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# “Asiatick Fire & Figure,” or, How Joseph Emin Made Mrs. Montagu an Avant-garde Critic in Her Empathy with the East

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Michael J. Franklin

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**ABSTRACT** Against a background of fears that Britain might repeat the Roman decline into imperial decadence, indolence, and corruption, this essay attempts to explore the appeal of Joseph Emin for a whole swath of the *haut ton*. His desperate courage and profound patriotism provided an absolute contrast with the “*vain, luxurious and selfish EFFEMINACY*” that Dr. John Brown had diagnosed as the disease of England’s elite. To the romanticism of this idealistic “Oriental” was added the imprimatur of the Duke of Northumberland, qualifying the thirty-year-old Emin for admission into Elizabeth Montagu’s menage of “lovers.” Emin’s company and traveler’s tales ignited the Orientalist in the Bluestocking, encouraging an appetite for translations from Asian literatures and rendering her an early and appreciative reader of the Bhagavad Gītā. In “‘The Commerce of Life’: Elizabeth Montagu (1718–1800),” ed. Nicole Pohl, special issue, <http://doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2018.0030> **KEYWORDS:** Emin as model for British youth and as *miles Christi*; Orientalism and masculinity; literary criticism; imitations or translations; Sir William Jones; Hammick Papers

☞ ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1785, Sir William and Lady Anna Maria Jones were thinking of London friends while dining at their Garden Reach home on the banks of the Hugli with the romantic East India Company army ensign and Armenian nationalist Emin Joseph Emin (1726–1809). We know this because Emin wrote on Sunday to Bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu: “Yesterday I dined with my boy at Sir Williams[,] he told me [he] was going to write both to Mrs Montague and to Mr Burke and promised to remember me to your Ladyship, to him, and to all his and my Noble Friends, which makes me still happier.”<sup>1</sup> Emin was a remarkable guest, and Jones was as

1. Emin to Montagu, August 7, 1785, cited in Emin, *The Life and Adventures of Emin Joseph Emin, 1726–1809*, ed. Amy Apcar (London, 1792; repr., Calcutta, 1918), 486. While this essay was in the editing process, Sara K. Austin kindly brought to my attention Humberto Garcia’s detailed and nuanced “Re-Orienting the Bluestockings: Chivalric Romance,

impressed as Elizabeth Montagu, who—almost thirty years earlier—had admired “Emin’s passion for liberty,”<sup>2</sup> writing her husband:

I wish his patriot spirit was communicated to a dozen or two of our great men; it is a shame there should be more of it in the breast of an Armenian slave, born in bondage and nurtured in ignorance, than in those who count a long line of ancestors, and, by a liberal education, have before them the examples of all the patriots Greece and Rome produced; but the luxury of polite education spoils all its precepts.<sup>3</sup>

Emin’s mother and younger brother died during Nadir Shah’s siege of Baghdad, and his father, like many of his countrymen, had immigrated to India, where entrepreneurial Armenians had been welcomed since the days of the enlightened Mughal emperor Akbar.

Driven by a fierce love of political freedom, Emin was determined to study the British military and artillery tactics he had witnessed at Fort William and enlist the aid of Erekle II of Georgia in uniting Armenians against Ottoman and Persian oppression. In 1751 Emin worked his passage to England on the East Indiaman *Walpole*. He then labored as an £8-per-annum grocer’s porter and a bricklayer in Drury Lane, when a chance meeting with Edmund Burke in St. James’s Park gained him not only employment as a copyist<sup>4</sup> but also the patronage of a prestigious swath of high society, including such Montagu friends as the politician and writer George, Lord Lyttelton; Dr. Messenger Monsey; the royal mistress Amalie, Countess of Yarborough; politician Hugh Percy, Duke of Northumberland; army officer Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland; and William Pitt, the Elder.

Elizabeth Montagu was seriously taken with the handsome young Emin, who called her his “Queen of Sheba.” She delighted in the attractively hybrid blend of patriotic heroism, religious idealism, and what she saw as Oriental caprice in the

Manliness, and Empire in Joseph Emin’s Letters,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2018): 227–55, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2018.0010>. Garcia’s exhaustive account of secondary sources throughout and especially at p. 230n7, where he lists studies of Emin’s autobiography, is extremely valuable. My essay, grounded in unpublished manuscript sources, including the neglected Hammick Papers at the British Library, was given as a lecture in the “Editing Enlightenment Letters: Elizabeth Montagu’s Correspondence” conference held at the Huntington Library on April 13, 2012.

2. Elizabeth Montagu to Benjamin Stillingfleet, September 15, 1757, in *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with Some of the Letters of Her Correspondents, Published by Matthew Montagu*, 4 vols. (London, 1810–13), 4:59.

3. Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 30, 1757, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:51.

4. Burke’s hurried, uneven hand was transformed into Emin’s immaculate copperplate for the Dodsleys’ printers as they set *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).

character and correspondence of her “Persian Slave.”<sup>5</sup> The talented physician and freethinking eccentric Messenger Monsey and the scholarly but sociable politician William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, were both playful rivals for Montagu’s affections, but in a letter to the former on Thursday, August 4, 1757, she includes Emin as an essential part of her “menage” (Emin was thirty-one; Monsey, sixty-two; and Pulteney, seventy-three):

I hope you will not be so narrow-minded as to exclude my Persian hero from his share of my heart, for without two such lovers as Dr. Monsey and Mr. Emin I cannot be so considerable as I desire: I shall make use of him to exterminate my enemies, and of you to preserve my friends; no good housewife thinks her menage complete without an extinguisher and a save-all.<sup>6</sup>

The romantic idealism of this young man, born of Armenian parents in the historic city of Hamadān in the mountainous mid-west of Iran, blew an invigorating blast of fresh air through Berkeley Square and Tunbridge Wells. From Hill Street on April 9, 1757, Montagu wrote Monsey an amusing letter that reveals the profound effect that Emin had made upon herself and her circle: “Your friend Mr. Emin has permission to go abroad with the Duke [of Cumberland], which makes him very happy; he has a mind to deserve an Epitaph, and I wish his heroism may not make him want one too soon; he has no doubt a great desire of fame after death.” She has been seeing much of Emin, increasingly convinced “he has a great and a good mind”:

[H]e dined tête à tête with me on Wednesday, and yesterday he dined with Lord Lyttelton, and spent part of his evening with me; so that if I had not ignobly married a private gentleman, I might have had a chance for being Queen of Persia; but as that boisterous fellow, Kouli Khan [Nadir Shah], broke the Peacock Throne to pieces, it is no matter: Bradshaw makes very good sophas, and there are no seats so hard to sit upon, and so uneasy, as thrones.<sup>7</sup>

5. Elizabeth Carter’s nephew Montagu Pennington wrote of Emin: “His character bears a strong resemblance to the ancient Christian knights of romance. Virtuous, pious, and enthusiastic; to raise the cross, and depress the crescent, seems to have been his chief aim. Active, brave, and hardy: he formed a good and noble purpose, and pursued it with unremitting ardour”; *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*, ed. Montagu Pennington, 4 vols. (London, 1809), 1:xx.

6. Elizabeth Montagu to Messenger Monsey, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:139. A *save-all* is a holder that allows candles to be burned to the end, preventing waste.

7. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:125–26.

Though Emin was ultimately to fail in emancipating Armenia, it is clear that he was superbly successful in liberating the “Queen of the Bluestockings” from the emotional blues of a somewhat staid marriage to her “private gentleman.” The throne of the “Queen of Persia” might be relatively uncomfortable compared with Bradshaw’s silken upholstery, but Emin’s involvement in this latest episode of the Seven Years’ War would seem no laughing matter. Montagu was initially elated at reading newspaper accounts of how “the Regiment of Royal Hunters [with which Emin was serving under Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland] has struck such a Terror into the French Army”<sup>8</sup> with their rifled barrels and expert marksmanship. The subsequent depressing news of the defeat of Cumberland on July 26, 1757, at Hastenbeck outside Hameln, and only thirty miles from Hanover, threw Montagu into a melancholy anxiety for “my brave volunteer”:

Mr Emin said he was one of the corps of Hunters, and the papers say they are all cut off; I could sit down and cry for him, if it were not too effeminate a proof of concern to give to the memory of so brave a man. I have but this comfort, that his intentions were good and laudable; he meant to qualify himself to serve his country, and not to serve a personal ambition by making war on the peaceable and the feeble; but to fight with tyranny, oppression, superstition, and ignorance; and he who rewards and punishes the secret thoughts, will reward him.

Is there no bright reversion in the sky  
For those who greatly think and bravely die?

Surely there is an exalted bliss destined to those who are actuated by a true and genuine patriotism! I mean such patriotism as dwells in the upright heart and pure; not to the vain pretences, pride, luxury, and ambition, make to it. Let me hear immediately what hope of poor Emin.<sup>9</sup>

As noted above, Montagu had described Emin as a hero who “has a mind to deserve an Epitaph”<sup>10</sup> and here, with the help of a moving couplet from Pope’s “Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady,” she attempts—prematurely, as it turns out—to provide him with one. At this crisis, concern for Emin is intensified by her desire

8. See *British Spy, or, The Universal London Weekly Journal*, July 30, 1757, 4.

9. Elizabeth Montagu to Messenger Monsey, August 6, 1757, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:142–43. The report that “the gallant Royal Hunters were almost all cut to pieces” was soon revealed to have been a mistake, amid the confusions of the battle of Hastenbeck; see *Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*, August 5–8, 1757, 64.

10. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:125.

that there should be some lasting record of his patriotic aspirations: "I hope Emin's letter will be returned to me, for every page of a hero's history is worth preserving."<sup>11</sup>

Her relief at receiving an amusing communication from "Jager" Emin is apparent in a letter to her sister: "I had a letter from Mr Emin last post, the Duke took him from the Jagers<sup>12</sup> & placed him in a Camp near to him, & he dined at ye 2d table with the considerable officers." His letter, she continues, exhibits:

the Asiatick stile with an address to Mr Montagu upon his great felicity in having such a wife that wd make you laugh, upon the whole he has had an agreeable Campaign for a Man who dispises danger & volupté. If one considers he was a Porter 5 years ago it is some rise to be allowed free conversation with ye Duke of Cumberland, & to be particularly distinguished by him, at which he seems pleased but not at all surprized. You may suppose the way he has made for himself in England does not abate & diminish his enthusiasm & adventurous spirit.<sup>13</sup>

The "Asiatick stile" of his honorific address to the felicitous Edward reveals Emin's ability to laugh in the face of danger and defeat; such a man might greet social advancement with an equanimity that renders "porter" and "prince" merely relative titles. The Shakespearean drama of the life of this Oriental man of action excites Montagu's sympathies and her passion, reducing all the wit and repartee of polite conversation to "our poor comedy," or what she would later term the "rhetorical flourishes" and "pompous declamations of French Theatre."<sup>14</sup> It is significant that, when describing to Lyttelton the nature of Shakespeare's genius, in words that Keats,

11. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:150. On August 7, 1757, Montagu wrote to Benjamin Stillingfleet: "[T]here must be a nobler seat than the Persian throne reserved for that fine spirit, which, born in slavery and nurtured in ignorance, aspired to give liberty, knowledge and civil arts to his country. To compass this he risked his life, and endured the greatest hardships, and ventured all dangers and uncertainties in a country whose very language he was a stranger to; how different from so many of our countrymen, who for little additions of power and greater gratifications of luxury, in spite of their pride of birth and advantage of a liberal education and the incitements of the great examples of all ages and nations, will hazard enslaving us to a nation our forefathers despised"; *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 85.

12. Always concerned with his Armenian quest, Emin laments in a letter to Dr. Monsey of July 19, 1757, that the "Corps of Jagers [. . .] are not disciplined, they fight like wild Arabs. I have desired my Friend, Lord Albemarle to recommend me to one of the Hessian Officers to learn the Prussian Exercise, and all the Evolutions, which is thing I want"; British Library [hereafter BL], Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fol. 10.

13. Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 86.

14. [Elizabeth Montagu], *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear: Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets, with Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London, 1769), 33.

refining his concept of negative capability, must subsequently have read,<sup>15</sup> Montagu recalls the wild dervish in Antoine Galland's translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* who can whirl himself into another creature's existence: "Though I admire Athenian art, I have not lost my esteem for the native genius of Shakspeare; he alone, like the dervise in the Arabian tales, can throw his soul into the body of another man, feel all his sentiments, perform his functions, and fill his place."<sup>16</sup>

Recycling this idea for her *Essay*, she continues to stress Shakespeare's deep knowledge of "the movements of the heart":<sup>17</sup> "Shakespear was born in a rank of life, in which men indulge themselves in a free expression of their passions, with little regard to exterior appearance."<sup>18</sup> This openness to the imaginative power of empathy she both greatly admired and increasingly possessed; it was her exposure to Emin's free expression of his passions that inspired her fascination with a genuine Asian subjectivity far removed from the commodified delights of fashionable Orientalism.

In 1749 Montagu mocked her own slavish consumerist conformity to chinoiserie in her Hill Street dressing room: "[S]ick of Grecian elegance and symmetry, or Gothic grandeur and magnificence, we must all seek the barbarous gaudy goût of the Chinese; and fat-headed Pagods, and shaking Mandarins, bear the prize from the finest works of antiquity; and Apollo and Venus must give way to a fat idol with a scone on his head."<sup>19</sup> Montagu was also well versed in popular literary Orientalism—the moral and philosophic tales of Joseph Addison in the *Spectator* and of Samuel Johnson in the *Rambler*—that satiric genre of pseudo-Oriental letters stemming from Giovanni Marana's *L'Espion turc* (1684) and Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721). On a personal level, Montagu knew the fascinating Madame Anne Marie La Cépèdes de Fauques de Vaucluse, author of such Orientalizing sentimental novels as *Abbasai, histoire orientale* (1753) and *Contes du serrail: Traduits du turc* (1753), recommending

15. "A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body"; Keats to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1947), 210. Honoré de Balzac also borrows Montagu's idea for his narrator as *flâneur*: "I could enter into the life of the human creatures whom I watched, just as the dervish in the *Arabian Nights* could pass into any soul or body after pronouncing a certain formula"; "Facino Cane," in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 6, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex (Paris, 1977), 1019.

16. Montagu to Lyttelton, September 10, 1760, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:298–99.

17. Montagu, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, 37.

18. Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, September 6, 1761, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:358; Montagu, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, 31.

19. Montagu to her cousin Rev. William Freind, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 3:130. On January 3, 1750, she writes in similar vein, but with greater confusion of civilizations, to her sister, Sarah Scott: "My dressing room in London is like the Temple of some Indian god: if I was remarkably short and had a great head, I should be afraid people would think I meant myself Divine Honours"; *Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Blue-stockings: Her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761 by . . . Emily J. Climensson*, 2 vols. (London, 1906), 1:271.

her to the literary hostess Elizabeth, Lady Craven, for the position of governess to her four daughters.<sup>20</sup>

But now in 1759, the very year of publication of Johnson's *Rasselas* and Goldsmith's "Asem," and three years before she was to meet her celebrated cousin-in-law, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,<sup>21</sup> she finds herself sending to George Lyttelton, the author of a purported continuation of Montesquieu's fictional text, *Letters from a Persian in England, to His Friend at Ispahan* (1735), a personal letter from a real Persian:

I have enclosed a letter I received from Emin last post: I am sure your Lordship will approve his not returning to England, and particularly his delicacy in not exposing his friends to the imputation of having protected an impostor. You will find his mind is still at the top of the heroic strain. An Asiatic, a savage, and a hero, in a fever, is a very terrible animal. Love of fame, and ambition of conquest, give delirium enough without an inflammation of the blood, and the natives of the warm climates seem at best hardly in sober senses. I wish your Lordship would write to him. He takes my letter very kindly, though it run directly against the grain of his heroism; but he may think what I say to him is dictated by the weakness and timidity of an effeminate mind. He knows your Lordship's is capable of no fear, but that "which is the beginning of wisdom."<sup>22</sup>

Despite her remarking his delicacy and kindness, Emin becomes a "terrible animal," a "savage" product of genetic, racial, cultural, and climatic determinism. By recourse to humor, she attempts to distance and subdue the intensity of the effect that the raw courage and heroic patriotism of Emin has exercised upon her. Yet the very next paragraph of her letter betrays the fascination with the genuine Orient that a genuine Oriental has engendered. Although she is still joking about being "queen of the East," it would seem that Montagu's "royal" Enlightenment ambitions anticipated those of the Asiatick Society of Bengal<sup>23</sup> by more than two decades:

20. Madame de Vaucluse also taught French to the young William Jones, her novels inspiring him with the romance of Asia; see Michael J. Franklin, "Orientalist Jones": *Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794* (Oxford, 2011), 75–76.

21. Lady Mary impressed Elizabeth Montagu as "one who neither thinks, speaks, acts or dresses like anybody else," February 16, 1762, cited in John Doran, *A Lady of the Last Century (Mrs. Montagu)* (Boston, 1911), 92. Henry Fielding was also a cousin of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and his verse epistle from around 1731–32, defending her from Pope's critical attack, was dedicated to Lyttelton.

22. Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, Tuesday, [July 9, 1759], in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:222–23. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," Psalm 111:10; cf. Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.

23. Sir William Jones famously announced that its purview would be bounded "only by the geographical limits of Asia," encompassing "MAN and NATURE; whatever is performed by the one, or produced by the other."



I am much pleased with the subjects of Busbequius's<sup>24</sup> letters and his manner; he tells the story of Mustapha and his son with the brevity of a letter writer and the dignity of an historian. It is strange that princes do not think it worth their while to send men of genius well pensioned, to learn whatever is extraordinary and good in the constitutions and customs of distant nations. When I am queen of the East I shall send a naturalist, a politician, and a man of sense, into every country in the world. The two first shall write memoirs and the third his annotations upon them.<sup>25</sup>

The following month, on August 28, 1759, Montagu updates Lyttelton concerning a letter that Messenger Monsey received from Emin at Florence, enclosing "a magnificent epistle to the noble daughters of Britain, his friends."<sup>26</sup> Frustratingly delayed beside the Arno by recurring bouts of pleurisy, Emin complains that the only response he has received to his letters from "this effeminate Country" is a reply, "full of Jockeyship," from Lady Bolingbroke: "she says she is training up a mare against my Lord Northumberland's mare, excellent Employment indeed, for the eldest Daughter of Marlborough."<sup>27</sup> Montagu detects that "as he approaches nearer to his native woods and deserts he grows more savage. There is a sort of wildness in his letter that speaks the hero untamed." Is her polite dinner guest reverting to "Oriental" type? His cross-cultural hybridity has the power simultaneously to disconcert and attract Montagu. She sees him as more appalled at the prospect "of having his fame, than his life, abridged":

Though the wise man says death is bitter to those who live at ease, yet it must be far more terrible to any one who has "scorned delight and lived laborious days" in order to attain some great and noble end, and is perhaps on the eve of glory and success, and the  
     "fair guerdon when they hope to find,  
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,

24. Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq [1522–1592], *The Four Epistles of A. G. Busbequius, concerning His Embassy into Turkey: Being Remarks upon the Religion, Customs, Riches, Strength and Government*, trans. Nahum Tate (London, 1694).

25. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:224–25.

26. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:233. This was Emin's angry and frustrated epistle of August 4, 1759, "To the Noble! Daughters of England From their Faithfull Slave Saluting"; BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fol. 25.

27. She is angling for him to send her "a true well bred Arabian," subsequently writing: "I had rather have one than any Kingdom in the world. I am in hopes we shall Both Have our wishes, I, my Arabian Horse, you, your Kingdom," Lady Bolingbroke to Emin, September 1, 1759, BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fol. 23.

Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin-spun life."<sup>28</sup>

Montagu mediates her sentimental identification with her hero through *Lycidas*, reflecting Milton's questioning of the necessity "To scorn delights, and live laborious days" in dedicated pursuit of aspirations to fame. She cannot conceal, however, that it is the wild epic poetry of Emin's life that arouses her deepest fascination. Montagu seems to prefer her heroes—whether literary or military, thirteenth- or eighteenth-century—untamed.<sup>29</sup>

There was, however, a more solemn side to Elizabeth Montagu and, in an unpublished, undated letter I discovered in the Hammick Papers that would appear to be a response to her "dear & valiant" Emin's "To the Noble! Daughters of England," she strikes a stern religious note. Having reassured him that he is by no means forgotten: "the Hero, & the Patriot, even in the free & noble land of Great Britain, are not such common characters, as easily to be effaced from the minds where they have made their impression," she feels compelled to "enter into serious discourse concerning your future conduct." Emin must remember that he is *miles Christi*:

What will it avail you if Persian virgins should sing your annual praise at feasts, & you should be the theme of Historians & Poets, & your name so great on earth should not be in the book of eternal life? In the hurry of battle, and the ardour & pride of conquest, remember the precepts of the God of Mercy, & that all men are his, that the meanest of his works are under his protection, that he is the avenger of every wrong, & the chastiser of every injustice, & remember that to forgive our enemies is one of his great commands. [. . .] You are willing to die a martyr for your country & you have already suffer'd much for it; add to the Martyr's the holiness of a Saint, & the devotion of a Prophet & go forth Emin the soldier of a good & gracious God, & free your people from the worst of slavery, a subjection to sin, superstition & ignorance. Pardon me for talking thus freely to you, but when I think how few opportunities I may

28. *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:233–34.

29. On reading Voltaire's *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, a thirteenth-century Chinese tragedy completely rewritten according to the dictates of French neoclassical drama, she is appalled at this "Chinese tale dressed in a French habit" and that its "saucy" French dresser should compare "Oriental" violation of the unities with "les farces monstreuses of Shakespear": "I could burn him and his tragedy. Foolish coxcomb! rules can no more make a poet, than receipts a cook. There must be taste, there must be skill. Oh! that we were as sure our fleets and armies could drive the French out of America, as that our poets and tragedians can drive them out of Parnassus. I hate to see these tame creatures taught to pace by art, attack fancy's sweetest child"; *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 3:7–8.

ever have of writing to you it gives me a cast of mind too serious to talk upon trifles.<sup>30</sup>

This certainly amounts to a tall moral order but, in a sense, he had brought it upon himself by frequently describing his mission to liberate “my Sheeplike-Shepherdless Armenian Nation” from Muslim control in pronounced pious tones. So Emin, having learned British military discipline and Prussian evolutions, must now add the roles of martyr, saint, and prophet to those of hero and patriot. Montagu’s freedom fighter must have the finest of feelings. It would seem that, for Emin in September 1760, among the mountains of Kurdistan, the receipt of Montagu’s letter among several others of similar tenor—including one from Lady Sophia Egerton, wife of the bishop of Durham—constituted something of a final straw. Having found the majority of Armenians “timorous as Lambs,” with little stomach for rebellion or even a slavish preference for Turkish rule to that of Georgia, he reluctantly and shamefacedly decided to return to Britain. A saddened letter of Emin to Monsey from the paralysis of an enforced quarantine on the *Northumberland* lying at Stangate Creek in the Medway explains how his plan to use Kurdish resentment of Ottoman government to facilitate and fund Armenian revolution failed to pass the Bluestocking test of conscience:

Yours [of] the 13th of January with the rest of all my Friends Letters over Land, & over Sea, came to me in the mountains of Kurdistan in the month of September, which I wish I never had them, which have been the Cause of my coming back to Europe and Ruination of the Design I was forming among those brave Fellows Kurds & Turkmans, and also my faint hearted Armenian slave nation to fall upon the Silver mines of the Turks, and rich effeminate Cities, the second place was to be Alepo, has no manner of Deffence or Fortification.<sup>31</sup>

The pious advice from “female and noble Friends” prevented his falling upon the riches of “effeminate Cities”; it severed “the very String of my Ambition, and slackened my Resolution.” He began to reflect that if the Ottoman Turks saw Emin, an Armenian, leading a force of Kurds, there would be severe reprisals, involving the massacre of defenceless Armenians under Turkish control, “ruination of our Turkey Trade, and the Loss of many Englishmen in that Country.”

Emin’s “Asiatick fire” had been seriously dampened, or rather damped down, for it glowed with internal intensity, and within a few months, Emin decided to enlist Russian help, applying to Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn, envoy extra-

30. Copy of a letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Emin, BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add MS 79500, fols. 102–4.

31. Emin to Monsey, April 13, 1761, BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fol. 52.

ordinary from the Empress of Russia, for a passport and letters of recommendation. Again the well-oiled machine of Bluestocking patronage whirred into life for this man of action whose libertarian vision was a century ahead of his time. Messenger Monsey furnished Emin with a letter of introduction to his distant relative at St. Petersburg, James Mounsey, personal physician to the Empress Elizabeth. Catherine Talbot wrote to the princess of Georgia and persuaded her adoptive father, Thomas Secker, archbishop of Canterbury, to write to Daniel Dumaresq, chaplain at the English Factory at St. Petersburg and friend of both the soon-to-be Catherine the Great and Elizabeth Carter. The Duke of Northumberland promised Emin an annual stipend of a hundred pounds for three years; the promptings of Elizabeth and Edward Montagu resulted in the Earl of Bath's recommendation of Emin to Robert Keith, minister-plenipotentiary at St. Petersburg; and Jonas Hanway (the author of *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea* [1753], including a history of Nadir Shah), who "loved the society of women,"<sup>32</sup> pleased many of them by securing Emin's passport from Prince Golitsyn.

On September 27, 1761, Emin set sail for Russia, never to return to Britain. Montagu had written to him disparagingly of "Pagan Heroes" who "address'd themselves to a vain goddess whom they call'd Fame."<sup>33</sup> Fame, however, was certainly "the spur that the clear spirit" of Emin raised, and his resurgent "Asiatick fire" enabled him to blunt the shears of Fates and Furies as he spent a decade awakening the youth of Armenia, sometimes at the head of 12,000 wild Caucasian mountaineers, often in bloody internecine guerrilla action. His impassioned attempt to realize his vision of a free Armenia, allied with Georgia and under Russian protection, was sadly doomed to failure, and in 1770 Emin voyaged to Calcutta, where he joined the Bengal Army irregular cavalry.

The Emin experience had freed Elizabeth Montagu from more than tedium vitae: it had liberated her from all the tired Eurocentric stereotypes of "the Oriental." Far more than through her reading of Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq's *The Four Epistles . . . concerning His Embassy into Turkey*, which Nahum Tate had translated and Lyttelton had loaned her, her mind had been opened to what she saw as the sensuality and the passionate politics of the East. This is a large part of the reason she responded to William Jones's first book of poems in such an enlightened mood.

Unlike William Collins's *Persian Eclogues* (1742)—so mildly Orientalized that their author admitted that he might have titled them "Irish Eclogues"—Jones's *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772) were animated with "Asiatick fire." They were the glorious Technicolor PowerPoints

32. John Pugh, *Remarkable Occurrences in the Life of Jonas Hanway, Esq.* (London, 1788), 229.

33. Copy of a letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Emin, BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add MS 79500, fol. 102.

illustrating and muskily scenting his central theme that the Oriental imagination offered an inexhaustible inspiration to the faded classicism of the West.<sup>34</sup>

Jones's "The Seven Fountains," for example, mingles erotic elements from his source texts (Ibn 'Arabshah's *Fakihat al-Khulafa* and the Prince Agib episode from Night 57 of *Les mille et une nuits*) to create "An Eastern Allegory" in which a young wanderer is led by a band of nubile nymphs to a sumptuous pleasure dome where they bathe in six fountains of sensuous delight. William Beckford would subsequently re-create this paradisaical pleasance for Vathek's palaces of the five senses, and for himself at Fonthill. The genre of the Romantic Oriental verse tale is thus born with a mature awareness, like Vulcan's Venus or Vishnu's Lakshmi, of its powers of attraction to budding Romantics.

The emergent Romantic in Elizabeth Montagu was quick to respond to the newly published beauties of Jones's *Poems*, as she reveals to her husband, Edward: "I have lately been reading some beautiful pieces of Oriental poetry translated by a Mr Jones who has an astonishing faculty for languages."<sup>35</sup> On her first reading of the Jonesian Oriental imitations, she thinks them translations, and her only criticism is that of sunny sensual overload:

The greatest fault I find with these poems is the reverse of what we complain of in our climate, the sky is ever clear, the sun fervent & bright, the flowers overpower with their fragrance & the birds incessantly sing. The Poets of less happier climates & less luxuriant Soils would sometimes introduce a Storm or paint a desert, which would give an agreeable variety.

She receives, however, and amplifies the Jonesian message loud and clear: "One sees plainly that if the Eastern Languages were known to us they have Authors in the East who would share the Temple of Fame with those of the Western World, & Europe would not assume all literary glory."

In response to a query from Montagu, her scholarly friend Elizabeth Carter endorses the beauty of the poetry, but from even a brief reading, she discerns Jones's classicizing hand in the imitations: "I read Mr. Jones's publication in great haste one day while you were dressing, and have not seen it since. The poetry is certainly beautiful, but the general idea it gave me was, that of its being too Grecian and classical for an Oriental design."<sup>36</sup>

34. See William Jones, "Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations" (1772), *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. Michael J. Franklin (Cardiff, U.K., 1995), 319–36.

35. Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, June 4, 1772, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Papers, 1688–1800, MO 2792, Huntington Library. The Montagu papers at the Huntington are cited henceforward with the abbreviation MO.

36. Elizabeth Carter to Elizabeth Montagu, June 8, 1772, in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu between the Years 1755 and 1800*, ed. Montagu Pennington,

By September, when Montagu writes to the proto-Romantic Scottish poet and philosopher James Beattie, a discriminating arbiter of taste, for his literary opinion, she has no doubt that she has mainly been reading Orientalized poems, but her delight in them seems to have increased to a virtual rapture:

Pray have you met with Mr. Jones's imitations of the Asiatic poetry? He possesses the oriental languages in a very extraordinary manner, and he seems to me a great master of versification. I wish he had given us translations, rather than imitations, as one is curious to see the manner of thinking of a people born under so different a climate, educated in such a different manner, and subjects of so different a government. There is a gaiety and splendour in the poems, which is naturally derived from the happy soil and climate of the poets, and they breathe Asiatick luxury, or else Mr Jones is, himself, a man of a most splendid imagination. The descriptions are so fine, and all the objects so brilliant, *that the sense akes at them*,<sup>37</sup> and I wished that Ossian's poems had been laying by me, that I might sometimes have turned my eyes, from the dazzling splendour of the eastern noonday, to the moonlight picture of a bleak mountain. Every object in these Asiatic pieces, is blooming and beautiful; every plant is odoriferous; the passions, too, are of the sort which belong to paradise. These things, as rarities brought from Arabia Felix, would give one great pleasure; but, when I am not sure they are not the dreams of a man who is shivering under a hawthorn hedge, in a north-east wind, I cannot resign myself enough to the delusion, to sympathise with them. Mr Jones has written some critical dissertations at the end of his poems, which, I think, shew him a man of good taste.<sup>38</sup>

The wildness of the “hero untamed” she had recognized in Emin in 1759 had been more than instrumental in her enthusiastic reception and continued celebration of the “high drama, raw nature, and primitive emotions”<sup>39</sup> of Ossian even before *Fingal* appeared in 1761. Having devoured *The Highlander: A Poem in Six Cantos* (1758) and *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (1760), she clearly ranked the growing dispute concerning authenticity below her love for the Romantic and the heroic: “I hear Lord Marchmont says, our old Highland bard is a modern gentleman of his acquaintance;

3 vols. (London, 1817), 2:138.

37. Significantly, Montagu's praise of Jones's poems evokes a Shakespearean quotation: “[Thou] smell'st so sweet / That the sense akes at thee”; *Othello*, 4.2.70.

38. Elizabeth Montagu to James Beattie, September 5, 1772, in Sir William Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, LL.D.*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1806), 1:298–99.

39. This economical summation of Ossian's sentimental appeal is Paul Langford's; see *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), 485.

if it be so, we have a living poet who may dispute the pas on Parnassus with Pindar and the greatest of the ancients, and I honour him for carrying the Muses into the country, and letting them step majestic over hills, mountains, and rivers, instead of tamely walking in the Park or Piccadilly.”<sup>40</sup>

The proto-Romanticism of Elizabeth Montagu wanted poetry freed from the park palings of Augustan gentility and exposed to challenging and reinvigorating materials. This Bluestocking reader and critic intuited Jones’s agenda, and in her letter to Beattie, she links it with that of Macpherson; it was no less than a reverse colonization of the Occident by the Orient and of the Anglo-Saxon by the Celtic. Montagu had spread Ossian’s fame amid Bluestocking circles, subsidizing Macpherson’s research trip to the Gaelic Highlands; now she was zealously proselytizing on behalf of the Jonesian mission of cultural translation. If Macpherson was to be honored for liberating anglophone Muses, then Jones’s preoccupations with acquiring European passports for Eastern muses and importing passions that “belong to Paradise” were similarly to be celebrated. Montagu’s letter significantly juxtaposes two poets whose “translations” were to exert such a profound influence upon European Romanticism. She was in the van of those scholars beginning to perceive a need for fresh imagery.<sup>41</sup>

Montagu was also one of the first literary figures of any significance (another, of course, being her Shakespearean rival Johnson) to express doubts concerning the authenticity of Ossian. As a critic, she had the foresight to realize that authenticity did not really matter, anticipating by almost half a century Sir Walter Scott’s reaction to the 1805 announcement that the Ossian poems were forgeries.<sup>42</sup> The glamorized third-century Highland warrior-poet might well have recalled “her” Emin in the mountains of Kurdistan, whom she described to Dr. Monsey as “a sprightly Asiatic and a great souled hero.”<sup>43</sup> If Macpherson’s Ossian was an invention, then Montagu could appreciate that a spirited living Scots poet disputing precedence with Pindar

40. Montagu to Lyttelton, October 31, 1760, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:319. By the summer of 1763, Ossian seems to have become a traveling companion: “On the summit of a bleak Mountain we had a violent hurricane which gave all the terror to the sublime which our friend Mr. Burke desires. As I had been reading Ossian I imagined the spirits of Loda were riding over our heads, the deep voiced thunder was a fine accompaniment to all these horrors”; Montagu to Elizabeth Vesey, July 14, 1763, Huntington Library, MO 6370.

41. Thomas Percy only implies that “our cold European imaginations” might benefit from the spirited exoticism of Eastern metaphor; see *The Song of Solomon, Newly Translated from the Original Hebrew: With a Commentary and Annotations* (London, 1764), xxxii–xxxiii.

42. “[W]hile we are compelled to renounce the pleasing idea, ‘that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung,’ our national vanity may be equally flattered by the fact, that a remote, and almost a barbarous corner of Scotland, produced, in the eighteenth century, a bard, capable not only of making an enthusiastic impression on every mind susceptible of poetic beauty, but of giving a new tone to poetry throughout all Europe”; *Edinburgh Review* 6, no. 12 (July 1805): 462.

43. Elizabeth Montagu to Messenger Monsey, September 28, 1757, in *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu between the Years 1755 and 1800*, ed. Pennington, 4:169.

on Parnassus was better than second best. Hugh Blair, the Edinburgh academic and later correspondent of Montagu, whose intellectual investment in Macpherson was substantial and whose international critical reputation was established by his *Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763), insisted that an ancient Scot should “dispute the pas on Parnassus” with Homer:

With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is indeed a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.<sup>44</sup>

In the case of Jones, authenticity was a different matter. Unlike Blair, whose enraptured response to Ossian blunts his critical faculties, Montagu responds to Jones’s poetry with both sensibility and sense. Desirous of brilliant objects, “Asiatic” splendors, and aching senses, she also retains a deep passion for the romance of knowledge. Emin’s prospective “queen of the East” still desires “to learn whatever is extraordinary and good in the constitutions and customs of distant nations.” This woman of genius has the intellectual curiosity of an Enlightenment savant, fascinated by different ways of thinking; the relationships between poetry, history, and national character; and the effects of different climates, systems of government, and education. When Alexander Dow, a recently returned East India Company army officer published *The History of Hindostan* (1768), which translated and adapted the Persian *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭa*, Montagu was fascinated by its picture of enlightened Mughal rule under the Emperor Akbar, whose religious tolerance culminated in a concept of universal monotheism. Dow’s inserted “Dissertation concerning the customs, manners, language, religion, and philosophy of the Hindoos” evoked a characteristic example of her ability to wear her learning as lightly as a cashmere shawl:

Since I have read it I have abated my former admiration for Pythagoras.  
If I was not afraid of offending the Bishop of Carlisle I would petition

44. Hugh Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (London, 1763), 23. The strength of Montagu’s links with the Scottish Enlightenment are stressed in a letter of August 14, 1768, to Montagu from John Gregory, professor of medicine at Edinburgh: “[William] Robertson, Hugh [Blair], [Adam] Ferguson, [Henry Home, Lord] Kaims & all our Literati often enquire about you with the highest regard because you are the Only Woman they hear of in England from whom Genius alone would entitle civility”; cited from Huntington Library, MO 1075 in Emma Major’s valuable *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712–1812* (Oxford, 2012), 205.



his majesty to offer one of the wisest of the Brahmins the Deanery of Durham if he would come to England.<sup>45</sup>

Like its producer David Garrick, she was less impressed with Dow's pseudo-oriental tragedy in five acts, *Zingis* (1769), which owed much to the fact that its author lodged with James Macpherson and thus seemed to many of its Drury Lane audience a pale imitation of Ossianic sublimities.<sup>46</sup>

In Jones she was delighted to discover "true Oriental beauties," but the critic in Montagu feels compelled to discriminate between the products of Jonesian and Asian imagination; ahead of her time, she wants translations of Asian source texts, not imitations. As noted above, she requires to know which are the products of "Arabia Felix," and which are by "a man who is shivering under a hawthorn hedge, in a north-east wind."<sup>47</sup> William Jones had judged that the critical world was not ready for absolute authenticity in all its potentially alienating alterity. He was probably quite right. Certainly the response of James Beattie, who had not yet read Jones's *Poems*, would suggest that he was:

What is the reason, madam, that the poetry, and indeed the whole phraseology, of the eastern nations (and I believe the same thing holds of all uncultivated nations) is so full of glaring images, exaggerated metaphors, and gigantic descriptions? Is it, because that, in those countries where art has made little progress, nature shoots forth into wilder magnificence, and every thing appears to be constructed on a larger scale? Is it that the language, through defect of copiousness,<sup>48</sup>

45. Cited in *Mrs. Montagu, "Queen of the Blues": Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, ed. Reginald Blunt, 2 vols. (London, 1923), 1:170.

46. The reaction of Garrick's German friend Helfrich Peter Sturtz was typical: "I wanted to find therein some true Oriental beauties, so much the more as Mr. Dow is acquainted with that country and its writers: I was somewhat disappointed in meeting rather with imitations of Ossian"; Sturtz to Garrick, May 5, 1769, in *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (London, 1831), 1:346. Both Dow and Macpherson were frequent dinner guests at Hill Street.

47. When Montagu was introduced to Jones at Elizabeth Vesey's soon after this, she must surely have shared this description with him. He would have enjoyed it, especially as his headmaster at Harrow, Rev. Dr. Thomas Thackeray, once remarked that Jones was "a boy of so active a mind, that if he were left naked and friendless on Salisbury Plain, he would nevertheless find the road to fame and riches"; John Shore, Baron Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of Sir William Jones*, 2nd ed. (London, 1806), 21. Montagu proved a valuable friend, zealously canvassing her Oxford friends when Jones stood for an Oxford University seat in 1780. To Sir William Weller Pepys she declared: "If the Muses were the Electors he would carry the election from every candidate that could offer. He possesses the keys of all their treasures and can deal them forth for the world"; quoted in *"Queen of the Blues,"* ed. Blunt, 2:84–85.

48. Beattie unaccountably refers to "the language" as if all Asia possessed merely a single language that he might term "Low Oriental." It is interesting that Jones, fourteen years later, would describe Sanskrit as "more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either"; "Third Anniversary Discourse, on the Hindus"

is obliged to adopt metaphor and similitude, even for expressing the most obvious sentiments? Is it, that the ignorance and indolence of such people, unfriendly to liberty, disposes them to regard their governors as of supernatural dignity, and to decorate them with the most pompous and high-sounding titles, the frequent use of which comes at last to infect their whole conversation with bombast? Or is it, that the passions of those people are really stronger, and their climate more luxuriant? Perhaps all these causes may conspire in producing this effect.<sup>49</sup>

That a sensitive poet and humane philosopher should indulge in this Eurocentric farrago of philistine prejudice is deeply depressing. But Jones had anticipated such western savagery only a year before in the preface to his *Persian Grammar*: “[W]e all love to excuse, or to conceal our ignorance, and are seldom willing to allow any excellence beyond the limits of our own attainments; like the savages who thought the sun rose and set for them alone, and could not imagine that the waves, which surrounded their island, left coral and pearls upon any other shore.”<sup>50</sup> Jones’s whole career was to be dedicated to eradicating the ignorant misconception that the countries of the East were “uncultivated nations [. . .] where art has made little progress.” Some scholars stubbornly resisted acceptance of the fact that Persia and India possessed a sophisticated culture when Britons were still daubing themselves with woad. Beattie’s reluctance—even before casting his eyes on the texts in question—to abandon the classical reassurance of Greece “by whose example and authority [. . .] simple and natural diction was happily established”<sup>51</sup> reveals that Jones’s task of prizing open closed minds was no easy task. Montagu, by contrast, had already seen the light in the East.

To demonstrate that most of the “figures, sentiments, and descriptions” in the first of his 1772 *Poems*, “SOLIMA, an *Arabian Eclogue*,” are drawn from Arabian originals, Jones adopts the scholarly practice of providing a transliterated extract from a pre-Islamic *qasīda* (ode), together with this literal prose translation:

[T]he stranger and the pilgrim well know, when the sky is dark, and the north-wind rages, when the mothers leave their sucking infants, when no moisture can be seen in the clouds, that thou art bountiful to them as

(February 2, 1786), in *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. Franklin, 355–67 at 361. Writing to John Gregory on July 1, 1768, the author of *The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius* writes of Scots Gaelic: “The Scotch tongue is really barren in itself, and, having been long confined to the lowest sort of people, is now become incapable of expressing any thing but low humour”; *The Correspondence of James Beattie*, ed. Roger Robinson, 4 vols. (Bristol, U.K., 2004), 2:62.

49. Dr. Beattie to Mrs. Montagu, September 30, 1772, in Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie*, 1:234–35.

50. William Jones, *Grammar of the Persian Language* (Oxford, 1771), ii.

51. Beattie to Montagu, in Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie*, 1:235.

the spring, that thou art their chief support, that thou art a sun to them by day, and a moon in the cloudy night.<sup>52</sup>

The corresponding lines of “Solima” introduce a frisson of European gothic and excise authentically Arabian elements, including the image of dereliction, the mothers abandoning their suckling babies, and the absence of life-giving rain. In a superficial and ahistorical view, it might appear that his poetic talents were not keeping pace with his critical theory. Jones’s couplets might seem to reflect the tiredness not of the weary pilgrim but of a certain Popean artificiality:

When, chill’d with fear, the trembling pilgrim roves  
Through pathless deserts, and through tangled groves,  
Where mantling darkness spreads her dragon wing,  
And birds of death their fatal dirges sing,  
While vapours pale a dreadful glimmering cast,  
And thrilling horror howls in every blast;  
She cheers his gloom with streams of bursting light,  
By day a sun, a beaming moon by night;  
Darts through the quivering shades her heavenly ray,  
And spreads with rising flowers his solitary way.

(Lines 69–78)

Interestingly in this context, some fifty-five years earlier Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who confessed to Pope, “I am pretty far gone in oriental learning,” was also experimenting with cross-cultural translation and thinking about reader response. From Adrianople she sent Pope a Turkish poem by Ibrahim Pasha that she had translated. It begins:

The nightingale now wanders in the vines;  
Her passion is to seek roses.

For Pope, Lady Mary provides a version in “the style of English poetry”:

Now Philomel renews her tender strain,  
Indulging all the night her pleasing pain;<sup>53</sup>

52. Jones, *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (Oxford, 1772), preface, ii–iii, cited hereafter in the text.

53. This pioneering Orientalist, however, does include the exotic comparison of the beloved’s eyes with those of a stag; see Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Pope, April 1, 1717, in *Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Malcolm Jack (London, 1993), 78–79.

The *gul u bulbul* (rose and nightingale) legend emerges with greater clarity in the simplicity of her literal translation, without the aid of Western classical allusion. But the reception of William Jones's poems demonstrates that the public of 1772, just like Pope in 1717, appreciated—if not demanded—domestication of the genuine Asian production. It must be made acceptably Augustan.

Of all the contemporary reader responses to Jones's *Poems*, that of Elizabeth Montagu stands alone in wishing "he had given us translations, rather than imitations." Whether or not she consciously saw herself as continuing a familial tradition of openness to the Orient, the fact remains that none of the reviewers expressed this desire for authentic originals. Let us take a key example: Gilbert Stuart's enthusiastic appreciation in the *Monthly Review* of May 1772. A published historian and political writer, Stuart was a practiced, learned, and talented reviewer, but what he values in Jones's volume is that, although the materials adopted are "from the writers of Asia," Jones "has not acted *merely* as a translator" (my italics):

the arrangement, and the conduct of the poems, are generally his own. In the eclogue, for example, intitled *Solima*, written in commendation of an Arabian Princess, who is supposed to have built a *Caravansera*, and adorned it with pleasant gardens, for the refreshment of travellers and pilgrims, he is only indebted to the poets of the East for some verses on benevolence and hospitality. We must not therefore withhold from him the praise of invention; and to this merit, which is unquestionably the highest and the most proper characteristic of the poet, the poem, just mentioned, will convince our Readers, that he has added the charms of a flowing and harmonious versification.<sup>54</sup>

Stuart continues by quoting the entire poem, in order to display Jones's "command of language, and a power of harmony, which few poets have displayed."<sup>55</sup>

Boswell wrote of Stuart: "His bluntness did not please me, though his strong mind did,"<sup>56</sup> but the blunt, strong-minded Stuart still wants to take his Asiatic poetry milk-and-watered down. Godwin said of this critic: "If ever any man defended or opposed measures from the genuine sentiments of his heart, it was doctor Stuart,"<sup>57</sup> but the good doctor demands "the genuine sentiments of" an Oriental heart tamed, the reader inoculated by the control of couplets.

54. Gilbert Stuart, review of *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations*, *Monthly Review* 46 (May 1772): 509.

55. Stuart, review of *Poems*, 516.

56. Boswell: *The Ominous Years, 1774–1776*, ed. Charles Ryskamp and Frederick A. Pottle (London, 1963), 305.

57. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Stuart, Gilbert (1743–1786)," by William Zachs, last modified May 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26704>.

Montagu would doubtless have preferred Jones's prose translation of the Arabic text to his poem "Solima," especially considering its authorship. It is the work of the sixth-century female poet Janūb bint al-'Ajlan al-Hudhaliyya, an impassioned tribute to her warrior brother 'Amr Dhū'l-Kalb, killed not in epic battle, but by two leopards while sleeping:

'Amr Dhū'l-Kalb, best of them in esteem, lies in Sharyān valley, the  
 wolves howling around him.  
 Thrusting a thrust so wide that gush upon gush of his blood follows it  
 like a mighty stream.  
 Playfully up walk the eagles to him, [confident], strutting like maidens  
 in their gowns.  
 He it was who would bring out the lovely round-breasted girl,  
 submissive among the captive women, perfume diffusing from her  
 sleeves.  
 The like of 'Amr you will never see as long as foot treads earth and  
 camels moan in yearning for their homelands.<sup>58</sup>

The reason Jones did not present to his readers this authentic product of desert pain was that he judged the time was not yet ripe; too pure a vein of the exotic might alienate his drawing-room audience. Jones intuited the truth of what Coleridge was later to assert: a great writer "must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished."<sup>59</sup> This applied equally to the cultural translator; first Jones must create a public taste for the genuine ethnic commodity.

But Elizabeth Montagu was ahead of the game: she already wants the real thing. An unpublished letter to Beattie of June 8, 1772, kindly sent me by Elizabeth Eger, reveals that Montagu had earlier attempted to send *Poems* to Beattie. She writes:

I will endeavour to convey to you by Mr Dilly some Asiatick poetry translated by a very ingenious Man & most extraordinary Linguist, a Mr Jones. I shd rather call these pieces imitations than translations. I wish they had been more of the latter for tho our Poet may have improved the poems, my greatest pleasure would have arisen from observing the turn of mind in the Oriental Poet. An Asiatick Bards address to a Sultan is more interesting to me than an English Poets birthday ode.<sup>60</sup>

58. *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston et al. (Cambridge, 1983), 85–86. My thanks are to Geert Jan van Gelder and Adam Talib for identifying this *qasīda*.

59. William Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, May 21, 1807, MA 1581, Morgan Library.

60. Montagu to Beattie, June 8, 1772, Beattie Collection, MS 30/C.80, University Library, King's College, Aberdeen.

Montagu appreciates Jones's accurate translations of two carefully selected Asiatic poems: "A Persian Song of Hafiz," which had already appeared to acclaim in his *Persian Grammar*, and "A Turkish Ode of Mesihî." This "Ode to Spring" by the Albanian-born Mesihî (d. 1512), has an appeal that is universal rather than culture-specific. For each stanza Jones supplies a refined metrical translation, a transliteration in Roman letters, and a precise prose translation, where one can locate the images absent from his more Augustan version: the vibrancy of sunbeams on scarlet tulips that, "like sharp lancets, tinge the banks with the colour of blood," or the geographic specificity of "the breath of the gale is full of Tartarian musk." Montagu can see that Jones is attempting to enable his readers to access a product of Turkish civilization at a range of levels, but she wants fewer imitations and more translations. It is true that her Ethnocentric chemise is clearly showing when she concedes that "our Poet may have improved the [Oriental] poems," but her profoundly simple—or simply profound—Enlightenment response is reflected by no other contemporary critic of Jones's book. It bears repeating: "my greatest pleasure would have arisen from observing the turn of mind in the Oriental Poet." Although her senses have ached at Jones's fine descriptions and brilliant objects, she does not need the acculturating influence of his own Orientalizing poems. Montagu wants the fascinating Asiatic source texts.

Hafiz's Persian song and Mesihî's "Ode to Spring" have mated her mind. The critic who was to assert that "Nature and sentiment will pronounce our Shakspeare a mighty genius"<sup>61</sup> had certainly begun to appreciate that genius was not the exclusive preserve of Anglophone cultures. She devoured Jones's comparison of Hāfiz's Ghazal 663, "O sweet gale, thou bearest the fragrant scent of my beloved" with Shakespeare's Sonnet 99, "The forward violet thus did I chide."

Jones asserted: "Eastern imagery is not so different from the *European* as we are apt to imagine" (192), and Montagu saw his point. Keen to dispel racial and political stereotypes, Jones includes a translation from Sa'di's *Bostan* of the advice of King Nushirvan to his son Hormuz:

*Be a guardian, my son, to the poor and helpless; and be not confined in the chains of thy own indolence. [. . .] Go, my son, protect thy weak and indigent people; since through them is a king raised to the diadem. The people are the root, and the king is the tree, that grows from it; and the tree, O my son, derives its strength from the root* (194).

A Persian king's address to his son was even more welcome to Montagu than an "Asiatick Bards address to a Sultan," especially as it answered those moralists who intoned about the evils of Asiatic despotism. Jones defies any Westerner—such as Beattie denouncing Asian peoples as "unfriendly to liberty," using "exaggerated

61. Montagu, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear*, xxiii.

metaphors, and gigantic descriptions”—to ignore evidence of Iranian enlightenment: “Are these mean sentiments, delivered in pompous language?” Refuting notions of Asiatic tyranny and Oriental unreason, he encourages his readers to relocate “Oriental” despotism in the Occident; such poems: “a century or two ago [. . .] would have been suppressed in Europe, for spreading with too strong a glare the light of liberty and reason” (332–33). Montagu was convinced not merely by Jones’s intellectual argument but by her life experience of Joseph Emin.

By the time Sir William Jones met him in 1784, Emin was recently back from Persia and yet another venture to reignite his Armenian dream. “Persian” Jones had likewise been early infected by “That last infirmity of Noble mind,” declaring: “Glory I shall pursue through fire and water, by night and by day.”<sup>62</sup> He could thus empathize with the fiery ambition of this native of Hamadān. Years earlier in London, Jones had been fascinated to read the action-packed autobiographical account that the Duke of Northumberland had encouraged Emin to compose and that had been widely circulated among the *haut ton*.<sup>63</sup> Now, as a judge of the supreme court in Calcutta, Jones was in a position to add his weight to that of the already sympathetic governor-general John Macpherson in arguing Emin’s case to the Supreme Council.<sup>64</sup> Jones secured Emin’s arrears of pay as brevet ensign in the irregular cavalry and helped obtain his posting to the Third European Invalid Regiment. Thanking Macpherson for his efforts, Jones added that, “Many in England will be equally thankful,” describing the sixty-year-old soldier of fortune as “a fine fellow; and if active service should be required, he would seek nothing so much, as to be placed in the most perilous edge of the battle.”<sup>65</sup> Emin expressed his gratitude in his letter of Sunday, August 7, 1785, to his former patron, Elizabeth Montagu:

Mr Macpherson the present Govr General who being very much inclined to assist, or forward my Interest for granting my Arrears of pay, and my Rank in the Army, as he cou’d not do or bring about by himself alone at the Honorable Board of Counsell, & myself being almost despaired by various disagreeable anxiety of Mind behold unexpectedly the great providence sent to my Assistence, the most learned Judge the Great Sir William Jones, who without my giving him the least hint of my Destress, interposed with the rest of other Gentlemen at Board, who having agreed unanimously to take my Case in good Consideration,

62. *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. Garland Cannon, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1970), 1:86–87; henceforth *SWJLetters*.

63. See *Gentleman’s Magazine* 37 (January 1767): 3–8, 54; *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1767* (1768), 204–10. These also include a translation from the Armenian of Emin’s letter to Prince Heraclius.

64. John Macpherson’s agent in London was his kinsman and friend James “Ossian” Macpherson.

65. *SWJLetters*, 2:700.

and favour me without any Opposition. On that I am gratefully under Obligation to Sir William, who has honored me with the inexpressible Indulgence to be with him, to enjoy almost every day in the Week at his house his learned improving Company, in a word I am in Love with his benevolent Heart and greatness of Soul. His mind is exactly like my dear uncle Mr Edmund Burke's, and my Lady Jones's affable Cordiality Care and Indulgence towards me and my Son, much resembling my Princess Patroness the aimable Mrs Montague.<sup>66</sup>

Some five months later Emin's letter arrived on a cold January morning in Portman Square, together with a selection of poems, translations, and articles written by Jones and his Asiatick Society colleagues.<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Montagu expressed her surprise to her sister, Sarah Scott:

After 20 years intermission of correspondence I had a letter last week from Emin, he found Sir Wm Jones was sending a packet to me of literary performances by our Country men at Calcutta, so he inserted his letter. He tells me Sir William Jones is his kind Patron, & has made his situation very comfortable. It seems he is married, & has a Son grown up.<sup>68</sup>

Emin's claim to be spending "almost every day in the Week" with Jones might seem somewhat at odds with the judge's incredibly busy schedule, but in truth both William and Anna Maria, a woman of great intellect and herself a poet, had—exactly like Elizabeth Montagu and the great and good of England—fallen under the spell of this freedom fighter.<sup>69</sup> Inspired by the "Othello-music" of "the batailles, seiges, fortunes" Emin had passed, and all his "trauells Historie," they knew the truth of what

66. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 486.

67. Elizabeth Montagu had been entertaining Warren Hastings in the autumn of 1785: "charm'd with the humility and simplicity of his behaviour and manners. He has none of the airs of a Nabob, nor the Pride of a Hero." Even before the Asiatick Society materials arrived, she had been enthusiastically and repeatedly recommending Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhāgvat-Gēeta* (1785), together with Hastings's "admirable preface," to her sister, Sarah Scott; "Queen of the Blues," ed. Blunt, 2:195. I am most grateful to Jack Orchard for pointing this out.

68. Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, January 18, 1786, in *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 487.

69. In a letter of May 30, 1761, to the introspective Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Carter attempted to feign a certain stoical resistance: "I hope by this time you have unravelled the intricacy of Emin's story, and that he has talked your head sufficiently romantic: a capacity of head which I am extremely inclined to envy"; *Letters between . . . Carter and . . . Talbot*, ed. Pennington, 2:363. Carter's letters to Montagu, however, refer to Emin as "our Hero," revealing her eagerness for news of him; see *Letters from . . . Carter to . . . Montagu*, ed. Pennington, 1:224, 257, 260.



Montagu had written nearly three decades earlier: “every page of a hero’s history is worth preserving.” Emin’s memoirs had to be published.

Jones, with his confirmed respect for “genuine patriotism,” whether classical Athenian, medieval Welsh, or contemporary American, Corsican, Polish, or Dutch republican, would have underscored every word of Elizabeth Montagu’s elegiac eulogy when she had feared Emin slaughtered at Hastenbeck. In England, Jones had frequently despaired of “manly, rational, intelligible Liberty,” lamenting the paucity of “virtuous men and real patriots.”<sup>70</sup> At Calcutta, surrounded by the vanity, pride, and luxury of so many self-fashioning nabobs, the Joneses admired the contrasting courage, equanimity, and principles of Emin and were more than pleased to help perpetuate the memory of their Armenian nationalist friend.

In a letter of 1789, Emin subsequently reveals to his “Princess Patroness” Montagu that his Calcutta friends had persuaded him to write his memoirs: “Had not I been encouraged by Sir Wm and Lady Jones, I should never had undertaken to do it.”<sup>71</sup> His grateful statement in the same letter that “My gardian Angel Sir William Jones has been so good as to correct the wrong spelling and faulse English of it” is corroborated by a letter from Jones of August 10, 1788, returning the last section of Emin’s memoirs: “with my hearty thanks for the pleasure which the whole work has given me.”<sup>72</sup> Jones continues:

[It] has been highly interesting to me; but, as there is no reasoning on tastes I cannot be sure that it will be thought equally interesting by others; the style remains wholly your own; for I have corrected only those errors in language and orthography, which were unavoidable in an English work written by a native of Hamadan; and it is not the least of your merits that you have acquired such a command of words, in a language so different from Persian or Armenian.

Jones advises his “dear Emin” to abandon “the Asiatick style of panegyrick”: “Swift has misled you by inculcating that men of wit love praise, be assured that every man of wit (unless wit and sense be at variance) must prefer plain food to sugar-plumbs, and would rather be rubbed with a coarse towel than Dacca Muslin with

70. *SWJLetters*, 1:318. Another Montagu, a correspondent—and cousin by marriage—of Elizabeth’s, John, fourth Earl of Sandwich, told Lady Cork and Mrs. Poyntz “that he had heard I [Jones] was a violent patriot,” *SWJLetters*, 1:301. Jones had celebrated transatlantic patriotism to his former pupil Viscount Althorp in March 1782: “Did you know that Americans had flourishing settlements *seven hundred* miles from the coast? Every man among them is a soldier, a *patriot*—Subdue such a people! The king may as easily conquer the moon or wear it on his sleeve,” *SWJLetters*, 2:517.

71. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 491.

72. *SWJLetters*, 2:807.

all its flowers.”<sup>73</sup> Turning to politics and Emin’s Armenian project, Jones mingles worldly wisdom with judicial reserve: “I know mankind too well to be surprized at the failure of your enterprize; nor am I fully persuaded, that it was just, since Heraclius [Erekle] had a claim on Armenia; unless you intended to establish a republican government, and could have been satisfied with the station of a private citizen.”<sup>74</sup>

Jones would certainly have applauded the success of such a mission, as his political publications had convinced many government ministers that he was a card-carrying republican. Emin’s final 1773 attempt to liberate the Armenians had involved Emin with the diasporic Armenian community in Madras, notably the wealthy merchant “Mr. Shahamar” (Shahamir Shaharian) and Emin’s friend, the activist Movses Baghramian.<sup>75</sup> Jones also appreciated the irony that, whereas Emin’s first patron was Burke (formerly a close friend of Jones), Emin’s latest mission had been facilitated by “Mr. Hastings my Calcutta Patron,” who gave “Mr. Joseph Emin, Ensign in the Hon’ble Company’s 1st Brigade [. . .] Liberty to proceed from hence to Bussorah [Basra], on Furlough.”<sup>76</sup>

With the help of Warren Hastings and some of Emin’s English friends, his 640-page *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Ēmin, An Armenian* was published in London in 1792, the fifth year of Hastings’s seven-year impeachment. It was inscribed to Colonel Thomas Deane Pearse, Hastings’s second in his 1780 duel with Philip Francis.<sup>77</sup> The names of Armenians jostle with those of Asiatick Society members among the Calcutta-compiled subscription list, demonstrating how Emin had also won the hearts of British India. Most of his earlier English patrons were dead, but “Montagu, the celebrated Mrs. E.” is down for five copies, the same number as Sir William Jones.<sup>78</sup>

Emin concludes his *Life and Adventures*, no doubt recalling the death of his mother and brother in Baghdad, with a lament for the decline of Persia and “the

73. *SWJLetters*, 2:807. Women of wit also love praise, and lovers are licensed to employ panegyric, but Jones’s comment might be compared with that of the Earl of Bath, nearly thirty years earlier, on returning a letter of Emin’s to Montagu: “Madam, Your eastern lover, (whose letter I enclose,) outdoes all us poor European adorers, in flights and lofty expressions. He has the sun, moon, heaven, and stars, to call to his aid, whenever he has a mind to compare you to any of them. But we poor humble lovers must be content with low descriptions of our passion, by talking of flames, darts, and such poor terrestrial allusions”; Lord Bath to Montagu, in *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:339.

74. *SWJLetters*, 2:807.

75. With the help of his two sons, Shaharian had founded an Armenian printing press in 1772, on which he had recently published a draft republican constitution for Armenia in *Girk Anvaneal Vorogayt Parats* [Book Named Snare of Glory] (Madras, 1787).

76. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 491, 443.

77. “It is to Colonel Pearse, who would despise a formal dedication that Emin begs leave to inscribe his Narrative, with the simplicity of a soldier, and with a grateful sense of his kindness”; *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 483.

78. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, xxv, xxiv.

completion of its ruin by Nadir Shah.”<sup>79</sup> The same despot had launched Jones’s career as Orientalist. Another arbitrary ruler, King Christian VII of Denmark, commissioned Jones to translate the *Tarikh-i Nādirī* of Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, a biography sympathetic to Nadir Shah, into French. “Power is always odious,” Jones writes in the preface to his *Histoire de Nader Chah* (1770), “always to be suspected, when it resides in the hands of an individual; and a free people will never suffer any single man to be more powerful than the laws.”<sup>80</sup> It was exactly such sentiments as these that had inspired a relatively affluent merchant’s son to sign on as a lascar on the *Walpole* East Indiaman.

Emin hoped that his story might rouse Armenian youth “from their slumber, till they open their eyes by degrees, and understand the true meaning of liberty.” The final lines of Emin’s autobiography run as follows:

Many vast regions in that quarter of the world [Asia] which have been ruled by the will of a single tyrant, who, like a savage beast, has devoured his subjects; and when he has been cut off, his successor has been no better than himself. Since the Orientals know not what freedom is, the author could not have learned the meaning of it in Asia but he went to improve himself in the knowledge of European manners, and happily found at last, that liberty is the source of all the comforts of life.<sup>81</sup>

Thus the “black Tyger,” or “Black S\_\_ of \_B\_\_\_ch,”<sup>82</sup> as Dr. Monsey frequently and apparently affectionately addressed Emin, reveals the secret of his success—even in failure. This is what the British, whether in Bengal or in Berkshire, wanted to hear: beyond a condemnation of supposed Eastern despotism, Emin provides a Persian paean to British superiority. Yet this was not the Bengal tiger licking the hand of his colonial master; his status was problematized by the fact that, as an Armenian Christian, he was neither of the West nor the East, his cultural hybridity conflicted by Caucasian geopolitics, his Persian birthplace, and his diasporic upbringing. In England he

79. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 484.

80. Jones, *An Introduction to the History of the Life of Nader Shah*, in *Works of Sir William Jones*, ed. Anna Maria Jones, 13 vols. (London, 1807), 12:314.

81. *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 482.

82. BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fols. 52, 105. In complimenting Mrs Montagu’s intellect, and continuing the playful rivalry of her lovers, Emin provides the following self-representation: “Pray [tell me] from whence this Lord Bath came to increase the number of my Rivals, by George I will shute his Lordship and be beheaded for my inchangeable Love [of] Mrs Montagu. I believe I had the honour to see this noble Gentleman at Lady Sophia Egerton’s once. Is not he a lusty black tall man with dark Eye and Eyebrows, more like an Asiatick than a European to be able to penetrate into her great Soul, and see the Brightness of her Wisdom, which is more than Europe itself; it deserves to be written higher than the great Diamond in the Peacock Throne of Grand Mogul”; Emin to Monsey, May 9, 1761, BL, Hammick Papers, vol. 5, Add. MS 79500, fol. 62.

loved to play at being an “Oriental,” as Elizabeth Montagu’s “faithfull asiatick Slave,” for example, but he could appear at times much more like an Orientalist. Emin certainly resented the application of the term *Oriental*, even by the elder Pitt:

Your Reception of me yesterday was severe, but I hope it was friendly. You said so, and I believe it. It was the Fedelity of your heart to spure me on, and to assure me of your Friendship. But give me Leave to say Sr that your hint with the Word Oriental, as if I was telling one of the Arabian Tails, I own, it choacks in the Throat me nor can I swallow it with any Comfort. I am hurt to the Soul, I see that success is necessary to make a man seem honest as well as wise.<sup>83</sup>

In addressing the secretary of state after what would seem to have been a most successful reception, Emin is not afraid to reveal something of his “wild Asiatic temper,” even while protesting about Pitt’s use of the word *Oriental*. His radical deconstruction of the binaries of self and other, similitude and difference helps explain the appeal of this complex character. As Elizabeth reveals to her husband, Pitt was impressed:

Emin dines with her Ladyship [Jemima Medows] to-day if joy can give appetite he will make a good meal, for by ye sollicitation of Lady Yarmouth Mr Pitt has received him & promised to see what can be done For him, as great minds are akin, Mr Pitt was much pleased with him. Emin repeated to me his discourse to Mr Pitt, & it was full of Asiatick fire & figure, if it did not touch ye Statesman it must ye Orator. Mr Pitt made him great compliments. I hope they will be realized: & they surely will if Lady Yarmouth continues her desire to serve him.<sup>84</sup>

We have considered the spellbinding effect that the “fire & figure” of Emin Joseph Emin exerted over Bluestockings, scholars, politicians, aristocrats, everyone in short from Edmund Burke to George II’s mistress, but while their letters—and their frequent exchange of his—testify to his influence and impact, they rarely provide a picture of what it was like to be in his company. A revealing episode in this regard is Emin’s own account of his reaction to the banter of Francis Hastings, tenth Earl of Huntingdon, especially to the latter’s suggestion that “Your best method will

83. Emin to William Pitt, 1758, in *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 485; see also his account of his meeting with Pitt on pp. 127–28. Emin’s earlier attempt to obtain an interview with Pitt is described by Montagu in a letter to her sister on Wednesday, May 3, 1756: “He has given in a memorial to Mr. Pitt, which contains a grand scheme, and Mr. Pitt said about six weeks ago, he would talk to him upon it, but has not yet had leisure. Mr. Emin’s letter to Mr. Pitt is one of the finest things I ever read”; *Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. M. Montagu, 4:12.

84. Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, March 1758, in *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apcar, 92.

be to compose a new sort of religion like Mohamed, and reform your countrymen to your way of thinking; otherwise the religion they have now, will never suffer them to follow your example, so as to become a free nation.” Emin offers a daring analogy between the earl and a spitted sirloin in a London chophouse welcoming a “Turkish executioner’s knife” and culminates with a straight-speaking put-down of the free-thinking “free speaker”:

nothing surprises one so much as to find her ladyship, your mother [Selina, founder of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion], so very religious, and your lordship so irreligious. Several free speakers like you, have brought down the true Christian character of the most noble English nation to the lowest degree of heathenism; and even propagated a notion all over the eastern quarter of the world, that (which God forbid) the English are not Christians.<sup>85</sup>

The closest portrayal, perhaps, comes from the pen of Catherine Talbot, a sensitive thirty-seven-year-old Bluestocking who always longed for diverting company. She wrote to Elizabeth Carter on New Year’s Day, 1759, of a casual visit Emin had made to her at Lambeth Palace, which caused her to miss the last post: “He is as good and as oriental as ever, though much more than ever in fashion amongst the fine folks. [. . .] He was particularly entertaining last night.”<sup>86</sup> Emin had been talking of “the management of states and kingdoms, the necessity there was of watching evils in their first growth,” anticipating Paine’s—or was it Jefferson’s?—“eternal vigilance is the price of liberty” by several decades. Talbot continues:

After much discourse of this kind, he sat down and amused me with one or two genuine Eastern tales and poems, as he had heard them repeated by some Persians he travelled with, when they sat down to pass the heat of the day on the banks of a river.—Now I am sure all this will plead my excuse for last Post.<sup>87</sup>

Talbot’s dark-skinned firstfooter had kept her from her writing desk, but her letter reveals something of his fascination for “the fine folks” and the Bluestockings, and especially for Elizabeth Montagu, who inhabited both camps. It resides in his being “as good and as oriental as ever.” “Otherness,” as Brian Treanor has pointed out, “is

85. “This grave repartee made his lordship hang down his head, and both the brothers cried out laughing, ‘He serves you right, my lord, upon our honour; we will acquaint his Royal Highness with every word Mr. Emin has said to you’”; *Life and Adventures*, ed. Apar, 164–65.

86. *Letters between . . . Carter and . . . Talbot*, ed. Pennington, 2:292.

87. *Letters between . . . Carter and . . . Talbot*, ed. Pennington, 2:293.

not absolute, it is relative; it is the crossing of (absolute) alterity and similitude.”<sup>88</sup> In Lambeth Palace or in the mountains of Kurdistan, Emin could cross and erode such apparent borders, discoursing upon “western” liberty or providing extempore translations of Persian poems.

“Persian” Jones’s poems provided fascinating materials and formative models for Romantic subjectivity underpinned by footnoted Orientalist objectivity. The Romantic writers—Coleridge, Southey, Landor, Byron, Moore, Percy Shelley, Felicia Hemans, Charlotte Dacre, Sydney Owenson—who were to reap the literary rewards of “sticking to the East” were as yet unborn. Yet Montagu had celebrated the spirit of this Persian-born Armenian when Jones was a young Harrow schoolboy; to paraphrase Garrick, “out rushed a female to protect”—and project—the East. Drawn by Joseph Emin’s “Asiatick fire & figure,” Elizabeth Montagu, Bluestocking “Queen of Sheba,” had been there—imaginatively and intellectually—decades before any of them.

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☞ **MICHAEL J. FRANKLIN** is Professor of English at Swansea University. He has published widely in several areas, but principally on Romantic representations of the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East, including those of Joseph Emin, Sir William Jones, Phebe Gibbes, Elizabeth Montagu, Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, Robert Southey, Byron, Henry Gally Knight, and Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. He is currently working on another book on Jones; a new edition of Gibbes’s *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789); and a study of Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi. He is also one of the editors on the Elizabeth Montagu Letters Project.

88. Brian Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity: Levinas, Marcel, and the Contemporary Debate* (New York, 2006), 207.

