allowed Persian to thrive with and for a new vernacular – English, especially as spoken by respectable upper-class gentlemen affiliated with the Company.

By imagining a kinship with them, these writers arrived at a home distinct from their birthplace, religious affiliation, and family lineages; Persianate selves without a fixed ethnicity. Yet this socio-linguistic interface also makes visible the semantic-cultural tensions that arise as the Persian language and Indo-Persianate sociability increasingly vied with Anglophone diffusionism west to east. Sociable transactions at the interstices of Persian- and English-speaking could as easily consolidate as constrain a shared cosmopolitanism, at times resulting in communicative breakdowns. The homosocial commensurabilities examined in *England Re-Oriented* test a Persianate episteme that had a wider reach and a longer shelf life than most scholars have reckoned. Its suppleness and limitations become apparent if scholars shift their analytic frameworks toward gendered bodies *in situ*: the empirical environments that endow embodied actions with affective meanings from other centuries and continents.

[13] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 293.

[14] On recent scholarship that has decoupled Hodgson's definition of the Persianate from Islamic political supremacy from 1600 to 1900 and an Iranian nationalist paradigm, see Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); essays in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), esp. Nile Green, "Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)," 1–71; the essays in *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Assef Ashraf (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019).

The present study therefore plots a "new imperial history" that begins with people's movements in space and time, dislodging a polycentric modernity from a historical teleology in which past multivalent possibilities are denied and made tributary to future nations and empires. Power does not reside in concrete institutions alone, and the local is not a frozen discursive field where ideas about empire are discussed in the abstract. Mediated bodies are shaped by a palpable spatial awareness that render these ideas meaningful in the first place. How metropolitan life transformed "foreign" identities has received minimal attention in scholarship on pre-1858 Persianate travelers; the specific British publics and gendered spaces they traversed, and the literary genres and aesthetics they used to describe these spaces, are treated, if at all, as mere background. Scholars have situated their views on European sexuality in a Central or South Asian context only, as if unrelated to concurrent debates about gender, race, and class in Britain. Deploying the postcolonial-feminist methodologies pioneered by Kathleen Wilson, Tony Ballantyne, Ann Laura Stoler, and others, I show how these travelers' metropolitan sociability empowered them to critique white imperial manhood in public showplaces.

Crucial to this historical reorientation are female bodies through which reciprocal agencies were formed and disparate imperial ideologies were fused. Under the British and Mughal Empires, noblemen asserted their civil command mainly with the help of powerful public women – wives, mistresses, and courtesans. They connected male supplicants to royal and wealthy patrons, acquainted genteel men with their duties, directed the outcome of their political struggles, arranged diplomatic marriages between elite households, and opined authoritatively on domestic and imperial policies. For Persianate travelers who felt lost in Britain, Englishwomen's beautiful bodies helped reorient them toward a second home, a familiar gentlemanly community. According to this logic, metropolitans' manners follow the established rituals of Eurasian polities held together by vast transcontinental networks of Persian-speaking aristocratic families and the women who presided over them.

In other words, female bodies negotiated imperial differences and similarities. Mistaken for magical creatures – mostly fairies – as well as royal courtesans who dance, sing, and excel in conversation, Englishwomen appeared to Central and South Asian travelers as transparent portals to other enchanting life-worlds; sites of convivial socializing that nourished a lively cosmopolitan openness toward strangers-as-strangers, without the social pressure to assimilate to the language, religion, and customs of the dominant society. Such feminine conviviality activates a cosmopolis that exists independently from, and in tension with, English patriarchs' global design to subsume alterity under a universalist imperial-familial order in which certain races and sexes are deemed more equal than others. An exclusive masculinist imperialism therefore yields to what Walter D. Mignolo calls "border thinking": when local histories, creeds, and identities are translated into a playful yet critical cosmopolitan idiom to foster "the recognition and transformation of the hegemonic imaginary from the

perspectives of people in subaltern positions."[15] Early modern Persianate travelers and their polite metropolitan hostesses imagined a fantastical kingdom outside European patriarchal control, a pluriversality decoupled from male hegemony over the family and the state: the twin pillars of the Company's legal-racial classification of Asians as inferior feminine-like subjects who require paternal supervision and discipline.

By joining British gentlemen in recreational venues centered on females' display, Persianate travelers immersed themselves in Britain's media ecology, adopted its perceptional modes, and acted out its alien personas with gusto. Because this theatricality had defined the Company's public-facing Mughal persona in South Asia, dramatic acts inscribe legible bodily histories through which these travelers and their lady friends imagined empire anew. Theaters, museums, ballrooms, newsprint, postal mail, and music concerts granted them entrée into hospitable communities of convivial strangers without borders. These mediations, I argue, are not secondary elaborations of external social factors, but are visceral worldmaking ventures that puncture that which is normally perceived as real with the made-up stuff of history. The optical, theatrical, and musical shows that these media-savvy visitors encountered resonate palpably with Iranian-Hindustani rituals of power and pomp. The British Empire therefore appeared to them as the realm of magic and mimesis.

More precisely, their ethnographic remediations reveal the decolonial prehistory of the mimetic desire to embody the other, what anthropologist Michael Taussig calls "mimetic excess": when the distinction between the West and the Rest is blurred by non-European agents who imitate Europeans' imitation of their supposed primitive mimicry.[16] Natasha Eaton has shown that such uncanny encounters were an organizing trope for British art producers and consumers in Calcutta and elsewhere in India, insofar as mimesis was both a tool of imperial governmentality and a strategy for disrupting its domineering visual modalities.[17] Bewitched by the colonial mirror's backreflection, Persianate travelers pierce through the surface image of Great Britain as an originary Occident inhabited by superior Christian civilizers. In other words, their texts are like ricocheting funhouse mirrors in which Britons appear as the quintessential mimic men, contrary to those who reserved this role for Anglicized Indians as famously argued in Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Education" (1835) – a polemic on the superiority of the English language that remains silent about Persian's ongoing status as a transregional lingua franca. Nor are these textual mirrors dependent on the ambivalences generated by resistant hybrid selves whose "colonial mimicry," according to Homi K. Bhabha, stages a subversion of the dominant English culture, as if imperial processes presuppose a homogenous, nonimitative Occident adverse to cultural mixing.[18]

[15] Walter D. Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-Polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 721–48, 736–37.
[16] Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 252–55.
[17] Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires*.
[18] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 121–31.

Because early Persianate travelers were not colonial subjects, they experienced Britain as a frontier zone where incongruous worlds meet. In this virtual borderland, science and sorcery converge to invest aesthetic copies with more power over their referents than the people who created them. European imperialists would displace this mimetic otherness onto a fabular East, conjuring an illusion of epistemic power to conceal their (male) impotency.

Persianate travelers to pre-1858 Britain should therefore be understood through a performance studies lens. My interpretive method is inspired by dramaturgical anthropologists such as Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, who minutely focus on how the codependence of social rituals, texts, and dramatic genres constitutes human agency. According to Judith Butler, these performances align gendered subjectivities with certain speech acts, and Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor have shown how enacted memories transfer knowledges across histories, geographies, and languages.[19] "Deep description" allows me to decode similar processes of enactment in Asian travelers' works, turning the spotlight on fanciful forms of community-building that would otherwise be dismissed as ahistorical. My methodological orientation broadens the body of history in respect to its subject matter and interdisciplinary scope.

The Trajectory of the Book

This book chronologically traces the circuitous itineraries of obscure individuals in their specific place and time, without treating them as a cohesive social group or adherents of fixed intellectual movements. Taking my cue from Roxanne L. Euben, each chapter dwells on bizarre reflective moments in these travel accounts, moments in which ideas of empire acquire meaning through "embodied travelers whose sense of self, knowledge, time, and space at once emerges and is transfigured by the doubled mediation between rootedness and distance, familiar and unfamiliar."[20] But unlike Euben, I locate this "doubled mediation" in the print and visual technologies that equipped these travelers with methods of self-reflection – the new social media that shaped the narrative arc of their travels. These multimedia doings induce a gendered field of vision; how conjoined histories of gender and empire become imaginable in various medial genres, from romance to satire.

However, this study on the particularity of media-oriented subjectivities is not comprehensive. Outside its purview are nineteenth-century travelogues that

[19] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*; Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982); Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[20] Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, 19.

were strictly instrumental to British intelligence-gathering in northern India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.[21] Nor does my book consider the accounts of Central and South Asians who traveled to and beyond Britain during this period for reasons other than documenting the empire's fabulous entertainments.[22] The itinerant bodies of *England Re-Oriented* can nonetheless attune scholars working in media, ethnic, gender, Islamic, Persian, and South Asian studies, as well as in comparative literature, to worldmaking activities in travel mediums centered on geographies and itineraries outside a fictive Europe.

Chapter 1 examines the Company's transformation into Bengal's territorial sovereign in 1764 as an embodied history: *sarkar-i kampani angrez bahadur* (The Government of the [Hon'ble] English), a Persian title that mimics the polite historical protocols of Perso-Turkic-Mongol empires since the fifteenth century. Absorbed into the habitus of British gentlemen trained in Persian, Hellenic, and Sanskrit classics, this title personified a corporate English body as an individual nobleman who was the imperial family's only and most powerful patriarch – the ultimate mimic men. A shared ethical and linguistic orientation inspired these travelers and their British hosts to imagine an ethnic kinship, as mediated by the Indo-Persian political treatises that Company lexicographers had translated into conduct books for genteel Englishmen aspiring to a career in India. This trans-imperial masculinity was what empowered Asian travelers to climb social rank as they befriended metropolitans in public showplaces – theaters, salons, and drawing rooms. The chapter proposes that orientalism and occidentalism are inadequate paradigms for understanding these travelers' multimedia engagements in Georgian and Victorian Britain, laying out the historical and theoretical groundwork for what will follow.

In Chapter 2, I consider the use of chivalric romance tropes in *Life and Adventures of Emin Joseph Emin, an Armenian, Written in English by himself* (1792). In Emin's letters to his Bluestocking patronesses Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, and Catherine Talbot, he plays a humble knight errant or "Persian Slave" as a strategy to master British politeness. In doing so, he befriends patrons such as George Lyttleton, Edmund Burke, and William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, the youngest son of King George II and commander of a German army Emin had joined in 1757. His epistolary interactions with the Bluestockings who coproduced his romantic fantasies allow him to identify Persian-Islamic notions of chivalry with British liberty. His memoir records ironic episodes in which he affiliates with brotherly Muslim warriors during his Islamophobic quest to liberate his people in the Caucasus from Ottoman and Persian despots. Such affinities render him a patriotic English gentleman while his lady friends expand their civic roles by adopting

[21] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 229–35.
[22] See Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India*, 315–21; Digby, "An Eighteenth-Century Narrative of a Journey from Bengal to England"; Fisher, "From India to England," 165–66; Storey, *Persian Literature*, vol. 2, part 1:159.