

fevers raging within myself, racking my heart and brain, while seeking their outlet.

Hali goes on to describe how he went about setting his 'long-chilled heart and worn-out brain to work, after they had been rendered useless by uninterrupted attacks of illness.' The writing of the *Musaddas* becomes an attempted act of healing, a catharsis which rejuvenates a body exhausted by illness and infected wounds. From the early twentieth century onwards the link between community, health and nation, was increasingly to exercise the minds of those who sought both to rebut European notions of degenerate races, and to redefine a new sense of self on the basis of rehabilitated and reappropriated notions of medicine (Arnold 1993:280-88). In a more metaphorical mode, the poet's ill health here becomes a symbol of national illness, and the *Musaddas* is written to heal and rejuvenate the worn-out body of both the poet and the Muslim community in India.

In this way, there is a strong link between poetics and bodily health and the act of writing itself becomes an attempt to cure and re-establish control over a degenerate body. The association between personal health and national health was later reinforced in the Second Introduction to the poem, where the poet describes the potential for regeneration in the community in terms of ashes and sparks waiting to be rekindled, and then explains the despairing tone of the *Musaddas* in terms of the fading fire in his own heart. The poem opens with the metaphor of illness, when the poet relates an anecdote about Hippocrates and the incurable disease by which the Muslim community is afflicted (M1-M2). The potency of this image is sharpened by the way it blends into the simile of the boat in danger, so that the feverish maladies afflicted by decline are combined with a sense of historical vulnerability (M3). The image of disease in the poem is contrasted with the glories of Graeco-Islamic medicine in a classical and robust Islam, and the ignorance of practitioners of traditional medicine amongst the sick Muslims of contemporary India. The denunciation of the latter is of some interest, given the interplay and conflict between European and indigenous medicine in British India (cf. Arnold 1993:3-4, 12, 44-55). Hali's evocation of the glories of Graeco-Islamic medicine in a safely distant past, combined with a predictable denunciation of degenerate Indo-Muslim practices, neatly balances the demands of both colonial and indigenous medicine. But it also suggests how Hali himself might have been negotiating a path between the two, trying to appropriate what he could from colonial ideologies in order to rejuvenate an indigenous body of poetics, in a way perhaps foreshadowing a similar strategy to be employed in the more literal context of health and medicine (ibid.:289). It also parallels his later negotiation of European authors in the *Muqaddama* (cf. section 1:3 above). The association between bodily illness and degenerate poetics is reinforced later in the poem, when contemporary poets are described as afflicted by 'hectic fever' (M251). This recalls the First Introduction to the *Musaddas* when Hali described himself as suffering from a similar malady, thereby further adding to the poem's perception of itself as attempting to offer a cure for a malady which is responsible for the corruption of aesthetic as well

as moral senses. Such powerful images of psychosomatic illness, in which the personal and the national are conflated, are evocative of the effects of the historical forces of decline that the poem grapples with, forces transmitted through the medium of the colonial state and manifested in imprints left on the body of the poet and his community as well as society at large.

3:4 Deserts and gardens

The nexus of economic values and a rhetoric of temporality is also partially evident in Hali's use of images of cultivation and irrigation to signify civilization. This imagery is particularly clear in the verses depicting the civilizing effect of Islam on the Arabian peninsula and the Middle East generally, which Hali described in the First Introduction in terms of the fructifying effects of Islam on a physically and culturally barren landscape. In the poem, pre-Islamic Arabia is described as a barren, inhospitable geographical region (M10):

Na khitton meñ ghalla na jangal meñ khetī
*'Arab aur kul kā'nāt us kā ye thī'*¹⁴

The dependence of the region on rain water, rather than any organized water supply, is also stressed (M9):

Na sabza thā sahrā meñ paidā na pānī
*Faqat āb-e bārān pai thī zindagānī'*¹⁵

This picture of barrenness is transformed by the impact of Islam. The Arabs became unmatched and unique in agriculture (*Falāhat meñ be-miṣāl-o yaktā hu'e vo M75*) and they made every desolate land flourish (*Kiyā ja-ke ābād har mulk-e vīrān M76*). Images of greenery are also used in a more general sense to measure the fructifying impact of Islam; thus, the seeds of spring are brought by the Arabs into the world (M76):

Bahār ab jo duniyā meñ ā'ī hu'ī hai
*Ye sab paud unhī kā laḡā'ī hu'ī hai'*¹⁶

The effect of Islam is described as a rain cloud which transformed God's plantation into greenery (M69):

¹⁴ There was no grain in the granaries, no cultivation in the wilderness. This was Arabia, and its whole world.

¹⁵ No greenery grew in the desert. There was no water. Life was dependent solely upon rain water.

¹⁶ The spring season which has now come into the world had its seedlings planted by them.

Rahe us se mahrūm ābī na khākī
*Harī ho ga'ī sārī khetī khudā kī*¹⁷

Similarly, the coming of Islam is described as a wave of liberation that rendered the world's garden green (M57):

Ye thī mauj pahli us āzādagī kī
*Harā jis se hone ko thā bāgh-e gū*¹⁸

Later, when the poet sums up the glories of early Islamic civilization, agriculture is again listed as among its achievements (M103), and the rain of the Arabs is described as having made all verdant (*Harā kar gayā sab ko bārān 'arab kī* M104). The Prophet himself is described as a gardener who had laid out a harmonious, egalitarian garden (M58):

Lagāyā thā māli ne ik bāgh aīsā
*Na thā jis men chhotā barā ko'ī paudā*¹⁹

However, the imagery of gardens is also extended metaphorically to include the cultivation of learning itself, so that the rediscovery of Greek learning under the Abbasid Caliphate is depicted in terms of the diffusion of fragrance from a beautiful garden (M87).

The importance of gardens, verdure, and barrenness to the imagery of the poem is also clearly signalled in the section entitled 'Simile of the nations as gardens' (M109-M112). Here the ruined garden of Islam is compared to other flourishing gardens, as well as gardens which although not actually flourishing, are ready to bloom. The decay of agriculture and of the garden of Islam forms a contrast not just with earlier glories, but also with the present achievements of British rule itself, amongst whose benefits is included a reference to cultivation (M285).

The use of garden imagery would have had Quranic resonances for Hali's Muslim readers. The garden in the Quran is used as an image of paradise. The abode of the Just is variously referred to as 'the Garden' (*al-janna* Quran 11:108), or as 'the Garden of Eden' (*jannat 'adn* Quran 18:32). Paradise is also described as a garden watered by running streams (Quran 2:25, 4:57). The Quran also contains a parable of the blighted garden, which is intended to warn mortals of the consequences of heedless arrogance (Quran 68:17-33). Whilst these resonances must be borne in mind, the use of garden imagery and images of cultivation and irrigation in the *Musaddas* is significant in a number of other ways. First, it is possible that schemes of agriculture, land reclamation, and irrigation in British India furnished Hali with a contemporary example of imperial power and its command over water for agricultural purposes. It was in

the decade after the *Musaddas* appeared that the economy of the Punjab was reshaped by unprecedented expansion in agricultural production brought about by canal colonization. This colonization signified an important experiment in social and economic engineering, which reflected an increasingly confident and interventionist colonial state.²⁰ However, prior to this, there were important developments in canal engineering concentrated in the Doab, with irrigation in the grand manner beginning with the Ganges Canal, which was opened in 1854 (Whitcombe 1972:8, 64). In 1875, one colonial observer, W.T. Thornton, was to describe this canal as 'the most magnificent work of its class in the whole world' (ibid.:85). Thus, even before canal colonization got seriously under way in the Punjab, there were a number of significant examples of colonial hydraulic engineering and its impact on agriculture. Such monuments of the colonial state's schemes of public works—and the *Musaddas* does depict the benefits of British rule at least partly under the heading of public works—may have sharpened Hali's interest in images of cultivation and irrigation. To a certain extent, too, the nexus of economic values in the *Musaddas* overlaps with the imagery of cultivation and irrigation, given that the transformation of agriculture and the changes in social structure in parts of British India which were wrought through irrigation, were a significant aspect of the colonial state's public works.

Secondly, it is also possible that the pitiful state of Mughal monuments and their once splendid gardens were a quite literal example of ruined gardens which reflected the decline of Muslim power in India. Since Hali spent some of the most intellectually formative years of his life in Lahore, it is worthwhile noting the Shalamar gardens in that city were a striking example of Mughal gardens fallen into ruin. The unkempt condition of the gardens and the ruined buildings was noted by both colonial and non-colonial officials in the nineteenth century (Kausar 1990:71-75). Furthermore, the Shalamar gardens in Lahore had themselves been constructed on the basis of Mughal feats of canal engineering (Wescoat 1990:45-8), so that the British works of engineering referred to above reinforced the anachronism of Mughal works. Whilst the *Musaddas* uses imagery of gardens to illustrate its themes in symbolic ways, it is useful to remember how these images might have been in part derived from the dilapidated remains of some Mughal gardens and monuments in north India which served as a poignant reminder of past glories and present ruin.

Thirdly, the weaving together of desert and garden in the poem evokes in part the imaginary landscape of Arabia and the symbolic geography of Persian gardens. Both can be seen to represent the two major strands of Islam, namely the now increasingly central strand of Arab Islam, and the soon to be marginalized Persianate heritage of Mughal India. The fading of the Persianate garden can be read variously as the decline of Mughal India as reflected in the ruined condition of its monuments, as the decay of the imaginary inner gardens of classical poetry alluded to above, and as Hali's own highly ambivalent attempt to distance himself from the ornate legacy of Indian Persianate Islam.

¹⁷ No creatures of water or of earth remained in want of it. God's whole plantation became green.

¹⁸ This was the first wave of the liberation by which the garden of the world was to become green.

¹⁹ The Gardener had laid out a garden which did not contain any very large or small plant.

²⁰ Fully discussed in Ali 1988, the standard work.

One aspect of the imagery of cultivation in the poem needs to be explored further. This is the character of the cultivation which the poet uses to measure the impact of progressive, civilizing forces on culturally barren landscapes. What the poem sometimes seems to value is the cultivation of exotica in hitherto inhospitable environments. Thus, the barren pre-Islamic landscape of Arabia is partly described in terms of the absence of materials necessary for the cultivation of the 'lotus-flowers of the heart' (M9):

*Na kuchh aise sāmān the vāñ muyassar
Kañval jis se khil jā'en dil ke sarāsar*²¹

This image of a lotus flower blooming in the desert makes abundantly clear the poet's identification between cultivation—both material and spiritual—and civilization generally. This identification occurs again, for example, when Spain is described as being turned into a rose garden by the Islamic conquests (M82):

*Huā Andalus un se gulzār yaksar
Jahān un ke āsar bāqī haiñ aksar*²²

Similarly, the image of cultivation in a jungle occurs twice, once in the context of characterizing pre-Islamic Arabia (M11), and once in the context of listing the benefits of British rule, where every corner of India's jungles are a rose garden (*Har ik gosha gulzār hai jāngalon meñ* M285). At the same time, similar images of exotica are used to characterize the dissolute life of the rich in contemporary India (M168):

*Kamar-basta haiñ log khidmat meñ un kī
Gul-o lāla rahte haiñ suhbat meñ un kī
Nafāsat bhārī hai tabī'at meñ un kī
Nazākat so dākhil hai 'ādat meñ un kī
Davā'ōñ meñ mushk un kī uñhā hai dherōñ
Vo poshāk meñ 'it̄r malte haiñ serōñ*²³

In this context, then, images of exotica are suggestive of precious over-refinement, which is one of the symptoms of decline. Here exotica are associated with dress and appearance, whereas the cultivation of lotus flowers and rose gardens in deserts or jungles is associated not just with work and effort, but also technological achievement.

²¹ Nor were there obtainable there the requisite materials necessary for the lotus-flowers of the heart to open fully.

²² Through them Spain was entirely turned into a rose-garden, where many of their memorials remain.

²³ People stand in attendance to serve them. The rose and the tulip remain in their company. / Their natures are filled with refinement, their habits are permeated with delicacy. / In their draughts masses of musk arise, their garments are steeped in pounds of rose perfume.

On the face of it, Hali's use of images of cultivation, and in particular, images of exotic cultivation, is somewhat surprising. This is because the usage seems to sit uneasily with the exaltation of 'natural' poetry later in the *Muqaddama*, and with the subsidiary sections which seem to support this elevation of 'natural poetry' into the main icon of Hali's poetics. In one such section, Hali explicitly states his preference for *āmad* 'spontaneous inspiration' over *āvardagī* 'affected artifice' (*Muqaddama*:120-2). In European terms Hali's poetics might even be labelled 'neoclassical', given its aggressive doctrine of a return to natural simplicity.²⁴ The vagueness of Hali's use of the word 'nature' has been noted elsewhere (Steele 1981:19, Pritchett 1994:165-6).²⁵ This vagueness, as well as the contradictions and inconsistencies in Hali's argument in the *Muqaddama*, make it difficult to say precisely where the usage of cultivation imagery in the *Musaddas* might be in tension with the *Muqaddama*'s argument.

The wider significance of images of cultivation in the *Musaddas* needs to be explored in another context, rather than in the context of the possible tensions with the argument in the *Muqaddama*. Christopher Shackle has suggested that the reference to Muslim Spain in Hali's ode to Queen Victoria is indicative of a British textbook as a source, rather than any direct Muslim reminiscence (Shackle 1996a:245). It has been suggested by others that the growth of European scholarship on Islam and the increased activities of Christian missionaries from the late nineteenth century onwards began to have an impact on Muslim self-perceptions themselves (Smith 1985:47, Hardy 1972:61-7, 175-6). The nature of Hali's references to European authors in the *Muqaddama* has been discussed by others (Steele 1981:16, Pritchett 1994:148-53). The complex character of these references is compounded by the manner in which European literature was transmitted into Hali's milieu. Pritchett has pointed out that Hali's knowledge of the European authors he refers to was probably derived from brief or poorly translated excerpts (Pritchett 1994:147). Whatever the precise nature of Hali's engagement with European authors, it seems clear that references and allusions to their work were partially used to legitimize his own perceptions and arguments (Steele 1981:16, Pritchett 1994:149-51). What is important here is a complex sense of the interaction between self-perceptions and perceptions of others towards one's self. It is possible to place the imagery of exotica and cultivation in the *Musaddas* in the context of just such an interaction between Muslim self-perceptions and European Orientalist scholarship. In part, Hali's depiction of Islam in the *Musaddas* can be seen as a response to a general image of an exotic and mysterious Islam in European Orientalist scholarship at the time.²⁶

However, there was another way in which Islam was being exoticized and rendered 'foreign' in India itself. The growth of Hindu revivalism from the late

²⁴ For a discussion of the neo-classical in these terms, see Rosen 1976:171.

²⁵ For a similar vagueness in Sir Sayyid's use of the word, see Troll 1978/79:175-7.

²⁶ For which see Hardy 1972:175-6, Rodinson 1988. For popular cultural uses of such an image in Britain, see Mackenzie 1995:176-204.

nineteenth century onwards became a significant factor in Indian politics. This involved an increasingly militant characterization of Indian Islam as an alien imposition (Hardy 1972:139, Robinson 1974:77-8). This also began to affect perceptions of Urdu itself, especially with the movement for Hindi which culminated in the Nagari Resolution of 1900 (Brass 1974:119-69). The campaign spawned some polemical Hindi dramas, in which figures of Hindi and Urdu are used as personifications of indigenous Virtue and exotic Vice (King 1992:123-48). Added to this, there is evidence to show that some Muslim communities stressed their extra-Indian genealogies, thereby reinforcing the view that Islam in India was an exotic phenomenon, and not an indigenous one (Shaikh 1989:79-80). To a certain extent, these self-perceptions became more acute as the decline of Muslim power in India accelerated, as they became a way of remaining in touch with an imperial past.

Thus, parts of the *Musaddas* also reflect the various ways in which Islam was being exoticized in the subcontinent. This is especially the case with the imagery of exotic cultivation in inhospitable environments, which becomes an apt symbol of not just the increasingly alien nature of Islam in the subcontinent, but also the shallowness of its roots and therefore its fragility. This sense of historical fragility is reinforced by the poem's general concern with tracking clues and detecting traces and footprints of the past on the contemporary world (cf. M79, M103). There is a corresponding anxiety about the effacement and erasure of such footprints and traces. For example, when delineating the reduced state of the Muslim aristocracy in India, the poet refers to how their names and marks have been erased (*Magar mit chukā jin kā nām-o nishān hai* M147, cf. also M119). The sense of fragile roots combined with exoticism becomes a potent image of the way perceptions of Indian Islam were being constructed by a variety of processes from the late nineteenth century onwards.

It is perhaps of interest here that whilst Hali is highly critical of most of the genres of Urdu poetry in his *Muqaddama*, he singles out the *marṣiya* generally, and particularly Mir Anis's work, for praise (*Muqaddama*:264-75). The main reason he gives to justify this praise is that the *marṣiya* presents a set of characters who serve as moral emblems, and so the genre as a whole is amenable to the kind of moral instruction Hali felt should infuse and uplift Urdu poetry (*Muqaddama*:271-3). But Hali's affinity with the *marṣiya* might also lie on a deeper level. Mir Anis's famous *marṣiya* beginning *Jab qat' kī masāfat-e shab āfiāb ne* ('When the sun had completed its nightly journey') abounds with images of exotic gardens in the desert (Anis 1968: verses 11-24, 49). The significance of these images is that they illustrate the magically transforming presence of the Prophet's family as they await martyrdom. However, since the *marṣiya* is also a uniquely Indian genre in Islamic literature, and at the same time, since it is so obviously associated with the Persianate Shiite strands of Islam,²⁷ the images of exotic gardens in barren deserts might reflect the genre's awareness of its own uniqueness. In this way, Hali's leaning towards the genre

²⁷ For a full discussion of the genre and its features, see Naim 1983:101-116.

might be explained not just in terms of his explicit views on poetics, but also in terms of his general engagement with exotic images of Islam in the contemporary world of colonial India.

3:5 Globalization, the written word and literary propriety

To a certain extent, then, the *Musaddas* bears the signs of an exoticization of Islam which was part of Hali's own working out of Muslim self-perceptions in colonial north India. This strand of exoticism also has to be placed in the context of the poem's themes as a whole. The concern with the power and scope of European imperial expansion is obviously central to the theme of decline and progress in the *Musaddas*. The measurement of the Muslim community against other communities (e.g. M131 ff) also bears witness to the historical and globalizing forces unleashed by that expansion.

This concern with the historical and imperial forces of progress is illuminated by the subsidiary theme of the migration and travelling of learning, as in the description of the incorporation of knowledge from Egypt and Greece in the section on the achievements of the Abbasid Caliphate (M88):

Harīm-e khilāfat meṅ unṭon pai lad-kar
*Chale āte the Miṣr-o Yūnān ke daftar*²⁸

The following verse describes the enrichment of Western libraries the 'stars of the East' (M89):

Navishton se haiṅ jin ke ab tak muzayyan
*Kutub-khāna-e Pairis-o Rūm-o Landan*²⁹

This suggestion of the migration of learned texts is touched upon earlier with a brief picture of the state of India and Persia in the period which saw the rise of Islam. Here the 'tent of knowledge and skill' is described as having been loaded up and taken away (*Ki thā gyān gun kā ladā yān se derā* M64), before the arrival of Islam resurrected it (M64). In other words, the *Musaddas* is acutely aware of what imperial power can command in archival terms.

Secondly, the migration of learning is also part of the theme of travel which recurs throughout the poem. It is their readiness to travel and explore which distinguishes the Arabs of early Islam (M78-M79); they are even described as internalising their migrant mode of life, so that 'they reckoned their homeland and travel as the same' (*Vo ginte the yaksān vatan aur safar ko* M78).

²⁸ Loaded on camels, the archives of Egypt and Greece used to come into the precincts of the Caliphate.

²⁹ With whose writings the libraries of Paris, Rome and London are even now adorned.

Furthermore, one of the achievements of the early Islamic conquests was the construction of roads, so that not only were they themselves worthy travellers, they also made possible ease of travel for others (M77). The image of open roads is also used in the First Introduction to the poem, when Hali describes how he was trapped in fruitless circles, but when he looked up, he saw 'open roads in all directions'. It is precisely the ease and safety of travel in India which is counted as one of the major benefits of British rule (M283, M285), whilst the eagerness to travel which distinguished the early Islamic world is contrasted to the present disinclination amongst Indian Muslims to do so (M125-M126). There is an implied link between the status of the Muslim community as a subject population, and its indifference to travel. Furthermore, travelling is seen as one of the ways of not just broadening the mind, but of actually verifying the existence of things mentioned in books, and more importantly, of learning how to distinguish between legendary place and geographical fact (M126):

*Bihisht aur Iram Salsabil aur Kauṣar
Pahār aur jaṅgal jazīre samandar
Isī tarh ke aur bhī nām akṣar
Kūtābōñ meñ parhṭe rahe haiñ barābar
Ye jāñ tak na dekhe kahañ kis yaqīñ par
Ki ye āsmāñ par haiñ yā hañ zamīñ par*³⁰

There is thus also an implied link between the disinclination to travel and the Muslim community's ineptitude in what might be called 'scientific' habits of observation and verification.

Thirdly, as briefly mentioned above, comparisons are made between Muslims and other communities. The significance of this lies partly in the way this comparison implicitly accepts an imperial notion of placing cultures in a hierarchy, based on a mixture of racial and other factors.³¹ The way the Muslim community might have slipped down just such a scale is only one obvious indication of their decline. More importantly, measurements against other communities, both in India and outside it, reflect the impact of European rule which enabled those very comparisons to be made. This is evident in a number of ways. Hali assumes in these comparisons, and indeed throughout the poem, a homogeneous all-Indian Muslim identity. To a certain extent, this conception reflects the way the category was defined in the Population Census of India from 1871 onwards. Religious categories were fundamental to the collection of data for the Census, and it was assumed that such categories indicated homogenous communities. Furthermore, some of the data, such as the tables on literacy and education, were broken down on the basis of religion and caste, so that

³⁰ Paradise and Iram, Salsabil and Kauṣar, mountain and jungle, island and ocean, / And many other such names, we have kept reading about in books, / But without seeing them, who can be sure whether they exist or not?

³¹ For such notions in the context of India, see Washbrook 1982 and Omissi 1991.

comparisons were drawn between putatively homogenous communities (Jones 1981:78-84). Indeed, the poem's concern with how the Prophet welded the warring tribes of the Arabian peninsula into a *qaum* (M15-M19, M54) perhaps serves as a subtext for the polemic of the *Musaddas* itself, especially given Hali's sense of the sectarian and social divisions in the Indian Muslim community (Steele 1981:4). In fact, there is an implicit connection in the *Musaddas* as a whole between progress and the making of nations, through which the anarchic pursuit of self-interest is replaced by the pursuit of a common national interest.³²

There is another way in which the concern with community in the *Musaddas* reflects the impact of European imperialism. The poem does not just assume the existence of an all-Indian Muslim community, bound together by a common historical experience of decline. The shift towards Arab strands of Islam, and the move away from Persian influences, signals an attempt to link the existence of an all-Indian Muslim community with a pan-Islamic one, whose centre of historical gravity is to be found in the Middle East. In some ways, this prefigures the crucial role which a pan-Islamic ideology was to play in bolstering the status of an all-Indian Muslim community as a political category from the early twentieth century onwards until 1947. This was to come to the fore in the Khilafat movement, as examined in Gail Minault's masterly study (Minault 1982). The link between pan-Islam and the increasing European penetration of the Middle East has been commented upon most recently by Jacob Landau, who has argued that emerging notions of pan-Islam reflected the way in which large parts of the world's Muslim population fell under European rule. Perhaps ironically, it was European imperialism which unwittingly bolstered a world-wide sense of Islamic solidarity (Landau 1990:7, 24-35). It is these parallel narratives of European imperialism and pan-Islamic consciousness which the *Musaddas* bears witness to, and which the early sections of the poem on the unification of warring tribes into a unified *qaum* prefigure.

It is possible to see in these themes of migration, travelling, and homogenous communities the incipience of what has been called 'globalization' (Giddens 1994:63-78). Giddens has identified the dialectical interaction between the local and the global as the defining process in globalization (ibid.:64), and it is clear from our discussion above that the networking across the earth's surface of connections between different regions is a figure that underlies the poem's concerns with migration, travelling, and homogenization. The grappling with these historical and globalizing forces in the *Musaddas* is condensed in two opposite images. The first occurs in the section dealing with the achievements of the Abbasid Caliphate (M85 ff), and the second in the section depicting the benefits of British rule (M282-M289). Amongst the achievements of the Abbasid caliphate are advances in surveying and astronomy. The poet describes how geometers of the age gathered together and used their apparatuses to survey the globe (*Kure ki masāhat ke phailā'e sāmāñ* M90). The

³² Cf. M173, where European nations are depicted as 'devoted to their country and community, and all fulfil the needs of everyone mutually.'

poet adds that thereby the value of the whole became evident from the part (*Hu'i juzv se qadr kul kī numāyān* M90). This image of measurement of the globe, and the derivation of the whole from the part, is a symbolic reflection of the globalizing which is the result of the unifying conquests of empires, in which new relationships between different geographical regions are forged. It also combines an allusion to imperial power with a reference to the power of scientific endeavour, so that measurement in the poem encompasses both geometry proper, as well as a measuring of cultures through the definition of hierarchies. Here it might be worth again pointing to the roll call of place names in the poem, which are used to invoke a sense of historically significant geographical space, often redolent with memories of past imperial power (M79-M80, M83). An example occurs in M91, where geographical sweep is combined with an allusion to scientific power:

Samarqand se Andalus tak sarāsar
*Unhī kī raṣad-gāheñ thīñ jalva-gustar*³³

Thus, verses 91 and 92 combine allusions to imperial power, scientific endeavour, and geographical space. The image of the globe-measuring geometricians of verse 90 might also serve as a symbol of the shape the poem itself aspires to, in which each part stands in a synecdochic relationship with the whole. In terms of the interaction between the effects of global empire and the rhetoric of the poem itself, it is the trope of synecdoche (Baig 1940:161-3) which is central to the poem, as has been suggested above in the context of time and economics. The wide historical and geographical sweep of the *Musaddas* is indicative of Hali's concern not just with the way time and space are shaped in human history, but also with the increasingly close relationship between part and whole which was an inescapable result of processes of global imperialism from the late nineteenth century onwards.

The other arresting image of the impact of empire is an allusion to the speed with which information is transmitted and the resulting effect on our notions of the world. This is listed as one of the benefits of British rule and so is counted as one of the results of European technological progress as a whole. The verse is worth citing in full (M286):

Pahunchī haiñ mulkoñ meñ dam-dam kī khabreñ
Chalī āñ haiñ shādī-o ḡham kī khabreñ
'Ayāñ haiñ har ik barr-e a'zam kī khabreñ
Khulī haiñ zamāne pair 'ālam kī khabreñ
Nahīñ vāqt'ā ko'ī pinhāñ kahīñ kī
*Hai ā'ina ahvāl rū-e zamīñ kī*³⁴

³³ Right from Samarkand to Spain, it was their observatories that diffused their splendour.

³⁴ In all the lands, fresh news arrives each instant. News of joy and sorrow keeps coming in. / The news of every continent is openly published. The world's news is revealed to the world. / Nothing which happens anywhere is hidden. All that happens upon the face of the earth is like a mirror.

The reference to news here in part reflects the burgeoning of the vernacular press, and the increasingly important role it played in defining communities of language and new categories of readership.³⁵ Also of some importance here is the way in which sections of this press began to use statistical data from the population census to define and articulate political demands for representation. Indeed, the sense of a world becoming transparent unto itself might have much to do with the rigorous detail with which population data were collected in British India and made publicly available (Jones 1981:86). To a certain extent, the new forms of poetry which Hali himself was trying to articulate in the later *Muqaddama* might have been influenced by these changing and novel forms of public discourse which print culture was engendering (cf. Lelyveld 1988, Shackle 1996a). It is also possible to see the Aligarh movement itself as embodying new idioms of public discourse and activity (Lelyveld 1978:103, 220-6, 251). Of particular interest here is Hali's central argument that poets should eschew stylistic and rhetorical elaborations for their own sake, and instead fashion the medium as transparent as possible to the moral message. This argument is particularly sharp in his denunciation of hyperbole (*Muqaddama*:182-4). The slight naivety of this view might have something to do with the novelty of large scale printing at the time; hidden behind this conception of a transparent medium might be the belief that whatever is printed must perforce be 'true'. Also, the fast transmission of news (*khabar*) which the poet refers to might have something to do with the way in which the *khabariyya* or 'informative' mode was being privileged over the *inshā'iyya* or 'non-informative' mode in new conceptions of public poetry (Pritchett 1994:107-8). Poetry was now being fashioned in terms of transmitting information, rather than as highlighting those non-falsifiable, non-informative aspects of language captured by the predominantly metaphorical modes of classical poetry. In other words, the fine art of poetry was being assimilated into a notion of mechanical art, that is, art created for the purpose of conveying information.³⁶ It is the failure to distinguish between fine and mechanical art that lies behind much of Hali's argument in the *Muqaddama*.

The reference in the *Musaddas* to the way in which printed information made 'the face of the earth like a mirror' has been discussed above. However, there are a number of ways in which the *Musaddas* reflects the privileging of the inscribed over the spoken word. In contrast to the ruined architectural monuments of Islamic culture, Hali points to the Hadith as a complete body of learning that testifies to the intellectual glories of past Islam. The Hadith embodies laws of substantiation and invalidation, which prefigured the rules of investigation which researchers of Hali's day used (M92, M94). Indeed, Hali argues that it was these volumes of verified reports and attested collections which reawakened a sense of critical history that had been 'shadowed over with darkness' (M93). Furthermore, in the context of describing the independence

³⁵ For two excellent accounts, see Lelyveld 1988 and Robinson 1993.

³⁶ For the distinction between the two, see Crowther 1993.

of such verified reports, Hali also argues that the sense of critical history as exemplified in the collection of the Hadith also prefigured 'liberalism'. In one of those sardonic remarks that occasionally puncture Hali's apparent infatuation with 'European' values of progress, the poet writes 'Let those who are pre-eminent in liberty today say when it was they started to become "liberal"' (M97).³⁷ The concern with written testimony as vouchsafing the oral pronouncements and continued existence of a historical presence is yet another reflection of not just the glories of early Islam, but also of Hali's strong sense of the priority of the inscribed or written word over the uttered word. In this regard, it might be worthwhile to note Abdul Haq's description of how when asked to recite his poetry, Hali would often prevaricate, claiming that his memory (*hifz*) was weak. Abdul Haq comments here that although this claim was typical of Hali's modesty, there was some truth in this (Abdul Haq 1950:140). This seems to suggest that Hali himself saw his poetry as a written text first, and only secondly as something to be read aloud. It is probable that he saw *mushā'iras* as perpetuating the figure of the Urdu poet as braggadocio (as depicted in Abdul Haq 1950:140). Hali's modesty in this regard might have more to do with distancing himself from those dissolute and immodest aesthetic and performing habits which he felt characterized aspects of Urdu literary culture. It is interesting that in his letter on the *Musaddas*, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan refers to how the poem should be sung by courtesans in a *majlis*, as though the very act of performing the *Musaddas* in a setting supposedly typical of Urdu literary culture at the time, would offset the morally dubious nature of that setting (Ahmad Khan 1924:166).

It seems likely that for Hali the priority he gave to the written word was in part related to his views on morality. It was also amenable to his attempts to create a new sense of propriety in Urdu literary etiquette, a propriety which was partly based on the superior force of the written as opposed to the spoken word. Hali's strategies for creating this sense of literary propriety included the employment of traditional *ghazal* imagery to make moral points. As Matthews and Shackle have pointed out, classical *ghazal* writers drew upon a variety of stock images. Originality consisted in adding a distinctive touch to a stock image, or developing such an image to a level of refinement hitherto unachieved, rather than inventing new ones (Matthews and Shackle 1972:11-15). One set of images consisted of garden imagery, Hali's use of which has been discussed above in the context of the poem's meditations on cultural decline. Another set of images traditionally associated with the *ghazal* draws on wine, drinking, and intoxication, which Hali later discussed in the *Muqaddama* (190-91). In contrast to these images as figures of ecstatic experiences, Hali sometimes uses similar imagery to illustrate moral points about certain vices. For example, faults such as pride and slander are characterized in terms of the intoxicating effects of wine (M215-M216). Similarly, the way in which excessive wealth has corrupted

sections of the Muslim community in India is also depicted in terms of 'the intoxicating wine of conceit and arrogance' (M159). At the same time, in a later section attacking contemporary poets, the reader is reminded of the conventional ways in which such imagery had been and continues to be a part of Urdu poetry. Here the performance of Urdu poetry is associated with courtesans, singers, and taverns (M256). There is a third way in which images of wine and intoxication are used in the *Musaddas*. This is to characterize the monotheistic message which is at the heart of the Prophet's mission. Thus the wine of falsehood is contrasted to the wine of monotheism which is soon to replace it (M32). Similarly, when describing Islamic society under the first four Caliphs, the poet writes (M55):

Rah-e kufr-o bātil se bezār sāre
*Nashe meñ ma-e haq ke sarshār sāre*³⁸

Thus, the *Musaddas* associates Urdu poetry with conventional imagery of wine and intoxication, but places this in a moral context of disapprobation, so that this imagery becomes a sign of the degenerate state of Urdu poetry. The link between this type of imagery and moral disapprobation is reinforced by the depiction of such vices as pride, slander, and love of material wealth. At the same time, the imagery of intoxication is constrained and reformed by associating it with the monotheistic message at the heart of Islam, so that the poet seems to be setting an example of the proper uses of imagery of intoxication in Urdu literature. In this way, the *Musaddas* establishes its own standards of propriety in literary etiquette, while containing examples of impropriety as a foil. The poem includes conventional points of reference which the text undermines in its attempt to create new conventions of poetry. It undermines these conventions by depicting them as improper and degenerate. Put another way, the *Musaddas* dramatizes its originality by including within its narrative images of the conventions it tries to break with and seeks to replace with conventions of its own. Here Paul Crowther's discussion of innovation in art is illuminating:

Historical innovation in art has always been determined in the context of creative breaks with, or refinements of, what has already been given. We do not want new artefacts that are simply unprecedented—but rather ones whose unprecedentedness casts new light on the traditions of art... Artistic innovation, in other words, is a complex relation between art and its past... (Crowther 1993:196)

One might say that one of the aims of the *Musaddas* was to cast new light on the

³⁷ It seems likely that Hali's characterization of the Hadith and his views on critical history were heavily influenced by Sir Sayyid's work in this field, for which see Troll.1978/79:100-43.

³⁸ All were disgusted with the way of unbelief and falsehood. All were drunk with the intoxicating wine of truth.

literary conventions it sought to break with. Its innovative character can also be seen in the context of its own relationship to the images of the past it created.

The priority of the written word in the *Musaddas* is thus reflected in a number of ways, from the central place of the Hadith as a surviving monument of Islam's classical age, to the concern with the transmission of news rendering the world transparent. It was also bound up with Hali's attempt to create a new sense of propriety in Urdu literature. The image of self-reflexivity, of a world becoming transparent unto itself, is a potent one for the technological impact of British imperialism. Hali's deft use of this image to express both reflection and transparency captures perfectly the effect this had on notions of identity. Indeed, in the First Introduction Hali refers to the poem as a house of mirrors which Indian Muslims 'may enter to study their features and realize who they were and what they have become.' As points of comparison and contrast are multiplied in a world rendered increasingly transparent by news, identity necessarily becomes more self-reflexive. The *Musaddas* recognizes that this can have a destabilizing effect. In a section of the poem entitled 'The decay of Islam', the poet writes of how the Muslim community 'was now fashioned as if it had begun to break up' (M107). The sense of simultaneous fragmentation and construction is in part expressive of the poem's concern with historical possibilities—the Muslim community might go either way—but it also expresses the sense of continual self-renewal and fashioning which the age of modernity seems to demand for survival.³⁹ At one poignant moment of the poem, another historical possibility is faced, namely the extinction, or at least superseding, of the Muslim community (M230):

Nabuvvat na gar khatm hoti 'arab par
Ko'i ham pai mab'us hota payambar
To hai jaise mazkur Qur'an ke andar
Zalalat yahud aur nasara ki aksar
Yunhin jo kitab is payambar pai aii
*Vo gumrahiyan sab hamari jaitii*⁴⁰

The distancing effect created by imagining this historical possibility fits in with the poem's general concern with historical possibilities and refashionings. These, in part at least, were made imaginable by the processes of imperialism and historical decline which Hali himself was witness to, and which were quite central to the changing self-perceptions which the poet was working through in the *Musaddas*.

³⁹ For a full discussion of the role of self-reflexivity in modernity, see Giddens 1994:36-45.

⁴⁰ If the office of Prophet had not come to an end with the Arabs, and if some prophet were to be sent to us, / Then, just as the general ruin of the Jews and Christians is recorded in the Quran, / So the Book which would be revealed to that prophet would make known all our acts of wickedness.

3:6 Carrion progress

As has been discussed in 3:1 above, the sense of historical decline in the poem is intertwined with the presentation of historical progress. However, while scholars have stressed Hali's ambivalent attitude to the world of classical poetics he sought to supplant (Steele 1981:12, Pritchett 1994:39, 43, 163, 182), less attention has been paid to his ambivalence towards the icons he created and lauded in his work. This is notably the case with the notion of progress in the *Musaddas*.

First, at one point in the poem progress is likened to the carrion corpse of a female dog (*murdar kuttiiya* M138). Although the context here is the failure of Muslims to recognize what progress is, to describe progress as 'carrion' is more suggestive of enervating decline than invigorating progress. This is a clear instance in the poem where the value system of the text, apparently so much weighted in favour of progress, becomes blurred. There is a sense in which throughout the poem Hali is offloading his own resentments against the carrion corpse called progress onto the Muslim community, rather than owning up to his resentments himself.

Secondly, the verses ostensibly praising the Europeans are sometimes ambiguous. For example, verses 102 and 104 are at pains to point out the debt that Europe owes to the achievements of classical Islam. In the section on medicine (M101-M102) the names of famous schools and physicians are listed, and the poet then adds that 'it was through them that the boat of the West got across' (*Unhi se huā par maghrib ka khevā* M102). The poignancy of this image is sharpened by the fact that the condition of the Muslim community at the commencement of the poem is represented in terms of a ship which is about to sink into a whirlpool, its crew asleep and oblivious to their impending doom (M3). The use of a similar image to illustrate the contrasting fates of Islam and Europe highlights the historical irony Hali draws attention to; namely that the Western ship got across with the help of the Arabs, while the Muslim ship itself sank. Hali might also be thinking here of the superior naval power of the British on which much of their empire rested, at least in part. More significantly, though, the general anxiety of the poem to gather up traces and signs of past Islamic achievements might also be explained by Hali's awareness of how the narrative of progress was being re-written as a European story which made no mention of the significant Arab contributions to important branches of learning (Turner 1994:31-2). This is reinforced by M104, in which the powerful nations of the time are reminded of their permanent debt to the Arabs.

Thirdly, some of the other verses apparently praising the Europeans are also ambiguous in the sense that they paint a slightly comic as well as a rather unappealing picture. This is the case with verses 131-2, where their restless energy and capacity for hard work are apparently lauded. For example, the description of European peoples racing so fast along the way as if they still had very far to go, carrying on their heads every kind of load and burden, is suggestive of an undignified and rather childish game. Furthermore, the addition of the qualification 'as if they had far to go' (*Bahut dur abhi un ko jana*