

7AN: The Adventures of Hajji Baba

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 22 Oct 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5767>

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Dave Tallman — 22 Oct 2010, 22:55

James Morier's Hajji Baba of Ispahan, The Adventures of Hajji Baba<<http://hajji.netfirms.com/index.html>>is a famous book that may be a source Wolfe drew on for ideas and character names in "Seven American Nights". This book was written in the 1800's and details the picaresque adventures of Hajji Baba, a barber. It features characters named the Mollah Nadan, Mirza Amak, and Osman Aga. Credit for this find goes to JazzCat, a poster on <http://usefulphrases.yuku.com> (It's interesting that in this work the name Nadan is given to a religious leader, a mullah).

According to Robert Borski's posting on urth.net:

While seeming a plausible Arab name, "Nadan," in fact, is something you would be ill-mannered in calling anyone. In Farsi it means "stupid, idiot;" therefore, by extension, the same thing that 'cretin' does.

With the discovery of "The Adventures of Hajji Baba" that claim about Nadan's name is partially invalidated. In translation, "Hadji Baba" is a well-known work of Persian literature, and any name drawn from it would be a reasonable name for a child. In the printed text of the English version of the book (available online through Google books), the name shows up as "Molah Nadân". According to <http://www.khamush.com/persian/rubaie236.htm>, "Nadân-ám" means "I cannot."

I'm becoming convinced that Wolfe read this book as part of his background research for the story and picked that name deliberately. Molah Nadan changes clothing with the narrator and ends up being punished for a crime in his place. A Christ figure, perhaps?

stoneox17 at aol.com — 24 Oct 2010, 19:46 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> writes:

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Googling a while ago, I came across another instance of the name Nadan. It comes from the story of Nadan and Ahikar (or Ahikar), which is a story from the Middle East from Biblical times, and which Wolfe also may have been familiar with.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia summarizes it as follows:

"Ahikar ... adopts as heir his nephew Nadan. The unappreciative youth falsely accuses his benefactor of treason, whereupon Ahikar escapes death only through the intervention of an executioner whom he himself had once spared,"

Eventually Ahikar is restored to his position, and Nadan is punished.

Peter S

James Wynn — 26 Oct 2010, 15:20 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I love this sort of post.

That he is punished in the place of another, Molah Nadan is a Christ figure.

On 10/22/2010 5:55 PM, Dave Tallman wrote:

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