

Axes in the
**Philosophy of
AMEEN
AL RIHANI**



امين الريhani



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Rihani, Islam and Nietzsche

الرّيحاني والإسلام ونييتشه

Francesco Medici

Juhan's Jihad and the Blond Beast

**Ameen Rihani between Islamic Doctrine
and Nietzschean Perspective**

Bibliography on Rihani between Islam & Nietzsche



Juhan's Jihad and the Blond Beast

Ameen Rihani between Islamic Doctrine and Nietzschean Perspective

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Abstract: «Who can reconcile the words of Muhammad [...] with those of Zarathustra?» wondered Ameen Rihani in his notebook on travel in Bombay, India, in September 1922 (Rihani, Ameen F. "Thus Spake Zarathustra." *The White Way and the Desert*. Platform International, 2002, p. 123). The strong interest of the Lebanese Maronite Christian author in – and, according to some scholars, even his inclination towards – Islam is evident in several of his writings and public speeches. He was also an attentive reader of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose philosophy exerted a deep influence on him. All this is well-known, but is it possible to reconcile Islam and the German philosopher's thought? Could Rihani achieve such a difficult aim? His references to Islamic religion and Nietzsche's philosophy, already numerous especially in the novel *The Book of Khalid*, would seem to find their perfect synthesis in the novelette *Juhan*.

Key Words: Ameen Rihani, Blond Beast, Friedrich Nietzsche, Holy War, Islam, Islamic Feminism, Jihad, Ottoman Empire, Sufism, Transvaluation of All Values, Übermensch (Superman, Overman, Superhuman), Zarathustra.

Nietzsche and Islam: a Probable Reception by Rihani the Novelist

Between the late 19th and early 20th century, when Ameen Rihani read their English translations, none of Nietzsche's books had found particular favor with academic philosophers. For several decades, indeed, Nietzsche's influence was felt above all by artists, particularly among the writers, to whom he himself appeared as an artist. It is no coincidence that Nietzsche inspired great Western authors, as well as Arab authors like Rihani's compatriot Kahlil Gibran and Muslim writers like British-Indian poet-philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl. German hermeneutic philosopher

Wilhelm Dilthey groups Nietzsche together with «philosophical writers,» such as Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin, Tolstoy and Maeterlinck.¹ This thesis appears to justify a primarily literary consideration of Nietzschean work also by Rihani, who makes General von Wallenstein, the German deuter-agonist of his novelette *Juhan*, say: «Yes, Nietzsche is one of our great geniuses – more of a poet, they say, than a philosopher.»²

Nietzsche's philosophy is a harsh criticism of the apparent positivity of Western culture which was affirming itself in every aspect, but which he used to call 'nihilistic' (where nihilism means nullification, reduction of life to a valueless entity), denouncing all its 'd cadence.' It is perhaps also for this reason it achieved great success in the East, which blamed arrogance, cold rationalism as well as brute materialism and imperialist policy of the West. The 'death of God,' first announced in Nietzsche's *The Joyful Wisdom* and then in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*,³ was mainly a radical attack on Judeo-Christian tradition as 'life-denying.' The fervent anti-Zionist and anticlerical Rihani – excommunicated by the Maronite Church in 1903 – could but be fascinated by Nietzsche's views on religious and social institutions, by his Romantic descent cult of a powerful self whose individualism overcomes vices and falsehood of the 'masses,' and by his preference of a 'chosen one,' a hero who elevates himself above all his fellows in his open challenge to society and morality.

Nietzsche's earliest passage which refers to Islam, or to an aspect of Islamic civilization at any rate, is contained in *Human, all-too-Human*.^{aphorism 100}. Here «shame» is intended as «a religious idea» which «exists everywhere where there is a "mystery"» and so it is also inspired by the place appointed to «the sex relations»: therefore it is mentioned, in order to exemplify it,

1- Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Selected writings*. Edited, Translated, and Introduced by Hans P. Rickman, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 114.

2- Rihani, Ameen F. *Juhan. A novelette*. Edited with an Introduction by Assad Eid, Notre Dame University Press-Éditions Dar an-Nahar, 2011, p. 85.

3- Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Joyful Wisdom. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by Thomas Common, with Poetry rendered by Paul V. Cohn and Maude D. Petre, vol. 10, The Macmillan Company, 1924, pp. 151, 168, 275, 276; Id. *Thus Spake Zarathustra. A Book for All and None. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by Thomas Common, vol. 11 The Macmillan Company, 1914, pp. 6, 105, 285.

the Islamic institution known as the «harem.» Given the sacralization of sexuality in religious civilizations, thus explains Nietzsche, in Turkish «the nuptial chamber» is «called *harem*, “sanctuary,” and is distinguished with the same name, therefore, that is used for the entrance courts of the mosques.»⁴ It may be interesting to remember in that regard, that *Juhan*, originally written in English by Rihani during the First World War – or, more precisely, during the Gallipoli Campaign (1915-1916), at the time of the Ottoman-German Alliance – was first published in its Arabic translation by ‘Abd al-Masīḥ al-Ḥaddād, who chose for it the significant alternative title of *Khārīj al-Harīm* (Out of the Harem).⁵ The harem is in fact the place or, better, the concept, the existential condition, the pivot around which the whole narrated story revolves. *Juhan* is «a Turkish lady of the harem» who has grown up within its «confines» and, «deploring the seclusion,» «the slavery and concubinage» of it, decides to break «her harem-fetters» and become «the leader of the movement for the emancipation of the harem.» On the contrary, the men of her family – fond of «the luxuries and the excesses of the harem-life» – are concerned that *Juhan*’s «European spirit» could corrupt «the Turkish harem.» In the first chapter the reader comes to know that the Muslim proto-feminist heroine⁶ has left her husband Prince Seifuddin (Seyfüddin) «when, after [...] accepting the condition of monogamy she imposed, he took another wife» with whom «to share his harem.» In order to murder her lover-enemy General von

4- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, all-too-Human. A Book for Three Spirits*. Part I. Translated by Helen Zimmern, with Introduction by John M. Kennedy, The Macmillan Company, 1915, p. 99.

5- al-Rīḥānī, Amīn F. *Khārīj al-ḥarīm*. Ta‘rīb ‘Abd al-Masīḥ al-Ḥaddād, As-Sayeh, 1916.

6- *Juhan* is described in the story as «the first Turkish woman who had the courage to walk through the streets of Stanbul unveiled [...] the first Turkish woman who stood before the multitudes in the open square, tore off the yard of white chiffon that covered her face, and hailed the sun of freedom» (*Juhan*, p. 23). About fifteen years after the publication of *Juhan* in its first Arabic version, Ameen Rihani himself, in an article entitled “Moslem Women Are Advancing at Different Paces: Revolutionary Changes by Legislation in Turkey Followed More Cautiously in the Other Countries of the Near East.” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1930, p. 9 (cf. Id. “Women in the Near East” *The White Way and the Desert*, p. 100), recounted how he witnessed an event that could have been decisive for the creation of his heroine: «In 1912 I heard a woman haranguing a crowd in one of the streets of Constantinople. She was the first woman to unveil in public, and after she had finished her speech, she waved her veil as a banner of freedom.»

Wallenstein, Juhan induces him by deceit to enter «the sanctum» of her harem, just because «out of the harem» all her previous efforts to counter him reveal themselves to be in vain. Thanks to this trick, Islamic authorities establish that Juhan's offence «was committed in self-defence» as the German officer «violated the sanctity of the Turkish harem» and so the woman, «in defence of her honor, put him to the sword.» At the beginning of the book, Ridha Pasha (Rıza Paşa) himself, Juhan's father, stresses, also in a political sense, the clear distinction between the Ottoman *haremlük* (the private, inviolable portion of the house) and «the *salaamlık* of a Turk» (the public area or reception rooms) when he claims that, despite their supreme authority, the German «shall not dictate to us in our homes.»⁷ In *Juhan*, the word «seraglio» is also mentioned, namely the sequestered living quarters used by wives and concubines in an Ottoman household, while «harem» may refer to the women themselves. But in the novelette, the term takes on a particularly special meaning, as exclusively referred to the heroine's inner sphere.⁸

In *The Dawn of Day*, aphorism § 496, Nietzsche introduces a comparison between the repeated attempts made by Plato to found «a united Mediterranean Greek State», where the Athenian philosopher would have become «the legislator of new morals», and Mohammed's juridico-political action.⁹ Here the pre-eminence of Islam over Christianity gradually begins to make its way into Nietzsche's thought, as openly stated in the subsequent *The Antichrist*, in which «*Mohammedan civilization*» is described as a «wonderful culture» because «it had to thank noble and manly instincts for its origin – because it said yes to life [...] a civilization beside which even that of [...] nineteenth century seems very poor and very “senile”.» According

7- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 16, 20, 15, 42, 15, 23, 19, 39, 37, 53, 87, 74, 89, and 30, respectively. Rihani's English spelling of the term is «harim», but in these pages, for consistency, the standard spelling of it has been used.

8- Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

9- Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Dawn of Day. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by John M. Kennedy, vol. 9, The Macmillan Company, 1911, pp. 346-347.

to him, «if Islam despises Christianity, it has a thousandfold right to do so»¹⁰ and he gives the reasons for it in a fragment published posthumously:

*If one wishes to see an affirmative religion of the Semitic order, which is the product of the ruling class, one should read the Koran [...]. (Mohammedanism, as a religion for men, has profound contempt for the sentimentality and prevarication of Christianity, [...] which, according to Mohammedans, is a woman's religion.)*¹¹

The history of mankind in Nietzsche coincides with the complete self-censorship of life. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, he explains how the weak, in their natural competitiveness with the strong, have reversed the rules of the conflict, to the point that their weaknesses, which would have resulted in losing an affirmative competition, on the contrary has prevailed over strength. And so humility, poverty of spirit, sentimentality, incapacity to act, and servility have become ideal values, while the strong the transgressor of value, the immoral. Darwinian natural selection is therefore overturned, with the consequent triumph of slave culture, the paradoxical supremacy of what Nietzsche calls 'reactive forces' over 'active' ones. For him Christianity, as well as Judaism, is a typical example of reactive culture, the result of a denial of life: a Christian must impose a conduct on himself in the name of love. He is at the same time the object and the subject of love, but what should be a spontaneous feeling takes the form of a duty. Hence Christians' 'resentment' and 'bad faith,' which are slave forms of consciousness, and consequently their thirst for revenge on others.¹² Again in *The Antichrist* (in which the influences of his extensive

10- Id. *The Antichrist*. Translated from the German with an Introduction by Henry L. Mencken, Knopf, 1931, p. 175. In the same work, Christianity is also blamed for its despising the body and disapproval of personal hygiene and cleanliness, «denounced as sensual» (p. 72). Here Nietzsche refers to the hammam (widely known as Turkish bath), which has, in the Islamic context, a function of religious purification before praying, besides being a place simply dedicated to body care, and for this reason often located close to a mosque. Said term recurs once in *Juhan* (p. 24).

11- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Books One and Two. *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, vol. 14 T.N. Foulis, 1924, p. 126.

12- Cf. Id. *The Genealogy of Morals. A Polemic. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by Horace B. Samuel, vol. 13, T.N. Foulis, 1913.

reading on the history of the origins of Christianity and Islam are clearly apparent) Nietzsche considers the crusades to be «a higher form of piracy, nothing more» and adds:

*Intrinsically there should be no more choice between Islam and Christianity [...] “War to the knife with Rome! Peace and friendship with Islam!”: this was the feeling, this was the act, of that great free spirit, that genius among German emperors, Frederick II. What! Must a German first be a genius, a free spirit, before he can feel decently? I can’t make out how a German could ever feel Christian.*¹³

The «Asiatic dream» of General von Wallenstein, the German military consul at Constantinople, namely the creation of an immense empire from Bursa to Baghdad also includes his opportunistic conversion to Islam especially in order to marry Juhan, «a Muslim woman [...] who was, moreover, so engagingly, conveniently European» – bringing «Sheikh’ul-Islam» (Şeyhülislam in Turkish, the highest Ottoman authority for religious affairs) to perform the ceremony according to Islamic rites – and thus strengthen the political alliance between the «Teutons» and the Turks. Moreover, in his craving for power, he hopes, «as his Imperial Majesty’s Advisor to the Sultan,» to «rank higher than any of the Kings of Germany.»¹⁴ It could be said that General von Wallenstein appears to intend to emulate no less than Frederick II in political ambitions, as well as to rival or even to surpass Napoleon in strategic intelligence: «And if Napoleon was willing to embrace Islam, he [General von Wallenstein] would go a step farther and take for himself a Muslim wife.»¹⁵ Here Rihani is referring to the French Emperor’s supposed conversion to ‘Mohammedanism’ during his Campaign in Egypt and Syria, when Bonaparte, in order to gain the Arabs’ support, would have tried to present himself as a liberator of the people from Ottoman oppression and praised the precepts of the Prophet’s religion, even promising to make himself a Muslim. Said conversion was nevertheless denied by Napoleon himself, who once told his trusty General Gaspard Gourgaud in confidence: «To promise and not to keep your promise is the

13- Id. *The Antichrist*, pp. 176-177.

14- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 45, 21 and 46, respectively.

15- Ibid., p. 45.

way to get on in this world.»¹⁶ As for Juhan, she is not naive enough to believe in her suitor's ambiguous promises.¹⁷

In *The Dawn of Day*, aphorism § 549, Nietzsche mentions Mohammed as one of «that four of the greatest men of all ages who were possessed of [...] lust for action» together with Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Napoleon.¹⁸ In *The Genealogy of Morals*, the author returns to Napoleon and to the extraordinariness of his figure. The French Revolution, with its slogan 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,' witnessed, for Nietzsche, the triumph of «the instincts of a resentful populace,» of reactive forces, and yet, at the very moment when such triumph reached its highest degree, there was a return of «the ancient ideal» in flesh and blood: «there appeared Napoleon [...] and in him the incarnate problem of the aristocratic ideal in itself [...] Napoleon, that synthesis of Monster and Superman.»¹⁹

At this point of our analysis, it is necessary to clarify the Nietzschean concept of «will to power,» which is a moral principle proclaimed in opposition to current morality, become, according to him, an indolent acceptance of leveling and trampling laws upon one's personal energies. Everyone must instead extend their own power for expansion and for original creation to the limits in order to produce a higher type of humankind represented in the myth of the Übermensch (German for 'Superman,' 'Overman,' 'Superhuman'). From Nietzsche's point of view, life is dominated by the will to power, or better, «life itself is Will to Power.»²⁰ But it cannot be reduced to the idea that life has the dominion over the others as its principal aim. If this end becomes the prime mover of action, it can obviously be achieved only through usual and socially recognized values manipulated to one's own advantage. What is lacking in this form of will to power is the creativity, the inventiveness which can transform existence. The will to power consists of active forces and reactive forces, the former are life-affirming and the latter are life-denying. The exclusive objective of domin-

16- Latimer, Elizabeth Wormeley (ed.) *Talks of Napoleon at St. Helena with General Baron Gourgaud*. A.C. McClurg & Co., 1904, p. 262.

17- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 72.

18- Nietzsche. *The Dawn of Day*, p. 381.

19- Id. *The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 56.

20- Id. *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Authorised Translation by Helen Zimmern, The Macmillan Company, 1907, p. 20.

ion over one's neighbor therefore belongs to reactive forces of the will to power. From a Nietzschean perspective, it can thus be affirmed that General von Wallenstein is not a 'creative' character. Aida Imangulieva calls him «a typical exponent of Nietzschean philosophy,»²¹ but if he is that, he is such quite unconsciously, since his opinion on Nietzsche is unequivocally negative.²² Even being an elegant and learned high officer, General von Wallenstein is not properly a person of letters, and his is a practical mind, actually characteristic of a military man. If the West for Juhan is «a dream of the soul», the East represents for him «the realization of a dream of power – purely material dream.»²³ If she nourishes a sincere, although not uncritical, admiration for European civilization, even while deeply loving her own country and Islam, he behaves, to quote Nijme Hajjar, «as a true Orientalist,» who «treats the Turks as inferiors and seeks to dominate them culturally to conquer them politically,»²⁴ wickedly exploiting at the same time his fairly good knowledge of their culture and the authority of his institutional position, since his «word in Constantinople is law.»²⁵ To General von Wallenstein's material, mediocre, cynical, 'reactive' plan of conquest, Juhan opposes an 'active' dream of emancipation for all her enslaved sisters, or even more, of changing the world (the precise meaning of the name Juhan, more correctly Cihan in Turkish, from the Persian Jihān or Jahān, is "world"), while rejecting the existing morality and values and aspiring to a new reality. She thinks to realize such an ambitious end through a child she would give birth to, a 'Superhuman,' «in the pursuit of *her* own happiness, in obedience to the commands of *her* dream of freedom»:

And I care not whether it be a boy or a girl; if a girl, she will inherit my dream of emancipation for the Turkish woman and carry out my work; if a

21- Imangulieva, Aida. *Gibran, Rihani & Naimy: East-West Interactions in Early Twentieth-Century Arab Literature*. Translated from the Russian by Robin Thomson, Inner Farne, 2009, p. 111.

22- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 85.

23- Ibid., p. 52.

24- Hajjar, Nijme. "A Feminist Reading of Juhan: Rihani's Avant-garde Vision of Arab and Muslim Feminism." *Ameen Rihani's Arab-American legacy: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*. Introduced by Naji B. Oueijan, Notre Dame University Press, 2012, 97.

25- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 68.

boy he might, with the aid of Allah, grow up to be a military and constructive genius – a savior of our nation, a rebuilder of our empire.²⁶

Here, Juhan's words remind us of those of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, according to whom the highest longing of a woman cannot be anything but giving birth to the Übermensch: «Man is for woman, a means: the purpose is always the child.»²⁷ Juhan, who longs «to choose herself a father for her child,» sees precisely in General von Wallenstein her 'means.' Although initially fascinated by and attracted to this man, she realized at a later time that «what she really wanted [...] was a child [...] from a German» making «this the highest expression of her freedom» and setting an example for her countrywomen.²⁸ However, she, as well as Khalid, eponymous hero of Rihani's masterpiece novel, have their own idea of the Übermensch, only partially coinciding with that of Nietzsche. It can be reasonably stated that she opts for the same «higher Superman» evoked in *The Book of Khalid*, reincarnating the best of the East and the West, «the male and female of the Spirit», in a new synthesis fusing their better disparate human and cultural qualities.²⁹ In other passages of the same work, Rihani outlines in more detail this new type of 'supreme Man' (from whom the hero of his novel would draw inspiration), different from the «European superman,» «equally devoted both to the material and the spiritual,» as «the proper exponent of Nature, and Spirit, and God: the three divine sources from which he issues, in which he is sustained, and to which he must return.» Nietzsche's influence upon Khalid's remarks, particularly with regard to the pre-eminence of Islam over the other two major Abrahamic religions, remains deep anyhow.³⁰

26- Ibid., p. 44 (the italics are mine).

27- Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. p. 75.

28- Rihani. *Juhan*, pp. 43, 72, 44, and 76, respectively. Cf. Imangulieva. *Gibran, Rihani & Naimy*, p. 112: «It is no coincidence that of all the Oriental nationalities, Rihani selected a Turkish woman for his champion of women's rights. This reflects the reality of the time, since Turkish women did then enjoy the most favorable conditions among all the Islamic nations.»

29- Cf. Rihani, Ameen F. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1911, pp. 245, 113-114.

30- Cf. Ibid., pp. 237, 241-242, 246, 317.

It is rather through «a child of fair complexion, with blue eyes and golden locks» than through her intellectual and political commitment that Juhan, more as a woman and mother than as a social reformer and an activist, can make the abstract myth propounded and advocated by Zarathustra and Khalid a reality, and give «to the new Turkish nation [...] one of her best sons – her greatest leader – *inshallah*.»³¹ Also the choice of the infant's name seems to be not accidental: Mustafa, Arabic for the 'Chosen One,' is an epithet of Muhammad.³² It should be noted that Muslims have often considered their Prophet as a sort of Overman, 'the best of created beings' according to some traditions, the incarnation of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the 'Perfect Human' or 'Universal Human,' who, in Sufism, in which Rihani together with Nietzsche were particularly interested,³³ represents the model of perfection on the path of spiritual realization, just as in Nietzsche the Übermensch is the goal humanity must set for itself and for its new generations. Such doctrine, mainly outlined by Ibn al-'Arabī and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, is said to be based on the Koranic concept according to which God's purpose in creating man was to make him His vicar (*khalīfah*).³⁴ The founding aim of this doctrine is to show each believer how to become again that 'Perfect Human' who he/she was at origin, at the time of Creation. The 'Perfect Human' is therefore present in human beings only as an archetype, which moves away as one moves toward it, until it identifies itself with God. Also Nietzsche's idea of the Übermensch has been interpreted as an ideal model, whose existence would be merely virtual and, ultimately, negative: it would represent the need to move towards an ultimate goal, but also the clear awareness that it does not exist, an unbearable idea for many and so suited to select 'the mighty of spirit.'³⁵

31- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 91.

32- Gibran chose the same name for the hero of his famous *The Prophet*. Knopf, 1923, p. 7 (cf. Bushrui, Suheil - Jenkins Joe. *Kahlil Gibran, Man and Poet: a New Biography*. Foreword by Kathleen Raine, Oneworld Publications, 1998, p. 244: «Almustafa is Christ and Muhammad merged into one, the embodiment of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the "Perfect Man" of Sufi tradition»).

33- Cf. for example Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 123; Id. *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 119.

34- Cf. Koran, 2:30. For the Koranic quotations, cf. mostly *The Holy Qur'ān*. Text, Translation and Commentary by 'Abd Allāh Yūsuf 'Alī, Hafner Pub. Co., 1946.

35- Cf. Ingravalle, Francesco. *Nietzsche illuminista o illuminato?* Edizioni di Ar, 1981, p. 150.

So Juhan's «super-child»³⁶ could constitute the overcoming of both Nietzschean and Sufi theories in a certain sense.

Getting back to Imangulieva's analysis, General von Wallenstein would be nothing but a sort of by-product of Nietzsche's philosophy: «the story presents Nietzschean theory squarely in its primary idea – the power of the strong over the weak – with all its inhumanity and brutality.»³⁷ It might be added that General von Wallenstein's character, «this personification of the omniscience of German power,» would seem to be inspired, even with regard to his physical appearance and mature age,³⁸ by the historical figure of German General Otto Liman von Sanders (1855-1929), more commonly known as Liman Pasha or the 'Lion of Gallipoli,' adviser and military commander to the Ottoman Empire during the Dardanelles Campaign.³⁹ Also in this case, Rihani's choice of his name could be not accidental: Wallenstein, euphonic variant of the original German Waldenstein,⁴⁰ literally 'forest rock/stone' or 'stone forest,' would seem to suggest the General's impenetrability, inscrutableness, inflexibility, and pitiless hardness. The hypothesis of a connection between the real 'Lion of Gallipoli' and the fictional character could be also corroborated by the fact that in Juhan's eyes General von Wallenstein takes on the likeness of a leonine «ferocious animal,» «a grinning, grisly, hirsute monster.»⁴¹ As Nietzsche makes clear in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, man is a bridge between animal and Übermensch: the spirit must go through three metamorphoses before it can be liberated, from the «camel» to «lion» to «child.» The camel is a beast of burden, heavily laden with superfluous and weakening religious observances, which must develop the independence of the rebellious lion. The lion, a symbol of courage, resists the religious commandments and is able to say «I will,» and «to create itself freedom, and give a holy Nay even unto duty.» To become the Übermensch, the lion is destined to metamorphose into a child, a fearless, innocent man with no burden of guilt, the only one

36- Hajjar. "A Feminist Reading of *Juhan*," p. 99.

37- Imangulieva. *Gibran, Rihani & Naimy*, p. 111.

38- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 70, 43.

39- Cf. Liman von Sanders, Otto. *Five Years in Turkey*. Baillière, Tindall & Company, 1928.

40- It is also worth mentioning here the name of Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583-1634), German-Bohemian military leader and politician, and a major figure of the Thirty Years' War.

41- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 44, 80.

who can say «a holy Yea unto life.»⁴² If Zarathustra's 'child' represents man's chance of a new beginning as Übermensch, Mustafa symbolizes, for his mother Juhan, the greatest hope of a new era for the Turkish nation.

Nietzsche's *The Joyful Wisdom* reports another reference to Islam in aphorism 128 on "The Value of Prayer:"

*the wisdom of all the founders of religions [...] has commended to them [the poor in spirit] the formula of prayer, as a long mechanical labour of the lips, united with an effort of the memory, and with a uniform, prescribed attitude of hands and feet – and eyes! They may then [...] honour [...] Allah with his ninety-nine [names].*⁴³

According to Nietzsche, «the poor in spirit» make up the large majority of the faithful of all creeds, but the 'Superwoman' Juhan⁴⁴ represents an exception: she is «religious, not in a sanctimonious, superstitious, or ostentatious way, but in the deeper inner life of the soul.»⁴⁵ In her praying there is nothing 'mechanical,' artificial, affected, unnatural. A clear example of this is her morning prayer, described at the beginning of the novelette. After praising Allah through the *Fātiḥah*, the opening surah (chapter) «of the sacred Book of Islam,» and giving thanks, «in the fatality and piety of her heart,» to «Almighty Allah, Lord of all Creation» for the new day, her «mind that was Occidental in education and training» has «a prayer of its own»:

Thou hast implanted in us, Almighty Allah, the seed of eternal aspiration; curse us not if we aspire. Thou art the author of love and freedom; curse us not if we break through our prison walls. Thou art all-merciful and just; curse us not if we resist the tyranny of man." "No," she said, [...] as if she would take the divine law into her own hands; "no," she repeated in a defiant air, which seemed blasphemous after her prayer; "no

42- Cf. Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, pp. 25-27.

43- Id. *The Joyful Wisdom*, pp. 171-172.

44- Cf. Hajjar. "A Feminist Reading of *Juhan*," 103 (the term Übermensch is not gendered in German; for its use also in feminine, cf. Rihani. *The Book of Khalid*, p. 165).

45- Id. *Juhan*. p. 16.

*longer shall we submit to his tyranny, whether a husband, a brother, a father, or a sovereign ruler.*⁴⁶

Juhan is depicted in the story as a very peculiar Muslim: she is at the same time «European in mind» but «still Mohammedan in spirit,» even endowed «with the zeal and eloquence of one of the *ulema*.» Sometimes she almost seems to have, besides Muhammad, «another prophet,»⁴⁷ namely the German philosopher, and in her religiousness both Islamic and Western/Nietzschean elements coexist. This makes her an outsider for her people (according to Ridha Pasha himself, «the iniquitous modern spirit of Europe's philosophers» and «Nietzsche in particular» were «upsetting her mind»),⁴⁸ whose prejudices and submissiveness she, for her part, condemns.⁴⁹

The «*amor fati*» (Latin for 'love of one's fate'), central pivot of Nietzschean conception of life, is reflected in that typical Islamic attitude, which also belongs to Juhan, often misunderstood by Western culture as mere fatalism. It consists indeed of a sense of total and trustful adherence to everything that occurs by necessity in the universe. Such a position does not exclude the responsibility of the individual and makes a perfect match with action.⁵⁰ In the language of Islam, Latin *fatum* corresponds to Arabic *qadr*, namely 'decree,' through which God ineluctably determines the fate of each single individual. That is why Allah, among His 'Ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names,' is called *al-Qādir* (The All-Powerful) and *al-Muqtadir* (The Determiner), divine qualities both etymologically and semantically connected to the linguistic root of *qadr*. Although Juhan is far from being a passive and resigned character, her *amor fati* is strong and evident in various passages of the novelette.⁵¹ Like Nietzsche's Übermensch, who disdains the 'original fear of affirming,' Juhan creates existence and ac-

46- Ibid., pp. 15-16.

47- Ibid., pp. 21 and 81, respectively.

48- Ibid., p. 20.

49- Cf. Ibid., p. 66.

50- Cf. in particular Nietzsche. *The Joyful Wisdom*, p. 213; Id. *Ecce Homo. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by Anthony M. Ludovici, vol. 17, The Macmillan Company, 1911, p. 54.

51- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 17, 65, 81.

cepts its casualness, as proved by this dialogue between the young woman and her cousin and suitor Shukri Bey (Şükrü Bey):

*Nothing these days is unchangeable, and nobody in these times of war can be the same from day to day. We are all the victims of this sinister and compelling force, this double-faced god of evil and good, whom I call Mutability. Is that what your German philosopher says? [...] Mutability – the God of the times!*⁵²

From a Nietzschean perspective, the 'I' is also not a constant or an immobile entity, it perpetually changes, becomes, transforms itself. Juhan, who is translating into Turkish *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Nietzsche, «her favorite author, whom she read in the original,»⁵³ is here probably paraphrasing Zarathustra's sayings such as this: «Change of values – that is, change of the creating ones. Always doth he destroy who hath to be a creator.»⁵⁴ Moreover, according to Nietzsche, Islam, unlike other religions, attributes might to God in its entirety, without dualistically separating the beneficial from the harmful aspect.⁵⁵ The concept of *amor fati* is strictly connected to that of the «eternal return» of which Zarathustra is the «teacher».⁵⁶ Being means becoming and so the eternal return is the eternal recurrence of becoming of the universe and all its energies and forces. *Amor fati* is 'active' acceptance of this eternal recurrence of the same. Rihani's Khalid is probably referring to Zarathustra's «eternal return» when he says that «there is in the nature of things a mysterious recurrence which makes for a continuous everlasting modernity,»⁵⁷ and agrees with him and Juhan on the idea of mutability of existence.⁵⁸ In conclusion, Rihani the novelist appears to espouse Nietzschean point

52- Ibid., p. 37.

53- Ibid., p. 14. The German philosopher's name is also mentioned, although only once and yet in an ironical context, in Id. *The Book of Khalid*, p. vii.

54- Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. p. 67.

55- Cf. Id. *The Will to Power*, p. 286.

56- Ibid., p. 269.

57- Rihani. *The Book of Khalid*. p. 140.

58- Cf. *ibid.* p. 237.

of view, according to which the weak can but notice the meaninglessness of becoming and rebel against it by degrading the world through their false morality, their nihilistic denial of every single worldly value. Only the strong can suggest new values as alternatives and experience nihilism actively.⁵⁹

Rereading Nietzsche and the Islamic Holy Scriptures

Rihani mentions Nietzsche's «blond beast» both in *The Book of Khalid* and in *Juhan*, making however, in both works, the same curious mistake of misattribution. In *The Book of Khalid*, said Nietzschean image is explicitly named only once: «the beautiful blond beast of Zarathustra, who would riddle mankind as they would riddle wheat or flour.»⁶⁰ For *Juhan*, it is instead the cruel General von Wallenstein the personification of the «blond beast» or, more precisely, her own «shame» of having yielded to his sexual lust, and the phrase recurs several times in the novelette. When, towards the end of the story, the heroine welcomes the German officer to her paternal home with the intention of killing him, he asks her what she was reading when he came in, and she replies: «“In the book of your prophet about the ‘blond beast’.” Showing the title.»⁶¹ In the previous chapter during the encounter between them, *Juhan* is depicted reading and commenting upon a famous and much-debated passage of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* on women, so, in her reply to the General, she surely refers to it. In truth, Nietzsche only uses the specific image of the «blond beast» in *The Genealogy of Morals* and in *Twilight of the Idols*, and not in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

Contrary to an opinion widespread in the early 20th century, evidently also shared by Rihani himself, it is not a metaphor for Teutonic belligerence and supposed racial superiority (an interpretation dear to Nazi ideology to come). Misinterpreted and manipulated, the concept of the «blond beast» is not to be intended as regarding a precise human type in a biological sense, but as an aristocracy of human spirit common to different ethnic groups, who are characterized by their «audacity» (the same «audacity»

59- Cf. Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. p. 304.

60- Rihani. *The Book of Khalid*. p. 113.

61- Id. *Juhan*. pp. 79 and 85, respectively.

mingled with «treachery» which Juhan recognizes in General von Wallenstein, «the accursed *Ilmani*»),⁶² and «nonchalance and contempt for safety, body, life and comfort»:

*It is impossible not to recognise at the core of all these aristocratic races the beast of prey; the magnificent blond beast, avidly rampant for spoil and victory; this hidden core needed an outlet from time to time, the beast must get loose again, must return into the wilderness – the Roman, Arabic, German, and Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavian Vikings, are all alike in this need. [...] The profound, icy mistrust which the German provokes, as soon as he arrives at power, – even at the present time, – is always still an aftermath of that inextinguishable horror with which for whole centuries Europe has regarded the wrath of the blond Teuton beast [...]*⁶³

The Nietzschean «blond beast» is an extraordinary individual (belonging to the species of those who, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, are described as ‘lions’), the ancient, noble warrior, who, after breaking all the ties with laws and dogmas imposed by so-called civilization, affirms his own «right of nature,» changes himself from a slave into a master, while being hated and feared by «the bearers» of «all those instincts of reaction and resentment,» the «descendants of all European and non-European slavery.» However, according to Nietzsche, the rapaciousness of the «blond beast» is preferable to the decadence of modern man,⁶⁴ and he uses the phrase once more in *The Genealogy of Morals* to describe how the oldest form of «State» emerged from «tyranny:» it was through «a herd of blonde beasts of prey, a race of conquerors and masters,» which pounced «with its terrible claws on a population, in numbers possibly tremendously superior, but as yet formless.»⁶⁵ He returns to the concept in his *Twilight of the Idols*, when commenting that «the finest specimens of the “blond beast”,» such as «the

62- Ibid., p. 83.

63- Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*. pp. 40-41.

64- Cf. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

65- Ibid. p. 103.

distinguished Germanics,» were emasculated by the Church and changed into sinners and caricatures of men.⁶⁶

It is interesting to observe that Juhan's first reference to the «blond beast» recalls some of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* verses: «“The blond beast!” she cried. And like one in the forest, who, on turning a path, stands facing a ferocious animal, she was white with fear, speechless with a fright.»⁶⁷ Nietzsche writes: «In fear perhaps before a / Furious, yellow, blond and curled / Leonine monster [...]» In a previous passage of the same work, the philosopher clears up the image of his «lions,» who are pure deniers of all values, disappointed of all truths, despisers of all religions, atheists and ‘free spirits,’ too devoted to their unbelief and to the Goddess of Reason. *Zarathustra* is waiting indeed for destroyers of both sacred and profane myths, on condition that they are «*laughing lions*»,⁶⁸ free from any resentment against what they destroy, not frowning while waning and making wane. Unlike «her countrymen in power,» Juhan rejects General von Wallenstein and does not accept to submit to him, because he is *not* a ‘laughing lion,’ but «terrible, strange, like a monster of the depths.» As Imangulieva argues, he, boasting about his *Kultur*,⁶⁹ «represents Western military-industrial capital and the mercantilism of the bourgeois way of life, with its forfeiture of spirituality.»⁷⁰ His «brute force» and his image of «a ferocious beast in the shadows of ancient ruins»,⁷¹ who exacts incessant tributes (the death of Juhan's brother, cousin and father first, then her love) to appease his lust for blood and destruction almost reminds us of the ancient Greek myth of the Minotaur dwelling in the labyrinth of Crete – and like the mythological monster killed by the Athenian hero Theseus' sword, General von Wallenstein dies run through by Juhan's sword. But in Rihani's novelette, the «blond beast» who holds Juhan's «heart as a hostage in one hand, and her mind, a broken sword, as it were, in the other,» this

66- Cf. Id. *The Twilight of The Idols. The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: The Case of Wagner, Nietzsche contra Wagner, The Twilight of The Idols, The Antichrist*. Translated by Thomas Common, T. Fisher Unwin, 1899, p. 149.

67- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 44.

68- Cf. Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, pp. 378, 346-347.

69- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 91, 79, 55 and 71, respectively.

70- Imangulieva. *Gibran, Rihani & Naimy*, p. 111.

71- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 74, 79.

monster suspended between Heaven and Hell, takes on even more complex connotations:

*What hand, human or demoniacal or divine, held her abject slave and dragged her to the gates of a paradise guarded by a blond beast, a grinning, grisly, hirsute monster? His eyes – she beheld him again – and his white fangs shone in the moonlight. His grunting desire beat its heavy black wings against her breast; above her head glimmered the sword of destiny; at her feet smouldered the fires of life; around her were abysses, deep, dark, bottomless; she was on a couch of roses, rocking over the gulfs of Juhannam!*⁷²

Islamic paradise is guarded by the angels, Juhan's «imaginary paradise» of freedom and equal rights, instead, has a «blond beast» at its gate. It should be recalled that she is afraid of appearing as «a daughter of Islam thrown to an infidel pig» in the eyes of her father and people, so her «vision of the blond beast»⁷³ is to be interpreted in a religious sense. Islamic tradition identifies «the beast» as the evil figure of the Dajjāl (the 'Liar' or the 'Deceiver'), comparable to the Antichrist in Christianity (*al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*, 'the False Messiah'), whose aim is to spread tyranny, oppression and injustice all over the world. The advent of the Dajjāl, foretold in various sayings of the Prophet, is associated with the outbreak of «the great war» and the conquest of Constantinople.⁷⁴ According to some interpretations, the Dajjāl, on whose forehead the word 'Infidel' (*kāfir*) is said to be written,⁷⁵ does not represent an individual figure, but a collectivity of people or nations hostile to Islam, such as the European Powers in First World War («Has he come from the North, the blond beast?» Juhan wonders).⁷⁶ In

72- Ibid., pp. 79, 80.

73- Ibid., pp. 80-81.

74- Cf. for example Sunan Abī Dāwūd, 38:4283: «The time between the great war and the conquest of the city (Constantinople) will be six years, and the Dajjāl (Antichrist) will come forth in the seventh». For the quotations from the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad translated into English, cf. website <http://sunnah.com>. Accessed 16 January 2017.

75- Cf. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. 4:55:574.

76- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 82.

light of this, Juhan's vision could be read as Rihani's foresight of the fall of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁷

Three elements in the story lend religious sacredness to Juhan's murderous gesture: the description of her superb beauty compared by the author to that of «a huri»⁷⁸ (a virgin of the Muslim paradise),⁷⁹ a (partial) verse from the Koran (2:191) engraved on the murder weapon, and the *ḥamdalah* (typical Muslim praise phrase unto God) uttered by her immediately after committing the homicide:

The saying was by no means assuring to a Christian. "Kill them," it read (meaning the infidels), "wherever you find them." [...] "This weapon, [...] was entrusted to me by my father. 'It is for your spouse', he said, 'who should inherit and keep inviolate the honor of our ancestors'. It is now for you, General Von Wallenstein – it is for the blond beast." [...] "Praise be to Allah," cried Juhan, "I have slain the blond beast – the blond beast is dead."⁸⁰

In the Koran, the quoted verse continues saying: «for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter.»⁸¹ Therefore, Juhan's act takes on a clear religious-political meaning: General von Wallenstein, regardless of his being a Christian, is not only responsible for the decimation of her family, but belongs to the oppressors, who humiliate her values, people, countrywomen⁸², homeland and faith.

Rihani's attention was also engaged by another pivotal concept of Nietzschean philosophy, that is to say the «transvaluation of all values» (or the «revaluation of all values»), twice mentioned in *Juhan*. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche asserts it is a process necessary to overturn the false and outmoded values of morality as taught by decadent religions (Christianity in

77- Cf. for example Id. "Germany and Islam." *The World's Work*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1915, p. 302.

78- Id. *Juhan*. p. 84.

79- Cf. Koran. 2:25, 3:15, 4:57, 37:48-49, 38:51-52, 44:54, 55:56, 55:58, 55:72, 56:23.

80- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 88.

81- In *The Joyful Wisdom*, p. 80, Nietzsche goes so far as to say that in Islam, for example according to the Wahhabi doctrine, murder and adultery are venial sins.

82- Cf. also Rihani. *Juhan*, p. 36.

particular): having established that ‘God is dead,’ according to him the individual should be self-reliant in terms of morality rather than succumb to the weakening effects of the life-denying ascetic ideal, which has extinguished aristocratic values in modern societies. In other words, people should decide for themselves what is good and what is evil, and create their own morality. The protagonist of this «transvaluation of all values» is again his Übermensch.⁸³ Juhan does not agree with this concept at least as regards her love for her family, her father in particular (her mother died): «She loved him with a love that no “transvaluation of values” could corrupt or undermine.»⁸⁴ But she is also aware she has not been a submissive daughter, having disobeyed Ridha Pasha’s order to keep away from General von Wallenstein, and her father’s words of reproach are still ringing in her ears.⁸⁵ As she knows well, the Koran advises Muslims several times to be dutiful and good to their parents, and numerous sayings of the Prophet order to respect and obey them, even if they are unjust.⁸⁶

Nietzsche’s «transvaluation of all values» also concerns the sexual sphere, as all instincts, even the basest, should be accepted beyond any moral condemnation and the individual should feel his own body no longer as the prison of the soul, but as a practical way of being in the world. In Nietzsche, sexuality is a fundamental, joyful and natural affirmation of life, for its being the very process by which human life is created, and so the elevation of chastity heralded by many religions, which poison the pleasures of the flesh, is for him an aberration, a contradiction of natural values, as attested in his famed “Law against Christianity.”⁸⁷ The German philosopher’s theory also appears to give women permission to enjoy their sexuality, to refuse to join the marriage mart, to reject the hypocritical religious bond of matrimony. The liberating potential it offers to Juhan cannot be overemphasized, as it drives her refusal of both Shukri Bey’s and General von Wallenstein’s proposals: «“I married once – I cannot marry again. I

83- Cf. Nietzsche. *The Antichrist*, pp. 52, 57, 177, 182.

84- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 44.

85- Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

86- Cf. for example Koran 2:83; al-Bukhārī. *al-Adab al-Mufrad*. 7:1:7.

87- Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, Translated by Judith Norman, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 67.

am married to freedom”.)⁸⁸ At the same time, she is not indifferent to the latter’s chivalry and advances.⁸⁹ But Juhan neither has a carnal relationship simply to satisfy her sensual appetites or to have her father released from prison, nor does she kill the German General only to take revenge on him for her father’s assassination. Her affirmative act of will, her challenging and overturning of common morality and values, has the «supreme purpose» to transform the reality around her, «neither in sacrifice nor in vengeance,» but for the sake of her future nation, for the sake of others, «even though she has to break all the conventions and all the sanctified traditions of her people.»⁹⁰ Furthermore, through her child, she can change Nietzschean «transvaluation of all values» into a ‘combination of all values,’ the Eastern and the Western ones, or better, according to her, the best of both of them. In a word, she is willing to give her honor, her freedom and even her life (e.g. risking a death sentence) to perfect the society to which she belongs.⁹¹ It should be noted however, that Juhan’s self-sacrifice, at least in a physical sense, is not fulfilled in the English version of the novelette, in which the heroine saves herself from the capital sentence, goes into exile far from Constantinople, to Konya, where she devotes herself to writing and raises the son she bore from her dead lover-enemy. The Arabic version instead concludes with the most Shakespearean and Romantic of finales: during her last rendezvous with General von Wallenstein, she kills him, and then commits suicide with a knife (*mudyah*): «The knife and the book of Nietzsche soaked in blood were on the floor next to the divan as true witnesses of what has to die in the East and West before the birth of the new world spirit.»⁹²

Juhan’s supreme self-sacrifice, from a Nietzschean perspective, represents an example of the most radical crisis of nihilism. But in his thought, also wanting to die means life-affirming, even if what is affirmed is one’s own

88- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 72.

89- Cf. Ibid. p. 43.

90- Ibid., pp. 76-77, 44 and 43, respectively.

91- Cf. Hajjar. “A Feminist Reading of *Juhan*,” pp. 102-103, 105, 109.

92- Cf. al-Rīḥānī, Amīn. *Khārīj-ul Ḥarīm*. Hindāwī, 2012, p. 86 (the passage was kindly translated from the original Arabic by Dr Maya El Hage). It is worth noting that suicide is a major sin strictly forbidden in Islam (cf. for example Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 2:23:446; Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn 1:587).

destruction. In the middle section of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche provides a moving portrait of Jesus, whom he considered, as Muslims do, a common mortal. According to him, Jesus was the unique true Christian, who wanted his own death on the cross not to redeem anyone, «but to show mankind how to live.»⁹³ In his 1921 essay “Green Logs and Brushwood,” Rihani, while agreeing with Nietzsche that destroying is a way of exercising one’s power to (re)create, describes self-sacrifice, «old fashioned» though it is, as the highest human expression, even regarding the realization of Nietzschean ideals themselves:

*Yes, the builder nowadays, paradoxical as it may seem, is looked upon as a destroyer. [...] Even the most radical among you, the Bolsheviki of the soul, the Anti-Christ, when they stand on their heads, are but a crude symbol of the Cross reversed. And the ideals of your superman, as conceived by their Teuton protagonist, not as they are poetized by his interpreters and parroters, find their highest and noblest expression in self-sacrifice. The old fashioned virtue again. Yes, indeed; even Nietzsche who thought he had murdered Christianity, fled to the forest and brought back a few good logs for the inner fire. Even Nietzsche was made the sport of his own “blond beast” and sent back to the foot of the cross – a caricature of the Christ.*⁹⁴

But Juhan is a woman, actually, an *ante-litteram* Muslim feminist, which is intolerable in her social and religious context, as attested by her cousin Shukri Bey’s curse: «Feminism – freedom and education for women – accursed of Allah!»⁹⁵ Nietzsche also, forgetting his own maxims on freedom for the individual, consistently opposes women’s emancipation and feminism, judged by him as another sign of the *décadence* of modern society. As a distinguished Greek and Latin scholar and classical philologist, the culture Nietzsche admired most was indeed that of Hellenic Greece, where women accepted their cloistered role as wives and mothers, and devoted their entire lives to their sons and family (an idea debated by Rihani in his

93- Nietzsche. *The Antichrist*, p. 106.

94- Rihani. *The Path of Vision*. pp. 61-63.

95- Id. *Juhan*. p. 39.

1933 essay *al-Mar'ah al-mujāhidah*).⁹⁶ His firm conviction was that present-day women had something to learn from the way the ancient Greeks treated their women. Although Nietzsche liked to see himself as an iconoclast, his crusade against decadent Western culture seems to be one-sided: he encourages men to carry out the «transvaluation of all values,» to create themselves anew and allow the Übermensch to emerge, but denies women the possibility of self-development. According to him, society would only become more decadent if the latter abandoned their just, natural role in order to seek careers of their own like men. For this reason he was a bitter opponent of female higher education, arguing that emancipated women want «to lower the general level of women's rank: and there are no more certain means to this end than university education, trousers and the rights of voting cattle.»⁹⁷ Nietzsche's answer to women's demand for equal rights is curiously quite the same as one put into effect by Ridha Pasha with her daughter Juhan at the beginning of the story, that is to say 'Oriental' seclusion.⁹⁸

Juhan resists patriarchy both from within and outside Islam, so, in her case, the 'Islamic feminist' appellative would perhaps be slightly too reductive – she appears rather to be a feminist *tout court*. Anyway, the phrase 'Islamic feminism' got about only in the early nineties of the last century.⁹⁹ Feminism's origins in the Islamic and Arab world date back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the earliest female activists came into the limelight as defending principles which echoed those proclaimed by their Western sisters: equally of rights within the family and full access to education and voting. Their protestations were often accompanied by sensational gestures of breaking off with their local customs, such as removing their veils in public – as Juhan, in the novelette, and Halide Edib (1884-1964)¹⁰⁰, actually, in Istanbul's Sultanahmet Square in 1919. Almost at the same time, however, other women turned up, who, while supporting the need for a radical change in gender relations, began to adopt a 'femi-

96- Cf. Rihani. "The Combating Woman." *The Rihani Essays*, pp. 359-360.

97- Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*, p. 66.

98- Cf. Id. *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 186-187.

99- Cf. Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. Penerbit Fajar Bakati Sdn. Bhd., 1992.

100- Cf. Edib, Halide. *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*. The Century, 1926.

nist' approach staying within the dictates of their own religion and local culture. Indeed, since their beginnings, 'Western-style' Muslim feminists were seen by most of their countrymen as irreligious representatives of an alien culture: in a historic moment, such as the early 20th century, dominated by European colonialist expansionism, women's militancy, often inspired by concepts and models elaborated in an imperialist context, was branded as a further attempt of foreign interference in Islamic societies. It is for this reason that some Muslim feminists broke away from their 'lay' comrades, whose ideology was felt as too Western-friendly. They immediately rejected the term 'feminism,' as coined in the West as well as an inconvenient label: calling themselves feminists, indeed, meant to be in the sights of who instrumentally established a connection between women's rights and forced westernization. On the contrary, they only considered themselves as representatives of an alternative, new voice wishing for the rediscovery of those prerogatives granted to the female gender by Islamic revelation, but opposed by the patriarchal regimes, which, throughout the centuries, had corrupted Muhammad's original and real gender equality message. Their aim was and is therefore rereading some of the most much-discussed passages of Sacred Texts regarding women's position (such as polygyny, divorce, dress code and seclusion) not in conformity with the male religio-political hierarchies¹⁰¹ in order to abolish all discrimination and to free themselves and the whole society.¹⁰² Juhan strongly believes in the possibility of reconciling her religion with modernity, too, as attested by her article "Islam and freedom"¹⁰³ published in the Turkish newspaper *Tanin*.

The Iranian anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini, who in one of her articles provides a clear and concise definition of Islamic feminism as «a movement to sever patriarchy from Islamic ideals and sacred texts and to give voice to an ethical and egalitarian vision of Islam can and does empower Muslim women from all walks of life to make dignified choices,»¹⁰⁴ main-

101- On Islam's hierarchical and not equalitarian nature, cf. Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 43.

102- Cf. Vanzan, Anna. *Le donne di Allah*. Bruno Mondadori, 2013.

103- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*, p. 56.

104- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism." *Critical Inquiry*, no. 32, 2006, p. 645.

tains for example in another essay that «compulsory covering and seclusion for women have no basis in the Koran, and the *hadith* (Traditions) that some claim to support them have been also forcefully questioned.»¹⁰⁵ Rihani's heroine, unveiled (except when she is ordered to wear the *izār* at a private audience with his Majesty the Sultan and Caliph) and 'out of the harem,' appears to be very aware of it, and acts accordingly by freely «cavorting» – to use a colorful expression of her father's – «through the streets of Stanbul,» «in the clubs, the hotels, the High Porte» and, above all, by herself, «without an attendant» (a man, of course) to guard her.¹⁰⁶ Juhan has decided to divorce her husband because he has been unfaithful to the vow of monogamy she imposed on him, and doubts that his cousin Shukri Bey could also keep such a promise. In another article published by Juhan in *Tasvir-i Efşkâr*, she argues that «monogamy [...] is our only salvation» and «the new race must be born in the sacred bond of love, not in concubinage.»¹⁰⁷ She returns to the matter when she happens to ponder on

a framed inscription from the Koran relating to marriage [...]
“And if thou canst not be just [...] marry but one.” And what
is man's justice to woman, she asked herself. The Prophet al-
lows him four wives and asks him to be just, that is conde-
*scending. Zeh, zeh!*¹⁰⁸

The above mentioned Koranic passage is worth reading more extensively for a deeper understanding of its content. Here it is an English translation, very close to that used by Rihani in the novelette: «Thou mayest marry women of thy choice, two or three or four, provided thou art able to deal justly among them. But if thou canst not deal justly among them, marry but one» (4:3).¹⁰⁹ Polygyny appears therefore to be admitted in the Koran, although with some reservations, which are even better clarified in a subsequent verse: «You will never be able to maintain justice among your

105- Id. “Islam and Gender Justice.” *Voices of Diversity and Change*, vol. 5, Edited by Vincent Cornell and Omid Safi, Greenwood, 2007, p. 92.

106- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 23, 26, 17.

107- Ibid. p. 53. Cf. also Id. *The Book of Khalid*, p. 243.

108- Id. *Juhan*. pp. 80–81.

109- Quoted in Khin U, Khin, “Marriage in the Burmese Muslim Community.” *The Journal of the Burma Research Society*, no. 36, December 1954, p. 24.

wives and love them all equally, no matter how hard you try. Do not give total preference to one of them, leaving the other as if in suspense» (4:129). In short, marriage to more than one woman at the same time is lawful, but in fact practically impossible. But while Islamic law mainly deals the polygyny as a financial question, Juhan considers it aberrant in terms of both the sentimental equity and honesty, and the social and spiritual justice: for her, if a man truly loves his wife, there are no reasons why he should take another one.

Juhan seems again to agree with Khalid, that a «Reformation of Islam» might be necessary, by freeing it «from its degrading customs, its stupefying traditions, its enslaving superstitions, its imbruting cants.» For him, as for Juhan, the Koran is «a divine guide to life» and, quoting from it (13:38), he adds: «“Every age has its Book” says the Prophet. But every book, if it aspires to be a guide to life, must contain of the eternal truth what was in the one that preceded it.» And so she tries to put Muhammad and Nietzsche on the same prophetic line and really hopes to find some answers in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, but her search unfortunately has the opposite effect:

*She dipped into [...] this book of Nietzsche. A Prophet? Yes. But why another prophet to a woman who satisfies herself with an inscription from the Koran? “Indeed, why another prophet, [...] when they all alike assume the same attitude toward women?” Love, pity, mercy, justice – they are same, coming from man, whether he be of the Orient or the Occident, a prophet, or a poet, or a hamal. “If you go to woman take a whip with you.” Here is the first and the last of the prophets – the last, echoing the first. Shall the whip then be the father of freedom born of woman? Allah! Has he come from the North, the blond beast? And am I the destined mother? Shall golden wings issue from the gaping, bleeding wounds of my soul? But pederem, what will he say? Take the whip with you.” She was tired of Nietzsche [...]*¹¹⁰

110- Rihani. *Juhan*, pp. 81-82 (*hamal* and *pederem* are Turkish respectively for ‘porter’ and ‘my father’).

In the first English translation of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, published in 1896 and which Rihani might have referred to, Nietzsche's famous line is rendered as follows: «Thou goest to women? Remember thy whip!»; a 1909 translation reads: «Thou goest to women? Do not forget thy whip!».¹¹¹ To be accurate, it is not clear from the original German («*Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiss die Peitsche nicht!*») whether the «whip» belongs to Zarathustra or to «women» in general, so the translation «thy [your] whip» could be misleading, given also that, for example in *Ecce Homo*, «the perfect woman,» who «tears you to pieces when she loves you,» is declared «a dangerous, creeping, subterranean little beast of prey.»¹¹² In a word, Nietzsche could well be saying that it is women who have the 'whip hand' on men. Anyway, what is worthy of interest in this analysis is that Juhan appears to interpret that passage of Nietzsche's in a misogynous sense and, even more importantly, to connect it with Muhammad's message. She is probably making implicit reference to the Koranic verse «as to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them, refuse to share their beds, beat them» (4:34), which would seem however to clash with some sayings of the Prophet.¹¹³ Or the opposite is true: it might be exactly those words of Nietzsche's which fortify Juhan's spirit and encourage her to persevere in what today's Muslim feminist Amina Wadud has called «gender jihad,» her «struggle to establish gender justice»¹¹⁴ in a society which is dominated by male tyranny and favors men in all the spheres of social interaction, when imposing several restrictions on women's freedom. From this perspective, Juhan's rhetorical inner question («But *pederem*, what will he say?») would find its clear answer in the sentence «Take the whip

111- Cf. respectively Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*. Translated by Alexander Tille, The Macmillan Company, 1896, p. 90; and Id. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (our reference edition), p. 77. The English edition of the work of Nietzsche preserved in the Rihani library in Freike, Lebanon, is *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Translated by Thomas Common, T.N. Foulis, 1909, as reported in al-Riḥānī, Amīn Albirt. *Ṣafwatu al-Falsafati al-Riḥāniyyah*. Manshūrāt ḥalaqati-al-Ṣanawbaratayn, 2016, p. 79.

112- Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. p. 65.

113- Cf. for example Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. 4:55:548; al-Bukhārī, al-Adab al-Mufrad, 1:18; al-Tirmidhī, 1:278.

114- Cf. Wadud, Amina. *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Oneworld, 2006, p. 10.

with you,» that is to say: ‘have the whip hand’ on the «blond beast» and what it symbolizes.

Jihad and “Holy War”

Nietzsche’s knowledge of Islam, although partial and sketchy, seems not to be limited only to the Koran, but to range over the Islamic traditions. For example, *Ecce Homo* includes indeed a phrase which clearly originates in one of the Prophet’s sayings: «My paradise is “in the shadow of my sword”.»¹¹⁵ Nietzsche puts it in quotes, showing to be acquainted with the original saying¹¹⁶, referring to the complex Islamic concept of jihad, to be understood in this case in its martial sense.

In the novelette, both in the English and Arabic version, Rihani seems to use without distinction the term «jihad» (*al-jihād*) and the phrase «holy war» (*al-ḥarb al-muqaddasah*).¹¹⁷ In Arabic, *jihād* is a noun meaning the act of striving, applying oneself, struggling, persevering, which recurs both in the Koran and in Islamic traditions, often followed by the phrase «in the way of God» (*fī sabīli Allāhi*), referring not only to physical fighting, but also to the inner work of self-refinement of the believer’s soul. The expression «holy war,» still widely used mainly in the West referring to war that is fought for religion and also as an inaccurate and loose translation for *jihād*, never recurs in the Koran. It does appear therefore rather unusual that an Arab writer, although a Christian, like Rihani uses such a typically Western phrase. The only explanation of it could be that he initially intended his *Juhan* for a public of Western or Arab-American readers.¹¹⁸

In the philosophy of Nietzsche, who was often accused of bellicosity, war is liberation from objectified forms of nihilistic civilization, from that world which nullifies existence, and its intention is always to show how necessary it is for the decisive individual of action to refuse and overturn the dominating slave morality, negative values, ‘bad conscience,’ and gain

115- Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. p. 79.

116- Cf. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 4:52:73.

117- Cf. for example his *Khārij al-ḥarīm*. Hindāwī, 2012, p. 8. Rihani’s English spelling is «*je-had*», but in these pages, for consistency, the standard spelling has been used.

118- Cf. Maleh, Layla. *The English Novel by Arab Writers*. Thesis, King’s College, 1980, pp. 182-183.

power – and in one of his essays, Rihani shows to share Nietzsche’s views to a certain degree.¹¹⁹ As argues Abir Taha,

“war”, for Nietzsche, [...] means something higher than aimless bloody fighting; it is rather a “spiritual war”, even a “holy war” undertaken for the sake of the noblest mission on earth, namely the breeding of the Superman [...] and the fighter [...] is not a simple soldier [...] but rather [...] a noble warrior [...] guided by honor not interest, whose loyalty and obedience stem from his firm belief in his holy cause [...]¹²⁰

However, for Nietzsche, martyrdom, which he links with Christianity – a religion that «promises everything, but *fulfils nothing*» – rather than being a moral high ground or position of strength, is but indicative of an *insensibility* to the problem of “truth”.¹²¹ And it is not by chance that Khalid, Rihani’s Nietzschean hero, when praising martyrs, does not refer to a religion in particular, but exalts martyrdom as the highest demonstration of human greatness.¹²²

Persian theologian al-Ghazālī makes a clear distinction between the ‘lesser jihad’ – a militant struggle in which Muslims fight against a common military enemy – and the ‘greater jihad’ – a spiritual struggle against one’s own worldly passions.¹²³ The martial jihad, which is one of the aspects of the ‘lesser jihad,’ has both an offensive and defensive level, and can only be declared by a recognized religious authority.¹²⁴ On 14 November 1914, Şeyhülislam Ürgüplü Mustafa Hayri Efendi declared jihad in the name of Mehmed V against the Triple Entente, enemy of the Ottoman Empire. It was the last genuine proclamation of jihad in history by a Caliph, and in Rihani’s novelette, there are three clear references to this epochal event: when Juhan hints at «her brothers fighting for their country and their faith»

119- Cf. Rihani. “The Most Exalted Prophet.” *The Rihani Essays*, p. 490.

120- Taha, Abir. *Nietzsche, Prophet of Nazism: The Cult of the Superman*. AuthorHouse, 2005, pp. 59-60.

121- Cf. Nietzsche. *The Antichrist*. pp. 118, 150.

122- Cf. Rihani. *The Book of Khalid*. p. 325.

123- Cf. al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *On Disciplining the Soul*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Timothy J. Winter, The Islamic Texts Society, 1995, p. 56.

124- Cf. Koran. 4:59.

and at an article of hers on the subject for the newspaper *Tanin*, and when the author describes the difference of opinion between the heroine and her father on «the question of the *jihād*» and the Ottoman-German Alliance. While his daughter «hailed the Germans, when they came to Constantinople, as Turkey's only friends,» the Pasha, «who would not be duped by the Germans, openly declared against a Holy War.» When in office as «a trusty advisor» to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, indeed, the ex-statesman «never concealed his dislike» for them, upholding on the contrary right «the diplomacy of England and France at the Porte.»

From Ridha Pasha's point of view, shared by many of his countrymen, Germans' coming to the Ottoman capital, far from being a demonstration of their sincere friendship for the Empire, is rather an act of sheer foreign aggression to be combated: «our alliance with Germany [...] is a crime against our nation, against all Islam». ¹²⁵ His «dislike» turns to ferocious hate when his son Medjid Bey (Mecîd Bey), brother to Juhan, an officer in Gallipoli, is brutally shot and killed on the battlefield by a German superior for disobeying his orders (it is Shukri Bey, the victim's cousin, who tells how the crime happened). According to Ridha Pasha, his beloved son is a «martyr» and a true mujāhid, as being dead «to a cause more sacred to him, in times of war, than that of country or religion,» that is to say «in defence of his own brothers in arms» ¹²⁶ against the infidels (there is no «good deed» which «could be an equivalent of jihād in the way of Allah,» says the Prophet). ¹²⁷ In the novelette, a wounded soldier, eyewitness of the episode, expresses himself in still more vehement words: «my officer [...] Allah enfold him in his mercy [...] died defending us against the brutality of the Germans.» ¹²⁸ Medjid Bey's type of martyrdom, military valor and moral integrity of his valiant behavior are highly praised in many of Muhammad's sayings. ¹²⁹

125- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 15, 16, 39, 21, 19, and 27.

126- Ibid., p. 47.

127- Cf. Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, 12:1298.

128- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 53-54.

129- Cf. Sunan Abī Dāwūd. 41:4754; Sunan al-Nasā'ī, 5:37:4101; Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī. 4:12:2567; Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn. 1:19.

The failure of Shukri Bey's attempt on General von Wallenstein's life and his consequent being sentenced to death could be interpreted from the same perspective. Indeed, his gesture is not motivated by the intention to defend a higher and more noble cause, such as protecting his country or religion, but only by his own personal interest, jealousy and cowardice: to liquidate his rival in love and avoid being sent to the front to join his regiment at Gallipoli. It almost seems that his conduct meets with a condemnation more divine than human.¹³⁰ On the other hand, author himself depicts Shukri Bey as a «cruel and abject» man. As regards Ridha Pasha's death, arrested on a specious charge of treason and vilely murdered in prison, Rihani's judgment on the matter coincides with that of his Muslim positive characters and is again marked by respect for Islamic law¹³¹ and strong disapproval for the base ways of infidel Germans in league with the secular Young Turks government.¹³² Juhan's 'lesser jihad,' as already explained in the previous pages, is above all a 'gender jihad.' In her «vision,» it is «Freedom» itself, personified in a female divine bellicose figure, to represent it.¹³³

Ibn Rushd calls the 'greater jihad' 'jihad of the heart/soul', and divides the 'lesser jihad' into three levels, mentioning the martial jihad last: 'jihad by the tongue/pen', 'jihad by the hand', 'jihad by the sword'.¹³⁴ Ideally following this classification, Rihani seems to depict his heroine as a perfect and complete model of *mujāhidah*. Juhan, who declares herself on her countrymen's side – her brothers who are devoting themselves to 'jihad by the sword' at Gallipoli against the French-British forces – does not want to find refuge in Anatolia, as her father would desire, but to «remain in the center of the storm to the end» in the capital, as «a duty to the nation, to the Empire.» As a woman, she is not allowed to fight in the battlefield,

130- Cf. Sunan Abī Dāwūd. 14:2763: «Faith prevented assassination (treacherous killing). A believer should not assassinate.»

131- On Rihani's inclination towards Islam, cf. Fontaine, Jean. "Amīn Rayhānī, chrétien ou musulman?" *Travaux et Jours*, no. 38, janvier-mars 1971, pp. 103-114. In *The Book of Khalid*, Rihani seems to make a fool of all those who wondered about his real religious faith: «I am a Christian by the grace of Allah» (p. 65).

132- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*, pp. 35, 64.

133- Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 52.

134- Cf. Ibn Rushd. *al-Muqaddimāt al-mumahhidāt*. Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988, pp. 341-342.

but she shows she is able to choose the right moment to put General von Wallenstein (literally) to the sword, which is «not, for her, a crime» and, after all, neither for the Ottoman judges of the Court, who decide indeed to spare her life and let her leave to Konya after the homicide (though perhaps only «to square themselves with their conscience and be forgiven by Allah»).¹³⁵ Even her feigned compliance in order to save her father's life and execute the General can be interpreted as a recourse to the *taqiyyah* (religious precautionary dissimulation), a practice permitted in Islam under certain circumstances.¹³⁶

The 'lesser jihad' is not only related to warfare, but includes all deeds acted by an individual in the way of God which externally display themselves. As for 'jihad by the tongue/pen,' Ibn Rushd describes it as commanding good and forbidding evil,¹³⁷ spreading and defending Islam with one's tongue or writing.¹³⁸ Juhan, as «the woman-oracle of the press and the tribune,» works out this level of jihad through both its ways: her «written and spoken word [...] inspires men and women.»¹³⁹ Her thirst for knowledge and intellectual activity are furthermore particularly praised in both the Koran¹⁴⁰ and the Islamic traditions, which consider them even more precious than martyrdom.¹⁴¹ Also because of her wisdom and knowledge, she is considered by some a «divine object of adoration next to Allah and the Prophet,»¹⁴² and, on the other hand, the Prophet himself said once: «Whoso honoureth the learned, honoureth me.»¹⁴³

135- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 36, 51, 91.

136- Cf. Koran. 3:28, 16:106 and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 7:71:662, 4:52:147, 4:53:408, 3:49:857.

137- Cf. Koran. 31:17.

138- Cf. Koran. 25:52.

139- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 23, 16.

140- Cf. for example Koran 39:9, 58:11.

141- Cf. Ul-Karim, Fazl. (ed.) *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-id-Din: Revival of Religious Learnings*. Darul-Ishaat, 1993, p. 22. Cf. also, for example, Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, 13:1385; Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, 5:39:2646.

142- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 53.

143- Quoted without any source in Al-Suhrawardy, Abdullah Al-Mamun. (ed.) *The Sayings of Muhammad*. With Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi, John Murray, 1954, p. 92.

‘Jihad by the hand’ refers to choosing to do what is right and to combat injustice, following Muhammad’s «beautiful pattern (of conduct)».¹⁴⁴ As for Juhan, it concerns with her charitable and humanitarian activities, for example her selling flowers «at a charity bazaar in Taksim gardens» or voluntary work as a nurse at the hospital for both Turkish and German wounded soldiers’ benefit, work which is «not of a dilettantish nature.» Rihani wants to make clear that it is not «a tribute to the fashion of the day among the society women of Stanbul,» but a task felt by his heroine as a moral and religious duty to others. Once again, Juhan’s conduct as «a right Muslim woman»¹⁴⁵ is confirmed in several Islamic traditions.¹⁴⁶ The same war wounded’s blessings to her take on a very special significance, as reported in another saying of the Prophet: «When you enter upon one who is sick, tell him to pray for you, for his supplication is like the supplication of the angels.»¹⁴⁷

And finally, ‘jihad of the heart’ is combating against the devil (al-Shayṭān), struggling of the self against forbidden desires in the attempt to escape his persuasion to evil. In Juhan’s ‘internal’ jihad, it is General von Wallenstein the devil incarnate to be fought, a sort of metaphor or symbol of evil. In her eyes he is, at the same time, both a monstrous beast and «the lord of *her* heart» whose devilish charm is all but irresistible. She is almost overcome with his «power to persuade, to dominate, to win willing obedience, to recruit [...] human hearts» and, even if only once, she goes so far as to offer herself to him as a sexual «slave» and «mistress,» at first considering her act as a Nietzschean «transvaluation of all values.» But, at a later time, when she sees the error of her ways, choking with rage and remorse, she repents: «Allah! [...] Why did I not slay the monster?». Killing him, within and without her, is therefore the only way to free herself from shame, to purify her soul. At any rate, her Nietzschean aim to procreate is achieved, and «if she did right, after acquiring the seed, in destroying the sower»¹⁴⁸ is, to her, just a passing doubt.

144- Koran. 33:21.

145- Cf. Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 16, 53-54, and 13 respectively.

146- Cf. for example Bulūgh al-Marām 4:654; Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī, 2:5:1073; Sunan Ibn Mājah, 1:6:1443.

147- Sunan Ibn Mājah 1:6:1441.

148- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 84, 73, 74, 80 and 91, respectively (the italics are mine).

Thus Dreamt Juhan

The Book of Khalid's hero so often refers in the story to his «dreams,» «strange visions, marvellous» and «nightmares» (interpreted as a «heavenly testimony,» «keys to the secret chamber of one's soul»), that the author addresses him several times as a (more or less naive) «dreamer:» «when he was not racked and harrowed by nightmares, he was either disturbed by the angels of his visions or the succubi of his dreams.» Besides his *Dream of Cyclamens*, a nostalgic and longing chant for his land narrated by him in free verse, his most «remarkable dream» is beyond doubt that in which he, «in the multicoloured robes of an Arab amir,» is «riding through the desert.» Said oneiric experience is a clear omen of Khalid's duty in life to build «a great Arab Empire in the border-land of the Orient and Occident.»¹⁴⁹ Dreams, visions and their interpretation, even more present in *Juhan*, have great importance in Islam, and Rihani himself hints at it when referring to Khalid's «belief [...] that when you dream you are in Jannat, for instance, you must be prepared to go through Juhannam the following day» as «a method of interpretation as ancient as Joseph.»¹⁵⁰

In Islam, dreams play a precise role of contact between God and His prophets, the sensible world and the spiritual world. A Koranic verse and a peculiar prayer uttered by Muhammad before going to bed and whenever getting up¹⁵¹ give an important key to understand generally the role of sleep: during it, souls separate from bodies lie with God, not elsewhere, therefore what is produced when one sleeps is necessarily submitted to God's will. Since their origins, Muslims conceived sleep as an active and clear state of consciousness, and not as a temporary state of unconsciousness. As for *Juhan*, it is necessary to make a distinction between dreams and visions, with the exception of her already mentioned «Mohammadan goddess» who is evidently only a figment of her imagination or, better, a pure symbolical figure rationally conceived by her in state of wakefulness. *Juhan*'s two dreams described in the story, though different in meaning and contents, both concern her late family members, her brother and father respectively.

149- Cf. Id. *The Book of Khalid*. pp. 51, 116, 118, 33, 101, 126, 49-51, 30, 31-32, and 342 respectively.

150- Rihani. *The Book of Khalid*. p. 30.

151- Cf. Koran. 39:42; al-Bukhārī. *Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn*. 16:1446.

Prophet Muhammad considered «pious» or «true» dreams as divine messages:¹⁵² one who dreams is similar to a prophet who gets a little revelation, for one's own use or to one's neighbors' advantage, conveyed through the angel of dreams¹⁵³ (Rihani calls him «genius» and uses the allusive phrase «the wings of night») or by ascending into Heaven, the realm of the hereafter (in the novel, «that shadowy and un conjectured world»),¹⁵⁴ where it lies a «Table Preserved»¹⁵⁵ on which it is inscribed the fate of human beings. During sleep it is possible to meet purified souls or the dead of one's own family with whom exchanging information and inquiries, but dreams are often veiled by symbols and need to be interpreted. Over the centuries, Muslims have in fact developed a sort of science of oneiric interpretation,¹⁵⁶ also spread at a popular level. As a Muslim, Juhan is not an exception: she believes «in her dreams, some of which, especially those of evil omen, she observed, had come true».¹⁵⁷

The dream of her dead brother who places his sword in her hand heralds indeed General von Wallenstein's execution through her and, above all, helps her to remove her doubts about her attraction-repulsion feelings for him. Nietzsche too considers certain dreams as a sort of prosecution or a symbolical commentary on sleeping one's conscious life.¹⁵⁸ As for Juhan's dream concerning her father, it is a «clairvoyant dream» which has a double function: to prepare her for the «shock» of the loss and reveal the true cause of Ridha Pasha's death, that is to say a heinous homicide mounted as a tragic suicide, as reported in the newspaper *Tanin* the following day. In this case, Rihani seems in truth to describe more a revelation received in a state of trance than a simple dream had by his heroine at night-time. In Sufi circles dreams are so important that events happened in dream are considered more real and significant than those which occur in the natural course of things. This might explain Juhan's aloof behavior and unusual re-

152- Cf. in particular Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 29:5628; Muwaṭṭa' Mālik 52:3.

153- Cf. al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyyah 55:395.

154- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 41, 44.

155- Cf. Koran. 85:22

156- Cf. for example Koran. 12:6 and 12:37.

157- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 51.

158- Cf. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, all-too-Human. A Book for Three Spirits*. Part II. Translated by Paul V. Cohn, George Allen and Unwin, 1924, p. 43.

action to *Tanin*'s official notice. To prove the point that said Juhan's oneiric experience is something more than a simple dream it is the inapplicability of the interpretation of it proposed by her maid Zuleika (Zuleyha): «Blood is happiness, [...] so my mother, who was an interpreter of dreams, used to say.» It cannot be ignored either the effect of Selim's potion upon Juhan's psyche which, as «coursing triumphantly through her veins»,¹⁵⁹ could have caused in her what Nietzsche calls a 'Dionysian' phenomenon, that is to say a psychic state of aesthetic experience, a result of combination of «stupendous awe» and «blissful ecstasy.»¹⁶⁰

Juhan's two visions described in the novelette – the most important of which deals with her dead mother or, better, with «the mothers of her race in bondage» –¹⁶¹ are both, directly or indirectly, connected to General von Wallenstein. She has her first vision while she is translating *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and not for coincidence she uses a typical Nietzschean dictionary for her tale through expressions such as «terrible truth,» «to urge me to some heroic deed,» «race,» and above all «superhuman.»¹⁶² It almost seems that her vision is influenced by or even springs from the pages of *Zarathustra*, maybe from some of its more famous and destabilizing passages, something like a warning to her, for example: «Man is something that is to be surpassed. [...] All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man?».¹⁶³ But who is, in the novelette, the «beast» to be surpassed? Man, of course, and her dithering, in order to do «some heroic deed.» At any rate, her dilemma to resolve is: «shall it be in sacrifice or in vengeance?». And then, who or what is to be sacrificed? Herself? Her honor? Who or what is to be avenged? Woman-kind? And what is the price of their and her freedom? Recalling her vision, she asks herself such questions almost all through the story. Incapable of finding a clear answer from within herself, she wonders in vain if, through

159- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 44.

160- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Edited by Oscar Levy, Translated by William A. Haussmann, vol. 1, The Macmillan Company, 1923, p. 25.

161- Rihani. *Juhan*. p. 76.

162- Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

163- Nietzsche. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. p. 6.

his sword, her dead brother in dream «meant vengeance or sacrifice.» Only in the end she realizes that it is an insignificant question, as «in her own eyes, whether she be an instrument of sacrifice or vengeance, she will be accomplishing a supreme purpose»¹⁶⁴ which is – as Nietzsche would say – affirmation of life. On the other hand, in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche easily settles the issue of sacrifice and vengeance: when all the unexpressed instincts turn themselves inwardly, what happens is a real conspiracy against life. Hence was born, disguised by terms such as ‘justice’ and ‘equality,’ a spirit of vengeance whose main key strength is sacrifice.

Juhan’s other recurrent vision in the story is the «vision of the blond beast.» It is so real, intense and shocking to represent for the heroine «the deepest, sternest, ugliest reality of her life.» She seems «to behold it personified,» a «pursuing monster» which symbolizes her «shame and fear,»¹⁶⁵ a feeling of guilt and repentance concerning her illicit intercourse with General von Wallenstein. She surely knows well what the Prophet would have said about it: «Obscenity is part of harshness and harshness will be in Hell.»¹⁶⁶ And what about her people? They – «those of the mosques» in particular – could not forgive her conduct: «if she submits to the will of an infidel, she will be dragged from his house [...] and put to the sword.»¹⁶⁷

According to Islamic tradition, good visions come from God and the bad ones from the devil, as ‘whisperings of Satan.’¹⁶⁸ And this is the internal conflict, the drama of Juhan, ever on the edge between good and evil, faith and reason, spirit and flesh, duty and love, religion and politics, East and West. Her actions are motivated by interior impulses, opposing feelings in her soul, not always clear, even to herself, and, just like Khalid, she is absolutely alone, alienated from other people. If *The Book of Khalid* could but end with its hero’s vanishing, Juhan’s story can but close with her exile and, maybe, «trusting in Allah and the Prophet» (and Zarathustra,

164- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 51, 76.

165- Ibid., pp. 81, 79.

166- Sunan Ibn Mājah. 5:37:4184.

167- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 81, 66.

168- Cf. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 42:5003; Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī 6:45:3528.

naturally) – together with her newborn son – also with «the realization of her long-cherished dream»¹⁶⁹ of freedom.

Conclusion

The first specific studies on the relationship between Nietzsche's thought and Islamic doctrine were only carried out recently. With his novelette *Juhan* (and to a lesser extent with the novel *The Book of Khalid*), Rihani was therefore a pioneer in highlighting, even if in literary rather than essayistic form, the numerous affinities between the German philosopher's work and the religion founded by Mohammed. This is mainly due to Rihani's identity as an Arab immigrant writer, and therefore to his dual education in both Eastern and Western models. Furthermore, his unique critical approach, which transcends all cultural and spatial boundaries, has indeed allowed the author to implement, in a certain sense, even an overcoming of the same Nietzschean philosophy using precisely the Islamic Holy Scriptures and Sufism, of which he – although Christian – was well-versed. And here, just to quote a few examples, the *Übermensch* becomes 'supreme Man', Perfect Being – embodied in the son of a Turkish Muslim woman and a German general, called – not by chance – Mustafa (an epithet of Muhammad), almost a prophet in swaddling-bands (Gibran will choose the same name in 1923 for the hero of his *The Prophet*), and the «transvaluation of all values» a 'combination of all values,' or rather, of all the most noble values that humankind has ever produced in both hemispheres of the globe.

Educated in the United States of America, which at the beginning of the 20th century was considered to be the cradle of democracy and freedom, Rihani judged the state of oppression and ignorance in his native land which women – both Muslim and Christian – lived in, as intolerable. Certainly, he wasn't the first Arab intellectual to comment on women's issues (one calls to mind the Egyptians Rifā'ah Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and Qāsim Amīn, whom he greatly admired), however he was undoubtedly the first among them to use the word 'feminism' and one of the few who believed that women had to emancipate themselves alone, without delegating the task of fighting for their rights to men: «Ten women who walk through the

169- Rihani. *Juhan*. pp. 77, 76.

city streets unveiled are more effective than one hundred male writers who defend the cause of their emancipation.»¹⁷⁰

As demonstrated in this research, Juhan, who pursues her battle without intermediaries, is a perfectly credible Muslim woman, even a *mujāhidah* and an *ante-litteram* Islamic feminist, and not a paradoxical heroine, detached from reality, as some have claimed. In fact, not only is the historic-political-religious context in which the novelette is set, meticulously reconstructed, but all three of its protagonists seem to be inspired by actual historical figures who were still living at the time of the narrated events, starting with General von Wallenstein («the blond beast»), who calls to mind German General Otto Liman von Sanders (1855-1929), the ‘Lion of Gallipoli.’

But, above all, many biographical similarities exist between Juhan and the Turkish novelist, translator, nationalist and political leader for women’s rights Halide Edib Adivar (1884-1964). The latter was indeed daughter of Mehmet Edib Bey, secretary – like Juhan’s father Ridha Pasha – of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and lost her mother when she was still a child; she was educated at home by private European tutors from whom she learned French and English languages and literature, religion, philosophy, sociology; her father’s house was an important center of intellectual activity in Constantinople and, even as a young girl, she participated in the cultural life of the capital; she was the first Muslim female to graduate in Turkey in 1901; she wrote numerous articles on the status of women for various newspapers, such as *Tanin* and others; she got a divorce from her first husband (she was not willing to accept his second wife); in 1908 she was among the founders of the Elevation of Women organization (*Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*); she lived in Europe, Anatolia and, during First World War, as Ottoman inspector for schools, also in Mount Lebanon.

The numerous explicit and implicit references to Nietzsche found in *Juhan*, far from being a mere exotic element introduced artificially into the work, instead suggest reading the whole story from a Nietzschean perspective, especially in terms of «will to power» and «*amor fati*», i.e. lust for action and ‘active’ acceptance of the events that occur in one’s life.

170- al-Riḥānī, Amīn Fāris. *Zanbaqat-ul Ghūr*. Dār al-Jīl, 1934, p. 133 (translated by me).

And finally this research has established that the first Arab translation of the novelette (published in New York in 1916) and its original English version (posthumously published in Beirut in 2011) conclude in a completely different way – a far from irrelevant detail, nevertheless until now, ignored by many Rihani scholars.

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