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### FROM AL-RASHID TO OSAMA BIN LADEN. TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE ARCHETYPES OF EASTERN PEOPLE IN THE IMAGINATION OF THE WEST

The West created two archetypes of Muslim. The first is the East wise man, the hero of 'The Fairy Tales of 1001 nights' (the historical realization was Saladin). The second is dangerous, Freudian 'uncanny' (the Man of the Mountain or Osama bin Laden now).

For me the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 is the point of turn the imagological point of view on that archetypes.

Both of types operated from Medieval on imagination of the West. They together created the view of Said's Eastman. At the same time he is knowing, tamed and dangerous, 'uncanny' threat. The long time the West could see more the first and act the East more 'canny' and dependent. 11/09 changed this perspective.

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Imagology, which formulates the ideological basis for this study, focuses predominantly on the socially-created images of the Other/Different and thus, the study itself is closely related to comparative literature (Wiśniewska 2011). On the one hand, they are led strictly in the space of linguistics, while on the other, in the widely-understood iconographic space ranging from paintings and movies (Davis 2006) to as far as literary depictions. This way of perception of cultural artifacts stems from the differentiation of Joseph Leerssen, for whom "images are not a reflection upon identity, but the contextualization of recognizability" (Leerssen 2008: 27). The majority of the imagological studies are devoted to creation of images of others in a certain geographical situation or vicinity (Ajdaczić 2008) or due to historical interloping (Goluński 2013), or the creation of a non-European society by European colonizers, which is especially popular in the contemporary post-colonial discourse.

As Corinne Fowler presents in her imagological *Chasing Tales*, Europeans had created an image of Afghanistan and its society which did not have much in common with reality,

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based on travel accounts (Fowler 2007). The image of the country and the people which she was able to draw out from the accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers as well as modern-day journalists was full of prejudice and stereotypes in which both groups believed, stemming first and foremost from the mindset of the British narrators. On the other hand, in *Egypt at the Exhibition*, Timothy Mitchell describes the process of the intellectual conquest which the Europeans conducted upon the land of the Pharaohs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mitchell 2001). What is most vital for the purpose of these deliberations is his characterization of the way Western intellectualists and the general public translated the alien and incomprehensible world of Islam into the comprehensible, and thus submitting to the Western vision of the world. It can be brought over to the dichotomies recognized in other areas by Edward Said: order – disorder, rational – irrational, modern – delayed: in all of these cases the first part always refers to the European culture (Said 1979: 104–120). From this imagological perspective, I would like to discuss the characters of Saladin and The Man from the Mountain in European culture, as it allows the usage of different cultural artifacts and the separation of interesting imagined structures of 13<sup>th</sup>-century Muslim leaders.

For the inhabitants of our continent, the followers of Islam had for ages been devoid of individual characteristics which would be able to leave a mark on their collective imagination. In *The Song of Roland* dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they are a nameless crowd that Charlemagne and his vassals struggle with. The death of the protagonist is caused by wounds delivered by many, not by the hand of a worthy opponent (*Le Chanson de Roland* 1990). The time of the Crusades changed this state of things only to a slight degree, as in *The Divine Comedy*, written after the fall of Acre, the character of Mahomed appears serving his punishment in hell for heretics (Alighieri 1989). Edward Said correctly observed that this kind of treatment depicted Islam not as a separate religion, but as a heresy within Christianity, and that made it possible to equate it to other such movements, such as Catharism. Of course, the names of the great conquerors of Christianity, such as Zengi Barbas or Saladin reached Europe, yet even though they became part of the folk tales they were still a type of hero, instead of heroes in their own right. An interesting element of this story, as noted by Jerzy Hauziński, is the way in which the opponents of Richard the Lionheart tried to utilize the assassins, subordinate to The Man from the Mountains (Hauziński 2016: 136). According to this narrative, Richard struck an agreement with Sinan which resulted in the assassins being on his payroll and carrying out missions on his behalf. The assassin and a fanatical Muslim had moved the contemporary imagination in a unique way. Alas, all other Muslim leaders which I discuss on these pages were presented in similar fashion: as barbaric enemies, which seems to be rooted in the collective imagological perception of the dangers coming from Islam held by the Christians of the era.

However, after the age of the Crusades came to a close, both of these characters ceased to play a significant role in the symbolic imagination of Europe. Proof of this notion can be found, for instance, in *Jerusalem Delivered*, penned by Torquato Tasso in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in which historically accurate Frankish heroes of the First Crusade, although depicted in a legendary fashion, face all the stigmatized anti-paragons of the late Middle Ages: a mage, a warlock and a warrior-woman, the last of whom is modeled after the heroine of the *Iliad*, named Penthesilea (Tasso 2008). Published in 1581, the epos remains tightly connected with

the events of Battle of Lepanto of 1571, which bears significant meaning as a decisive event when it comes to relations between Christianity and Islam. The triumph of the European fleet not only saved the continent from the Islamic invasion, but also – as it appeared at the time – broke the might of Islam permanently. Written after the victory, in a euphoric atmosphere, the epos remains within the sphere of myth, giving (however shyly) a voice to the followers of Islam, who are yet depicted in accordance with the characteristics described by Said in *Orientalism* (Said 1979). For the full conquest of The Middle East we have to wait until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Against this vaguely devised background I would like to present two characters, which had become pivotal for the narration about The East in the European culture during the previous two ages.

### AL-RASHID (SALADIN)

I combine the character of the caliph of Baghdad, famous for his wisdom, with that of one of the greatest leaders of the Muslim world of the Middle Ages, as the latter took on some of the characteristics of the former in European narratives.

Al Rashid is one of the main protagonists of *One Thousand and One Nights*, a grand, poly-morphic work, a hybrid that takes different types of narration and binds them into one whole, which assumed its final form at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Egypt (Bašnie 1966: X–XIV). It is this canonical version which the majority of its European translations is based upon. Despite the ancient origins of the individual stories, which sometimes date back even to pre-Islamic times, as well as earlier events which were reconstructed, it was the 1780 edition that was introduced to the European culture (Bašnie 1966: XVI–XX). This is a meaningful fact in the context of these deliberations because, according to Ian Watt this was the time in which the modern novel, borrowing motifs from different cultures, was born (Watt 1973). It was also the time when Europe conquered the Middle East and began construction of an imagological image of the Other in line with Waldenfelse's assumptions.

The fabled Al-Rashid is commonly perceived as the embodiment of wisdom, righteousness and courage. When he appears, he is depicted as a good ruler who looks after his people. To become acquainted with their living conditions he dresses as a commoner and walks the streets of Bagdad, learning their opinions on everything, himself included. He makes hard decisions, sometimes behaving as the biblical King Solomon, using the law and his knowledge of the world as moral compasses. It is rarely noted, however, that he has a specific sense of humor, taking joy from the unusual tales of his subjects. There is little that connects the historical Saladin with the caliph of legends. The former was a Kurd, a nephew of Zengi, one of the Muslim leaders who in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century began the process of recapturing the lands lost to Christians during the First Crusade. Saladin and his uncle were given the task of conquering Egypt and taking it from the hands of the caliph of Cairo, which at the same time was the goal of the king of Jerusalem. Ultimately, Saladin removed the weak and corrupted vizier, put the underaged caliph in a luxurious prison and, using the death of his patron in Bagdad to his advantage, declared himself king of Egypt. In the following years he united the majority of the Muslim lands of the region and defeated the Franks in 1187 at the Battle of Hattin,

capturing most of the kingdom, including Jerusalem. When it appeared that complete victory over the Christians was only a matter of time, the forces of the Third Crusade arrived, stopping Saladin's advance, partially thanks to the bravado of Richard the Lionheart and partially due to, then non-existent in Europe, the military discipline displayed by the monastic orders. Due to these factors, Saladin was defeated several times and Acre returned to Christian hands. However, Jerusalem was not conquered and soon after the peace treaty between Saladin and Richard was signed the latter sailed back to Europe while the former died unexpectedly, with his success being squandered by competing successors. This gave the Franks time to regroup and brought the Kingdom of Jerusalem an age of continued existence.

There was one fact that turned the character of Saladin – a tough ruffian famed, among others, for personally executing one of the prisoners after the Battle of Hattin or releasing captured Templars and Knights of St. John to the Dervish, who brutally slaughtered them – into a noble paragon shrouded in legend. While capturing Jerusalem, he did not allow for the purge of the city (as it was demanded by many in revenge for the purge the participants of the First Crusade perpetrated in 1099), allowing safe passage for Christians (albeit for a fee) who could safely reach the ports on the coast. As noted by Steven Runciman, however, it was not an act of kindness on his side, but one dictated by a need for money to pay his troops. Had he agreed to the pillaging of the city, he would not have gained much, as according to the custom of the day the spoils went mainly to the pillagers themselves, with only a small share being given to the leaders (Runciman 2009).

How did the character of Al Rashid get imagologically contaminated by that of Saladin? Walter Scott, viewed as the father of the modern historical novel, whose works were very popular in the 1820s, seems to be the culprit. Saladin's character appears in his *Talisman*, published in 1825, where it is characterized more in the way of Al Rashid. In the initial chapters of the story, he engages in an inconclusive duel with a traveler from Europe while in the guise of a simple warrior. Later on, he appears several more times as a doctor or a messenger of "Saladin" crossing the path of the main protagonist whenever he needs help, invariably portrayed as honorable and chivalrous, which puts him more in a manner of the Christian knight than the barbaric Saracen. Interestingly, the Grand Master of the Templars, Ridefort, is cast in opposition to Saladin, being depicted as a treacherous bastard and thus when the Kurd punishes him justly at the end of the story this does not upset the reader (Scott 2009). The imagological pattern that Scott introduced here has proven to be extraordinarily durable on both the structural and ideological levels, yet before I present yet another example of it at work, it is worth inspecting the moment of its historical creation. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the centuries-long struggle between Europe and Asia came to a close, with the former emerging victorious. Napoleon's armed expedition to Egypt was not only the annexation of the country itself, but it also marked the beginning of an intellectual conquest. Scholars accompanying the emperor began the first research into the Nile basin, which resulted in tomes describing an indigenous civilization as older than the European, yet halted in its development for unknown reasons and outpaced by the Christian one. This research, as noted by Timothy Mitchell (Mitchell 2001) and Martin Bernal (Bernal 1987) was methodologically poor by contemporary standards, yet it results bore enormous ideological repercussions. Scott's novels fit into this perspective as the military, economic and cultural (ideological) victory over Islam that caused

Europe to feel safe. Other factors like the emergence of national states and an excitement with the Orient rooted in Romanticism led to the creation of a personified representative of Islam reflecting the European (or rather the Brito-colonial) imagination about the men of The East, which was – as presented above – a combination of structures drawn from the freshly-translated into English *One Thousand and One Nights* (1788) and the weak, contorted and falsified knowledge of the Crusades available at the time. Two more cultural artifacts, which I would like to mention briefly, corroborate the – imagologically understood – durability of Saladin as a figure of the good and wise man of the East: *The Leper King*, penned by Zofia Kossak in 1937, and *Kingdom of Heaven*, directed by Ridley Scott in 2005.

Kossak, first and foremost, sustains the imagologically perfect image of Saladin which Scott created, deepening it even more as she makes the Kurd the judge of Christianity which loses the Battle of Hattin due to being sinful, and after the death of Baldwin IV (The Leper), who has been canonized in the novel, there is no one among the Franks who could oppose Saladin and the purity of his fate. The latter is depicted as nearly a Christian: he delays the war with the Franks, who fascinate him. When it does appear, however, he does not enjoy victory, explaining to the weak King Godwin that the responsibility for the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem rests on the shoulders of the Grand Master of the Templars, Rideford, and a brawler, Rynald de Chatillon (Kossak 1990b: 176).

The last, to this date, depiction of Saladin appears in Ridley Scott's movie of 2005, where the duel from *Talisman* is repeated in the initial scenes, yet the knight defeated by the Christian is here an advisor of Saladin's. The Kurd himself was depicted as an aging yet still attractive man (by contemporary standards that is), a warrior convinced of the necessity of waging war against the infidels, yet tired of it and neither vengeful nor obstinate. He commands with an iron fist, stopping his commanders from senseless slaughter. Yet again the actions of a caricaturized Rynald de Chatillon are the cause of the war.

This image of Saladin as “a good Muslim and ‘almost’ a Christian” returns, as we can see, in a consistent and almost unchanged way regardless of the medium in which it is presented – the durability of such images in European culture is pointed out by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (2010: 220).

## THE MAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS (SINAN)

Historically, Sinan is the leader of one of the Islamic movements of the Nizari, which opposed the Sunni and the Shia somewhere between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They were thus heretics who, for the sake of defending their beliefs, created an internal group known as the Assassins (which is the French translation of the Arabic word meaning “taking hashish” perceived as an insult, not meaning that they indeed used the substance). Sinan was the leader of the Syrian Nizari, and the approximately 30 years of his activity correspond mostly with the times of Saladin, as he probably died a year after him in 1194. As written by Jerzy Hauziński:

Sinan was not a blinded zealot, but an extremely talented politician with a vision. He made friends with people who could have been his enemies and with their help eliminated common foes. This led the Nizari to ally with different groups: other sects of the Isma'ili in Syria, the fundamentalist

in Egypt, the Sunni Muslims in all of the countries of Levant. For that reason Sinan even came close to the world of the Crusaders. That is the reason why the Nizari of The Middle East fell into the world of legend (Hauziński 2016; 148, translate – M.G.).

The mythical character of the whole movement for which the Man from the Mountains became a metonymic abbreviation made him appear completely different in the imagination of the Europeans, and thus he was perceived as being within Freud's category of the uncanny (Freud 1997: 233–263). Freud explains the concept of the uncanny as the relation between the known: the tamed and understood, and the unknown: the alien and foreign that stems from it. Analyzing *The Sandman* by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Freud describes the unknown as “demonic” in Arabic and Hebrew. It can be added that the intuitive definition of the word in Polish contains such meanings as well, with such interpretation being reinforced by the Polish historical novels of the interwar period: *Without Arms* by Zofia Kossak (Kossak 1990a) and *Red Shields* by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (Iwaszkiewicz 1971). In the first of the two, Sinan appears only several times, yet in a very emblematic way. The author describes him in the first chapter as follows:

The Man from the Mountains, ruler of the Ismaelites successor to the terrible Sinan, lord of the inaccessible, rocky nests of Alamut, Kalat al-Kaf, Kadmus and Oleika towering over the Syrian coast, strolls angrily on the rocky courtyard looking down on the valley like a vulture. On the battlements and the bay windows over a seemingly bottomless pit there stand motionless like statues his, “fidais”, servants dressed in white, ready to do his every bidding. Should he point towards the pit, they will fall into it without a thought. Should he order them to go and kill the Sultan in Damascus – they will do this as well. Should he will them to run to Rome and kill the Pope, this will also be done. Against their canny and cruel dagger there is no protection. This is why the Man from The Mountains is feared by the whole world, why the people willing to eliminate their enemies or uncomfortable witnesses pay hefty sums. The man from the Mountains does not hold any order in contempt and for his followers distance in impossibility hold no meaning, as they are more cunning than the snake and do not fear death. Certain to achieve paradise, the foretaste of which they draw from the hempen brew known as hashish, they await their own demise impatiently and nothing can distort their fate. It is thanks to them that the Man from the Mountains is powerful and dangerous. In his rocky fortresses he possesses wealth greater than that of the Sultan and there is no man in the world that would wish to make an enemy out of him (Kossak 1990a; 14, translate – M.G.).

This passage paints the Man from the Mountains as a figure evoking fear, merciless towards both his enemies as well as his own men. In the novel he is responsible for the Children's Crusade and it is he, as “The Sandman”, who appears on the ship on which the children were to sail to the Holy Land not as pilgrims, but as slaves. In the imagination of the Europeans he is thus situated at the opposite end of the spectrum, being a counter for the good and chivalrous Saladin, representing everything that the denizens of Europe feared in Eastern peoples: secrecy, unethical actions, a lack of morality, despotism, and a failure to value the life of the individual – a list that fits perfectly with the image of the East reconstructed by Said in *Orientalism*. For the purpose of my deliberation, most important is the fact that

the Man from the Mountains is not the main character in any of these works. In Kossak's work *Al-Kamil*, the nephew of Saladin, assumes more a pivotal role, while in Iwaszkiewicz's book he appears only in a frightening tale recounted to the protagonist by the young Saladin, whom he visits. If both of these characters appear in the cultural texts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is only in this relation, where Saladin works in the light of day responding to the European imagological perception of what is comprehensible and thus known. East, while Sinan serves as a shadow for him (or other characters), as the incomprehensible and thus the unknown part of the East that evokes fear.

## AFTER 9/11

This relationship changed dramatically after the terrorist attack orchestrated by Osama bin Laden on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden himself played a role in this change, by referring to the legend of the assassins to justify his actions during his passionate speeches. He was educated in the USA and thus, knowing the imagological imagination of the White people, he fit into it in a way that allowed him to be both comprehensible and terrifying. In the aforementioned *Kingdom of Heaven*, the character of Sinan does not appear, while Saladin assumes a darker role (also visually) albeit maintaining the balance between military necessity and the code of chivalry. However, in 2005, the first entry in the popular video game series *Assassin's Creed*, consisting now of about 20 titles, entered the market. In it, the character of Saladin does not appear, while the player partakes in a vicious, centuries-long war between the Assassins and the Templars, with the player always assuming the role of the former. In the latest installment (*Altair's Chronicles* series) and the corresponding book – *The Secret Crusade: The untold story of Altair – the Master Assassin* by Oliver Bowden (Bowden 2011) – a demonic character of the leader of the Assassins that can be equated with the Man from the Mountains appears. In the course of the story the playable character/protagonist of the book is faced with a series of tasks, each more difficult than the previous one. Each of them revolves around eliminating the enemies of the Master, and the protagonist is not required to think whether his actions are reasonable, as only blind obedience can restore his fame after a failed action. However, in the end it is revealed that all the assassinations were not acts committed in defense of the faith, but in a war against the private enemies of the Master, who in the end, Altair has to defeat. Although the image of the Assassins is positive, the Master displays a stereotypical set of traits: he is treacherous, cruel and selfish. Of course, we have to take into account that the story is set in an alternative, pseudo-historical reality; however, the reference to the historical Assassins has, without a doubt, played its part in the commercial success of the franchise.

A similar shift can be observed in Polish novels set in the age of the Crusades that were published after 2001, and although it is impossible to explore the topic in depth in such a short article, the character of Sinan plays a major role in most of them. In some cases, as for instance, in Marcin Mortka's *The Sword and the Flowers* (Mortka 2008–2010) a synthetic reverse of relation can be observed: while Saladin is only mentioned in the work of Iwaszkiewicz, in Mortka's story the Man from the Mountains and his actions are significant to the plot.

These changes are directly related to the events of 9/11, as well as later actions of Al-Kaida and the narrative that the media devised to address them. If up until 2001 the West treated the East as a world that was safe and subjugated, to the European discourse (even if, for the major part, it was only wishful thinking), 9/11 drastically changed the situation also in reference to the symbolic and imagological imagination of the Europeans. The known and largely Europeanized Saladin, filtered through Al-Rashid, had been replaced by a dangerous, unpredictable and thus uncanny Man from the Mountains, the role of whom had been assumed by Osama bin Laden.

## CONCLUSION

The works of fiction presented above have nothing in common with their historical counterparts and *Assassin's Creed*, as a simulacrum, only confirms that notion. However as more and more imagologists are beginning to point out, that is no particular reason why they would not be able to exist in such a mythicized or stereotypical form within the public awareness. Such images, created by culture, can – and in this particular case undoubtedly do – play their part in the creation of the public moods and they are strongly connected to social reactions, especially in the age and world of media which do not care to uncover such unattractive things as the complex truth about the world itself. As a meaningful transition of the imagological perception of the Eastern leader from the good, Europeanized Saladin to the “uncanny”, dangerous Sinan (Man from the Mountain) I take the point of the terrorist attack of Al-Kaida from 9/11, yet this date is, of course, symbolic. The core of the change is the European loss of power over the Middle East and the necessity to revise the European depiction of it that thus followed. If European authority had remained unchallenged, they would try assimilating the East depicting Saladin as close to the Christian idea of the world. The loss of power and security that it brought about resulted in the return of “the repressed” Man from the Mountain, on which Bin Laden had his share of influence. This shifts shows the failure of the European colonial discourse, which turned out to have been only imagology, a depiction of the East, or – as Eric Hobsbawm put it – an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983).

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#### OD AL-RASHIDA DO OSAMY BIN LADENA.

#### PRZEMIANY ARCHETYPÓW LUDZI WSCHODU W WYOBRAŹNI ZACHODU

Zachód wytworzył dwa podstawowe, mityczne archetypy muzułmanina. Pierwszy to wschodni mędrzec, bohater *Baśni z tysiąca i jednej nocy*, którego historyczną realizacją jest Saladyn, drugi zaś to groźny, opisany przez Freuda jako „niesamowity”, Starzec z Gór, za którego współcześnie uznawany jest Osama bin Laden.

Przyjmując za punkt wyjścia ataki terrorystyczne z 11 września 2001 r., autor ukazał przesunięcie w imagologicznym odczytywaniu w obrębie zarysowanych archetypów.

Oba typy funkcjonują w wyobraźni Zachodu od średniowiecza, wspólnie kreując ambiwalentny obraz Saidowskiego człowieka Wschodu, jednocześnie znanego, w jakimś stopniu oswojonego i groźnego, stanowiącego nie w pełni zrozumiałe zagrożenie. Od czasów kolonialnych Zachód „pozwał” sobie na widzenie pierwszego, czyniąc Wschód bardziej widzialnym („samowitym”) i bardziej podporządkowanym. Wydarzenia z 11 września wymusiły zmianę tej perspektywy.

Słowa kluczowe: Al-Rashid, orientalizm, Starzec z Gór, niesamowite, Saladyn