

# Merchants, Sorcerers, Fire Worshipers: ‘Snapshots’ of Persian Culture and the Central European Mirror

## The Persian Other in the Portrayal of Central European Orientalist Fiction

Márton Pál Iványi 

Doctoral School of Sociology and Communication Science of the Budapest Corvinus University;  
4-C Közraktár utca, 1093 Budapest, Hungary; [martonpivanyi@gmail.com](mailto:martonpivanyi@gmail.com)

Received 1 October 2023 | Accepted 20 November 2023 | Published online 15 December 2023

**Abstract.** Critiques of Western Orientalism have been well-known since the Saidean perspective, and in-depth analysis of Frontier Orientalism has also gained prevalence and academic recognition. Yet, another tendency, namely, that of exoticizing Persia, has not been given wide-ranging attention. This paper delivers a theoretical and empirical framework describing another variant of Central European Orientalism, which may be remotely reminiscent of alleged colonial thought, yet with regional peculiarities and without any direct exposition of historical-political conflict.

**Keywords:** Central Europe, critical discourse analysis, Orientalism, history, literature, fiction

### Introduction

Central European postcolonialism’s key figure, Czesław Miłosz, criticizes Western approaches to the world. At the same time, he refers to “ketman,” the peculiar concept of dissimulative practices based on religious grounds related to Persia (Shiism), which he then expands into a distant sociopolitical context: “What is Ketman? I found its description in a book by Gobineau entitled *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia*. Gobineau spent many years in Persia (from 1855 to 1858 he was a secretary in the French legation, and from 1861 to 1863 he was French minister), and we cannot deny his gift for keen observation, even though we need not necessarily agree with the conclusions of this rather dangerous writer.”<sup>1</sup>

This citation is relevant for us here in at least two ways. On the one hand, it points to the need for a Polish author to distinguish, or even distance himself, from

---

1 Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, 57.

a Western author, i.e., French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau. On the other hand, it also illustrates that Miłosz himself is receptive to the theme of the infinite Orient and applies its perceived or actual characteristics to his circumstances.

This article offers a view of the historical and socio-cultural stakes represented by this Auftakt, namely, by addressing the questions 1) whether it is also possible to identify a literary tradition of Othering Persia in the Central Eastern Europe (CEE) region, 2) if so, what regional peculiarities can be highlighted; last, 3) what may explain the latter features, also bearing in mind complex interregional historical relations that come into play between all relevant concepts such as the Occident, the Orient and the "demi-"Orient.<sup>2</sup> As parts of such an endeavor, we employ a textual-contentual analysis of significant regional authors' works concerning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, offering "snapshots" of a tendentious and widespread portrayal of Persia, predominantly as a source of the Magical and commerce. While doing this, as our aim is to understand Orientalism as broadly as possible, we shall emphasize Hungarian author and scholar Antal Szerb, whose oeuvre is at the intersection of fiction and academic engagement and, thus, can be considered an epigon, highlighting the complexity of the CEE epistemological stance regarding the Orient.

## Persia and the diverse dimensions of Orientalism

Othering that involves stereotypically featured facets of Persia is far from exclusively characteristic of CEE fiction. In fact, Iran and the Persian cultural scene itself have attracted a great deal of attention from European intellectuals and artists. Apart from Antiquity (e. g. Aeschylus), modern authors, inter alia, from Cervantes<sup>3</sup> to J.D. Salinger,<sup>4</sup> just to name a few here, have attributed remarkable importance to this segment of the "Orient" throughout the centuries.

2 I.e., Central Eastern Europe. A wording and concept applied on account of Larry Wolff, who introduces the critique to an "intellectual project" of the alleged or real "demi-Orientalization" of Eastern Europe. See: Wolff, *Inventing Europe*.

3 Accordingly, *Don Quijote*, the protagonist and title hero of the masterpiece of seventeenth century Early Modern Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, refers both to Zoroastrianism and to Persia in general, in his conversation with the landlady, her daughter and Maritornes and the canon, respectively, in Chapter XLVII as follows: "virtue is of herself so mighty, that, in spite of all the magic that Zoroaster its first inventor knew, she will come victorious out of every trial [...] I am a knight-errant [...] who, in defiance and in spite of envy itself, and all the magicians that Persia, or Brahmans that India, or Gymnosophists that Ethiopia ever produced, will place their names in the temple of immortality." Cervantes, "*Don Quijote*," 405, 407.

4 In Salinger's book entitled *Franny and Zooey*, published in 1961, character LeSage's "wife turned out to be a really tired, bosomy, Persian-looking blonde" which operates apparently as an exoticizing theme. Salinger, *Franny*, 113.

Great scholarly attention<sup>5</sup> has been focused on whether the “Occidental” authors’ corresponding epistemology and portrayal of Persia and, obviously, of the Orient, in general, are based on ontology or, instead, serve imperialist objectives. The coryphaeus of such trains of thought, Palestinian–American scholar Edward Said claimed to identify, *tout court*, political realities behind such epistemological interest<sup>6</sup> and “charm,” attracting scholars of various disciplines.<sup>7</sup>

Orientalism, both in view of its broader senses and the potentially “over-stretching”<sup>8</sup> arguments of the Saidean interpretation, obviously surpasses the context of Persia. This becomes evident from Said’s *opus magnum* itself in the context of certain phases where he presents the geocultural variability of the scope of his objects of scrutiny:

“[...] at certain moments of [...] general European history of interest in the East, particular parts of the Orient like Egypt, Syria, and Arabia cannot be discussed without also studying Europe’s involvement in the more distant parts, of which Persia and India are the most important...”<sup>9</sup>

In fact, Hungarian Romantic author Mór Jókai, later discussed in detail in this paper, in his autobiographic writings, had already highlighted the corresponding nuances.

“The history of Turkey, the tales of the East, Istanbul, occupy a large space in my novels, furthermore, Crimea, the Caucasus, Persia, Palmyra, Afghanistan, China, the Amur, the splendid cities of Asia, and Syria...”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, one can be well aware of the distinct features of the scope of interest in the Orient, including the cultural and/or social differences that can be attributed to Persia or even potential antagonisms vis-à-vis other facets of the Orient.<sup>11</sup>

5 Said, *Orientalism* 1979; Mamdani, *From Victim*; Asad, *Formations*; Dainotto, *Europe*; Massad, *Islam*.

6 Note that in fact, Said is far from being the first to identify the epistemological limits of Orientalism, but surely the most influential. Already Egyptian Abd ar-Rahman Jabarti had delved beyond the military aspect of Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt, probing into the underlying motivations and the broader Western perspective, exploring their potential epistemological approach to the events. Later on, inter alia Tunisian Abdelkader Zghal’s and Hachmi Karoui’s *Decolonialization and Social Science Research: the Case of Tunisia* (1973), Egyptian Anouar Abdel-Malik’s *L’Orientalisme en crise* (1963), Moroccan Abdallah Laroui’s for a *Methodology of Islamic Studies* (1973) all polemicize accordingly some years before Said, just to name a few authors.

7 Iványi, “Orientalisms and Central European Approaches,” 9.

8 Tibi, *Islam Between Culture and Politics*, 235.

9 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 17.

10 Jókai, Mór. *Jókai – Önmagáról*. <https://mek.oszk.hu/07300/07315/07315.html>

11 Adams, *Persia by a Persian*, 442; Mazahéri, *La route de la soie*, 95.

Apart from that, one should not disregard that the Saidean interpretation of Orientalism and its poststructural traditions is as widely challenged as applied in various contexts. Inter alia, political scientist Bassam Tibi points to the limits of Orientalism as follows:

“[I]t has become a kind of postmodern fashion to accuse any criticism [...] as being »Orientalist« in attitude.”

Tibi, thus, here proposes to pursue uncensored studies without fear of being victimized by the invective of “Orientalism.”<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the contentual questions the Saidean thesis or its scholarly legacy may raise, it is needless to say that Persia, both from internal and external perspectives, has generally been associated with ancient<sup>13</sup> and glorious<sup>14</sup> civilization and not necessarily portrayed as anything “exotic, degenerate, passive, fanatical, mysterious, civilized, and uncivilized by degree.”<sup>15</sup> Nota bene, the perceptions of an Oriental Persia as mystical are not inevitably linked to any hostility; instead, this often arises from its profound cultural legacy (literature, symbolism, and arts), ancient historical significance, and mystical traditions (such as astrology, alchemy, and Sufism), which have fascinated people for centuries.

Still, irrespective of the overall validity of the Saidean paradigm and its subsequent pro and contra academic implications, critical logic and stance may well serve as tools for a partial understanding of the relations between certain geocultural and historical regions. In accordance therewith, we may encounter the complicated relations of the Occident and the Orient, as well as those of Western and Central Eastern Europe.

### The Central Eastern European Other?

The reason for the emphasis on CEE peculiarities is that this region may have been subjected to prejudiced misrepresentation, inasmuch as these territories and nations themselves were seen as the nearest representatives of “the Orient” to the “Occident” (i.e., predominantly Western Europe). We need to take into account a hypothetical explanation for that and, by doing so, grasp some further facets of the complex concept of Orientalism.

Larry Wolff explores the historical construction of the concept of Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment era by delving into how Western European

12 Tibi, *Islam Between Culture and Politics*, 235–37.

13 Sheen, *The New Persia*, 3; Hamzavi, *Persia and the Powers*, 9.

14 Homayounpour, *Doing Psychoanalysis*, 56.

15 Hodkinson and Walker, eds, *Studies in German Literature*.

intellectuals developed and popularized a distinct and often stereotyped image of Eastern Europe. He examines how this portrayal was shaped by political, cultural, and geographical factors, reflecting the biases and perceptions of the Western European elite. Thus, the relevant role of imagination, ideology, and power dynamics resulted in the construction of Eastern Europe as a separate and somewhat exotic entity in the European consciousness:

“The distinction [...] is by no means a matter of time immemorial, undiscoverably ancient. It was not a natural distinction, or even an innocent one, for it was produced as a work of cultural creation, of intellectual artifice, of ideological self-interest and self-promotion.”<sup>16</sup>

This perceived or real tendency can be traced back centuries, as highlighted by the author:

“Just as the new centers of the Enlightenment superseded the old centers of the Renaissance, the old lands of barbarism and backwardness in the north were correspondingly displaced to the east. The Enlightenment had to invent Western Europe and Eastern Europe together, as complementary concepts, defining each other by opposition and adjacency.”<sup>17</sup>

Hence the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion—Europe but not Europe. Eastern Europe defined Western Europe by contrast, as the Orient defined the Occident, but was also made to mediate between Europe and the Orient. One might describe the invention of Eastern Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization.<sup>18</sup>

## The canon of Modernity and those outside it

In the words of Edward Said, “in the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world [...] settings, in some cases names only, half-imagined, half-known; monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires. The European imagination was nourished extensively from this repertoire.” Then Said goes on to identify the relevant time frame and the actors: “[B]etween the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century [...] major authors [...] drew on the Orient’s riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines of imagery, ideas, and figures populating it.”<sup>19</sup>

---

16 Wolff, *Inventing Europe*, 4.

17 Wolff, *Inventing Europe*, 5.

18 Wolff, *Inventing Europe*, 7.

19 Said, *Orientalism 1979*, 63.

Explanations for such a perceived or real canon differ in terms of the relevant motivations. For once, as anthropologist Talal Asad put it, “a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred—is a salient feature of the modern epoch; It is, arguably, a product of nineteenth-century romanticism, partly linked to the growing habit of reading imaginative literature—being enclosed within and by it—so that images of a »pre-modern« past acquire in retrospect a quality of enchantment.”<sup>20</sup>

Others, such as the historian Joseph Massad, contextualize these ideologically loaded trains of thought from a world political perspective:

“The emergence of the Eastern Question in eighteenth-century Western Europe was part and parcel of the attempt, ongoing since the Renaissance, to create »Europe« as a transcendental idea, composed of a set of Enlightened ideals differentiated from a prior historical moment that this nascent Europe would call »the dark ages«, and as a unified and separate geography differentiated from »dark« lands and continents lying outside it.”

Again, others, just like professor of literature Roberto Dainotto, follow a similar logic, claiming “a theory of Europe, from its very outset, is a theory of Orientalism.”<sup>21</sup>

Returning to the argument of Massad, such a “geographic demarcation would become essential for the European project that would in the nineteenth century be called »civilization« and »culture.«”<sup>22</sup>

It is, although to a lesser extent than those approaches above, also indirectly relevant that within the corresponding eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, as academic Mahmood Mamdani goes so far as to say, “what is striking,” was the

“...confluence of culture and biology and the emergence of a discourse on civilization and the emergence of a discourse on civilization that was nothing less than a culture-coded racism [...] Race spread from a marginal to a mainstream doctrine in the context of modern imperialism that single most important transformative experience in recent human history [...] Race became the marker dividing humanity [...] The former civilized, the latter putty for a civilizational project.”<sup>23</sup>

Here, the historical stakes of any discussion about the Orient, in general, or in a narrower sense, about Persia become evident, and so do the potentially peculiar characteristics of Central Europe, outside of any involvement in the Western colonial agenda.<sup>24</sup>

20 Asad, *From Secular*, 13–14.

21 Dainotto, *Europe*, 18–19.

22 Massad, *Islam*, 15.

23 Mamdani, *When Victim*, 77.

24 Lemmen, “Noncolonial Orientalism,” 209–27; Iványi, “Orientalism,” 11.

Having these approaches and precedents in mind, this paper at hand aims to consider the overall validity of such perceived or real tendencies, differently inflected and serving various thematic and ideological purposes,<sup>25</sup> particularly in a regional frame of reference.

Our corresponding aim is to grasp regional peculiarities via snapshots of the CEE modern corpus dedicated to ancient Persia in the Late Modern period. The relevant, decisive passages selected from the works of these authors, inspired by the theoretical framework, and the (post-)Saidean criteria of critique are presented in dialogue.

### Central European Romanticism

As early as the oeuvre of Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), it was demonstrated that ancient Persia was of significant importance for Polish Romanticism. This is attested to by *The Crimean Sonnets* [Pol.: *Sonety krymskie*] published originally in 1826. In this context, an overall honest and benevolent attitude is manifested, based on a thorough knowledge of Persian mythology reflected by the author's remarks that serve educational purposes without any hint of value assessment.

These lines of Mickiewicz may, prima facie perhaps, resonate with the Saidean thesis, which holds that the “Orient” has “a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts it out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself.”<sup>26</sup>

But any assertion that the Polish Romanticist would highlight Persia as “exotic, degenerate, passive, fanatical, mysterious, civilized, and uncivilized by degree”<sup>27</sup> appears rather unstable. Anyhow, Mickiewicz, a subject of the Russian Czar, surely had no direct relation to (Western imperialism's) political agenda, following which, according to Said once again—now from the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition of his opus magnum—“there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires.”<sup>28</sup>

In the *Mountains from the Keslov Steppe* [Pol.: *Widok gór ze stepów Kozłowa*] The “divas,” writes Mickiewicz in his notes, “are, according to ancient Persian mythology [Pol.: *podług starożytnej mitologii Persów*] evil spirits that once ruled the earth and were then banished by angels, now living at the end of the world, beyond Mount Kaf.” In a later piece entitled *The Kikineis Mountain* [Pol.: *Góra Kikineis*], Mickiewicz

25 Cf. Peernajmodin, “Orientalist,” 4. 145.

26 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 283.

27 Hodkinson and Walker, eds, “Introduction,” 1.

28 Said, *Orientalism* 2003, xxi.

takes account of a certain “mountain bird” [Pol: *ptak-góra*], which is, he adds, is “known from the Thousand and One Nights. It is the Simurg bird, so famous in Persian mythology [Pol.: *jest to sławny w mitologii perskiej*], so often described by the poets of the East: «So great (says Firdussi [i.e., Ferdowsi] in the Shah-nameh) as a mountain and mighty as a castle, it can carry an elephant in its clutches.»”<sup>29</sup> While we venture to assert that these lines reflect a sincere appreciation on behalf of Mickiewicz of Persian poetry, general stakes are demonstrated when we recall Said’s disapproval when he quotes French linguist Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy in saying Oriental poetry was nourished by “opinions, prejudices, beliefs, superstitions which we can acquire only after long and painful study.”<sup>30</sup>

Although our primary objective here is to focus on fiction, in the context of our broader aim to discover regional particularities, it is worth mentioning that a friend of Mickiewicz,<sup>31</sup> Polish Iranologist Aleksander Chodźko, in his *Specimens of the Popular Poetry of Persia* (1842), in the context of the legendary heroic outlaw Kurroglu from Northern Persia, comes up with an intriguing statement:

“This is quite in the Oriental spirit. The princes of the blood and the grand dignitaries of the court, whenever they can, never hesitate to increase their income, by converting to their own use the pay of magistrates, troops, servants, etc., entrusted to their care.”<sup>32</sup>

In Hungarian Romantic author Mór Jókai’s *The Golden Age of Transylvania* [in Hung.: *Erdély aranykora*] published in 1851, references to Persia constitute one Orientalist set among many, mostly inspired by interactions with the Ottoman Empire and Islam in general. Accordingly, a certain elderly slave woman named Babaye tries to rouse femme fatale character Azraële from the latter’s ponderings by delivering the following oratorio:

“[H]ave not the bayaderes danced among the burning candles? Or is that no longer pretty either? Are the silken threads of Persia worn and colourless? Is the honey of the spleen no more tasty, the pineapple no more fragrant? Have the pearls of Ceylon lost their lustre? Are the Italian eunuch’s dana annoyed? And even the mirror no longer shows anything beautiful? Why is the day so angry, why is the day so unkind? What need of clouds in the skies of Damanhur?”<sup>33</sup>

29 Both citations of Mickiewicz are to be found in the *Sonnets from the Crimea*, translated by Edna Worthley Underwood, available in Ebook version of the Gutenberg Project: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27069/27069-h/27069-h.html>

30 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 128.

31 Glinski, “The Eastern.”

32 Chodźko, *Specimens*, 130.

33 Jókai, *Erdély*, 110.



At a later point in the same novel, Jókai carries on with the same “eclectic” variant of the broader exotic Oriental theme:

“A magnificent oriental hall opens up before us. A hundred wax torches are burning around the walls [...] columns decorated with rabbit and animal heads, such as one sees on Persian temples, their centres torn by variegated curtains. On the walls shine Moorish friezes, glittering cirades of gold and malachite...”<sup>34</sup>

These descriptions might resonate with and justify a far-reaching critique of Orientalist contextualizations and tropes such as the “Lustful” Oriental described by Said and Charles D. Sabatos or the “Desiring” one by Massad, nota bene, aimed primarily at Western intellectuals’ ideologically charged contributions.<sup>35</sup>

The same Jókai, a year later, continued his authorly path towards the Orient by bringing twelfth-century romantic poet Nizami Ganjavi’s tragic romance, Khosrow and Shirin, to life also for a Hungarian audience, since, as the prelude goes, “Old Persia, the rival of Rome, the satrapas who conquered the world, the glorious courts are buried, their graves are not remembered with reverence, their names, their deeds are dust on the cold pages of history.”

### Science and violence, years of the “Belle époque” and the early twentieth century

In the context of scholarly research, one should not disregard the legacy of prominent Hungarian Orientalist Ignác Goldziher, known primarily for his contributions to Islamic studies and his extensive work on Islamic culture and religion. He was a distinguished scholar and is often regarded as one of the founders of modern Islamic studies in Europe. While his focus was not exclusively on Persia, his research encompassed the broader Islamic world, which naturally included Persia due to its historical and cultural significance within Islamic civilization.

Goldziher, otherwise sometimes quite critical of Shiism *per se*, expressed sympathy toward the contribution of Persians to Islamic intellectual life in a work published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1881: “Persians, Tatars, »maulas« [*mawāli*] were the ones whose names shine most brightly in Islamic theological and scientific literature in general.”<sup>36</sup> As we can see even from this citation, Goldziher’s connection to Persia primarily lies in his scholarly pursuits related to Islam and the Middle East.

34 Jókai, *Erdély*, 278.

35 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 8; Sabatos, *Frontier*, 104, 149–50; Massad, *Desiring*, 152–57.

36 Goldziher, *Az iszlám*, 63.

In *The Magic Caftan* [Hung.: *A Beszélő köntös*], a semi-historic, semi-fictional novel of Kálmán Mikszáth from the year 1889, once again, the harem beauties, i.e., the quintessential imagery of Orientalism,<sup>37</sup> comes to the forefront, with an explicit reference to Ferdowsi's fantasies, in a scene when three ladies are chosen to be sent as a gift to the Sultan, who, according to the narration, "has never kissed better, and nor sung Firdaussi [i.e. Ferdowsi] more beautiful songs about any other woman!"<sup>38</sup>

The fifth Chapter of Hungarian Gyula Krúdy's *French Castle* [Hung.: *Francia Kastély*], published in 1912, takes note of a certain Pálházi, who was seen by his Viennese acquaintances "spending like the Shah of Persia."<sup>39</sup> Here, the topos of the wealth of Persia, although among late modern settings, can be viewed as a distorted and distant echo of the ancient treasures of Darius.<sup>40</sup>

Even if our overall focus is on Central Eastern European peculiarities, as anticipated above, it should also be noted that in the context of Hungarian authors, the attitudes towards the Orient and the corresponding national frame of reference were obviously defined by complex historical relations such as a 1) direct and hostile contacts with the Ottoman Empire, a "harbinger" of Islam to Central and Eastern Europe; and ii) experiences and assumptions of an ethnogenesis surrounded by peoples of Eastern origins (proto-Turks, Khazars, Cumans, and Jász, the latter of Indo-Iranian origin).<sup>41</sup>

Coming back to our main thread: if we read these citations above through the Saidean perspective, the idealization of Oriental wealth is not only a common literary motif but may also reflect projections of interventionism. In Said's interpretation, when British explorer and writer Richard Francis Burton "tells us in the Pilgrimage that »Egypt is a treasure to be won«, that it »is the most tempting prize which the East holds out to the ambition of Europe [...]«, we must recognize how the voice of the highly idiosyncratic master of Oriental knowledge informs, feeds into the voice of European ambition for rule over the Orient."<sup>42</sup>

Still during the Monarchy era, Czech Jaroslav Hašek, author of a number of essays in addition to his opus magnum *Švejk*, in one of the former (which was added later, post mortem, in 1968 to *Dekameron humoru a satiry*) describes a group of middle school youngsters, among whom a certain Roztocil "was always talking about his adventures in Persia, how he beheaded Kurds as a binbashi [Turk.: *Binbaşı*]."<sup>43</sup>

37 Sabatos, *Frontier*, 108.

38 Mikszáth, *A beszélő köntös*, 38.

39 Krúdy, *Szindbád*, 570.

40 Briant, *Darius*, 383.

41 Foltz, *The Ossetes*, 50.

42 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 196.

43 Hašek, *A Balaton*, 25.

Here, even if the “irrational violence”<sup>44</sup> of the Orient might come to play or be hinted at, the entire context is lacking seriousness, so even given the brutality, we may well consider it a banal theme of childish boasting.

As for Polish authors, Henryk Sienkiewicz, in Chapter XLIV of his historical novel *With Fire and Sword* [Pol.: *Ogniem i mieczem*] i.e., in the first volume of the Trilogy series (1884–1888), during the elections of the leader of the Commonwealth forces in Lwów, describes how “the population of the city increased tenfold; for with the crowds of nobles poured in thousands of merchants and shopkeepers of the whole world, from distant Persia to England beyond the sea.”<sup>45</sup> Here, merchandise, i.e., one of the “hereditary” associations with Persia, takes full effect.

In Chapter LV, protagonist Zagłoba tells his comrade fellow nobleman Rzędzian about Horpyna, the witch, adding that “if she is a powerful witch I am a more powerful wizard, for I learned the black art in Persia. She serves the devils, and they serve me, and I could plough with them as with oxen; but I don’t want to do so, keeping in mind, as I do, the salvation of my own soul.” In this abstraction, Persian sorcery, arguably, may seem to be contrasted with Polish Christian decency on behalf of the author Sienkiewicz.

This may seem especially relevant if we recall Massad’s argument that certain dichotomies are “both [...] act[s] of self-constitution and projection as well as [parts of] an imperial strategy that uses cultural assimilation and othering as tactics of economic and political domination.”<sup>46</sup> However, this is surely not the case in the context of Sienkiewicz and could hardly have been achieved by an artist whose country was itself divided by the regional powers at the time of his work.

In Chapter XVII of the third edition of the Trilogy entitled *Fire in the Steppe* [Pol.: *Pan Wołodyjowski*], during the session of the *Diet* [Pol.: *Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*] we again encounter the former motif of the latter two:

“First came the merchants who looked for rich harvests in those electoral meadows where more than half a million of the voting gentry would throng together with all the great magnets, their suits and servants and followers and their courts and their private armies. They came from England, Holland, Germany and Russia. There were tartar traders, Turks, Armenians, and even merchant caravans from Persia [Pol.: *kupcy ... Persowie nawet*], carrying fine clothes, boards of woven woolens, canvass for the tents and pavilions, under which all of the Polish–Lithuanian knighthood would live and debate. Clothes-of-gold and damask, furs, jewels, perfumes, honey dates and oriental sweetmeats.”<sup>47</sup>

44 Cf. Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 313.

45 Sienkiewicz, *With Fire*.

46 Massad, *Islam*, 19.

47 Sienkiewicz, *Fire*, 207.

These two focal points of reference of Persia in these decades, namely, commodities and the Magical, attracted even wider attention in the upcoming years, as we shall see below.

### **Magic and merchandise as dominant themes after the Great War**

in Dezső Kosztolányi's novel entitled *Nero, the Bloody Poet*, published in 1921, sorcerers of Antique Persia enter the scene for an ephemeral period:

“There were hundreds of magical physicians in Rome, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, who put the patient to sleep with vapours, so that he would learn the curse of his cure from Aesculapius in his sleep, and healed him by laying on of hands and by magic spells [...] A Persian wizard suspected the spirits of Ahriman in the emperor, and while he was praying he saw a large dragon emerge from him.”<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, Kosztolányi was nicknamed the “Persian poet” by fellow poet Endre Ady, the latter using a term that was supposed to convey the abstract and spiritual essence of the former's poetry, devoid of immediate, local realities or context. Such a feature again, just like the quotation above, reflects the premises associated with a magical, idealistic, or dreamy Persia on behalf of contemporaries.

When encountering the Magical, the irrational, it is relevant at this point to recall how Said concludes his findings in the first edition of *Orientalism*: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes.”<sup>49</sup> However, the almost exceptionalizing association of Persia with the magical might not inevitably reflect any hostility of Central Eastern European authors; instead, it may stem in general from the rich Persian cultural heritage (literature and tales, symbolism and arts), historical narratives of ancientness, and mystical traditions (astrology and alchemy, Sufism) that have all captivated imaginations for centuries.

Reminding us of Krúdy, we “encounter” the Shah of Persia in the memoir of Hungarian Gyula Illyés, recalling his years spent in Paris in the early 1920s. This time, we find him in a lifelike, contemporary setting, namely, that of Le Dôme Café in Montparnasse—what's more, with true historical credibility: “If one [...] examines the people here one by one: one gets a world view of the rise of a modern religion. Underneath the clamorous disguise of prostitutes and counterfeiters, you may find, among others, also «the Persian Shah.»”<sup>50</sup> While this scenery may be considered as

48 Kosztolányi, *Nero*, 83–5.

49 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 1.

50 Illyés, *Hunok*, 301.

revelatory of the lustful<sup>51</sup> Oriental, potential referring to the Shah's individualized contemporary perceptions, regardless of his ethnic or cultural background, is more likely to be the case.

Czech Vladislav Vančura, in his *Marketa Lazarová* (1931), described the goods stolen by the robber clan of Kozlíks at a point. In this context, Character Mikoláš, “finally grabs a bundle of beautiful fabric. It was wrinkled, like the Armenian merchant who had brought it from Persia [Czech: *jenž ji vezl z Persie*] to the Lowlands.”<sup>52</sup> In this scene of Vančura's book, there seems to be an identification with high-quality goods, again indicating identification with the commercial legacies of Persia.

Now in the 30s, a specific episode in the historical novel entitled *Golden Corsage* [Hung.: *Aranykoporsó*] of Ferenc Móra, published in 1932, reminisces about the historical background presented by Kosztolányi on the one hand and descriptions of the “commodities” of the Orient on the other, as Emperor Diocletian tells his adopted son Quintipor “how much money goes out to Arabia for incense, to Armenia for slaves, to Persia for eunuchs, to Serica for silk and to India for women's goods.”<sup>53</sup>

Later in the book, when issues of dynastic marriage come forth, we find another interesting phase: “There were only two powers in the world at that time, the Roman and the Persian. Varanes, the one-armed Persian prince who had been summoned home by his reconciled father, knew that he had a sister, Hormizda, who had to live in a locked tower to keep her beauty from driving men mad. This is the goddess who is worthy of Quintipor in every way. Her joy is the union of East and West and with it the peace of the world.” At the same time, Protagonist Quintipor's child love, Titanilla, daughter of Caesar Galerius, who is being courted by an (again) Persian prince, Varanes, in turn, “refused to be queen among the fire-worshipping barbarians.”<sup>54</sup>

Apart from merchandise and the ancient faith of Persians, something else is also at stake here, which is even more pronounced, arguably, with the most effective articulation and characteristic form in the oeuvre of Antal Szerb.

### The Desiring Persian of the inter-war period in the 1930s

What comes into play here, in the words of Joseph Massad, is the “repudiation of the institutionalization of promiscuous sex with women (as concubines, singing girls, slaves, or even as multiple wives).”<sup>55</sup>

51 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 8; Sabatos, *Frontier*, 104, 149–50; Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 159.

52 Vančura, *Marketa*, 13.

53 Móra, *Aranykoporsó*, 162.

54 Móra, *Aranykoporsó*, 296–97.

55 Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 159.

Such an impulse of exoticism vis-à-vis the Persian other becomes by no doubt most dominant in the portrayal of a character in the otherwise world-famous *Journey by Moonlight* [Hung.: *Utas és holdvilág*] of Antal Szerb, in whose oeuvre the intersection of scholarly Oriental research and stylized literary imagination seems to be enshrined.

Besides the exotic qualities present from the very moment of his entrance on stage, not only norm-breaking, for example, drug-dealing clichés but also lustfulness comes to life in relation to Luthpali Suratgar, or simply, “the Persian,” a friend of János Szepetneki, who is himself a friend of protagonist Mihály. Here are some descriptive passages and physical or psychological attributes used to illustrate this: “cruelly intense eyes,” “superficially tamed tiger,” “something medieval, something more raw and true humanity, which nothing has yet mechanized,” “a stranger, this ten times stranger man.” In addition, he speaks with “surprising vehemence,” while the other characters say his aim is to “build himself a harem of showgirls.” “There was an animal warmth and assurance in the Persian gaze,” “the whole man was translucent, so volcanic that he almost waited to see when he would burst into flames.” Erzsi, the young wife, having been sold by Szepetneki to this man, was considering “surrender[ing] herself to an exotic beast, completely losing her gentlemanly nature, like an oriental lech in the Bible or the Thousand and One,” but ultimately, she resists.<sup>56</sup>

At this point, we may raise the merely speculative question, in the words of Massad, whether one should acknowledge “respect for difference, or is it rather an emphasis on othering and exoticization?”<sup>57</sup>

### The occult theme’s Persian variation in Antal Szerb’s literary work

On the one hand, we can discover a cultural or even “anthropological sensitivity to the world of magic”<sup>58</sup> with an overall “peace-loving nature”<sup>59</sup> in the works of Antal Szerb, an outstanding “arts scholar with a bookish personality,”<sup>60</sup> “incessantly living in the intellectual fever of research.”<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, his Eurocentrism cannot be completely ruled out<sup>62</sup> since the value aspect involved in Antal Szerb’s setting the West as a benchmark for the

56 Szerb, *Utas*, 209–14, 356–62

57 Massad, *Islam*, 9.

58 Havasréti, *Szerb Antal*, 26.0

59 Havasréti, *Szerb Antal*, 177.

60 Dénes, “A szépíró,” 291.

61 Poszler, “Bevezetés,” 19.

62 Iványi, “Orientalizmus vagy mágikus” 53–57.

sophistication and humanization of life is a feature that accompanies his entire oeuvre.<sup>63</sup>

Such an ambivalent attitude we may venture to define either as a binarity of “occult-empirical vs. speculative-experimental epistemological dichotomy”<sup>64</sup> or an intellectual reticence vis-à-vis the Exotic and fascination thereabout at the same time.<sup>65</sup>

Some of Antal Szerb’s descriptions in *The Legend of Pendragon* [Hung.: *Pendragon legenda*], undoubtedly one of the author’s most popular (fantasy) novels, published in 1934, are sometimes imbued with an elusive “Oriental” occultism—let us add that this is one of the reasons for the book’s captivatingness. The characters who bear this occultism are none other than “the last great masters of the hidden sciences, the goldsmiths and magical physicians,” that is, the Rosicrucians. The “allegorical and obscure” language of a codex, which is their basic work, includes the “meaningless but beautiful motto” of the legendary Persian magus and alchemist Osthanes.<sup>66</sup>

Discussing the pragmatism of the “national character” behind Persian poetry in his *History of World Literature* [Hung.: *A világirodalom története*] published in 1941, the otherwise undoubtedly benevolent and objective Szerb raises an intriguing point: “the romanticized country and the contemplative, dreamy way of life of its people also favored the Muses; though their religion forbids wine and confines love to the very prosaic forms of the harem, the Persians have found a way to enjoy and celebrate both wine and adventurous and idealized love in poetic form.”<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these strikingly dichotomizing words of praise and appreciation, Antal Szerb also feels it important to point out that “the interesting features of modern Persian literature are the folk mystery plays which present the stories of Ali, Hassan and Hussein and other Shiite martyrs in a highly naturalistic representation, with real bloodshed and terrible cries of wailing.”<sup>68</sup> This statement from 1941, which indicates that mystery was still valid in contemporary Iran, is in line with the tendency we have traced in Antal Szerb’s work above. This ambivalence—let us call it, experimentally, a kind of “fascinated alienation”—is also clearly evident in the presentation of the works of one of the great figures of Persian literature, Jalaleddin Rumi:

---

63 Havasréti, *Szerb Antal*, 189.

64 Havasréti, *Szerb Antal*, 255.

65 Iványi, “Orientalizmus vagy mágikus,” 61.

66 Szerb, *Pendragon*, 24, 199–200.

67 Szerb, *A világirodalom*, 156.

68 Szerb, *A világirodalom*, 160.

“The parables in his work, Masnavi, are sometimes quite eerie and strange: the doctor (God) suddenly makes a young man old by a mysterious poison, so that the maiden (the soul) realizes how useless it is to love outward beauty and youth. But how wonderful is this story...”<sup>69</sup>

In one of his last radio broadcast feuilletons, entitled *The Poets and the Money* [Hung.: *A költők és a pénz*] from 1941, Szerb, similarly to Mickiewicz and Mikszáth earlier, also refers to Ferdowsi. Here, in a rather playful manner, the materialistic, sometimes even money-hungry relationship between the poet and his Samanid/Ghaznavid ruling patron is revealed, again recalling the premises of alleged Persian merchant instincts.<sup>70</sup>

### The neutral tone of the post-war era

László Passuth's *Four Winds in Transylvania* [Hung.: *Négy szél Erdélyben*], published in 1957, depicts the Trei Ierarhi Monastery during Prince of Transylvania, King of Poland István Báthory's visit to the Principality of Moldavia, where Passuth finds artistic overlaps between the Orthodox and the Oriental decorations:

“And all around them, the world of the East: carpets, tapestries, expensive cushions scattered on the floor, tiny tables with hookahs, gilded Persian pots, greenish African majolica. These were the gifts that the Divan's bazaars sometimes favored in return for the thousands of gold that Moldavia had been hoarding every year to feed the Serail.”<sup>71</sup>

In the 1961 historical novel of Pál Szabó entitled *As May Be* [Hung.: *Ahogy lehet*], in an analogical manner with Jókai's *Azraële*, the harem “becomes a metaphor for the struggle for power between East and West.”<sup>72</sup> Here, the Persian wearing is only a minor segment of a general, exoticized Oriental landscape:

“This morning, the beautiful young wife of the Alaybey does not want to get up, neither for Prophet Mohamed nor for Allah, the one true God. She just lies in her room, on the sofa, in a linen Persian shawl with all her clothes and blankets, and just stares stiffly at herself. Where else would she look?”<sup>73</sup>

In *The Inverted Crescent* [Czech: *Obrácený půlměsíc*], Zikmund and Hanzelka draw on Persian humor to describe the Lebanese cannabis cult:

69 Szerb, *A világirodalom*, 159.

70 Szerb, *Nagy emberek gyermekcipőben*, 139–40.

71 Passuth, *Négy szél*, 453.

72 Sabatos, *Frontier Orientalism*, 19.

73 Szabó, *Ahogy lehet*, 104.



“There’s a Persian fairy tale about three pilgrims who travel together to Isfahan. When they arrive at the city gates, it is already night. The gate is closed. The three wanderers wonder what to do. The first takes out a bottle of brandy and takes a long drink. The second lights an opium pipe, the third a hashish pipe. Half an hour later they begin to deliberate again on what to do. »Let’s go to the gate and break it down«, says the first. »Let’s go to bed and sleep it off, they’ll open it in the morning anyway«, says the other with a welcome smile. »We’ll hide in the keyhole«, announces the hashish-fiend.”<sup>74</sup>

Protagonist Miloš Hrma of Bohumil Hrabal’s *Closely Watched Trains* [Czech: *Ostře sledované vlaky*] from the year 1965, as the earlier-quoted Charles D. Sabatos<sup>75</sup> points out, is “amazed to discover the station-master’s office decorated in luxurious »Oriental« style: No one would ever have expected the station-master of such a tiny station to have an office furnished like this. The Persian carpet glowed with red and blue flowers, and three Turkish stools heightened the Oriental effect.” References here are part of a descriptive phase worded in a rather neutral tone.

The (pseudo-)historical novel of Tibor Déry entitled *The Excommunicator* [Hung.: *A kiközösítő*], published in 1966, takes us back to the times of the “Long Fourth Century” also dealt with by Móra. One of the perpetrators of the failed assassination attempt on Ambrose of Milan testifies in the tribunal transcript, reminding us once again of magical connections, that:

“[...] having in my unimaginably depraved youth learned with great diligence and conscientiousness from the best Persian masters of the time the arts of sorcery and magic forbidden by law, which include the arts of chiromancy, astrology, divination, incubus and succubus, and other evil spirits, and even the summoning of the devil [...] I hired devils to kill, or in other words, to liquidate, what else could I do?”<sup>76</sup>

Last, the historical novel *The Töröksíp* (i.e., Zurna, musical instrument) *Blows* by Viktor Szombathy, from the year 1987, can be viewed essentially as a compilation of practically all the clichés from the corpus, so we will cut off the timeline of this review here.

When the protagonists of the novel, set at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, travel through the Balkans, they meet the Bogomils, who had been priorly supposed to “roam the sands of Syria, Egypt, Arabia, they had seen the fire-worshippers of Persia” in addition to their other collective adventures.<sup>77</sup>

74 Zikmund and Hanzelka, *Fordított félhold*, 329.

75 Sabatos, *Frontier Orientalism*, 134, based on Hrabal, *Closely Watched Trains*, 13.

76 Déry, *A kiközösítő*, 428–30.

77 Szombathy, *Töröksíp*, 126.

Later on, Murza bey, one of the main characters, during the same “road trip,” when hearing the anecdotes of a certain Enrico from Venice, tells the former his “instructive story should be put into poetry by a poet, it lifts the soul so high. If I were Hafiz, pearl of Persian poets, I would certainly attempt that.”<sup>78</sup>

Persian goods are also represented at the market of Kecskeméti, where, apart from Syrian figs, dates from Persia are sold.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, again, the “quintessential Oriental image of the harem beauty”<sup>80</sup> also enters the scene at a court session in Istanbul: “The qadi (i.e., judge) was interrogating a couple, a carpet merchant from Persia and his wife, who was wrapped in a thick shroud. The woman had only a beetle’s eye peeking out from under her chador. The qadi looked at her with satisfaction, he thought she was a pretty woman, so why not judge in her favor?”<sup>81</sup>

## Summary

Edward Said claims in his opus magnum entitled *Orientalism* about certain Western notions of the East that “the imagery of exotic places [...] a fascination with the macabre, with the notion of a Fatal Woman, with secrecy and occultism, all combined to enable literary work.”<sup>82</sup>

Regardless of the infinite variability of motivations and actors, this set of motifs and topoi is indeed more or less also reflected in the literary heritage of some CEE authors of fiction, representing a region itself portrayed, arguably, as exoticized.<sup>83</sup>

Just as in the “Western” case, ancient Persia has attracted significant literary attention from Central and Eastern European authors. This has resulted in numerous corresponding depictions from the beginnings of the Late Modern Period, which presented the relevant subject *inter alia* as exciting, exotic, alluring, magical, constituting an analogy when compared with the cultural premises and tendencies of the Western mainstream.

As for these latter trends, central to our analysis was the point that the Saidean postcolonial theorization of Orientalism, which posits Western epistemology as an interrelated supporter of colonial objectives, is useful in terms of providing a prudent stance overall since, as pointed out already above, a relatively similar set of topoi and motifs can indeed be identified in the CEE corpus.

78 Szombathy, *Töröksíp*, 154.

79 Szombathy, *Töröksíp*, 104.

80 Sabatos, *Frontier Orientalism*, 108

81 Szombathy, *Töröksíp*, 194–95.

82 Said, *Orientalism* 1979, 180.

83 Cf. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern*.

Either derived from exoticizing traditions or travel writing, inspired by the simultaneous Oriental scholarly works from the very same region or by historical experience such the legacy of the Ottoman era that involved indirect cultural contact with Persia, notions and visions such as Persia as an exotic land, peoples involved in merchandise, magic and sorcery, ancient fire worshiping and the harem circulate in these works. It is also suggested that the attention of some regional authors develops into a more emphasized Orientalist tone in some of Antal Szerb's novels. However, it is important to underline that such settings and notions may not necessarily be the result of hostility towards Persia but instead can be attributed to its profound historical and cultural legacy.

At the same time, it is also essential to stress that no direct attachment to Western imperialist agenda can be identified on behalf of these authors, contrary to Said's thesis that was explicitly aimed predominantly at Western authors.

Whether such an assumption about the uncompromisedness of the CEE region leaves the door open to speculations of indirect support for colonial objectives or can rather be taken for granted in the context of the region in globo remains subject to further research.

## Bibliography

- Adams, Isaac. *Persia by a Persian: Personal Experiences of Manners, Customs, Habits, Religious and Social Life in Persia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1906.
- Asad, Muhammad. *Road to Mecca*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Briant, Pierre. *Darius in the Shadow of Alexander*. London: Harvard University Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674744608>
- Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899.
- Chodźko, Aleksander. *Specimens of the Popular Poetry of Persia*. London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1842.
- Dainotto, Roberto M. *Europe (In Theory)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822389620>
- Dénes, Tibor. "A szépiró." In: *Akitól ellopták az időt* [One Who was Robbed Time], edited by Wágner, Tibor, 291–94. Budapest: Kairosz, 2002.
- Déry, Tibor. *A kiközösítő* [The Excommunicator]. Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1983.
- Foltz, Richard. *The Ossetes: Modern-Day Scythians of the Caucasus*. London: Bloomsbury, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755618484>

- Gingrich, Andre. "Frontier Myths of Orientalism: The Muslim World in Public and Popular Cultures of Central Europe." In: *Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School*, edited by Bojan Baskar and Borut Brumen, 99–127. Piran: Inštitut za multikulturne raziskave, 1996.
- Gliński, Mikołaj. "Adam Mickiewicz's Eastern Face. How Adam Mickiewicz turned to the East only to discover a chunk of home." *Culture.pl*, (2022): <https://culture.pl/en/article/adam-mickiewiczs-eastern-face> (last accessed: 17 November 2023).
- Goldziher, Ignác. *Az iszlám. Tanulmányok a mohamedán vallás történetéből* [Islam. Studies in the History of the Muslim Religion]. Budapest: Magvető, 1980.
- Homayounpour, Gohar. *Doing psychoanalysis in Tehran*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9510.001.0001>
- Hamvazi, Abdol Hossain. *Persia and the Powers: An Account of Diplomatic Relations, 1941–1946*. London: Hutchinson & Company Limited, 1946.
- Hašek, Jaroslav. *A Balaton partján és más írások* [On the shores of Lake Balaton and other writings]. Budapest: Helikon, 2016.
- Havasréti, József. *Szerb Antal*. Budapest: Magvető, 2019.
- Hodkinson, James and John Walker, eds. *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2013.
- Hrabal, Bohumil. *Closely Watched Trains* [Ostre sledované vlaky]. New York: Grove Press, 1968.
- Illyés, Gyula. *Hunok Párisban* [Huns in Paris]. Budapest: Magvető–Szépirodalmi, 1970.
- Iványi, Márton Pál. "Orientalizmus vagy mágikus kultúra? A másítás narratív mintázatai Szerb Antal műveiben" [Orientalism or Magical Culture? Narrative Patterns of Othering in the Works of Antal Szerb]. *Tiszatáj* 71, no. 4 (2017): 44–64.
- Iványi, Márton Pál. "Orientalisms and Central European Approaches: A Nuanced Critique without Colonial Bias: Introduction to a Future Anthology." *Central European Cultures* 2, no. 1 (2022): 8–31. <https://doi.org/10.47075/CEC.2022-1.02>
- Jókai, Mór. A huszti beteglátogatók. Történelmi elbeszélések [Visiting patients in Huszti. Historical narratives]: <https://mek.oszk.hu/07300/07315/07315.html>
- Jókai, Mór. *Erdély aranykora* [The Golden Age of Transylvania]. Budapest: Akadémiai, 1962.
- Kosztolányi, Dezső. *Nero, a véres költő* [Nero, the Bloody Poet]. Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1968.
- Krúdy, Gyula. *Szindbád* [Sindbad]. Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1985.
- Lemmen, Sarah. "Noncolonial Orientalism? Czech Travel Writing on Africa and Asia around 1918." In *Deploying Orientalism in European Culture and History*

- from Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by James Hodkinson, John Walker, Shaswati Mazumdar, and Johannes Feichtinger, 209–27. *Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture* 143. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691193830>
- Massad, Joseph. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226509600.001.0001>
- Mazahéri, Ali. *La route de la soie*. Paris: la Manutention, 1983.
- Mickiewicz, Adam. *Sonety krymskie* [The Crimean Sonnets] Wolne Lektury, Nowoczesna Polska. <https://wolnelektury.pl/media/book/pdf/sonety-krymskie.pdf> (last accessed: 17 November 2023).
- Mikszáth, Kálmán. *A beszélő köntös* [The Magic Caftan]. Saxum, 2018.
- Miłosz, Czesław. *The Captive Mind* [Zniewolony umysł]. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- Móra, Ferenc. *Aranykoporsó* [Golden Corsage]. Budapest: Akkord, 2005
- Passuth, László. *Négy szél Erdélyben* [Four winds in Transylvania]. Budapest: Magvető, 1957.
- Peernajmodin, Hossein. “Orientalist representations of Persia in the works of Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, Moore and Morier.” PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002.
- Poszler, György. “Bevezetés.” In *Akitől ellopták az időt* [One Who was Robbed Time], edited by Wágner, Tibor, 19–21. Budapest: Kairosz, 2002.
- Sabatos, Charles D. *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 2003.
- Salinger, J. D. *Franny and Zooey*. Penguin Books, 1969.
- Sheen, Vincent. *The New Persia*. New York: The Century Company, 1927.
- Sienkiewicz, Henryk. *With Fire and Sword*. The Gutenberg Project – eBook. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37027/37027-h/37027-h.htm> (last accessed: 17 November 2023).
- Sienkiewicz, Henryk. *Fire in the Steppe*. Fort Washington, PA: Copernicus Society of America, 1992
- Szabó, Pál. *Ahogy lehet* [As may be]. Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1962.
- Szerb, Antal. *A Pendragon legenda* [The Legend of Pendragon]. Budapest: Magvető, 1934.
- Szerb, Antal. *A világirodalom története* [History of World Literature]. Budapest: Magvető, 1980.

- Szerb, Antal. *Utas és holdvilág* [Journey by Moonlight]. Budapest: Magvető, 2014.
- Szerb, Antal. *Nagy emberek gyermekcipőben* [Great Men in Children's Shoes]. Budapest: Szépmíves Könyvek, 2017.
- Szombathy, Viktor. *Megszólal a töröksíp* [The Turkish Whistle Blows]. Budapest: Móra 1987.
- Tibi, Bassam. *Islam between Culture and Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230514140>
- Vančura, Vladislav. *Marketa Lazarová* [Marketa Lazarová]. Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1953.
- Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Zikmund, Miroslav and Jiří Hanzelka. *Fordított félhold* [The Inverted Crescent]. Bratislava: Szlovákiai Szépirodalmi, 1962.

