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BYRON'S POETICAL ORIENTALISM

By

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ABSTRACT

BYRON'S POETICAL ORIENTALISM

By

Sameer Jamal Mahmoud

Angered and intrigued by the ways in which the West has viewed the Moslem East from earlier times through the Middle Ages to Victorian Orientalism, the author set out to study the nature of Byron's poetical Orientalism in his Eastern works. These works best represent the British view of the Moslem East.

The study addresses three major topics. The first topic examines how Western literary sources portrayed Islam, Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) and Moslems throughout the centuries. The second topic traces the development of the Oriental tale in English prose and poetry, which can be traced back to the Crusades and to medieval romances. The last topic touches upon Byron's fascination with the Orient as manifested in his Oriental works: Childe Harold's Pilgrimage II, "The Turkish Tales," "Beppo," and Don Juan.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Western caution towards Eastern ways of life, thinking, and morality, and an unwillingness to accept Moslem civilization, rejecting much of their practices and all of their religion, i.e., Islam, has intrigued and angered me as it has angered Edward Said, as manifested in his pioneering work, Orientalism. Said explains how Western culture represents the Eastern culture in its imaginative or nonimaginative writing. Said suggests, at least theoretically, that Orientalism is ultimately a cultural doctrine willed over the Orient so that the Orient becomes inferior to the West; this doctrine forced a difference between the familiar (the West, Europe, "us") and the other, the stranger, the inferior (the East, the Orient, "them"). Said also argues that Western writings displayed a bias, particularly against the Arabs; that the writings did much to fix in the Western mind a stereotype of Eastern inferiority; and that their thinking was strongly tinged by racialist assumptions. In short, the West--a superior, elite culture--has frequently portrayed the East as inferior.

I set out to study Orientalism in Byron's work because his imaginative works stand out as the best imaginative representation of British Orientalism. His work has a distinctive and unique position among other works that preceded him. My concern in this research is to study, reflect upon, and analyze the motives behind Byron's "love

affair" with and interest in the Moslem East, and to dwell upon the nature of Byron's Orientalism. The poet's Orientalism deserves a close investigation in order to see how this Orientalism affects the structure of his Oriental, imaginative work; how it contributes thematically to it; and what conclusions can be drawn as far as attitudes are concerned, from Byron's use of it. This study is a close examination of the Oriental elements in his imaginative writing.

In its purpose and approach, Byron's Orientalism is different and unique, for his reading about the history of the East has given him an open mind. The East is not only a subject for study and examination but also a place for first-hand observation. For Byron, the East has become a way of life, a classroom, very open, a whole new world, exotic and strange, but has its own treasures, richness, wealth; prolific in terms of culture and tradition, experiences, discoveries. There is a marked difference in his Orientalism. In his work, Byron is truly the master of his material (not a captive), handling his material successfully, refusing to follow the demands of traditional stock ideas of others. He handles the Oriental element with realism and urbanity that are unparalleled in other works of the same genre.

It was in the Grand Tour fashion that Byron first thought of going to the East. Once in the East, in a new school different from his own, Byron began to get rid of some of his European prejudices about the East as inferior, savage, uncivilized, lagging behind, and to see it as it really is. He started dwelling on the virtues and vices of the East compared with the virtues and vices of his own civilization. Byron was also concerned about the authenticity of his

narrative, insisting on the "correctness of his costumes" and the Eastern allusions.

Byron had his own way of looking at the East. He, unlike Beckford, Scott, Southey, and Moore, to name a few, was not a library Orientalist whose main concern was to gather as much information as possible about Eastern life, customs and thought in order to present it in an academic way to his audience. As George Rashmawi rightly puts it, "Byron was essentially a curious, tolerant traveller, who, as he moved from one strange city into another in the Near East, absorbed his new experiences in this beautiful region of the world, and stored them in his memory to fall back into when the chances presented themselves" (p. 48). Byron's Eastern experience has influenced and tamed his attitude toward both European and Eastern civilizations. For the poet was in distress: his life suffered several blows that resulted in complications and emotional frustrations, after his exile from England and his mysterious sexual relationship with his half-sister, Augusta. The Eastern memories became so precious to him that Byron never hesitated to refer to them publicly and in his journal or to his friends. Byron liked the simplicity of life in the East, where one can enjoy his freedom.

The romantic cult of Orientalism is a movement that started with William Beckford's The History of the Caliph Vathek in 1786. It was probably the first European Oriental tale closely imitating Eastern literature. In England, the vogue of Orientalism established itself at the end of the eighteenth century. Byron's Oriental work was a response to the romantic cult of Orientalism which seemed the fashion of the time. Stemming originally from the Napoleonic conquest of

Egypt, the movement in Europe provided a palette, a geography, and an exotic manner of living at a strong variance with everything that the civilized West seemed to stand for during the nineteenth century. Many Europeans started having an easy access to the East; they went there even for short visits, especially the French and the British. Some of them never forgot to record in their works what they had seen.

The East presented to the European writers and poets rich colors, life, intense sunlight, a new definition of freedom, let alone escape from the reality of life in Europe. Byron is a case in point. The Moslem East provided the Westerner with an ancient, complicated civilization with its standard of behavior and the acceptance of slavery at variance with humanistic Western standards. It presented a different conception of the Creator that does not come to terms with the Westerners' conception of Jesus as part of the Creator.

A prolific romantic English poet like Byron had created several Oriental works in his oeuvre. In other words, Byron's trip to the Orient produced the "Turkish Tales," Childe Harold's Pilgrimage II, Beppo, and Don Juan. Byron devotes his tales to the social, religious and political life of the region. He also displayed his fascination with the Arabian Nights, the one great source of literary Orientalism which the eighteenth century brought to the West and which in the nineteenth century became popular.

In his first Oriental tale, The Giaour, Byron begins with a specific description of the setting in which the action takes place:

> Far, dark,along the blue sea glancing,
> The shadows of the rocks advancing
> Start on the fisher's eye . . .
> . . . by the lovely light
> That best becomes an Eastern night.
>
> (The Giaour 168-179)

A brief summary of the plot would contain the following points: Hassan, a Moslem Chieftain, loves his slave Leila; but she is also loved by the Christian Giaour, and Hassan, learning of her infidelity, has her killed in the "traditional fashion" (drowned, like a kitten in a sack). The Giaour kills Hassan in combat and then retreats into a monastery, where he tells his tale and dies. Byron highlights very selective Oriental elements in the tale. The narration alludes to the Giaour's fleeting glimpses. The Giaour displays the proverbial "evil eye":

> Though young and pale, that sallow front
> Is scath'd by fiery passion's brunt,
> Though bent on earth thine evil eye
> As meteor-like thou glidest by,
> Whom Othman's sins should slay or shun.
>
> (The Giaour 194-199)

This is a well-known aspect of Eastern life. In the Holy Quran, there is a reference to an envier who can destroy the material and the spiritual goods of the people he envies. This aspect of life in the Moslem society still holds today; many people are obsessed by the effects of the evil eye.

In another tale, Byron's The Bride of Abydos, perhaps the best imaginative representation of Byron's Orientalism, holds a unique position among its counterparts because all the characters are Orientals. In Marchand's words, The Bride of Abydos is "an objective Oriental tale with authentic background of Moslem customs" (p. 63). In this tale, Byron touches upon arranged Oriental marriages, the treatment of women as slaves and their rights in the Moslem society.

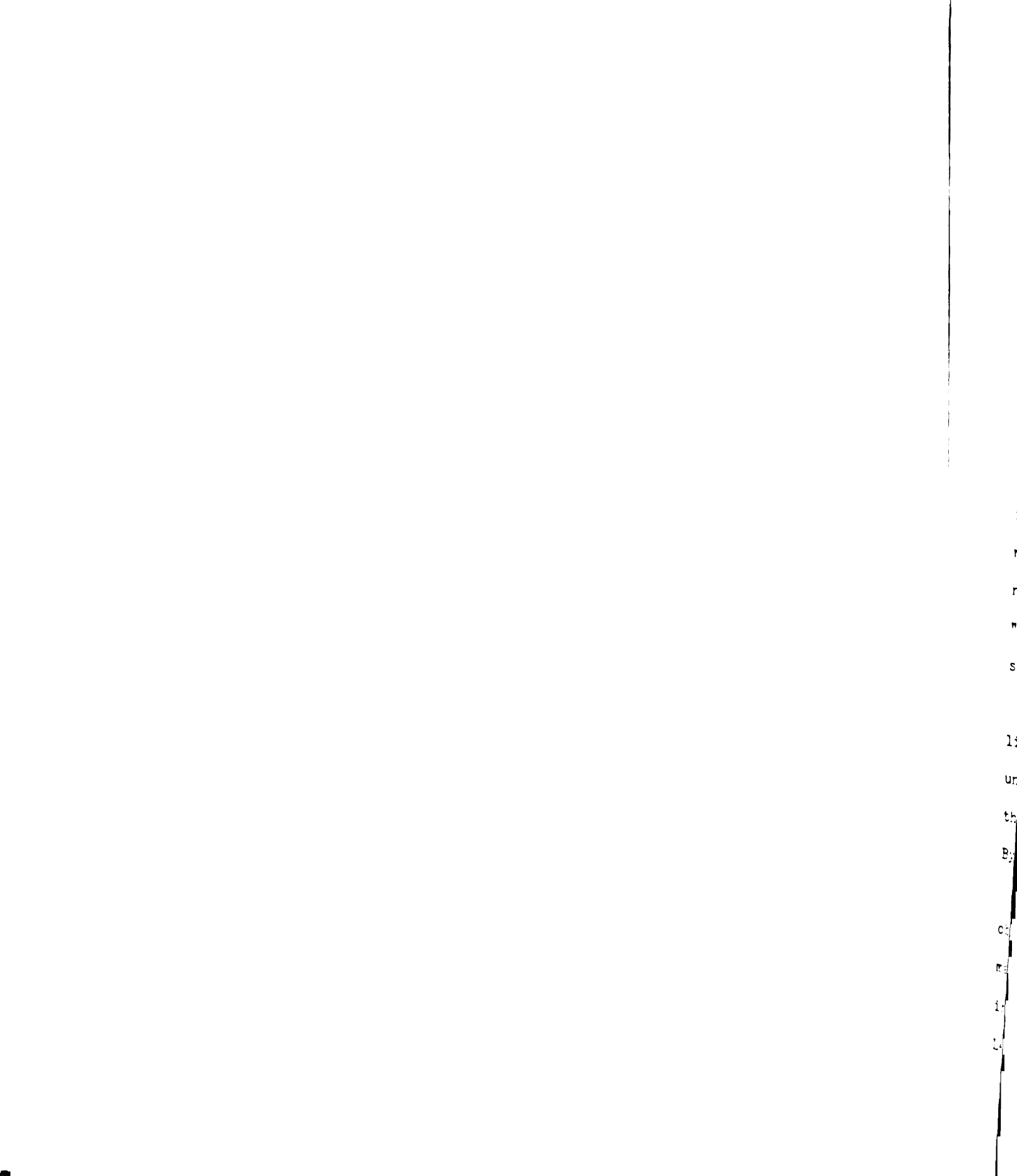
Another of Byron's tales is concerned exclusively with piracy. The Corsair, the title of the tale, locates the scene of action at the

ancient town of Abydos, on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, or Hellespont, about half-way between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmora. Stories of piracy were rife in the East in Byron's time.

In Beppo, written in Italy in the autumn of 1817, the hero is disguised as a Turk and returns home after a prolonged absence in the East. Byron seizes the opportunity for a digression on Moslem women. Laura, the hero's wife, is amused and impressed when she learns that her husband has been living amongst the Turks and that he has adopted some of their manners, especially pertaining to dress.

In Don Juan, Byron treats the subject of the Moslem East for the last time. Byron's heroines, in particular, have "dark, Oriental eyes." He dwells on themes of love, war, and religion. He touches also upon the theme of buying and selling of slaves in the second canto of Don Juan. Juan is offered for sale in the Istanbul slave market. There is a clear allusion to the existence of slavery in the region (The British being by no means innocent of use of slave trade for profit).

From the scholarly investigations of Byron's Orientalism, I have drawn on several studies that started at the turn of the twentieth century. The publication of Martha Conant's The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century was a notable contribution to the study of the Oriental tale in England. Published in 1908, the book deals with Oriental tales in the century. Conant classified the tale in that period into four categories: moral, philosophical, imaginative and satirical. Marie Meester's Oriental study (1915) allows four and a half pages for the discussion of Byron's Orientalism, and consequently,



the results are negligible. In the mid- and late-1930s, Wallace Cable Brown contributed to Byron scholarship. He published four articles and a dissertation about the British interest in the Near East. In his dissertation, published in 1934, Brown dwells on the popularity of English travel books about the Near East, 1775-1825. He contends that Byron's romances grew out of this travel-book milieu, with its emphasis on accuracy and the liveliness of style. However, his discussion of Byron's work is terse. His article, "Byron and the English Interest in the Near East," makes the point that Byron "capitalized" an interest already existing, created by the many travel books then popular, but Brown does not discuss Byron's own work. Brown stressed the erudition involved in the depiction of local color. He alluded to the relationship between the poetic vogue and contemporary knowledge of the region. He maintains that scholars and travellers brought his "glamorous reality" of the East near to the English public and so stimulated the interest of imaginative writers.

Harold Wiener devotes his dissertation to the study of the literary sources of the Turkish tales. His work adds further to our understanding and appreciation by studying Byron's sources and the use that he made of them. His work, however, falls short of explaining Byron's understanding of the Near East.

Anahid Melikian (1951) devotes her dissertation to tracing and observing Byron's reactions to the Near East and his use of Oriental materials in his work. She gives special attention to Byron's interest in the Armenian cause. Melikian has drawn significantly from Byron's Letters as an invaluable source of information.

There were other works that discussed the importance of the Near East in different branches of romantic literature, but none of them dealt with Byron exclusively. These works were mostly articles, but include a dissertation. The dissertation by Mohammed Asfour was an analysis and reflection of five authors stretching from Samuel Johnson through Byron.

Bernard Blackstone, a well-known authority on Byron, examined the influence of Islamic culture on Byron's life and works. He argues that not only was this influence strong but that Byron had an "innate tendency" which made "Islam and its way of life enormously attractive to him." The "triple eros" is love, wisdom, and power, which Blackstone finds to be the theme both of Islamic thought and of Byron's life and poetry.

In addition to the analysis, reflection upon and examination of Byron's Oriental work on the Moslem East which I offer, I endeavored, in the following pages, to highlight the image of Islam in Western literature. The relationship between Islam and Christianity was reflected in the subject matter of Western literature for several centuries. The West kept some connections with the East and the influence of it. The connections took many faces: Moslem Spain, Crusades, Turks and Mogols' conquests, the exploration of India, the conquest of the subcontinent by the English, as well as the study of the Oriental language and history by William Jones and others. The genesis of Christian anti-Islamic literature is often traced to Saint John of Damascus. The old tradition of distorting the image of Islam reappeared again and again in the writings of later Western authors during the Crusades and the Renaissance, down to recent times. The

works of Southern, Daniel, Schoebel, Hitti, to name a few, documented clearly the Western attitude towards Islam.

Until 1699, the date of the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Christian West tended to look at the Moslem East with hostility because Christianity lost some ground to Islam in terms of military success and religious conversions. This resulted in mutual hatred and mistrust. By the eighteenth century, the Western image of Islam and the Moslems had long been stereotyped and distorted. It stretched back to the Middle Ages. The polemic literature was partly directed against the person of Prophet Mohammed. He was accused of being "sensual" because of his marriage to more than one wife. And partly it was against Islam and Moslem. It was considered a "corrupt" religion. Saracens were always conceived as pagans and Mohammed as their god.

In Elizabethan literature, we find numerous plays being based on or utilizing Islamic literature. In this regard, Louis Wann has written a useful survey of Elizabethan plays based wholly or in part on Oriental themes. The Elizabethan dramatist conceived of the Orient as "the domain where war, conquest, fratricide, lust, and treachery had freer play than in the lands nearer home - a conception," Wann contends, "more or less justified by the actual facts" (pp. 428-29). Christopher Marlowe's Tamberlaine I-II is a case in point. All of Tamberlaine's victories are scored against Moslems.

In the seventeenth century, Dryden's Don Sebastian touches on the Christian-Moslem conflict. Dryden never freed himself from the long tradition of viewing Moslems as an enemy. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed a slight change in the attitude towards

the Moslems and their religion, which could have been due to the deflated influence of the church.

In Chapter III, I endeavor to trace the origin and development of the Oriental in England as a literary genre. The genius of the Oriental tale in Europe is hard to trace, let alone the beginning of this literary mode in England. What we know is the interest of the Europeans and the British in literature of the Orient for several centuries, perhaps since the twelfth century. There were several factors that contributed to the appearance of the Oriental tale. Among others, these were the translation of the literature in Oriental languages into European languages, and the contributions of pilgrims, travellers, missionaries and the Crusades in the transmission of Oriental culture. There was a need for the translations and trips to the Near East; for both religious and business reasons pilgrims, travellers, and businessmen studied the Eastern cultures because these cultures had become cultures of encounter and understanding for them.

The Oriental tale matured highly in the eighteenth century. The translation of The Arabian Nights was a driving force in that achievement and maturity. The best representations of the Oriental during the period were Johnson's Rasselas, Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, and Beckford's Vathek. These works are discussed in some detail in this chapter.

The next two chapters furnish a background for the study of Byron's poetical Orientalism in Chapter IV.*

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*I would like to bring to the reader's attention that the critical and interpretive aspect of this thesis, at times, could have a higher level of sophistication. The critical judgments of scholars

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quoted occasionally need more testing either of their validity or profundity. I have dealt with complex issues that every reader--Western or Eastern--can bring to his or her own insights and his or her cultural background. I failed to devote more space and detail to the discussion of Byron's Oriental work.

CHAPTER II

WESTERN REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM AND MOSLEMS IN WESTERN LITERATURE

Any well-read scholar agrees that there is a history of Western writers who have written about Islam and the Moslem East. Western interest in Islam and the Orient goes back to the seventh century. One could say that it started with the emergence of Islam as a new religion and a new power spreading beyond the Arabian Peninsula. During the last fourteen centuries, the relations between Islam and Christian West have some periods of collaboration as well as ones of tension, conflict and incomprehension. "Christian reactions to Islam," Daniel writes, "are documented from an early date, . . . from the first generations after the rise of Islam, and originates in the work of St. John of Damascus, himself born about fifty years after the Hijrah" (p. 3). St. John was the real founder of the Christian tradition. St. John's attitude was a total rejection of "whatever a Muslim believes, including the whole of what he believes about God and about Christ, although some of that is true according to the Christian faith" (Daniel, p. 3). Daniel points out how St. John "descended to ridicule, for example, of what he mistakenly took to be Qu'ranic belief, the Camel of God, in a petty way; and he began the long tradition of attacking (Prophet) Mohammed for bringing in God-- simulating revelation--in order to justify his own sexual indulgence, instancing

the story of Zayd and Zaynab, which would become a classic Christian theme" (p. 4). The Christian West tended to view the Moslem East and Islam with hostility and suspicion. James J. Addison alludes to the Western view and writes that "during most of these centuries misunderstanding and suspicion and hostility have marked the relations between Christendom and Islam" (p. 3).

Therefore, it is not surprising to see the Christian West elaborating its cultural and intellectual literature towards Islam. There is indeed a vast amount of literature on Islam, Moslems and the East from the first inception of Islam. The writings started in popular forms and with the Moslem success in Spain, coupled with the beginning of the Crusades. Christian men of letters produced clear-cut representations of Islam that amount to what can be called a "distorted image." Islam was presented inaccurately. "Islam," as Daniel writes, "was often deformed when it was presented by Christianity" (p. 17). As this chapter will indicate, Islam was depicted "as a religion of violence, hatred, and that (it was suggested) Prophet Mohammed was the author of false religion, based on deceit and that the Moslems were infidels identified with the devil" (Obeidat, p. 47).

The "distorted image, however," Montgomery writes, "continued to influence the Western understanding of Islam until the present century despite the efforts of scholars for two hundred years to move to correct the more flagrant distortions" (p. 4). A number of mistakes had been found passed from one writer to another. The Western conceptions of Islam and Prophet Mohammed "habitually prefer literary authority for what they say rather than first-hand observations of the Moslem people" (Montgomery, p. 10). Meredith Jones rightly says that

Western writers "drew on obscure or second-hand sources and the result is a combination of a little fact and much imagination of a very biased character" (p. 202). The typical argument against Mohammed's Prophethood hinges on what is said that "his life and teaching fell short of the standard of a prophet and his mission was not foretold" (Kedar, p. 20). A good example is Guibert of Nugent and his brief account of Mohammed. It is one of the earliest biographies of the Prophet produced in the West outside Spain. He admitted having no written source of Mohammed. He was even unaware of the Prophet's real name and called him Matnomus (Southern, p. 31).

With the diminishing presence of Moslems in Spain, the Moslem Turks gained a strong foothold on the frontiers of the Christian West. And until the end of the fifteenth century, "no Europeans in effect knew enough of the history of either Islam or the Moguls to make even an approximate judgment whether dangers long past had been real or illusory" (Gilmore, p. 20). In the early period of encounter between Islam and the Christian West, the age, in the words of R.S. Southern, was one "of ignorance." Moslems, universally known as Saracens, were considered pagans in the eyes of Christians. In the Middle Ages, there was a tenacity of fictions. Legends of Mohammed and the fantastic descriptions of Moslem practices were produced. As soon as they were produced, they took on a literary life of their own. At the level of poetry, the picture of Mohammed and his Saracens changed very little from generation to generation (Southern, p. 29). Mohammed was considered "a magician who had destroyed the church in Africa and the East by magic of cunning" (p. 31). By the early nineteenth century, Christian views of Islam had been distorted for a long time. These

traditional views went back to the Middle Ages and earlier. In the nineteenth century, the Moslem East was still considered an enemy, to be defeated" (Schacht, p. 48).

The confrontation of Islam and Christian West had assumed multifaceted dimensions from the seventh century to the present. At first Islam expanded at the expense of Christianity, forming a new and vigorous civilization. In the eleventh century (1095), Western Christendom started a vigorous expansionist move into Islam.

The Crusading movement was motivated by religious propaganda to arouse the passions of the Christians to take the cross against the Moslems. For instance, in 1444 Pope Eugenius IV "persuaded Ladislas of Hungary to renew war against the invaders" (p. 15). Also "in 1461, Pius II sent a letter to Muhammed II, in which he urged his conversion to Christianity and promised him, upon such conversion taking place, the title to the Eastern Empire" (p. 18). The papacy engineered subsidies in the interest of repulsing the Turkish enemies (p. 9). There were also attempts to refute the Islamic doctrine. One of these attempts was that of Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny. About 1142, he visited Spain and commissioned Robert of Kelton, Herman of Dalmitan, and others to translate the Qu'ran into Latin. Pope Gregory VII was "interested in the conversion of Spain's Muslims to the point of sending for the first time a missionary to them" (Kedar, p. 45). Despite this, we still find a Byzantine--in the twelfth century--who "openly expresses the opinion that Christians and Saracens believe in the same god, a statement that led to major internal conflict" (Kedar, p. 21).

The second attempt to translate the Holy Qu'ran was done by George Sale at the beginning of the eighteenth century. His version appeared in London in 1734. In his translation of the Qu'ran, Sale tried "to deal with Muslim history in terms of Islamic sources; moreover, he let Muslim commentators on the sacred text speak for themselves" (Said, p. 117). One could say that in this 18th century, the West first looks upon Moslems through understanding eyes.

The traditional view of Christian polemicists has remained the same until relatively recently. As Daniel puts it, "the points in which Islam and Christianity differ have not changed." He adds that "Christians have always tended to make the same criticism; and even when, in relativey modern times, some authors have self-consciously tried to emancipate themselves from Christian attitudes, they have not generally been as successful as they thought themselves" (p. 1). The image of Islam, and its founder, was common among even the intellectual elite such as Francis Bacon as well as all levels of society. Areas of differences between Christianity and Islam are a few but very sensitive. These differences include inter alia: Islam's repudiation of the divinity of Jesus, coupled with the Christian belief of Jesus' crucifixion; Islam's tolerance of polygamy; Islam's teaching that the cause of Allah is worth fighting for.

To prove the falsehood of Mohammed's prophethood, Christian polemicists set up their own standard. They argued that he was not a prophet of God and allued in detail to his many marriages. They attached sensuality to him and contrasted it with the purity of Christ. They termed him an imposter as a prophet, since he "failed" to

show any miracles. He was given many deformed names: Maphomet, Buphometh, Matronum, Maltrous, Mahound, and so on.

Early English literature contained the tradition that Mohammed "did not actually have the Angel Gabriel as an intermediary with God; rather he had trained a white pigeon to sit on his shoulder, pick grains from his ear, and pass for an angel" (Hitti, p. 24). John Lydgate, the English poet of 1451, refers to Mohammed as "a false prophet who was denounced by swines while drunk" (Lydgate, p. 5). And Shakespeare inquires "Was Mahomet inspired by a Dove?" (Henry VI, i. II). In fact, the dove received "the appellation of maumet or mammet . . . a corruption of the word 'Mohammed' which came to mean a puppet." Shakespeare used Mahmet to mean puppet. He also "gave it fresh currency" (Hitti, p. 55). Francis Bacon, an Elizabethan intellectual, refers to Mohammed as a miracle-monger. Again Francis Bacon strips Mohammed of his prophethood. He was associated with magic—Bacon's 'Of Boldness' is a case in point. Mohammed has been credited with supernatural performances:

> Mahomet made the people believe that he would call a hill to him, and form the top of it after up his prayers for the observers of his law. The people assembled. Mahomet called the hill to come to him again and again; and when the hill stood still he was never a whit abashed, but said, 'If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill' (p. 279)

Bacon is responsible for the proverb he attributes to Mohammed. The proverb has no place in Islamic literature.

Such is the Western representation of Islam and its Prophet. It would be fair to say that "the Christian polemicists presented a totally incoherent reductionist picture of Islam (its Prophet)" (Obeidat, p. 50). The distorted image of the "infidels" emerged so

often in the popular literature of the Middle Ages, it developed into a stereotype, misunderstood, incomprehensible, and looked on with hostility. Meredith Jones goes on to say that the medieval "conception of Islam was based on ecclesiastical authorities, where interest in it was to disfigure the beliefs of customs of the infidels" (p. 203). The author of Chanson de Geste presents the stereotype of the Moslem. Jones writes about the depiction of Moslems in the French romance:

> But for the Christians (they - Muslims, Saracens) are an evil people, they spend their lives in hating and mocking at Christ and in destroying His Churches. These are the children of the author of all evil, the Devil; like their ancestor, they hate God and are constantly placing themselves under the protection of Jesus. . . They are an intensely emotional and excitable people, readily giving way to tears of joy and anger . . . And they practice polygamy" (pp. 204-205).

This side had showed total prejudice borne out of a long history of enmity and misunderstanding, ignorance and hatred. Christians at one time felt superior to the Moslems in terms of faith and belief, as if the latter's faith is vulgar. This kind of misrepresentation and attack is even found in the writings of those who knew much more about Islam. It is anti-Islamic literature. Writers kept the tradition for years to come.

The great Florentine poet Dante (d. 1321) displays an awareness and recognition of the merit and weight of Arabic culture and at the same time a great aversion to Islam and its founder. Dante considers Avenores, al Ghazali, and Saladin to be virtuous men in Limbo First Circle IV, but Prophet Mohammed and his son-in-law are assigned to the Ninth Circle of Hell for having been the sources of scandals and schism."

He looked at me, and into his hands laid bare
His breast. "Behold how I am rent," he cried.
"Yea, mark how is Muhammed mangled. These
In front if we cloth Ali weeping so,
Ripped through the face even from chin to hair.
And all the rest from thou seest with us below
Were sowers of schism and dissension, too,
During their lives, and hence are so.

(Dante, Divine Comedy, trans. Lacy Lockert)
"Inferno" XXVIII 28 Canto)

Dante's treatment, as Tatlock puts it, "is not only the most hideous mutilation of all in this valley; it is hardly equalled anywhere in the Inferno for repulsiveness, certainly not for ignoble bodily exposure of grotesqueness of description" (p. 192). The literary tradition continues to exist: "portrait of Muhammed, images of Islam as a Christian heresy, characterization of the Qu'ran as a fabrication remain typical."

Later representations were building on the previous ones. This can be clarified if we turn now to the French epic romance poem, La Chanson de Roland (1100). How the French poem depicted the Moslem faith is a case in point. In The Song of Roland, Moslems worshipped three gods Mahomet, Terragant and Apollo; but later by "natural process, of development, they had many more. Over thirty of their gods have been counted in literature: Jupiter, Diana, Plato and Anti-Christ" (Southern, p. 32). Moreover, the author of the French epic considers the Saracens of Spain as pagans. In his words:

Charles the great King was that day light of heart,
For Cordova had fallen. He had broke
With catapults her towers and strong walls,
And given rich booty to his men,
Their fill
of gold and silver and dear accoutrement;
And not a Payrim lived to tell his tale,
For those who had not been baptized.

They suppose that Moslems' beliefs are pagan held by Arabs before becoming Moslems.

The poem also related that the "young Charlemagne faithfully serves Galafre, the Saracen King, of Toledo and marries his daughter (who, of course, becomes a convert)" (Schacht, pp. 12-13).

This great medieval French epic celebrates the wars between Christians and Saracens in Spain. The Christian poet endeavors to give his listeners or readers some idea of the Saracen religion. According to this vision, the Saracens worshipped a trinity consisting of three persons, Mohammed, the founder of their religion, and the two others, both of them devils Apollin and Tervagant. It seems comic and one gets amused by medieval man unable to conceive of religion or indeed of anything except in his own image. Since Christendom worshipped its founder in association with other entities, the Saracens also had to worship their founder, and he too had to one of a trinity, with two demons coopted to make up the the number. In short, the song dwells on the theme of the border warfare between Christianity and Islam in northern Spain.

The poem employs a set of analogues, heathendom versus Christendom, evil versus good, the army of Christ versus the army of Mohammed. The poem also highlights the idea of conversion. The poem concludes with the baptism of "over a hundred thousand (infidels)"/True Christians, except for the queen." The queen is excluded because Charlemagne wants her "through love to take the faith." The queen, Bramimonde, assumes a new name, Juliane. The Saracens are converted and this is considered simply a religious and cultural triumph.

The great medieval Spanish The Epic of Cid (1150) digs in similar grounds as other works mentioned previously. It sheds light on the theme of warfare between Christians and Moslems in Spain. The narrative begins when the Cid has just been exiled from Castile by King Alfonso VI as a result of a gossip spread by jealous peers. The Cid lived during the last years of the 11th century and won fame and great riches fighting along the Moslem frontier of Spain. It is worth noting also that The Cid is not without contradictory implications. The Cid is involved in a battle against the Christian court of Barcelona. This indicates that the Cid (in Arabic, Sayyed, i.e., Master) is willing to fight his fellow Christians if the occasion warranted. "The poem," Archibald Lewis writes, "shows a fluidity of loyalties and purpose during the period of the Reconquista in Spain which seems remarkable indeed" (p. 41). We also encounter The Cid in friendship with the Muslim Abengalbon, the governor of Molina, who was also responsive to him. He even harbored his family (daughters). This kind of literature is the outcome of cultural contact between the Islamic Orient and the Occident.

> "And now, Raqual and Vidus," said Don Martin, give me your solemn word that neither to Christian nor to Moor will you betray me, as I shall make you rich forever and you will never be in want again" (p. 10)

The Moor is always portrayed as the defeated who "turns tail and flies the field" (p. 33). In another occasion The Cid says of himself, "I have won battles when it pleased God to aid me, and Moors and Christians live in fear of me" (p. 97).

John Lydgate (1376?-1451?), one of the first English poets, gives an extensive profile of Prophet Mohammed's career. He knew

even the color of the dove, "milk white" (p. 921). His account is entitled "Off Machmet the fals prophete and how he laying drunke was devoured among swyn." In his writing, we find contemporary myths and legends blended together about the Prophet. Mohammed is seen as a magician of low birth who studied the Bible in Egypt. He also alludes to the dove that picks grain from the Prophet's ear and the bull that carries the Qu'ran: Mohammed is

> Like a glotoan deied in dronkenesse
> Bi excesse of mykil drynkyng wyn,
> Fill in a podel, devoured among swyn (II. 152-54)

During the Elizabethan age, the Ottoman Empire was a major power in the region threatening the neighboring European countries. Islam again was subject to misuse in literary works as the religion of the Moslem Turks rather than that of the Saracens. The Western Europe portrayed the Moslem Turk as sensual, cruel, viscious, savage, bloodthirsty and established all that in the literary tradition" (Gilmore, p. 21). Gilmore points out that "the stereotype Turk, sensual and cruel flaying the Christian population, was really a product of the pamphlet literature of the 16th century, when rulers hoped to increase the contribution of the subjects toward a Turkish crusade by vivid presentation of the atrocities committed by the enemy" (p. 21). The word Turk developed to be a symbol of the enemy of the cross, the treacherous infidel, and the new barbarian" (Schoebel). In the sixteenth century and later centuries, Western writers maintained the literary tradition and expanded it drastically. It is worth noting that the Turkish Empire safeguarded the rights of worship of both the Christians and Jews and extended "almsgiving" (Sandys, p. 27). In other words they showed tolerance

to the two segments. Eventually, Christians and Jews prospered under the rule of the Turkish Empire. Even "the people of the Balkan area looked upon the Muslim Turks as liberators from greedy land-owners" (Obeidat, p. 45).

The Elizabethan interest in the Moslem East with the emergence of the Turkish power reached a peak between 1586-1611. The Elizabethans presented oriental characters, history, life, and customs. More than 30 plays were produced. Louis Wann (1915) surveyed the Elizabethan plays that are based on Oriental Themes. Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and Christopher Marlowe's Tamberlaine I,II are in a sense the starting point of the Elizabethan drama dealing with the orient. The greatest thing that strikes us in reading the literature of this period is the Elizabethan conception of the Orient as "the domain where war, conquest, fratricide, lust, and treachery had freer play than in the lands nearer home" (pp. 428-429). These are striking aspects in the affairs of foreigners: wars, conquests of the Oriental. Elizabethan dramatists "erred in presenting fake pictures of history or life." The Elizabethans displayed a considerable knowledge that concerns Mohammadan religion, the observance of its religious forms and the tenets of its followers. Elizabethans are responsible for "the introduction of suicide" among the Moslems as an Eastern custom. As Wann firmly puts it, "this was not merely a distortion of a particular fact . . . but a violent misrepresentation of a fundamental rule of life among all Mohammedan peoples." (p. 443). Marlowe's Tamberlaine I is a good example. It is evident that

suicide has always been rare among Moslems, just as it is today. Islam shuns committing suicide.

The Elizabethan representation of Islam/Turkish Moslems cannot be separated from the political situation existing between the Turkish Empire and the West. In the year 1600 the Ottoman Empire was one of the most powerful in the world to be reckoned with. Its territories extended from the Arabian Gulf on the southeast to Vienna on the northwest; from the Atlas Mountains of Africa on the southwest to the Caucasus on the northeast. Europeans "devoured" books about these powerful people, knowing their customs and religion was a matter of preparation for a likely encounter.

Christopher Marlowe makes several references to Prophet Mohammed and Islam. He represents Moslem lands and characters. Marlowe's hero, Tamberlain, insults the Turkish emperor, Bajazet and gives relief to the defeated Christians in Constantinople, who had been beseiged by the Turkish. Ironically, the Moslem Tamberlaine is shown as a semi-pagan hero, unkind to his brethren, and on the other hand responsive to "the Christian and their heroic aspirations" (Obeidat, p. 54). Tamberlaine's campagins were all against Moslems. This makes the play more convenient for a Christian or an Elizabethan to identify himself with. An average Moslem rules out any Islam in Tamberlaine and in the rest of the Moslem characters of the play. All Moslem characters, let alone Tamberlaine, use harsh language against Islam and its founder, Mohammed. For example, in the Second Part of the play, Tamberlaine denounces Mohammed and the Qu'ran:

> Now, Casare, where is the Turkish Alcoran,
> And all the heaps of superstitious books
> Found in the temples of that Mahomet
> Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt.
> (Act V, i, 172-175)

In another scene, Tamberlaine is addressing and challenging Mohammed:

> Now Mahomet if thou have any power
> Come from thyself and work miracles
> That art not worthy to be worshipped
>
> (Act 5, Scene 1 190-193)

In John Dryden's Don Sebastian we find similar portrayal of Islam, the Prophet and Moslems. In John Dryden's words, "Muley-Muluch, . . . by all relations, dyed of a feaver in the battle, before the Field; but if I have allowed him another day of life, it was because I stood in need of so shining a character of brutality, as I have given him" (Preface, p. 289). Dryden has, for example, the Mufti argued that Muslim law says plainly women have no souls (Act I, 1, 265).

The medieval image of Islam and Prophet in later literature remained unchanged. Mohammed was still considered the heretic and fake Prophet, who fabricated a new religion based on deceit. Such prejudices recurred again and again. The unfavorable Western image of Islam arose from the hostile contact that accumulated over the centuries. The distorted image showed the "hostile" nature of Islam and served to satisfy the literary taste of Christian intellectuals in their dealings with the Moslems. Western interest in the Moslem East was not only theologically and ideologically oriented but also aroused the minds of writers who were hunting for a different culture. The French translation of The Arabian Nights (1704-7) at

the hands of A Gallard met a delighted, receptive audience. Therefore, a romantic attitude emerged coupled with the religious attitude and dominated the Western interest in the Moslem East.

It should be clarified in the first place that Westerners did not show tolerance toward Islam, and Western literary tradition persisted in accepting legends about Moslems and their religion without any effort to verify the accuracy of the sources available. There is great emphasis on themes such as the "sensuality" of the Prophet, that carnality is the criterion of imposture. Even George Sale's translation of the Koran in 1734 was an attempt to help the church convert the Moslems to Christianity. Sale went on to argue that the Qu'ran is dull, repetitious, and a manifest forgery" (Sale, p. v). There were other anti-Islamic writings which appeared at the same time.

But in the Age of Enlightenment, the Moslems were looked upon as men just like other men, with many of them indeed superior to the Europeans. In Candide, the heroes, now wiser find peace near Constantinople following the advice of a very famous dervish.

In the literature of the nineteenth century, the Moslem East occupied a high place. The East attracted the imagination of the Western peoples. The Moslem East "was still an enemy to be defeated" (Schacht, p. 48). The West showed a sense of power and superiority over the East. The Romantic representation of the Orient was an exotic locale. During the late 18th century and the early 19th century "Popular Orientalism achieved a vogue of considerable intensity" (Said, p. 118).

Sir William Jones was a driving force in making many interesting oriental works known in Europe. He had done several translations from Arabic, Hebrew and Persian. In this respect, Meester alludes to Jones's contributions and says that his "translations were read by most literary men of the 19th century and their influence is visible in the most famous poets of that period. Southey and Moore often quote Jones's work in their copious notes; Shelley and Tennyson borrowed from him in their Queen Mab and Locksley Hall, respectively. Byron also seems to have read at least some of his work" (Meester, pp. 10-11). So the East--Moslem East--was important for the literature of England. In the 19th century, Western interest in the Moslem East was expressed in terms of the following tendencies: romantic exoticism, imperalistic sense of Western superiority and utilitarianism. There was a general tendency and a kind of love or lively interest in everything Oriental. Many Europeans materialized this avid interest and love in their visits to the shores of the Mediterranean.

The imperialistic tendency is seen in Napolean's expedition to Egypt at the turn of the 19th century (1798-99). His expedition was one of various political occurrences, and it was an attempt to keep the Europeans' attention directed toward the Near East. The motives were economic, political and out of competition with the British. His expedition, coupled with British campaigns, were utilitarian in nature. His plans became the first in a series of European encounters with the Orient because of colonial ambition.

And the romantic writer contributed to English Oriental literature. He opted to take a different idea of the Moslem East.

This appeared alongside "the well-established older image" (Obeidat, 1984, p. 56).

Turks became a generic term, the object of pejoratives as "villainous", "barbarous" and a visitation from God for the sins of Christemdom" (Schoebel). In the 19th century, almost all of the Moslem East was under Western rule, with Europeans playing the role of a master. The Western sea force increased East-West contact which led to the drift of Oriental material into British literature. At the turn of the century, Robert Southey composed Thalaba (1801). The narrative poem involves a conflict between good and evil forces. In the conflict, Southey presents both the witches' attempt to find and destroy the representative of good, Thalaba, who is a pious Moslem, and Thalaba's attempt to find and destroy the representative of evil, the Domdaniel. Okba, a Domdaniel Magician, massacres all the members of Thalaba's family. Thalaba finds himself being dragged into a number of challenging adventures. Through Thalaba's quest for the Domdaniel, the tale would seem to compel Southey to introduce "Islam as the good that is doomed to stand in the face of evil powers, but in fact Southey had no genuine sympathy with Islam" (Obeidat, p. 56). In his pursuit for the Domdaniel, Thalaba finally reaches Baghdad. At this time, Southey suspends the course of the narrative and delivers the following apostrophe:

> So one day may the Crescent from thy Mosques
> Be plucked by Wisdom, when the enlightened arm
> of Europe conquers to redeem the East!
>
> (Book V.vi)

It is noteworthy that Thalaba's Moslem faith is inappropriate in the poem which reminds us of Marlowe's Tamberlaine. Southey is

clearly failing to abandon his personal prejudice. He is undermining the imaginative world that he is trying to create. In a letter to John May dated July 29, 1799, Southey reveals his attitude towards Islam and Mohammed. He alludes, in the letter, to the Qu'ran. In his words, the Qu'ran "is dull and full of repetitions, but there is an interesting simplicity in the tenets it inculcates. What was Muhammed? Self-deceived, or knowingly a deceiver? . . . But of Muhammed, there is one fact which in my judgment stamps the imposter. . . . The huge and monstrous fables of Mohammedanism, his extravagant miracles . . ." It is true that Southey seems to see in the Qu'ran something reasonable (given the authenticity of inspiration), but he still deems the Prophet as only an imposter as a prophet and that his claim to prophethood can only be accepted as false.

Thomas Moore, one of Southey's contemporaries, wrote Lalla Rookh in 1817. It was a time when the vogue of Orientalism was the fashion of the period. Moore's Lalla Rookh falls into four stories which are narrated by Feramorz, the poet: "The Vield Prophet of Khorassan," "Paradise and the Peri," The Five Worshippers," and "The Light of the Harem." Moore develops a parallel between Zelika's position among the The Vield Prophet's harem to Mohammed's coffin, which Moore suspends at Madinah.

> Half mistress and half saint, though half as even
> As doth Medina's tomb, twixt hell and heaven
> (p. 45)

There was a common belief that the Prophet's tomb was suspended between the floor and the ceiling of the vault where he was buried.

In "Paradise and the Peri," Moore develops the Persian legend of the Peris, a breed of fallen angels who are allowed all kinds of happiness of earth, but not Paradise. The Peri, however, may be forgiven if she brings a tear of a repentant sinner. Her task is done, and Paradise is finally won.

> And she already hears the trees
> of Eden, with their crystal bells
> Ringing in that ambrosial breeze
> That from the throne of Alla smells
>
> (p. 150)

"The Five Worshippers" deals with the Moslems' conquest of Zoroastrians. The Moslem emir fights and conquers Persia. He is described in words that come from Feramorz, the Moslem narrator, as

> One of that saintly, murderous brood
> To carnage and the Koran gives,
> Who think through unbelievers' blood
> Lies their directest path to heav'n;-
> One, who will pass and knell unshod
> In the warm blood his hand hath pour'd
> To mutter o'er some text of God
> Engraven on his reeking sword
>
> (p. 175)

Feramorz's attitude towards Islam soon changes. He gives his loyalty to Islam when he winds up his role as a storyteller. Moore's intention in the poem is not clear at all.

Such is a survey, reflection on and analysis of Western representations of Islam and Moslems in Western literature from the seventh century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. One could analyze and make reflections of more works and more passages of major works, but these are representative of the whole. Suffice it to say that Western representation of Islam focused on certain themes that relate to religion, power, and sexual laxity. Those themes are ideology, the traditional venues of Western polemic

against Islam and the Moslem East. The West tended to view Islam as a corrupt religion fabricated by Prohpet Mohammed. Throughout centuries, there was a slight change in Westerners' attitudes from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries. Western treatment of Islam and Moslems was not fair at all and it was coupled with so many accusations.

CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF THE ORIENTAL TALE IN ENGLAND

The scope of the history of the Oriental tale in England in time is hard to define. As Martha Conant eloquently puts it, "in case of most literary tendencies, both beginning and end were gradual and transitional" (p. xvii). The emergence of the Oriental tale in Europe and England was due to direct encounter with the Near East coupled with numerous translations of Oriental literature for a considerable period of time. There was also a great interest in the Orient itself. Oriental fiction was introduced to Europe and England, in particular, by different means, inter alia: travellers, pilgrims, missionaries, crusades; translations from Eastern languages into Latin, French and English.

The history of British interest in the Near East is necessary to our study of the Oriental tale in England. In tracing such history, we have to shed light on that interest as it comes through the ages. But I will try to give a cursory investigation of that interest because this subject is not part of my work. In this respect, Englishmen knew the Near East as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when for a time the crusades centered the attention of all Europe on the Holy Land. That interest in the Near East was mainly religious. Later on that interest took new perspectives. There was the excitement of adventure that played an important role in the subsequent visits of

medieval travellers to the Levant. Up to the 16th century, the chief influence of the Near East was on fashions, i.e. new modes of dress. Those fashions were introduced and imported by Jewish merchants. Wallace Cable Brown writes that "English females of the twelfth century could scarcely have been distinguished by her attire from a lady of Lower Europe" (p. 17). And with the adoption of the Turkish head-dress in the fifteenth century, the Oriental fad was reaching its peak in England. Large turbans of the true Turkish form were made of the richest materials. We assume that there were travels of the English for commercial purposes. Those businessmen had brought with them to England their first-hand observations of what the Near East was. The direct contact between England and the Near East had necessitated reading books on the Near East in the original, or in translation from Near Eastern languages into Latin and French and from French into English. All that was for the sake of understanding the Near East life and customs.

Literary interest in the Near East, therefore, could be said to have developed and sprung out of the social, economic and political relations with that part of the world. In England, which is our main concern, Oriental fiction could be traced back to the eleventh century. In Anglo-Saxon translations of legends concerning the adventures of Alexander the Great, we find fictitious descriptions of the marvels of the Far East, i.e., India. In the Middle Ages, many Eastern stories were available in England and Europe. These Oriental stories drifted across Europe via Syria, Italy, Byzantium, and Spain. We must thank travellers, pilgrims and Christian missionaries for the oral transmission of this fiction. Scholars made available to Europe

translations of great collections of genuine Oriental tales: Sendebar; Kalila and Dimna or The Fables of Bidpai; Disciplina Clericalis; and Barlaam and Josephat. This literary genre appeared in England "in the form of metrical romances, apologues, legends and tales of adventure: Fabliau of Dame Siriz; The Proces of the Sevyn Sages, Mandeville's Vioage, let alone Chaucer's Squirer's Tale" (Conant, p. xix,xx).

In the sixteenth century, the great period of translation, Englishmen had the first editions of the Gesta Romanrum; The Fables of Bidpia, or The Morall Philosophie of Doni emanating from Italy by 1570. Thomas North was behind those translations from Italian into English (1570). And during the reign of Elizabeth, there were also voyages of exploration, discovery and commerce. By that time, the Turkish had established themselves as an unbeatable military institution. They had achieved great military success: Constantinople fell into their hands in 1453. Thus, interest was aroused in Oriental history and fiction of the Near East, as well as Turkish history and culture. Painter's Palace of Pleasure includes the stories of Mahomet and Irene, and Sultan Solyman. There were various treatments of these stories. The Turk or the Moor is romanticized. Extravagant and sentimental love for Christian princesses are combined with outbursts of native savagery. In the genre of drama, there are many plays, inter alia: Kyd's Soliman and Perseda, Fulke Greville's Alaham, and Mustapha; Marlowe's Tamberlaine I-II and Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, which includes at least an Oriental element. Wallace Brown points out that "travellers and their writings were popular in the sixteenth century because Elizabethans were in full tide of a great period of discovery and colonization" (p. 10). In other words, Elizabethans

showed a wide interest in the brisk business and romance which lay in the East, waiting for them to make use of it. In this respect, it is worth noting Ralph Fitch who impressed all London with an account of his travels to the East in 1591. In his account, Fitch emphasizes Eastern wealth; he gives a description of women of Hormuz wearing jewels. And Fitch was not the only traveller to emphasize the richness of the East. Many travellers emphasized this aspect of the East. The influx of Near Eastern wealth affected the social structure of the British society. Shakespeare's "All perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" is a case in point. There was a real cross-cultural and social interaction to the extent that Englishmen were using cane sticks for walking, let alone the Turkish bath--of course cold--which was very common in England. It was a source of social prestige. (See Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Letters and Works ed. Lord Wharncliffe, London, 1893 I, 283-87.)

In the Elizabethan period, the Near East influence was strong in dramatic literature, in which the Turk, the Moor, the Saracen became the most popular and spectacular figures on the Elizabethan stage. The Moslem Turk was represented as wicked, jealous, cruel and savage. Shakespeare, in Othello, made the Turk a hero, but he was at the same time full of jealousy. Heywood's The Fair Maid of the West endowed the Moslem Turk with many good qualities. The point that I am trying to make is that Oriental stories were absorbed into the popular tradition of post-medieval England.

The seventeenth century witnessed an interest in the Orient. The works of travellers, historians, dramatists and Orientalists are a case in point. The French heroic romances were very much like Oriental

stories. Knolle's Generalle History of the Turk (1603) extended the Western interest in the Near East for many years to come. Mlle. de Scudery's heroic romances, known as pseudo-Oriental, appeared in the middle of the century. There were also numerous heroic plays on Oriental themes such as John Dryden's Don Sebastian. Sir Roger L'Estrange's version of the Fable of Bidpai formed a link between the fictions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the late seventeenth century, Marana's satire The Turkish Spy was first translated into English.

The burgeoning interest in the Near East continued in the eighteenth century. At the very turn of the century, The Arabian Nights was translated into French by Antoine Galland. And the first English version of the Nights began between the years 1704 and 1712. No doubt, The Arabian Nights exercised an influence on the French and English literary sources for decades to come. Galland's initiative to translate The Arabian Nights seemed not to have satisfied the taste of the European audience. So his translation was followed by a few others, inter alia: Richard Burton's Arabian Nights' Entertainment or Thousand Nights and a Night; John Payne's The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night (1884); Edward William Lane's Arabian Nights' Entertainment (1838-40).

Conant pointed out that The Arabian Nights was "a permanent factor in the emergence of the Oriental tale in England" (p. xxvi). It played a major role in the history of Oriental fiction in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also enjoyed popularity in France and England. In the words of Meester, "they (The Arabian Nights) have furnished our languages with a number of

expressions and images; they have imprinted on our minds many scenes of Oriental life" (p. 13). She goes further to add that "they give such a faithful picture of the Orient, its life and customs, manners and condition" (p. 13). The Arabian Nights is also the earliest collection of Oriental tales to appear in French and England in the century. The charm of The Arabian Nights is in the sense of mystery and magic. In this respect, Conant points out that "one supreme attraction of The Arabian Nights is the charm of pure adventure" (p. 11). The charming, magical, mysterious East was opened to the Western wandering imagination. The beautiful Scheherazade tells her tales to the cruel Sultan for a thousand and one nights in the hope that she will not be beheaded. The stories are interwoven and varied: romances, anecdotes, apologues and fables. Take for example, a story like "In the Days of Haroun Alrashid," where human beings are transformed into dogs or black stones. The stories are all a blend of realty versus unreality.

The Nights gives the reader or listener a glimpse of Eastern life; or say, Oriental customs and beliefs. Customs are described in vivid detail: marriage ceremonies are always accompanied by feasting, music, dancing, let alone the bride's seven-fold salutation of her husband.

Another interesting story is "The Story of the Sleeper Awakened or The Dead Alive." It tells the ruse of Abou Hassan and his wife to win gifts from the Caliph and Zobeide by feigning death. The Caliph offers 1000 pieces of gold to anyone who could prove who of the two, Abou Hassan or his wife, died first. Instantly a hand is held and a voice from under Abou Hassan's pull is heard to say: "I died first, Commander of the Faithful, give me the 1000 pieces of gold." Such are

the natures of tales in The Arabian Nights. All sorts and conditions of men are in The Nights: princes, viziers, fishermen, cadis, slaves, sheiks, let alone women. The French romanticists, Conant writes, "went wild over the fascinating tales of merchants, cadis, and Calendar" (p. xxiii). French philosophical satirists found the Oriental tale a convenient medium to criticize the French society. The vivid descriptions of places in The Arabian Nights compelled many people to go to the East to see places like Baghdad in reality, and for enjoyment.

After Galland's translation of The Nights there were many imitations of the translated Oriental tales. Those imitations were imaginative, fanciful, used Oriental themes, and had an Eastern setting. From the early period of the eighteenth century, the tales of The Arabian Nights were quoted, adapted and, of course, imitated as didactic fiction. And the best two examples in this respect are Samuel Johnson's Rasselas (1758) and William Beckford's Vathek (1786). After the pseudo-translations, there were Oriental fictions such as heroic romances, realistic tales as well as ecologues. The Beautiful Turk (1720) was a translation from the French romance Hallige or The Amours of the King of Tamaran . . . a novel, Mrs. Aubin's Noble Slaves, or The Lives and Adventures of Two Lords and Two Ladies. But imitations ceased to be written by 1740, although, in 1741, Mrs. Eliza Haywood produced The Unfortunate Princess, which shows some resemblance to an Oriental tale.

The Oriental tale as a literary genre in English literature emphasized the fundamental elements of human character: passion of love, hate, ambition, revenge, war, the spirit of adventure and delight

in the picturesque and the mysterious. The English writers were especially impressed by the supreme fidelity in and heroic devotion to religious belief.

It is important to point out that The Arabian Nights was not the only major source of influence on European literature. Equally important are The Persian Tales or Thousand and One Days (1714), the companion-piece to The Nights, a collection of Oriental tales. In those tales, the central figure is the princess of Casmire, who having dreamed that she saw an ungrateful stag forsaking a hind, has lost faith in men and has decided never to marry. Her beauty drives men mad; the King, her father, is in despair; and her old nurse Sultememe, undertakes to convert her by telling her tales of faithful lovers. For 1001 days the tales are told, but each hero or lover is criticized by the skeptical and obdurate princess. She is finally persuaded to marry the Prince of Persia only by magic powers and the religious authority of a holy spirit.

Another major source of influence is The Turkish Tales, also a collection of tales first translated into English from French in 1708). The collection tells about Queen Canzade's evil passions for her stepson which turns to hatred upon his rejection of her love and her scheme to murder the King. The prince is bound to forty days of silence for fear of a mysterious calamity predicted by his tutor. The tutor, meanwhile, retires into a cave to avoid being questioned. Canzade persuades the King to decree the prince's death. The King's forty viziers intervene and plead for him by telling the King stories of wicked women and loyal sons. The queen encounters the viziers by telling tales of evil viziers and murderous princes. Finally the tutor

is shown up, the prince justified and the queen condemned in his stead. The Turks call them "Malice of women" for the queen's stories reveal her malice. Thus, to wind up, The Arabian Nights, The Persian Tales, and The Turkish Tales must have played a major role in the construction of Europeans' and British conception in particular of Eastern life and literature.

Conant, in her pioneering study, points out that Oriental fiction in England falls into four groups: imaginative, moralistic, philosophic, and satiric tales. There is no need to dwell much on this subject. It seems that these groups cross and meet. In this sense, there is no clear-cut imaginative tale, or clear-cut moralistic tale. Each group has had a function to perform; for instance, satirists used it as a medium to criticize their society." "English writers," Conant remarks, "used the Oriental tales, not so much for literary as for social satire and expressed their disapproval of the genre by direct criticism in preference to parody" (p. 184).

To move from the general to the particular, we now turn to study briefly the major Oriental tales in England: Oliver Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World (1760); Samuel Johnson's Rasselas (1757); and William Beckford's Vathek (1786). With the publication of The Citizen of the World, the genre of pseudo-letters reached its highest point of development in England. It is a series of letters written ostensibly as an Oriental description and a satire of manners and customs of Europe by sharp contrast with the real or imaginary customs of his native land. The most famous sketches are those of the "Man in Black," "Beau Tibbs," and the "Wooden-Legged Soldier." The Man in Black is the gentleman who so improbably turns out to be the father of Zelis, the

beautiful captive rescued from a Persian harem by the mandarin's son, who in due course unites West and East by marrying her. He "is a mere outline, yet an engaging and unforgettable figure, a paradoxical blend of the soft heart and the sarcastic demeanor" (Conant, p. 69).

The second attempt perhaps to rival The Arabian Nights was Samuel Johnson's Rasselas (1757). Rasselas, also pseudo-Oriental, was written in prose. The tale reflects the current opinions of its age and for that reason it possesses a distinct historical value. It is in a sense moralistic. It is considered one of the most important Oriental tales of the period.

Rasselas, a serious Oriental tale, was written shortly after the death of Johnson's mother. It expresses his somber philosophy of life. Rasselas, confined in the Happy Valley all the days of his youth, realizes that the gratification of desires does not confer lasting happiness at all and, with his sister Nekayah and two other companions, escapes into the world only to discover unhappiness everywhere. Rasselas, not able to obtain even his wish to govern a Little Kingdom, resolved to return to Abyssinia in Egypt. In sight of this conclusion, the princess Nekayah declares: "The choice of Life is become less important. I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity" (p. 187). Johnson's point is that of the impossibility of attaining happiness because of lack of free choice, and unsuccessful endeavors. Johnson also keeps in his mind a didactic purpose. His story has one of the various aspects of his earnest philosophy of life. And his favorite theme is "the vanity of human wishes." In Conant's words, "Johnson feels that an Oriental tale demands elevated and dignified

diction, Biblical imagery, and the abstract, general term instead of the concrete" (p. 120)

In Rasselas, Johnson alludes to the Arab's indifference to his ignorant wives. This seems to be in line with the Western general view of "the vulgarity" of women in Moslem society. Asfour argues that Johnson's Rasselas' "imputation supposed permissiveness of Islam" (p. 41). Johnson's attitude towards the Arabs can be seen in the following interesting passage:

> The Arab, according to the custom of his nation, observed the laws of hospitality with great exactness to those who put themselves into his power . . . He restored her (Pekuah) with great respect to liberty and her friends, and undertook to conduct them back towards Cairo, beyond all danger of robbery or violence (p. 139).

Here, Johnson shows positive aspects of Arab customs. At other times, he shows negative aspects of Arabs such as avarice or greed. On the other hand, Johnson treats the Persians and the Egyptians in favorable ways, the latter as Pharoahs and not as Arabs. The setting of the story is mostly Egypt.

Paul Tussell maintains that it is safe reading Oriental tales for the young, ignorant, and idle. A word of praise should be given to Johnson, for he did not use any material that portrays any confrontation between Christianity and Islam although Rasselas and his companions are, indirectly, Christians. In a sense he was independent of conventions and stock ideas about the Moslem East. He freed himself to some extent from the tradition which preceded him.

Another major representative of the Oriental tale in England in the eighteenth century is William Beckford's Vathek (1786). Originally in French, Beckford's Vathek is Oriental in subject matter and

treatment and perhaps the best imitation of a genuine Oriental tale in English literature. In other words, Vathek is a typical Oriental moral tale that has an exotic spirit. The Arabian Nights is one of the major sources for Beckford's amazing tale. And Beckford's tale contributed in a major way to the development of the Oriental tale in England in the nineteenth century, especially that of Robert Southey and Lord Byron. It stands as the most important work in the course that Orientalism took in the 19th century. "It forms a link between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this respect, Lord Byron did not hesitate to borrow from its terrific and gorgeous imagery. He writes:

> For corrections of customs, beauty of descriptions, and power of imagination. It far surpasses all European imitations; and bears such marks of originality, that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation. (Poetry III, 145)

It was a direct source of inspiration. It holds a unique and a high place among all Oriental tales, at least, of the eighteenth century. The tale is brilliant in coloring and fantastic in plot like The Arabian Nights, which seemed to have appealed to Western writers through its plot.

William Beckford's "Arabian Tale" Vathek has drawn from "a large body of scholarly and literary material in which familiar motifs are brilliantly reinforced in the exotic imagery of Islamic faith and superstition" (Shaffer, p. 181). The Caliph Vathek has a pleasure-palace upon a mountain; down the "green declivity" of the mountain near four fountains, was a "dreadful chasm," a "vast black chasm" in the plain where the Giaour, or infidel, appears to the Caliph and "in accents more sonorous than thunder" promises to bring him to the

"Palace of Subterranean Fire," which holds the "talismans that control the world." Vathek is commanded to go from his city of Samarah to the ruined city of Istakhar, or ancient Persepolis. After making his way with great vicissitudes, through the forests of cedar and the waste mountains, he finds in the ruins of great civilization, a Hell that evokes "L'ambiance persane de l'Arabie sons l dynastic des Abbassides, l'atmosphère même de Vathek tout entier."

E.S. Shaffer points out that "through the eighteenth century Islam had continued to be considered a Christian heresy; so in Vathek the familiar motifs are printed in the negative" (p. 182). She adds that "in Vathek, Mohammedanism is a Christian heresy, by the powerful and unexpected superimposition of motifs and their culmination in a mutual hell, Christian civilization is itself revealed as a heresy" (p. 182).

E.S. Shaffer writes and maintains that "Ambition and lust had been seen as the ruling traits of Mohammed through (the eighteenth) century" (p. 182). Beckford's tale has an Oriental setting coupled with Oriental machinery. The Muslim Caliph signs a Faustian pact with the Giaour. His problems begin when he is visited by the stranger who lures him to Istakhar, where he ultimately finds eternal damnation in the Halls of Eblis. The Muslim Caliph and his beautiful bride Nouronihar sing against Islam and Muhammed; they do not go to the Hell. On the contrary, they are promised a paradise in the Qu'ran, but the promise of a paradise is only Beckford's imagination. Dwelling on the promised paradise is clear evidence that Beckford consulted the Qu'ran and other Oriental sources such as Adventures of Abdallah, Son of Hamid translated from French by J.P. Bignon (1729).

British interest in the Moslem East continued throughout the eighteenth century. Sir William Jones, the great Orientalist of the time, had done direct translations in the 1760s and 1770s. In the 1780s, Oriental tales appeared. Jones studied Oriental history, literature, and philosophy. This effort opened the door for Englishmen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to learn much about the Moslem East. Jones was a driving force in making many Oriental works known in Europe. He had done several translations from Arabic, Hebrew and Persian. In the words of Meester, Jones's "translations were read by most literary men of the nineteenth century and their influence is visible in the most famous poets of that period. Southey and Moore often quote Jones's work in their copious notes; Shelley and Tennyson borrowed from him in their Queen Mab and Locksley Hall. Byron also seems to have read some at least of his work" (pp. 10-11). He had a genuine interest in Oriental life and thought. He laid the foundations for more knowledge of Eastern countries.

Jones, a late eighteenth century Orientalist, showed a wide range of knowledge and deep affection for things Arabian. Jones and his colleagues such as J.D. Carlyle, and Jonathan Scott provided accurate first-hand translations of Eastern material, let alone Jones's own first-hand observation of the East.

In the 19th century, the Oriental material continued to influence English literature and European culture via important channels: historical events; the impact of some authors and some literary works of the previous century paved the way for a new generation of writers to direct their attention to the East and its literature. In the first place, there was a general tendency and a kind of lively interest and

love of everything Oriental. In the second place, many Europeans and British in particular manifested this avid interest and love, and paid visits to the showers of the Lavent. The burgeoning interest in the East was due to Napoleon's expedition to Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century (1798-99). Napoleon's plans became the first in a series of European encounters with the Orient out of colonial interest and ambition. His expedition to the Near East was one of various political, or say, military occurrences, and it was an attempt, certainly, to keep European attention directed toward the Near East. The British set a strong foothold in India and even established their Empire there. As a result of Napoleon's expedition, "Britain and France rivaled each other for diplomatic influence with Oriental monarchs or walis whose territory lay on the short overland routes to India, all resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of English travellers to the East" (Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud)(p. 145). The travellers, whether merchants, diplomats or soldiers, or rich people, toured the Near East, registered their first-hand observations and returned to England with information and entertaining or tragic stories about the Near East.

The travel literature and imaginative literature of the opening decades of the nineteenth century made a great contribution to building the Orientalist discourse. In the literature of the period, the Moslem East occupied a high place. The Orient attracted the imagination of the Western peoples. A sense of power and superiority over the East was apparent in the 19th century. As Edward Said contends, "'Popular Orientalism' during the late 18th century and the early nineteenth century achieved a vogue of considerable intensity" (p. 118). And the

Moslem East "was still an enemy to be defeated" (Schacht, p. 48). Most writers, from Southey to Moore, "did not free themselves from the well-established image" about the Moslem East (Obeidat, 1984, p. 56).

So the East was important for the literature of England. The Orient as a theme was represented throughout the century in question. There were reasons behind the Romantic writers' adoption of the Orient as one of their favorite themes. Among these reasons were the enjoyment of the bourgeoisie of the Moslem world; the escape from the comfortable but dull life of the merchant classes. It was a desire to escape into a world rather different from the writer's own and to create one's own subjective world and the love of picturesque Eastern color. It was a complete escape, physically and spiritually, from one's own environment. Byron's romantic spirit was a case in point. The East was extended to mean more than a symbol of comfort, luxury, and wisdom. The Orient came to represent the mysterious, the unknown, the threatening.

The opening of the nineteenth century saw the first matured and most notable of Oriental tales, and that is Robert Southey's Thalaba, The Destroyer (1801). But the Orient was represented in English literature throughout the nineteenth century. Meester tells us that Southey was "a great student from an early youth; gathered a store of material on all subjects" (p. 23). He spent so many years studying all the works that might enlighten him or his writings. Because of his wide reading, his writings cover many regions. In Thalaba, Southey has brought in all features belonging to an Oriental tale: Afrites, Eblis, the Garden of Eden.

Southey showed a great interest in William Jones's writings, inter alia: Moallakat; Sacontala; Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations. He read Asiatic Researches, Arabian Nights, The Quran, and Vathek. Beckford's Vathek influenced Southey's Talaba: the name "Sarsar, the Icy Wind of Death" is a case in point.

Southey's very long poem in epic form, Thalaba, is a story of an Arabian whose father, brothers and sisters have been stained by evil enemies possessed by supernatural powers; they are in fact closely in league with the great and awful Eblis, or Satan himself, and their headquarters is the Domdaniel, a "seminary for evil magicians under the root of the sea." Those evil enemies, it appears later, have murdered Thalaba's father and siblings because their auguries revealed to them that from this family will spring their destroyer. Thalaba is that divinely appointed hero. After overcoming a long series of obstacles, mainly supernatural, he makes his way to Domdaniel, and destroys it and its evil inhabitants. Thalaba is an Arab; Southey set earthly scenes of the poem in Arabia. Southey also appended to the poem a formidable array of quotations from Near Eastern histories and travel books.

It is interesting to examine certain relevant aspects of the poem that concern the Moslem Orient. Although Southey did not travel to the Near East and depended on second-hand information, he showed outright hostility towards Prophet Mohammed and Islam. He frankly employs the theme of imperialism in his Oriental tale, where he soliloquizes over the downfall of Baghdad, which, he says, can only be restored to greatness by the intervention of the "enlightened arm of Europe." When Thalaba approaches Baghdad, Southey stops the narrative to deliver this soliloquy:

Thou too art fallen, Baghdad! City of Peace,
. . . .
. . . .
So one day may the crescent from thy Mosques
Be pluck'd by Wisdom, when the enlighten'd arm
of Europe conquers to redeem the East!
(Book V,vi)

This is a clear invitation to invade the Near East. He shows that Europe is superior to the East. These lines "indicate the imperialistic motives where they were the ruling passions of the time" (Asfour, p. 98). His dreams were materialized in the decades to come. This is one example, and there are numerous others throughout the poem which shows Southey's attitude towards Islam and the Moslem East. In a letter to John May dated July 29, 1799, he questions: "What was Mohammed? Self-deceived, or knowingly a deceived?" He implies that the Prophet was an imposter as a prophet and that his claim to prophethood can only be accepted as false. In short, Southey never showed any sympathy or understanding of the people and their religion.

Thomas Moore's book Lalla Rookh (1817) is another outstanding publication to appear in the nineteenth century. It marks the peak of Oriental vogue in English literature. Moore's verse tale evokes the picture of a dreamland of no definite boundaries, Arabia, India, or Persia, where the nights are warm and starry, the nightingales singing to the silver moon and the air is sweetly scented with the fragrance of rose bushes. All the romantic properties of the glamorous East are there: adventure, love, excessive passions, and colorful rich scenery, with nothing reminiscent of the ugly and gloomy reality of Europe at the close of Napoleon's wars. Moore's tale registered a record of success, and it was the romantic Oriental tale at its highest. It was a new vein of Oriental romance, that increased the vogue of

Orientalism, by meeting the appetite of readers for the glamorous East. But Moore depended on his extensive reading rather than first-hand knowledge or observation. He never visited the Near East; his knowledge was gained wholly from books.

It is interesting to note that Moore's Lalla Rookh shares accidental coincidences in locality and costume and in plot and character with Byron's The Bride of Abydos (see Gwynn, Stephen, Thomas Moore: English Men of Letters, London 1905, pp. 56-61 for a full account of the whole matter).

Groves, baths, fountains, fruits, flowers and sexual blandishment are some of the things that Moore is concerned about in his tale. He gives, however, an impartial picture of the Near East, giving the attractive and unattractive sides. Byron, commenting on Moore's Oriental tale, remarks:

> I am very much delighted with what is before me and very thirsty for the rest. You have caught the colours as if you had been in the rainbow and the tone of the East is perfectly preserved. (quoted by Meester)

In his dedication of The Corsair to Moore, Byron speaks of the former's Oriental poem being written at that time. He begins:

> Your imagination will create a warmer sun and less clouded sky; but wildness, tenderness and originality are part of your national claim of Oriental descent. (pp. 148-49)

This shows how Moore's Lalla Rookh followed the fashion for Oriental subjects at that time.

The second decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the publication of two major Oriental tales: Thomas Hope's Anastasius: or Memoirs of Greek (1819) and James Morier's Hajji Baba (1824). Hope's and Morier's Oriental tales are genuine Near Eastern in both subject

matter and setting. Hope's Anastasius was a conscious villain who knows the difference between good and evil, but due to his bad upbringing, his natural disposition always inclined to evil. He lacks courage, pride, tenderness, or virtue. The hero's highly colored career takes him into every walk of life in the vast Ottoman Empire, describing in detail the lives of the subjects of the Sublime Pure, Ottoman jail (the Bangs). He turns a Muslim thus having the privilege of visiting Egypt, Baghdad, Smyran, and even Mecca. Anastasius manages to establish himself, in Egypt, with one of the Beys and finally is awarded the honor of the hand of his patron's youngest daughter. He gets married but this marriage does not last due to the untimely death of his wife. He sets out again on his travels, paying a visit or, say, a pilgrimage to Mecca--he then becomes a womanizer seducing many innocent girls.

Thomas Hope, the author of Anastasius, was an extremely wealthy gentleman who had spent eight years of his youth studying and travelling to Egypt, Greece, Sicily, Syria, Spain and Turkey. In his Oriental tale, Hope gives realistic descriptions of the people and the appearance of the Near East. He gives us a clear-cut picture about the Near East in what seems in Western eyes its shameless hypocrisy and its romance. He depends on his first-hand experience and observation. There is the romantic attraction and political interest in the Near East. Hope gives the impression that the region is adorned by the Greeks and defaced by the Turks.

James Morier's Hajji Baba (1824) was another successful Oriental tale that appeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Wallace Brown, in his discussion of Hope's work, writes that Hope's

book "was probably an important factor in deciding Morier to write Hajji Baba in this picturesque fictionalized form five years later" (p. 475). In Hajji Baba, the author, Morier, brings the hero down from the summit of his tower of a thousand steps, where he had observed the stars and sacrificed to the power of darkness. The hero leaves his Palace of the Five Senses, rich with the treasures of art and literature. He quits the Hall of Subterranean, where he had wandered in sublime damnation. From the ruins of Istakhar, he walks "the dirty narrow streets" of Isfahan and sits in his father's shop close to a big caravanserai, shaving heads, trimming beards and cracking the joints of merchants and mule-drivers, discussing the "price of Lamb's wool in Constantinople." He is captured by robbers and takes part in their robberies, serves under a doctor and under a priest, and is at one time a soldier.

Morier seems to be unique among all Oriental tale writers by taking his hero to the reality of the streets of Isfahan. In this respect, T.O.D. Dunn, an Indian writer, notes:

> . . . at last, in 1824, a decisive blow was struck at all the false sentiment attaching to an East as little understood as visited, when James Justinian Morier launched upon the world his immortal hero, . . . Here at last the Oriental Gil Blas, naked and unashamed. (p. 27)

Wallace Brown considers Morier's Hajji Baba "the culmination of the development of English prose fiction about the Near East in the period 1775-1825" (p. 826). F. Moussa Mahmoud points out that Morier made "his hero a man of humble origin, with more education than was usually acquired by people of his class" (p. 171).

Another prose Oriental tale that appeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was Sir Walter Scott's romance of the crusades,

The Talisman (1825). In this romance, Scott turns to the crusades, and to his favorite hero Richard the Lion-Heart. The setting of The Talisman is in the Holy Land in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, at the time when Richard the Lion-Heart was there at the head of the crusades. Throughout the story, Scott keeps the Oriental atmosphere up, the visual superstitions and Eastern legends. He also alludes to the Koran and to national poets. Take for instance:

> What saith the Book itself? He that would not be burnt avoideth to tread on hot embers--wise men spread not the flax before a bickering torch--He, saith the sage, who hath forfeited a treasure doth not wisely to turn back and gaze at it. (Quoted by Meester, p. 47)

Scott also presents a sort of a professional story-teller making his appearance and the Arabian physician in the type of an Eastern sage of whom Scott says: ". . . in the East, wisdom is held to consist less in a display of the sage's own inventive talents, than in his ready memory and happy application of and reference to 'that which is written'" (quoted by Meester, p. 47). Scott never fails to give a nice description of the morning prayer in the desert, with the muezzin's call. In his writing of The Talisman, Scott was influenced by The Arabian Nights, which was one of his sources. When Scott introduces an Oriental speaking, it constantly reminds readers of the Thousand and One Nights, and there are many passages that appear to be inspired by the Thousand and One Nights.

In Saladin's tent, above the King's seat, is displayed the banner of Death with the inscription: Saladin, King of Kings--Saladin, Victor of Victors,--Saladin must die. Scott seems to admire Saladin, and the story of Richard the Lion-Heart is a case in point. Richard lies dangerously ill of a fever; the Sultan sends him his own personal Arab

doctor; the King's friends suspect a trick to murder him, and Richard is appropriately indignant that they should think of such a thing. The climax of the tale is concerned with a brilliant tournament scene in the desert near Acre, at which the forces of the Saladin meet on friendly terms with the Christian crusaders under Richard, the Lion-Heart. Scott's The Betrothed (1825) is another tale that bears a direct relation with the Near East.

To conclude, Orientalists from the school of Sir William Jones (1745-1794), the travellers, and The Arabian Nights all played important roles in the development of the history of the Oriental tale in England until 1825. There was the moralist or philosophic pseudo-Orientalism of the eighteenth century; there was also the more realistic tales written by travellers such as Hope and Morier, let alone Romantics' adherence to Oriental local color and costume. All contribute to this kind of new literary genre that was Oriental literature. In light of the history of the Oriental tale, one could assume that the Near East continued to influence the direction of English literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In my previous survey and discussion of the history of the Oriental tale in England, I have endeavored to select and shed light on a few of the most interesting tales that bear a close relationship with the Near East. I have shown at times the moral themes of some of them wherever the story would admit of them.

CHAPTER IV

BYRON, ORIENTALIST

The case for Byron's literary importance has been treated in admirably comprehensive works such as Leslie A. Marchand's Byron: A Biography, 3 Vols., 1957; G. Wilson Knight's symbolic interpretation and praises of Byron, The Burning Oracle, 1939; E.J. Lovell, Jr., Byron: The Record of a Quest, 1950; Jerome J. McGann, Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development, 1968; and Bernard Blackstone's Byron: A Survey, 1975. In these works and others, Byron is considered one of the major literary figures in the nineteenth century. He may be ranked also as one of the better English poets interested in the Near East in his time, who depends on his poetry on first-hand observation. His literary output is vast; and my concern in this chapter is particularly the poet's writing on the Moslem East. Byron's interest in the Near East is clear from the amount of literature he wrote about that part of the world. His work is the outstanding example of British interest in the Near East as manifested in the poetry of the period.

From an early age, Byron showed a fascination with the Orient. He says of himself:

> The Turkish History (i.e., General History of the Turks by Richard Knolles and its continuation by Sir Paul Ricant) was one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child, and I believe, it had much influence on my subsequent wishes to visit the Levant and gave perhaps the Oriental colouring which is observed in my poetry.

Such are the words of Byron. He had also read Demetrius Cantemir's History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire; Baron DeTott's Memoirs; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's works; Vincent Miguot's History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire; and "all travels, or histories, or books upon the East" that he could lay his hands on (Moore, 119n). Besides his readings of many books of history and of travel alike, in the countries of the East, Byron had read The Arabian Nights as a child. He alludes to his boyhood appreciation of The Nights. He had also acquainted himself with Sir William Jones's translations and works. But William Beckford's Vathek (1786) "was the greatest influence on his work" and he "admired it greatly and must have studied it very thoroughly, for as he admits himself in one of his notes to the Giaour, he owes a great part of his knowledge on Oriental matters to it" (Meester, p. 34). In the note to his successful Turkish tale, Byron gives Vathek "great publicity." He wrote as a final note to his own tale:

> For the contents of some of the notes I am indebted partly to D'Herbelot, and partly to that most Eastern and, as Mr. Weber justly entitles, it, 'sublime Tale,' the Caliph Vathek. I do not know from what source the author of that singular volume may have drawn his materials. Some of the incidents are to be found in the Bibliotheque Orientale; but for correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination, it far surpasses all European imitations and bears such marks of originality that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation. As an Eastern tale, even Rasselas must bow before it; his 'Happy Valley' will not bear a comparison with the 'Hall of Eblis.' (Byron, p. 145)

If the note indicates anything, it shows the scope of Byron's indebtedness to Vathek. This indebtedness has been amply studied by many writers. In his Siege of Corinth (1816), Byron, telling Thomas Medwin of his borrowing from Vathek in his tale: "You remember a

passage I borrowed from it in 'The Siege of Corinth', which I almost took verbatim." The borrowing, in Byron Smith's words, "forms an interesting example of how imagination kindles another" (p. 128). The borrowing in question occurs when the ghost of Francesca bids Alp repent. The stanza begins:

> There is a light cloud by the moon.
> 'Tis passing, and will pass full soon.
> If, by the time its vapoury sail
> Hath ceased her shaded orb to veil,
> Thy heart within there is not changed,
> Then God and man are both avenged. (The Siege, 21. 598-603)

Harold S.L. Wiener (1938) examined Byron's debt thoroughly. In his study, Wiener tackles The Giaour (1813) in relation to Vathek. He also examines the similarities between Byron's notes to The Giaour and Henley's notes to Vathek. Wiener, moreover, finds many reminiscences of Vathek in Byron's The Bride of Abydos (1813): The close resemblance between Selim Byron's hero and Nouronihar's cousin Gulchenrouz. So Vathek was a direct source of inspiration for Byron and for others.

So we see Byron's absorption of Turkish history, travel literature, and Oriental literature. He learned many details about Eastern customs and peculiarities. All his readings combined had deeply influenced his writing about the Near East. It was the Near East which was always connected with the poet's life by his childhood reading; by its relationship to the classical and Biblical worlds, which were the background of his education. That Near East was the distant land to which the crusades and pilgrims had gone a long time ago.

In addition to Byron's wide reading, he actually went to the Near East, or say, to the Orient. He made up his mind in 1809 to travel to

Greece, Albania and Turkey, "convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them" (Prothero, p. 309). Byron showed a kind of dissatisfaction with the current travel literature and books about the Near East. In a letter to his mother, Byron writes:

> If we see no nation but our own, we do not give mankind a fair chance;—it is from experience, not from books, we ought to judge of them. There is nothing like inspection, and trusting to our senses. (L.J., 194-195)

It is evident from the above quotation that Byron was looking for a mature judgment about the Near East and its people. And in his writing, Byron shows his passion for accuracy, supporting, verifying, and documenting the facts about the Orient. As Anahid Melikian puts it, "Byron's objectivity gradually made him see the Near East in a different light, not with less interest, but with fewer illusions and more understanding" (p. 99). Byron's writing was not based on library Orientalism. His was based on first-hand observation.

Byron's trip to the Levant follows the customary Grand Tour. My main concern here is not to dwell on his journey from his native land to the Near East because this subject has been adequately treated elsewhere. My concern is the impact of the journey on Byron as a poet, and how he employed his first-hand observation of the Orient in his poetry, i.e., The Turkish Tales, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Beppo and Don Juan. As we will see later in this chapter, Byron fails to free himself totally from the traditional conception or stereotypes of the Near East inherited in Western literature from generation to generation. Byron is truly unique and different from all other writers and poets who were attracted by the Near East, or, had a "love affair" with it. For Byron created his own real Orient, integrated into a

living whole. His journey to the Moslem East contributed to the final image of the Orient in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The poet went to the Near East with an open mind; he was prepared to see things as they were and to form independent judgments whenever that was possible. In January 14, 1811, he wrote a letter to his mother, which begins:

> I am so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them, and the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an Islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us, to set our young men abroad, for a term, among the few allies our wars have left us.
>
> Here I see and have conversed with French, Italians, German, Dances, Greeks, Americans, etc. of countries and manners of others, where I see the superiority of England (which, by the by, we are good deal mistaken about in many things). I am pleased, and where I find her inferior, I am at least enlightened. (Letters and Journals, I. p. 309)

Byron's avid interest and "love affair" with the Near East is clear from his correspondence with his friend Thomas Moore. He writes to him, "stick to the East," as "it was the only poetical policy" (Letters and Journals, II, p. 255).

Byron's journey to the Near East might be viewed as a positive experience. His trip was quite broad and fruitful. He learned a lot from his direct observation and contact with the people. In the Near East, Byron encounters for the first time people with amazing customs, manners of people, a different social life (especially pertaining to marriage), let alone a different religion from his own. He looked forward to viewing the Mediterranean landscape. Byron travelled for many reasons: he found in the act of travel the movement, the changes of scene, the variety of contacts, and the possibility of solitude among unknown men in the East, a charm which amounted for some years to

a passion; the beauty of scenery, the historical and literary association, the pleasures of music and other arts, glimpses of a religious life into which he could never truly penetrate. Byron "left" his country for his country's good. He knew the bitterness of exile. He led a restless, unfulfilled life. He lost his intimate relatives and friends. His romantic spirit gave him the tendency, the desire to escape into a world rather different from his own; the desire to create one's own subjective world, and the love of picturesque local color.

The nature of Byron's relationship to English interest in the Near East is that he did not create that interest; it had long been established before him; he contributed to that interest. In Brown's words, "a traveller himself, and intimate with other travellers and travel books, Byron caught the precise spirit of English interest in the Near East; and with his eye on the romantic realities of that region, provided his readers with the best possible substitute for the actual sight of the scenes themselves" (p. 64).

And Byron's death stands as one of the most memorable incidents in his story. This brings us back to the biographical interest in Byron, an interest which perpetually draws out attention away from his actual Oriental work. However, what we know of his life is enhanced by our interest in his work. Byron died while fighting for the Greek cause.

Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto II, the first major work that alludes to the Near East, celebrates the Greek struggle for freedom and independence. It is worth noting that the Greek culture fascinated Europeans for a considerable period of time. Europeans tended to idealize everything Greek. On the other hand, the image of

Moslem Turkey, in Europeans' terminology, was associated mostly--and unjustly--with cruelty, tyranny and barbarism due to hatred and enmity between the Europeans and the Turkish Moslems and due to the former's ignorance of the region and its people" (Asfour, p. 156). Even those who had the opportunity to visit and sojourn in the Orient wrote books of their first-hand observation, Oriental poetry, but failed to convey an accurate picture of the thing they observed. Byron's judgment is a case in point.

Therefore, it is not at all surprising to find that Lord Byron as a traveller, an Englishman, and a poet held an admiration for and sympathy with the oppressed Greeks. On the other hand, he holds hostility toward the "tyrannical" Turks and their alien culture. For the sake of Greek freedom, Byron even offers large sums of money to advance its cause, let alone his personal participation in the struggle.

Such was Byron's political thinking. The question is, was the struggle between Greece and Turkey primarily religious? In this respect, Asfour rightly says that "It should have been clear to Byron that the struggle between Turkey and Greece was not essentially a religious struggle between Christianity and Islam, but rather between an imperialistic power and a vanquished nation" (p. 158). Elsewhere, Byron tells us that there was probably more mutual hatred between Turks and Arabs than between Greeks and Turks (Poetry III. 162n). Byron tends to identify the cause of the Arabs with the cause of Greeks of being in the same boat as oppressed nations. However, we cannot rule out that Byron had represented, occasionally, the Greek-Turkish dispute as that between Islam and Christianity. One of his references in

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is a case in point. In his visit to Albania, he exclaims:

> Land of Albania! Where Iskander rose,
> Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
> And he his name-sake, whose oft-baffled foes
> Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprize:
> Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
> On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
> The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
> And the pale crescent sparkes in the glen,
> Through many a cypress grove within each city's ken!
> (CHP II. 38, 334-342)

And again in stanza 44, we read:

> Here the red cross, for still the cross is here,
> Though sadly scoff'd at by the circumcis'd,
> Forgets that pride to pamper'd Priesthood dear;
> Churchman and votary alike despis'd.
> (CHP II, 44, 388-391)

In the same canto, Byron expressed his religious skepticism. In the third stanza, he asserts that:

> Even gods must yield--religions take their turn:
> 'Twas Jove's--'tis Mahomet's--and other creeds
> Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
> Vainly his incense soars his victim bleeds;
> Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built on reeds.
> (CHP II, 3, 23-27)

If in stanza 44 Byron shows his sympathy with Christianity, disregarding other creeds, the lines quoted above show that Byron's spiritual doubts are broader. He is a romantic, rebelling against all customs, including Christianity. His was a conscious revolt against Calvinism and its practices; on the unconscious level he remained as a Calvinist, for he received a Calvinist education. The poet considered "himself a wandering Jew, an outcast of his own dark mind rebelling and alienated from the Establishment" (Hirst, p. 2).

Byron's contact with the Moslem Turks resulted in a revision, an improvement of the old distorted image inherited from previous European

generations who had had a long tradition of misrepresentation of Islam and the Moslem East, as we have seen in Chapter II. Let us call his attitude toward the Turks an open-mindedness, freed to some extent from the European tradition. In "Additional Notes on the Turks" appended to Canto II of Childe Harold, Byron writes:

> It is hazardous to say much on the subject of Turks and Turkey; since it is possible to live amongst them twenty years without acquiring information, at least from themselves. (p. 102)

Byron seemed to be aware that some measure of intimacy with the Turks is needed in order to understand them and give an accurate image about them. He accomplished that by getting acquainted with Ali Pacha and other high-ranking Turkish officials.

When Byron arrived in Prevasa on November 12, 1809, he wrote to his mother a letter offering an account of his visit to Ali Pacha, "one of the most powerful men in the Ottoman Empire," and "of how the Pacha had given orders that I should be treated well, because he was an Englishman of rank. About the character of the Pacha as a dignified, mild-looking old man, Byron says:

> He has the appearance of anything but his real character, for he is a remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties, very brave, and so good a general that they call him the Mahometan Bounaparte. (L.J.I. 252)

In short, Byron liked the Albanians, admired their bravery, honesty, friendship and hospitality for the Turks. Byron was impressed by them:

> Some are brave, and all are beautiful
> . . .
> . . .
> The women not quite so handsome . . .
> They are extremely polite to strangers of any rank, properly protected. (L.J.I. 286)

And again, Byron writes:

> The Turks take too much care of their
> Women to permit them to be scrutinized. (L.J.I. 271)

One could say that Byron found a shelter in the East; he also felt at home among the people of the Orient. But we should not forget that his life there had its own limitations.

As an acute observer, Byron always attempted to present the positive and negative sides of the Near East people. He strove to give an accurate and authentic picture of his first-hand observation of life in the Orient. In Ruskin's words, Byron "spoke only of what he had seen and known; and spoke without exaggeration, without mystery, without enmity, and without mercy" (p. 149). He was always concerned about the accuracy and correctness of his work. Leslie Marchand suggests that "Byron saw much to justify a growing dislike of the Turks" (p. 242). Byron found that the Turks were humane in their treatment of street animals, but they also manifested a "contempt for human life" that "was truly revolting" (p. 242). Byron claims of his observation of many vices of the Turks inter alia: maltreatment of their wives, imprisonment of them in the harem, trading in slavery, and fondness of sensual pleasure. In this respect, Byron failed to recognize that slavery trade was rampant in Constantinople as well as in other major cities in the West. Moreover, when Byron sees something sinful in the Near East, the people see it as a virtue. If Turkish Moslems confine their wives to the home, they are not ill-treating them, but their concern is about honor and dignity. If the Turks practice polygamy (I suppose they do), it is not sinful or sensual but a necessity in some cases; the system of polygamy has been condoned in order to marry off widows whose husbands died in holy wars. In the

Turkish case, being in war with Greece and other European nations, it necessitated having more than one wife. And having more than wife is better than having a mistress behind one's own wife.

On other occasions, Byron did not spare his native England, let alone Turkey. In a letter to Henry Drary, dated May 3, 1810, Byron's observation and comparison runs as follows:

> I see not much difference between ourselves and the Turks. . . . In England the vices in fashion are whoring and drinking; in Turkey, sodomy and smoking. We prefer a girl and a bottle, they a pipe and a pathic.
>
> (Poetry III, 83)

All of this shows that Byron was writing from actual experience because he sojourned in the Near East. He gives excellent accounts of the people and country of the Orient. He is deeply interested and involved in the whole problem of the Orient and its relation to England and to Christianity from a biblical perspective. There was a wave of interest in biblical history coupled with enthusiasm for Christianity at the turn of the 19th century.

Byron's major writing about the Moslem East sheds light also on the poet's ideology. Byron wrote several tales on the subject of the Orient. These tales and other works contain numerous references to Islam and pictures of life of Moslems. Some of these references are either colored by the poet's own spiritual doubts or by the distortions and prejudices which were rampant several centuries ago. Other references tolerate the lifestyle, religious manners and practices. Many contradictions multiplied his spiritual doubts long before his trip to the Orient. He expressed, for example, doubts about the immortality of the soul. However, Countess Guicciolli mollifies and assures us that "In religion, his skepticism never went so far as to

cause him to deny its fundamental doctrines" (p. 169). And Byron assures his doctor that he does not "reject the doctrines of Christianity" and that he "only asks a few more proofs to profess them sincerely" (p. 147). And the debate over Byron's religious ideology is still open. C.M. Woodhouse, in "The Religion of an Agnostic," concludes that Byron "held no specific faith, but was possessed by a passionate spirit of religious enquiry" (p. 32).

It seems that it is not possible to reach a consensus on Byron's religious attitudes: whether to be understood as undermining faith in the Bible, or reinforcing biblical belief. For example, in Byron's Cain, it is hard to settle the issue of whether the poet intended to say that Cain has a duty to love his brother Abel whether or not God demands it. Byron was busy in a religious struggle of the mind. What concerns us here is Byron's position between his Calvinistic education and the challenging new religion that he encountered in the Moslem East. In this respect, Anahid Melikian remarks that "Byron's interest in the Old Testament was in complete accord with his Calvinistic upbringing, which gave him belief in a stern God (a belief against which he struggled), and imbued him with the sense of predestination, which, I think, helped him to understand the Mohammedan idea of fate and man's helplessness before God" (p. 157). The religious critics "called Byron to account for wasting his God-given talent and for not producing something of great spiritual and ethical value" (Santucho, p. 6).

Blackstone raises the question of Byron's true ideology. He thinks that "Byron's heart and hope is in the hand of the Christian God." He adds that "Byron believes that 'All religions are one: the

Father of Christianity and the Allah of the Moslems are one and the same. The monolithic simplicity of Islam appealed to Byron, at this period of his life, above the doctrinal and ritual complexities of Christianity; nevertheless, he has sacrificed his preference and remained faithful to the creed of his fathers" (p. 133-134). But not all religious practices appealed to the poet. On marriage practices, he wrote:

> Another doctrine can never be in repute among the Solomons of the East. It cannot be easy to persuade men, who have had so many wives as they pleased, to be content with one; besides, a woman is old at twenty in that country. (p. 118)

Byron shows a certain degree of understanding and toleration of the marriage practice there and, as the quotation above shows, Byron hints at justifying that practice. If he is preoccupied with the negative aspects of Eastern Society, he is also involved in the virtues of the people of that land. His ideas about the Near East were not the stock ideas "of the earliest times." In other words, he was not dependent on conventions and stock ideas or traditions of those who preceded him. He freed himself, to a great extent, from the tradition that was the norm for hundreds of years.

His treatment of the Turkish race, whether as Moslems or Turks, gives a clear and interesting picture of them. His observations make his works, i.e. Turkish Tales, Beppo, and others, remarkable and readable. His description of people and country are those of an onlooker rather than a traveller. His description of the Turks' various occupations and dress, education and general intelligence came out of Byron's sojourn in the Levant. He gives a clear description of the Turks' morality; their hospitality; their sobriety, bravery,

sincerity, and honesty. In his Additional Notes on the Turks, Byron says:

> In all my money transactions with the Moslems, I ever found the strictest honor, the highest disinterestedness. In transacting, business with them, there are none of those dirty peculations under the name of interest, difference of exchange, commission, etc., etc.
>
> (McGann, 102)

In another example showing the level of their education and intelligence, Byron remarks:

> I remember Mahmout, the grandson of Ali Pacha, asking whether my fellow traveller and myself were in the upper or lower House of Parliament. Now this question from a boy of ten years old proved that his education had not been neglected. It may be doubted if an English boy at that age knows the difference of the Divan from a College of Dervishes; but I am sure a Spaniard does not. How little Mahmout, surrounded, as he had been, entirely by his Turkish tutors, had learned that there was such a thing as a Parliament, was useless to conjecture, unless we suppose that his instructors did not confine his studies to the Koran.
>
> (McGann, 103)

Byron digresses on the system of education in Turkey. He endeavors, I think, to correct his fellows' concepts about education in the Near East. Equally important, Byron is truly paying his dues to the people of the Orient. This is what he has seen and experienced. And on the nature of Byron's interest in the Orient, Brown succinctly writes:

> A traveller himself, and intimate with other travellers and travel books, Byron caught the precise spirit of English interest in the Near East; and, with his eye on the romantic realities of that region, provided his readers with the best possible substitute for the actual sight of the scenes themselves. (p. 64)

Childe Harold II

Upon Byron's return to his homeland, he published his first-hand travel observation of what he had seen and experienced. He introduced to his English audience the first two cantos of his outstanding work,

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812). His work was well-received and won him immediate recognition. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage became the best-seller and awoke in thousands of readers the eager desire to sail "where the waves of the Aegean spread 'their long array of sapphire and of gold'" (p. 94). Through Byron, readers were able to enjoy, in their imaginations, the beauty of the East, the excitement of seeing distant lands and people.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage highlights and capitalizes upon the struggle of the Greeks against the Turks for the sake of freedom. In Byron's eyes, the Greek struggle is seen as a struggle between Christianity and Islam. Islam, however, is sketchily presented in Canto II of Childe Harold.

> There some grave Moslem to devotion stops,
> And some that smoke, and some that play are found;
> . . . . . .
> Hark! from the mosque the nightly solemn sound,
> The Muezzin's call doth shake the minerat,
> 'There is no god but God!--to prayer--Lo! God is great.'
> (CHP II, 59, 523-531)

And in the next stanza, Byron begins:

> Just at this season Ramazani's fast
> Through the long day its penance did maintain:
> But when the lingering twilight hour was past,
> Revel and feast assumed the role again:
> I vow all was bustle . . .
> (CHP II, 60, 532-36)

In his references to the Greek race and the Turkish race, Byron, as might be expected, tilts in favor of the Greek people and shows much sympathy with the Greeks and meager admiration for the cruel and tyrannical Turks and their culture. The image of the Moslem Turk was still associated with cruelty, barbarism and tyranny. They were seen as enslaving and oppressing the Greeks.

In Childe Harold II, stanza 38, Byron reminds us of the "cross" as the symbol of Christianity, while the "crescent" symbolizes Islam. All his references to Islam shows that Byron was very much aware of being in a Moslem country, and of the importance of religion and people's observance of religious practices. Equally important is that Byron's attitude in Canto II of Childe Harold shows the difference between the Englishman who had actually lived among the people of the Moslem East and the one who knew them only second-hand. The second canto includes several descriptive and narrative passages which directly pertain to modern Greece and Turkey. Our concern here is mainly Byron's allusion to Turkey and Islam. It is worth mentioning that Byron is concerned with the antiquity of Greece and the activity of her despoilers, specifically Lord Elgin, savagely assailed for removing many of the sculptures and architectural fragments from the Parthenon to London. Byron brings his hero from Spain (Canto I) through the Mediterranean to the coast of Albania, commenting enroute on Childe Harold's love for holding "converse with Nature's charms," and on life and women. In the same canto and in others, Byron also registers his political diary of the Grand Tour which he and Hobhouse made through Greece to Constantinople in 1809-10.

In the second Canto, Byron frankly urges the Greeks to wake up and to rise and fight for their own cause. He alludes to that in several places in the poem. Byron's addressing the "spirit of freedom" is a case in point. He says:

> Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
> But every carle can lord it o'er thy land;
> Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
> Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
> From birth till death enslav'd; in word, in deed unmann'd.
> (CHP II, 74, 706-710)

And again in stanza 83:

> Yet with smooth smile his tyrant can accost,
> And wield the slavish sickle, not the sword:
> Ah! Greece! they love thee least who owe the most;
> Their birth, their blood, and that sublime record
> Of hero sires, who shame thy now degenerate horde!
> (CHP II, 83, 787-791)

It is Byron who laments the lost glory of Greece; he also lost faith in the modern Greeks. He doubted their abilities to liberate themselves from the tyranny of their enemy. At times, he conceives the Greek struggle as between an imperialistic power and a vanquished nation or race. At other times, he terms the struggle as a religious one between Christianity and Islam. Take for example stanza 44:

> Here the red cross, for still the cross is here,
> Though sadly scoff'd at by the circumcis'd,
> Forgets that pride to pamper'd Priesthood dear;
> Churchman and votary alike despis'd,
> Foul Superstition! howsoe'er disguis'd,
> Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
> For whatsoever symbol thou art priz'd,
> Thou sacerdotal gain, but general less!
> Who from true worship's gold can separate thy dross?
> (CHP II, 44, 388-396)

It is not surprising that Byron is siding with the Greek and the cross. He goes even further to identify himself with the Greeks' cause. Byron also feels hopeless sometimes as he implies in another stanza:

> Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? No!
> True, they may lay your proud despoilers low,
> But not for you will freedom's altars flame,
> Shades of the Helots! triumph o'er your foe!
> Greece! change thy Lords, thy state is still the same;
> Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame.
> (CHP II, 76, 724-729)

Byron is surely addressing the Greeks. Is not he teaching them a lesson of freedom and of independence? Freedom and independence from the Turks' slavery.

In another stanza, Byron presents himself as a well-known authority on the politics of the Moslem East. He refers to the capture of Istanbul by the Ottomans from the Giaours (infidels). And he uses words of the Near East such as the Serai, and the Moslem sect Wahabis. The Serai is the location, headquarters of the Ottoman authorities. It is a symbol of the political system in Turkey. The Wahabs' sect signifies political and religious power. Byron fears that they might "wind their path of blood along the West; but never will freedom seek this fated soil, but slave succeed to slave through years of endless soil" (CHP II, 77, 735-737). He is clearly portraying their religious fanaticism as being bloody. In the very next stanza, he presents their religious ideology of how "to shrive from man his weight of mortal sin By daily abstinence and nightly prayer" (CHP II 78, 740-741).

In previous stanzas, he describes Ali Pacha as glorious with strong personality. Ali Pacha, alighting his horse, makes the "Giaours view his horse-tail with dread" (CHP 10, 687). Elsewhere, Byron does not forget to talk about slavery, Moslem luxury and Moslem women, let alone love. On slavery, we read: "As page and slave anon were passing out and in" (CHP II, 60, 540). But were the Turks the only race trading slaves? Of course not; slavery business was not the exclusive property of the Eastern societies. Slaves were bought and sold in Constantinople, but also in the West Indies (Don Juan, IV. 115, 914). The trade in eunuchs and slaves was rampant during that time and even practiced by the Turkish Sultan and the Christian Pope (Byron's note to D.J. IV, 82). Byron also takes Childe Harold to the hub of the Eastern society, the Eastern market, and there:

'Mid many things most new to ear and eye
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gaz'd around on Moslem luxury,
Till quickly wearied with that spacious seat
Of wealth and wantonness, the choice retreat.
(CHP II, 64, 568-572)

Lastly, Byron highlights the place of women in the Near Eastern society: their lifestyle as mothers confined at home. He begins:

Here woman's voice is never heard: apart,
And scarce permitted, guarded, veil'd, to more,
She yields to one her person and her heart,
Tam'ed to her cage, nor feels a wish to rove:
For, not unhappy in her master's love,
And joyful in a mother's gentlest raves.
(CHP II, 61, 541-546)

Byron also makes several allusions to the Turkish Moslems and their lifestyle, their education . . . Space does not allow us to dwell on that, but an example is deemed necessary at times. There is little argument against Byron's open-mindedness when he visited the Moslem East. But certain traditions inherited from previous European generations can be traced in one of his notes to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage II 38, 5-6. In his note, Byron tells us that he was served by two Albanians, "an infidel and a Mussulman." When he falls back sick, he is attended by these two servants with such zeal and concern "that would have done honour to civilization." When it was time for Byron to take off, Basili, the Christian servant, took his money and went away. Dervish, the Moslem servant, dashed his money to the ground and began to weep: "from that moment to the hour of my embarkation," writes Byron, "he continued his lamentations and all our efforts to console him only produced this answer . . ." He leaves Byron and his fellows were deeply impressed and moved by what Byron, unfortunately, calls "the unaffected and unexpected sorrow of this barbarian" (McGann,

pp. 88-89). And again, Byron relates an incident in CHP II 66, in which he is attacked by "bad men" and how he is sheltered by the Albanians "when . . . less barbarians would have cheered him less." It is obvious that Byron still carries his English background, which wrongly or rightly encouraged an attitude of superiority to other nations. The European label of a non-European as barbarian is coupled with recognition of a high degree of nobility in them. A phrase like "the noble savage" (For details, see Horst S. and Ingrid Daemmrich, Themes and Motifs in Western Literature: a Handbook. Tünbingen: Francke, 1987, 196-200) "was famous in the 18th century and has a history behind it" (Asfour, p. 162).

Despite these reservations, Byron's Childe Harold was the first sign of improvement of the distorted image inherited from previous. European generations of a long tradition of misrepresentation.

The Giaour

> The Circumstance to which the above story relates was not very uncommon in Turkey. A few years ago the wife of Machtar Pacha complained to his father of his son's supposed infidelity; he asked with whom, and she had the barbarity to give him a list of the twelve handsomest women in Yanina. They were seized, fastened up in sacks, and drowned in the lake the same night! One of the guards who was present informed me, that not one of the victims uttered a cry, or shewed a symptom of terror at so sudden a 'wrench from all we know, from all we love . . . I heard it by accident recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant, and sing or recite their narratives.' (McGann, p. 246)

Such are the words of Byron explaining the implications of composing The Giaour, the first work in the series of famous 'Byronic Tales' which Byron was soon to produce. As the Advertisement suggests, the setting of the poem is in Greece shortly after 1779, when Hassan

Ghazi broke the rebellion of the Arnaut in the Morea. In Jerome McGann's words, Byron "means to call up the general state of Greece under Ottoman rule at the end of the eighteenth century." He adds that "the poem is in fact a displaced critique of current European ideology," although "sometimes read as a mere adventure story ornamented with 'Eastern imagery'" (p. 1034).

As Byron clearly states, the custom of drowning faithless women (political enemies, persona non-grata) was rampant in the region at the time. Byron, in The Giaour, seems to have created an atmosphere fraught with mystery about the story of his tale, which, he said, was based on fact. He appears to have been involved in the rescue of a girl who was on the verge of being dumped alive in the sea as a retribution for committing adultery, and some speculate that the poet himself was the cause of the crime. At least he took part in the events (Jerome McGann, p. 1035).

In brief, the story of the Giaour involves a Muslim emir, Hassan; a Venetian, the Giaour; and Leila, the beautiful Circassian, who is loved by Hassan, her Muslim lover, husband or master--it is not easy to determine the relationship--but deceives him by giving her love to another non-Moslem, a giaour. The relationship between Hassan and Leila is not based on mutual love. If he loves her, he does that as a master and she remains as a slave. This theme is one that recurs frequently in Oriental fiction. The Giaour comes along, with all the fascinating handsomeness of the Byronic hero, Leila braves all danger and follows him: "in likeness of a Georgian page" (I. 455). Hassan finds out Leila's unfaithfulness and how she "had wrong'd him with the faithless Giaour" (I. 458). Although Hassan is, obviously, in love

with her, he "in the Mussulman manner," as Byron writes in the Advertisement, has her sewn in a sack and drowned with the help of a fisherman, who is one of the narrators of the tale. In other words, he punishes her by drowning her as she deserves--according to the "rules of the game in Turkey." The Giaour, her non-Moslem lover, ambushes Hassan and his retinue and avenges the death of his beloved, and spends the rest of his life at a monastery, haunted by the lost Leila, until remorse kills him.

In the Poem, one finds a sense of mystery sustained throughout in which the Oriental setting helps to enrich the poem with more dimension. Our concern here is, of course, primarily with the question of Byron's use of Orientalism. But Byron's Giaour can also be seen as his hero, who in Peter L. Thorslev's words, is "England's contribution to the tradition of the Romantic hero" (p. 185). The story is set in the Orient but its hero is Western and remains nameless throughout the tale. And several other important elements should be recognized in the tale: the use of Oriental imagery; the theme of religious strife between Moslems and Christians (let alone national and religious customs); constant shift of events; narrative movement back and forth in time; Byron's occasional intrusion on the scene.

There is a sense of realism in Byron's narratives. For he depends on first-hand experience of the Near East. This has enabled him to give an accurate picture of the place and of the people he describes. The fisherman describes the scene the Giaour is momentarily looking at:

> Why looks he o'er the olive wood!
> The crescent glimmers on the hill,

The Mosque's high lamps are quivering still;
. . .
. . .
The flashes of each joyous peal
Are seen to prove the Moslem's zeal.
To-night - set Rhamazani's sun -
To-night - the Bairam feast's begun -

(The Giaour I, 221-229)

In such a passage, Byron proves that he can handle the Oriental material successfully. What he reports in the quoted passage above are true details of the Orient. He uses expressions and words that are directly associated with religion and people. He chooses the word "crescent" because the appearance of the crescent at the end of Ramadan is, indeed, the signal for the beginning of the "Bairam feast," which is still announced in some Islamic communities by firing cannon shots. He also uses the word "crescent" as a symbol of Islam. The passage shows that Byron knew something about the Islamic calendar.

In another passage, Byron brings a description which is distinctly Eastern. The Moslem fisherman describes Leila in an Oriental manner:

Her eye's dark charm 'twere vain to tell,
But gaze on that of the Gazelle,
It will assist thy fancy well,
As large as languishingly dark,
But soul beam'd forth in every spark
That darted from beneath the lid,
Bright as the jewel of Giamschid.

(The Giaour I, 473-480)

Byron's comparison of Leila's eyes to those of a gazelle is one of the most common images in Arabic poetry. The "jewel of Giamschid" is apparently borrowed from Beckford's Vathek. The description might have come from works of an Oriental poet, possibly the Persian Hafiz. Byron continues in making use of Oriental description in the succeeding lines. In this respect, he compares Leila's cheeks to "young

pomegranate's blossoms." Byron appends the line in question "plus Arabe qu'en Arabie." It is an Oriental simile. One cannot resist quoting the lines:

> On her might Muftis gaze, and own
> That through her eye the Immortal shore -
> On her fair cheek's unfading hue,
> The young pomegranate's blossoms strew
> Their bloom in blushes ever new -
> Her hair in hyacinthine flow
> When left to roll its folds below,
> As midst her handmaids in the hall.
>
> (The Giaour I, 491-498)

In Arabic and Persian, "pomegranate's blossoms" are called "gulnare" or "jullinar." Byron uses this name in The Corsair. It is worth pointing out here that Leila is the most famous female love in Arabic and Persian literature. One recalls Majnoon Leila. Such images capture truly the spirit of the Orient and the people. Byron seems to excel even native poets of Persia and Arabia. He shows an acquaintance with the people and the places.

Although Byron succeeds superbly in describing and handling his Oriental material, and sets forth details with remarkable accuracy, he was less successful and even failed in his representation of Islam as a religion. However, it is hard to tell whether Byron is to be held responsible for his misrepresentation of Islam or not. What we know is what Byron himself claimed of being a skeptic believer in religion, believing in God but unsure about the hereafter (see L.J. II. 18-23). He professes deep respect for the honestly pious, regardless of their creeds. He talks loosely about the errors of the Greek religion, i.e., Eastern Orthodox Christianity (see Poetry, II. 196) as well as "the erroneous devotions" of the Moslems (Poetry II. p. 302). Byron was not fully qualified to make any judgment about the beliefs of the Moslems.

He misrepresents teachings of Islam. In the Advertisement to The Giaour, Byron tells us that "the story, when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave who was thrown, in the Mussulman manner, in the sea of infidelity." But this punishment is not carried out according to Moslem law. Moslem law is clear-cut in this matter. In the Qu'ran, we read in translation:

> The adulterer and the adulteress, scourage ye each
> one of them (with) a hundred stripes. And let not pity
> for the twain withhold you from obedience to Allah, if ye
> believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of
> believers witness their punishments.
>
> (The Qu'ran, Chap. 18, 2)

If and when the punishment is carried out, it is conditioned upon the testimony of four witnesses who have caught the culprits in the very act, and if anyone charges a woman with adultery without evidence, he must be scouraged himself. And the punishment is applied to men and women alike, married or single. If married,they are pelted with stones until their death. It is the concept of chastity and honor that is very sensitive in most Islamic societies. Once a woman is suspected of committing adultery, it is felt that the honor of the family has been damaged. In order to deflate and remove this dishonor, many people resort to killing the accused (in most cases the girl, but sometimes the man as well) avenged by the girl's family. Most killings are usually carried out if and when cases become public.

There is also another misrepresentation that Byron talks about in the poem:

> The foremost of the band is seen
> An Emir by his garb of green:
> Ho! who art thou!' - 'this low salam
> Replies of Moslem faith I am.'
>
> (The Giaour I, 357-359)

And in the note pertaining to the above lines, Byron maintains that "Green is the privileged colour of the Prophet's numerous pretended descendants; with them, as here, faith (the family inheritance) is supposed to supersede the necessity of good works; they are the worst of a very indifferent brood" (p. 243). Byron makes the fisherman hear voices, see turbans and recognize that the man at the head of the band is an "Emir by his garb of green." The note says that green is the distinctive color of the Prophet's descendants, but the line says that Hassan is known to be an emir by his green garb. Moreover, not all the Prophet's "numerous descendants' are emirs. Byron seems to allude to the Shiite sect. But those garbs are predominantly black, not green, because they consider themselves perpetual mourners of Ali's sons and others of his household. And Byron's claim that the sect believes that faith supersedes the necessity of good work is not true. Faith is the most important part of Islam. It is a must in Islam to be faithful in order to be forgiven. Byron is clearly showing a hostile attitude toward this offshoot minority for unjustified reasons: they are the worst of a very indifferent brood." He is generalizing . . . It is an indication of his feelings towards the Calvinist creed of the sufficiency of faith for salvation, he was "early disgusted with."

A third misconception or misrepresentation occurs in the fisherman's description of Leila's beauty. He goes on to say:

> But Soul beam'd forth in every spark
> That darted from beneath the lid,
> Bright as the jewel of Giamschid.
> Yea, Soul, and should our prophet say
> That form was nought but breathing clay,
> . . . . .
> Oh! who young Leila's glance could read
> And keep that portion of his creed

> Which saith, that woman is but dust,
> A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?
>
> (The Giaour I, 477-490)

Byron's accusation that Moslems believe in the soullessness of women is groundless, sloppy and without evidence. It is, however, rooted in European tradition. Byron himself realizes his awareness of its falsity. In a note to Line 490, he writes:

> A vulgar error: the Koran allots at least a third of Paradise to well-behaved women.

Byron's note, however, remains vague. One does not read in the Koran that a third of Paradise is allotted to women. Prophet Mohammed said something related to women's opportunities in Paradise. He says that "Janna (Paradise) is under the feet of women."

There is Byron's sarcastic tone on the concept of al-Sirat. It appears to be ridiculous. This tone appears more than one time in The Giaour: in the very description of the "maids of Paradise" as impatiently waiting and inviting Hassan to their halls (Lines 739-40) and in the funny account of Monkir and Nakir given in the note to Line 748 (McGann, p. 244-45).

Byron makes other references to Moslem religious beliefs and practices in The Giaour which will be considered in my treatment of the next three tales.

The Bride of Abydos

A good starting point in studying Byron's Orientalism in his second Turkish tale and his first composition of any length, The Bride of Abydos, is to shed light on the references that Byron makes to The Bride in his Journal of 1813. Highlighting Byron's allusion to his

tale allows us to appreciate the Oriental elements and character of the tale. On Sunday, December 5, 1813, before Christmas, Byron confides in his Journal:

> The Bride of Abydos was published on Thursday, the second of December, but how it is liked or disliked I know not. Whether it succeeds or not is no fault of the public, against whom I can have no complaint. But I am much more indebted to the tale than I can ever be to the most partial reader; as it wrung my thought from reality to imagination--from selfish regret to vivid recollections--and recalled me to a country replete with the 'brightest' and 'darkest,' but always most 'lively' colours of my memory.

He intends the new tale to be less sombre than The Giaour but "more villainous." Marchand points out that "the theme of incest" (Selim and Zuleika were brother and sister in the first draft) had a powerful attraction for him, but he shied from it at last. Byron is turning to the lively and colorful memories of the Near East at the time when he is in great need of emotional relief from the nightmare and pressure and tension in his hectic life. In Rishmawi's words, "The East, just like poetry itself, offers a safety valve, an emotional by-pass which prevents Byron from going mad (because of his feelings of guilt about his incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta)" (p. 49). In this respect, Byron writes:

> It (The Bride of Abydos) was written in four nights to distract my dreams from xx. Were it not thus, it had never been composed, and had I not done something at the time, I must have gone mad, by eating my own heart, a bitter diet.

Byron's words indicate that The Bride of Abydos was composed as an emotional experience; an escape into a world rather different from his own in order to create his own subjective world, it also shows his love of picturesque exotic locale and color. Byron was genuinely committed, seeking self-knowledge and self-fulfillment; for he was leading a

restless and unfulfilled life. As he said he has written the Oriental tales to "hold off" certain painful realities which haunted his mind. Byron is unlike the Orientalist whose main concern is getting knowledge of the East in the political and cultural venues. Unlike other Orientalists, Byron never showed any clear-cut or significant colonial interest in the East. At times, Byron deals with the Near East as a separate, independent entity which dwells only in his imagination; at other times, he contrasts the Near East as a new theater contrasted with an old, depressing theater of European affairs. In the East Byron recognized "the debasement of European culture" (McGann, p. xvi). The Near East functions as a sign for salvation from the bitterness of life in his native land. In this sense, Byron is indebted to the East for providing him a refuge and shelter from his restlessness.

In order to discuss the Oriental elements in The Bride of Abydos, a recapitulation of the tale is necessary. The story tells us about how Giaffir, Zuleika's father, poisons his brother, Abdallah, Selim's father, and confiscates his wealth as well as his son. Zuleika and Selim grow up together as a sister and a brother and fall in love with each other. Selim learns later of his true identity and vows revenge. He becomes head of a pirate gang but continues his love affair with Zuleika. Giaffir grows suspicious and decides to marry his daughter to a wealthy man. Zuleika, of course, loves Selim, and so she follows him to his grotto, where he divulges to her his real identity, and where he is surprised by Giaffir and killed. The story has its own shortcomings because Giaffir, the cruel and ruthless Turk*, spares the only witness

---

* Who kills his brother in cold blood and exploits his slaves and peasants mercilessly.

to his crime, Abdallah's slave Haroun, and puts him in charge of his harem. And Selim is not sure why the murderer of his father, the usurper of his father's wealth, spares his life. This is an apparent contradiction in Giaffir's behavior or a weakness in the narrative. Giaffir's past is that of a heartless, ruthless tyrant. We come to know it through Selim's long speech in Canto II.

The narrative of The Bride of Abydos introduces the reader to the main characters of the tale: Giaffir, Zuleika, his daughter, and Selim, his supposed son. The second stanza take us right into the story proper, with a description of Giaffir. Giaffir plays a central role in the tale by being the immediate cause of its action. He is also a very Eastern Oriental character in The Bride. Giaffir appears as a man of war and a compassionate and caring father as respects Zuleika. Byron introduces him into the narrative as a real Turkish Pacha, whose presence is in the center of his court, and whose words are the "lawless law" among his followers:

> Begirt with many a gallant slave
> Apparell'd as becomes the brave
> Awaiting each his Lord's behest,
> To guide his steps, or guard his rest
> Old Giaffir sat in his Divan . . .
>
> (The Bride I, 2. 20-24)

In his face, one could see "pensive cheek and pondering brow" that reveal his inner anguish. Old Giaffir is deeply concerned about the future of his daughter to whom he is on the verge of breaking the news of her arranged marriage to a wealthy and powerful, but aged, Bey, whose wealth and power will both secure the future of the young, beautiful Zuleika. The aged Bey and Giaffir are united to stand against the Sultan's "death-firman."

> And thou shalt have a noble dower:
> And his and my united power
> Will laugh to scorn the death firman,
> Which others tremble but to scan
> And teach the messenger what fate
> The bearer of such boon may wait.
>
> (The Bride I, 7. 209-214)

Giaffir has appeared as the one who has the absolute authority and the right to fix his daughter's "fate" in the way that best meets his interest and business. He also gives himself the right to shower reproaches over his son's head because Selim mentions his fondness for nature and poetry. Selim's romantic inclinations are viewed with a hostile attitude by Giaffir. This reveals the latter's cruelty and harshness. In his interpretation of Giaffir's behavior in a symbolic manner, Gleckner believes that Giaffir's cruelty is due to the fact that his world is strictly run by the power of his mind which rejects human feeling and love as unmanly. Giaffir also harbors fatherly affections that crop up for moments toward the child of gentleness, Zuleika, when he rethinks his decision to go ahead in marrying her to the aged Bey. But his overriding ambition instantly dashes any hope of reconsideration of the arranged marriage:

> Zuleika came - and Giaffir felt
> His purpose within him melt:
> Not that against her fancied weal
> His heart though stern could ever feel;
> Affection chain'd her to that heart,
> Ambition tore the links apart.
>
> (The Bride I, 6. 187-192)

Giaffir's tyranny fails to touch Zuleika's love for Selim. This love causes Zuleika's untimely death and dashes Giaffir's hope to resist the death-firman. Zuleika's death leaves Giaffir in a state of desperation and solitude. He has become a victim of his own tyranny. He is guilty

of murdering his brother, his nephew and his own daughter. Murder triggers murder. He is in a sense of despair and misery. Gleckner points out that "All men suffer from the tyranny of their minds and the futility of their passion. Neither Selim nor Giaffir is right or wrong" (p. 131).

The second major character in the story that should be highlighted is Zuleika. In this regard, we have to focus on the nature of her relationship with her brother-love Selim. Zuleika is first introduced to the reader when her father orders Haroun, the harem chief-guard, to fetch her from her tower so that she will be informed about her arranged marriage. From the outset of the tale, we come to feel that Zuleika as a woman does not have the right to determine her future or prospective husband. This is one of the Oriental elements that Byron is dwelling on. His message is that Zuleika is an Eastern woman whose first duty is to receive orders and obey them if and when they come from her father. In the Oriental tradition of a virgin, Zuleika bows her head in silence and complies with the order, hiding her dissatisfaction.

The story proceeds, Zuleika assuming the role of the loving, comforting sister, and is alarmed by the unusual gloom in her brother's appearance and his coldness, indifference toward her. She strives to attract his attention and to sweep his gloom away. She offers him the objects of pleasure to touch him: her Persian Atar-gul's perfume, her roses, and "Bulbul songs." But Selim remains untouched, lost in thought. Zuleika changes her strategy to win his pleasure by offering him sensual relief: kissing and caressing. Zuleika invites her sad child to:

Come, lay thy head upon my breast,
And I will kiss thee into rest.

(The Bride I, 11. 301-302)

Her strategy to win him did not work. Finally she resorts to mentioning her marriage unwittingly, assures him that it will not take place unless he gives "free consent and command." Selim to her is, first and foremost, a friend and a guide:

Ah! Were I sever'd from thy side
Where were thy friend - and who my guide?

(The Bride I, 11. 319-320)

Zuleika's vows of affection--of love and frienship--give Selim an incentive to reveal his true identity and intentions toward her. Selim declares:

Think not I am what I appear;
I've arms, and friends, and vengeance near.

(The Bride I, 12. 381-382).

With the first canto coming to an end, Zuleika displayed a sense of helplessness and total loss when Selim challenged her. She underwent a fluctuation in her behavior. She became confused, disappointed due to the upheaval in her relationship with Selim. At this point, we are reminded of Byron, being torn between his sexual desires toward his half-sister Augusta and his fear regarding the consequences of such an incestuous relationship. He wittingly changes the relationship between the hero and the heroine from brother and sister to first cousins.

In the second Canto, Selim is involved in pursuit of freedom, at the expense of his love for Zuleika. He becomes a man of war, a professional pirate-leader. He breaks the news of his involvement in piracy and that leads to Zuleika's broken heart. The lovers seem now to belong to different valleys: the one dreaming of a free life; the other dreaming of love.

Zuleika is presented as "Oriental" in that she is an exotic, charming, yet "ignorant" or naive Moslem lady who leads a life of seclusion and solitary confinement surrounded by Eastern charms and luxurious objects; a reference to the richness of the Near Moslem East.

Selim, the third major character in the tale, plays an important role in the story. In Giaffir's court, Selim is a shy, downcast, and gentle young man. In his first speech, he extends an apology to his master, Giaffir, on behalf of his sister Zuleika, with whom he was enjoying reading love-poetry in the seraglio's garden. Giaffir reproaches him, calls him a coward and taunts him for his unmanly conduct:

> Go, let thy less than woman's hand
> Assume the distaff--not the brand.
>
> (The Bride II, 4. 99-100).

He is insulted; and Selim finds himself helpless and paralyzed to act.

Byron's critics have dwelt on interpreting Selim's effeminacy. They have offered more than interpretation. Gleckner sees Selim as another Hamlet and believes that Selim's effemininity is a mask which he has to put on to cover his rage against his uncle, who poisoned his father, confiscated his belongings, and deprived Selim of his just inheritance. Selim is concerned about proving to his uncle that he is a man.

Manning interprets Selim's effeminacy as an "instance of transvestism" which hides his plots against his uncle and also shields him from his uncle's wrath. Selim now believes that power can buy him love and freedom, promises Zuleika's "bower" in the Eden of his dreams:

> For thee in those bright Isles is built a bower
> Blooming as Eden in its earliest hour.
>
> (The Bride II, 20. 410-411)

The Oriental traits in Selim's character are represented in his Galiongce attire. The description of his attire is accurate and picturesque, and runs for 19 lines (131-150). It consists of the garb of the Suliols, the brave Albanian warrior, whom Byron wanted to lead in battle against the Turks.

Byron also gives us an insight into the social customs of the Moslems, such as the seclusion of women at home:

> (Woe to the head whose eye beheld
> My child Zuleika's face unveiled!)
>
> (The Bride I, 2. 8-39)

And the son's obedience and reverence to his father:

> For son of Moslem must expire,
> Ere dare to sit before his sire!
>
> (The Bride I, 51-52).

The son is very humble as the son of Giaffir's slave.

The end of the tale is tragic. It leaves Selim and Zuleika dead. No one to mourn Selim not buried under "turban stone," but swept away by the sea. Zuleika is mourned by her father and her handmaids. We hear the "loud wul-wileh," the wailing of the women, and "the Koran-chanters of the Hymn of Fate." A rose on her grave grows, a nightingale sings all night long. Byron describes her death and funeral sensitively. The roses and the nightingale stand for something important as a popular near Eastern theme. Take the rose which Zuleika intends to present to her:

> This rose to calm my brother's cares
> A message from the Bulbul bears;
> It says to-night he will prolong,
> For Selim's ear his sweetest song.
>
> (The Bride I, 10. 287-290)

It is very evident that Byron uses original words such as Bulbul (nightingale) keeping the reader or say the listener in an Oriental atmosphere.

The Corsair

Byron's third tale, The Corsair, has its Oriental mood but it is not as Oriental as the first two tales. The Oriental images are few; the religious theme is not very crucial as such. The most important document for understanding The Corsair is Byron's Journal of November 1813-April 1814 (BLJ III, 204-258), where the political and personal contexts of the poem are clearly revealed. It was at this time that Byron's disillusion and weariness with regency society and politics reached a critical level. The Corsair is partly a symbolic formulation of the political situation of the day, as Byron saw it, with its contest between equivocal forces of revolt and the established powers of an old and corrupt order.

Conrad, Byron's hero, is primarily a Westerner, the leader of pirates, who braves his enemy. Turkish Moslems are represented in Seyd Pacha seen in his stronghold, but only to be defeated. Conrad then escapes with the help of Gulnare, the favorite of the Pacha's harem, who has fallen in love with him at first sight. Gulnare insists that she run away with Conrad. On returning to his own home, Conrad finds that Medora, the woman he loved, has died of despair in his absence, thinking that he had been killed. Broken-hearted, he leaves the island, never to return.

The first Canto is a description of the pirates' life, their homeland, their leader Conrad, and his beloved Medora. Byron's hero is:

> That man of loneliness and mystery,
> Scarce seen to smile, and seldom heard to sigh;
> Whose name appalls the fiercest of his crew,
> And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue;
> (The Corsair I, 8. 173-176)

And Byron questions:

> What should it be? That thus their faith can bind?
> The power of Thought--the magic of the Mind!
> (The Corsair I, 8. 181-182)

Other fellow pirates do not seem to understand him. They seem instead to dread his anger and hatred. And Conrad's religion is vaguely defined. Seyd Pacha refers to him as a "giaour"; he has some traces of Christianity, but he behaves like a good Moslem; he abstains from drinking.

In the second Canto, Byron takes us to the palace of Seyd Pacha. There are preparations for a feast, which the Pacha has promised to his people in anticipation of the capture of the pirates. In an ironic passage, Byron describes the Pacha's braves, most of whom at the moment have dispersed:

> Though all, who can disperse on shove and seek
> To flesh their glowing valour on the Greek;
> How well such deed becomes the turbaned brave--
> To bare the sabre's edge before a slave!
> Infest his dwelling--but forbear to stay,
> Their arms are strong, yet merciful to-day,
> And do not deign to smite because they may!
> (The Corsair II, 1. 16-22)

Then a Dervish, a holyman, a fugitive from the pirates, wants to give Seyd information about his enemies. Seyd realizes that this Dervish is Conrad in disguise. His behavior arouses the Pacha's suspicion, when

he refuses to accept the food set before him. Then, there was a pirates' attack, bloodshed, confusion; fire breaks out which threatens to destroy the harem where the helpless women are confined. Conrad, once he hears the cries of women, orders his band to "burst the haram" and not to "wrong . . . one female form. He tells his fellows to remember that 'we have wives.'" He comes to rescue Gulnare, the dark-eyed lady, "the Haram queen," who has fallen in love with him. Conrad happens to be captured, in the Pacha's prison, and bears his fate with pride and courage. Gulnare plots to save him, visits him secretly at night and tells him of her plans. Conrad turns down her offer, telling her of his love for another and of his readiness to die.

In the third canto, Byron digresses in description of nature; in explanation of Medora's belief that Conrad might be dead--she herself on the verge of dying of a broken heart.

As we see, the tale was a way out of the reality of his perplexing experience. The crucial figures in Byron's turbulent and tottering world--at this time--are Lady Frances Wedderburn Webester and his sister Augusta. In The Corsair, as we have seen in The Giaour, Byron and Conrad are one and the same man.

What themes are tackled in The Corsair? In his schematized study of the Turkish tales, William H. Marshall observes that there are two basic themes in the tale: love and death. Death is represented by war and Love by the triangular relationship in which Conrad is the central figure, with Medora on the one side, and Gulnare on the other.

The theme of war sheds light on Byron's attitude toward Islam, which we encountered earlier in the chapter. The action of the story originates in Seyd's wish to crack down on the rebel pirates.

Meanwhile, the Moslem camp is celebrating a victory expected because of their confidence and their having the upper hand. In this regard, Byron seems to use a sarcastic tone; he wants to make a point here pertaining to the Turks and Greeks: the former can afford to be careless and in low profile because the latter are so slavish.

> For Seyd, the Pacha, makes a feast to-night:
> A feast for promised triumph yet to come,
> When he shall drag the fettered Rovers home;
> This hath he sworn by Alla and his sword.
> . . .
> . . .
> 'Tis but to sail--no doubt to-morrow's sun
> Will see the Pirates bound--their haven won!
> Meantime the watch may slumber, if they will,
> Nor only wake to war, but dreaming kill.
>
> (The Corsair II. 1. 13-15).

Although Conrad bears in his behavior traces of Christianity, he is "more than a Moslem when the cup appears" (I. 430), and puffing clouds from his "long Chihouque's dissolving cloud supply/While dance the Almahs to wild minstrelsy" (II. 35-36). The spirit of the scene might have come from The Arabian Nights. The scene needs only "a genie to pop out of a lamp or an ofrit to frighten the revellers out of their wits" (Asfour, p. 180).

Gulnare's love at first sight with Conrad needs to be dwelt upon briefly. In Oriental fiction of Byron's kind, it might be expected that only one encounter is enough for a Moslem heroine with "big and dark eyes" to fall in love with her giaour. In the hub of fire and terror, Gulnare finds time to take a good look at her rescuer:

> Much did she marvel o'er the courtesy
> That smoothed his accents, softened in his eyes:
> 'Twas strange--that robber thus with gore bedewed,
> Seemed gentler than Seyd in fondest mood.
>
> (The Corsair II 7, 261-265)

Byron also dwells on the Turks, depicting them as tyrants of politics and love. They deprive their male subjects of freedom, let alone their women. Both are slaves. Gulnare is described as one of their slaves:

> She was a slave--from such may captives claim
> A fellow-feeling, differing but in name:
> Still half unconscious--heedless of his wrath,
> Again she ventured on the dangerous path,
> Again his rage repelled--until arose
> That strife of thought, the source of woman's woes!
> (The Corsair III, 5. 202-207)

The Corsair has a tragic end and it awaits the tyrant of politics and love, Seyd Pacha, rather than the shackled Conrad or the infatuated Gulnare.

The Pacha, having won the battle, goes to sleep forgetting that the city is burning and the dead are wounded. Gulnare takes his signet-ring off his finger without awakening him (tyrants rarely awake in such cases).

Seyd's relations with his wife, as we have seen in the last quotation, are those of a sensual master to a beautiful slave. Gulnare just feels that

> . . . Love dwells with - with the free
> I am a slave, a favoured slave at best,
> To share his splendour, and seem very blest!
> (The Corsair II, 14, 502-504)

The rest of the tale is about smuggling Conrad out of Coran with Gulnare's help. Byron somewhat exaggerates and misjudges the circumstances of Seyd's murder. On the one hand, he exaggerates Conrad's nobility beyond belief in refusing to kill Seyd, and in dissuading Gulnare from doing it herself. On the other hand, he misjudges the Eastern mind in his presentation of Gulnare's decision to kill Seyd and her feeling there is nothing very horrible about it:

I never loved--he brought me--somewhat high--
Since with me came a heart he could not buy.
I was a slave unmurmuring
But for his rescue I with thee had fled.
(The Corsair III, 8, 329-332)

We do not need to linger much longer on the rest of the tale.

The Siege of Corinth

As Byron's Advertisement indicates, Siege is based on an incident in the long struggle between Venice and the Ottoman Empire for control of the Peloponnesus. It recounts how the Turkish troops, led by a renegade Christian, besieged the Christian city of Corinth, and how at the moment that victory seems to be in the hands of the Turks, the defending Christian general of the town blows it up (with a prepared fuse) and besieged and besiegers are destroyed. The description of the Moslem forces besieging Corinth and shooting cannon balls at the walls of the city is given in stereotyped images:

The tent is pitched, the crescent shines
Along the Moslem's leaguering lines;
And the dusk Spahi's bands advance
Beneath each bearded Pascha's glance,
. . .
The turban'd cohorts throng the beach;
And there the Arab's camel kneels,
. . .
The sabre round his Icons to gird;
And there the volleying thunders pour,
Till waves grow smoother to the roar.
(The Siege 2. 30-41)

Byron also offers the description of the dead outside the wall of Corinth seeming to deplore and condemn war as a human activity in which there are no winners but always suffering and loss of human lives.

In the tale, Moslem and Christians face each other as equals. Byron highlights the religious affiliation and conversion of the hero. Alp the "Adrian renegade" is being exiled from his homeland, Venice,

after being "wrongly" accused of some capital offense. He takes refuge in the Ottoman Empire, becomes a Moslem, and joins the enemies of his country:

> Against his countrymen he bore
> The arms they taught to bear; and now
> The turban girt his shaven brow.
> . . .
> He stood a foe, with all the zeal
> Which young and fiery converts feel.
> . . .
> He fled in time, and saved his life,
> To waste his future years in strife,
> That taught his land how great her loss
> In him who triumphed o'er the Cross
> 'Gainst which he reared the Crescent high,
> And battled to avenge or die.
>
> (The Siege 4. 74-95)

In leading the attack, Alp, however, has a personal motive: Francesca, the daughter of the town's governor, is the woman he has loved and still loves, and whom he lost in Venice. The night before the attack, there is the muezzin's call for prayer. Byron has a beautiful description of the night, which is broken by the call for prayer:

> As rose the Muezzin's voice in air
> In midnight call to wonted prayer;
> In rose, that chaunted the mournful strain,
> Like some lone spirit's o'er the plain:
> 'Twas musical, but sadly sweet,
> Such as when winds and harp-strings meet,
> And take a long unmeasured tone,
> To mortal minstrelsy unknown.
>
> (The Siege 11. 221-28)

There is no such midnight call for prayer in Islam. Byron seems to be mistaken when he alludes to the call for prayer. Byron is simply confusing calling for prayer and calling for Suhoor. The latter is only in Ramadan so that Moslems can take their pre-dawn breakfast. However, Byron shows an aesthetic appreciation of the adhan, the muezzin's call for prayer. He goes on to describe it:

It struck the besieger's ear
With something ominous and drear,
An undefined and sudden thrill,
Which makes the heart a moment still.
(The Siege 11, 231-234)

Alp is not loudly excited, nor is he bragging about the great deeds he will do against his fellow men:

Nor his the loud fanatic boast
To plant the crescent o'er the cross,
Or risk a life with little loss,
Secure in Paradise to be
By Houris loved immortally.
(The Siege 12. 252-256)

The Moslems do not show any trust or confidence in Alp. They seem to be suspicious. Alp's conversion also seems not a deep one. As a Christian renegade, Alp is torn between his loyalty to the memory of Greece and his intentions of revenge. His victims will be his own people. While in this mood, the vision of his beloved Francesca appears to him asking him to return to his faith and spare the city. He is to change that by instinctively returning to his Christian faith and trying to make the sign of the cross. But, alas, "His trembling hands refused to sign." Francesca warns him:

Thou hast done a fearful deed
In falling away from thy father's creed:
But dash that turban to earth, and sign
The sign of the cross, and for ever be mine;
Wring the black drop from thy heart,
And to-morrow unites us no more to part.
(The Siege 21. 530-535)

She gives him an instant to make up his mind; he rejects her suggestion. Alp's answer reveals an insensitive mind obsessed with the idea of revenge:

'And where should our bridal couch be spread?
In the 'midst of the dying and the dead?
For to-morrow we give to the slaughter and flame
The sons and the shrines of the Christian name.
(The Siege 21. 536-539)

It is obvious that it is too late for him to return to Christianity. In the morning, after the cry of "God and the Prophet" "Alla Hu," the attack begins. Francesca continues her pleas for the reconversion of Alp to the Christian faith. The next day, the Moslems storm the city and destroy it, but their victory is cut at the climax. In the church when they come for spoils; Minolti, Francesca's father, starts a terrible explosion that destroys all things. In other words, everything is razed to the ground. Byron describes to his readers how the Christians are defending Corinth, depicting their heroic acts as brave freedom fighters. He also gives an insightful glimpse of the destruction of war:

> Some fell in the gulf, which received the sprinkles
> With a thousand circling wrinkles;
> Some fell on the shore, but far away,
> Scattered o'er the isthmus lay;
> Christian or Moslem, which be they?
> Let their mothers see and say!
> When in cradled rest they lay
>
> (The Siege 33, 992-999)

Byron is expressing his sorrow about the loss of lives. As a matter of fact, loss is loss: human lives. It is the life that is strange and fickle. How little is needed to ruin or to save human lives? Byron's lines are great lines; they come from a sincere heart. These lines show that Byron's heart is broken because of wars and death. He truly shows that he has an open mind. It is the theme of war which kept Byron being perturbed all the time because of its uselessness. He is a pioneer in alerting mankind about the danger of war. His lines do anticipate what poets and writers of the first World War have to say about the destruction and futility of war.

Equally important is Byron's allusion to the question of conversion of Alp, as a man, to another faith, to another side in the battle. Byron is arguing, perhaps, that religion is responsible for causing wars among people. It is a war of religions, Islam and Christianity. Followers of each religion believe that their counterparts are infidels. Byron, therefore, gives a religious coloring to the war between the Turks and the Greeks. This is not the whole thing. It is also a war of interests. It is Christian England who sided with Moslem Turkey in the late years of the nineteenth century against Christian Russia. It is an imperial struggle even if religiously motivated or even oriented. In The Siege of Corinth, Byron does not leave room for romantic aspects. The tale sounds realistic when it tackles war. And Byron is treating the matter seriously.

Beppo

Byron's Beppo, subtitled a "Venetian Story," has its setting in Venice; and its characters are all Venetians. But the Moslem East--Turkey, in particular--plays an important part in it. It is a new Moslem East, with a different romantic atmosphere. Beppo, after whom the poem is titled, is a successful merchant, trading as far as Aleppo of Syria. His wife, whom Byron names Laura, is used to his many absences. But when Beppo goes off on a voyage from which he does not come back for several years, in law he was almost "as good as dead." Laura decides, in the accepted custom of the day and place, "to connect her/with a vice-husband, chiefly to protect her" (Beppo 29. 231-232). She chooses a very acceptable "vice-husband," a Count, well-versed in

the duties and the art of a "Cavalier Servente," and with him she now goes to the Carnival festivities.

Byron begins Beppo by touching upon the social life in a Christian society rather than in Moslem society. In Catholic society, Byron tells us, people before Lent try to get their fill of pleasure. In the first stanza, he begins:

> 'Tis known, at least it should be, that throughout
> All countries of the Catholic persuasion,
> Some weeks before Shrove Tuesday comes about,
> the people take their fill of recreation,
> And buy repentance, ere, they grow devout,
> However high their rank, or low their station,
> With fiddling, feasting, dancing, drinking, masquing,
> And other things which may be had for asking.
> (Beppo 1. 1-8)

Byron also alludes to marriages and their roles in Christian countries. He says about Laura, Beppo's wife:

> She was a married woman; 'tis convenient,
> Because in Christian countries 'tis a rule
> To view their little slips with ages more lenient;
> Whereas, if single ladies play the fool,
> (Unless within the period intervenient,
> A well-timed wedding makes the scandal cool)
> I don't know how they ever can get over it,
> Except they manage never to discover it.
> (Beppo 24. 185-192)

In his letter to his mother about Spain, a Catholic oriented country, Byron explains what he means by the quoted stanza:

> I beg leave to observe that intrigue here in the business of life; when a woman marries she throws off all restraint, but I believe their conduct is chaste enough before.
> (LJ I. 239-40)

He delivers a similar message to his sister Augusta:

> Every body, is, so much so, that a lady, with only one lover is not reckoned to have overstepped the modesty of marriage . . . that being a regular thing. Some have two, three, and so on to twenty, beyond which they don't account.
> (LJ IV. 24).

After these digressions on morals of the Venetians (contrasted with the English), carnivals, feasting in Catholic countries, Byron finally brings us to the climax of the tale in Stanza 69. He develops a vivid contrast between sex life in a Christian society and in a Moslem society. Laura, looking beautiful and triumphant and enjoying many admiring glances from all the passing males at the carnival festivities, is pleased to find so many faults in her friends. One of the males staring at her

> . . . was a Turk, the colour of mahogany;
> And Laura saw him, and at first was glad,
> Because the Turks so much admire philogyny,
> Although their usage of their wives is sad;
> 'Tis said they use no better than a dog any
> Poor woman, whom they purchase like a pad:
> They have a number, though they ne'er exhibit 'em,
> Four wives by law, and concubines 'ad libitum.'
> (Beppo 70. 553-560)

At this point, Byron touches upon the social life in Turkey. His knowledge about marriages in Moslem Turkey is limited if compared to his knowledge of Christian countries. Therefore, Byron only gives a partial view of the rules of the game in Turkey. Pertaining to polygamy, Islam does allow a man to marry more than one wife, but not without restrictions. And in reality, Moslems who have two or more wives are always a very small minority. Byron is mistaken when he takes it for granted that all Turks have more than one wife. In The Island, Byron says:

> Sublime tobacco! Which from east to west,
> Cheers the Tar's Labor or the Turkman's rest;
> Which on the Moslem's Ottoman divides
> His hours, and rivals opium and his brides;
> (The Island, 1823)

Byron is simply generalizing by using such verses: "Moslem's Ottoman . . . and his brides" assumes that every Moslem Turk has several women.

If Islam allows polygamy, it is for several reasons. Women usually outnumber men in most societies, and polygamy has been condoned in order to marry off widows whose husbands died in holy war. Another reason is to take care of unfortunate or disabled women or to unite warring political or religious factions. The young are nowadays veering from that tradition. Statistics of the Nablus area Islamic court shows that there were only 2,018 recorded marriages to a second or third wife (1967-1986). The Koran cautions that polygamy breeds jealousy:

> Ye will not be able to deal equally
> between (your) wives, however much
> ye wish (to do so).
>
> (The Qu'ran, Chap. 5, 129)

Moreover, to have a second and a third wife is better, even far better than having a mistress in addition to one's first wife.

Concerning Byron, he seems to have only contacted high-ranking classes such as Pashas and Agas, people whose political, social and financial circumstances put them in positions to marry to a second and a third or fourth wife and have concubines if they so desired. But they remain a tiny minority. They are not representative of the whole society as Byron conceives them to be.

In stanza 71, Byron describes women in Turkish society. There is no doubt some truth in his description. He begins:

> They lock them up, and veil, and guard them daily,
> They scarcely can behold their male relations
> So that their moments do not pass so gaily
> As is supposed the case with northern nations;
> Confinement, too, must make them look quite palely.
> And as the Turks abhor long conversations,
> Their days are either past in doing nothing,
> Or bathing, nursing, making love, and clothing.
>
> (Beppo 71. 561-568)

Byron's point here is that Turkish women are so very idle. But Byron's description is no longer accurate for many modern Moslem societies.

Byron digresses later on about lovers and authors, then he goes back again to talk about the unfortunate Turkish women:

> The poor dear Mussulwomen whom I mention
> Have none of these instructive pleasant people,
> And one would seem to them a new invention,
> Unknown as bells within a Turkish steeple;
> . . .
> A missionary author, just to preach
> Our Christian usage of the parts of speech.
> (Beppo 77, 609-616)

And again Byron says:

> No chemistry for them unfolds her gasses,
> No metaphysics are let loose in lectures
> No circulating library amasses,
> . . .
> They stare not on the stars from out their attics,
> Nor deal (thank God for that!) in mathematics.
> (Beppo 78, 617-624)

Byron makes a contrast between Turkish women as Moslems and the enlightenment of the Western Bluestockings. He seems to imply that the "Blues" are not worth emulating. He seems to favor the ignorance of Moslem women. He thanks God that Turkish ladies do not have any deals in mathematics, which in Byron's code stands for Lady Byron. In Byron's view, Moslem women seem to be admirably simple and naive compared with the sophisticated Western Blues.

In the meantime, Byron continues:

> Our Laura's Turk still kept his eyes on her,
> Less in the Mussulman than Christian way,
> Which seems to say, 'Madam, I do you honour,
> And while I please to stare, you'll please to stay';
> Could staring win a woman, this had won her,
> But Laura could not thus be led astray;
> She had stood fine too long and well, to boggle
> Even at this stranger's most outlandish ogle.
> (Beppo 81. 641-647)

This is truly one of the most un-Islamic ways of behaving toward a woman. A Turkish Moslem would find it difficult to keep the eye of the well-veiled object of his desire.

Laura withstands the glances with admirable calmness. She keeps cool. Later on she is upset when she finds the Turk waiting for them on their palace steps. The Turk explains to that count, "That Lady is my wife!" The three of them decide to talk the matter over, and go into the palace together. In one respect, Byron keeps the Oriental element in the story:

> They entered, and for coffee called,--it came,
> A beverage for Turks and Christians both,
> Although the way they make it's not the same.
> (Beppo 91. 721-23)

At this time, Laura is impressed, excited and bursts out in a childish manner:

> 'Beppo! What's your pagan name?
> Bless me your beard is of amazing growth!
> (Beppo 91. 725-726)

Byron dwells on the subject of conversion another time. Beppo has converted to Islam and is acting as a genuine Turk: having a beard, using his fingers for a fork, eating no pork, the latter, of course, according to Islamic law. In the end, he is restored back to the Christian faith. Beppo never lost his dignity at any point as a good Moslem Turk. Beppo seems less a satire at the expense of the Turks than the Venetians and the English.

Don Juan

Even a cursory reading of several cantos of Don Juan, the last and the greatest work, will show that Byron has kept his abiding interest in the Near East. He makes several allusions to the Moslem

East and its people. The references in Don Juan appear from the beginning. Byron tells us that Donna Julia is of Moorish origin:

> The darkness of her Oriental eye
> Accorded with her Moorish origin;
> (Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by:
> In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin).
> (Don Juan, Canto I. 56. 441-444)

Byron's heroines have dark, Oriental eyes. This Donna Julia is married to an Hidalgo who was a "heathenish cross." Her husband ruined the purity of the Spanish breed. Later Julia is sitting with Juan. We read:

> When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
> As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
> Described by Mahmet, and Anacreon Moore,
> To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
> With all the trophies of triumphant song--
> He won them well, and may he wear them long!
> (Don Juan, Canto I. 104. 827-832)

Byron is making a parallel between Prophet Mohammed's and Anacreon Moore's heavens. In reality, the line implies that they are placed in the same level: the Prophet's heaven is no more real than the poet's. In another stanza, on the domestic level, Prophet Mohammed is mentioned among those cuckolded by their wives:

> Thou mak'st the chaste connubial state precarious,
> And jestest with the brows of mightiest men:
> Caesar and Pompey, Mahomet, Belisarius,
> . . . . . .
> Their lives and fortunes were extremely various,
> . . . . . .
> Yet to these four in three things the same luck holds,
> They all were heroes, conquerors, and cuckolds.
> (Don Juan, Canto II. 206. 1641-1649)

Byron is not using his references to Prophet Mohammed in the right context. The slur has no evidence at all. Earlier in the second canto, Byron introduces "Haidee, the greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles,"

whose dress and general appearance are those of the typical modern Greek maiden:

> Her brow was overhung with coins of gold,
> That sparkled o'er the auburn of her hair,
> Hair clustering hair, whose longer lucks were roll'd
> In braids behind, and though her stature were
> Even of the highest for a female mould,
> They nearly reach'd her heel; and in her air
> There was a something which bespoke command,
> (Don Juan, Canto II. 116. 921-927)

In the next stanza, Byron describes her eyes. From the description, one gets the impression that the eyes are Oriental:

> . . . ; but her eyes
> Were black as death, their lashes the same hue
> Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies
> Deepest attraction, for when to the view
> Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
> (Don Juan, Canto II. 117, 929-933)

In the Orient, beauty is judged in terms of dark eyes. As the Arabic saying goes, "The beauty of a woman lies in her eyes."

Haidee wears a pelisse, the customary Mohammedan outer garment, which she uses to cover the half-drowned Juan when she and her maid Zoe find him:

> He had a bed of furs, and a pelisse,
> For Haidee stripped her sables off to make
> His couch; and, that he might be more at ease
> . . . . . .
> They also gave a petticoat apiece,
> To pay him a fresh visit, with a dish
> For breakfast, of eggs, coffee, bread, and fish
> (Don Juan, Canto II. 133. 1057-1064)

Byron is also highlighting the Eastern hospitality and their lifestyle. The breakfast is an Oriental model. What about the dinner served to Juan and Haidee? It is also Oriental:

> The dinner made about a hundred dishes;
> Lamb and pistachio nuts--in short, all meats,
> And saffron soups, and sweet breads; and the fishes
> Were of the finest that e'er flounced in nets,

> Drest to a Sybarite's most pamper'd wishes;
> The beverage was various sherbets
> Of raisin, orange, and pomegranate juice,
> Squeezed through the rind, which makes it best for use
> (Don Juan, Canto III. 62. 489-96)

Byron is touching on Moslem hospitality and luxury. In the next stanza, he elaborates on the Oriental taste displayed in the dining room. There is no room to quote them here. He brings our attention to the "Oriental writings on the wall" (Canto III. 65. 513). In a footnote to his line, Byron adds that "the words prophesized the destruction of Belshazzar's Kingdom." In the next six or seven stanzas, Byron dwells on the luxury and wealth of the Moslem East in all aspects of life.

In Canto IV, Byron profiles Haidee's mother: "Her mother was a Moorish maid, from Fez,/Where all is Eden, or a wilderness" (Don Juan, Canto IV. 54. 431-432). In various places, Byron uses Oriental words such as "Simoon," meaning the hot dry wind of the desert.

Toward the end of the Canto in question, Byron brings up the subject of slave trade and gives a description of the slaves being sold and bought in Constantinople:

> . . . the vessel bound
> With slaves to sell off in the capital,
> After the usual process, might be found
> At anchor under the seraglio wall;
> Her cargo, from the plague being safe and sound,
> Were landed in the market, one and all,
> And there with Georgians, Russians, and Circassians,
> Bought up for different purposes and passions.
> (Don Juan, Canto IV. 113. 897-904)

The next stanza shows the brisk business of slave trade:

> Some went off dearly; fifteen hundred dollars
> For one Circassians, a sweet girl, were given,
> Warranted virgin; beauty's brightest colours
> Had deck'd her out in all the hues of heaven:
> Her sale sent home some disappointed bawlers,

Who bade on till the hundreds reach'd eleven;
But when the offer went beyond, they knew
'Twas for the Sultan, and at once withdrew.
(Don Juan, Canto IV. 114. 905-912)

This description, coupled with the notes, is appalling. But, in this regard, there is some truth about trading in slavery. Moslems were involved in the slave trade. The slave trade was, as a matter of fact, rampant in that region during that time. Moslems were not, however, the only people involved in such business; they were not the only people guilty of this inhuman practice. Many parts of Europe and America were hotbeds of slavery. Thanks to Byron for reminding us of such a thing:

Twelve negresses from Nubia brought a price
Which the West Indian market scarce would bring;
Though Wilberforce, at last, had made it twice
What 'twas ere Abolition; . . .
(Don Juan, Canto IV. 115. 913-916)

In the market of slaves that day, Don Juan and his friend, the English fellow, happened to be the two of the slaves bought for the seraglio (palace).

Cantos V and VI are devoted mostly or mainly to a description of the slave market and the interior of the Sultan's harem in Constantinople where Don Juan is bought because he attracted the eyes of the Sultana Gulbeyaz: "In passing on his way for sale." She had other negroes whom she ordered to bring directly, but Juan later to be the Sultana's lover. The Sultana loses her "prudence":

She had no prudence, but he had; and this
Explains the garb which Juan took amiss.
(Don Juan, Canto V. 114. 911-912)

In the next stanza, Byron continues:

His youth and features favour'd the disguise,
And, should you ask how she, a sultan's bride,
Could risk or compass such strange phantasies,

> This I must leave sultanas to decide:
> Emperors are only husbands in wives' eyes,
> (Don Juan, Canto V. 115.913-917)

In such a secret situation and even one fraught with danger, Don Juan is disguised as one of the Sultana's women attendants; the whole plot fails, however, due to the woman in charge of the harem, not being apprised of the ruse, puts Juan to bed with one of the girls, soon to be discovered. Juan is banished, but he is lucky to escape with his life. Unlike the Sultana, Baba is prudent, knows the risks of complicity in bringing a man to the harem, let alone to the Sultana's harem's chamber. Baba tries to disguise Juan as a girl, a disguise to which he is fittingly suited, so handsome and young he is. Juan, at first, refuses to wear feminine clothes given to him, but Baba becomes upset and threatens to unsex him. He addresses Juan as "worthy Christian nun" saying:

> I say a thing, it must at once be done.
> What fear you? Think you this a lion's den?
> Why, 'tis a palace; where the truly wise
> Anticipate the Prophet's paradise.
> (Don Juan, V. 81. 645-648)

Byron's allusion to the hereafter has a sense of irony. Byron is doubtful of its reality. For Moslems, the anticipation of the hereafter and Paradise and Hell is an important pillar in their belief. Anyone who doubts its coming is considered an infidel. Byron seems also to emphasize certain phrases such as his paradise, his houris, his everything. This is a sign of doubt, as if it is something personal.

When Juan spends the night in his female disguise among the Sultan's harem, Byron stops his narrative to "moralize, curiously enough, on the tiresomeness of polygamy . . ." (Smith, p. 192):

Polygamy may well be held in dread,
Not only as a sin, but as a bore:
Most wise men with one moderate woman wed,
Will scarcely find philosophy for more;
And all (except Mahomedans) forbear
To make the nuptial couch a "Bed of Ware."
(Don Juan, Canto VI. 12. 91-96)

Byron enlarges his theme of Moslem's Paradise and the Houris. Of the Houris, Byron suggests that they have the power to select their mortal partners:

As ever Mohamet pick'd out for a martyr,
Who only saw the black-eyed girls in green,
Who make the beds of those who won't take quarter
On earth, in Paradise; and when once seen,
Those houris, like all other pretty creatures,
Do just whate'er they please by dint of features.
(Don Juan, Canto VIII, 111. 883-888)

So a Moslem's Paradise is seen as a place of future sexual gratification and enjoyment, at least from the view of non-Moslems. If the Moslems fight infidels, it is a fight for the sake of the promised houris in the next world:

These black-eyed virgins make the Moslems fight,
As though there were one Heaven and none besides--
Whereas, if all be true we hear of Heaven
And tell, there must at least be six or seven.
(Don Juan, Canto VIII, 114. 909-12)

Byron's "if all be true" shows that he doubts it.

These depictions and descriptions of Love scenes and of Oriental luxury are, in fact, allusions to the corruption of the Sultan's palace. The Sultan is portrayed almost as an unthinking beast who can do nothing but eat and copulate. In Canto VI, Byron gives us a profile of the Sultan:

He didn't not think much on the matter, nor
Indeed on any other: as a man
He liked to have a handsome paramour
. . . . . .

As an amusement after the Divan;
Though an unusual fit of love, or duty,
Had made him lately bask in his bride's beauty.
(Don Juan, Canto VI. 91. 721-728)

And again, he continues:

He drank six cups of coffee at the least.
(Don Juan, Canto VI. 92. 732)

Gulbeyaz is no better than her Sultan. She is depicted as a seducer who does not know real love, only sexual intercourse, and Juan has to perform what he is ordered to perform.

Cantos VII and VIII contain in full detail the story of the siege and assault of the Turkish city of Ismail by the Russians. Juan enters into the picture and joins the Russian forces. He then goes to St. Petersburg as a lover of Catherine the Great. On different occasions, Byron praises the bravery of the Moslem Turks, their stubbornness. They defend the city with wild cries of "Allah! and Allah Hu." Juan becomes a hero, rescues a little Turkish girl Leila, raises her and tries to convert her to Christianity, but to no avail.

And so the Moslem East has occupied a high place in Don Juan. There are other references to religious practices, customs and traditions but what we have just discussed is enough to show the image of Moslems and Islam in Byron's Don Juan.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

With the emergence of Islam in the seventh century, the Christian world started paying a heavy cost. Moslems extended their power over countries where the majority of people were Christian, such as Spain. The Moslems also entered into competition with the Christians for the conversion of people of other faiths, let alone the Christians themselves. The Moslems established themselves as a great empire and a great power that had to be reckoned with. Islam as a new religion was deemed, through the Christian eyes, as a false and a corrupt religion. The spirit of suspicion, hostility, and enmity characterized the Christian attitude towards Islam. The history of the relationship between the Christians and the Moslems was bloody at times. The war between the two groups was a war of the sword and the pen as well. It resulted in a distorted image of the new religion and its followers that did not gain much in clarity and fairness until recently. The church, the dominating aspect of life until at least the seventeenth century, initiated the distorted image. The distorted image of the polemic literature of the Middle Ages filtered into the popular literature of the time and continued to appear until the nineteenth century. And the popular literature received much interest from the Western audience: it was warmly welcomed by the Christian audience.

The Western attitude towards Islam centered on the person of its Prophet. He was portrayed as an imposter, a Christian heretic, an idol, a magician, a god and a womanizer . . . And it was also said that Islam was his own fabrication. He was shown as unworthy of prophethood; his religion was not divinely revealed.

There were also similar accusations about Islam and the Moslems. These occurred again and again throughout much of the early literature of the Western world. For instance, the Cutlers, in their pioneering study, The Jew as Ally of the Muslim, point out that "as the Third Crusade was being organized, Western Christians accused the Moslems of participating in the crucifixion of Christ." Such an accusation forgets that "Quranic Islam was not around when Jesus was crucified" (p. 2). And, theologically speaking, Moslems do not believe that Jesus the Messiah was crucified.

Despite all these distorted images, there appeared in the midst of polemic literature, voices that called for peaceful coexistence between the two religions. And in the eighteenth century, there was a considerable improvement in the knowledge of Islam as a religion and a way of life and of the Moslem countries in general. Throughout the ages, there were numerous translations of the Oriental works, both religious and literary, into Latin, French, English and other languages. They became available and attracted a large audience. The ever-burgeoning quantity of travel literature began to convey more accurate information about Islam and Moslems.

In the nineteenth century, the literature of the period reflected a change in the attitude of Westerners; an awareness and interest in the Moslem East as well as an increase in knowledge and understanding.

After reading various and representative scenes of Byron's Oriental works, one can say several things about the relationship between the poet and Islam and Moslems. First, Byron's Oriental works are to some extent freed from the traditional views and stereotypes of past generations. The spirit of polemic literature is absent in his work. His openmindedness shows that the romantic poet's desire was not to find faults, if there are any, in Islam and its followers. He shows a lot of tolerance of what he has seen and experienced. Christianity was no longer controlling ideologies and ways of thinking in Byron's days. Byron's deep interest was in the theme of conflict of power and misunderstanding between two diverse cultures and civilizations or simply between East and West. As has been stated in the previous chapter, Byron, as a boy, was exposed to various reading pertaining to the history of the Near East, especially Rycant's The Present State of the Ottoman Empire. In Byron: A Critical Study, Rutherford contends that Byron's

> own interest . . . was not in Oriental tales of fantasy and wonder: he knew the Arabian Nights and admired Beckford's Vathek, but neither of these works had much influence on his poetry. The Near East was not a Land of Peris and enchanters, but of Pachas, pirates, and banditti, and it was the passion and adventure to be met within real life that he drew on in his Turkish Tales. (p. 37)

And Blackstone suggests that "even his dervishes are 'infected' by the same lust for power . . . but they use it in a way which leads to enlightenment" (p. 331).

Byron also sought accuracy and authenticity in his narrative. He sought, as Garber puts it, to "affirm not only the validity of his facts but the legitimacy of the seeing which makes a context for those facts" (p. 325). For instance, in a letter of 15 December, after Byron

published his second Oriental tale, The Bride of Abydos, he asked an experienced traveller of the Moslem East, Edward Clarke, for his observations on the fidelity of the "manners and dresses" in the new poem. There is, Byron maintains, an "Oriental twist in my imagination" (p. 199) coupled with memory to get his work as close to authenticity as possible. He excels all his counterparts in terms of having a clear understanding of the Near East and its people.

Equally important is that Byron's journey to the Moslem East opened new doors for him, doors of genuine observation and information. He had watched things closely.

One could classify the Orient in his work into two: a realistic Orient described and appeared in his journals and in his letters to his mother, sister and friends: his meeting with the Pacha is one of these realistic depictions. In his prose, the East is presented with considerable clarity as well as vision and lack of hatred or prejudice. The other Orient is that of his fiction. It appears in his imaginative works such as Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Don Juan, and The Turkish Tales. The fictional Orient is not much distorted as far as local color is concerned. It has a shortcoming in its depiction of the culture and background of the Moslem society. The hero of his imaginative works in question is the Byronic hero who is the center of all the action.

Byron tackled certain themes in his Oriental works, inter alia: slavery, tyranny, polygamy, religion. These themes and ideas were tackled before, even exhausted, but Byron freed himself to some extent from the traditional way of Western writers. He gave his audience a new taste and spirit of what the Near East was. The romantic writer

showed a remarkable appreciation and tolerance of the Moslem East as a way of life. He succeeded in coming to terms with the Near East in terms of culture, religion, traditions, and people and land. In short, Byron was a student of the Near East and a serious learner. And in this sense, the Near East--its people, land, history and culture--provided a most satisfying classroom for an outstanding author that England had produced.

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