

'SAMPLES OF THE FINEST ORIENTALISM':

A STUDY OF THE ORIENT IN  
LORD BYRON'S 'TURKISH TALES'

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in

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## CONTENTS

PREFACE	1-viii
CHAPTER 1	
Image of the Orient in English Literature - A Historical Survey	1-36
CHAPTER 2	
Byron's Oriental Sources in the 'Turkish Tales'	37-78
CHAPTER 3	
Byron's Oriental Diction	79-132
CHAPTER 4	
Byron's Oriental Similes	133-154
CHAPTER 5	
Byron's Oriental Characters	155-216
CHAPTER 6	
Byron's Orientalism in Comparison to Robert Southey's and Thomas Moore's	217-272
APPENDIX I	
A Bibliography of Byron's Oriental Reading	273-276
APPENDIX II	
Naming the Oriental Names in Byron's 'Turkish Tales'	277-281
APPENDIX III	
Byron's 'Tale of Calil'	282-288
APPENDIX IV	
A Bibliography of Southey's Oriental Reading	289-296
APPENDIX V	
A Bibliography of Moore's Oriental Reading	297-301
BIBLIOGRAPHY	302-325

## PREFACE

While I was working on my earlier doctoral thesis, Modes of Satiric Consciousness in Lord Byron's Poetry, at the Aligarh Muslim University, India (1977-80), I was struck by Byron's dabbling with 'the customs of the East' in his Beppo and Don Juan. Since his 'Turkish Tales', the bedrock of his Oriental material then lay outside the scope of my research, I had to defer any study of them to a later date. My desire to explore Byron's Orientalism was, however, whetted in time by reading Edward Said's influential but controversial Orientalism (1978) and Rana Kabbani's Europe's Myths of Orient (1986), the latter almost an extension of Said's work, though more specifically focussed on Victorian literature, travel writings and paintings. Both Said and Kabbani hold Western writers guilty of presenting a distorted image of the Orient and ascribing to Orientals negative qualities of various sorts - especially violence, despotism, lust, promiscuity and irrationality. Edward Said even perceives in Orientalism 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.'<sup>1</sup>

Though apparently an innocent and innocuous field of learning embodying the fruits of Western scholars' specialized study of a geographical area known as the Orient, Orientalism is inevitably shot through with religious and cultural bias. The representation of one culture by another is liable to err; in the case of Western literary Orientalism the distortion is rooted in the unfortunate clashes and divisions between two major world faiths - Christianity and Islam. However, after reading Said's and Kabbani's somewhat polemical works I felt a little perplexed; for whatever inchoate impression I had gathered about Byron's Orientalism on reading his Beppo and Don Juan seemed to me to point to a deviation from conventional Western concepts

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1. Edward Said, Orientalism (London, 1978), p. 3.

of the Orient. Byron's Orientalism struck me as an alternative view, differing greatly from the dominant one, and his identification with a culture not his own tended to cut across the barriers of religious hostility and cultural blindness. I decided, therefore, to embark upon an investigation of this subject at a British university, where most of the written resources would be available. Being conversant with Oriental languages - that is, Arabic and Persian - and as a Muslim with a first-hand knowledge of Islamic tradition, I hoped to grasp Byron's Oriental material more readily, if not more perceptively. Moreover, the prospect of learning what Byron, someone outside my religio-cultural tradition, says about us appealed to me. This enquiry proved illuminating and enlightening for me; in the process of unravelling Byron's Orientalism I learnt a great deal by way of self-knowledge.

To the best of my knowledge, Byron's Orientalism has not been studied with the attention it merits. Indeed, the whole field of Western literary Orientalism - to be precise, the representation of the Orient in English literature - is a largely neglected one. Despite more than a thousand years of interaction between West and East at every conceivable level and in diverse fields, only a few substantial works cover this ground. Of these, mention must be made of Samuel C. Chew's The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England During the Renaissance (1937) and Byron P. Smith's more general Islam in English Literature (1939). The scope of Martha P. Conant's Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century (1908) is fairly indicated by its title. Until the fairly recent appearance of Nigel Leask's British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (1992), there had not been a single corresponding study for the Romantic period, which witnessed a much closer interaction between England and the Orient, and as a result, a

considerable mass of literary Orientalism. For the most part, however, Leask construes the East as 'India' which, as I have explained later, lies outside the scope of my thesis.

Byron's Orientalism, including his 'Turkish Tales', have attracted only spasmodic attention from critics and scholars. Daniel P. Watkins's Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales (1987) is perhaps the first full-length analytical study of these 'Tales', though it examines them from an angle entirely different from the specifically cultural perspective that lies at the heart of my thesis. Marilyn Butler's two pieces in Byron and the Limits of Fiction (1988) and in Byron: Augustan and Romantic (1990) come closest to my line of enquiry. Anahid Melikian's Byron and the East (1977), a slim work of only 116 pages, fails to offer any in-depth analysis. Harold S.L. Wiener's pioneering article 'Byron and the East: Literary Sources of the "Turkish Tales"' (1940) is undoubtedly a significant work on an important aspect of Byron's Orientalism, though even this is not free from several instances of omission and inaccuracy. The annotations in E.H. Coleridge's and Jerome J. McGann's editions of Byron's poetry do not take us all that far and deep into Byron's Orientalism.

The present thesis reflects, as well as attempts to bridge, the divide between Christianity and Islam or West and the Orient as this is habitually inscribed in literary writings. It is a study of Byron from an Oriental/Muslim vantage point. In the course of my labours, I quickly realized that Byron stands out from, and above, both his predecessors and contemporaries in his treatment of the Orient - in terms of his wide range, his accuracy and his imaginative sympathy. One of my purposes has been to give full recognition to this unusual empathy. Another is to explain Byron's Oriental allusions - a job which, I believe, has not so far been satisfactorily done. My major

concern has been to establish some important and hitherto unrecorded information about Byron's Oriental sources, diction, similes and characters, and thus to fill gaps in Byron scholarship. I have not attempted to offer any developed critical analysis of the 'Tales' - though it may be that critics much more gifted than I am will be enabled to do this better by the new light I throw on details on the texts and on their background.

It might be useful to say a word at the outset about the key expression 'Orient' as it is used throughout this thesis. On the one level it stands neutrally for the geo-civilizational entity covering countries east of the Mediterranean and stretching through Asia - mainly Turkey, Arabia, Persia and North Africa. On another, however, it has strong ideological, emotional and cultural associations; 'Orient' is inevitably what might be called a 'charged topos'. It is also worth remembering that the 'Orient' and 'Orientals' have been described in Western literary Orientalism down the ages under such varying heads as the 'Saracen', the 'East', the 'Moor', the 'Bedouin', the 'Arab', the 'Mahomeddan' and the 'Musselman', and all these terms are synonymous for my purpose. My discussion is focussed on the representation of Islam and Muslims in Western literary Orientalism, to the exclusion of other religious groups in the Orient, especially Hinduism and India. Corresponding to the 'Orient', 'West' and 'Western' are used interchangeably in this thesis for 'Christendom', 'Christian' and 'Occident'.

I deal primarily with four of the 'Tales' of Byron - The Giaour (1813), The Bride of Abydos (1813), The Corsair (1814) and The Siege of Corinth (1816) - for they are seen to constitute Byron's Orientalism. The two omissions from the series are Lara (1814) and



Parisina (1815), which lack Oriental material. 'The Tale of Calil' (1816), though in prose, is treated briefly in Appendix III, for its direct relevance to my concerns. Occasional references to the Orient throughout Byron's poetic corpus, which are elements of his Oriental diction, are taken into account in chapter 3. Constraints of time and space have forced me to leave out discussion of Beppo and Don Juan, though, needless to say, they do contain some Oriental material.

I perhaps owe an explanation of why I speak of the four 'Tales' as 'Turkish', since they are variously mentioned in Byron scholarship as 'Oriental', 'Eastern' and 'Turkish'. My preference for designating them as 'Turkish' rests on these grounds: the sub-titles of The Giaour and The Bride introduce them as 'Turkish Tales'; Byron brands them so in his letters; and they are set in Turkey. Both the characters and customs alluded to in the texts and in Byron's explanatory notes are specifically Turkish.

Chapter 1, 'Image of the Orient in English Literature: A Historical Survey', offers an outline of the beginnings and main contours of literary Orientalism up to Byron's day. This historical setting helps us, in turn, to appreciate Byron's Orientalism and especially how it marks a departure from convention.

Chapter 2, 'Byron's Oriental Sources in the "Turkish Tales"', establishes first Byron's Oriental reading, of which an exhaustive bibliography is provided in Appendix I. The main concern, however, is to identify the possible sources of the 'Turkish Tales' and to correct Byron scholarship by pointing out omissions and errors. This should help in encouraging better annotations in any new edition of the

'Turkish Tales'.

Chapter 3, 'Byron's Oriental Diction', covers the entire poetic corpus of Byron, isolating and explaining words of Oriental origin. There is also discussion of Byron's use of these words in terms of their aptness, accuracy and impact on the total effect of the poem.

Chapter 4, 'Byron's Oriental Similes', is focussed on a study of Oriental images in the 'Turkish Tales'. The local effects of Oriental similitudes are examined, particularly how they invest the poem with credibility and immediacy.

Chapter 5, 'Byron's Oriental Characters', brings out Byron's breaking away from stereotype and his imaginative sympathy in entering into genuine feelings and traditions of Orientals.

Chapter 6, 'Byron's Orientalism in Comparison to Southey's and Moore's', resumes the discussion broached in chapter 1 and extends the arguments of chapter 5. By discussing at length Southey's Orientalism in Thalaba (1801) and Roderick (1814) and Moore's in Lalla Rookh (1817) and The Loves of the Angels (1823), this comparative study shows the relative strengths and weaknesses of the three contemporary poets. It makes manifest why Byron's Orientalism stands out as the 'finest sample'.

Byron's 'Tales of Calil' (1816), first published only in 1985, has gone largely unnoticed. In Appendix II some observations are made on Byron's possible sources and on the tenor of his Orientalism in this 'Tale'. Appendix III, 'Naming the Oriental Names in the "Turkish

Tales"', is a fairly detailed study of each of Byron's Oriental names in the 'Tales', with remarks on its possible source and its functional use. Appendices IV and V provide a bibliography of Southey's and Moore's Oriental reading respectively. This might compensate, to a degree, for the absence of a detailed discussion of their possible Oriental sources, which I could not do owing to the constraints of time and space.

It will not be perhaps out of place to mention that some results of my work for this thesis have been recently published: (i) 'Byron's Allusion to Zuleika - A Note' in Byron Journal 19 (1991), (ii) 'A Bibliography of Byron's Oriental Reading' in Notes and Queries 237 (June 1992), (iii) 'The Outline of Coleridge's and Southey's "Mohammed"', with Professor Vincent Newey as the co-author, in Notes and Queries, 238 (March 1993), and (iv) '"A Vulgar Error": Byron on Women and Paradise', again co-authored with Professor Vincent Newey, in Byron Journal 21 (1993).

Chapter 4, 'Byron's Oriental Similes', is based upon the paper I presented on the same topic at the 18th International Byron Conference held in London (31st July-3rd August, 1991). I am under a great debt to my supervisor, Professor Newey, for his interest and criticism and for encouraging me to go ahead with these publications and the Byron Conference paper. Without his inspiration, great help and useful advice, their appearance would not have been possible.

I am grateful to my employer, the Aligarh Muslim University, India for having granted me Study Leave to pursue study for the Ph.D. at the University of Leicester (UK). Words fail me in recording my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Vincent Newey. For an overseas

-viii-

student like me with little critical training, it was quite a task to embark upon doctoral research at a British University. With his consistent, invaluable and most willing guidance, and his constant encouragement at every stage of my work, I was able to undertake and finish it in time. I shall always remain indebted to him for his numerous favours. I am thankful to the staff of the libraries of the University of Leicester, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, British Museum and the Islamic Foundation, Leicester for the supply of material I needed.

My thanks go to Mrs. K. Barratt who typed the thesis so efficiently. The support of my wife, Sara, and my son, Abdul Haleem, always kept me going.

*A. R. Kidwai*

Abdur Raheem Kidwai

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Chapter 1

IMAGE OF THE ORIENT IN ENGLISH LITERATURE: A HISTORICAL SURVEY

It was mostly in terms of religious differences and hostility that Europe learned first about Islam and Muslims. The phenomenal rise and spread of Islam in the seventh century A.D., with its military and political repercussions, made Europe all the more apprehensive. Within a century after its birth in Arabia, Islam was entrenched in major parts of Asia and Africa and was knocking at the very doors of Europe at many points: from the West, through Spain; in the centre, from Sicily to southern Italy; and in the East, into the Balkans and southern Russia. It was resolved to check these threats, and Islam was perceived as a heresy and Muslims cast in the role of enemy, as fierce, irrational people given to violence and lust. So far as knowledge of Islam is concerned, R.W. Southern brands the period 700-1100 as 'the Age of Ignorance'.<sup>1</sup> This negative image is reflected in the polemical writings and literary texts of the day, and even of much later date - a point illustrated in some detail later in this chapter.

The first real, literally face-to-face, contact between Europe and the Orient was brought about by the most dramatic confrontation - the Crusades in the Middle Ages (1096-1271). Though the Crusading movement was essentially a religious movement, secular tendencies and forces were at work too, including commercial ones. Its cultural and historical significance in forging links between Europe and the Orient is immense. As pointed out by Dorothee Metlitzki, the Crusades resulted in 'the Arab influence on a wide range of Frankish activities - on military technique, on vocabulary, on food, clothing and ornamentation'.<sup>2</sup>

1. R.W. Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, MA., 1978), p. 14.
2. Dorothee Metlitzki, The Matter of Araby in Medieval England (New Haven, 1977), p. 4.

More fruitful European interaction with the Orient flowed, in large measure, from the Muslim occupation of Spain in 715, which continued until 1492. 'As a cultural transplant on European soil, and a natural bridge between the East and West...[Muslim Spain] served as an agent for transmitting 'basically Eastern ideas.'<sup>3</sup> Transmission of learning from the Orient, then a centre of superior culture and richer civilization, to Europe is the most remarkable feature of this process. A host of European scholars have identified the nature and extent of the influence of the Orient on Europe in fields as diverse as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, logic, metaphysics, technology, music and other arts and sciences.<sup>4</sup> Through the acquisition of Oriental knowledge there came about what C.H. Haskins calls 'the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.'<sup>5</sup>

3. Anwar Chejne, 'The Role of al-Andalus in the Movement of Ideas Between Islam and the West', in Islam and the Medieval West: Aspects of Intercultural Relations, ed. Khalil I. Semaan (Albany, 1980), pp. 114-15.
4. Some of these works are:  
Thomas Arnold and A. Guillaume, The Legacy of Islam (Oxford, 1931).  
Donald Campbell, Arabian Medicine and its Influence on the Middle Ages (London, 1926).  
Paul Coles, The Ottoman Impact on Europe (London, 1968).  
D.M. Dunlop, The Arabic Science in the West (Karachi, 1958).  
H.G. Farmer, Historical Facts for the Arabian Musical Influence (London, 1930).  
R.A. Jairazbhoy, Oriental Influences in Western Art (New York, 1965).  
J.T. Monroe, Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship (Leiden, 1970).
5. C.H. Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century: Studies in the History of Medieval Science (Cambridge, MA., 1927), p. 80.

Another major point of contact between Europe and the Orient is of course Turkey, generally referred to in European accounts as the Ottoman empire. The Turkish forays into Europe started in the mid-fourteenth century and ended in 1699 with the Treaty of Karowitz. They resurrected some of the medieval hatred against Islam and Muslims - a point borne out by the image of the Orient in Elizabethan literature, to which we will turn later. Notwithstanding frequent military encounters on this front, the conflict contributed greatly to cultural and social exchange and gradually to a better understanding of Islam and Muslims. This aspect is covered thoroughly in Paul Coles's The Ottoman Impact on Europe.<sup>6</sup>

It was by travel that Europe learned more about the Orient, and English travel literature provides significant clues about the changing image of the Orient. In the Middle Ages there had been little traffic between England and the Orient, but with the establishment of the Levant company in 1581 the volume increased considerably. Trade links and diplomatic missions gave rise to a steady flow of visitors, some of the leading figures being Sir Henry Blount, George Sandys and William Lithgow. That the travelling gentleman then gradually replaced the traveller indicates that the Orient was becoming more and easily accessible. Some of the commentators perceived the Bedouin life as an instructive contrast to the artificialities of European existence, others regarded those people as remnants of a primitive race, full of innocence and simplicity; they were seen as abstaining from material possessions which would curtail their freedom. Eyles Irwin published in 1780 his travelogue, A Series of Adventures in the Course of a Voyage

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6. Paul Coles, The Ottoman Impact in Europe (London, 1968).



up the Red Sea, on the Coasts of Arabia and Egypt, which is all admiration for the domestic felicities of the Oriental life; and in 1802 his comic opera 'The Bedouin' was staged in Dublin. In most of the travel writings, the Orientals were depicted as examples of the Noble Savage.

Next to travel literature there are paintings by the Orientalist painters. Lucas van Leyden's 'Daughters of Lot' of the late fifteenth century is perhaps the first European painting with a distinct Oriental imagery. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 brought the Orient deep into the European consciousness. The conqueror's dress, arms and architecture evoked some fascination. Van Dyck painted Sir Robert Shirley as an Oriental with an enormous turban in order to heighten the effect of his being a wealthy person. Francesco Guardi has to his credit some forty-six paintings on Turkish life. In the eighteenth century, as a ramification of neo-classicism, the Orient was generally perceived as the domain of decoration. A.J. Gros's painting 'The Battle of Aboukir' represents the Orient in terms of richly coloured costumes and war horses. The image of the Orient in these paintings is characterised by eroticism, richness in both costume and splendour and some remnants of the warrior stereotype. Orientalist paintings in early nineteenth-century England catered for the Romantic feeling for the picturesque and for local colour. Moreover, the Orient stood for a place where sensual desires which could not be indulged in England might be easily satisfied; and finally these paintings responded to the longing for mystery.

A serious interest in the Orient is reflected also in the appearance of scholarly volumes on Oriental history, replacing the medi-

eval polemical writings which contain little fact and much fiction about the Orient. Richard Knolles's General History of the Turks (1603) and Simon Ockley's History of the Saracens (1708-1718) established this history as an academic discipline. Other notable examples are Pierre Bayle's A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical (1737-1741), Richard Pococke's A Description of the East (1743-1745), and Alexander Russel's Natural History of Aleppo (1756).

An important literary source for studying the image of the Orient is provided by the Chanson de Geste, the oral poetry of medieval France. These heroic poems, primarily meant for entertaining the public, found mostly in twelfth century manuscripts, exercised a great influence on European literature, including of course English literature. The image of Islam in these songs, it is worth clarifying, is the unofficial, unchurchmanlike view of Islam in that the Church did not have any role in their composition. Yet, as pointed out by Norman Daniel, 'the Saracen religion in the songs relates to actual facts about Islam in the same way as a distorting mirror twists a real object into an unrecognisable travesty.'<sup>7</sup> They represent Islam as a despicable form of paganism; they denounce the Islamic practice of the segregation of women, polygamy, harems, divorce, and ascribe sexual promiscuity to Muslims.<sup>8</sup>

7. Norman Daniel, Heroes and Saracens: A Reinterpretation of the 'Chanson de Geste' (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 4.

8. Apart from Daniel's excellent study, the image of the Orient in the Chanson de Geste is examined also in C.M. Jones, 'The Conventional Saracens of the Songs of Geste', Speculum, 17 (1942), 201-225.

As to English literature proper, the Middle English romances, as for example Beues of Hamtoun or The Sowdone of Babylone, are the earliest literary works dealing with the Saracens and their world. However, in the words of Dorothee Metlitzki, 'they are essentially vehicles of fanatical propaganda in which the moral ideal of chivalry is subservient to the requirements of religion, politics and ideology. Pagans are wrong and Christians are right whatever they do...They are primarily concerned with one basic theme: the war of Christianity against Islam.'<sup>9</sup> Special mention may be made of the Romance Floris and Blancheflur, composed in the middle of the thirteenth century, which is marked by a specifically Arabian theme and is permeated by Arabian motifs. However, this and other Romances of the period abound in stereotypes of Muslims depicting them as irrational pagans and the Prophet of Islam as an impostor. William Langland (c. 1330-c.1386) appears to have been swayed by the same prejudices in portraying the Prophet in Piers Plowman as a Christian heretic abusing the power of the Holy Ghost. Similarly, the second coming in the vision of Piers Plowman is preceded by a time deformed by 'Mahomet' (this name was used of the Prophet Muhammad, being the generic word for a false god).

A note of missionary zeal permeates Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale, for Constance, daughter of the emperor of Rome, marries the Sultan of Syria in order to convert him to Christianity: 'That, in destruccioun of Maumettrye / And in encrees of cristes lawe dere' (236-37). The polemical design of the Tale is heightened by derisive references to the Quran (332) and the Prophet (224, 336 and 340). However, Chaucer speaks admiringly of several Muslim philosophers such as Alchabitius

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9. Dorothee Metlitzki, p. 160.

[Abd al-Aziz c. 960] in Astrolabe (1, 8, 13), Alocen [Ibn al-Haytham 965-1039] in Squire's Tale (232), Azrael [al-Zarqali 1029-1087] in Astrolabe (2, 45, 2), Averroes or Averrois [Ibn Rushd 1126-1198] in 'General Prologue' (433), Avicenna or Avycen [Ibn Sina 980-1037] in 'General Prologue' (432) and The Pardoner's Tale ((889 and 890) and Albus or Albus [al-Khwarizmi 780-850] in Book of the Duchess (435), The Miller's Tale (3210) and Astrolabe (1, 7, 6 and 8, 6). His Squire's Tale is set in the Orient; to be precise at Sarray, a prosperous commercial town founded by the Central Asian ruler, Batu Khan.

John Lydgate's Fall of Princes (c. 1440), standing out as perhaps the first English literary piece with a detailed account of the Prophet, re-echoes some of the polemical assaults on the Prophet in describing him as a magician of low birth who is guilty of leading his followers astray, rejecting his claim to have received the divine revelation and branding him as 'a nigromancien and a fals prophete' (Book IX, 147). John Gower's Confessio Amantis, however, speaks of Saracens in conciliatory terms.

A common expression used in early seventeenth century literature employed mainly for pouring scorn and contempt is 'Turk', used frequently by Shakespeare in Othello (II, 1, 114), Hamlet (III, 11, 275), King Lear (III, iv, 91), 2 Henry IV (V, 11, 47), Richard II (IV, 1, 95), Richard III (III, v, 40), The Merchant of Venice (IV, 1, 32) and Much Ado About Nothing (III, iv, 56). Bacon levels a baseless charge against the Prophet, accusing him of being a miracle-monger in his essay 'Of Boldness'.<sup>10</sup> This polemical aspect apart, 'to the minds of most...poets [of the day] the country [Arabia] was associated with the

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10. Francis Bacon, The Essays of Bacon (London, 1903), p. 61.

images of luxury and wealth.'<sup>11</sup> The gorgeous Oriental life is recounted with some degree of awe in Marlowe's Jew of Malta (I, i), John Fletcher's Bloody Brother (V, ii), Ben Jonson's Alchemist (II, ii, 93-4) and Massinger's Roman Actor (II, i).

This image of the Orient, thus, retains some of the old polemical strain, yet nonetheless signifies a marked departure from the medieval prejudiced view of Islam and Muslims. It records some positive appreciation for Oriental life and ways.

How the truth gradually makes its way against prejudices is borne out by Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors, which corrects a misconception, among others originating from medieval works on Islam, about the Prophet's hanging tomb, reported by Marlowe in Tamburlaine 2 (I, i, 137-42) and Beaumont in The Scornful Lady (III, ii) and even at a much later date by Robert Southey in Roderick (XXIII, 147-50) and Thomas Moore in Lalla Rookh. This medieval report that the Prophet's body hangs in an iron chest in mid-air in a mosque is dismissed by Browne as 'fabulous, and evidently false.'<sup>12</sup>

References to the Orient in later seventeenth-century literature in general are relatively few and far between, though, for example, Milton is found speaking of the perfumes of Arabia in Paradise Lost (IV, 159-64) and Donne using the simile 'like Bejazet encaged' ('The Calm'), alluding to the popular story that the Turkish Sultan, Bejazet, defeated by Tamburlaine in 1407, was paraded publicly in a cage. Dryden's Don Sebastian, showing a close thematic affinity with Massinger's Renegado, is full of the contrast between Christianity and

11. Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England During the Renaissance (New York, 1937), p. 432.

12. Sir Thomas Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica, ed. Robins Robbins (Oxford, 1981), I, 107.

Islam and it is glaringly in favour of the former.

In the next generation, Pope speaks scoffingly of Islamic laws and of fratricide among Turkish sultans in The Dunciad (Book III, 89-90) and Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (198-99) respectively. In Butler's Hudibras the visage of Bruin, the bear, is as grim 'And rugged as a Saracin, / or Turk of Mahomet's own kin' (Part I, 2, 251-52). In Congreve's Way of the World the 'Mahometan fools' are derided for their 'heathenish rules', particularly the prohibition of wine in Islam (IV, 1, 404-08). In Goldsmith's Citizen of the World there appear some medieval misconceptions about the Muslim paradise, the Islamic belief about the absence of the soul in women, and the Prophet being 'a professed opposer of gaiety' (Letter CXI).

Notwithstanding these traces of the time-worn distorted image of the Orient, eighteenth-century literature reflects a marked tolerance in approaching things Islamic. To this end Gibbon's fairly objective, historical account of Islam in his magisterial History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-1788) and George Sale's English translation of the Quran (1734) - the basic text of Islam - greatly contributed. Above all, the scholarly translations of Oriental works, mainly literary ones, by William Jones paved the way for a better and favourable view of the Orient.

Another important factor was the popularity of the Arabian Nights, of which the first English translation was published in 1706. As to its reception in England, Muhsin J. Ali aptly remarks: 'Very few books have cast such a spell on the reading public as the Arabian Nights.'<sup>13</sup>

13. Muhammad Jassim Ali, Scheherazade in England: A Study of Nineteenth Century English Criticism of the Arabian Nights (Washington, 1981), p. 3.

This contention is firmly corroborated by numerous reprints, 'complete editions', 'new translations' and 'careful revisions' of the Arabian Nights during the century. Its popularity is evidenced also by its serialization over the years in London News, Churchman's Last Shift, General Magazine, Lady's Magazine, Monthly Extracts and Novelist's Magazine. Addison's response was equally warm in that he published several Oriental pieces in The Spectator.

Apart from being a unique amalgam of the informative and the delightful, the Arabian Nights was much admired for its exoticism, its depiction of strange social manners, and its machinery of such enthralling figures as jinn, fairies, magicians and talismans. 'These stories', holds E.F. Bleiler, 'appealed...with a wide range of opportunities; delicacies of style, elaboracies of construction, adventure, eroticism, moralism, sensibility, fantasy, philosophy and irony.'<sup>14</sup> Some of the legends permeating these stories had their parallels in the Celtic, Teutonic and Greek traditions - hence their appeal for a larger readership. Along with their exoticism and the charm of pure adventure, these stories are grounded in solid value systems and deal with such issues as the sinfulness of pride and greed and the vanity of human wishes. Numerous Oriental Tales, often pseudo-Oriental imitations and adaptations, appeared in the wake of their popularity, of which a masterly analysis is made by Martha P. Conant. According to her, this phenomenon 'might be called an episode in the development of English Romanticism.'<sup>15</sup>

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14. E.F. Bleiler, Three Gothic Novels (New York, 1966), p. xxviii.

15. Martha P. Conant, The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1908), p. viii.

The beginning of Oriental Tales in English literature dates back to the Middle Ages when many Oriental stories had found their way into England through the religio-political, socio-cultural, military and travel contacts with the Orient. The translation of the Arabian Nights brought about the full blooming of this genre. As to the vast number of eighteenth-century Oriental Tales, Martha P. Conant classifies them into the following four groups - imaginative, moralistic, philosophic and satiric:

The imaginative group, the earliest, and, at the beginning of the century, the most significant, diminished, as the other groups increased in strength, but revived again near the end of our period in Beckford's Vathek. The moralistic and philosophic groups are prominent in the periodical essays from Addison to Dr. Johnson. The philosophic group comprises besides Rasselas several translations from Voltaire's contes-philosophiques. The satiric group is chiefly exemplified by the pseudo-letters culminating, in English, in Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, and by Count Hamilton's entertaining parodies.<sup>16</sup>

Along with the Arabian Nights, the publication of the Persian Tales (1714) translated from French by Ambrose Philips, Turkish Tales (1708) rendered by Jacob Tonson and Mogul Tales (1736) further strengthened the genre. Another contributing factor was the appearance of Eclogues in the same period, among them those of William Collins, Thomas Chatterton and John Scott. Collins's Persian Eclogues came out first in 1742, to be re-issued as Oriental Eclogues in 1757.

Let us now turn to the Romantic period to discuss the treatment of the Orient, which was promoted and enhanced by certain historical

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16. Martha P. Conant, p. xxvi.



developments and, more importantly, by a general tendency of the age to look at things in a wider, broader context. Of the relevant historical events, special mention should be made of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1798) which awakened Englishmen to the strategic military significance of the East. Then the War of Independence in Greece (1821-1828) put the Orient again firmly on the public agenda. Perceived as the struggle of the oppressed against Ottoman despotism, the Greek movement attracted widespread and active sympathy, and Byron in particular responded enthusiastically, devoting his considerable energy, time and resources to the cause. The colonization of several Asian and African countries, with its concomitant diplomacy, travel, war and administration, exposed the English to hitherto unknown frontiers and generated an all-round curiosity about distant Oriental lands and their people. Trade grew considerably, resulting in regular and first-hand contacts which called for detailed knowledge of all aspects of the Orient. One outcome of this was the appearance of a vast body of literature on its arts, religion, philosophy and culture.

The availability of authentic works on the Orient is another distinguishing feature of the Romantic period. The importance of scholarly writings becomes more marked because of the Romantic writers' heavy reliance on them for annotation, not least in the poetical works of Byron, Southey and Moore. Besides, the Orient had always its exotic appeal to excite the imagination of creative artists and to kindle the curiosity of the general public. The picturesque scenes of Oriental landscapes, in particular, attracted the Romantics, catering to their urge for a return to primitive nature, while Arabo-Islamic mythology, seen at work in Southey's, Byron's and Moore's writings, furnished them

with a new means of grappling with ultimate reality, and in the case of Moore helped him satirize the contemporary political situation.

Along with the influence of the Arabian Nights, the tales of Addison and Johnson had paved the way for the continuation of the tradition of literary Orientalism in the Romantic period. Like Addison, Johnson wrote Oriental tales mainly for instruction, couched in an amusing style; so that, for example, in his 'Ortogrul of Basra' (Idler, 99) the chief character Ortogrul finally realizes the importance of industry. His other contributions - 'The History of Almamoulin, the son of Nouradin' (Rambler, 120), 'The History of Abouzaid, the Son of Morad' (Rambler, 190), 'Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia' (Rambler, 204 and 205) - are also concerned, in the main, with moral and ontological issues. Though the characters bear Muslim names and inhabit Muslim countries, the tales have little Oriental colour, and references to famous Oriental place names such as Samarcand, Arabia and Abyssinia constitute only a nominal Oriental setting.

Johnson's choice of an Oriental story for his first major work, Irene (1736), reflects the vogue of literary Orientalism in the day. The play has much in common with Massinger's Renegado and Dryden's Don Sebastian in its denunciation of Oriental despotism. Mahomet, the central character, is an amorous Turkish emperor who falls in love with a Greek captive, Aspasia. Johnson's image of the Orient is essentially of the medieval period, betraying hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Among his sources are authentic works on the Orient such as those by Knolles, D'Herbelot and Sale: but what is nonetheless surprising is that his work is flawed by several factual inaccuracies and misconceptions about the Orient, its beliefs and its life. For

example, Mahomet <sup>...pleasure</sup> reverberates the preposterous charge of medieval detractors of Islam that according to the Islamic tradition women do not have souls and are created solely for the pleasure of males:

Vain Raptures all - For your inferior Natures  
Form'd to delight, and happy by delighting,  
Heav'n has reserv'd no future Paradise,  
But bids you rove the Paths of Bliss, secure  
Of total Death and careless of Hereafter,  
While Heav'n high Minister, whose awful Volume  
Records each Act, each Thought of Sov'reign Man,  
Surveys your Plays with inattentive Glance,  
And leaves the lovely Trifler unregarded.

(I, VII, 15-23)<sup>17</sup>

Like his predecessors and contemporaries writing on the Orient, Johnson is guilty of another common inaccuracy in locating the Prophet's tomb in Makka whereas it is situated in Madina. Cali, the vizier, seeks the Sultan's permission to go on pilgrimage to Makka, where the Prophet is buried (I, v, 7-12).

Johnson appears more at home in writing Rasselas (1759), for this work is closer to an essay, a genre in which he undoubtedly excelled. More significantly, it represents his mature outlook on a wide range of subjects and is largely free from any animosity against Islam and Muslims. Essentially it is philosophical, with the main theme of false expectations in that all the major characters fail to attain any lasting happiness; they continually undergo disappointments. Johnson is mainly concerned with 'the Vanity of Human Wishes', concluding that the gratification of desires does not bring satisfaction, which may be attained only through knowledge, faith and integrity. On the whole, the treatment of the Orient is cursory and vague, but it is worth noting

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17. The Poems of Samuel Johnson, eds. D.N. Smith and E.L. McAdam (Oxford, 1941), 276.

that it does not misrepresent it.

Another landmark of pre-Romantic literary Orientalism is Beckford's Vathek, published in Henley's English translation in 1786. Originally it had been written in French. For its supernatural machinery, exotic settings and weird incidents contemporary reviewers have related Vathek to the Arabian Nights. On the one hand, Vathek represents the culminating point of the vogue for Oriental tales in eighteenth-century England, on the other, it burlesques this genre by emphasising the strange and the exotic in terms of its action, plot and imagery. Vathek resembles the fiction of Voltaire and Hamilton in its use of wit and satiric techniques and reflects some affinity with Johnson's Oriental tales in its moralizing spirit.

Despite the popularity of Oriental tales in the period, Vathek is unprecedented in its coverage and attention to details of Oriental life and customs both in the text and in Henley's scholarly notes. Beckford's concern for local colour impressed Byron greatly and his homage to Beckford's correctness of costumes is recorded in his note to The Giaour.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the genuinely Oriental setting of and abundant local material in Vathek and Beckford's wide familiarity with authentic works on the Orient, the themes and spirit of Vathek are unmistakably Western - the story of Faust lies at its heart. Like Goethe's Faust,

18. The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry, ed. E.H. Coleridge (London, 1922), II, 145; referred to as Poetry in subsequent references. The other edition of Byron's poetry, Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford, 1981-93) is mentioned throughout as CPW.

Vathek seeks knowledge, including its forbidden variety and at the price of his soul. Moreover, Vathek is not completely free from some misconceptions, though inadvertent ones, about Oriental beliefs and practices. As a result, Vathek betrays the Western mind-set of its author, especially in portraying Hell and Eblis.

Although the sections on the Halls of Eblis stand out above others for their intense drama and for being remarkably successful in evoking the intended effect of awe and dread, Beckford's image of Hell bears no correspondence with its account in Islamic texts. With its 'halls and galleries', 'long curtains brocaded with crimson and gold', 'choirs and dances', 'gleam brightening through the drapery' and 'chambers'<sup>19</sup> it looks more like a country mansion than the ghastly, bottomless pit of unquenchable blaze described as Hell in Islamic tradition, as for example, in the following Quranic passage:

Those in the hell will be in the midst  
Of a fierce blast of fire  
And in boiling water,  
And in the shades  
Of black smoke:  
Nothing will there be  
To refresh, nor to please:<sup>20</sup>

Beckford's inability to grasp the Oriental material and overcome Western influences mars also his portrait of Eblis. Although he uses the authentic Oriental expression 'Eblis' for Satan, his Eblis being a tragic figure radiating certain grandeur shows greater affinity with Milton's Satan, as is evident in the following passage:

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19. William Beckford, Vathek, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford, 1983), pp. 110 and 115.

20. The Quran 56: 42-44.

As infinity of elders with streaming beards, and afrits in complete armour, had prostrated themselves before the ascent of a lofty eminence; on the top of which upon a globe of fire, sat the formidable Eblis. His person was that of a young man, whose noble and regular features seemed to have been tarnished by malignant vapours. In his large eyes appeared both pride and despair: his flowing hair retained some resemblance to that of an angel of light. In his hand, which thunder had blasted, he swayed the iron sceptre, that causes the monster Ouranbad, the afrits and all the powers of abyss to tremble.<sup>21</sup>

This conception of Eblis does not have even an iota of resemblance with the accursed, utterly ignominious Eblis in the Quran:

The angels prostrated themselves (in obeisance to Adam)  
All of them together:  
Not so Eblis: he  
Was haughty, and became  
One of those who reject faith.  
God said: 'O Eblis!  
What prevents you from  
Prostrating thyself to one  
Whom I have created  
With My hands?  
Are you haughty?  
Or are you one  
Of the high and mighty ones?'  
Eblis said: 'I am better  
Than he: You created  
Me from fire, and him  
You created from clay.'  
God said: 'Then get you  
Out from here: for you  
Are rejected, accursed.  
And My curse shall be  
On you till the Day of Judgement.'<sup>22</sup>

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21. Vathek, p. 111.

22. The Quran 38: 73-78.

These inaccuracies apart, in depicting things Islamic, Beckford does not, however, distort or disparage Islamic beliefs and practices: Vathek is singularly free from polemical note. Central to Vathek is the theme: 'to know everything, even sciences that did not exist' and in line with this aim Beckford condemns religious obscurantism that forbids probing certain domains of knowledge. His jibes at the 'reverend Moullahs' [Muslim religious scholars] are therefore directed more against the narrow, rigid religion of theologians. His criticism represents also a reaction to the strong Calvinistic leanings of his possessive mother who exercised an overpowering influence on him in his childhood.

Apart from being an outstanding specimen of Western literary Orientalism, the significance of Vathek consists also in providing Byron with a number of Oriental images and allusions in his 'Turkish Tales', a point examined in some detail in chapter 2 of this thesis on 'Byron's Oriental Sources'.

To the scholarly contributions of Sir William Jones (1746-1794) may be ascribed a major role in preparing the ground for the interest in the Orient in the Romantic period; for, equipped with a mastery of Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit, Jones produced a number of translations of and commentaries on Oriental literature. In 1772 he brought out an anthology of Arabic and Persian poems rendered into English, among which special mention should be made of his translation of the Arabic poetical masterpiece entitled Moallakat (The Seven Odes). To promote a better understanding of the Orient Jones founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, India in 1784, the parent of all Asiatic Societies, and the Society's journal Asiatic Researches went a long way in achieving this objective. His writings, containing a wealth of

information about things Oriental, served later as a main source for Byron, Southey, Shelley and Moore. His Persian Grammar (1771) introduced both Persian literature and language to English literary circles and urged men of letters to benefit from its rich heritage. Jones firmly believed that a study of Oriental works would furnish them 'with a new set of images and similitudes...and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light.'<sup>23</sup> Byron appears to be making the same point later in 1813 in his letter to Thomas Moore, quoted in chapter 6 of this thesis, exhorting him to draw on Oriental material.

In addition to Jones, a number of other Oriental scholars such as John Richardson (1741-1811), Francis Gladwin (d.c. 1811), Charles Wilkins (c. 1749-1836), William Marsden (1754-1838), William Carey (1761-1838), Daniel Price (1765-1837), John Haddon Marshman (1768-1837), Sir Gore Ouseley (1770-1844), John Leyden (1775-1811), Matthew Lumsden (1777-1835) and James Atkinson (1780-1852) also helped kindle and sustain public interest in the Orient through their scholarly writings on various aspects of Oriental life.<sup>24</sup>

The ever-growing body of travel literature too played an important part in popularizing literary Orientalism. Since Wallace C. Brown has already covered this ground in his account of 'The Popularity of English Travel Books about the Near East, 1775-1825',<sup>25</sup> a few general remarks will suffice. In view of the continental war, travellers unable to visit Western Europe turned to the Oriental lands, in addition

23. William Jones, Works, ed. Lord Teignmouth (London, 1807), X, 360.

24. A.J. Arberry, British Orientalists (London, 1943).

25. W.C. Brown, 'The Popularity of English Travel Books about the Near East, 1775-1825', Philological Quarterly, 15 (1936), 70-80.



to the large number of those who were genuinely interested in the Orient. According to Brown's survey, some seventy travel books about the Orient were published in England between 1775-1825; and to these may be added numerous pieces on the Orient and reviews of travel literature about the Orient published in influential periodicals. On the one hand these writings provided the reading public with useful, at times curious, information and, on the other, they offered much for the inspiration of creative writers.

Among the English travellers to the Orient, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) deserves special mention on more than one count; for being one of the very few women travellers to the region, for her representation being singularly free from the binary opposition between the Christian and Oriental worlds as superior/inferior, for her first-hand unconventional account of the harem and for the influence of her Letters..., written during her travels in Europe, Asia and Africa to persons of distinction as a literary source for later writings on the Orient, as for example, in Byron's 'Turkish Tales'. She visited Istanbul in 1717 along with her husband Lord Montagu, ambassador of the Le vant Company to Turkey. Her Letters were, however, published posthumously in 1763.

Since the beginning of relations between West and the Orient, the harem being the unfamiliar and exotic had stirred the Western imagination. To this was added the dimension of the Western interest, from the days of its geographical discoveries, in the sexual mores of non-Europeans. For the essential Oriental characteristics of sensuality and violence and its political aspect in terms of the

oppression of women, the harem served in the West as a metaphor for tyranny and arbitrary rule in society. Lady Montagu's eyewitness account, however, divests the harem of its mainly sensual, erotic, sensational and promiscuous features. Far from repeating the conventional image of voyeuristic pleasure and sexual fantasy, her account of the harem rather domesticates it and employs it as a suitable setting for drawing comparisons between the Western monogamous and Oriental polygamous forms of sexuality and the position of women in the respective cultures. To adduce this point, reference may be made to the following extract from one of her letters to Abbe Conti which brings out the comparativeness of the Christian and Islamic codes of womanhood, sexuality and matrimony:

Women, says he, [the Prophet of Islam] not being capable to manage Affairs of State, nor to support the Fatigues of War, God has not ordered them to govern or reform the World, but he has entrusted them with an Office which is not less honourable, even then of multiplying the human Race; And such as, out of Malice or Laziness, do not make it their Business to bear or to breed Children, fulfil not the Duty of their Vocation, and rebel against the Commands of God. Here are Maxims for you, prodigiously contrary to those of your Convents. What will become of your Saint Catharines, your Saint Theresas, your Saint Claras, and the whole Bread-roll of your holy Virgins and widows? who, if they are to be judged by this System of Virtue, will be found to have been infamous Creatures, that past their whole Lives in a most abominable Libertinism.<sup>26</sup> (emphasis in the original)

The Islamic concept of sex, completely dissociated from sin, struck Lady Montagu. Moreover, she describes, perhaps for the first time, polygamy positively. Being a woman able to discuss sexual matters freely and intimately with the harem women, Lady Montagu was in a unique position to perceive the Oriental sexuality in a different,

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26. The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford, 1965-67), I, 364.

broader perspective hence her unconventional position on both these matters. The other Western accounts of these subjects tend to be more an exercise in fantasy than a real understanding of the issues involved. It is therefore not a surprise to note her outrage against her predecessors for their ignorance and sensationalization in projecting only a lurid picture of the Orient, especially its sex life: 'Now I am a little acquainted with their [Turks'] ways, I cannot forbear admiring the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all writers that have given account of 'em.'<sup>27</sup>

Being able to observe the freedom enjoyed by the veiled harem women, granted them by the Islamic law on divorce, inheritance and dower money, Montagu proceeds to contrast and compare their liberty with the Christian and British notions of womanhood and examines, again in a comparative fashion, the two different social and political systems.

A highly distinguishable feature of her Letters, for our purposes, is that it often recounts her rational, meaningful discussions with Turk males on a variety of social, literary and political issues, especially the position of women. What it signifies is the possibility of a purposeful, serious dialogue between the West and the Orient. The latter is no longer cast as a barbaric land peopled by those given only to violence and lust.

Lady Montagu's Letters, in a sense, anticipate Byron's Orientalism in that both writers make a clean break from the conventionally prejudiced view of the Orient, show a fine understanding of the Orient helped partly by their eyewitness accounts, rich in

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27. The Complete Letters of Lady Montagu, I, 328.

genuine local topographical and cultural description, and use the Oriental setting for examining a wide range of issues by comparing the Oriental code of life with the traditional Christian/British one without claiming the latter's moral superiority.

Particular mention should also be made of some other important travel works. James Bruce's Travels Between the years 1765 and 1773 through part of Africa, Syria, Egypt and Arabia, into Abyssinia to Discover the Source of Nile (1790) is, in the main, a record of his adventures in the Near East as British consul at Algiers (1763-65) and his explorations in Abyssinia (1761-72). Guided by the spirit of genuine inquiry and research, it delves deep into the life and ways of Arabs and regards them as perfect Noble Savages. Bruce's description of the fatal desert storm - Simoom - appears to have fascinated Coleridge, Byron and Southey, for all of them employ it as an effective image. Alexander Russel's Natural History of Aleppo (1756), revised and expanded by his brother Patrick Russel in 1794, relates the observation of these two physicians to the British factory at Aleppo. Though this is essentially a topographical description of Aleppo, it is interlaced with frequent remarks on the creed and life of its inhabitants. This work went a long way in allaying some of the common misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. James Dallaway's Constantinople, Ancient and Modern (1797), being an account of Turkey by a chaplain and doctor at the British Embassy at the Sublime Port, provides detailed information about Turkish life and customs, while William George Browne's Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the Years 1792 to 1798 (1799) makes an insightful comparison between the relative happiness of life in the West and in the Orient.

Another salient travel book is Edward Daniel Clarke's Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa (1810) in six large volumes: Byron regarded Clarke an authority on the Orient, as is evident from his letters.<sup>28</sup>

Oriental scholarship, set in motion by Sir William Jones and a host of other eminent Orientalists, led to the appearance of several histories, including Sir William Ouseley's The Oriental Collections (1797). Beside such works Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-88), containing lengthy sections on Islam and Muslims, deserves special note for its influence on Romantic writers. The period also saw the appearance of a number of specialized journals on the Orient, namely Oriental Chronicles, Asian Annual Registers, Asiatic Researches and Asiatic Review.

Little wonder then that the works of all the major Romantic poets contain copious allusions to the Orient. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) provides a convenient starting point. His moving love poem, Lewti, or the Circassian Love-Chaunt (1798), has its central character, the singer, drawn from the Eastern race. More significantly, it exhibits some possible borrowings from Jones's translation of the Arabic odes, Moallakat (1780-81). 'Tamah', the name of an Arabian plain, referred to as 'Tehama' by Niebuhr, appears as 'Tamaha' in Lewti. The Moallakat vividly describe the secret nocturnal visits of lovers to virgins in their fragrant bowers; the lover in Lewti entertains a similar imaginary visit to Lewti's bower. Yet on the whole the Oriental colour in the poem is quite weak.

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28. Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London, 1974), III, 199. Referred to as L&J in subsequent references.

Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' employs some images such as the dome and the caves, the damsel and the dulcimer and the flashing eyes and the floating hair which bring to mind its possible Oriental sources. Breyer identifies the Abyssinian maid in 'Kubla Khan' with a houri of the Muslim heaven.<sup>29</sup> The stately dome is a recurrent image in Jones's The Seven Fountains: An Eastern Allegory. The image of the damsel and dulcimer suggests the luxury of Oriental palace life, described vividly in the travel literature of the day. Then the dancer with 'flashing eyes', 'floating hair' and 'holy dread' shows a striking similarity to the account of the whirling dervises - the Oriental mystics who went into a trance in their ecstatic communion with the divine reality. 'Kubla Khan' draws also on Oriental legends about the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to and vision about the heavens and the Quranic account of the Adite king Shaddad, who had dreamt of and built an earthly paradise.

Sir Walter Scott's (1771-1832) Oriental material, as reflected in his Vision of Don Roderick (1811) and The Talisman: A Tale of the Crusades (1825), resurrects some of the medieval conceptions of the Orient. Scott is concerned in the main in these works with the Muslim conquest of Spain and an account of the Crusades respectively - hence his polemical note.

As to the Orientalism of Shelley (1792-1822), it is essentially a means for airing his radical views on the issues confronting Europe in his day. Shelley himself makes this point while relating the Oriental locale of his Revolt of Islam (1817) to the intended thrust of the poem:

29. B.R. Breyer, 'Towards an Interpretation of "Kubla Khan"' in English Studies in Honor of James Southall Wilson, ed. Fredson Bowers (Virginia, 1951), pp. 227-290.

The scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople and modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is in fact a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in an European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously as I think) the modern philosophy, and contending with ancient notions and the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is a Revolution of this kind, that is the beau ideal as it were of the French Revolution, but produced only by the influence of individual genius, out of general knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

This statement of Shelley makes the title of his poem look less intriguing. For, Muslims in the poem are found rebelling against their own ruler, Othman, rather than against an enemy of Islam and the poem, excepting the title, is almost devoid of any cultural description of Islam or Orientals. Dealing with the theme of political tyranny and religious dogma, the message of the poem is to liberate Europe from the despondency and gloom in the wake of the failure of the French Revolution. An instance of the contemporary ring of the poem is that Laon defeats Othman and conquers the Golden City of Constantinople. Yet he spares Othman, bearing a close affinity with the ideal of the French Revolution, according to which the king is to be set free, rather than to be executed.

In Laon and Cythna's revolt and eventual success against the Sultan Othman, Nigel Leask perceives Shelley's 'reaction against the negativity of Tom Moore's 1817 account of Oriental revolution.'<sup>31</sup>

30. Collected Letters of P.B. Shelley, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford, 1964), I, 563-64.

31. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (Cambridge, 1992), p. 110.

Significantly enough, both the Oriental revolutions in Lalla Rookh (in 'The Veiled Prophet of Khor assan' and 'The Fire-Worshippers') and in Byron's Bride of Abydos and Corsair are failed revolutions.

Another distinguishable mark of Shelley's Orientalism is its adherence to convention in depicting a negative view of the Orient and, as a result, its endorsement, as in Southey's, of the colonialism and evangelism of the day. Despite his dismissal of Christianity being 'an outworn encumbrance' in the context of England, Shelley approved of the missionary work in British India, regarding it as an instrument for bringing about gradual enlightenment and progress. He expressed the hope that 'the zeal of the missionaries what is called the Christian faith, will produce beautiful innovation there [in India], even by the application of dogmas and forms of what is here an outworn encumbrance.'<sup>32</sup>

For Shelley, both Hinduism and Islam are bereft of any spirituality and pose a threat to civilization. This stance permeates his representation of Islam in Hellas. The play glorifies the Greek uprising against Turkish domination and deals with the themes of despotism and redemption. Though Byron too was a philhellenist, actively engaged in the Greek cause, his 'Turkish Tales' do not betray such a dark, negative view of Islam or Turks as does Shelley's Hellas. In Hellas, the fate of Greece is discussed by Christ, Satan and Mahomet; throughout the play Christianity is symbolized by 'light' and Islam by 'darkness'. It thus brings to the fore once again the medieval, distorted image of Islam, which holds it synonymous with tyranny, lust and fratricide. That Hellas may have its negative representation of the Orient owing to its classical model is explained by Nigel Leask:

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32. Shelley and His Circle, ed. Donald H. Reiman (Cambridge, MA., 1973), IV, 987.



Shelley tells us that Hellas is modelled upon Aeschylus' play The Persians, identified by Edward Said as the inaugural text of orientalism in Western culture, in terms of a hellenic power of representation defining itself over against an 'Asiatic Other'. In Shelley's earlier poems, 'Greek' values struggle against 'Asiatic' despotism and priestcraft in a universal meta-physical framework, like the elemental battle between the eagle and the serpent in the first canto of The Revolt of Islam.<sup>33</sup>

Among his other works with Oriental material is his first major work, Queen Mab, exhibiting as it does the influence of Sir William Jones's Palace of Fortune and Southey's Thalaba in terms of its scenery, diction and characterization. Alastor (1816), too, shows the influence of Thalaba both in employing Oriental mythology and in its imperialist tenor. As Kashmir figures as its prominent locale, Leask thinks that it 'could be read as an unmasking of Britain's desire for its Indian Other'.<sup>34</sup> Shelley's unfinished Gothico-Oriental romance The Assassins (1814) offers a critique of some of the social and intellectual concerns of the Assassins, a medieval extremist Muslim group that mercilessly killed its religious and political opponents. The hero and heroine of the romance, Albedir and Khaled, bear Muslim names. Yet the Oriental touch is faint. What Shelley ascribes to the Assassins are actually his own views as expressed in his A Philosophical View of Reform. Using the pretext of Assassin philosophy, Shelley castigates the social order of the day. His poem 'The Indian Serenade' (1819) employs the popular Oriental image of the nightingale. Another relevant piece is 'From the Arabic, an Imitation' (1821), with marked borrowings from the Arabic romance, translated into English by Terrick Hamilton, entitled Antar, A Bedoueen Romance (1819). The same text had been translated

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33. Nigel Leask, p. 72.

34. Nigel Leask, p. 123.

earlier by Sir William Jones, and Shelley appears to have studied both renderings, for he creatively extends the romance in describing the feelings and emotions of Abta, the other partner in Antar. He succeeds remarkably in projecting an idealized form of a lover in his poem.

Shelley articulates his views on the themes of decay and historical progress with reference to the Orient, particularly the ancient Egyptian civilization in 'Ozymandias' and 'To the Nile'. Byron's serious reflections on ruin and death also occur in a similar Oriental setting in The Giaour in the context of the slain Hassan's deserted palace (281-351). Michael Rossington discovers in the journey to the Orient in both Alastor and Prometheus Unbound, 'Shelley's response to wider contemporary arguments about the search for "a cradle of civilization" and in 'The Witch of Atlas' the 'North African - location of the Witch's realm, works as a parody of the desire to find in the Orient a universal key to all mythologies.'<sup>35</sup>

In his concern with the mythologies of the world, his endorsement of colonial and evangelical incursions in the Orient and his cultural narcissism precluding any positive appreciation of the ethnically different, Shelley's Orientalism is akin to Southey's. A detailed study of the latter follows in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Apart from the substantial literary Orientalism in the works of the above-mentioned Romantic writers, others such as Leigh Hunt, Keats, Crabbe and Landor also make reference to the Orient. Some allusions occur in Wordsworth's The Prelude, Ecclesiastical Sonnets Part I (particularly XXXIV) and 'The Armenian Lady's Love' (1830).

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35. Michael Rossington, 'Shelley and the Orient', Keats-Shelley Review, 5 (Autumn 1991), p. 20.

The Dream of the Arab in The Prelude (V, 86-102) represents a significant change in literary Orientalism in the Romantic period. Unlike Pope, who in The Dunciad had portrayed Arabs as ignorant people opposed to learning and accused them of burning libraries, Wordsworth acknowledges the great Arab intellectual legacy and its contribution to world knowledge. The Arab is made to appear with a stone and shell, standing respectively for the books of science and poetry; so doing, Wordsworth recognizes the Arab preservation and transmission of knowledge which helped retrieve Greek ideas. Far from the conventional 'Noble Savage', Wordsworth's Arab stands out as a culture-hero. More importantly, the Arab in The Prelude has answers to the dreamer's questions, signifying the opening of doors for dialogue and communication between the West and the Orient. Wordsworth is perhaps the first writer to grant this equal status to an Oriental, who is no more conventionally cast in the role of a warrior or an enemy.

The Arab's stone, apart from its associations with the philosopher's stone and elixir figuring prominently in Arabic alchemy, is related to the resurrective stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of civilization (Daniel II, 44-45). As the stone in the Biblical account evokes a sense of the rejuvenation of a disintegrating world, the Arab's stone symbolizes signal advancements in all spheres of human intellectual endeavours at a time when the West was steeped in 'darkness'. Similarly, the Arab's shell denotes a book of poetry, or in Yousef Tarawreh's view, 'the Arabian Nights [is] a possible source of Wordsworth's conception of the shell, especially in view of these tales' frequent references to genies and efreetts being held within shells.' Again, according to Tarawreh, 'the subtle significations of stone and

shell...are related to the Oriental invention of the alphabets...and the invention of paper.'<sup>36</sup> Wordsworth's treatment of the Orient in The Prelude is markedly positive.

Leigh Hunt's 'Mahmoud' (1823) celebrates the justice of Mahmud Ghaznavi, a Muslim ruler, who ordered a criminal to be executed in the dark and explained that he had the light put out lest the accused might be his own son. 'Cambus Khan' (1823) is quite close to the Arabian Nights in its description of luxuries and gorgeousness. The poem relates at length the Khan's feast and the fabulous gifts presented to him by the neighbouring, overawed kings. Hunt's other works with streaks of literary Orientalism are: 'Abou Ben Adham', 'Jaffar', 'The Bitter Gourd', 'Abraham and the Fire-Worshipper' and 'The Trumpets of Doolkarnein'.

Landon's Count Julian revolving around the theme of the Muslim conquest of Spain, contains few references to the Orient. George Crabbe draws heavily on the Arabian Nights for his tale 'The Confidant' (1818) in order to bring home a moral point about sin and atonement.

Keats's works testify to his familiarity with the Arabian Nights and Beckford's Vathek. In one of his letters to Fanny Brawne of July 1819 he makes a pointed reference to the story of 'The Man who Laughed Not' in the Arabian Nights.<sup>37</sup> In Endymion some fables are apparently

36. For this discussion on The Prelude, I have drawn on Yousef Tarawreh's 'Islamic Reflections: Revisionist Portrayals of Arab Civilization with Particular Reference to Wordsworth, Pope, Cervantes, and Dante', International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies, 4 (1987), 62-63.

37. The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York, 1938), VIII, 13.

taken from the Arabian Nights, Vathek and Thalaba. For example, regarding the story of Glaucus who was destined to live for a thousand years, Sidney Colvin observes: '[it] inevitably reminds us of such stories as that of the Fisherman in the Arabian Nights, and of the spell laid by Suleiman upon the rebellious Djinn, whom he imprisoned for a thousand and eight hundred years in a bottle until the Fisherman released him.'<sup>38</sup>

According to Forman, in writing 'Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man, / Frozen in that old tale Arabian' Endymion (I, 405-06) Keats had in mind the eldest lady's story in 'The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad' of the Arabian Nights.<sup>39</sup> On Keats's Orientalism Colvin makes this insightful remark: 'The scenery, indeed, is often not merely of a Gothic vastness and intricacy: there is something of Oriental bewilderment - an Arabian Nights jugglery with space and time.'<sup>40</sup> Douglas Bush lists the Arabian Nights and Vathek as possible sources for Keats's Mythology in Hyperion.<sup>41</sup> In sum, although Keats's Orientalism is peripheral, it does point to the strong influence of particular texts.

Prior to the gradual British annexation of India in the later half of the eighteenth century the Orient being peripheral to the British experience spelled, in the main, exoticism - a land of luxury and sensuous opportunities and this image was confirmed by the study of the Arabian Nights. The translation of Oriental texts, which were mainly literary ones, did not leave such an imprint as the discovery of

38. Sidney Colvin, John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-Fame (London, 1920), p. 191.

39. H. Buxton Forman, II, 41.

40. Sidney Colvin, p. 173.

41. Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (Cambridge, MA., 1969), p. 116.

classical humanist texts had in the Renaissance period. As yet the Orient existed too far removed from its intellectual and religious domains and socio-political realities and concerns. However, with the ever-increasing British involvement and rule in India with its concomitant political, administrative and religious ramifications compelled the public figures, writers included, to engage seriously with new situations, challenges and issues. It is therefore not a surprise to note reflections of this engagement in Romantic writings. As a study of the image of India lies outside the scope of the present thesis, the vast body of Orientalism on this aspect is passed over in silence and only some main contours of the socio-political context of the Romantic discourse are outlined, which, it is hoped, will facilitate a better appreciation of Byron's Orientalism. For some of my observations that follow I am indebted to Nigel Leask's fairly recent study, British Romantic Writers and the East, focussing on 'the anxieties and instabilities in the Romantic discourse of the empire' and Marilyn Butler's two insightful articles.<sup>42</sup>

The British expansion eastwards or imperialism with all the related implications lie at the heart of the Romantic discourse. Nigel Leask accounts thus for the Orientalism of the day:

the sheer demand for orientalism, the proliferation of orientalist styles and narratives in the arts of the Romantic period; the eighteenth-century vogue for Chinoiserie is diversified into a demand for Egyptian, Ottoman, Mughal and Hindu motifs, components of what John Barrell calls, 'the imagery of an early but well-established imperialist culture'. Demand and

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42. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire and Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East' in Byron: Augustan and Romantic, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London, 1990), pp. 63-81 and 'The Orientalism of Byron's *Glaour* in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, eds. Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 78-96.

desire are rationalized in terms of an (always risky) analogy with the imperial triumphs of the classical works. For the orientalist poet Tom Medwin, English Romantic Literature found a precedent and alibi in the Athenian practice of incorporating the imagery of its subjugated people into its own culture...the products of an imperial heraldry which incorporated the symbols of the conquered with its own coats of arms.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, one should not lose sight of the palpable political aspect of this discourse, arising out the consolidation of British political and military power in the Orient, once again most notably in India. For a negative perception of the Orient, especially of its decayed institutions and decadent social fabric underlined an urgent need for some remedial action on the part of the British, which was deemed as God's will or a moral duty. This generated support for the civilizing mission and evangelical work which would bring about reform and enlightenment in the colonies. What was good for the West must be better for them. To this on-going socio-political debate the Romantics responded in their own, obviously varied, ways. This trend appears at its sharpest in the products of what Marilyn Butler brands 'a school of new powerful politicised poetry.'<sup>44</sup> Some of the works illustrative of this are Southey's epics namely Thalaba (1801), Madoc (1805), and The Curse of Kehama (1810), Mary Shelley's novel The Last Man (1824), Shelley's Revolt of Islam (1818), Prometheus Unbound (1820) and Hellas (1821), Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh (1817) and, to a considerably less extent, Byron's 'Turkish Tales' (1813-16) and his play Sardanapalus (1821).

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43. Nigel Leask, p. 8.

44. Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East', p. 68.

Most of these works depict revolutions, though mostly failed ones, aiming at the overthrow of some despotic Oriental ruler. What is significant is the close parallelism between these Oriental and contemporary tyrannical European regimes. Written in the wake of the French Revolution they pulsate with allusions to this event. Nonetheless, their concern with the imperialism, colonialism and evangelism of the day is much more distinct. Embedded in the discourse are responses to the following contemporary historical events: Napoleon's invasion of Syria and Egypt in 1798; the growing French role in the affairs of Persia and Afghanistan - countries located too close to India then coming rapidly under the British rule; wide-ranging discussions in both parliament and press on the British management of Indian affairs, especially administering its educational system and the pressing evangelical campaign by the Clapham Sect calling for the parliament approval for conversion and mission in India. Charles Grant's Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain (1813), an official field study, advocated strongly Christian proselytism in India. The Indian society reeling under oppressive and cruel Hinduism was 'a classic instance of unreformed despotism, precisely the type of the old regime the French were now rationally sweeping away.'<sup>45</sup> Eventually, the evangelists won their case in that the parliament amended the East India Act in 1813, permitting proselytisation.

Swayed by negative representations of India Southey and Shelley appear to have joined the call for the civilizing mission, or indirectly the imperialism project. At the other end of the scale, Byron's 'Turkish Tales', however, seem to question the validity of assumptions

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45. Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East', p. 71.



underlying this project. In the course of discussing Byron's and Southey's Orientalism in later chapters of this thesis, these aspects will be studied in greater detail.

Let us now recapitulate the distinguishing features of literary Orientalism in the Romantic period as we have so far witnessed it. It represents a significant advance in both the range and quality of attention and use. It is neither tethered to religious and theological concerns as in earlier periods, nor does it betray a paucity of authentic information as in the pre-Romantic period. Far from being merely exotic or employed simply as a pretext for moralizing or satirizing, it often reflects a genuine interest in the Orient, which is articulated creatively and imaginatively. Writers of this period appear on sure grounds about their knowledge of the Orient, partly owing to the availability of a large body of relevant literature and partly because of greater and easier first-hand access to the Orient itself. And this is even more distinctly true of Byron, Southey and Moore. The latter two we shall have occasion to compare to Byron in due course; but it is Byron's own exceptionally various, subtle and insightful Orientalism to which we must now turn.

## Chapter 2

BYRON'S ORIENTAL SOURCES IN THE 'TURKISH TALES'

Knolles-Cantemir-de Tott - Lady M.W. Montagu-Hawkins's translation from Mignot's History of the Turks - the Arabian Nights - all travels or histories or books upon the East I could meet with, I had read, as well as Rycaut, before I was ten years old. I think the Arabian Nights first.<sup>1</sup>

Byron's account of his Oriental reading illustrates both his personal interest in the Orient since childhood and his contemporaries' general fascination with it, which is borne out by the availability of a spate of works - travel, historical and scholarly - during the period. Far from being merely a child's fondness, Byron's love of the Orient grew steadily, culminating later in his visit to and stay in Albania and Turkey as part of his Grand Tour, and, more importantly, in the composition of his 'Turkish Tales', namely The Giaour (1813), The Bride of Abydos (1813), The Corsair (1814) and The Siege of Corinth (1816). These poems, in particular, are replete with allusions to things Oriental in both the text and notes. Our main concern in this chapter will be to identify the possible sources of Byron's Oriental material in the 'Tales'. No attempt will be made at critical analysis; the discussion is focused purely on establishing the sources and correcting Byron scholarship on this count by pointing out omissions and errors. This, it is hoped, will help towards a better and more extensive annotation of the 'Turkish Tales', which may, in its turn, lead to a more perceptive understanding of them.

As a fruitful way forward, let us first draw an accurate and comprehensive list of Byron's Oriental reading by examining his Reading List of 1807, the '1816 and 1827 Sale Catalogues of Byron's Collection

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1. Isaac Disraeli, The Literary Character (London, 1822), pp. 101-02.

of Books', his letters and journals, and some relevant Byron scholarship. To the best of my knowledge, a satisfactory bibliography of Byron's Oriental reading has not so far been compiled. Coleridge and McGann in their editions of Byron's poetical works and Harold S.L. Wiener<sup>2</sup> and Bernard Blackstone<sup>3</sup> in their articles refer to works on the Orient which Byron read or probably read; but on the whole this is a neglected area of Byron studies, as Blackstone himself points out:

Byron's biographers and critics have paid no great attention to his Eastern affinities...Prothero's edition of the letters and journals lists no Eastern works in its otherwise very comprehensive 'Books Read by Byron'. John Drinkwater's centenary study, The Pilgrim of Eternity...cites Moore's 1807 reading list...but leaves out the final Oriental section. Coming down to our own time, we look in vain through Professor Marchand's index [of his Byron: A Biography] for any mention of Firdausi, Hafiz, Sadi or Jami. Nor are Rycart, Knolles, Cantemir, D'Herbelot or De Pocqueville listed.<sup>4</sup>

Having indicated this gap, however, Blackstone makes no attempt at providing a complete account of such titles.

While Blackstone is perfectly justified in lamenting the general lack of attention to Byron's 'Eastern affinities', his criticism that 'Prothero's edition...lists no Eastern works' is somewhat unfair, for it does mention, for example, the ones by Bayle, Castellan, Chardin, Clarke, Knight, Malcom, Prideaux, Toderini and Tully.<sup>5</sup> Harold S.L.

2. Harold S.L. Wiener, 'Byron and the East: Literary Sources of the "Turkish Tales"', in Nineteenth Century Studies, ed. Herbert Davies, et al (New York, 1968), pp. 89-129.
3. Bernard Blackstone, 'Byron and Islam: The Triple Eros', Journal of European Studies, 4 (1974), 325-63.
4. Bernard Blackstone, p. 325.
5. The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals, ed. R.E. Prothero (London, 1901), VI, 500-04.

Wiener restricts himself to the titles mentioned in the 1816 Sale Catalogue. E.H. Coleridge covers most of Byron's Oriental reading, though not all. Jerome J. McGann simply repeats what was already known by reproducing the titles identified earlier by Coleridge and Wiener. It is therefore all the more important to work towards a complete and careful picture.

Byron's Reading List of 1807 stands out as the first and foremost source in view of such significant entries as the following:

Turkey: I have read Knolles, Sir Paul Rycaut and Prince Cantemir, besides a more modern history anonymous. Of the Ottoman history I know every event, from Tangralopi, and afterwards Othman I to the peace of Passariowitz, in 1718 - the battle of Cutzka in 1739, and the peace between Russia and Turkey in 1790.  
Biography: Teignmouth's Sir William Jones.  
Arabia: Mahomet, whose Koran contains the most sublime passages, far surpassing European poetry.  
Persia: Ferdousi, author of Shah Nameh, the Persian Iliad - Sadi and Hafiz, the immortal Hafiz, the Oriental Anacreon.<sup>6</sup>

The full titles of the works alluded to in these passages, in the 1816 and 1827 Sale Catalogues, and in Byron's letters and journals and other sources, are described in Appendix I of this thesis, 'A Bibliography of Byron's Oriental Reading'.

What makes a study of Byron's sources for his Oriental material so highly relevant is his repeated emphasis on the 'Turkish Tales' as works firmly grounded in the Orient. On the genesis of The Giaour he confides to Lord Holland: 'It pleases me much that you like "The Giaour"...the incidents are founded I believe on facts - and made an

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6. Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of his Life, ed. Thomas Moore (London, 1920), pp. 46-47.

impression on my memory when I heard them - which...broke forth into that rhapsody with all their Turkish and Arabesque accompaniments' (italics mine).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the 'Turkish...accompaniments' of The Bride of Abydos are brought into play by his reference to it as 'another Eastern tale - something of the Giaour cast.'<sup>8</sup> His letter to Annabella Milbanke reinforces further the Oriental design of The Bride: 'I have been scribbling another poem - as it is called - Turkish as before - for I can't empty my head of the East - ...there are some Mussulman words in it...'<sup>9</sup> (italics mine).

That Byron drew upon authentic works on the Orient is evident in his reply to John Murray, his publisher, who had expressed reservations about 'the propriety of putting the name of Cain into the mouth of a Mussulman' character - Selim in The Bride. Byron defended his position saying: 'Do you suppose that no one but the Galileans are acquainted with Adam and Eve and Cain and Noah...if you want authority - look at Jones - D'Herbelot - Vathek - or the Notes to the Arabian Nights.'<sup>10</sup> In similar vein is his letter to Lord Holland, in which he speaks of his vivid knowledge of Oriental life:

Bride and Giaour - the popularity of which last really surprised - ...My head is full of Oriental names and scenes - ...it is my story and my East - (and here I am venturing with no one to contend against - from having seen what my contemporaries must copy from the drawings of others only) that I want to make palpable - and my skull is so crammed from having lived much with them and in their own way...with their scenes and manners - ...[The Bride] is thoroughly Eastern - and partly from the Koran.<sup>11</sup>

7. Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London, 1974), III, 34-35. In all subsequent references this work is referred to as L & J.

8. L & J, III, 157.

9. L & J, III, 160.

10. L & J, III, 164.

11. L & J, III, 168-69.

Almost the same point is made more tersely in a letter to Lady Melbourne: 'When I speak of this tale [The Bride] and the author - I merely mean feelings - the characters and the costume and the tale itself...are Mussulman.'<sup>12</sup> Byron's note on The Giaour, too, foregrounds its Oriental origin and gives a guide to some of his means of explaining the allusions of the poem:

The circumstance to which the above story [The Giaour] relates was not very uncommon in Turkey...I heard it by accident recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant, ...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."<sup>13</sup>

As well as such acknowledgements of indebtedness, Byron always makes it a point to highlight the genuineness of what he calls the 'costume' of the 'Tales'. Not unsurprisingly, in response to a query about the accuracy of one of his Oriental allusions in The Bride he reproves John Murray: 'I send you a note for the ignorant - but I really wonder at finding you among them - I don't care one lump of Sugar for my poetry - but for my costume - and my correctness on those points (of which I think the funeral was a proof) I will combat lustily.'<sup>14</sup> But Byron's insistence on seeking authentic information is perhaps exemplified at its best in his instruction to Murray on another occasion. Unsure about whether Makka or Madina was the Prophet Muhammad's burial place, which he intended to mention in The Bride (II, 402), he asks:

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12. L & J, III, 175.

13. Poetry, III, 144-45.

14. L & J, III, 165.

Look out in the Encyclopaedia article Mecca whether it is there or at Medina the Prophet is entombed - if at Medina the first lines of my alteration must run - 'Blest - as the call which from Medina's dome / Invites Devotion to the Prophet's tomb', if at 'Mecca' the lines may stand as before. You will find this out either by Article - Mecca - Medina - or Mohammed - I have no book of reference by me.<sup>15</sup>

And the point is pressed home in subsequent correspondence: 'Did you look out? Is it Medina or Mecca that contains the holy sepulchre? - don't make me blaspheme by your negligence - I have no book of reference or I would save you the trouble I blush as a good Mussulman to have confused the point.'<sup>16</sup>

The real significance of the above-quoted letter, however, lies in Byron's correcting a fairly common Western misconception about the Prophet's burial place. Since Muslims throng every year in large numbers to Makkah to perform homage at the House of God in Makkah, writers not familiar with details of the Islamic faith often mistake Makkah as the site of the Prophet's tomb. In fact, it is in Madinah, a town some three hundred miles away from Makkah, that the Prophet is actually buried; and a visit to his resting place is not part of the Muslim pilgrimage. If this sounds obvious to some readers, then it is worth pointing out how many authors have got it wrong: Butler in Hudibras 2 (I, 111, 442); Beaumont in The Scornful Lady (III, 11, 6-7); Nashe in The Unfortunate Traveller<sup>17</sup>, Addison in The Spectator (191); and Byron's contemporary, Walter Scott, who commits the same error in presenting Saladin swearing by 'the tomb of Mecca' in The Talisman.

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15. L & J, III, 190-91.

16. L & J, III, 191.

17. The Unfortunate Traveller by Thomas Nashe, ed. H.F.B. Brett-Smith (Oxford, 1920), p. 46.



Byron's predilection for accuracy is again unmistakable in his letter of December 15th, 1813 to Edward Daniel Clarke, a regular Eastern traveller:

Your very kind letter is the more agreeable because - setting aside talents - judgement - & ye. "Laudari a laudato" & c. . you have been on ye spot - you have seen and described more of the East than any of your predecessors - I need not say how ably & successfully - and (excuse the Bathos) you are one of ye very few who can pronounce how far my costume (to use an affected but expressive word) is correct. As to poesy - that is - as "Men Gods and Columns" please to decide upon it - but I am sure that I am anxious to have an observer's - particularly a famous observer's testimony on ye. fidelity of my manners & dresses - and as far as Memory and an Oriental twist in my imagination have permitted.<sup>18</sup>

That Byron was fully conversant with Turkish history as a result of his extensive reading is corroborated by Count Gamba's report, recounting Byron's conversation with Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos on this subject:

Mavrocordato [sic] is esteemed as very accomplished in this particular area and tried Byron on the genealogy of the Ottoman emperors. Wherever there was any difference of opinion, we always found on reference, that Byron was right: his memory, indeed, was surprisingly accurate. He said: "The Turkish history 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."<sup>19</sup>

Julius Millingen, who was Byron's close companion in his last days, also testifies to his thorough familiarity with Oriental history:

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18. L & J, III, 199.

19. Count Peter Gamba, *A Narrative of Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece* (London, 1925), pp. 148-49.

Historical works, next to novels, were those which he took more pleasure in reading; and indeed his acquaintance with both ancient and modern history might, without exaggeration, be called prodigious. He had devoted peculiar attention to that of the East, a region very imperfectly known, where his imagination always delighted to rove, and from which he drew his finest, and most original poetical thoughts.<sup>20</sup>

Another piece of evidence on this count is Byron's identification of several historical inaccuracies in Bacon's work. In a note on Don Juan (V, CXLVII) alluding to the Ottoman ruler, Solyman, he points to Bacon's erroneous accounts of Solyman in the essay on 'Empire' and proceeds to list other such instances, though they are mostly related to Greek history, in Bacon's Apophtegms.<sup>21</sup>

Having noted Byron's impressive Reading List on the Orient and his own statements recording his indebtedness to works on the Orient for lending 'Oriental colouring' to the 'Turkish Tales', it now seems in order to establish the nature and extent of his borrowings from these sources.

As in the case of Byron's Oriental reading, scant scholarly attention has been given to the Oriental sources of the 'Tales'. To the best of my knowledge, the only works dealing with the subject are again E.H. Coleridge's annotations in his masterly edition of Byron's poetry, an excellent article by Harold S.L. Wiener, and Bernard Blackstone's article which seeks to establish Stephen Weston's Moral Aphorisms in Arabic (1805) as a major influence on Byron.

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20. His Very Self and Voice: Collected Conversations of Lord Byron, ed. Ernst J. Lovell Jr. (New York, 1954), pp. 467-68.

21. R.E. Prothero, V, 597-600.

E.H. Coleridge's annotations, no doubt, help in locating most of Byron's sources, but Wiener's article is a more far-ranging exploration of the relevant material. Little wonder then that Wiener's piece is usually cited in Byron studies as the standard contribution, rather as the final word, on the matter. This point is illustrated best by Jerome J. McGann's edition of Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, in that, despite his claim of making 'important additions to what has been previously known', he relies heavily on Wiener in dealing with Byron's borrowings. McGann gathers little substantially new in this area; and Wiener's otherwise highly useful article is itself not altogether free from instances of omission and inaccuracy. To establish Byron's sources is inevitably to rectify both gaps and mistakes in existing scholarship. Let us take up each 'Turkish Tale' for this purpose.

As I have already shown, Byron himself indicates the Oriental origin of The Giaour and certain works on the Orient as his sources. In the 'Advertisement' to the poem he tells: 'The tale which these disjointed fragments present, is founded upon circumstances now less common in the East than formerly: ...The story, when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave, who was thrown, in the Mussulman manner, into the sea for infidelity, and avenged by a young Venetian, her lover.'<sup>22</sup> Almost the same point, along with reference to some of his sources, is made in a note on the poem:

The circumstance to which the above story relates was not very uncommon in Turkey...I heard it by accident recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant, and sing or

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22. Poetry, III, 83.

recite their narratives...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."<sup>23</sup>

In addition to 'the coffee-house story' which Byron 'heard by accident', the main episode of The Giaour may have sprung from Byron's own observations in Turkey, for as his biographer, Leslie A. Marchand, informs us:

One day when he [Byron] was returning from his daily bathing at Piraeus he observed a curious procession moving down toward the shore under a guard of soldiers. Sending one of his servants to inquire, he learned that it was a party sent to execute the sentence of the Waiwode or Turkish governor of Athens on a girl caught in an act of illicit love. She had been sewed into a sack and was to be cast into the sea.<sup>24</sup>

Or Byron may have learnt about this Turkish mode of punishment from reading Knolles's Turkish History, which refers to this custom.<sup>25</sup>

In its bare outline the story in The Giaour is about a Muslim chief Hassan, his beautiful Circassian wife, Leila, and a Venetian outlaw, the Giaour. Leila has an illicit love affair 'with the faithless Giaour' (458) and for this transgression Hassan orders her to be sewn up in a sack and drowned. This is witnessed by a fisherman who is the all important narrator in the tale. The Giaour later avenges her death by killing Hassan and passes the rest of his life in deep anguish.

One encounters salient Oriental material in the opening lines of the poem:

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23. Poetry, III, 144-45.  
24. Leslie A. Marchand, Byron: A Biography (New York, 1957), I, 257.  
25. Richard Knolles, The Turkish History with a Continuation by Sir Paul Rycaut (London, 1687-1700), III, 235.

For there - the Rose, o'er crag or vale,  
Sultana of the Nightingale,

(21-22)

In the explanatory note on these lines Byron enlightens his readers: 'The attachment of the nightingale to the rose is a well-known Persian fable. If I mistake not, "the Bulbul of a thousand tales" is one of his appellations.'<sup>26</sup> Coleridge, Wiener and McGann,<sup>27</sup> apparently following one another, all locate Henley's note on Vathek<sup>28</sup> as Byron's source of information for the first part of his note. Coleridge refers also to William Jones's translation of an Oriental poem, Mesih's Ode, which employs this Persian fable and so could be Byron's other possible source. Surprisingly enough, this plausible point is not explored any further by Wiener and McGann; and Coleridge is content not to go beyond the Ode itself in William Jones's Works. Actually Jones repeatedly mentions the fable of the rose and the nightingale, both in his translations of Oriental poetry and in his articles on Oriental literature.<sup>29</sup>

More importantly, Byron scholars have overlooked another possible source relating to this fable - Lady Montagu's Works, which Byron had read with admiration for its account of Turkish life, particularly the harem. This work carries Lady Montagu's English translation of 'Turkish verses' which inevitably draws on the fable:

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26. Poetry, III, 86.  
27. Poetry, III, 87; Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 97 and CPW, III, 416.  
28. William Beckford, Vathek, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford, 1983), p. 143.  
29. The Works of Sir William Jones, ed. Lord Teignmouth (Delhi, 1979), V, 293-95 and X, 331.

The nightingale now wanders in the vines;  
Her passion is to seek roses.

And her elucidation of the tale seems to be the basis of Byron's note, for she says: 'The first verse is a description of the season of the year; all the country now being full of nightingales, whose amours with roses is an Arabian fable, as well known here as any part of Ovid amongst us.'<sup>30</sup> On the source of the latter part of Byron's note related to the appellation, the 'Bulbul of a thousand tales', Byron scholars have nothing to say. Since Jones speaks of the bulbul in similar terms,<sup>31</sup> Byron may have learnt it from him.

Byron's devotion to the Greek cause is to the fore in the opening part of The Giaour. What saddens him is that the Greeks, prostrate under Turkish domination, 'crawl from cradle to the grave, / Slaves - nay, the bondsmen of a Slave' (149-50). The 'Slave' thus alluded to is the Turkish governor of Athens, 'the Kislär Aga (the slave of the Seraglio and guardian of the women)'.<sup>32</sup> In view of Byron's personal involvement with Turco-Greek affairs, it is quite likely that he may have himself picked up these details about the Turkish title and function of the Turkish governor of Athens. Wiener suggests Prince Cantemir's History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire as his possible source of information.<sup>33</sup> This, however, again leaves out Lady Montagu, who describes in her Works the assignment of the Kislär Aga in terms similar to Byron's: 'the kyzlar-aga...is the chief guardian of the seraglio ladies.'<sup>34</sup>

30. Works of the Rt. Hon. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (London, 1803), II, 142 and 145.

31. The Works of Sir William Jones, II, 37.

32. Poetry, III, 93.

33. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 124.

34. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 113.

The Oriental setting of The Giaour appears at its sharpest in the description of the following scene by the Muslim fisherman:

The crescent glimmers on the hill,  
The Mosque's high lamps are quivering still;  
Though too remote for sound to wake  
In echoes of the far tophaike,  
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 -  
(223-39)

This is immensely rich in Oriental detail - the crescent heralding the beginning of a new month, the illumination of mosques, the festival celebrations with fireworks, the end of the Muslim month of fasting and the arrival of their festival, Bairam. Of the many references which would have been incomprehensible to his readers, Byron explains some in his notes: "'Tophaike", musket. The Bairam is announced by the cannon at sunset: the illumination of the <sup>S</sup>mosques, and the firing of all kinds of small arms, loaded with ball, proclaim it during the night.<sup>35</sup>

Here McGann simply refers to D'Herbelot's entry on the Muslim fasting, 'Ramadhan'.<sup>36</sup> He and other scholars, moreover, miss out not only Lady Montagu's Works but also George Sale's translation of The Quran,<sup>37</sup> both of which describe what Byron does in the above-quoted passage, the latter in the greater detail and in terms similar to Byron's.

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35. Poetry, III, 96.

36. CPW, III, 417.

37. Works of Lady Montagu, III, 43.

Before we examine relevant passages in Sale's Quran in order to establish how far Byron drew on it, it is appropriate to say a word about Byron's interest in and study of Arabic. According to Leslie A. Marchand, Byron not only 'bought an Arabic grammar to prepare for the Eastern voyage' but, as reported by John Galt, also 'took lessons in Arabic from a monk, I believe one of the librarians of the public library.'<sup>38</sup> Stendhal's observation reinforces this point: 'He [Byron] speaks ancient Greek, modern Greek, and Arabic.'<sup>39</sup> Even in the face of this evidence, Wiener denies Byron's knowledge of Arabic in stating emphatically that 'Byron did not read Arabic.'<sup>40</sup> Though it is hard to ascertain the level of Byron's competence in the language, it is certain at least that he had read the Quran in Sale's English translation, as noted earlier in Byron's Reading List.

To revert to the suggestion that Byron owes something to Sale's Quran for his account of the Muslim festival, the relevant passage in Sale reads: 'Their [Muslims'] two Bairams, or principal annual feasts: the first of them...begins...immediately succeeding the fast of Ramadhan, ...it is observed...for three days together at Constantinople and in order parts of Turkey...with great demonstrations of public joy.'<sup>41</sup> Apart from having overlooked some likeness between this and Byron's account, Coleridge and McGann have discounted altogether the poet's own knowledge of the festival. Leslie A. Marchand recounts his first-hand observation of Ramadan in Turkey:

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38. Leslie A. Marchand, I, p. 198.

39. Ernst J. Lovell Jr., p. 196.

40. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 111.

41. A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran: Comprising Sale's Translation and Preliminary Discourse, ed. E.M. Wherry (London, 1896), I, 231. Hereinafter referred to as Sale, The Quran. Throughout this thesis the modern spelling The Quran, unless spelt as The Koran in a quotation, is used. Similarly, 'Makkah' is preferred to its old variant, 'Mecca'.



They [Byron and his friends] were fortunate enough to see a Greek wedding procession that night, and the next day, October 8, the Ramadan, or Mohammedan Lent, began. Pistols and guns were fired in every part of the city at the rising of the moon, and the minarets of the mosques were illuminated. All day the Turks fasted, but the night was a time for visits, for puppet shows, jugglers, dancers, and story-tellers.<sup>42</sup>

It is evidently Byron's direct experience that most lends vividness to his depiction. His use of the expression 'crescent' is a good example. Not only is the crescent an emotive expression in the Muslim context, its greater relevance is that the sight of the new moon marks the end of the month of fasting and the beginning of the new Islamic month, of which the first three days mark the festival - Bairam. For Muslims follow the lunar calendar. Byron's fidelity to such finer details is amazing. None of his predecessors or contemporaries display such a thorough familiarity with the life and ways of the Orient.

In order to bring out the vengefulness of the Giaour, his main trait, Byron introduces him with reference to an apt Oriental simile involving the 'Simoom' - the fatal blast of the desert:

He came, he went, like the Simoom,  
That harbinger of fate and gloom,  
Beneath whose widely-wasting breath  
The very cypress droops to death -

(282-85)

Since the fatal effects of this desert storm are graphically described in James Bruce's Travels<sup>43</sup> (1790), which figures in Byron's Reading List, Coleridge rightly points to it as Byron's possible source.<sup>44</sup> It

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42. Leslie A. Marchand, I, 205.

43. James Bruce, Travels...to Discover the Source of the Nile, (Dublin, 1790), IV, 55.

44. Poetry, III, 99.

is worth adding that the Simoom simile appears to have caught the fancy of other Romantic poets; it is used by S.T. Coleridge in Religious Musings and by Southey in Joan of Arc.

Byron's knowledge of Oriental customs is reflected in his allusion to 'the sacred bread and salt' in The Giaour (343), and in its sound exposition in his note: 'To break bread and taste salt with your host, ensures the safety of the guest: even though an enemy, his person from that moment becomes sacred.'<sup>45</sup> Being himself a traveller to the Orient, Byron may have personally observed the event; or he may have gathered it from Henley's note on Vathek<sup>46</sup> and Bruce's Travels.<sup>47</sup> Byron's possible indebtedness to either or both of these sources has been ignored by all Byron scholars, including Coleridge, Wiener and McGann.

In a sharp contrast to the Giaour, the 'harbinger of fate and gloom', there is Hassan, a figure of charity and hospitality (340-50). Byron explicates this point further in his note: 'I need hardly observe, that Charity and Hospitality are the first duties enjoined by Mahomet; and to say truth, very generally practised by his disciples. The first praise that can be bestowed on a chief is a panegyric on his bounty; the next, on his valour.'<sup>48</sup> For this highly generalised remark on Muslims, Coleridge cites the fourth chapter of the Quran as Byron's source and provides the translation of a Quranic verse (4: 35) dealing with charity and hospitality, taken from Sale's translation,<sup>49</sup> though without acknowledging it or specifying the verse. Merely repeating Coleridge, McGann too refers to chapter 4 of the Quran. What

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45. Poetry, III, 102.

46. Vathek, p. 150.

47. James Bruce, Travels (London, n.d.), p. 452.

48. Poetry, III, 103.

49. Sale, The Quran, II, 83.

prompted Coleridge to locate the origin of Byron's note in the Quran is not clear. It is a general remark which may have no definite source; moreover, the last part of Byron's statement on the court eulogy has no counterpart in chapter 4 or any of the 114 chapters of the Quran. Coleridge would have done better to have told us that a single verse of the Quran (4: 35) may have inspired Byron's emphasis that 'Charity and Hospitality are the first duties enjoined by Mahomet.'

A criticism against both Byron and Coleridge on this point, though purely from a Muslim perspective, is that whatever is enjoined in the Quran is by God, not by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). For Muslims, the Quran is the Word of God transmitted by the Prophet who did not have any role whatever in its authorship. It is also a bit puzzling why Coleridge picks out chapter 4 as the likely source, for exhortations to practise charity and hospitality recur in most of the 114 chapters of the Quran. In all probability Byron's note is actually based on his own observations resulting from his close contact with Muslim Turks whose virtues he lauds in his letters: 'I will bring you ten Mussulmans that shall shame you in all goodwill towards men, prayer to God, and duty to their neighbours.'<sup>50</sup>

Hassan being the 'Emir' (the Oriental title for a chief), he is dressed in 'his garb of green' (357). Byron duly explains the status of the colour in his note: 'Green is the privileged colour of the prophet's numerous pretended descendants.'<sup>51</sup> Coleridge and McGann

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50. R.E. Prothero, II, 22.

51. Poetry, III, 103.

have nothing to say on the source of this; Wiener rightly points to Knolles's Turkish History, without even grasping the real significance of what Byron says. Actually there is no 'privileged colour' in Islam. Yet Byron cannot be charged with misrepresentation of Islam in this comment on Muslim society; for with the passage of time there developed somehow in Turkey false beliefs about the sanctity of the green colour, which reached such manic proportions that its use was reserved exclusively for Muslims and forbidden for non-Muslims. Byron renders a great service in underlining a belief of which the West was vaguely aware but underinformed. Massinger's following allusion to the 'forbidden colour' can be better appreciated in the light of Byron's note:

Take you heede sir  
What colours you weare. Not two houres since there landed  
An English Pirats Whore with a greene apron,  
And as she walk't the streets, one of their Mufties,  
Wee call them Priests at Venice, with a Razor  
Cutts it of, Petticoate, Smocke and all, and leaues her  
As naked as my Nayle: the young Frie wondering  
What strange beast it should be. I scap't a scouring;  
My Mistres Buskepoynt, of that forbidden coloure  
Then tyde my codpeece, had it been discover'd  
I had been caponde.

(The Renegado, I, 1, 50-58)

On entering the hall the Emir is greeted with 'salam', the Arabic formula meaning 'peace be upon you', the customary salutation of Muslims. Byron's explanatory comment makes this point clear. For no

apparent reason, to this Coleridge adds a passage from Richard F. Burton's Arabian Nights (1887).<sup>52</sup> Apart from being superfluous, this passage is irrelevant as well, for it deals with the salutation Muslims use in their ritual prayers, which is obviously different from the one used for greeting. Since Coleridge could not distinguish between the two forms, his annotation, far from being helpful, causes confusion.

Leila wronged Hassan 'with the faithless Giaour' on the eve

When Rhamazan's last sun was set,  
And flashing from each minaret  
Millions of lamps proclaim'd the feast  
Of Bairam through the boundless East.

(449-52)

What is striking here is Byron's eye for detail, his meticulous accuracy, and his positive appreciation of the Orient. Leila's beauty is then brought home by a cluster of characteristically Oriental images: 'her eye's dark charm' is likened to 'the gaze of the Gazelle' (474) and her eyes 'look bright as the jewel of Giamschid' (479). Byron scholars are unanimous in locating the latter simile in Henley's note on Vathek. Another possible source, neglected by all, is Jones's Works which make use of this fairly popular Persian image.<sup>53</sup> The former simile is too common to be traced back.

Byron's allusion to 'Al-Sirat's arch' (483) and its explanatory note once again demonstrate his deep familiarity with Oriental material. The note reads as follows:

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52. Poetry, III, 104.

53. Works of Sir William Jones, X, 321.

Al-Sirat, the bridge of breadth narrower than the thread of a famished spider, and sharper than the edge of a sword, over which the Mussulmans must skate into Paradise, to which it is the only entrance; but this is not the worst, the river beneath being hell itself, into which, as may be expected, the unskilful and tender of foot contrive to tumble with a "facilis descensus Averni", not very pleasing in prospect to the next passenger. There is a shorter cut downwards for the Jews and Christians.<sup>54</sup>

Some streaks of flippancy and wit apart, this is, on the whole, a truthful version of what Muslims believe. In view of a similar note in Vathek by Henley,<sup>55</sup> Coleridge, McGann and Wiener all identify it as Byron's source of information. It is rather strange that none of them observes the following note of parallel import also in Sale's Quran:

those who are to be admitted into paradise...must first pass the bridge, called in Arabic al-Sirat, which they say is laid over the midst of hell, and described to be finer than a hair and-sharper than the edge of a sword, ...this bridge is beset on each side with briars and hooked thorns, which will however be no impediment to the good, for they shall pass with wonderful ease and swiftness, ...whereas the wicked, what with the slipperiness and extreme narrowness of the path, ...will soon miss their footing, and fall down headlong into hell, which is gaping beneath them.<sup>56</sup>

Coleridge offers additional annotation on this allusion: 'The authority for this legend of the Bridge of Paradise is not the Koran, but the Book of Mawakef, quoted by Edward Pococke.'<sup>57</sup> What Coleridge fails to grasp here, understandably perhaps, is that 'Hadith' (sayings of the Prophet) provide graphic details of the al-Sirat bridge - hence the Muslim belief in it. It is worth mentioning that 'Hadith' is a basic source of Islam, next only to the Quran in importance. The Book of Mawakef referred to by Coleridge is inappropriate in this context in

54. Poetry, III, 109.

55. Vathek, p. 151.

56. Sale, The Quran, I, 147.

57. Poetry, III, 109.

that it is not an authentic Islamic text.

Byron's far-ranging interest in <sup>the</sup> Muslim faith and practice is evident also from the following observation:

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?  
(487-90)

Here the note brings out the disparity between what Muslims believe and what they actually practise: 'A vulgar error: the Koran allots at least a third of Paradise to well-behaved women; but by far the greater number of Mussulmans interpret the text their own way, and exclude their moieties from heaven.'<sup>58</sup>

That Byron is indebted to Sale's Quran for this bit of information is spotted by Coleridge, McGann and Wiener. Their identification is, however, only partially correct, since the point about the Muslim belief and its misperception in the West, which Byron takes up in his note, is found also in Lady Montagu's Works. According to her: 'Our vulgar notion, that they don't own women to have any soul is a mistake.'<sup>59</sup> Byron's other possible source, which eludes all Byron scholars, is Gibbon, who, in his History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, says: 'Notwithstanding a vulgar prejudice, the gates of heaven will be open to both sexes.'<sup>60</sup> Yet another contender, again overlooked by Byron scholars, could be James Dellaway's Constantinople, Ancient and Modern (1799), which figures in Byron's Reading List.

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58. Poetry, III, 110.

59. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 195.

60. Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. O. Smeaton (London, n.d.), X, 248.

Dallaway, who had been the chaplain and physician of the British Embassy at the Sublime Port, clearly states in his travelogue that 'not only do Muslim women have souls, they are promised in the Koran to be restored with all the charms of eternal youth and unblemished virginity.'<sup>61</sup>

More significantly, Byron scholarship has again failed to shed any light on the significance of Byron's note. What Byron does in this instance is to rectify a centuries-old 'vulgar error' of Western literary Orientalism. In her article, 'Women and Paradise', Mary Hossain traces the persistence of the Western idea that 'women in Islam do not have souls and cannot enter paradise'. Her survey is, in the main, about French writers. Among the English writers subscribing to this fallacious notion, though not specified by Hossain, are Johnson, Dryden, George Farquhar and Goldsmith. It is bewildering that she places Byron in the same category, saying that this Western myth 'flourished again in the nineteenth century as part of the enchantment of the mysterious oriental woman in, for example, Byron's The Bride of Abydos (1813).'<sup>62</sup> Though Mary Hossain quotes some lines from The Bride in order to substantiate this contention, her misreading of Byron stems from the fact that she takes this quotation from a secondary source, that is, an anthology entitled The Spirit of the East.<sup>63</sup> Had she consulted Coleridge's or McGann's edition of Byron's poetical works, she would have seen Byron's note; for, in both, the passage from The Bride, quoted by Hossain, carries a cross reference to Byron's note on The Giaour<sup>64</sup> which dispels the Western misconception about women's position in Islam.

61. James Dallaway, Constantinople, Ancient and Modern, (London, 1799), p. 27.

62. Mary Hossain, 'Women and Paradise', Journal of European Studies, 19 (1989), p. 303.

63. The Spirit of the East, eds. Gerald de Gaury and H.V.E. Winstone (London, 1979), p. 119.

64. Poetry, III, 183 and CPW, III, 439.



Although Coleridge, McGann and Wiener ascribe Byron's source in this instance to Sale's Quran, Wiener alone discerns that the claim in Byron's note that the Quran allots at least a third of Paradise to well-behaved women does not exist in Sale's work. Such a fantastic allotment is, in fact, not there in the Quran or any Islamic text.

Another salient but unrecorded point about this note is that Byron disavows here what he believed earlier. In one of his early poems, 'To Miss E[lizabeth] P[igot]' (1806), he censures Muslims for denying women the soul:

Eliza! what fools are the Mussulman sect,  
Who to woman deny the soul's future existence,  
Could they see thee, Eliza! they'd own their defect,  
And this doctrine would meet with a general resistance.

(1-4)<sup>65</sup>

As already pointed out, Byron employs several Oriental images in order to bring home Leila's beauty which, in turn, reinforce the Oriental setting of The Giaour. Illustrative of this is the following passage:

On her fair cheek's unfading hue,  
The young pomegranate's blossoms strew  
Their bloom in blushes ever new -  
Her hair in hyacinthine flow

(493-96)

Henley's note on Vathek is again favoured by Coleridge, McGann and Wiener as Byron's source. Yet the pomegranate image occurs in an almost identical sense in Jones's translation of an Oriental ode: 'the

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65. CPW, I, 144.

pomegranate brings to my mind the blushes of my beloved.'<sup>66</sup> That pomegranate and hyacinthine are common images in Oriental poetry as a means of conveying the beauty of the beloved's cheeks and hair respectively is stressed by Jones in his Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations.<sup>67</sup> Henl y's note on Vathek may, however, be Byron's source for his reference to Leila as 'the loveliest bird of Franguestan' (506), as correctly identified by Wiener.<sup>68</sup> No such expression is found in Jones.

As the Emir's men assemble, they exclaim in the characteristically Muslim way: 'Bismillah! now the peril's past' (568). In Byron's first draft of the poem this line read as 'Thank Allah! now the peril's past': his substitution of 'Thank Allah' with a more apt Muslim expression, 'Bismillah', speaks volumes about his pursuit of an authentic Oriental idiom. He explains the meaning of 'Bismillah' for the benefit of his readers: 'In the name of God'; the commencement of all the chapters of the Koran but one [the ninth], and of prayer and thanksgiving.'<sup>69</sup>

In depicting the tombs of the Ottoman rulers, Byron refers to the 'Koran verse that mourns the dead' (726) engraved on their epitaphs and explicates this allusion further: 'The turban, pillar, and inscriptive verse, decorate the tombs of the Osmanlies, whether in the cemetery or the wilderness.'<sup>70</sup> Among Byron scholars, only Coleridge attempts to specify 'the Koran verse' and suggests verses 26-27 of the chapter 55 of the Quran.<sup>71</sup> In all fairness, Coleridge is not much off

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66. The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 422.

67. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 334.

68. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 101.

69. Poetry, III, 113.

70. Poetry, III, 119.

71. Poetry, III, 119.

the mark, given his limited knowledge of the Quran. Nonetheless, from a purely Muslim viewpoint the more widely used and pertinent 'Koranic verse' in this context would be verse 35 of chapter 21 or verse 156 of chapter 2.

Byron continues the description of the Ottoman tomb in elaborate and evocative fashion:

There sleeps as true an Osmanlie  
As e'er at Mecca bent the knee;  
As ever scorn'd forbidden wine,  
Or pray'd with face towards the shrine,  
In orisons resumed anew  
At solemn sound of 'Alla Hu!'

(729-34)

This is followed by a note: "'Alla Hu!" the concluding words of the Muezzin's call to prayer from the highest gallery on the exterior of the Minaret. On a still evening, when the Muezzin has a fine voice, which is frequently the case, the effect is solemn and beautiful beyond all the bells in Christendom.'<sup>72</sup>

What is singularly striking about the above-quoted passage and note is Byron's range of sound knowledge and positive understanding of Islamic religion and ritual. We may take the following features as illustrative: a 'true Osmanlie' in his grave feeling as secure as in Mecca, the most sacred place for him in both life and death; his having 'bent the knee' at Mecca, an obvious reference to prayer posture while on pilgrimage, a duty binding on all Muslims who can afford it; his revulsion at the 'forbidden wine', prohibited in Islam: his prayers

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72. Poetry, III, 120.

while facing 'the shrine' in Mecca, a prerequisite for Muslim prayer; and finally the whole atmosphere, of a typical Muslim town, resonating with 'the solemn sound of "Alla Hu!"', being 'the concluding words of the Muezzin's call to prayer from the Minaret'. Above all, Byron's comparison of Azan, the Muslim call to prayer, with Church bells is markedly in favour of the former on aesthetic grounds. The scene uniquely recaptures the essentials of the Muslim religious life; and in particular the emphasis on prayer reflects the pivotal position it holds in Muslim life. Quite fittingly, Osmanlie, a true Muslim who had always shunned what is forbidden in Islam and had performed the necessary rituals, constantly experiences spiritual rejuvenation: 'In orisons resumed anew / At solemn sound of "Alla Hu!"'. With its solid Islamic contents, genuine details and a sublime appreciation of sanctities, this passage could not have been composed better by a devout Muslim poet.

The only slight inaccuracy in Byron's account consists in his remark that 'Alla Hu' constitutes 'the concluding words of the Muezzin's call to prayer'. Though the Arabic expression 'Alla Hu', to be precise 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great), is a refrain in 'the Muezzin's call to prayer', it does not represent its 'concluding words'. The Muslim credal statement 'La ilaha il Allah' (There is no god but God) marks the ending of this call. Byron misquotes, no doubt, because he is recollecting at a distance his visits to mosques a few years earlier during his stay in Turkey. No Byron scholar has discovered a source for this note, though, in order to provide some additional information about the Muslim call to prayer, Coleridge reproduces a passage from D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale, which discusses how this call to

prayer was institutionalised.<sup>73</sup> Unable to appreciate the big difference between Byron's note, which introduces the Muslim call, and Coleridge's annotation based on D'Herbelot, which charts its history, McGann attributes even Byron's note to D'Herbelot, which is simply incorrect.<sup>74</sup> Had McGann reproduced Coleridge's annotation, reference to D'Herbelot as its source would have been perfectly in order. However, since Byron's note is drawn from his own observation, it cannot be traced to any precursor text.

The Muslim paradise with its houris and other material rewards has caught the fancy of Western writers down the ages. Byron is no exception and dwells at some length on the 'maids of paradise' warmly welcoming Hassan after his death at the Giaour's hands:

But him the maids of Paradise  
Impatient to their halls invite,  
And the dark Heaven of Houris' eyes  
On him shall glance for ever bright;  
They come - their kerchiefs green they wave,  
And welcome with a kiss the brave!  
Who falls in battle 'gainst a Giaour,  
Is worthiest an immortal bower.

(739-46)

Byron's note provides a clue to his source: 'The following is part of a battle-song of the Turks: 'I see - I see a dark-eyed girl of Paradise, and she waves a handkerchief, a kerchief of green; and cries aloud, Come, kiss me, for I love thee.'<sup>75</sup> Byron may have picked up this song during his stay in Turkey. His other possible source could be Sale's

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73. Poetry, III, 120.

74. CPW, III, 420.

75. Poetry, III, 120.

Quran, which has similar details about the Muslim paradise and houris being promised to Muslim martyrs.<sup>76</sup> Byron's otherwise truthful account, however, suffers from a minor inaccuracy, occurring in both the above-quoted passage of The Giaour and his version of the Turkish song. The Quran makes no mention of the houris' 'green kerchief', rather it depicts them 'lying on green cushions.'<sup>77</sup> It is difficult to say who confused the green 'kerchief' with 'cushions' - Byron or the composer of the Turkish song.

The Muslim fisherman, the chief narrator of the tale, brands the Giaour as the

false Infidel! shalt writhe  
Beneath avenging Monkir's scythe;  
(747-48)

On the identity of 'Monkir' Byron provides this explanatory note:

Monkir and Nekir are the inquisitors of the dead, before whom the corpse undergoes a slight noviciate and preparatory training for damnation. If the answers are none of the clearest, he is hauled up with a scythe and thumped down with a red-hot mace till properly seasoned, with a variety of subsidiary probations...See Relig Ceremon and Sale's Preliminary Discourse to the Koran.<sup>78</sup>

The real significance of this note consists in Byron's acknowledgement of his source for the Oriental material - Sale's translation of the Quran and Bernard Picart's Religious Ceremonies and Customs (1733-39). Strangely enough, despite Byron's own identification of his sources for this note, McGann omits the reference to Picart's work and presents only Sale.<sup>79</sup> Since a note on Monkir and Nekir identical in tenor with

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76. Sale, The Quran, I, 218.

77. Sale, The Quran, IV, 107.

78. Poetry, III, 121.

79. CPW, III, 420.

Byron's is contributed by Henley in Vathek, Byron scholars justifiably invoke it also as Byron's source.

The Oriental atmosphere of the poem is intensified further by the use of imagery in depicting the Giaour who appears

to wander round lost Eblis' throne;  
And fire unquench'd, unquenchable -  
Around - within - thy heart shall dwell,  
Nor ear can hear, nor tongue can tell  
The tortures of that inward hell! -

(750-54)

Byron scholars are right in identifying Henley's note on Vathek<sup>80</sup> as Byron's possible source for his allusions to Eblis, the Arabic term for Satan, and to the hearts of the doomed consumed with fire. What these scholars tend to disregard in this instance is again Sale's Quran, which recounts graphic and gruesome pictures of punishment in hell. Some details of torments inflicted on evil-doers, as laid down in the Quran, reverberate in Byron's passage. Here, for example, is a Quranic passage from Sale's translation which shows some similarity with Byron's account: 'The hell-fire is the kindled fire of God: and therefore it shall not be quenched by any which shall mount above the hearts of those who shall be cast into hell.'<sup>81</sup>

In addition to this substantial Oriental material, a range of Arabic, Persian and Turkish language is used in The Giaour, and is studied in the chapter on 'Byron's Oriental Diction'.

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80. Vathek, p. 151.

81. Sale, The Quran, IV, 277-78.

Both chronologically and thematically The Bride of Abydos is quite close to The Giaour. Byron's own statements about its Oriental credentials have been already quoted in the opening part of this chapter. McGann is therefore justified in inferring that 'what Byron knew from personal experience was the Eastern culture which lent verisimilitude to the plot of Bride, a number of specific incidents and scenes, and much local colouring.' In tracing the 'Literary and Historical Background' of the poem McGann refers to 'the poem's specific allusion (insisted upon in the notes) to the story of Potiphar's wife, which in Turkish literature formed the story of the love of Zuleika and Mejnoun.'<sup>82</sup>

McGann's comment is marred by two inaccuracies, one of which is serious and the other minor. The love story of Potiphar's wife, Zuleika, has nothing whatsoever to do with Mejnoun - a quasi-historical, legendary love figure in the Oriental literature. It is Joseph (Yusuf in Persian and Arabic) that happens to be Zuleika's partner in all accounts of this love story, whereas Mejnoun and Leila constitute another entirely different love story circulated widely in the Orient.

McGann's mixing of one allusion with another is indeed confounding, for both in his note on The Bride, reproduced on the very next page of McGann's edition, and in one of his letters, Byron makes it perfectly clear that it is 'Mejnoun and Leila' who stand out as 'the Romeo and Juliet of the East.'<sup>83</sup> As to the other lover partners - Zuleika and Joseph - Byron's remark is again very clear, in his letter to John Murray: 'When you know that Zuleika is the Persian poetical

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82. CPW, III, 435.

83. CPW, III, 436.



name for Potiphar's wife, on whom and Joseph there is a long poem - in the Persian this will not surprise you.'<sup>84</sup> (*italics mine*).

Apart from setting the record straight about the two love figures, Byron's above-quoted letter brings out also the other inaccuracy in McGann's comment that the love story of Zuleika and Joseph and of Mejnoun and Leila appeared first in Persian and Arabic literature, to gain currency later in Turkish literature. McGann is not, however, much off the mark here.

As compared to The Giaour, there are fewer Oriental allusions in The Bride, though its overall setting is markedly much more Oriental, reinforced by an all-Oriental cast of characters. Moreover, its story, in the main, takes up the familiar Eastern themes - fratricide, despotism and subjugation of women. The 'stern' Giaffir, Zuleika's father, usurps the throne by getting his brother Abdalla killed. He, however, spares Abdalla's son, Selim, who is brought up in his palace as his own son. Selim and Zuleika grow up as brother and sister. Later on, Selim comes to know his true identity and resolves to avenge his father's murder. He joins a pirate band in order to gather enough strength to strike against Giaffir. Although prohibited by her father, Zuleika continues to see Selim. The affair ends tragically with Selim killed by Giaffir and Zuleika dying of grief.

The Bride opens with an account of the Oriental landscape, containing references to the nightingale, perfumes and gardens of 'Gul' in their bloom (I, 7-10). And Byron duly defines, in his note, 'Gul'

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<sup>84</sup>. L & J, III, 164.

as the rose. While Coleridge and McGann do not attempt to locate any source for Byron's use of Oriental images in this passage, Wiener refers to Jones's Works in general as a possible source.<sup>85</sup>

To be precise, Byron's description of 'the clime of the East' is drawn, in most part, from Jones's translation of 'A Turkish Ode' - a point altogether neglected by these Byron scholars. The following lines mark the opening of The Bride:

Know ye the land of the cedar and vine?  
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine,  
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,  
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;  
(I, 5-8)

The last two lines seem to re-echo ones of 'A Turkish Ode':

Clear drops each impearl the rose's bloom  
And from its leaf the Zephyr drinks perfume.<sup>86</sup>

In their childhood Zuleika and Selim spent together a happy time,  
as Selim recalls:

Before the guardian slaves awoke  
We to the cypress groves had flown,  
And made earth, main, and heaven our own!  
There lingered we, beguiled too long  
With Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song;  
(I, 68-72)

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85. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 106.

86. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 274.

In his note Byron clarifies what 'Mejnoun's tale' and 'Sadi's song' stand for: 'Mejnoun and Leila, the Romeo and Juliet of the East. Sadi, the moral poet of Persia.'<sup>87</sup> As to Byron's source of information for these comments, all Byron scholars are silent. It is in fact in Jones's Works that the same appellation 'Romeo and Juliet' is used of these Oriental love figures.<sup>88</sup> That Sadi was the moral poet of Persia was common knowledge in an age experiencing a vogue for Oriental literature. Byron might not have drawn on any particular source for this element.

After Zuleika's audience with Giaffir, he 'Thrice clapped his hands, and called his steed' (I, 232). Byron's accompanying note brings out the full implication of his action: 'Clapping of the hands calls the servants.'<sup>89</sup> Henley's note of a similar import is found in Vathek: 'She clapped her hands. This was the ordinary method in the East of calling the attendants in waiting.'<sup>90</sup> Notwithstanding this note of Henley, Byron may have himself noted this Oriental custom during his stay. It is surprising that Coleridge, McGann and, more importantly, Wiener fail to point out the resemblance between Henley's and Byron's notes. Wiener has otherwise thoroughly studied Byron's borrowings from Vathek.

Giaffir's hatred for Selim is to the fore in branding him 'an Arab to my sight' (I, 144). One appreciates the real significance of Giaffir's remark on reading Byron's explanatory note: 'The Turks abhor

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87. Poetry, III, 160.

88. The Works of Sir William Jones, III, 309.

89. Poetry, III, 167.

90. Vathek, p. 150.

the Arabs (who return the compliment a hundredfold) even more than they hate the Christians.<sup>91</sup> Byron may have noted the deep distrust and hostility between Turks and Arabs during his visit. Another possible source could, however, be James Bruce's Travels, which graphically describe the animosity between these two Muslim ethnic groups. Since Bruce's work has not been mentioned by Byron scholars on this count, it is worth quoting a relevant passage in order to adduce the similarity between Byron's and Bruce's observations. On his way to Ptolemeta, Bruce's vessel sank and after much struggle he managed to reach the shore, where he fell unconscious:

A blow on the neck, with the butt end of a lance, was what first awakened Mr. Bruce from the senseless state in which he lay, after escaping the violence of the waves. The Arabs believing him from his dress to be a Turk, after beating, kicking, and cursing him, stripped him of the scanty clothing yet upon him; ...

It now occurred to him, from considering that the Arabs, when beating and stripping him, had uttered a gibberish, in imitation of Turkish, that he owed the ill usage which he had received, at least, in part, to his having been mistaken for a Turk.<sup>92</sup>

A moving passage in The Bride on death, in accord with Oriental beliefs, contains reference to Azrael - the Arabic name for 'the angel of death':<sup>93</sup>

Time shall not see  
The hour that tears my soul from thee:  
Even Azrael, from his deadly quiver.  
(The Bride, I, 321-23)

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91. Poetry, III, 163.

92. James Bruce, pp. 33-34.

93. Poetry, III, 171.

For this Byron may have drawn on his first-hand knowledge or on Henley's note on Vathek<sup>94</sup> or on Sale's Quran,<sup>95</sup> both of which texts describe the name and function of Azrael. This point has, however, escaped the attention of Byron scholars, for they do not attempt to look for any source.

Of the Quranic allusions in The Bride, the most striking is Zuleika's 'sainted amulet' with the 'Koorsee text' engraving (II, 68-72). For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with this Quranic material Byron explains it at some length:

The belief in amulets engraved on gems, or enclosed in gold boxes, containing scraps from the Koran, worn round the neck, wrist, or arm, is still universal in the East. The Koorsee (throne) verse in the second cap. of the Koran describes the attributes of the Most High, and is engraved in this manner, and worn by the pious, as the most esteemed and sublime of all sentences.<sup>96</sup>

On Byron's source in this instance, Coleridge and McGann do not say a word. Wiener, however, does. Since Byron himself refers to the second chapter of the Quran, he tries to locate it in Sale's Quran but arrives at this conclusion: 'Byron mentions the Koorsee text...there is no place in Sale's Discourse or in the Koran itself which might have prompted Byron to refer to them.'<sup>97</sup> Wiener's assertion is incorrect. Sale does discuss the Koorsee verse; and, more significantly, Sale's note seems to be Byron's source. Here is Sale's note, which Wiener could not locate:

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94. Vathek, p. 151.

95. Sale, The Quran, I, 300.

96. Poetry, III, 181.

97. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 112.

This throne, in Arabic called Kursi, is by the Muhammadans supposed to be God's tribunal or seat of justice...This verse contains a magnificent description of the divine majesty and providence; ...This passage is justly admired by Muhammadans, who recite it in their prayers; and some of them wear it about them engraved on an agate or other precious stone.<sup>98</sup>

Wiener then finally succeeds in discovering a source for 'the Koorsee verse': 'Having been unable to trace the original of the note on the Koorsee text to Sale or Henley I ran across it in the notes to Jonathan Scott's edition of the Arabian Nights.'<sup>99</sup> In this instance, however, and several others, Jonathan Scott's notes of 1811 merely repeat what Sale had said much earlier in 1734. In places Scott lifts passages verbatim from Sale's work. Wiener is apparently unaware of this fact; and in any case, for the source of Byron's note on the Koorsee text the credit goes to Sale, not to Scott. Another note related to the Quran in The Bride occurs thus:

A Koran of illumin'd dyes;  
And many a bright emblazon'd rhyme  
By Persian scribes redeemed from time; ...

(II, 73-75)

None of Byron's scholars track the source of this observation. It is quite likely that Byron came across ornate copies of the Quran during his stay in Turkey, for it is a common practice among Muslims to produce and display embellished copies in libraries, mosques, museums and houses. On the other hand, Sale's work may again have brought into focus for the poet this Oriental custom. Sale writes: 'They read it

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98. Sale, The Quran, I, 381 and 382.

99. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 114.

[the Quran] with great care and respect, ...consult it in their weighty occasions, carry it with them to war...adorn it with gold and precious stones.'<sup>100</sup>

To persuade Zuleika of his true love Selim invokes the Quran, saying:

So may the Koran verse displayed  
Upon its steel direct my blade,  
In danger's hour to guard us both,  
As I preserve that awful oath!  
(II, 189-92)

Byron's note elaborates this other Oriental custom: 'The characters on all Turkish scimitars contain sometimes the name of the place of their manufacture, but more generally a text from the Koran, in letters of gold. Amongst those in my possession is one with a blade of singular construction...'<sup>101</sup> Although he clearly spells out that this information about the engravings is based on personal observation, the detail of how the followers of Islam invoke the Quran or swear by it 'in danger's hour' may have come to his notice either from his direct interaction with Muslims or from his reading Sale's work, of which the relevant passage has just been quoted. . Again, this point has hitherto found no place in Byron scholarship.

Byron's astute understanding of Oriental life is once more evident from his reference to 'the horsetails' (II, 232) and his explanation of this as 'the standard of a Pacha',<sup>102</sup> a Turkish ruler.

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100. Sale, *The Quran*, I, 114.

101. *Poetry*, III, 186.

102. *Poetry*, III, 189.

For as Bernard Lewis, a Middle East historian, remarks: 'When the Ottoman used the horsetail as an emblem of authority, and designated certain high officers of the sultan as "the Agas of the Imperial stirrup", they were clearly evoking the image of the man on the horse as the symbol of effective power.'<sup>103</sup>

Discussing despotism and liberty, Byron speaks of those who 'on visionary schemes debate, / To snatch the Rayahs from their fate' (II, 383-84). As 'Rayahs' is an Arabic word, and would have been incomprehensible for most of his readers, Byron appends this explanatory note: 'Rayahs, - all who pay the capitation tax, called the "Haratch".'<sup>104</sup>

Coleridge cites the ninth chapter of the Quran as the basis of the Muslim capitation tax,<sup>105</sup> and McGann merely repeats this point.<sup>106</sup> In truth, however, neither of the expressions used in Byron's note - 'Rayahs' or 'Haratch' - occurs in chapter 9 of the Quran. For the capitation tax the Quranic term is 'Jizya', which is of course found in this chapter; it is in the Turkish language that it is referred to as 'harac'.<sup>107</sup> Coleridge and McGann could have been clearer on this issue.

Another instance of Byron's use of Quranic material in his simile, 'Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour' (II, 409), and his definition of Aden as "'Jannat-al-Aden", the perpetual abode, the Mussulman paradise.'<sup>108</sup> Both Coleridge<sup>109</sup> and McGann<sup>110</sup> are right to

103. Bernard Lewis, The Political Language of Islam (Chicago, 1988), p. 11.

104. Poetry, III, 195.

105. Ibid., III, 195.

106. CPW, III, 441.

107. H.C. Hony, A Turkish-English Dictionary (Oxford, 1976), p. 134.

108. Poetry, III, 197.

109. Ibid., III, 197.

110. CPW, III, 441.



suggest Sale's Quran as Byron's likely source.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, however, they overlook another possibility - Jones's Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations<sup>112</sup> which discusses Aden in terms similar to Byron's.

The local colour in The Bride is strengthened by Byron's description of the graves of Selim and Zuleika (II, 618 and 672); and we are told that 'a turban' was 'carved in stone'<sup>113</sup> above Selim's grave and that there was 'a single rose shedding' on Zuleika's. Wiener reminds us that Byron stands indebted to Lady Montagu's Works for these particular details. Similarly, Byron's account of Muslim funeral rites is singularly accurate (II, 627-32). Coleridge and Wiener convincingly trace Byron's debt on this count to D'Ohsson's Tableau Generale, Scott's edition of the Arabian Nights and Lady Montagu's Works.<sup>114</sup>

There is one salient strand of Byron's account, however, that has gone unremarked - the mention of 'A bird unseen' (II, 690) with 'His long entrancing note!' (II, 693) near Zuleika's grave. The accompanying note informs the reader that 'for a belief that the souls of the dead inhabit the form of birds, we need not travel to the East',<sup>115</sup> and goes on to invoke several such stories popular in England. It is this wider explanation perhaps that has stopped Byron scholars looking for any source for his interest in the metempsychosis. However,

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111. Sale, The Quran, I, 155.

112. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, pp. 330-31.

113. Poetry, III, 205.

114. Poetry, III, 206 and Harold S.L. Wiener, pp. 116 and 127.

115. Poetry, III, 209.

Sale recounts a similar pre-Islamic belief of Arabs: 'Some believed a metempsychosis, and that of the blood near the dead person's brain was formed a bird...which...visited the sepulchre; though others say this bird was animated by the soul of him that is unjustly slain, and continually cries, ...till his death be revenged.'<sup>116</sup>

Byron's choice of the heroine's name, Zuleika, is somewhat puzzling for Wiener:

...although most of the other Eastern names used by Byron in the "Turkish Tales" are quite conventional, Zuleika is uncommon, and the only other place [apart from D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale] I have found it - that is, among the books we know Byron read - is in the works of Sir William Jones. Jones merely lists the name of Zuleika and Joseph, but refrains from comment.<sup>117</sup>

This is incorrect on two counts. First, the name of Zuleika appears also in Sale's Quran.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, Wiener's remark betrays his scant knowledge of Jones's Works. Far from 'merely listing the names of Zuleika and Joseph' and refraining 'from comment', as Wiener holds, Jones deals at length with the popular legend of Zuleika and Joseph in his translation of a fairly long Persian poem on this very subject and alludes to it at several places in his discussion of Oriental literature.<sup>119</sup>

Another point at which Byron scholars fail to credit the possible influence of Jones's Works is the following lines in The Bride, where Selim declares his overflowing love for Zuleika:

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- <sup>116.</sup> Sale, The Quran, I, 44.  
<sup>117.</sup> Harold S.L. Wiener, pp. 104 and 105.  
<sup>118.</sup> Sale, The Quran, I, 376.  
<sup>119.</sup> The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 442-44, 315 and X, 253.

Now thou art mine, for ever mine,

...

I would not wrong the slenderest hair  
That clusters round thy forehead fair,  
For all the treasures buried far  
Within the caves of Istakar.

(I, 348 and 355-8)

This perhaps echoes Jones's translation of 'A Persian Song of Hafiz':

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,  
Would give thy poet more delight  
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold  
Than all the gems of Samarcand.<sup>120</sup>

The Corsair has relatively few Oriental allusions, and Byron does not appear to have drawn very much on any of the above-discussed sources for the Oriental material of the poem.

We may note, however, that 'the turban'd Seyd', the Muslim chief, indulges in 'the forbidden draughts'.

Though to the rest the sober berry's juice,  
The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem's use; ...

(II, 33-34)

That wine is forbidden in Islam, and that some Muslims flout this rule, most probably came to Byron's notice during his stay in Turkey. Wiener, however, directs our attention to Scott's edition of the Arabian Nights.<sup>121</sup> Lady Montagu<sup>122</sup> and Sale<sup>123</sup> make the same point about the Islamic prohibition of wine and its violation.

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120. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 251.

121. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 117.

122. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 102-04.

123. Sale, The Quran, I, 191.

In another episode, Conrad, disguised as a 'Dervise', manoeuvres an entry into the Syed's court. Byron provides a note to help his readers grasp what a Dervise is. That a similar statement by Henley on Dervises is recorded in Vathek<sup>124</sup> has gone entirely unnoticed.

By the time he composed The Siege of Corinth in 1816, Byron's predilection for ensuring the local colour of his 'Turkish Tales' by providing allusions to and notes on Oriental life and ways appears to have almost faded. Apart from once mentioning Vathek as his source for some Oriental images,<sup>125</sup> the only other instance is his description of dogs feeding on corpses beneath the seraglio wall in Constantinople. Wiener suggests De Tott's Memoirs as the basis of Byron's account.<sup>126</sup>

The Oriental material in <sup>the</sup>main text and explanatory notes is quite pronounced in The Giaour, less so in The Bride, and almost negligible in The Corsair and The Siege. With the passage of time Byron may have exhausted what he calls 'the brightest and darkest, but always most lively colours',<sup>127</sup> of his memory of the Orient.

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124. Vathek, p. 144.

125. Poetry, III, 478.

126. Harold S.L. Wiener, p. 126.

127. L & J, III, 230-31.

Chapter 3

BYRON'S ORIENTAL DICTION

In view of Byron's concern for accuracy, his extensive Oriental reading and his stay in the Orient itself for some time, as discussed earlier, it is not much of a surprise to note the presence of numerous Arabic, Persian and Turkish words in his poetry, particularly in the 'Turkish Tales'.

This chapter is an attempt to draw a compendium of Byron's Oriental diction, and to identify the origin of each Oriental word and to study its use by Byron in terms of its aptness and impact, if any, on the effect of the poem. Generally speaking, the following points will be raised: Does Byron's Oriental diction reflect a reckless quest for neologisms born of a fascination with the exotic, or does its inclusion make the 'Turkish Tales' genuinely more meaningful, investing them, for example, with the aura of a distinct locale. Another related area of enquiry is how Byron fares, in comparison to his predecessors and contemporaries, in the range and fitness of his Oriental diction.

First, it might be helpful to define what is meant in this chapter by the two terms 'Oriental' and 'diction'. Diction is used in the very general sense of Byron's choice and employment of words. 'Oriental' indicates a religio-cultural concept rather than a purely geographical one, and denotes the Islamic culture and traditions prevailing in Byron's time: hence Arabic, Persian and Turkish words employed by Byron are corporately considered as the constituents of his 'Oriental' vocabulary. Though the main focus of my discussion is on words of direct Oriental origin, expressions naturalized into English have occasionally also been included where these are inextricably associated with Oriental life, as, for example, 'turban', 'mosque', 'minaret' and 'amulet'. To be precise, some of even these words are of French and Spanish origin. Oriental place names have been excluded,

since they do not appear to contribute significantly to Byron's treatment of the Orient.

The first striking feature of Byron's Oriental diction is its sheer diversity, which distinguishes him at once from both his predecessors and contemporaries writing on the Orient. Even a cursory glance tends to persuade one of his wide familiarity with authentic Oriental expressions. As to the appropriateness or otherwise of their use in the given context, this will be examined in some detail as we proceed.

As a preliminary, it is worth asking whether Byron actually knew any of the Oriental languages. There is a relevant journal entry:

I sometimes wish that - I had studied languages with more attention - those which I know...the Armenian and Arabic alphabets - a few Turkish and Albanian phrases, oaths, or requests...I set in zealously for the Armenian and Arabic - but I fell in love with some absurd woman kind both times before I had overcome the Characters...<sup>1</sup>

In Byron's letters, there are references to his knowledge of 'some variety of Ottoman [Turkish] oaths in great service'<sup>2</sup> and to his ability to 'swear in Turkish', followed by the frank admission that 'I have got no great vocabulary in that language.'<sup>3</sup> According to his biographer, Leslie A. Marchand, Byron

bought an Arabic grammar to prepare for the Eastern voyage...and took lessons in Arabic from a monk, I believe one of the librarians of the public library ...The usual routine [of Byron during his stay in Malta] was to take an Arabic lesson in the morning and then to go by boat to La Pietà for bathing.<sup>4</sup>

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1. L & J, IX, 31.
  2. L & J, II, 37.
  3. L & J, I, 238.
  4. Byron: A Biography, I, 198-99.

Notwithstanding his wish and some effort to learn Oriental languages, particularly Arabic and Turkish, Byron could not, however, gain any proficiency in them. His use of Oriental expressions is then owing partly to first-hand, acute observation of Oriental life and partly to his extensive reading in works on the Orient. What is indeed remarkable is that despite the lack of any mastery over these languages Byron handles his Oriental diction so well, making it fit neatly so as to reinforce both the setting and the ethos of his poems.

Since most of Byron's Oriental expressions would obviously be incomprehensible to his English-speaking reading public, he provides several explanatory notes. In so doing, he seems to be following the example set in Beckford's Vathek by Henley's commentary on Oriental allusions; and Southey and Thomas Moore, too, had followed the same practice in Thalaba and Lalla Rookh. Yet for all his diligent explication of Oriental material, Byron is by no means comprehensive. Some of the omissions in his annotation are of peculiarly Oriental words which had not made their way into dictionaries. Not unsurprisingly, he was censured - for example, in the piece in the Edinburgh Review on The Giaour - for introducing 'perplexing' words:

The Oriental costume is preserved, as might be expected, with admirable fidelity through the whole of this poem; and the Turkish original of the tale is attested, to all but the bolder sceptics of literature, by the great variety of untranslated words which perplex the unlearned reader in the course of these fragments. Kiosks, Caiques and Muezzins, indeed, are articles with which all readers of modern travels are forced to be pretty familiar; but Chiaus, palampore and ataghan are rather more puzzling: they are well sounding words, however, and as they probably express things for which we have no appropriate words of our own, we shall not now object to their introduction. But we cannot extend the same



indulgence to Phingari, which signifies merely the moon; which we can...on no account, allow to be supplanted, at this time of day, by any such new and un-Christian appellation.<sup>5</sup>

Almost the same point is made by the British Review in its review of The Giaour, which criticises Byron for his 'importation of exotic terms into our language':

Our poet also sometimes errs in the use of poetical language. Whatever merit words may independently possess, we ought not to mingle those together in the same poem which point to nations, times, climates, and customs very wide apart. Thus "clan", "foeman", "paynim" do not mix well with the "rhamazan", the "kiosk" and the "palampore". Nor are we sure that the largest extent of poetical liberty will quite justify such an importation of exotic terms into our language as "salam", "ataghan", "palampore", "caique", "serai" and others.<sup>6</sup>

A primary aim of the following catalogue is to explain these 'untranslated words', of which only a few have been glossed by Coleridge and McGann in their respective editions of the poetry. To the best of my knowledge, there is not a single book or article dealing with Byron's Oriental diction; only in Edna Osborne's Oriental Diction and Theme in English Verse 1740-1840 are there some passing references to this aspect of his language. Our task then will be to produce a body of new knowledge as well as on occasion to correct errors and inaccuracies in relevant Byron scholarship.

Since the Oriental expressions are scattered all over Byron's poetic corpus some occurring frequently and others only occasionally, listing them alphabetically in the form of a compendium seemed the most practical and accessible way of presenting the material. The main

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5. Edinburgh Review, 21 (1813), 308.

6. British Review, 5 (1813), 141.

focus of the chapter is on the 'Turkish Tales', but other works are included. The first figure within brackets records the total number of times a word appears in Byron's poetry, followed by its frequency in individual poems. Next, exact reference is provided for canto and stanza or line numbers; for the 'Turkish Tales' line numbers follow the canto number, whereas for longer poems such as Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Don Juan, stanza numbers follow the canto numbers. An asterisk signifies that the expression in question does not appear even in the latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (1989). The following abbreviations have been used for the poems: G = The Giaour, B = The Bride of Abydos, C = The Corsair, S = The Siege of Corinth, SS = 'Line associated with The Siege of Corinth', DJ = Don Juan, EBSR = English Bards and Scotch Reviewers and CH = Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

Ablutions (1, DJ, VI, 92)

Known in Arabic as 'Wudu' and 'abdest' in Persian, ablution in the Oriental context signifies the ritual washing of certain parts of the body obligatory on every Muslim before performing prayers. In Vathek the Persian expression 'abdest' is used and explained by Henley in his notes.<sup>7</sup> Byron's reference to this Muslim practice reflects his familiarity with 'the customs of the East', which is genuine in that one finds the Sultan, the Muslim chief and Gulbeyaz's husband, as is expected of any practising Muslim, performing

due ablutions

Exacted by the customs of the East,

And prayers and other pious evolutions.

(DJ, VI, 92)

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7. Vathek, p. 139.

Aden (1, B, II, 409)

Though Eden is a familiar Biblical expression, Byron uses its Quranic version in its peculiarly Islamic sense; for, in the explanatory note, he defines it as "Jannat al Aden" - the perpetual abode, the Mussulman paradise.<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Beckford and Henley use this word in a similar sense in Vathek.

Afrit (2, G, 784 and C, II, 150)

'Ifrit' is an Arabic word for the demons employed in The Quran (27: 39). This expression occurs also in Vathek. Byron refers, and aptly so, to the raving Afrits in conjunction with Gouls, the Arabic word for monsters.

Aladdin's lamp (1, DJ, XII, 12)

In view of the wide circulation of the Arabian Nights in Byron's day, the meaning of this highly popular allusion would not have been lost on Byron's readers. The talisman of course enables its holder to get whatever he wishes. Byron's reference to this allusion well brings home its meaning:

Yes! ready money is Aladdin's lamp.

(DJ, XII, 12)

Allah (24, G (5), 482, 681, 734, 1083 and 1133, B (3) I, 396 and 442 and II, 301, C (4), II, 6, 68, 235 and III, 469, S (2), 668 and 774, The Island (1), III, 127, CH (1), II, 77, DJ (8), VII, 13, 42 and 87 and VIII, 8 and 115)

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8. Poetry, III, 197.

Allah is the Arabic equivalent to God, which Muslims always use for describing God. What accounts for its recurrence in Byron's poetry, particularly in the 'Turkish Tales', is that he makes his Muslim characters use this word whenever they refer to God. Such consistency and sensitivity are by no means everywhere apparent in writings of the period. Southey's Thalaba, for instance, though dealing exclusively with Muslim life, often supplants 'Allah' with 'God' which looks unnatural and betrays Southey's scant regard for religions other than his own. Byron's usage of this characteristic Muslim expression lends credibility to the Oriental setting of his world and displays his accurate observation of Muslim behaviour and belief: for example, in taking an oath or on being faced with severe pressure a Muslim instinctively turns to Allah Whom he/she believes to be the only refuge, and accordingly Hassan, Zuleika and other characters in the 'Tales' are found invoking Allah when they are in some crisis, physical or emotional.

\*Almahs and Almas (2, C, II, 36 and 'The Waltz', 127)

Though Byron explains 'almahs' as 'dancing girls', he appears to have confused the Arabic word 'ilmah' with 'almahs'. 'Ilmah' is used for a woman who makes a show of her beauty and for dancing girls. Byron's memory for once appears to have faltered.

\*Al-Sirat (1, G, 483)

Literally this Arabic word means 'way' or 'path'. In Islamic religious texts it signifies a bridge which everyone must cross on the Day of Judgement. Believers with good deeds to their credit will smoothly pass over, whereas unbelievers will stumble and be doomed to

divine punishment. Byron's reference to the narrowness and sharpness of this bridge and to the ordeal unbelievers will suffer in traversing it is in accordance with Islamic belief. Likewise, his description of the tottering structure with 'fiery flood' below and 'Paradise within the view' along with 'Houris beckoning through' captures the essentials of the Muslim heaven.

\*Amaun (1, G, 603)

This Arabic word means clemency or protection, especially in the context of war. Byron rightly explains it as 'quarter and pardon'.<sup>9</sup> Likewise he appropriately uses the word in a martial situation in that we learn that Hassan, on being surrounded suddenly by the Giaour and his men, could not even raise 'the craven cry, Amaun'.

Amber (6, B, II, 65, The Island II, 455, The Deformed Transformed, I, 1, 268, and DJ (3), IV, 55, V, 53 and XVI, 11)

Called 'anbar' in Arabic, this particular variety of perfume is commonly worn in the Orient. Byron's explanatory note, appended to The Bride, appears to indicate his first-hand knowledge of the substance.

Amulet (1, B, II, 69)

Popularly known as 'ta'awid' in Arabic, amulets with Quranic engravings are fairly common in the orient. This charm is believed to ward off evil spirits; or, in Byron's words, it helps 'smooth this life, and win the next' (B, II, 71). Little wonder then that Zuleika appears adorning 'her mother's sainted amulet, / Whereon engraved the

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9. Poetry, III, 115.

Koorsee text'. Byron correctly identifies the 'text' as the Koorsee (Throne) verse in the Quran (Chapter 2, verse 255) which celebrates the glorious attributes of God. This verse usually constitutes amulets. Byron's description of this Oriental custom is strikingly accurate even in its minutiae.

Ataghan (3, G, 355, 522 and 602)

The actual Turkish word is 'yataghan', which is used for a large heavy hunting knife, of which the edge is concavely turned and carried in a metal scabbard, generally of silver among the wealthy. Accordingly, the Emir, the Muslim chief, appears in The Giaour with his 'silver-sheathed ataghan' (355).

Atar-gul (1, B, I, 270)

Comprising two Persian words 'itr' and 'gul', literally meaning perfume and rose or flower respectively, this expression stands for the attar of roses, the most popular variety of perfume in the Orient. In The Bride, Zuleika's chamber is full of its fragrance. Byron makes the additional remark that 'the Persian [variety of this perfume] is the finest.'<sup>10</sup>

\*Azrael (1, B, I, 323)

Known as 'Izrail' in Arabic, this is the name of the angel of death in Islamic lore. Byron's usage and definition<sup>11</sup> of Azrael are both correct. This Arabic expression appears to have been fairly popular in his day, in that it occurs quite frequently in Southey's

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10. Poetry, III, 169.

11. Poetry, III, 171.

Thalaba and earlier in Beckford's Vathek.

Bairam (2, G, 229 and 452)

This Turkish word denotes a festival; hence it is used to describe the two major Islamic festivals, 'Idd al-Fitr' and 'Idd al-Adha'. The former is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. Byron's account is singularly accurate in that he speaks of 'the Bairam feast' in conjunction with the setting of 'Rhamazani's sun'. Since the Muslim calendar is lunar, the appearance of the new moon marks the end of a month and the beginning of the next; and so Byron's reference to 'the crescent' in this context demonstrates his eye for precise detail.

Berry (2, C, II, 33 and DJ, III, 63)

Since Islam forbids Muslims to drink wine, Byron makes it a point to mention 'berry's juice' as an alternative drink in his description of Oriental feasts. He also points out the deviant behaviour of those Muslims who flout this prohibition.

Bey (2, B, I, 379 and II, 483)

This Turkish word literally means 'a noble chief'. As a title in the Ottoman empire it was conferred on a lord. Though Byron employs this expression aptly, he does not provide any clue to its meaning. E.H. Coleridge explains it accurately in his annotation,<sup>12</sup> but he does not specify its origin. McGann simply lifts this information from Coleridge's edition and thus his annotation adds nothing new.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Poetry, III, 166.

<sup>13</sup> CPW, III, 437.

Bismillah (1, G, 568)

This is an abbreviated form of the Islamic/Arabic formula 'Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem' (In the name of Allah, the most graceful, the most merciful). All the Quranic chapters, except one, have 'Bismillah' as their opening sentence. Muslims recite this liturgical formula for invoking God's help on all occasions, be it while reciting the Quran, reading, writing, taking food or drink or embarking on some venture. Byron appears to be familiar with the customary usage, for Hassan recites it when, in his encounter with the Giaour, he and his men reach a relatively safe place. Byron's application is indeed marked by dramatic irony, in that as soon as Hassan is about to settle down after pronouncing the words, 'a bullet whistled o'er his head' (572).

Henley's note in the apparatus to Vathek, based on D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale, is misleading in suggesting that "Bismillah" became not the initiatory formula of prayer, till the time of Moez the Fatimite.<sup>14</sup> Since the Quran was compiled and recited in prayers during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, 'Bismillah' has been in circulation since the very early days of Islam. Byron's note explaining this term is free from this or any other inaccuracy.<sup>15</sup>

Bread and Salt (2, G, 343 and C, II, 119)

Known as 'nan-o-namak' in Persian and Turkish languages, 'bread and salt' signifies in Oriental culture the host's hospitality and the guest's gratitude for that kindness. It constitutes a sacred bond between the two and its betrayal is regarded as an abominable act.

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14. Vathek, p. 141.

15. Poetry, III, 113.



As a traveller, Byron may have had first-hand experience of this aspect of Oriental life. Moreover, it is because of the same 'sacred pledge' that the Dervise, being really Conrad in disguise, 'shuns the salt', i.e. Seyd's food. Byron's explanatory note is likewise accurate: 'To break bread and taste salt with your host, ensures the safety of the guest: even though an enemy, his person from that moment becomes sacred.'<sup>16</sup>

Bulbul (2, B, I, 288 and II, 694)

This is the Persian word for the nightingale and, as Byron states, its attachment to the rose 'is a well-known Persian fable'. That Bulbul is generally associated in the Orient with love and melodious song may have come to Byron's notice from his study of the works of Lady Montagu, Sir William Jones and several translations of Persian poetry circulating in his day. In his note on The Giaour he correctly recounts one of its appellations - 'Bulbul of a thousand tales'.<sup>17</sup> Byron effectively draws on this Oriental fable in The Bride, for Zuleika sends Selim 'a rose' or 'a message from the Bulbul' (I, 287 and 288), symbolising her love for him.

Calpac (1, G, 717)

Originally a Turkish word, 'kalpak' stands for 'the solid cap or centre part of the head-dress'.<sup>18</sup> In traditional Turkish culture, the colour of one's calpac indicated the social class to which one belonged. Soldiers wore black and scholars and students white. Byron, however, is perhaps unaware of these finer details, for he fails to mention the colour of Hassan's calpac.

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16. Poetry, III, 102.

17. Poetry, III, 86.

18. Poetry, III, 119.

Camel (11, G, (1), 689, S (2), 36 and 1016, CH (1), IV, 21, DJ (4), II, 84, IV, and 55 and VI, 102, 'The Age of Bronze' (1), 313, 'The Dream' (1), 119 and 'On Jordan's Banks', (1), 1).

Camels are special to the Arab way of life; most of Byron's references to the camel reinforce local colour. For example, the scene recounting the agonized waiting of Hassan's mother as she looks forward to her son's return with a new bride draws greater poignancy and verisimilitude from the reference to camels' bells, marking the return of an approaching caravan. Similarly, the reference to 'the Arab's camel' emphasises 'the Moslem' presence in The Seige (36). The allusion to 'the holy camel's hump' (DJ, VI, 102) appears to have been taken from Vathek.<sup>19</sup> In order to assuage and placate the Sultana's anger, her servant Baba pleads his innocence and swears by 'the Koran' and 'the holy camel's hump'. Reference is thus made to the Muslim tradition that regards the camel a holy animal.

Capote (6, CH (2), II, 52 and 73, B (2), II, 141 and 595, C (1), I, 558 and SS (1), 10)

The Turkish work 'kaput' denotes a cloak made of coarse material. That Byron was fully familiar with this Turkish dress and its twin function of defending one against cold weather and serving as one's bed sheet is evident from his letter to his wife: 'Two days ago I was nearly lost in a Turkish ship of war...I wrapped myself up in my Albanian capote (an immense cloak), and lay down on deck to wait the worst.'<sup>20</sup> He appears<sup>to</sup> to recall this experience in 'Lines Associated with the Seige':

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19. Vathek, p. 80.

20. Poetry, III, 450.

Our sleep fell soft on the hardest bed;  
Whether we couch'd in our rough capote,  
On the rougher plank of our gliding boat,  
Or stretch'd on the beach,

(8-12)

Hobhouse, too, seems to be fascinated by this dress and its many uses, which he describes in his Journey.<sup>21</sup>

Chiaus (1, G, 571)

'Cavus' is a Turkish word referring to a uniformed attendant of some high-ranking person - someone equivalent to the present-day aide-de-camp. Though Byron employs the designation aptly in speaking of the Chiaus of Hassan, he does not explain what it means. Coleridge provides a useful note outlining the duties of a Chiaus, but he does not specify the origin of the word. In this case, as in earlier instances, McGann once again repeats Coleridge's annotation, though abridging it considerably.

Chibouque (2, B, I, 233 and C, II, 35)

The Turkish word 'cubuk' denotes a pipe for smoking. Byron's knowledge of the instrument is rich, for in his explanatory note he spells out such details as that about 'the Turkish pipe, of which the amber mouth-piece, and sometimes the ball which contains the leaf, is adorned with precious stones, if in possession of the wealthier order.'<sup>22</sup> Little wonder then that the regal Giaffir appears in The Bride with his 'gem-adorn'd Chibouque' (I, 233).

21. John Cam Hobhouse, A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey (London, 1813), p. 155.

22. Poetry, III, 167.

Circumcision (3, CH, II, 44 and DJ, V, 69 and 71)

All Muslim males are required by Islamic law to be circumcised soon after birth. Aware of this practice among Muslims, Byron refers to them as 'the circumcised people' (CH, II, 44). In a lighter vein is the other reference when Baba, the superintendent of slaves in the Turkish seraglio, asks Juan, brought there as a slave, to undergo circumcision which 'would better his condition'. What is implied is that once Juan embraces Islam, he would be immediately set free.

Concubines (4, CH, I, 2, Beppo, 70 and DJ, VI, 8 and 17)

To deal with female prisoners of war, the early Islamic law recommended concubinage, granting them rights similar to that of a wife. Some Muslim rulers, no doubt, abused this legal provision by maintaining large harems, keeping even hundreds of concubines.

Comboloio (1, B, II, 72)

Known as 'tasbih' in Arabic, comboloio is the Muslim rosary comprising ninety-nine beads, each of which represents a unique attribute of God. Muslims use it for the remembrance of God. Byron's description of Zuleika's comboloio (B, II, 72) in conjunction with 'the amulet / Whereon engraved the Koorsee text' (II, 69-70) and 'a Koran of illumined dyes' (II, 73) captures the religious life of the Orient in that all these symbols objectify that life.

Crescent (14, CH (3), II, 38 and 44, G, 222, S (4), 30, 94, 214 and 253, 'Ode on Venice', 116 and DJ (5), II, 92, III, 77, VI, 86, VIII, 122 and XI, 49)

In Byron's poetry his use of the expression 'crescent' is always in relation to Islam and Muslims. This is pertinent, for, since the Crusades, the cross and the crescent have symbolically represented Christianity and Islam respectively. The Crescent has been the official emblem of Turkey; before and after Byron's day; and it figures prominently on the national flags of many Muslim states. What binds Islam and Muslims with the crescent is perhaps the fact that they follow the lunar calendar.

Dervise (10, G, 340, C (8), II, 49, 65, 99, 117, 140, 142, 144 and 160, and DJ, III, 29)

The Persian word 'darwesh' describes a Muslim ascetic, given to mysticism. Since this expression occurs in Lady Montagu's Works<sup>23</sup> and Beckford's Vathek<sup>24</sup> it would not have been totally unfamiliar to Byron's readers. A dervise is esteemed in Muslim society for his renunciation of worldliness and his simple life. Byron's account is therefore not out of place when we find the Corsair disguised as a Dervise in his 'saintly garb' (II, 144) and entering easily into the Seyd's court.

In Don Juan (III, 29) Byron mentions another variety of Dervise - the dancing ones, who often tend to go into a trance in their attempts to achieve ecstatic union with God. In this state they appear to lose consciousness, whirling and gyrating as if turning on a pivot. That they were fairly common in the Orient is corroborated not only by Lady Montagu, but also by Chew, who recounts his 'vivid memoirs of...the Mewlewi Dervishes...twirling and whirling as lightly as thistledown.'<sup>25</sup>

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23. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 254-56.

24. Vathek, p. 144.

25. The Crescent and the Rose, p. 199.

Divan (7, B (4), I, 24, 74 and II, 251 and 326, C, II, 106 and DJ (2), VI, 91 and XIV, 70)

'Diwan', originally an Arabic word, is commonly used throughout the Orient to refer to a government office or consultative assembly. Byron is therefore right in speaking of Giaffir's divan (I, 24) and in his other references to this important institution of Oriental public life. The word was used earlier in Vathek.<sup>26</sup> In a letter to his mother, Byron records his visit to Ali Pasha's divan.<sup>27</sup> His description of Giaffir's divan in The Bride is on the whole authentic, in that it contains a vivid account of an Oriental court - its traditions and its customs - by reference to 'many a gallant slave' 'awaiting each his Lord's behest' (I, 20 and 22) and to Selim 'standing at the Pacha's feet' (I, 50).

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26. Vathek, p. 128.

27. L & J, I, 227.

\*Eblis (1, G, 750)

The 'infidel Giaour' is seen doomed 'to wander round lost Eblis' throne' (750). As to Eblis's identity, Byron introduces him as 'the Oriental Prince of Darkness': 'Iblis' is the Arabic/Quranic counterpart for Satan or devil. As in the Bible, Satan is the accursed one in Muslim tradition: hence the Muslim fisherman's reference to Eblis in the context of a curse is singularly apt. Through Beckford's celebrated passage, 'the Hall of Eblis' in Vathek, this expression may have had some substantial currency among Byron's readers.

Emir (1, G, 357)

'Amir' in Arabic is used as a title for the chief, commander or ruler. In The Giaour there appears 'an Emir', and rightly so, at the head of his band and dressed distinctly.

Fakir (1, G, 339)

'Faqr' is an Arabic word for a poor man, resembling a Dervise, in the sense of having meagre resources. Every Dervise, having renounced worldly goods, is invariably a 'fakir', though a fakir may not always be a Dervise. Byron employs these two words in successive lines, maintaining the fine distinction in their meaning: 'Nor there the Fakir's self will wait; / Nor there will wandering Dervise stay' (339-40). In his annotation McGann, however, altogether overlooks the difference between them, and treats them as synonyms.<sup>28</sup>

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28. CPW, III, 417.

False (3, The Morgante Maggiore (2), I, 45 and 55 and 'On Jordan's Banks', 2)

What prompts the inclusion of this seemingly innocuous word in a catalogue of Oriental diction is that the epithet 'false' was used almost as a rule in relation to the Prophet Muhammad by medieval polemicists, who absolutely rejected his claim to revelation or prophethood. Although Byron's Orientalism is almost totally free from this strain in that he recognizes and records in several places the Muslims' reverence for the Prophet, in the above instances he appears to re-echo the detractors of Islam. In The Morgante Maggiore 'false' is prefixed to Macon, a variant spelling of the Prophet Muhammad, while in 'On Jordan's Banks' reference is to 'the False One', implying the Prophet of Islam. As to the reason for these exceptional moments, Byron may be exonerated, to some extent, in the case of The Morgante Maggiore, being the translation of Luigi Pulci's Il Morgante Maggiore (1482) which draws on the polemical Chanson De Geste. However, it is difficult to account for Byron's momentary reversion to convention in 'On Jordan's Banks'.

Firman/death-firman (4, B (2), I, 211 and 456, C, II, 7 and DJ, IV, 91)

'Farman', a Persian word, signifies the command or order of some high authority, which people must obey. This expression figured prominently in the parlance of Oriental courts, for through his firman the ruler used to issue decrees on all matters, including the death sentence which Byron rightly refers to as 'the death-firman' (The Bride, I, 211). Then there is reference to Giaffir's firman in conjunction



with 'imposts and levies' (The Bride, I, 456) set by him. Byron came across this expression first during his journey to Turkey when he had to obtain the firman for visiting parts of the Ottoman empire, a point borne out by his letters written in 1811.<sup>29</sup>

Fountain (4, G (2), 295 and 538, B, I, 152 and C, I, 126)

Fountains are integral to Oriental mansions. They serve many functions: providing coolness in the otherwise arid climate of Arabia; ensuring a continuous, abundant supply of water which Muslims need for ablution in order to perform five daily prayers; and recreating the Quranic image of paradise, of which fountains constitute an inalienable part. In speaking of the fountain in The Bride, Byron seems to have in mind the redemptive quality of water: Giaffir describes her daughter, Zuleika 'sweet', as the desert-fountain's wave' (I, 152). Byron makes striking use of the fountain in The Giaour when depicting how in Hassan's palace the 'stream has shrunk from its marble bed' (297) soon after the Giaour has killed Hassan. The image signifies life itself: as long as Hassan was alive, the fountain 'in whirls fantastically flew, / And flung luxurious coolness round / The air, and verdure o'er the ground' (302-04); after his death 'the wild-dog howls o'er the fountain's brim' (295).

\*Franguestan (1, G, 506)

Etymologically this Persian word, 'firang' or 'firangistan', stands for Franks and French. It was, however, used in the Orient in a

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29. L & J, II, 38, 39, 40 and 41.

very wide and general sense of referring to a European, whatever his exact nationality. Byron's definition confines it to 'Circassia', an inaccuracy which Coleridge rectifies in his annotation by adding that the term refers to 'Europe generally'.<sup>30</sup> McGann, however, merely reproduces Byron's underdeveloped note.

Gazelle (5, G, 474, DJ (3), II, 6 and 202 and III, 68, and 'To Ianthe', 28)

Originally an Arabic word, 'ghazal', meaning deer, is perhaps the most familiar Oriental image in the West. In comparing the beloved to a gazelle the Arab 'implies not only beauty of face but also grace of movement and gentleness of temper, most desirable qualities in a woman.'<sup>31</sup> Byron seems to be fond of this recurrent image from Oriental literature and uses it to describe models of feminine beauty, be she 'Nature's bride', Haidée in DJ (II, 206), or Leila in The Giaour (I, 474).

Genii and Ginns (3, EBSR, 219, G, 385 and DJ, VI, 48)

'Jinn', an Arabic word, stands for the invisible beings or spirits that may interfere with the lives of human beings. Through the numerous editions and immense popularity of the Arabian Nights, this expression must have been fairly familiar to Byron and his readers. Byron's 'Genii of the deep, / ...trembling in their coral caves' (The Giaour, 385-86), and their mention along with 'Gouls in hosts' (DJ, VI, 48), exemplify his sound understanding of Oriental lore.

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30. Poetry, III, 111.

31. Anahid Melikian, Byron and the East (Beirut, 1977), p. 48.

Giamschid (1, G, 479)

In Byron's allusion to 'the jewel of Giamschid' the reference is to the legendary Persian king Jamshed, famed for his fabulous wealth and his love of wine. That Byron possessed a detailed knowledge of the legends associated with this king is borne out by his extensive note. Some additional useful material throwing further light on Byron's allusion is found in Coleridge's scholarly annotation.<sup>32</sup>

Giaour (6, CH, II, 77, B, I, 459, C, III, 173, DJ (3), V, 150 and 156 and VI, 48 and G, passim)

The Arabic word 'jaur', literally meaning deviation, is the basis of the Turkish word 'gaovur' which was applied in Turkey to non-Muslims, for being outside the mainstream religio-cultural Islamic tradition. The expression seems to have caught Byron's fancy, for, in addition to its frequent use in several of his poems, it supplied the designation of the central character of the poem entitled The Giaour itself. Studying Byron's use of this word, it is worth noting that it is mostly employed when a Muslim character refers to a non-Muslim: a point illustrated best by the Muslim fisherman's calling Hassan's killer the 'young Giaour' (190).

In its pejorative use by the fisherman the epithet not only reflects his hatred for Hassan's assassin but also points to the unwelcome intrusion of a non-Muslim in a purely Oriental context. With pointed reference to Muslim religious terminology and to scenes of Muslim festivals (222-230), the fisherman questions the presence of one with 'foreign garb' (231) and asks bluntly, 'what are these to thine or

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32. Poetry, III, 108-09.

thee' (232).

On a wider level, Byron's choice of this Oriental expression seems the more purposeful in that throughout the action of the poem the Giaour appears as an outsider, aloof and totally cut off from human relations. Neither does the Giaour gain any spiritual comfort from his long sojourn in the monastery; all religious tradition is meaningless for him.

Gouls (2, G, 784 and DJ, VI, 48)

Derived from the Arabic word 'ghul', goul stands for the desert demon appearing in varying shapes. Byron employs this word in its correct sense. He may have picked it up from Vathek.

Green colour (3, G (2), 357 and 743 and DJ, VIII, 111)

The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said that the Muslim paradise will have green as its main colour; and the dome of the Prophet's tomb in Madina is of green. On the basis of this saying, green has acquired special significance, rather sacredness, for Muslims. Byron is therefore very much to the point in portraying the Turkish chief in 'his garb of green' (The Giaour, 357). In his explanatory note he remarks: 'Green is the privileged colour of the Prophet's numerous pretended descendants.'<sup>33</sup>

Byron's references to the green handkerchief of the houris (The Giaour, 743) and to their being dressed 'in green' (DJ, VIII, 111) are in particular accord with the Muslim belief about the predominance of green in paradise.

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33. Poetry, III, 103.

Gul (1, B, I, 8)

This originally Persian word means a rose in both that language and in Turkish. It is a recurrent image in the Orient for love and feminine beauty. Though Byron employs the root term 'gul' only once, he uses the rose frequently as a symbol in his 'Turkish Tales'. Instances in point are: Leila mentioned as the rose (The Giaour, 26); Zuleika offering the rose to Selim betokening her love for him (The Bride, I, 288); and the rose appearing symbolically 'meek and pale' after Zuleika's death (The Bride, II, 673).

Hafiz (3, CH, II, 63 and EBSR (2), 708 and 762)

Sir William Jones's Works, containing translations of Persian poetry, introduced Byron to Hafiz - the greatest lyric poet of Persia. Byron's mention of the name is reflective of his acquaintance with and admiration for the work.

Haram (20, G (2), 292 and 439, B (6), I, 33, 67, 240, 465 and 475 and II, 414, C (5), II, 182, 202, 224, 255 and III, 131, CH (1), II, 56, Beppo, 72 and DJ (5), I, 87, VI, 58, 95 and 103, and VII, 67)

The Arabic word 'haram' has the connotations of a sanctified precinct. The two most sacred mosques in Makka and Madina are popularly known as 'haram', for, apart from their being holy, it is prohibited to commit any violence within their boundaries. For similar considerations, the interior part of a Muslim house reserved for one's wife is known as 'haram'; marriage in Islam is a sacred contract, and because of Islamic rules prescribing segregation of sexes this area of

the house is forbidden to strange males. Islam allows polygamy in exceptional cases and permits concubines in order to accommodate female prisoners of war. Unscrupulous Muslim rulers abused both these provisions of Islamic law, keeping as many as hundreds of women.

Haram is widely perceived in Western literary Orientalism, travel literature and paintings as a haven for gratifying sexual passion. In the first edition of Roget's Thesaurus (1852) 'haram' is grouped with synonyms of 'brothel'. Even in the 1972 edition of Roget's Thesaurus haram is listed under 'impurity'.

Since the Muslim characters in Byron's 'Turkish Tales' are drawn from the ruling class, haram figures quite prominently in The Giaour, The Bride and The Corsair. Being something novel and closely associated with the sex life, its description must have offered a titillating appeal to his readers; hence, on one level, Byron's preoccupation with the seraglio. Generally speaking, however, his account of haram reflects a thorough knowledge of almost all facets of its life - over-protectiveness, conspiracy, sexual anarchy, maltreatment of women, lust and treachery. These features of haram occasionally prompt some trenchant remarks from Byron the satirist. How women are closely guarded and segregated is conveyed with reference to 'the Haram guard' and 'the Haram's grating key' (The Bride, I, 33 and 67). Even 'the Haram queen' - Gulnare - is like another 'slave of Seyd!' (The Corsair, II, 224). In Beppo the plight of haram women is related thus:

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 them,  
Four wives by law, and concubines 'ad libitum'.

They lock them up, and veil, and guard them daily,  
They scarcely can behold their male relations, ...

(Beppo, 70-71)

Haratch (1, in Byron's note on B, II, 384)

While explaining the word 'Rayahs' (B, II, 384) Byron employs this word and defines it as the capitation tax. It is, in fact, the Turkish word 'harac'. The inaccuracy lies in Byron's transliteration, not in his definition.

Henna (2, DJ, III, 75 and 76)

The Arabic word 'hina' refers to a tropical shrub, of which shoots and leaves are used to dye hair and nails, particularly by ladies. In describing Haidée's beauty mention is made of her nails 'touch'd with henna' (DJ, III, 75).

Hookas (1, The Island, II, 19)

The Persian word 'huqqa' stands for a metallic or earthen vessel through which fumes pass when smoking tobacco. This mode of smoking is quite common in the Orient. Byron may have observed it during his stay in Turkey. He puts this knowledge to use in mentioning hookas along with a pipe in reference to 'sublime tobacco' (The Island, II, 19).

Hourî (14, G (3), 486, 741 and 1046, B (3), I, 147, II, 113 and 692, 'To Eliza', 7, DJ (7), I, 104, VIII, 111, 113, 114, 115 and 116)

Houri, originally an Arabic word 'huriya' referring to the virgins of perpetual beauty in Paradise, has been familiar in English literature for its exoticism. Byron's fascination with houris is considerable. His portrayal of them is cognate with the Muslim conception, which is derived from the Quran, for they appear as models of perfect feminine beauty in his account. The feature most emphasised by the Quran, their large black eyes, is shared by all the heroines of the 'Turkish Tales' - Leila, Zuleika, Gulnare. There is, however, a streak of satire when Byron attributes the valour of some Muslim warrior to his belief that he will enjoy houris once he is killed in the war and has been transported immediately to the Muslim paradise (DJ, VIII, 111). Moore makes almost the same point about houris waving their scarves, 'beckoning to their bow'rs the immortal Brave' (Lalla Rookh, 160). It is one of Moore's Muslim characters, the poet Feramorz, who remarks so, with a tinge of sarcasm. This is unrealistic, for a Muslim cannot entertain any doubt about houris and paradise, for these are described in authentic religious texts; whereas in Byron it is a neutral narrator that goes in for quips about the Muslim paradise.

\*Hu/Alla hu (3, G, 734, S, 668 and DJ, VIII, 8)

The Arabic formulation 'Allah-o-Akbar' (God is great) is used by Muslims almost as a refrain in their prayers, religious rituals, times of crisis, particularly as a battle cry, for this affirmation strengthens them in their faith, enabling them to undertake anything, no matter however risky, even fatal. Byron's introduction of this liturgical expression and his detailed explanatory note cover all its connotations and associations.



The Insect-Queen of Kashmeer (G, 389-90)

Byron borrows this imagery from Vathek,<sup>34</sup> and adroitly uses it as an extended simile (The Giaour, 388-421) for raising a whole spectrum of issues and as a metaphor for feminine beauty, its charms and perils, its intricate relationship with violence and its impermanence, and for human passions in their unfathomable depth. (Some of the thematic implications of this image are discussed in chapter 5, 'Byron's Oriental Characters').

\*Istakar (1, B, I, 358)

This is the Persian name of the ancient city, Persepolis, known for its fabulous wealth. Byron draws heavily on Beckford's Vathek, Henley's note, and D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale for his mention of its 'treasures'.<sup>35</sup>

Janizar/Janizaries (2, S, 659 and DJ, XI, 62)

Derived from the Persian word 'jan-nisar', literally meaning one loyal and devoted to someone, janisaries were the bravest soldiers of the Ottoman army, who greeted death in defence of the empire. Byron's readers who were acquainted with Lady Montagu's Works may have known of them, for she provides a detailed account. In The Siege janisaries, of course, figure prominently in the sieging Muslim army.

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34. Vathek, p. 63.

35. Poetry, III, 173.

Jerreed (2, G, 251 and B, I, 238)

The Turkish 'jerid' is a derivative of the Arabic word 'jarid', which refers to a blunt javelin used in equestrian games. Byron's use of this term captures both the meaning and the spirit, for he employs it as a simile suggesting swift motion (The Giaour, 250-51).

\*Kaff (2, EBSR, 1022 and DJ, VI, 86)

'Qaf', as known in Persian, is regarded as a fabulous mountain, imagined as surrounding the whole world and binding the horizon on all sides. Byron's reference indicates his knowledge of this legend, though rather than applying it in its mythical sense he simply mentions it as a mountain in the Orient. In comparison Beckford in Vathek puts the expression to a much more meaningful and functional use. When Eblis receives his 'adorers' Vathek and Nouronihar, he tells them to enjoy 'the subterranean expanses of the mountain of Kaf, opened by 'the dives' with 'talismans'.<sup>36</sup>

Khan (5, S, 662 and DJ (4), VIII, 104, 112, 114 and 116)

The Persian word 'khan' is a title used in the Orient for noblemen and high-ranking officers. In Byron's poetry they appear, and rightly so, in the company of the Pachas - the rulers (The Seige, 662). In Don Juan, there is a detailed account of 'a brave Tartar khan / Or Sultan', the chieftain (DJ, VIII, 104).

\*Kislar (1, B, I, 239)

This Turkish word 'Kizlar aga' literally means the incharge of

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36. Vathek, p. 111.

virgins. As a title it describes the head of the black eunuchs guarding the seraglio. Byron alludes to this personage's duty to watch 'well the Haram's massy doors' (The Bride, I, 240).

Kiosk (I, C, III, 44)

The Persian word 'kushk' refers to what Byron calls 'a Turkish summer house', a building quite common in the Orient and mostly found in palace gardens where it offers a panoramic view and is open to the cool breeze.

\*Koorsee (I, B, II, 70)

Literally the Arabic word 'kursi' means a chair. However, in the context of the Quranic verse 'ayat al-kursi' (the Throne verse) it stands for God's throne. This verse outlines the majestic attributes of God and so has special significance in Muslim liturgy. Muslims believe that an amulet with the engraving of this verse protects one against evil. Perfectly in line with this Oriental tenet is Byron's description of Zuleika's 'sainted amulet' on which was 'engraved the Koorsee text' worn in the belief that it 'could smooth this life, and win the next' (The Bride, II, 69-70 and 71).

Koran (8, G, 726, B (4), II, 73, 103, 189 and 629, C, II, 42, The Deformed Transformed, I, 11, 115, and DJ, VI, 102)

Known in Arabic as the 'Quran' this is the Word of God revealed to the Prophet of Islam and hence has a pivotal position in Muslim life.

Apart from its being the object of utmost reverence, Muslims turn to it for divine guidance and try to follow its commandments to the utmost possible extent. Byron must have noticed its predominant role in Oriental life: he speaks of the particular 'Koran verse that mourns the dead' (The Giaour, 726). inscribed on Hassan's grave; mentions the highly ornate copies of the Quran in Zuleika's room (The Bride, II, 73), common objects in most of Muslim houses; shows Zuleika and Selim invoking the Quran in times of crisis (The Bride, II, 189); describes 'the Koran-chaunters' (The Bride, II, 629) in Zuleika's funeral scene, and Baba swearing by the Quran (DJ, VI, 102). Since the medieval period the Quran had been the target of polemical attacks, strains of which are noticeable even in Byron's contemporaries, as in Southey's note on Thalaba: 'The tame language of the Koran could be remembered by the few who have toiled through its dull tautology.'<sup>37</sup> While Southey finds fault only with the Quran's repetitions, Thomas Moore goes a step further in charging the Prophet of Islam with inventing the Quranic text to gratify his lust:

Here Mohammad, born for love and guile,  
Forgets the Koran in his Mary's smile;  
Then beckons some kind angel from above  
With a new text to consecrate their love.

(Lalla Rookh, p. 218)<sup>38</sup>

By contrast, Byron's account is exceptionally positive, and observant about Muslim conduct.

37. Robert Southey, The Poetical Works of Robert Southey collected by himself (London, 1838), IV, 28.

38. The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore (London, n.d.), p. 218.

Mahomet/Prophet (29, G (4), 480, 679, 1047 and 1082, B (5), I, 432, II, 107, 187, 319 and 325, C, II, 131, S (3), 336, 668 and 819, 'To Eliza', 5, The Morgante Maggiore, I, 40, CH (3), II, 3, 44 and 77, DJ (11), I, 104, II, 206, V, 81, 103 and 156, VI, 113, VII, 17, VIII, 111 and X, 56 and 75)

The Arabic word 'Muhammad', literally meaning the praised one, is the proper name of the Prophet of Islam. Muslims revere the Prophet next only to the Quran. Byron's observation of the central place of the Prophet's example and teachings is faithfully articulated in several references. He speaks, for example, of Muslims invoking the Prophet's help in crisis (The Giaour, 679 and 1082), their reverence for his shrine, his hair and his wife, (The Bride, II, 187, DJ, V, 103 and VI, 113), their obedience to his teachings (The Bride, I, 432), and their seeking his forgiveness (The Bride, II, 319). In a flippant remark, Byron places him among 'heroes, conquerors and cuckolds' (DJ, II, 206). In one of his earlier poems, 'To Eliza' (5), he censures the Prophet for driving woman from paradise and denying her any soul - a charge which he disavows later in The Giaour (480). The Morgante Maggiore betrays a polemical note in his use of the medieval name 'Macon' for the Prophet (I, 35 and 43) and in juxtaposing 'bad Macon's false and felon test' with 'the only true God of Christians'. This deviation apart, Byron's account is, on the whole, a truthful representation of Oriental sensitivities about the Prophet.

Byron has none of the stuff which vitiates the treatment of the Prophet in English literature. Southey's Chronicle of the Cid (1808) disparages the Prophet for being 'of a meagre mind, and with morals of open

and impudent profligacy.'<sup>39</sup> Likewise, in his Preface to The Curse of Kehama he severely attacks the 'false Prophet for abomination and audacious profligacy'. Then in Roderick (1814), too, there is an ugly diatribe against the Prophet:

They say, quoth one, that though the Prophet's soul  
Doth with the black-eyed Houris bathe in bliss,  
Life hath not left his body, which bears up  
By its miraculous power the holy tomb,  
And holds it at Medina in the air  
Buoyant between the temple's floor and roof:  
And there the Angels fly to him with news  
From East, West, North, and South, of what befalls  
His faithful people.

(XXIII, 145-52)

Of such distortions, there is nothing in Byron.

Mamaluke (1, B, I, 235)

Literally the Arabic word 'mamluk' means a purchased slave or captive. On the authority of D'Herbelot, McGann rightly explains it as 'a slave warrior, originally...from Circassia.'<sup>40</sup> In accordance with their being the main constituents of the Muslim army, Byron describes the Mamluks as part of Giaffir's force.

Maugrabee (1, B, I, 235)

Derived from the Arabic word 'maghrib', literally meaning 'west', this is used in the Orient for inhabitants of North Africa, particularly Moroccans. Byron defines these as 'Moorish mercenaries',<sup>41</sup> which is

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39. Robert Southey, Chronicle of the Cid (London, 1806), p. 189.

40. CPW, III, 416.

41. Poetry, III, 168.

reasonably accurate. It was mainly Moroccans who had made their way into Spain during the period of Muslim rule and were known in the West as 'Moors'. That they formed the bulk of the Turkish army points to their being mercenary. Byron may have come across the expression Maugrabee through the Continuation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments (1792), which describes at length the legend of Maugraby, the wicked enchanter. It is worth pointing out that the same legend constitutes the plot of Southey's Thalaba. The Maugrabee's preoccupation with magic is not, however, Byron's concern; he alludes only to their military service for the Turkish chief.

Mecca (4, G (1), 730, B (3), I, 155 and 312 and II, 402)

For Muslims Mecca, now generally spelt as Makka, a town in Saudi Arabia, is the holiest of holy places, because it houses Ka'aba, the House of God, to which Muslims turn in prayers, and because it is the birth place of the Prophet of Islam. Byron's allusions embrace the whole gamut of Muslim beliefs about Makka. He presents his Muslim characters in the 'Turkish Tales' 'bending the knee' in prayer 'at Mecca' (G, 730), 'wafting to' and 'swearing by Mecca's shrine' (B, I, 155 and 312), and speaking reverentially of 'the Muezzin's strain from Mecca's wall' (B, II, 402).

\*Mejnoun (1, B, I, 72)

The Arabic word 'majnun' literally means someone mad or possessed by a demon. As the designation of a legendary figure it refers to Qais ibn Mulawah of the Bani Amir tribe, the most famous love figure in the

Orient, whose passion for Leila is part of folklore and the basis of numerous works in several languages. Byron appropriately speaks of these two figures as 'the Romeo and Juliet of the East.'<sup>42</sup> For this appellation and for his knowledge of the legend Byron is indebted to Sir William Jones's Works, which describe Mejnoun and Leila in exactly the same terms.<sup>43</sup> Byron's other possible sources may be Henley's note on Vathek<sup>44</sup> and D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale. Byron refers to the story in a telling context, for Selim and Zuleika, the two lovers, appear enjoying 'Mejnoun's tale' in an idyllic setting. 'Mejnoun's tale' seems to comment upon the story of The Bride in that both the stories deal with tragic, unfulfilled love.

Minarets (6, CH (2), II, 38 and 59, G (1), 450, C (2), II, 197 and III, 40 and EBSR (1), 1020)

The origin of this word is the Arabic 'manarah' meaning 'light house'. Minarets, being a distinct part of the mosque, symbolise Islam and Muslims. These high-rise structures, from the top of which the Muezzin makes the call to prayer at appointed hours, dot the skyline of a Muslim town. Their association with the ascendancy of Islam in a given place and with prayers is brought out by Byron's references; as, for example, while pointing to Muslim rule in Albania he says: 'The cross descends, thy minarets arise' (CH, II, 38).

Mogul (1, DJ IX, 33)

The Persian word 'mughal' is used to describe a Mongolian, and

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42. Poetry, III, 160.

43. The Works of Sir William Jones, IV, 222.

44. Vathek, p. 147.



more specifically, the Mongolian empire in India from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Byron's allusion has a contemporary touch, for he refers to the Moguls along with Nadir Shah, the Persian ruler who invaded the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century.

\*Monkir (1, G, 748)

Byron's reference to Monkir, and his explanatory note on the function of the two angels - Monkir and Nekir - who, according to the Muslim belief, are inquisitors of the dead, reflect his in-depth knowledge of the belief system of Islam. In this instance he may be indebted to Sale's Qurān, Picart's Religious Ceremonies and Customs and Henley's note on Vathek.<sup>45</sup>

Moslem/Mussulman (51, G (5), B (3), C (6), S (14), CH (4), Beppo (3), DJ (12), Marino Faliero (1), The Island (1), 'To Eliza' (1), 'The Age of Bronze' (1)

The Arabic word 'Muslim', standing for a follower of Islam, is derived from the term 'aslama', meaning someone who has totally submitted himself to God's will. Though Byron often employs this expression, he passes only a few remarks about Muslims by way of generalization. Most of these betray no prejudice; he points out, for instance, their firm commitment and devotion to their religion (CH, II, 59); their practice of invoking Allah in times of a crisis (S, 775-76); their religious zeal (G, 227); the orthodox Muslims' avoidance of wine (G, 548 and C, I, 430 and II, 34); their family values (B, I, 51-52);

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45. Poetry, III, 151 and Vathek, p. 151.

the sable vest being the dress of the noblest Muslims (B, II, 88); and the crescent being their emblem (S, 31). Some of the centuries-old Western misconceptions do, however, survive in Byron's perceptions. He speaks of 'the usurping Moslem' (CH, IV, 153); their valour in anticipation of the celestial reward of houris (DJ, VIII, 114); and their belief in the soullessness of women ('To Eliza', 1-2) - though he did retract the latter view in a note on The Giaour, describing it as 'a vulgar error'.<sup>46</sup>

Mosque (11, CH (1), II, 59, G (2), 223 and 463, C (1), III, 43, SS (1), 20, 'The Curse of Minerva' (1), 43 and DJ (5), V, 148, VI, 86, VII, 63, VIII, 133 and X, 75).

The mosque is the most important institution in Islam, being the centre of religious and community activities. Byron seems to have a special interest in mosques, which is borne out by his frequent visits to mosques in Turkey, as recorded in his letters.<sup>47</sup>

References to mosques in his poetry bring out their centrality in Oriental life - their main function as a place for prayer (CH, II, 50 and DJ, V, 148), their sacredness ('The Curse of Minerva', 43), and their illumination during the Muslim festival (G, 223).

Muezzin (4, CH, II, 59, B, II, 402, S, 221 and DJ, VIII, 141)

The Arabic word 'muezzin' is used of a person who performs Azan - the call to prayer at appointed hours five times a day. During his stay in Turkey Byron gained a first-hand knowledge of the impact the

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46. Poetry, III, 110.

47. L & J, I, 242, 243 and 250-51 and II, 3, 8 and 18.

Muezzin's call makes. Being so different from church bells, it must have struck Byron, who appears to have developed a liking for it, for he describes it as 'blest' (B, II, 402), 'musical' (S, 225) and 'solemn' (CH, II, 59). In Childe Harold (II, 59) he provides an accurate translation of a refrain of the Azan.

Mufti (2, G, 491 and DJ, VII, 17)

This Arabic word describes an Islamic jurisconsult, the authority on religious questions. In Dryden's Don Sebastian the Mufti is portrayed as a despicable creature reeking of hypocrisy, worldliness and greed. In order to please the emperor Muley-Moluch, the Mufti feels no scruples in misinterpreting Islamic religious law. Byron's account of the Mufti is free from such hostility; it is rather in consonance with Oriental literary convention. Like any Arabic or Persian poet, he holds that if the Mufti were to see Leila's beauty he would discover in it the sign of the divine (G, 492-92). In another place the Mufti is bracketed with the Prophet, indicating his prestigious position. That Mufti was a fairly common usage in English literary circles is further supported by its use in Samuel Butler's Miscellaneous Thoughts, in which he calls the Pope 'the Roman mufti', and in Lady Montagu's Works.<sup>48</sup>

Musselim (1, B, I, 374)

Byron himself explains this Turkish title for 'a governor, the next in rank after pacha.'<sup>49</sup>

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48. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 247.

49. Poetry, III, 173.

Mussulwoman (1, Beppo, 77)

Byron's use of Mussulwoman, in contradistinction to Mussulman, signifies his word-play. He seemingly does not invent this word for himself; the usage dates back at least to Dryden's comedy, An Evening's Love (1668).

Nabob (1, The Vision of Judgement, 77)

This is the corrupted form of the Persian word 'naib' signifying a 'deputy' to the ruler or chief, a title fairly common in Turkey, Persia and, more importantly in prospect, in India, which was rapidly coming under British rule in Byron's day. Some of the British officials while posted in India had amassed great wealth and on their return home they displayed it, much to the chagrin of established nobility. They were derisively referred to as nabob: Byron's ironic reference covers this aspect in that he places the nabob in the company of the duke and knight.

Nadir Shah (1, DJ, IX, 33)

Byron alludes to the Oriental historical figure of Nadir Shah (1688-1747), the Persian king known as the Napoleon of the East for his military prowess and for extending vastly the borders of his empire. His exploits, particularly the invasion of India, were quite well known in Byron's day. William Jones had translated into French an account of Nadir Shah.<sup>50</sup>

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50. The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 322.

Nazarene (1, DJ, VIII, 111)

The Arabic word 'nasrani' is etymologically linked to Nazareth, the town of lower Galilee where Jesus spent his youth (hence Jesus's followers are called Nazarenes). Being the Quranic term, it was used by Turks of Byron's day to describe Christians. Byron is to be credited for observing and retaining this Oriental usage.

\*Ollahs (1, B, I, 251)

This is a variant of the Arabic word 'Allah', the Islamic expression for God. As already indicated elsewhere, Muslims invoke Allah on numerous occasions in daily life, especially as a war-cry in battle which renews their faith. Byron's explanatory note covers all routine aspects of their usage.<sup>51</sup>

Oriental Funeral Rites (G, 323 and B, II, 621-31)

What prompts the inclusion of this entry is Byron's claim that his account of the funeral in The Bride is 'a proof' of the 'correctness' of his 'costume'.<sup>52</sup> The Giaour contains only a generalised and passing reference to the 'woman's wildest funeral wail' (323) over Hassan's death. In The Bride, however, details specific to an Oriental funeral occur in the account of Zuleika's death - 'the loud Wul-wullah', 'the handmaids weeping', 'the Koran-chaunters of the hymn of fate' and 'the silent slaves'. These details are both comprehensive and accurate. The full meaning of the Oriental expression 'Wul-wullah' is explained under the relevant head; other aspects of the portrayal

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51. Poetry, III, 168.

52. L & J, III, 165.

testify to his close observation of Oriental life: the Quranic verses are chanted on one's death and women wail, whereas it is not permitted for males to weep aloud - hence the 'silent slaves' and their 'sighs'.

Osman/Othman/Ottoman (20, B (7), G (3), S (3), The Island (1), The Two Foscari (1), CH (2), DJ (3))

The Turkish empire, named after its founder Usman, was known in its anglicized form as the Ottoman empire. Since Turkey is the location of most of Byron's 'Turkish Tales', it is not surprising to note his frequent references to Ottomans. He makes few generalizations about them, but these are singularly free from any bias or jingoism. His account sheds real light on the Ottoman Turks, their characteristics and their lifestyles: for example, Hassan is portrayed as 'true an Osmanlie' with a turban carved on the tombstone of his grave and his life is marked by the observance of Islamic religious norms (The Giaour, 723-46). Mention is also made of Ottomans' fabulous wealth and pomp (DJ, V, 51).

Pacha/Pasha (36, G (1), B (9), C (15), S (2), DJ (9))

This Persian/Turkish word is used as a title to describe a lord or a governor of a province. The Ottoman empire in Byron's day derived its strength from the allegiance of these Pashas to the Sultan, the emperor. As Byron's 'Turkish Tales', particularly The Bride and The Corsair, deal with the Turkish ruling class, there are frequent references to Pashas, which highlight their wealth, grandeur and hospitality as well as their tyranny and despotism. Hassan, Giaffir and Seyd, being Pashas, are described as 'stern'.

Palampore (1, G, 666)

This Turkish expression is explained well by Byron himself as 'the flowered shawls generally worn by persons of rank.'<sup>53</sup> Though the word occurs in Vathek along with Henley's note,<sup>54</sup> Byron is to be credited for describing it as a dress item exclusive to the Turkish nobility.

Peri (3, B (2), I, 151 and II, 85 and CH, 'To Ianthe', 19)

This Persian word for a fairy, denoting extraordinary feminine beauty and charms, is employed metaphorically by Byron. Out of overflowing love for his daughter, Giaffir calls Zuleika 'My Peri' (B, I, 151). Likewise, Zuleika's chamber is described as the 'Peri Cell' (B, II, 85) in order to heighten its exquisiteness. Since the Arabian Nights abounds in references to Peri and Jinn, supernatural beings in Oriental tradition, they may both have been fairly familiar terms for Byron's readers. Peri, along with a brief explanatory note, appears in Vathek, and later, in the very title of the second story, 'Paradise and the Peri', of Thomas Moore's highly popular poem, Lalla Rookh.

Persian Scribes (1, B, II, 75)

'A bright emblazoned rhyme / By Persian scribes redeemed from Time' (The Bride, II, 75-76) figures amid many objects, predominantly religious ones, in Zuleika's tower. These objects symbolise her purity and her remoteness from the real world. The 'emblazoned rhyme / By Persian scribes' seems to underscore her deep interest in art and liter-

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53. Poetry, III, 117.

54. Vathek, p. 138.

ature, suggested earlier with reference to her attachment to 'Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song' (I, 72). The mention of Persian scribes once again demonstrates Byron's thorough familiarity with and appreciation of Oriental culture in that calligraphy is one of the most glorious facets of Oriental culture. 'Since any pictorial representation of living beings - man or animal - is forbidden in Islam, Muslim artists directed their creative spirit to reproducing inanimate objects: hence the immensely rich tradition of the arts of architecture and arabesque.

Pilaff (1, C, II, 31)

The Persian word 'palav' refers to an Oriental dish made of meat covered with rice and garnished with spices. While describing the feast at the Seyd's court Byron mentions this customary sumptuous dish served to guests.

Polygamy (3, DJ, V, 158, VI, 12 and VIII, 105)

Through his stay in Turkey and study of works on Islam, Byron knew about the practice of polygamy among Muslims. His references do not share the pious horror of earlier writers, who treat these customs as a proof of Muslims' licentiousness and lustfulness. His account is characterised, in the main, by a note of humour and amusement. In one of his letters he speaks in a jocular vein of 'the Mussulman legal allotment' of four wives.<sup>55</sup> Describing Turks in Beppo, he remarks: 'They have a number, ... / Four wives by law, and concubines "ad libitum"' (70). Despite his avoidance of mere vituperation, however, his contention that polygamy is a rule, rather than an exception, among

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55. L & J, III, 173.



Muslims is not true. Since he had moved in the circle of the Turkish ruling class who maintained large harems by indulging in polygamy and concubinage, Byron may be held guilty of generalising his limited experience.

Pork (1, Beppo, 92)

The relevance of including this word in a discussion of Oriental diction lies in the point that Byron's reference to pork brings into sharp relief his knowledge of the details of Oriental life - to be precise, of its dietary laws. On meeting Beppo a long time after his sudden disappearance, Laura asks whether he had embraced Islam, commenting that 'they say you eat no pork'.

Rhamazan/Rhamazani/Ramazani (3, CH, II, 60 and G (2), 228 and 449)

Byron's knowledge of Oriental religious life is again borne out by his reference to 'Ramadan', the Arabic name of the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, in which Muslims fast from a little before dawn to sunset. During this month mosques are specially illuminated, as Muslims offer special prayers in the night. Byron's references to Ramadan remarkably cover all these points. As for example in Childe Harold, he mentions 'Ramazani's fast', its 'day long penance' and its conclusion at 'the twilight hour' (60); and in The Giaour he points another significant aspect of Ramadan - at the end of this month Muslims celebrate 'Bairam feast' (228 and 449) as thanksgiving to God. For these bits of authentic information about Islam Byron is indebted not only to such writings as Sale's Quran and Henley's notes on Vathek, but

to his own first-hand observations. According to Marchand, his biographer, while Byron was in Turkey, Ramadan, or the Mohammedan Lent, began.<sup>56</sup>

Rayahs (1, B, II, 384)

Literally the Arabic word 'ra'aya' means subjects. In Turkey and other Muslim countries, however, it came to signify non-Muslim people under Muslim rule. Byron's definition in an explanatory note<sup>57</sup> is accurate.

One of the goals of Selim's move to overthrow the despotic Giaffir is 'To snatch the Rayahs from their fate. - / So let them ease their hearts with prate / Of equal rights, which man ne'er knew' (I, 384-86). As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, in attributing this vision to Selim in The Bride Byron may have in mind the reform programme of Selim III, the Ottoman emperor of the day, who, however, failed in his plans.

Sadi (1, B, I, 72)

Reference to the great Persian poet Sadi (1213-1292), author of Oriental classics such as Gulistan and Bostan further attests Byron's knowledge of Oriental literature. Sadi's Gulistan, abounding in moral precepts, had been a widely circulated work in the Orient. Little wonder then that Zuleika and Selim are found in The Bride reading 'Sadi's song' (B, I, 72).

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56. Byron: A Biography, I, 205.

57. Poetry, III, 195.

Salam (2, G, 358 and DJ, XI, 12)

The Arabic expression 'Salam' stands for the customary salutation among Muslims. Byron provides the full text and a translation in his explanatory note. Though Byron's explanation is perfectly satisfactory, Coleridge offers additional remarks in his annotation which are simply beside the point; for no obvious reason, Coleridge links this greeting formula to a Muslim prayer ritual.<sup>58</sup>

Serai (4, G, 444, B (2), II, 279 and 391 and C, III, 180)

The Persian word 'saray' refers to an inn. However, in Turkey, it was used also as a synonym for a palace. Seraglio, an Italian corruption of serai, has in turn been a standard expression in the West for the harem. Byron uses the word 'serai' quite aptly in that he mentions that 'Leila dwelt in his [Hassan's] Serai' (G, 444) and refers also to Abdullah's Serai (B, II, 279).

Seraskier (1, DJ, VIII, 81)

This Turkish word describes a commander-in-chief; hence Byron's reference to one of this title defending the bastion in the siege of Ismail in DJ (VIII, 81).

Seyd (17, C, passim)

Originally the Arabic word 'Saiyyid' refers to the descendants of the Prophet of Islam. It is, however, also used in the Orient as an honorific title for a ruler or an elderly person. In The Corsair,

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58. Poetry, III, 104.

Conrad's adversary is Seyd, mentioned also as the Pacha to indicate his rulership.

Sherbet (6, B, II, 128, C, I, 427 and DJ (4), II, 180, III, 311 62 and 69)

This is a Persian word for a drink, made of fruit or milk. The real significance of Byron's mention of this Oriental expression is that, since wine is forbidden in Islam, sherbet is the alternative drink at social gatherings and feasts.

Simoom (4, G, 282, Manfred, III, 1, 128 and DJ (2), IV, 57 and XIV, 58)

The Arabic word 'Simoom' refers to the devastating desert blast. Byron did not experience it directly, but appears to have learnt about it from James Bruce's Travels to Discover the Source of Nile (1805). Moreover, the use of Simoom as an image of destruction is quite common in Arabic literature, which Byron may have noted while reading Jones's translations. He employs it as a simile - in comparing Giaour, Hassan's murderer, to Simoom (G, 282) and in likening Haidée to it in order to bring out the unbridled nature of her passion (DJ, IV, 57).

Sophy (1, DJ, IX, 33)

This is an anglicized form of the Persian word 'Safavi' used for the Iranian dynasty (1500-1736). An earlier instance of its use is in William Congreve's Way of the World (1700). Byron describes the Iranian ruler Nadir Shah (1688-1747) as 'the costive Sophy', which is inaccurate, since it was Nadir Shah who brought an end to the Safavid

empire in 1736 by annexing power and establishing the Afsharid dynasty (1736-1795) in Persia.

Spahi ((3), S, (2), 32 and 645 and Mazeppa, 437)

The Persian word 'sipahi' refers to what is known as 'sepoy' in the anglicized form, i.e. a soldier. As to Byron's possible source, it may be ascribed to either his own observation in Turkey or to Lady Montagu's Works in which she speaks of 'the road full of the great spahis' in Constantinople.<sup>59</sup>

Sultan/Sultana (24, G (1), 22, S (1), 65, B (3), I, 316 and 460 and II, 657 and DJ (19), Dedication, 11, I, 87, III, 79, IV, 82 and 114, V, 84, 111, 115 and 126, VI, 7, 9, 89, 114 and 117, VII, 73 and 74 and VIII, 104 and 109)

In Arabic 'Sultan' and 'Sultana' are the titles used of the king and the queen respectively. These were standard expressions in the Orient for describing heads of the state: hence a fairly large number of references to them in Byron's poetry, especially in his description of the court and harem - the two chief preoccupations of Sultans and Sultanas. Byron's account of the Sultan and Sultana brings out some of their main traits - despotism, sexual debauchery, ostentatiousness and fabulous wealth.

Sunbul/Hyacinthine (1, G, 496)

Describing Leila's beauty Byron says: 'Her hair in hyacinthine

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59. Works of Lady Montagu, II, 189.

flow' (G, 496). In the explanatory note he adds: 'Hyacinthine, in Arabic, "Sunbul", as common a thought in the Eastern poets as it was among the Greeks.'<sup>60</sup> William Jones makes a similar point in his Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations when he observes that comparison of the beloved's curled hair to hyacinthine is a common poetical figure in Oriental literature.<sup>61</sup>

Symar (1, G, 1273)

This Arabic word stands for a robe or cloak. Leila reappears 'shining in her white symar' (G, 1273). On Byron's usage of this expression, McGann makes the very insightful comment that 'it emphasizes the special <sup>u</sup>phereal suggestions which his image was meant to evoke.'<sup>62</sup> To this we might add that Muslims bury their dead wrapped in white sheets - hence Byron's specific reference to the white colour of her symar.

Talisman (4, 'The Age of Bronze' (2), 106 and 128, The Two Foscari, II, 82 and DJ, XIV, 62)

This is an anglicized form of the Arabic word 'tilism', meaning a charm or something capable of working wonders. Through the wide circulation of the Arabian Nights and the Oriental tales of Steele (The Guardian, 167), John Hawkesworth's Almorán and Hamet (1761), James Ridley's Tales of the Genii (1764) and Beckford's Vathek (1786), it became such a relatively common expression in English that Walter Scott's work is entitled The Talisman. In all instances of his use Byron employs this expression as a synonym for some charm.

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60. Poetry, III, 110.

61. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 210.

62. CPW, III, 422.

\*Tambourgi/Tambour (2, CH, II, 73 and B, I, 73)

The Arabic word 'tumbur' refers to a kind of lute or guitar and the one who plays it is known in Persian and Turkish as 'tambourchi'.

\*Tchocadar (1, B, I, 449)

Here Byron appears to have slightly misspelt the Turkish word 'Chuhadar', used to describe a footman or attendant in the houses of the great. His definition, outlining the role and function of a Tchocadar, is, however, correct. So is his use of this word, for Zuleika speaks of her father's Tchocadar approaching her, carrying a message from Giaffir.

Timour/Tamerlane (3, The Island, II, 8, The Deformed Transformed, I, 1, 322 and DJ, VIII, 133)

Since the Elizabethan period, and especially after the publication of Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1590), Tamerlane (d. 1405) had been a relatively familiar Oriental figure in English literary consciousness. As to his name, Taimoor was his first name while 'laine', the second part of his name, is the Persian word 'lang', used of a lame person. Since Taimoor was lame, he was commonly known as Taimoor lang, of which the corrupted anglicized form is Tamburlaine or Tamerlane. For having defeated the Turkish emperor in 1402, Tamerlane was praised in a Western Europe then faced with a serious threat from the Turkish army. In keeping with Western tradition, Byron speaks with admiration of Tamerlane's bravery (The Deformed Transformed, I, 321-22). His other references are to his phenomenal rise, from a child of a poor and obscure family to the founder of one of

the largest empires in Central and South Asia (The Island, II, 185), and to his numerous conquests (DJ, VIII, 133).

Tophaike (1, G, 225)

This is a derivative of the Turkish word 'top', which describes a cannon. Not only are Byron's use and definition of this Oriental expression accurate, he also employs it in an apt context, in remarking that the Bairam, the Muslim festival, is announced by the cannon at sunset.<sup>63</sup> The practice is followed to this day in many Muslim countries. The Bairam is observed at the appearance of the new moon, in accordance with the lunar calendar.

Tower (7, G, 294, B (2), I, 40 and II, 62, C (3), I, 124 and 579 and III, 581 and S, 173)

Towers are an outstanding feature of Oriental architecture and are commonly found in mansions. Byron therefore speaks of towers in Hassan's and Syed's palaces and Zuleika's harem.

Turban (38, G (4), B (5), C (2), S (5), Beppo (1) and DJ (21))

The turban is the Oriental headdress, almost an essential part of the outfit of its ruling class and religious scholars. In Byron's 'Turkish Tales' almost all the leading male Muslim characters - Hassan, Selim, Seyd and his men - appear wearing turbans. Again, in Beppo and Don Juan the turban is mentioned in relation to some Muslim personage. Byron also uses this expression as an adjective, in that Muslims are

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63. Poetry, III, 96.



referred to as 'turban'd host' and 'turban'd victors'. As to Byron's close observation of Oriental customs, the following entry in his journal is worth noting: 'Saturday, I went with Harry Fox to Nourjahad;...The dresses are pretty, but not in costume; - Mrs. Horne's, all but the turban, and the want of a small dagger (if she is a sultana), perfect. I never saw a Turkish woman with a turban in my life - nor did anyone else.'<sup>64</sup> In The Corsair and The Seige the turban is used for a functional purpose in that the Dervise and Alp wear it when they appear as Orientals.

Veil (3, B (1), I, 40, C (1), III, 517 and S (1), 327)

The veil is part of the Islamic dress code for women. Western travellers, writers and artists, in particular, have been intrigued by its mystique. Byron shows familiarity with this Oriental custom in The Bride, where Giaffir is all wrath against him 'whose eye beheld / My child Zuleika's face unveiled!' (I, 39-40), and refers to Gulnare's veil (The Corsair, III, 517); but, surprisingly, he does not exploit to any extent this highly suggestive and evocative Oriental symbol.

Vizier (5, B, I, 458, S (2), 663 and 674 and DJ (2), IV, 116 and V, 148)

The Arabic word 'wazir', literally meaning the bearer of the burden, stands for the minister or lieutenant of a king. As Byron's 'Turkish Tales' deal with the life and ways of the Turkish ruling class, Byron refers, of necessity, to the vizier, an essential part of the Establishment. In Byron's account the vizier appears as a noble, trusted and seasoned man, grounded well in the art of governing.

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64. L & J, III, 226.

Wahab (1, CH, II, 77)

Byron alludes to Abd al-Wahab (1703-1787), an Islamic reformer of Arabia, who fiercely assaulted false beliefs, superstitions and innovations which had crept into Muslim society. This was resented by the old guard who accused him of desecrating holy places, including the Prophet's tomb in Madina. Byron's reference embraces all these aspects of Wahab's policy and voices the concerns of that large section of Muslim society which was suspicious of his motives and objectives. He speaks of 'Wahab's rebel brood, who dared divest / The Prophet's tomb of all its pious spoil' (CH, II, 77). In the same vein is the reference to his 'path of blood', pointing to the civil war in the Arabian peninsula in Byron's day, which had been caused by Wahab's revivalist movement and its resistance by the old guard.

\*Wul-wellah (1, B, 2, 627)

Byron explains this as the 'death song of the Turkish women'. So doing, he appears to have mistaken the part for the whole. The Persian exclamatory expression 'wa-wailah' means 'alas' or 'woe' - and so can be expected to form one element of any death song in the Orient.

## Chapter 4

### BYRON'S ORIENTAL SIMILES

Writing in 1772, Sir William Jones, man of letters and distinguished Orientalist, concluded his Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations with a forceful recommendation:

I cannot but think that our European poetry had subsisted, too long on perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables: and it has been my endeavour for several years to inculcate this truth, that if the principal writings of the Asiatics, which are repositied in our public libraries, were printed with the usual advantages of notes and illustrations, and if the languages of the Eastern nations were studied in our great seminaries of learning, where every other branch of useful knowledge is taught to perfection, a new and ample field would open for speculation, we should be furnished with a new set of images and similitudes; we should have a more extensive insight into the history of the human mind; and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate.<sup>1</sup>

Though Jones's impassioned plea for a systematic study of Oriental literature went largely unheeded, Byron's poetry embodies a partial fulfilment of his wish that Oriental literature should be drawn on for 'a new set of images and similitudes'. My primary aim in this chapter is to examine the local effects of Byron's Oriental similes, rather than any overall treatment of the texts. Byron's Oriental similes have received little critical attention. In analysing them I have drawn on some general cues provided by Daniel P. Deneau, Frederick W. Shilstone and Daniel P. Watkins.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Giaour

Throughout The Giaour, the figure of Leila is drawn with the

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1. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 359-60.
  2. Daniel P. Deneau, Byron's Narrative Poems of 1813: Two Essays (Salzburg, 1975), Frederick W. Shilstone, Byron and the Myth of Tradition (Lincoln, 1988) and Daniel P. Watkins, Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales (London, 1987).

help of similitudes; concrete, physical details about her are conspicuous by their absence. She does not utter a single word in a poem of 1334 lines; we get her sketch as viewed by others, as diverse as her lover, the Giaour who idealises her beauty, and the Muslim fisherman who abhors her. Though she prompts all the action in the poem, being at the centre of a fatal confrontation between two men, the Giaour and Hassan, she takes hardly any part in the actual events. Since both men want to possess her exclusively, she is dependent on others for her existence as well as for her description.

As an abstraction of ideal beauty, however, she maintains her ethereal presence throughout the poem, and in keeping with this aura is portrayed mostly in non-human terms. Even after her death, her body is denied the human touch in being referred to as 'the precious freight' (362); and she does not get even 'an earthly grave' (1124). She appears only in a vision before the Giaour and when he tries to 'clasp her' to his 'desperate heart' he encounters a shadowy figure:

I clasp - what is it that I clasp?  
No breathing form within my grasp,  
No heart that beats reply to mine,  
(1287-89)

Shorn of 'breathing' and the 'beating' heart, Leila is depicted mainly in similitudes of 'light' and 'star'. For the Giaour she is 'The Morning-star of Memory!' (1130) and 'a form of life and light' (1127). Little wonder then that the kind of love Leila inspires

is light from heaven -  
A spark of that immortal fire  
With angels shar'd - by Alla given,  
To lift from earth our low desire.

...

She was my life's unerring light -  
That quench'd - what beam shall break my night?  
(1130-34 and 1145-46)

What is striking here is the emphasis on the spiritual and the divine, accentuated by the reference to 'Alla' - the Oriental expression for God - to the exclusion of physical details.

Other aspects of Leila's idealised beauty and her non-human account are brought into play most vividly in the following passage, which is characterised by a preponderance of Oriental images:

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.

...

On her might Muftis gaze, and own  
That through her eye the Immortal shone -  
(473-79 and 491-92)

'The eye's dark charm', 'the Soul' beaming 'forth in every spark', 'the Immortal' shining through her eyes bring out in full the spiritual dimensions of her beauty. She is not compared directly to the gazelle, which could be too concrete an evocation of her physical charms; Byron actually draws the reader's attention to the imaginative impact of the comparison. Again, the Oriental similitude of the jewel of Giamschid reinforces an abstract feature of her beauty - her inward brightness. Even more significant and meaningful is the use of the Oriental expression 'Mufti' in this context. A Mufti is a strict jurisprudent

who prescribes and enforces severe Islamic laws ensuring women's seclusion and segregation. Leila's being is of a kind that makes even such men discover in it the signs of 'the Immortal'.

Leila's purity, innocence and rich associations with paradise are emphasised throughout the poem. Her unstained figure gleaming 'whiter than the mountain sleet' (501) corresponds with pristine Greece in the opening part of the poem. Strikingly enough, both Greece and Leila are portrayed with reference to flower imagery, but what concerns us here are the distinctly Oriental examples:

On her fair cheek's unfading hue,  
The young pomegranate's blossoms strew  
Their bloom in blushes ever new -  
Her hair in hyacinthine flow  
(493-96)

That both the images of 'pomegranate' and 'hyacinthine' are recurrent ones in Oriental love poetry is borne out by the following evidence. In one of his love poems the Persian poet Hafiz, with whom Byron shows some familiarity in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1807), employs the hyacinthine image thus:

When the wine sun fills the bowl of the East,  
It brings to her cheeks a thousand anemones,  
The wind breaks ringlets of hyacinth  
Over the beads of the roses,  
As among the meadows I inhale  
The fragrance of her rich hair.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Anthology of Islamic Literature, ed. James Kritzeck (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 288.

The pomegranate image in a similar context occurs in Jones's translation of an Oriental ode: 'The pomegranate brings to my mind the blushes of my beloved.'<sup>4</sup> Jones makes the same point in his Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations: that pomegranate and hyacinthine are commonly used in Oriental poetry as a means of conveying the beauty of the beloved's cheek and hair respectively.<sup>5</sup>

Leila's close identification with paradise comes out sharply in the following passage, which is once again laden with Oriental images:

But Soul beam'd forth in every spark  
...  
Yea, Soul and should our prophet say  
That form was nought but breathing clay,  
By Alla! I would answer nay;  
Though on Al-Sirat's arch I stood,  
Which totters o'er the fiery flood,  
With Paradise within my view,  
And all his Houris beckoning through.  
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?  
(477 and 480-90)

First, a word about Byron's repeated representation of Leila in terms of the soul, which refutes the popular Western misconception that Islam denies the soul to women. This point is elaborated further in the above passage and in an explanatory note appended to The Bride of Abydos.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, the passage contains Oriental terms such as

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4. The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 422.  
5. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 334.  
6. Poetry, III, 110.



'Al-Sirat's arch', 'Houris' and 'Alla', which are specific to the Muslim paradise. Not only is Leila, as McGann notes, 'deliberately associated with the natural paradise of the landscape',<sup>7</sup> she is closely identified with the Muslim paradise.

Byron then passes on to describe the concomitant fatal consequences of Leila's beauty. This is conveyed partly with the help of the extended simile of 'The insect-queen of eastern spring' (388-421). Byron's reference to 'Kashmeer' butterfly with 'hue as bright, and wing as wild' demonstrates the link between beauty and tragedy but seems primarily present out of sheer exoticism. This image, borrowed from Beckford's Vathek, is by no means specific to the Orient; rather, Byron uses it as a way of recording observations on beauty and its contradictions; its allure, its impermanence, its vain pursuit, its tie with 'idle hopes and fears', and its tragic consequences resulting in 'a life of pain, the loss of peace'.

As to the similes used for the Giaour, his violent temperament is foreshadowed by the following simile which heightens a sense of alarm and danger:

Here loud his raven charger neighed -  
Down glanced that hand, and grasped his blade -  
That sound had burst his waking dream,  
As Slumber starts at owlet's scream -  
(245-48)

The swiftness of the Giaour's movement is likened to 'jerreed' (251) - the Turkish word for a blunt javelin used in equestrian games. Images drawn from nature bring out the Giaour's fierceness, aggressiveness and domineering aspect. Indeed, they help identify him with a force of

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7. Fiery Dust, 156.

nature itself:

He came, he went, like the Simoom,  
That harbinger of fate and gloom,  
Beneath whose widely-wasting breath  
The very cypress droops to death -  
(282-85)

'The cold in clime are cold in blood,  
Their love can scarce deserve the name;  
But mine was like the lava flood  
That boils in Aetna's breast of flame.'  
(1099-1102)

Dark and unearthly is the scowl  
That glares beneath his dusky cowl -

...

And like the bird whose pinions quake -  
But cannot fly the gazing snake -  
Will others quail beneath his look,  
Nor 'scape the glance they scarce can brook.  
(832-33 and 842-45)

The Oriental simile of 'the Simoom' provides a conspectus of the major traits of the Giaour's character in that both the Simoom - the desert blast - and the Giaour spell death, evoke awe and dread, abound in energy, and are capable of changing altogether what they confront. Their victim has to resign to fate in facing them.

#### The Bride of Abydos

Most of the similitudes employed in The Bride concern Zuleika, who shares many features of Leila. Zuleika too is an abstraction of ideal love referred to more than once as 'Peri' (I, 151 and II, 85), the

Oriental word for a fairy. She personifies, in an abstract fashion, 'Beauty', 'Bashfulness' and 'Pity' (I, 226-29). Again like Leila, she is represented repeatedly through the image of light - 'spark of Beauty's heavenly ray' (I, 171), 'the light of love' and an 'eye [that] was in itself a Soul!' (I, 181). Zuleika's association with paradise is stressed throughout the poem, making her appear all the more innocent and pure.

First, reference is made to the paradise-like life she leads in the company of Selim, before the story unfolds itself. This account is loaded with Oriental images which both reinforce the local colour and depict her as a child-like figure endowed with 'nameless charms':

We to the cypress groves had flown,  
And made earth, main, and heaven our own!  
There lingered we, beguiled too long  
With Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song;  
(I, 69-72)

The passage indicates fully Zuleika's remoteness from the real world. Particularly, her retreat to 'the cypress groves' and her preoccupation with 'Mejnoun's tale' and 'Sadi's song', standing for the world of art, music and popular literature, suggest a one-dimensional character given to a life of pure joy.

Oriental motifs figure constantly in the poem, especially in the opening part. The 'gardens of Gul' (I, 8), 'citron and olive' (I, 9), 'the voice of the nightingale' (I, 10) and 'the roses' (I, 14) heighten the serene, romantic setting and contrast starkly with 'the spirit of man' (I, 15) which augurs violence and bloodshed. By the end of the

poem this premonition comes true, resulting in the tragic death of both Zuleika and Selim.

Unlike Leila, Zuleika does not, however, have merely a nominal role in the action. She does participate, though by playing a small part in her small world. Mostly she remains an object of masculine dispute, between her father Giaffir, her suitor, the kinsman of the Bey Oglou and Selim. It is therefore not surprising that her description comes mainly from the accounts of Giaffir and Selim and contains a range of distinctly Oriental similitudes.

Selim's account that Zuleika is the quintessence of religious values and child-like innocence is underlined by a series of similes:

Blest - as the Muezzin's strain from Mecca's wall  
To pilgrims pure and prostrate at his call;  
Soft - as the melody of youthful days,  
That steals the trembling tear of speechless praise;  
Dear - as his native song to Exile's ears.

(II, 402-06)

The use of precise terminology - 'the Muezzin's strain', 'Mecca's wall', 'pilgrims pure and prostrate' and 'the call' - helps to locate Zuleika in a particular cultural context. That she is submissive and obedient to the extreme degree is implied by the call for prayer and pilgrimage to which the faithful respond unquestioningly and instantly.

Her identification with religion - its rituals and its small, protected mode of experience impervious to the harsh realities - appears at its sharpest in the description of her 'chamber' which is littered with religious artefacts. Zuleika's aloof world bears no

correspondence with the real world inhabited by her murderous despotic father and by the lover-turned-pirate, Selim:

The only lamp of this lone hour  
Is glimmering in Zuleika's tower.

...

And o'er her silken Ottoman  
Are thrown the fragrant beads of amber,  
O'er which her fairy fingers ran;  
Near these, with emerald rays beset,  
(How could she thus that gem forget?)  
Her mother's sainted amulet,  
Whereon engraved the Koorsee text,  
Could smooth this life, and win the next;  
And by her Çomboloio lies  
A Koran of illumin'd dyes;  
And many a bright emblazon'd rhyme  
By Persian scribes redeem'd from time;  
And o'er those scrolls, not oft so mute,  
Reclines her now neglected lute;  
And round her lamp fretted gold  
Bloom flowers in urns of China's mould;  
The richest work of Iran's loom,  
And Sheeraz' tribute of perfume;

...

She, of this Peri cell the sprite,

...

Wrapt in the darkest sable vest,  
Which none save noblest Moslem wear,  
To guard from winds of heaven the breast  
As heaven itself to Selim dear;

(II, 61-62, 64-81, 85 and 87-90)

Her 'Peri cell' is an amalgam of a life of religion and luxury, and both these aspects are brought into relief by the use of genuine Oriental

images. As to the religious objects, they are typified by 'beads', 'sainted amulet' with 'the Koorsee text' engraving, and 'A Koran of illumin'd dyes'. Her plush lifestyle with streaks of paradisaal plentitude and gorgeousness is exemplified by the 'silken Ottoman', 'fragrant amber', 'emerald', 'lamp of fretted gold', flowers blooming in 'urns of China's mould', 'Sheeraz perfume' and 'the darkest sable vest'. The link with paradise becomes quite explicit in the concluding lines of the passage. The irony is that Zuleika's 'gorgeous room' is incongruent with 'the rude night' that forebodes ghastly events. Moreover, it is the protected environment of Zuleika's 'Peri cell' that prevents her from responding to Selim's exhortations to flee and move forward from a life of innocence to that of experience, from the cosy setting of her tower to the adventurous world of pirates and rebels. Zuleika is too child-like and passive to join ranks with Selim who is bent on transforming the order of things. She is bound too tightly to the gilded chains of tradition and the status quo. The world she has inhabited all along is too small to make room for change. Her 'virgin grave' (II, 460) sums up her inability to have confronted reality head-on.

Zuleika stands out as a 'fairy form' (I, 286) denoting love, light and hope for Giaffir and Selim. Not unsurprisingly, the latter addresses her in such metaphorical terms:

But be the star that guides the wanderer-Thou!  
Thou, my Zuleika, share and bless my bark -  
The Dove of peace and promise to mine ark!

(II, 395-97)

Both the metaphors of 'The Dove of peace' and the 'ark' resonate with Biblical connotations, stressing Selim's reliance on her. Later on, however, they turn out to be ironical in that Selim's fondness for Zuleika brings about his undoing. This point is made poignantly with reference to his 'fatal gaze':

Escaped from shot - unharmed by steel,

...

There as his last step left the land,  
And the last death-blow dealt his hand -  
Ah! wherefore did he turn to look  
For her his eye but sought in vain?  
That pause - that fatal gaze he took -  
Hath doomed his death - or fixed his chain -  
(II, 557 and 561-66)

For Giaffir too, Zuleika symbolises hope:

But hark! - I hear Zuleika's voice,  
Like Houris' hymn it meets mine ear;  
She is the offspring of my choice -  
Oh! more than even her mother dear,  
With all to hope, and nought to fear,  
My Peri! ever welcome there!  
Sweet, as the desert-fountain's wave  
To lips just cooled in time to save -  
(I, 146-53)

The houri's simile stresses Zuleika's link with paradise and the 'Peri' metaphor her idealised beauty. The fountain simile, perfectly in line with the Oriental setting of the poem, reinforces Giaffir's drawing on comfort and reassurance embodied by Zuleika. Zuleika appears as a means of redemption in Giaffir's arid world.

Another significant strand of this passage is the delight Zuleika offers to Giaffir's senses - that of hearing brought home by reference to 'the voice', 'Houris' hymn', 'mine ear' and of feeling conveyed through 'the desert-fountain's wave' cooling his 'lips'. A similar aura of gratification, this time of the sight, is made in the following lines:

Such to my longing sight are thou;  
Nor can they waft to Mecca's shrine  
More thanks for life, than I for thine  
Who blest thy birth, and bless thee now.

(I, 154-57)

The intensity of Giaffir's emotions, it is worth noting, is represented through an Oriental image - 'Mecca's shrine'.

The twin associations of hope and light encapsulated by Zuleika permeate the expression of sorrow over her death:

Thy Daughter's dead!  
Hope of thine age - thy twilight's lonely beam -

(II, 658-59)

Her consistent identification with light lends greater symbolic significance to the 'glimmering in Zuleika's tower' (II, 62) on the 'rude night' (II, 86). Throughout the poem she stands out as a sign of hope amidst all-round darkness.

Her purity and innocence, though tinged with irony, are brought into play through this similitude:



Fair - as the first that fell on womankind -  
When on that dread yet lovely serpent smiling,  
Whose image then was stamped upon her mind -  
But once beguiled - and ever more beguiling;

(I, 158-61)

The irony implicit in the simile is that it immediately brings to mind the obvious Biblical overtures, implying that Zuleika is a deceitful daughter of Eve. Yet she actually betrays no guile in the action of the poem. On the contrary, she plays the role of a timid, submissive and obedient daughter. Zuleika's link with Eve is suggested again when she tells Selim:

Think'st thou that I could bear to part  
With thee - and learn to halve my heart?  
Ah! were I severed from thy side,  
Where were thy friend - and who my guide?  
Years have not seen - Time shall not see  
The hour that tears my soul from thee -  
Even Azrael from his deadly quiver  
When flies that shaft -

(I, 317-24)

Although Byron idealises Zuleika, it appears that he could not help dropping hints about the seductive, beguiling nature of womankind. A point worth noting is the inclusion of the Oriental image of Azrael, the death angel in Islamic lore, which renders the above account more authentic and moving.

Byron's choice of the name Zuleika as the heroine of this poem is itself ironical; for in the Islamic legend, based on the Quran and celebrated in several Oriental works with which Byron was familiar,

Zuleika appears as a lascivious seductress. By contrast Byron's Zuleika is a paragon of virtue and grace.

An important cluster of Oriental images relating to the rose and bulbul, the nightingale, deserves explanation on more than one count. Apart from the fact that this Oriental legend is apt in a poem like The Bride, a point to which I shall return later, its explication is also important because it was, and remains, incomprehensible to most of Byron's readers. The reviewer in the Quarterly Review (January, 1814) took strong exception to it, remarking: 'Lord Byron has borrowed, we know not whether from some Eastern legend, or his own invention, a little fabulous incident which forms a more graceful and appropriate conclusion to the poem.'<sup>8</sup> The reviewer overlooks the point that this legend actually recurs throughout The Bride. In the very opening lines reference is made to 'the Gardens of Gul in her bloom' (I, 8) and 'the voice of the nightingale' which reappear later in Zuleika's expression of her love for Selim:

'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 -'  
(I, 287-90)

The 'rose' and 'the Bulbul' figure again in the concluding part of the poem. Another point worth mentioning is that Zuleika's association with the Bulbul with its sweetest song fits with earlier references to the sensuous gratification offered by her.

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8. Quarterly Review, 10 (1813-14), 350.

Although the reviewer could not ascertain the origin of this legend, it is definitely an 'Eastern legend' employed frequently in Oriental love poetry, as examples from original texts indicate:

When the rose of the secret had opened and blown,  
The voice of reproach was a bulbul in tone  
(Jami's Joseph and Zuleikha)<sup>9</sup>

The splendour of youth, again  
Has come to the garden.  
The fragrance of the rose carries  
A sweet message to the nightingale  
(Hafiz's 'Paeon of a Dreg-Drinker')<sup>10</sup>

Last night at the feast of the roses and wine  
The nightingale sweetly sang.  
(Hafiz's 'Boatpeople')<sup>11</sup>

The rose and the nightingale myth, being closely related to love, is pertinently and effectively employed in The Bride. In the opening part the paradisaical setting is enhanced by the ever-blossoming rose garden and by 'the voice of the nightingale' which is 'never mute' (I, 10); the emphasis is on permanence, admitting no decline or decay. More interestingly, in Oriental texts the rose is sometimes likened to 'the unresponsive beloved that has nothing to say to the suppliant nightingale.'<sup>12</sup> Byron shows remarkable familiarity with nuances of this Oriental image, for when Selim learns about Giaffir's plan to get Zuleika married to the kinsman of the Bey Oglou, he becomes distraught and turns 'pale-mute-and mournfully sedate -' (I,

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9. Anthology of Islamic Literature, 356.

10. Hafez: Dance of Life, tr. and ed. Michael Boylan, et al. (New York, 1988), p. 28.

11. Hafez: Dance of Life, p. 32.

12. Daud Rahbar, The Cup of Jamshid (Hartford, 1974), p. 7.

256). The news shatters him completely and, lost in his thoughts, he does not give any attention to Zuleika's repeated efforts to elicit a response from him (I, 264-86). As a last resort she plucks the rose and presents it to Selim saying:

'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 -  
And though his note is somewhat sad,  
He'll try for once a strain more glad,  
With some faint hope his altered lay  
May sing these gloomy thoughts away.'

(I, 287-94)

The significance of Zuleika's present of the rose would not have been lost on Selim. Through the images of the rose and the nightingale she conveys her love and reassurance to him. What is particularly striking about this passage is the role reversal. Zuleika introduces herself as the nightingale, promising Selim all that she can do to boost his morale. Generally speaking, in this Oriental legend the female, being the pursued, is represented in the rose and the male, being the pursuer, in the nightingale.

The image of the rose has another dimension in Oriental texts which is adroitly exploited by Byron in the conclusion of the poem, where there is reference to the mysterious appearance of an unearthly rose at Zuleika's grave (II, 670-86). In the original sources the rose can represent, as Daud Rahbar points out, 'quickened flames that once were human beauties or passions or wounds of buried lovers' hearts.'<sup>13</sup>

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13. The Cup of Jamshid, p. 7.

More significantly, the miraculous rose in The Bride appears to re-echo the following passage of Hafiz's 'Thorns and Roses':

Forsaken Joseph  
To Canaan will return.  
Despair not  
Upon the thorny stalks of family grief  
A rose shall bloom.  
Despair not.<sup>14</sup>

For a poem such as The Bride no image could be more appropriate than one that includes the theme of unrequited love in the range of its concern with the passions.

The remaining noteworthy Oriental simile in The Bride occurs in the context of Selim's promise to Zuleika:

For thee in those bright isles is built a bower  
Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour.  
(II, 408-09)

Selim urges her to flee to the 'bower' in order to escape the hostile, despotic and murderous world of her father. The place of refuge is aptly likened to 'Aden' - the Arabic word for paradise, rather than the obvious Biblical 'Eden'. Byron's choice of Aden enhances both the local colour and Selim's notion of a dreamland ensuring uninterrupted bliss.

#### The Corsair

As in the case of Byron's Oriental diction, the incidence of

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14. Hafez: Dance of Life, p. 20.

Oriental similes in the 'Tales' decreases gradually along a line from The Giaour to The Seige of Corinth. An illustration of this is found in the way he portrays Gulnare, the heroine of The Corsair. Though she shares some traits of Leila and Zuleika, in that passing reference is made to her 'heavenly face' (II, 397) and 'white arm' holding 'a lamp' (II, 398), which evoke associations of purity, innocence and paradise, the passage describing her form conspicuously lacks Oriental images. Rather, she is sketched in general terms:

That form, with eye so dark, and cheek so fair,  
And auburn waves of gemmed and braided hair;  
With shape of fairy lightness - naked foot,  
That shines like snow, and falls on earth so mute -  
(II, 402-05)

Nonetheless, an Oriental simile is employed later, when Seyd rejects Gulnare's plea for him to release Conrad for the ransom money:

'Gulnare! if for each drop of blood a gem  
Were offered rich as Stamboul's diadem;  
If for each hair of his a massy mine  
Of virgin ore should supplicating shine;  
If all our Arab tales divulge or dream  
Of wealth were here - that gold should not redeem!'  
(III, 152-57)

Here the rhetorical structure, characterised by hyperbole and the reference to gems and diadem, brings to mind Jones's translation of an Ode by Hafiz, with which Byron was familiar:

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,  
Would give thy poet more delight

Than all Bocara's vaunted gold  
Than all the gems of Samarcand.<sup>15</sup>

The passage recaptures also the idea of fabulous Arab wealth, popularised by the Arabian Nights.

The Siege of Corinth

Though Byron has recourse to several similitudes in exploring the theme of earthly mortality within the context of the havoc wreaked by war in The Siege, none of these is specifically Oriental. For example, the intensity of the battle scenes, with their wanton killings, becomes all the more graphic for being displayed through a series of swiftly-changing similes drawn from the ambit of general experience:

As the wolves, that headlong go  
On the stately buffalo,  
...  
Thus against the wall they went,  
...  
Many a bosom, sheathed in brass,  
Strewed the earth like broken glass,  
...  
Even as they fell, in files that lay,  
Like the mower's grass at the close of day,  
(678-79, 684, 686-87 and 690-91)

The predatory and destructive aspect of war is reinforced by the first simile, while the last one brings out the bleak comprehensiveness of the destruction.

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15. The Works of Sir William Jones, X, 252.

An Oriental image is, however, used in The Siege to accentuate the atmosphere of the impending war:

As rose the Muezzin's voice in air  
In midnight call to wonted prayer;  
It rose; that chaunted mournful strain,  
Like some lone Spirit's o'er the plain:  
'Twas musical, but sadly sweet,  
(221-25)

This Oriental simile functions on more than one level. First, the 'mournful strain' of the Muezzin's call to prayer seems to be pregnant with the premonition of bloodshed on a wide scale. Moreover, it appears also to raise some disturbing yet pertinent questions about the role of religion in public life; for both parties to the siege, bent on exterminating one another, professed strict adherence to their respective faiths - Islam and Christianity. Does religion sanction and sanctify war that spells total destruction? Or is religion too weak, too isolated a presence 'like some lone Spirit', helpless to thwart such a self-destructive pursuit? At another level, the 'lone Spirit' may be identified with Alp himself, who is repeatedly referred to as 'alone' (251, 261 and 309).

From a Muslim viewpoint, this passage is marred by inaccuracy: there is no 'midnight call' to prayer in Islam; Byron perhaps confuses the evening prayer with the midnight service. This minor lapse apart, however, Byron's use of Oriental similes, in addition to achieving specific effects, is characterised by a remarkable appreciation of a culture not his own. The point assumes greater significance from the fact that most of the similes are related to religious tradition and



customs. This itself testifies to Byron's accurate representation, in that religion deeply permeates all departments of human activity in the Orient. His sharp and judicious understanding of intricacies of ritual and conduct in this domain makes his Orientalism all the more unique.

## Chapter 5

### . BYRON'S ORIENTAL CHARACTERS

Informing Lady Melbourne of his having composed 'a new Turkish Tale' - The Bride of Abydos - Byron wrote to her: 'When I speak of this tale and the author - I merely mean feelings - the characters and the costume and the tale itself...are Mussulman.'<sup>1</sup> The aim of this chapter is to study the 'Mussulman' characters of the 'Turkish Tales'. To the best of my knowledge, no enquiry along these lines has so far been made. Marilyn Butler's article on 'The Orientalism of The Giaour'<sup>2</sup> touches on some points which are discussed here; but, generally speaking, existing considerations of Byron's characters are focussed on the Byronic hero. In their studies, McGann,<sup>3</sup> Deneau,<sup>4</sup> Watkins<sup>5</sup> and Shilstone<sup>6</sup> look at character in general terms, without specific reference to any Oriental dimension.

My approach will include examination of how far Byron's characters conform to the Oriental stereotypes of English literature and what image of the Orient they represent. By focussing on the Oriental imagery and vocabulary granted them, I will also explore how far Byron enters into their feelings and attitudes. Some relevant points, particularly relating to The Giaour and The Bride, have been covered in chapter 4 on 'Byron's Oriental Similes' and are not repeated here; I concentrate on The Corsair and The Seige of Corinth. An attempt has been made also to examine the characters in relation to the overall concerns and themes of each 'Tale'.

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1. L & J, III, 175.
  2. Marilyn Butler, 'The Orientalism of Byron's Giaour', in Byron and the Limits of Fiction, eds. Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 78-96.
  3. Jerome J. McGann, Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development, pp. 141-64.
  4. Daniel P. Deneau, Byron's Narrative Poems of 1813: Two Essays, pp. 26-90.
  5. Daniel P. Watkins, Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales, pp. 35-88 and 108-23.
  6. Frederick W. Shilstone, Byron and the Myth of Tradition, pp. 43-98.

The Songs of Geste and The Song of Roland provide the earliest instances of the presence of Oriental characters in Western literary tradition. As The Songs hold a mirror to the crusading and missionary Christianity of the Middle Ages, they understandably represent a distorted image of Muslims, known of course as Saracens in the then West. The misrepresentation, born of deep hostility towards an Islam perceived as heretical, consists not only in a disfiguring of the Islamic creed, the Quran and the Prophet of Islam, but also in the drawing of a repulsive picture of Muslims. Seen as disciples of the devil, Muslims appear in The Songs as physical monstrosities, usually in the form of giants with horns and black in colour and given to violence and bloodshed. Being non-Christians, or rather un-Christians, they are perceived as immoral, indulging in cannibalism, polygamy and buying and selling women and slaves. On them are heaped all sorts of derogatory epithets and insulting remarks. Occasionally they receive a little admiration for their bravery in resisting the Crusaders, yet not only do the Saracens always suffer a crushing and humiliating defeat at the hands of Christians, they also at the first available opportunity recant and denounce their religion and redeem themselves by embracing Christianity. For example, no sooner does Roland tell the Saracen, Sir Magog, in Rauf Coilyear, 'to give up his faith in Mahoun [the Prophet Muhammad] - "Fy on that foule Fiend, for fals is thy fay" - than he readily obliges him, saying 'I will forsaik Mahoun.'<sup>7</sup>

As to the image of Muslim women in The Songs, their picture is, as is pointed out by C. Meredith Jones,

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7. Norman Daniel, Heroes and Saracens: A Reinterpretation of The Chanson De Geste (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 191.

drawn largely from the imagination...She seems to have no other object in life than to fall in love at first sight...with a Christian knight whom she will eventually marry, and for whom she is eager to relinquish her religion. These ravishing and highly sensual ladies are not secluded or sheltered, but pitch their tents in the forefront of the armies so as to display their charms to the Christian heroes whom they are unable to resist. They are ready to sleep with them at once, <sup>8</sup> they ceaselessly engineer opportunities for intercourse.

That such notions had gained a general currency in Western literary Orientalism is corroborated further by study of the plot summaries of The Songs of Geste. In at least twenty Songs some Oriental female readily converts to Christianity. She is usually the wife or daughter or a Saracen ruler who seduces some Christian knight who, in his turn, gallantly rescues her from the shackles of familial tyranny. Occasionally male Oriental characters also appear denouncing their former faith on finding it out as utterly false.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, almost all the remarks about the Orient in pre-Renaissance English literature, as for example in William Langland's Piers Plowman and John Lydgate's Fall of Princes, are heavily biased by way of invective. The negative views persisted in the Renaissance period, the more so because of the impending threat of Turkish aggression. What is, however, significant is that in Elizabethan texts, particularly the drama, the frequency of the appearance of Oriental characters is unusually high. According to Louis Wann's masterly survey of the Oriental in Elizabethan plays (1579-1642),<sup>10</sup>

8. C. Meredith Jones, 'The Conventional Saracens of The Songs of Geste', Speculum 17 (1942), 219 and 220-21.
9. These conclusions have been inferred from plot summaries of The Songs of Geste provided in Norman Daniel's Heroes and Saracens, pp. 328-39.
10. Louis Wann, 'The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama', Modern Philology, 12 (1915), 163-87.

almost all the major writers, including Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Shakespeare, Dekker, Webster, Fletcher and Massinger, offer relevant materials, the vast majority of their Oriental figures being Turks, followed by Moors, Persians and Arabs respectively. Regarding the overall conception of Orientals, Wann observes:

The Turks are generally represented as valiant proud-spirited and cruel...there is scarcely any mention of that hospitality, patriarchal dignity and simplicity, and frank generosity that impress foreigners today as his most prominent qualities.

[The Moors] are more barbarous and lustful...The Elizabethans seem to have had very hazy ideas about the rest of the Oriental nations...Their morals are loose and the monarchs are apt to be tyrannical.<sup>11</sup>

Philip Massinger's Renegado (1624) provides us with an apt illustration. In an almost polemical vein reminiscent of medieval times, the play contrasts Christian purity with Muslim sensuality. Donusa, a Muslim princess, like her counterparts in The Songs of Geste, falls in love at first sight with Vitelli, a Christian dealer, and offers her body to him, for 'her religion allows all pleasure.' Driven by her promiscuity, she seduces Vitelli to her 'private room' and asks him passionately for 'the second entertainment' the next day.

There are fewer Orientals in Restoration literature. There is less preoccupation with the Ottoman Empire and Turks, as they no longer posed any military threat. Nonetheless, the conventional image of the Orient surfaces in references to amorous Muslim tyrants and charmingly seductive harem women, ever-willing to abandon their faith and home and elope with Christian lovers. Dryden's plays with an Oriental cast deserve a special mention in this regard.

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11. Louis Wann, p. 180-81.

In both Massinger's Renegado and Dryden's Don Sebastian (1691) the conventional Orientals stand out - a male Muslim tyrant and a Muslim heroine who forsakes Islam and converts to Christianity. Muley-Moluch, the Muslim ruler in Don Sebastian, is a 'shining...character of brutality' and 'luxurious, close, and cruel, / Generous by fits, but permanent in mischief' (I, 1., 25-26). Then we have the despicable character of the Mufti (a title properly used of a respectable Muslim religious scholar) who embodies sheer opportunism and unbridled sensuality, with his long train of wives and concubines. To gratify his lust Muley-Moluch flagrantly flouts the commands of his religion, and in so doing he is assisted by the cringing Mufti who not only turns a blind eye to the emperor's transgressions but actively sanctions and sanctifies them. Accordingly, Muley-Moluch's wish to abolish a month-long fasting in Ramadan, a duty obligatory on every Muslim, is readily, and without any scruples, granted by the Mufti (I, 1). Likewise, the latter tampers with the text of the Quran to enable the emperor to wed a married woman (III, 1). At the same time, we have the conventional Oriental woman, Morayma, the Mufti's daughter, who goes off with Antonio and makes derogatory statements about her father's creed (III, 11).

Dryden's heroic play, Aurengzebe (1675), claims to deal with the career of Aurangzeb (1618-1707), the last great Mughal emperor of India. His Aurangzeb and other Muslim characters, however, bear little resemblance to the real historical figures. This may be ascribed to the lack of authentic information at the time about Mughal history. Dryden's other play, The Conquest of Granada (1670), marks a refreshing change in that Almanzor, the Muslim hero, champions love and honour; but we find that, although Moors constitute the dramatic personae, the

Oriental touch is conspicuous by its absence, for there are few references to Oriental religion and traditions.

Johnson's Irene (1736) is true to the tradition of The Renegado and Don Sebastian, with a Muslim tyrannical ruler given to lust, cruelty and treachery. Johnson's sympathies blatantly lie with the Greeks, while his Turks are drawn in dark colours. His other work, Rasselas, however, makes a pleasant departure from convention. Based on authentic works on the Orient, it presents Arabs and Persians in a favourable light, never contrasting Christianity with Islam in order to bring home the superiority of the former over the latter. A strong note of intellectual honesty underlies this work, with objective and frank discussions on religious issues. Christians and Muslims alike are first and foremost human beings with all their strengths and follies; they are not simply good or bad for practising a particular religion.

Beckford's Vathek carries further the tradition of Rasselas. Not concerned with conflict between Christianity and Islam, it objectively portrays Orientals and disinterestedly recounts their beliefs and customs. Henley's scholarly notes, culled from authentic sources, greatly help in this regard. Some of the Oriental characters in Vathek do fall much below correct moral standards, but this is not linked to their belief in Islam. For example, Vathek's preoccupation with oppression and violence is not traced back to his Islamic creed. Nor do his irreverent remarks about religion amount to an indictment of Islam in particular, rather they are directed against religion and clergy.



This humanistic broadness of mind, absence of the centuries-old ideological attitudes, cross-cultural sympathies and appreciation of a different, rather alien culture and set of religio-social traditions is exemplified at its best in Byron's 'Turkish Tales'. Only occasionally does Byron betray the influence of convention in his treatment of Orientals.

Before passing on to discuss Oriental characters it seems in order to make some observations on the Byronic hero <sup>o</sup> ~~around~~ whose towering figure, such as that of the Giaour, Conrad and Alp, the 'Turkish Tales' revolve. These heroes are central to each 'Tale' in that the action initiated by them - the Giaour's love for Leila, Conrad's attack on Seyd's palace and Alp's alignment with Muslim army - sets in motion a series of events. What is especially relevant for our purpose, however, is their interaction with Oriental characters in each poem. In Western literary Orientalism a conventional Western hero, drawn usually in the tradition of a gallant Christian knight, makes his appearance in order to rescue an Oriental female suffering at the hands of her tyrannical father or husband. In liberating the subjugated female the hero establishes his moral, physical and cultural superiority. Being an embodiment of light his incursion into the dark Orient blesses the latter with enlightenment. Most of such works afford no meaningful interaction between the Western and Oriental characters which are too polarized in their outlooks.

The other common configuration is the role of adversary between the Western and Oriental characters. Cast as enemies, they appear only to annihilate each other. And as a rule the Western/Christian emerges victorious, overwhelming and routing his Oriental enemy. Seen against

this background the Byronic heroes of the 'Tales' mark a radical departure from convention in the way they relate to Oriental characters.

First a word about the main traits of the Byronic heroes in the 'Turkish Tales', as outlined by Peter L. Thorslev Jr.:

Byron's heroes are Noble Outlaws...their passions are far more subjective, and far more intense. This shows up most vividly in the passion of love...for most of them it [love] is the ruling passion in their lives - and they remain faithful, in true romantic fashion, until death.

The Byronic Heroes of these four romances, then, vary in character largely between two poles; that of the Gothic Villain and that of the Hero of Sensibility. They are all, however, Noble Outlaws, and are therefore active, not contemplative, as are Childe Harold, Manfred and Cain. The Giaour, the least developed of the four, is largely a remorseful Gothic Villain. Selim, of the Bride, is almost pure Hero of Sensibility and Noble Outlaw in love, ...<sup>12</sup>

Some other features are identified by Peter J. Manning. According to him, the Byronic hero is

a thwarted figure, ignorant of the essential self, who represses his inner dismay under a shell of sternness ...He is unable to win the woman he loves from his rivals, who are generally father-figures, and though her picture contains ominous shadows, he is incapable of maintaining a healthful existence apart from her. The recurrence and strength of this configuration parallel to the vision of a child still dependent upon his mother and jealous and fearful of the omnipotent father, is massive testimony of its hegemony in Byron's imagination.<sup>13</sup>

12. Peter L. Thorslev Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis, 1962), pp. 148 and 149.

13. Peter J. Manning, Byron and His Fictions (Detroit, 1978), p. 61.

Let us proceed with The Giaour in order to examine the interaction between the Byronic hero and Orientals. The Giaour, no doubt, falls for the Muslim chief Hassan's wife Leila and kills Hassan to avenge his execution of Leila for her unfaithfulness. Although mutual hatred between the Giaour and Hassan is to the fore, little of this proceeds from their respective religious considerations. Far from being an exponent of the enlightened and enlightening Christianity pitted against a hideous representative of barbaric Islam in Hassan, the Giaour has no empathy whatever for Christianity. Despite his long stay in <sup>a</sup>monastery the Giaour, much to the chagrin of the friar, never attends the 'vesper prayer, / Nor e'er before confession chair / Kneels he, nor reckes he when arise / Incense or anthem to the skies,' (802-05). For his sheer indifference the Friar brands him 'a stray renegade' in that he 'shuns' the 'holy shrine / Nor tastes the sacred bread and wine.' (811 and 814-15). The Giaour finds no appeal in Christianity as he curtly tells the Friar:

Waste not thine orison - despair  
Is mightier than thy pious prayer;  
I would not, if I might, be blest,  
I want no paradise -

(1267-70)

The truth of romantic love which he experiences with Leila is his only consolation (1182-83). The lack of Christian solidarity in The Giaour sets it apart from earlier specimen of literary Orientalism and from such works of his contemporaries as Southey's Roderick and Shelley's Revolt of Islam which seem to emphasise the superiority of Christianity over Islam.

In his outlook and value system the Giaour performs no better

than Hassan. Both the Giaour and Hassan are driven by mutual hatred. And although prompted by a sense of honour and revenge the Giaour kills Hassan who had deprived him of Leila's company, the Giaour's own attitude towards Leila, rather her infidelity is exactly the same as of Hassan. Both the males, though representatives of different religious and cultural tradition, subscribe to the similar code of honour that prescribes capital punishment for an unfaithful wife. Notwithstanding the fact that Leila has to lose her life for her love for him, the Giaour perfectly justifies Hassan's treatment of the recalcitrant Leila: 'Yet did he but what I had done / Had she been false to more than one' (1062-63).

The Giaour's remorse is not for any of his moral and social transgressions. He shares in equal measure the vices and weaknesses of Hassan. Byron casts them in the same mould which rules out the Giaour's superiority over his Oriental adversary.

The Giaour's abundant love for and loyalty to Leila is his most attractive, redeeming feature. In relating this sincere love relationship between a Western hero and an Oriental female, and without resorting to the latter's conversion or demonstrating the former's superiority, The Giaour breaks the stereotype.

As to Conrad in The Corsair, his outstanding feature is his anti-authoritarian stance, actualizing in his strike against Seyd, an Oriental despot. This clash apart, the poem does not enter into polemics by holding Islam responsible for Syed's tyranny. Nor does it attempt to juxtapose the West's superiority with the Orient's negative aspects. For like Seyd, Conrad is equally tyrannical in treating fellow pirates who dread his authority. His valiant move to protect

the honour of harem women by risking his life is, to an extent, reminiscent of <sup>the</sup> conventional Christian knight type Western hero. His chivalry is however offset, rather eclipsed, by an Oriental female, in the shape of Gulnare's heroism that brings about Conrad's release from Syed's captivity and her own freedom from the tyrannical husband. Rather than portraying a conventional Western hero liberating an Oriental female reeling under oppressive patriarchy, Byron reverses the order in depicting an Oriental female securing a Western hero's release by dint of her sheer courage and bravery. Conrad suffers both military defeat at the hands of Seyd's men and psychological defeat against Gulnare whose manoeuvres outwit him. Like Selim, Conrad betrays hesitation in taking a decisive action. Prompted by chivalry he stops his men from entering the harem and going ahead with overpowering Seyd and his men, as a result of which Seyd gains time and reinforcement to arrest Conrad.

As we noted earlier in the case of the Giaour and Hassan, both Seyd and Conrad, especially the latter notwithstanding his anti-authoritarianism, display a striking indistinguishability in their views on gender role and code of honour. For example, Conrad dissuades Gulnare from seeking a way out for his release, for he believes that he had 'earned' 'the meed / Of Seyd's revenge,' (III, 286-87). Moreover, he feels outraged as Gulnare abandons her wifely role and turns into a rebel against 'the oppressor Seyd'. The polarization of gender roles between his wife, 'lonely bride' Medora and 'Gulnare, the homicide' baffles him. Like the Oriental Seyd, he is unwilling to grant space or a greater role to Gulnare. To sum up Byron does not invest Conrad with some halo of superiority for being a Western who stands out above Orientals.

Conrad makes his way into Seyd's palace dressed as a Dervise, an Oriental ascetic. Displaying an amazing integration into the Oriental way of life during this interlude Conrad offers a good example of interaction with Orientals. As to how Byron succeeds in projecting a true-to-life Dervise, this will be studied later in this chapter while discussing other Oriental characters of The Corsair. What is worth noting, on the whole, is that despite his antagonism to the despotic Seyd, Conrad does not harbour any animus against Islam or Orientals. And notwithstanding being 'the most striking of Byron's Noble Outlaws', almost 'a misanthrope' and 'the darkest of his heroes',<sup>14</sup> Conrad relates well with Orientals.

Since Selim is himself an Oriental character and Alp converts to Islam, howsoever superficially, both of them are studied along with other Orientals. Our immediate task is to focus on Oriental characters in each 'Tale' with the aim of further explaining his image of the Orient.

#### The Giaour

One of the striking features of The Giaour is its multiple narration. Though the author's voice controls and manipulates the action and emotions, it lets four different speakers present their own perspectives. These speakers are as diverse in their outlook as they could possibly be - the Muslim fisherman, the Giaour, the friar and the narrator. For our purposes, the fisherman is of special interest. It stands to Byron's credit that he allows a genuine Oriental to relate from his strictly Islamic position almost all the incidents of the poem.

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14. Peter L. Thorslev Jr., pp. 157 and 158.

Unlike most predecessors or contemporaries, Byron does not gag or stifle the Oriental voice.

The presence of this Muslim narrator contributes immediately to the Oriental ethos of the poem in that his images, allusions and attitudes bear a distinct colour. We may remind ourselves, for example, of his description of the Giaour's movement in terms of 'the Simoom' (282), his reference to the Giaour's steed as 'swift as the hurled on high jerreed' (251), his similitude for Leila's eyes as 'bright as the jewel of Giamschid' (479), and his use of the typical Oriental images of 'the Gazelle' (474) and the 'hyacinthine' (496), and of 'the young pomegranate's blossoms' to which he likens Leila's 'fair cheek's unfading hue' (493-95). Other pieces of Oriental vocabulary in The Giaour are drawn from Muslim religious terminology: 'Bismillah' (568), 'Al-Sirat's arch' (483), 'the Muftis' (491), 'Houris's eyes' (791), 'avenging Monkir's scythe' (748) and 'Eblis's throne' (750).

The fisherman's hatred for the Giaour, indeed for his whole race (191), reflects the distance and mutual distrust between the two major faiths. In contrast to other practitioners of Western literary Orientalism, however, Byron does not extend this point to proclaim the intolerance of Islam and the fanaticism of its followers or the compassionate nature of Christianity. Similarly, the reference to the fisherman's belief in 'the evil eye' (196) is a truthful depiction of Oriental character; such beliefs are widely held, and Byron does not exploit the detail as a pretext for attacking superstitiousness. The fisherman's antipathy towards the Giaour, which arises partly because the latter is an infidel and partly because he has killed Hassan and had

illicit relations with a Muslim woman, Leila, then surfaces again in his observation that the Giaour deserves to be slain at the hands of 'Othman's sons' (198-99). Driven by understandable xenophobia, he questions the presence of the Giaour amid the scenes of Muslims celebrating their religious festival - Ramadan and Bairam:

Why looks he o'er the olive wood? -  
The crescent glimmers on the hill,  
The Mosque's high lamps are quivering still;  
Though too remote for sound to wake  
In echoes of the far tophaike,  
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 -  
To-night - but who and what art thou  
Of foreign garb and fearful brow?  
And what are these to thine or thee,  
(221-32)

One striking point about the above passage is the intensity of the local colour lent by the fisherman's interiority to Muslim culture, expressed by his moving account of the sighting of the crescent heralding the Bairam feast, and of mosques with illumination and festivities. But it is the conception of the Giaour as an alien that most stands out. Throughout the poem, the fisherman thus describes the Giaour as an outsider, and even as someone totally cut off from the human scene 'like a demon of the night' (202). His view that he is someone fallen from grace is shared and endorsed by the friar, who can find no redeeming feature in the Giaour, despite having stayed with him for 'twice three years' (798). For the friar the Giaour is 'some stray



renegade' who 'broods within his cell alone' (806) and 'shuns our holy shrine, / Nor tastes the sacred bread and wine' (814-15). Although love can be a highly sublimating and integrating force, in the Giaour's case his love for Leila estranges him further from the social world; it evokes deep disapproval from Hassan, the fisherman and the friar.

The following passage, too, captures the essentials of the fisherman's perception of the Giaour:

Woe to that hour he came or went,  
The curse for Hassan's sin was sent,  
To turn a palace to a tomb;  
He came, he went, like the Simoom,  
Tha harbinger of fate and gloom,  
Beneath whose widely-wasting breath  
The very cypress droops to death -  
(279-85)

The Giaour is seen as a 'curse'; and the calamity unleashed by him is likened to the Simoom, an apt simile at hand for an Oriental, which makes the Giaour an agent of fate and a force of nature that changes irretrievably the order of things. Notwithstanding their condemnation of the Giaour, these utterances serve to render him a formidable, awe-inspiring, even attractive figure. The fisherman's, as well as the friar's, invective, in fact, lends an aura of greatness to the Giaour. This doubling, or bifurcation, of effect testifies to Byron's adroit use of the device of multiple narration.

What is just as significant in an 'Oriental' reading of the 'Tale' is that the fisherman's account has no blasphemy against his own faith, for right from The Songs of Geste to Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh

one of the chief functions of the Muslim characters is for them to forsake their religion and disparage its teachings and commands. Complementary to this is the fisherman's accurate description of Muslim religious life. On this count, Byron once again surpasses other exponents of Western literary Orientalism, whose Muslims project an unreliable, distorted account of things Oriental. Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Massinger's Donusa in The Renegado, Dryden's Muley-Moluch and Mufti in Don Sebastian, Johnson's Mahomet in Irene, Southey's Thalaba and <sup>0</sup>More's Feramorz in Lalla Rookh, though Muslim by profession, betray an untenable ignorance of Islam. For example, Feramorz, the narrator in Lalla Rookh and Hinda in 'The Fire-Worshippers', one of the stories of Lalla Rookh, hurl blasphemous quips about Allah while Thalaba renders an anthropomorphic account of Allah in Thalaba (I, 572-3 and II, 150-51). Needless to say, such false, at times tendentious remarks disfigure Islamic tenets and practices. Byron does not invent Muslim characters in order to discredit Islam.

In terms of his imagery, vocabulary and outlook, Byron's fisherman is thoroughly Oriental. He makes no bones about the side he takes; he dismisses the Giaour as 'the infidel' (351) and laments the murder of Hassan in an elegiac way, glorifying the deceased's virtues, particularly his charity and hospitality:

And here no more shall human voice  
Be heard to rage - regret - rejoice -  
The last sad note that swelled the gale  
Was woman's wildest funeral wail -

...

But Gloom is gathered o'er the gate,  
Nor there the Fakir's self will wait;  
Nor there will wandering Dervise stay,  
For bounty shares not his delay;  
Nor there will weary stranger halt,  
To bless the sacred 'bread and salt'.

...

For Courtesy and Pity died  
With Hassan on the mountainside. -  
His roof that refuge unto man -  
In Desolation's hungry den. -

(320-23, 338-43 and 346-49)

The above passage abounds in Byron's reflections on the degenerative process of history.

In a similar vein, the account of how Hassan's palace was turned into a tomb, following his murder by the Giaour, captures the details of the luxuriant atmosphere of an Oriental palace, with its stable, serfs, bowers, fountains and streams, while making this the occasion for a haunting general study in the landscape of change, loss and the fragility of human creations.

What aids and heightens the elegaic note of the following passage is Byron's use of such specific Oriental expressions as 'the Bat', 'the Owl' inhabiting the palace and 'the wild-dog' howling, a spectacle which in the Oriental tradition conveys desolation, depopulation and utter ruin. For Nigel Leask, the fisherman's 'account of the ruination of Hassan's hall is his own culture's equivalent of the "European" version of the ruination of Greece by its Turkish overlords':<sup>15</sup>

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15. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East, p. 29.

The steed is vanished from the stall,  
No serf is seen in Hassan's hall;

...

The Bat builds in his Haram bower,  
And in the fortress of his power  
The Owl usurps the beacon-tower;  
The wild-dog howls o'er the fountain's brim,

...

For the stream has shrunk from its marble bed,

...

'Twas sweet of yore to see it play  
And chase the sultriness of day -  
And springing high the silver dew  
In whirls fantastically flew,  
And flung luxurious coolness round  
The air, and the verdure o'er the ground. -  
(288-89, 292-95, 297 and 299-304)

The reference to 'Fakir' and 'Dervise' (339 and 340) no longer visiting Hassan's deserted palace produces a particular fidelity to place: in the Orient 'Fakir' and 'Dervise', being poor ascetics, live on the charity of rich persons like the chief Hassan. Just as effective are the lines:

Nor there will weary stranger halt,  
To bless the sacred 'bread and salt'.  
(342-43)

The belief related to the sacred bread and salt - that taking food with the host ensures the safety of the guest - is duly elaborated by Byron in his explanatory note. This custom also explains why Conrad, disguised as a Dervise, declines to share food with Seyd in The Corsair (II, 113-32).

The fisherman's description of Hassan's men when they were about to execute Leila is also laced with solid Oriental content by way of references to their 'ataghan' (355) - the Turkish word for a hunting knife - and to the 'Emir' standing out above others because dressed in the privileged 'garb of green' (357). His account of Leila's death by drowning, apart from its poignancy, is characterised by an equally vivid Oriental image - 'Genii of the deep' - which may possibly be traced back to Byron's reading of the Arabian Nights:

I gaz'd, till vanishing from view,  
Like lessening pebble it withdrew;  
Still less and less, a speck of white

...

Known but to Genii of the deep,  
(380-83 and 386)

Detail upon detail, allusion upon allusion, aid Byron's singular success in shaping an authentic Oriental in the figure of the fisherman. Other relevant data that might have been invoked includes lines on the 'forbidden wine' in Islam, of which 'the bowl a Moslem must not drain' (547-48), and on 'Gouls and Afrits' (784), Oriental nomenclature for evil spirits. Byron's assimilation of the range of an alien culture is quite astonishing.

This range embraces importantly questions of value-judgement, as in the narrator's wholehearted approval of Hassan's drowning of the recalcitrant Leila. For him, since Leila had wronged Hassan, 'with the faithless Giaour' (458), her 'treachery deserv'd a grave' (462). Elsewhere he dubs her 'The faithless slave that broke her bower, / And, worse than faithless, for a Giaour' (535-36). Strikingly enough, he heaps his most abusive epithet, 'faithless', on both the Giaour and

Leila: on the former for being a non-Muslim and on the latter for having deviated from Islamic norms.

Nonetheless, Byron does not single out the Muslim fisherman for harbouring 'hatred for others'. 'Hate', 'loathing', 'abhorrence' and 'hostility' are like some epidemic afflicting all the characters - Muslim as well as Christian. In the words of McGann, 'vengeance or the "mutual interchange of wrong for wrong" is, in Byron's poetry, the focal Satanic element, and the story of the Giaour is an attempt to explain its nature.'<sup>16</sup> While the fisherman loathes the Giaour's race (191) and regards him 'false infidel' (747), the Giaour 'hates' and 'abhors' Hassan (1018 and 1035). So does the Friar 'dislike' the Giaour; and even the Giaour notes the friar's 'abhorrence' on his brow for his deeds (1161). Both the Muslim fisherman and the friar, representing their respective cultures, employ a similar range of language laden with religious superstition and curse, and both demonize the Giaour. Moreover, the Giaour tells the friar about 'the Paynim Hassan's supposed hostility to his creed' (1039-1041). The fisherman's scornful remarks about the 'faithless' Giaour are matched by the Giaour's about the 'Paynim fool', Hassan (683). The exchange of polemic between them is amazingly even.

Just as important with regard to the rampant violence and hatred prevailing in the poem, the 'Advertisement' to The Giaour refers to several territorial disputes, accompanied inevitably by wars, in the Seven Islands, Morea, Misitra and Russia. There is not just antagonism between characters, but conflict is a very way of life (67, 318-19 and 747-86); and by stressing this, Byron, it seems, questions the codes,

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16. Fiery Dust, p. 156.

both Christian and Oriental, that let violence go unchecked. The traditions espoused by both the Muslim fisherman and the Christian friar fail to stop the vicious cycle of physical destruction - not least Hassan getting Leila murdered and the Giaour killing Hassan in return. In Islam the punishment for adultery is stoning to death, but the Turks had altered the mode of execution; they drowned the transgressors in a sack. Accordingly, Leila meets this fate. Moreover, Islam forbids marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man. This religious consideration impels the Muslim fisherman to denounce more abhorrently Leila's illicit relations with 'the faithless Giaour' (458). For him Leila's 'treachery' - both marital and religious - justifiably deserves 'a grave' (462). His hatred for the Giaour proceeds from his religious belief in that he consistently derides his 'Christian crest' (256).

Again it is on religious grounds that the Giaour seeks to win the friar's sympathy for his murder of Hassan:

Thou wilt absolve me from the deed,  
For he was hostile to thy creed!  
The very name of Nazarene  
Was wormwood to his Paynim spleen.  
(1038-41)

One may therefore hold that both traditions - Islamic and Christian - are seen to be responsible, to some degree, for the violence in the poem.

Against this backdrop, Leila's ideal beauty attains greater meaning; it marks the only streak of light and life amid the enveloping darkness. At another level, however, the violence is caused by Leila;

her beauty is a source of both life and death. The idea of beauty leading to tragedy is encapsulated in the butterfly simile. An Oriental similitude, 'The Insect-queen of Kashmeer' (389-90), is used for Leila's beauty. However, soon the butterfly image develops into an allegory for bringing home some reflections on 'Beauty'. First, its lure and seductiveness are set forth, for it 'Invites the young pursuer near, / And leads him on from flower to flower' (391-92). This pursuit, however, culminates in 'A chase of idle hopes and fears, / Begun in folly, closed in tears' (398-99). For, even if one wins the object of beauty, be it 'the insect' or 'the maid' (401), it results only in 'A life of pain, the loss of peace' (462). In other words, the attainment of the ideal brings about disillusionment. Moreover, in the process the 'fiercely sought' object loses all its 'charm, and hue, and beauty' (408). Byron's vision is 'caught' negatively in a bind where beauty, a source of possible salvation, is simultaneously a source of destruction. This is perhaps an aspect of Byron's ironic universe.

As to Byron's sketch of Leila, it is worth remembering that we have already covered some ground in chapter 4 on 'Byron's Oriental Similes' in that a series of Oriental similitudes and images are used in portraying her. The following discussion is by way of supplementing what is said on pp.133-38 of this thesis.

Byron's Leila exhibits some remnants of the stereotype - an Oriental female subjected to tyranny, total segregation and subjugation and deprived of personal and sexual freedom. Her attempt to break bondage results only in losing her life. She is greeted not only with death but also with blame and condemnation. The fisherman's scathing



remarks stem from his perception of her failing to conform to society's and religion's notion of a good woman. She does not enjoy even basic freedom and is treated more as an object, rather than as a person, over which two males - both the Oriental Hassan and the Western Giaour relentlessly fight. Although Leila suffers at the hands of fellow Orientals - her husband kills her for infidelity and her co-religionist fisherman abhors her for her moral and religious treachery in having an affair with the non-Muslim Giaour - even her lover the Giaour would like to see her bound to the same stringent moral code that rules out her sexual freedom. Thus in relating Leila's miserable lot Byron does not target or single out the Islamic code, but indicts both Islamic and Christian morality.' Given this context, Marilyn Butler's comment assumes greater significance: 'Leila's tragedy provides the human context against which the claims of the great religions are seen, and it is notable that neither religion has a space for her, in this world or the next.'<sup>17</sup>

Though Leila prompts the action in the poem, causing her own death and that of Hassan and such anguish in the Giaour that he denounces life, there is little in the poem directly about her. Apart from the fisherman's passing reference to what he describes as Leila's 'treachery' (462), it is through the Giaour's account that we learn about her. To him 'she gave her heart' (1068) and for him she stands as 'the Morning-star of Memory' (1130). Like Hassan, Leila shares some features of the conventional Oriental, not least her dissatisfaction with, or rather rejection of, the loveless husband, and her falling in love with someone of a different faith. The lack of matrimonial love

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17. Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East', in Byron: Augustan and Romantic, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London, 1990), p. 75.

in Oriental society is indeed a recurring theme in Byron's 'Turkish Tales'. Leila, Gulnare in The Corsair and Gulbeyaz in Don Juan are all victims of it, being represented as playthings, reeling under a hard yoke. For Hassan, Leila is merely 'lovely toy' (404), and Gulnare in The Corsair takes up the same point in referring to herself as 'a toy for dotard's play' (III, 342). In Leila's affair with the Giaour there is, however, no polemical note. She neither recants her Muslim faith nor does she choose the Giaour as her lover for being a Christian and hence a superior being.

At the level of political allegory Leila's tragedy, as recognized by Byron critics, corresponds to the contemporary Greek liberation movement against the Ottomans. According to Jerome J. McGann, 'She seeks freedom from bondage with Hassan, and if she is destroyed as a result, her will to action remains a moral lesson to the enervated Greeks.'<sup>18</sup> For Nigel Leask, Leila stands 'as symbolic embodiment of the Hellenic values underlying European civilization, [which] can find representational space only as a beautiful corpse or as the phantom which returns near the end of the poem.'<sup>19</sup> The violence inflicted on defenceless Leila may, in a sense, be taken as Byron's indictment of the raging imperialist violence of his time. In sum, in portraying Leila Byron remains scrupulously faithful to local colour and retains some features of conventional Oriental female yet this Oriental setting helps him to disrupt commonplaces and move one to examine broader social and political issues.

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18. Jerome J. McGann, Fiery Dust, p. 156.

19. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East, p. 33.

Having discussed Leila, let us turn to Hassan. Hassan's character, it is clear, retains some elements of the conventional Oriental despot. Little wonder then that in more than one place he is described as 'stern' (519 and 587) and accordingly his voice and frown 'Are dreaded more than hostile sword' (599-600). The terrible punishment he inflicts on Leila in order to prove himself a 'true Osmanli' (Turk) is again in line with the ways of Oriental tyrants. Like the fisherman, Hassan, too, expresses his revulsion for the Giaour's 'vile faith' (616) and in view of 'his evil eye' (612) he regards him as 'the accursed Giaour' (619). As noted earlier, the Giaour entertains similar bias against the Muslim faith. In such moments Byron seems attracted by the very idea under scrutiny, whatever its moral implications; he explores as well as breaks down prejudice. Byron achieves this effect mainly by alternating contradictory outlooks on the characters and action of the poem. As already indicated, the action is related by diverse narrators - the Muslim fisherman and the Giaour - who could not be more opposed to each other. Their accounts of the same events, seen from different perspectives, carry strong overtones of their presuppositions - personal, cultural and religious. The friar's account is not also altogether free from prior assumptions. These views are, however, constantly contrasted with the objective point of view provided by the principal narrator or the authorial controlling voice.

For example, driven by his hatred for non-Muslims, which is aggravated further by the Giaour's illicit affair with Leila and his murder of Hassan, the Muslim fisherman represents the Giaour in such abusive terms as 'a demon of the night' (202), a 'dark courser' (207),

'unwelcome' (212), an embodiment of 'hatred' (235) with a 'haughty mien' (256) and an 'infidel' (351), rather 'false infidel' (747) and brands Leila 'the faithless slave' (535). The principal narrator, however, emphasises throughout Leila's beauty in referring to her as 'the loveliest bird of Franguestan' (506) and does not pass any value-judgement on her relationship with the Giaour. The fisherman's laudatory portrait of Hassan (288-351), with a marked emphasis on his charity and hospitality, is matched by the narrator's account, focussing on his negative qualities such as being 'stern' (517, 519 and 587) with 'fiery flashes' (589), curling his beard 'with ire' (593) and glaring 'his eye with fiercer fire' (594) and his 'frown and furious word' (599). Hassan's description of the Giaour is inevitably coloured by deep antipathy. He despises his 'pallid brow' (611), his 'evil eye' (612) and regards him as an 'Apostate from his own vile faith' (616) and as the 'accursed Giaour!' (619).

The main narrator's sketch of the Giaour has none of these prejudices; rather he glorifies the Giaour's 'nameless spell' (838) and his 'spirit' that is 'yet unquelled and high / That claims and keeps ascendancy' (840-41) and his 'noble soul, and lineage high' (869). The friar, however, likens the Giaour to an 'evil angel' (912). In his turn, the Giaour pours scorn over the 'Paynim', 'Ungrateful fool' - Hassan (1041 and 1042). According to him, Leila is not some 'erring' woman who wrongs her husband; on the contrary she appears to have deep, true love for him: 'To me she gave her heart' (1069), and 'She was a form of life and light' (1127). He does not see Leila guilty of any crime: 'hers was not guilt! / She was my life's unerring light' (1144-45). The technique of the multiplicity of narrators, each

bearing his own set of prejudices, undoubtedly provides Byron with an opportunity to explore the very issue of prejudice.

The Oriental traits of Hassan's character are, whatever else, unmistakable and genuine. He is introduced as 'an Emir' in the 'garb of green' (357); he curls 'his beard with ire' (593). He dresses in 'turban' (659) and in 'flowing robe' (661), with 'palampore' (666), 'calpac' and 'caftan' (717). At the time of his death he calls on 'the Prophet' and 'Alla' (679 and 681) and his face turns to heaven (668).

Nor is he all callousness and despotism. Byron is fair and prudent enough to invest him with positive qualities, as in, for example, the reference to his charity and hospitality - his generosity towards everyone, particularly the poor and the ascetic (339-40), his bounty for strangers (341-42), his 'Courtesy and Pity' (346) and his offering 'refuge' for the desolate (347-48). My viewpoint is corroborated by this observation of Peter J. Manning: 'The first glimpse of Hassan surprisingly shows not the ruthless murderer of his faithless beloved but an infant enveloped in liquid maternal happiness.'<sup>20</sup> As a result, Byron's Hassan stands strikingly apart from his counterparts in The Songs of Geste and works of Marlowe, Massinger and Dryden. He has both virtues and vices.

The Oriental locale of The Giaour facilitates Byron to present what Watkins refers to as 'surprisingly comprehensive symbolic formulation of the world as Byron saw it.'<sup>21</sup> Apart from dealing with such socio-political issues as vengeance, violence, the role of religion in private and public life, the political allegory linking the subjugation

20. Peter J. Manning, Byron and His Fictions (Detroit, 1978), p. 37.

21. Daniel P. Watkins, Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales, (London, 1987), p. 15.

tion of Greece to Leila's tragic lot, beauty and its fatal consequences, ruin and degenerative process of history, it raises also the theme of isolation which is, in a sense, personified in the Giaour. The Giaour, literally meaning in Oriental languages someone outside the mainstream religious tradition, appears throughout the poem as an outcast and an outlaw who has violated and defied both the divine and the moral law. And he feels no remorse for his transgressions. Byron's concern with the theme of isolation may possibly have an autobiographical touch in that at the time of writing The Giaour, as Andrew Rutherford informs us, he had 'an awareness of having been an outsider when he came to London.'<sup>22</sup>

An especially significant theme of The Giaour for our purpose, however, is that the poem seems to question the very assumptions underlying contemporary imperialistic and evangelical projects. It, no doubt, points to Oriental despotism and violence but it brings out as well, almost in an equal measure, negative features of Christianity - its bigotry and cheerless morality. The Giaour and Hassan as well as the fisherman and the friar are cast in the same mould. The vices attributed by the West to the Orient exist according to Byron in the West itself. In its failure to offer solace to the suffering Giaour, its pious horror over his sins and its condemnation of Leila for being a pagan and an adultress, as expressed by the friar, Christian morality is seen to be no better than the rigid Islamic tradition. The Giaour, in a sense, subverts the imperialist and evangelical discourse of the day built around the idea of Christianity's redemptive power. This strand of Byron's Orientalism makes him markedly distinguishable from his contemporaries, especially Southey and Shelley, in the field.

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22. Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 39.

The Bride of Abydos

In a letter to Lord Holland, Byron informed him of the design of his forthcoming poem, The Bride: 'The Bride is to be appended to the G[iaou]r...is thoroughly Eastern...partly from the Koran.'<sup>23</sup> The 'thoroughly Eastern' credentials of the poem are borne out by the very absence of any non-Oriental character in the poem and by several allusions to Oriental traditions and customs. Unlike other 'Turkish Tales', The Bride is not dominated by the overwhelming presence of the Byronic hero. Its hero, Selim, is no match for the Giaour, Conrad and Alp - the dominant figures of the other 'Turkish Tales'.

As the poem opens, we are introduced to the 'old Giaffir' with 'deep thoughts in his aged eye', 'mind with unconquerable pride', 'pensive cheek and pondering brow' (I, 24-30). Beyond physical features come insights into character, and they too point to an archetypal figure. As an orthodox Oriental, subscribing to the segregation of the sexes, he is outraged to learn of his daughter's outings: 'Woe to the head whose eye beheld / My child Zuleika's face unveiled' (I, 38-39). Why he reacts so angrily is explained later in the text, 'To meet the gaze of strangers' eyes / Our law, our creed, our God denies' (I, 429-30).

Behind the imperious and jealous man there lurks a doting father, addressing his daughter as 'my child' even in a fit of anger; his affection for Zuleika, as we shall see, comes to the fore at several places in the poem. Nonetheless, the despot overtakes the loving parent, in his assertion that Zuleika's 'fate is fixed this very hour' and that she would be 'taught duty' by him (I, 41 and 43). Being the

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23. L & J, III, 168-69.

Pacha, or ruler, he expects others to act on the dictum: 'to hear is to obey' (I, 44). He exercises absolute control over 'many a gallant slave' (I, 20) awaiting the 'Lord's behest / To guide his steps, or guard his rest' (I, 22-23). Everyone in the palace is at his beck and call: '"Let the chamber be cleared - the train disappeared - / Now call me the chief of the Haram guard"' (I, 32-33).

Under the Oriental guise, Giaffir stands out as a symbol of an authoritarian power-structure against which Selim later rises in revolt. Moreover, Giaffir's attitude betrays contempt for and low opinion of womankind. In a true Oriental vein, he mocks Selim's 'less than woman's hand' which should better 'Assume the distaff - not the brand' (I, 99-100). Likewise, he proudly tells Zuleika:

And now thou know'st thy father's will -  
All that thy sex hath need to know -  
'Twas mine to teach obedience, ...  
(I, 215-17)

In recreating an Oriental atmosphere in The Bride Byron appears at his sharpest in relating the incidentals of Giaffir's world: his 'clapping hands' for summoning servants, his pastime of enjoying 'jerreed' and 'mimic slaughter' in the company of 'Maughrabee, Mamaluke, the Kislari and Moors', and exclaiming 'Ollahs' in the excitement of javelin-throwing (I, 231-51). Such habitual assertiveness and involvement in warlike pursuits may be seen as part of Byron's indictment of a political tyranny of which violence is an ineluctable component. Like the fisherman in The Giaour, moreover Giaffir has an ingrained and aggressive distrust of adherents of faiths other than his own; for he sneeringly refers to Selim's 'unbelieving mother' (I, 82)



and to him being 'Greek in soul' (I, 87). In the same vein, he disparages 'the dogs of Moscow' (I, 96) and 'the curs of Nazareth' (I, 98). The dehumanizing, animal imagery is reflective of his deep religious and racial prejudices. Giaffir's dislike of people of different persuasions is not, however, so intense as his hatred for Selim, whom everyone takes to be his son. This is how he gives vent to his true feelings for Selim: 'He is an Arab to my sight, / Or Christian crouching in the fight' (I, 144-45). His hostility towards Christians is offset by an equally dismissive reference to his co-religionists - Arabs.

As a self-centred despot, Giaffir has scant regard for others' feelings. Rather, 'he does not feel' and is ready to bear down with nonchalant force upon the lives around him (I, 172). Illustrative of this is his 'bid' to Zuleika to get married to a 'kinsman of the Bey Oglou' (I, 206), which would accure her 'noble dower' and him greater 'united power' (I, 210). Far from seeking his daughter's consent or taking her into his confidence, he simply commands her to marry someone of his choice. Such is his dreaded authority that she, on being told of her fate, 'in silence bowed the virgin's head' (I, 219). That this man is in fact a 'stern usurper' (II, 260), guilty of fratricide in killing Abdalla - Selim's father - is discovered later by Selim. To Selim he justifiably appears as 'a tyrant' (II, 298) and 'the despot' (II, 326). This 'rash and unrelenting chief' (II, 651) eventually succeeds in getting rid of Selim, who had dared to challenge him.

Notwithstanding his heinous murder of his own brother, his scorn for Selim, his tyranny and despotism, there is an amazingly tender side

to his character - his overflowing love for his daughter, Zuleika. For him, Zuleika's voice is 'like Houris' hymn' (I, 146-47). The following passage reflects his abundant affection:

My Peri! ever welcome here!  
Sweet, as the desert-fountain's wave  
To lips just cooled in time to save -  
Such to my longing sight art thou;  
Nor can they waft to Mecca's shrine  
More thanks for life, than I for thine  
Who blest thy birth, and bless thee now.  
(I, 151-57)

That Zuleika might 'save' him suggests that he takes her as a means of redemption. What is, however, more complex is the cluster of sensual images - 'sweet', 'lips', 'cooling' and 'longing' - emphasising the sensual gratification offered by her to him. Beneath this there lurks perhaps a tension, rather conflict between a father's love and a lover's 'longing', hinting incest that figured as a theme in the first sketch of The Bride, which Byron deliberately suppressed and rejected. Nevertheless, the strain of incestuous love reappears<sup>re</sup> in a much more pronounced form in Zuleika's love for her brother Selim, which is discussed later in this chapter (pp. 189-90 ).

The split between the outer and the inner or the public and the private aspects of Giaffir's personality comes out in another passage notably conveying the extent to which he is 'bound' to Zuleika:

Zuleika came - and Giaffir felt  
His purpose half within him melt;  
His heart though stern could ever feel -  
Affection chained her to that heart -  
(I, 187-91)

And a similar strength of feeling is present in his response to Zuleika's death, reflecting genuine grief and sorrow (II, 652-53).

We notice Byron's customary accurate Oriental details in this elegaic lament (II, 651-68), but the important point is that his characterization of Giaffir as a whole far transcends that of typical literary Oriental despots such as Dryden's Muley-Moluch. Byron goes beneath surface features to tensions, contradictions and complexity.

Some Byron scholars point to the close resemblance between Giaffir and Ali Pasha, the chief of an Albanian province whom Byron came to know personally. William A. Borst offers the following explanation of his recreation of Ali Pasha as Giaffir:

The powerful personality of Ali Pasha moved Byron profoundly. The spectacle of a willful human being who could rise above his fellows always fascinated him... There was...a great deal that was appealing in the primitive power and passion of Ali, the very enormity of his egoism and ambition. Except for the portrait of Ali Pasha in *Childe Harold*, Byron never pictured Ali Pasha directly in his poetry. Ali was, however, undoubtedly the model from which Byron drew...the cruel and treacherous Pasha Giaffir in *The Bride of Abydos*.<sup>24</sup>

It needs always to be stressed that in depicting the loathsome aspects of Giaffir Byron is not directing ire against Orientals in particular; rather he is condemning corrupt authority. As to Borst's observation, though interesting, it really misses the point. What makes Byron's Giaffir distinctive is that we see revealed in him a range of emotions and urges beyond, and set off against, those of the expected 'cruelty' and 'treachery'.

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24. William A. Borst, *Lord Byron's First Pilgrimage* (New Haven, 1948), pp. 76-77.

Byron was fascinated also with Zuleika herself, so much so that he initially entitled The Bride as simply Zuleika, as is evident from an entry in his journal.<sup>25</sup> (He appears to have learned about the name Zuleika, 'the Persian poetical name for Potiphar's wife',<sup>26</sup> from William Jones's account of Oriental literature).<sup>27</sup> Unlike the ethereal Leila in The Giaour, she is a centre of attention. As to her physical features,

Such was Zuleika - such around her shone  
The nameless charms unmarked by her alone -  
The light of love - the purity of grace -  
The mind - the Music breathing from her face!  
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole -  
And, oh! that eye was in itself a Soul!

(I, 176-81)

Zuleika stands out here as an abstraction of idealised beauty. This perhaps signifies Byron's escapism. Amid the sordid, gruesome world of The Bride, rife with Giaffir's despotism and Selim's collusion with pirates, Zuleika represents what life should be - pure and beautiful.

Not only is Zuleika outwardly attractive, she is blessed with inner beauty - devoted gentleness, obedience to her father and immense love for her brother - Selim. As an Oriental female brought up in a patriarchal society, her obedience, or rather subservience, is almost absolute: and in this, she exercises remarkable self-abnegation. On being told of her father's decision to get her married to a total stranger, she does not register any protest. Though Islam prescribes the consent of both partners as an essential prerequisite for marriage,

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25. L & J, III, 205.

26. Byron: A Biography, I, 419.

27. The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 369.

such arranged marriages are quite common in the Orient. Byron vividly brings out the Oriental practice of forced wedlock in designating Zuleika as the bride for 'Osman's bed / She - whom thy sultan had but seen to wed' (II, 656-57).

Again, however, things are by no means as straightforward as they may seem. Zuleika's love for Selim is central to the plot of the poem; and what is puzzling is the nature of her love, which veers from the sisterly, affectionate love to incestuous desire (I, 394-99). This brings to mind Byron's affair with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, an aspect recognised by Leslie A. Marchand in his observation: 'The model for Zuleika was perhaps a composite of his feelings for Augusta and Lady Francis Webster.'<sup>28</sup> The theme of incest is not, however, developed in the poem. Byron introduces revenge motive for Selim's revolt against Giaffir which eclipses altogether the theme of incest. That Byron purposively rejected this theme is evident from his letter to Edward D. Clarke:

I had nearly made them [Zuleika and Selim] too much akin to each other - and though the wild passions of the East - and some great examples in Alfieri - Ford - and Schiller (to stop short of Antiquity) might have pleaded in favour of a copyist - yet the time and the North (not Frederick but our Climate) induced me to alter their consanguinity and confine them to cousinship.<sup>29</sup>

It is difficult to say what really compelled Byron to 'induce the alteration' - apprehension of provoking unnecessary attention to his own affair or deference to tradition. Nonetheless, since The Bride is con-

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28. L & J, III, 195.

29. L & J, III, 199.

cerned with the themes of conflict between tradition and rebellion and of passion in its varied manifestations, the passage in question is of special interest; for it shows Zuleika overcoming, though momentarily, her submissiveness and asserting her sexuality:

With thee to live, with thee to die,  
I dare not to my hope deny;  
Thy cheek, thine eyes, thy lips to kiss,  
Like this - and this - no more than this,  
For, Alla! sure thy lips are flame,  
What fever in thy veins is flushing?  
My own have nearly caught the same,  
At least I feel my cheek too blushing,  
(I, 392-99)

Her 'fever' and 'blushing' unmistakably point to sexual arousal. She is in the end, however, firmly bound to the chains of tradition. Aware of her 'weaker sense' (I, 412), fearful of Giaffir's wrath (I, 416) and conscious of her religious law and creed, the Prophet's will and God's commands (I, 430-32), she controls her passion. Far from going any further, she soon retraces her steps:

Ah! yonder see the Tchocadar,  
My father leaves the mimic war;  
I tremble now to meet his eye -  
(I, 449-51)

The trembling Zuleika's conformity, reflected in her wholesale surrender to her father, ultimately brings about her tragic end. For she witnesses as a mute, silent spectator her father killing Selim. She never gathers courage to flee with Selim. At Selim's death she is so much struck with grief that she dies. Byron is interested in the urge to transgress boundaries, but also in the ultimate force of convention.

Like others Zuleika is thoroughly Oriental. Take, for example, her characteristically Oriental allusion to 'Azrael' (I, 323), the angel of death in Muslim lore. More significantly, her 'Peri cell' (II, 85) displays rich Oriental setting, with its 'silken Ottoman' (II, 64), 'fragrant beads of amber' (II, 65), 'her mother's scented amulet, / Whereon engraved the Koorsee text' (II, 69-70), her copy of 'the Koran of illumin'd dyes' with 'many a bright emblazon'd rhyme / By Persian scribes' (II, 73-75), and 'The richest work of Iran's loom / And Sheeraz' tribute of perfume' (II, 80-81). The preponderance of religious objects identified with Zuleika reinforces her association with tradition; and apart from possessing such objects (which include the 'combolio' as well as the 'Koran', 'Koorsee text' 'amulet'), she is often found invoking earnestly Allah and the Prophet, and swearing by 'Mecca's shrine' (I, 312). In this regard, she differs radically from the conventional Oriental female in The Songs of Geste and other works of Western literary Orientalism, who, as we have seen, peremptorily abandons her faith and falls for the first Christian that comes her way.

In portraying Zuleika, Byron attempts to grapple with a whole range of issues and concerns. As a signifier of tradition, she performs perfectly the accepted social role of a woman; she is at the beck and call of masculine power. As an idealised beauty, she is no more than a treasure, an object to be retained or won. Her compliance with her father's command to marry Osman Bey is in line with what is expected of a female. She is too immobile, too timid and of 'weaker sense' (I, 412) to join Selim; she simply withdraws as the fatal confrontation between Giaffir and Selim is to take place. Her tragedy flows from her inevitable subservience to authority and unquestioning

loyalty to the values of religion, family and nation. Her domestic life offers a microcosm of political life, with identical threads binding her to authority and the denial of freedom. What on one level may be respected as virtuous conduct according to the rules, is on another a source of self-imprisonment and tragic circumstances for others.

Having discussed Giaffir and Zuleika, let us now turn to the other Oriental, Selim, who is a somewhat problematic figure, for as pointed out earlier, Byron's 'Turkish Tales' are essentially stories of Byronic heroes, the only exception being the Bride with its all-Oriental cast. Indeed Selim seems, at least in part, to be constructed as the opposite of a Byronic hero. Unlike the Giaour, Conrad and Alp, he is not an exile. Though he resembles the Giaour in being torn between love and hate, he has none of his fierce passion. He rebels, but does so too little and too late.

As the poem opens, we find Selim subjected by Giaffir to such taunts as 'son of a slave' (I, 81), bred 'from an unbelieving mother' (I, 82). In response, 'No sound from Selim's lip was heard' (I, 105). On being harshly told not to see Zuleika any more, he merely appears 'pale - mute - and mournfully sedate' (I, 256). However, in keeping with his own repeated statements, 'Think not I am what I appear' and 'I am not what I appear' (I, 381 and 482), there is a sea-change in his outlook, mainly after discovering how Giaffir had got his father Abdalla killed and that he is Giaffir's wronged nephew, not his son. On visiting Selim's grot, Zuleika does not fail to note that 'some change seem'd wrought within' (II, 115). She notices a pile of arms and brands of foreign blade and hilt 'in a nook within the cell' (II, 122-23 and



120) and 'a cup too... / That did not seem to hold sherbet' (II, 126-27). Selim now appears in 'his robe of pride' with pistols and sabre swinging from his belt (II, 131 and 138-39). More importantly, 'high command / Spake in his eye - and tone, and hand' (II, 147-48). He reminds Zuleika: 'I said I was not what I seemed - / And now thou see'st my words were true' (II, 151-52). Having overcome his timidity and cowardice (II, 536-37), and feeling 'liberated' (II, 345), he devises a plan to seek revenge against Giaffir for his father's murder. The old Giaffir, however, strikes first the deadly blow and Selim's tragic death is too much for the innocent Zuleika, who then dies of a broken heart. The sudden change in Selim's character may be explained in the light of Peter L. Thorslev Jr.'s analysis. Combined in Selim are traits of both the Gothic Villain and Hero of Sensibility. His revenge motive and urge to restore family honour are reflective of the former whereas his walks and lingering in cypress groves with Zuleika listening to 'Mejnoun's tale or Sadi's song' (I, 71-72), Oriental stories of tragic love, link him with the latter. In addition, for the outburst of his outlawry, his vindication of piracy and his loss of inheritance as a result of his father's murder, Peter L. Thorslev Jr. regards him 'the first of Byron's fully developed Noble Outlaws.'<sup>30</sup>

What is important for our purpose is, however, to examine whether Selim is portrayed as a genuine Oriental. Typically of Byron's Orientals - the fisherman, Hassan and Giaffir - Selim thinks low of other races, as is evident from his dismissive reference to Zuleika's prospective husband as someone belonging to the 'viler race' of Israel (I, 376). There is a great deal of such like authenticity. Take, for example, his attendance before Giaffir:

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30. Peter L. Thorslev Jr., The Byronic Hero, p. 155.

And downcast looked, and gently spake,  
Still standing at the Pacha's feet. -  
For son of Moslem must expire,  
Ere dare to sit before his sire!

(I, 49-52)

His swearing by 'the Prophet's shrine' and invoking 'the Koran verse' (II, 187 and 189) for guarding and preserving his oath are in the customary Oriental style. His frequent references to 'Alla' (II, 301) and the Prophet 'Mahomet' (II, 325) befit a Muslim.

In view of Selim's genuine Islamic vocabulary, feelings and attitude, it is rather surprising to note Anahid Melikian's remark: 'It never becomes clear who Selim's mother was, and whether Selim is a Muslim, a half-Christian, or really of no faith at all.'<sup>31</sup> Melikian overlooks some pretty obvious evidence, as we have seen. Furthermore, Selim's remark on some Muslims flouting the religious prohibition of wine has a ring of truth:

This cup too for the rugged knaves

...

Our Prophet might forgive the slaves,  
They'r only infidels in wine.

(II, 317 and 319-20)

His preoccupation with the 'Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song' (I, 72) again underpins his Oriental credentials. Especially the allusion to Mejnoun's tale, a popular tragic Oriental story of unfulfilled love hints at the similar tragedy to befall Selim and Zuleika. Byron often lends colour to his 'Turkish Tales' by inserting finer details about Oriental dress - for example, Zuleika appears 'Wrapt in the darkest

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31. Anahid Melikian, Byron and the East (Beirut, 1977), p. 53.

sable vest, / Which none save noblest Moslem wear' (II, 87-88) - and, strikingly enough, when Selim rises in revolt against Giaffir, this is symbolically represented by his disrobing and putting off the turban: 'His robe of pride was thrown aside, / His brow no high-crown'd turban bore' (II, 131-32). Selim's implicit statement about his supporters within Giaffir's palace is made in Oriental terms of reference, as he triumphantly tells Zuleika 'Within thy father's house are foes - / Not all who break his bread are true' (II, 270-71). The allusion to the sacred 'bread' has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

In sum, Selim is genuinely Oriental like the rest of Byron's characters in this tale. Notwithstanding a passing reference to his being bred by an 'unbelieving mother' (I, 82) and being 'Greek in soul' (I, 86), there is no attempt on Byron's part to Christianise him. So doing, Byron avoids a practice common among his predecessors and contemporaries, who often resort to the strategy of redeeming a Muslim character by this direct and unsubtle route - as is the case from the character of Saladin in Boccaccio's Decameron, Langland's Saracens, Dante's Muslim philosophers (Avicenna and Averroes) in The Divine Comedy through Dryden's Alamanzor in The Conquest of Granada to Moore's Azim in Lalla Rookh. All of these tend to be virtuous because of their having embraced the truth of Christianity, if not actually having been converted. They are found condemning their faith by way of self-reproach. Byron's Selim and other steadfast Oriental characters signify a break with this centuries-old tradition.

Through Selim, especially his rebellion against the authoritarian Giaffir, Byron seems to be addressing the twin issues of failed revolution and heroism. According to Nigel Leask, 'Selim's revolt...

fails because he cannot reconcile his notion of heroism with realpolitik, and the revolutionary values of his pirate band.<sup>32</sup> Although there is some revolutionary plotting aiming to overthrow the tyrant and reference to the debate on 'visionary schemes' 'To snatch the Rayahs from their fate' (II, 383-84), there is no sustained effort on Selim's part to conceive and execute his revolutionary plot. His attachment to Zuleika is too distracting, culminating in his 'fatal gaze' (565). Moreover, the introduction of revenge and family honour motive divests his venture of a broader social and political context. For Leask Byron could 'only contemplate the limits of aristocratic heroism, whilst nurturing a compensatory scepticism about the effects of revolutionary democracy.'<sup>33</sup>

At the level of political allegory Selim's revolt corresponds, in a sense, with the Greek uprising against the Turks in Byron's day, though the former is very localised and springs from personal motives. Selim's lack of a concerted plan and impoverished resources and his lonely battle too, connect it to the Greeks' lot. Notwithstanding these socio-political implications, Selim is thoroughly Oriental, demonstrating once again Byron's remarkable ability to enter the feelings and ethos of a culture not his own.

#### The Corsair

Before discussing the Oriental characters in The Corsair, it is worth noting some similarity between the plot of this poem and that of the medieval romance, The Sowdone of Babylone. The former is centered on Floripas, a Saracen princess who falls in love with a knight imprisoned

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32. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East, p. 39.

33. Nigel Leask, p. 44.

in her father's castle and helps the knight to overpower her father. The Corsair, nevertheless, is free from the polemical overtones of the earlier text, which is solely concerned with the theme of degrading a Muslim ruler through the treachery of his own daughter. There is a conventional parallel, but The Corsair goes well beyond it in complexity.

The most striking feature of this complexity is that central to The Corsair is the idea of the 'change of form' (II, 143); in the course of the action Conrad becomes disguised as the Dervise and Gulnare's soul too is 'changed' (III, 320). Having lived all her life 'as a slave un murmuring' (III, 331), the latter resolves to 'try the firmness of a female hand' (III, 381) and is quite successful in playing this role. Her words to the captive Conrad resonate deeply with the idea of freedom:

I have gained the guard,  
Ripe for revolt, and greedy for reward.  
A single word of mine removes that chain:

...

That hated tyrant, Conrad - he must bleed!  
I see thee shudder - but my soul is changed -  
Wronged - spurned - reviled - and it shall be avenged -  
Accused of what til now my heart disdained -  
Too faithful, though to bitter bondage chained.

...

Those tyrants, teasing, tempting to rebel,  
(III, 312-14, 319-23 and 327)

Physical and moral revolt on Gulnare's part permeate the above passage, underlined by her refrain-like references to 'revolt', 'chained', 'change', 'avenged', 'bitter bondage chained' and 'to rebel'.

Gulnare becomes the very symbol of freedom. She frees not only herself but Conrad as well; and, in so doing, she is inspired by Conrad, whose attack on Syed's palace marks an attempt to overthrow him and to change the order of things. Gulnare acknowledges this point, saying: 'What sudden spell hath made this man so dear?' (II, 424). However, in an amazing role reversal Gulnare succeeds where Conrad fails. Conrad's attack on Syed, though daring, backfires, resulting in his captivity, whereas Gulnare, a mere 'defenceless beauty' (II, 218), manages to kill Syed, win over his guards and secure her liberation and Conrad's release. Unlike the timid, submissive Leila and Zuleika, Gulnare overwhelms both the males - Seyd physically in murdering him and Conrad psychologically in stupefying him by her indomitable courage and resourcefulness.

In the first encounter with Gulnare in his captivity, Conrad is 'dazzled with the light' (II, 429) as he looks at her. The ethereal 'light' of Byron's other heroines becomes here a veritable force and a compulsion. What is perhaps implied is that Gulnare is too formidable a person for Conrad to withstand. Though he tries to resist and dissuade her, he goes on yielding to her invariably at every step. Significantly enough, even in the very first meeting Gulnare is seen commanding him: 'Look at me - and remember' (II, 437). Later on, she reminds him: 'Corsair! Thy doom is named - but I have power' (II, 460). She ventures 'on the dangerous path' (III, 205) which stuns even the otherwise fearless Conrad to the point of disbelief:

He had seen battle - he had brooded lone

...

But ne'er from strike - captivity - remorse -

From all his feeling in their inmost force -  
So thrilled - so shuddered every creeping vein,  
As now they froze before that purple stain.

(3, 418 and 422-25)

That Gulnare completely overpowers him is summed up thus: 'And Conrad following at her beck, obeyed (III, 448). Important clues to this effect are there even in her first encounter with Conrad; for she is not overwhelmed or awe-struck, like others, by his outward appearance:

Much did she marvel o'er the courtesy  
That smoothed his accents, softened in his eye:

...

Seemed gentler than Seyd in fondest mood.

(II, 261-62 and 264)

She perceives Conrad in terms of his 'courtesy', 'smooth' accent, 'softened' eyes and 'gentleness'. There is some suggestion of effeminacy in Conrad, especially in Gulnare's company Conrad becomes something of a meek person. This signifies a double role-reversal in the poem - Gulnare takes on the role of Conrad and the latter tends to behave like the latter.

In terms of the conception of woman, Byron's Gulnare is a problematic figure, whose actions do not conform to traditional roles. What is worth noting is that both Gulnare and Conrad are conscious of this disparity. That she herself is torn between what is expected of her as a woman and what she actually desires as an individual is neatly put across in the following lines: 'The wish is wrong - nay worse for female - vain: / Yet much I long to view that chief again' (II, 269-70). Through portraying an Oriental woman who is kept segregated, Byron, it seems, is attempting to open up the question of woman's rights, particularly her sexual passions, and to challenge her role of angel

Gulnare resolves to achieve what she wants; her ambition, singleness of purpose and determination are no less convincing than those of the dreaded pirate chief, Conrad:

My love stern Seyd's! Oh - No - No - not my love -

...

...it would not be.

I felt, I feel, love dwells with - with the free.

(II, 499 and 541-42)

Her strong-minded rejection of Seyd and the transition of her utterances from the past tense to the present signify her resolve to break once for all the chains of 'bondage' (II, 524) and attain 'release' (II, 526). In so doing she fears 'no death' (II, 534). She is full of initiative and daring and is fully cognizant of this (III, 380-85) - a point that emerges even more vividly in the passage in which she juxtaposes her activeness with Medora's passivity:

I rush through peril which she would not dare.

If that thy heart to hers were truly dear,

Were I thine own - thou wert not lonely here:

An outlaw's spouse - and leave her lord to roam!

What hath such gentle dame to do with home?

(III, 299-303)

Not only does Gulnare despise Medora, 'the gentle dame', she calls into question the very role of a domestic female.

Throughout The Corsair Byron interrogates social norms and the relationship between the sexes by focussing consistently on the plight and misery of Gulnare. She, rather the whole harem, exists for the sheer physical pleasure of Seyd. Little wonder then that Gulnare



considers herself a mere 'slave' who is 'to bitter bondage chained' (III, 323). Seyd derides her plea for releasing Conrad:

Release my foe! at whose remonstrance? - thine!

...

I do mistrust thee, woman! ...

...

Know'st thou that I can clip thy wanton wing?

(III, 171, 178 and 191)

His dismissive view of Gulnare is encapsulated in his branding her as a bird with 'wanton wing' and his intention to 'clip' her betrays his authoritarianism and tyranny. Though she is apparently a domestic woman, her life teems with and is vitiated by all that strikes at the very foundation of domestic bliss. Apart from being denied any respect, confidence and mutual trust, she is condemned to a painfully unfulfilled physical existence:

He takes the hand I give not - nor withhold -  
Its pulse nor checked - nor quickened - calmly cold:  
And when resigned, it drops a lifeless weight  
From one I never loved enough to hate.

(II, 511-14)

Veering from the commonplace theme of loveless marriage, this passage takes up the issue of sexual injustice, or rather the denial of female sexuality. In Gulnare's numbness is a stark subterranean vein of smouldering desire.

Gulnare's rebellious, strong-willed statements, stemming from her defiance of both divine and moral law, materialising later into her murder of Seyd, completely shake Conrad. This conception of woman is too disturbing for him. First, he tries to reason with her, dissuading

her from being attracted to him and asking her to remain faithful to her lawful husband: "Lady - methought thy love was his" (II, 497). Later on, when she actually kills Seyd, Conrad refuses to consider her, whom he looked upon only as a 'weaker prey' (II, 206), even a woman; she is too unnatural to have any feminine features: 'That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak, / Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!' (III, 426-27). For him, 'Gulnare, the homicide!' stands in stark contrast to 'his lonely bride' (III, 462-63) - Medora, the quintessence of femininity. Conrad's fellow pirates, too, are intrigued by Gulnare:

They whisper round, and gaze upon Gulnare;  
And her, at once above - beneath her sex,  
Whom blood appalled not, their regards perplex.

(III, 513-15)

Notwithstanding their perplexity, in sketching such an unconventional female as Gulnare Byron unsettles the customary assumption of womanly character and conduct.

Gulnare is not, however, altogether devoid of features which link her to Leila and Zuleika, the models of ideal beauty and femininity. There are streaks of the paradisal form in Gulnare, too: "'tis an earthly form with heavenly face!" (II, 397). Her constant association with light (II, 398 and 429 and II, 271) as she enters the captive Conrad's cell evokes connotations of life-sustaining influence. Her character has been marked also by a certain tenderness. Despite all her masculine courage, she is occasionally overcome by peculiarly feminine emotions, as is evident from her confessional statement:

She knelt beside him and his hand she prest,  
'Thou may'st forgive though Alla's self detest;  
But for that deed of darkness what wert thou?  
Reproach me - but not yet - Oh! Spare me now!  
I am not what I seem - this fearful night  
My brain bewildered.'

(III, 469-73)

The ambivalence in Gulnare's character reaches its peak at the close of the poem, registering another 'change' in her, in that she appears to regain the traditional feminine qualities of modesty, gentleness, humility, dependence and insecurity:

And now he turned him to that dark-eyed slave  
Whose brow was bowed beneath the glance he gave,  
Who now seemed changed and humble: - faint and meek,  
But varying oft the colour of her cheek  
To deeper shades of paleness - all its red  
That fearful spot which stained it from the dead!  
He took that hand - it trembled - now too late -  
So soft in love - so wildly nerved in hate;  
He clasped that hand - it trembled -

(III, 531-39)

In summary, Gulnare 'is not what she seems' in many respects; neither 'the Haram queen' (II, 224) nor 'slave' (II, 224) or 'slave unmurmuring' (III, 331), nor a mere 'toy for dotard's play' (III, 342), nor a 'defenceless beauty' (II, 218), nor 'the homicide' (III, 463), and above all not a stereotypical Oriental female. When she finally reverts to routine womanly appearance and behaviour it is with an ironic suggestion that she has, for better or for worse, gone beyond them - it is 'now too late' - and that there can never be the whole truth about her, or a source of positive stability.

Seyd is another of Byron's characters who is not only Oriental in name but represents, to some extent, the conventional character of Western literary Orientalism. The 'stern' Seyd (III, 132), literally the chief, demanding obedience (II, 99-100) and 'thirsting for revenge' (III, 161), brings to mind the recurrent type of the despot. In line with this is his deep distrust and low opinion of womankind. He tells Gulnare, his wife: 'I do mistrust thee, woman' (III, 178); and he rejects scornfully her plea for setting Conrad free for ransom money. So doing, he shows no regard for the counsel given by his wife; he dismisses her contemptuously and charges her, for no apparent reason, with unfaithfulness. Branding her a 'deceitful thing' (III, 190), the ruthless Seyd threatens her with the chilling warning of sack death, administered to Leila in The Giaour. Other traits of despotism soon surface:

He rose - and slowly, sternly thence withdrew,  
Rage in his eye and threats in his adieu:  
Ah! little recked the chief of womanhood -  
Which frowns ne'er quelled, nor menaces subdued;  
(III, 194-96)

There are repeated references to his 'wrath' and 'rage' (III, 204 and 206) directed against Gulnare, whom he treats as a mere 'slave' (III, 202). He is all hatred for Conrad, on whom he lays the familiar contemptuous Oriental epithet, 'the Giaour' (III, 173). He is foolish, too. In anticipation of his victory over the pirates, he throws a feast in which his 'bearded chiefs' take 'forbidden draughts' (II, 32), and these 'revellers...securely sleep / On silken couch' (II, 39-40) while they are being surrounded by Conrad's men. Byron's account captures the decadence disfiguring Seyd and his courtiers. Like Byron's

other Orientals Seyd invokes 'Allah' (II, 6), but unlike others his knowledge of Oriental religion is defective; for example, in trying to persuade the reluctant Dervise to accept his food, he says: 'What ails thee, Dervise? eat - dost thou suppose / This feast a Christian's?' (II, 117-18). Far from forbidding Muslims to partake food with Christians, the Quran makes it a point to announce that 'the food of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) is lawful for you and yours is lawful for them.'<sup>34</sup>

Seyd's traits as an Oriental ruler given to issuing commands and demanding unquestioning obedience stand out in his interview with the Dervise, which is full of imperatives:

Stay, Dervise! I have more to question - stay,  
I do command thee - sit - dost hear? - obey!  
More I must ask, and food the slaves shall bring;  
Thou shalt not pine where all are banqueting;  
The supper done - prepare thee to reply,  
Clearly and full, I love not mystery.

(II, 99-104)

Combined in Seyd are all the vices of tyranny - of which his treatment of Gulnare is but a particularly glaring instance. Analysing Seyd's weaknesses, Daniel P. Watkins, however, overstates his love for money: 'Whereas the worlds of Hassan and Giaffir had been defined mainly by blind power and violence, in Seyd's world, these are subsumed by money, which more than any other single concern gives his social life its coherence.'<sup>35</sup> Though Seyd's 'feast' and 'banqueting' (II, 102) amount to a show of wealth, and though Gulnare's plea for releasing Conrad for

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34. The Quran, 5: 6.

35. Daniel P. Watkins, p. 73.

ransom consistently harps on the monetary gains that will accrue to Seyd (III, 145-52), he dismisses her plan outright, without being even momentarily tempted by Conrad's treasure in return for his release. For him, typical Oriental as he is, the sense of honour is of utmost importance. He believes firmly in exacting revenge, and responds accordingly to Conrad's surprise attack:

Vengeance swells the cry -  
Shame mounts to rage that must atone or die!  
And flame for flame and blood for blood must tell,

...

When wrath returns to renovated strike,  
(II, 235-37 and 239)

Driven by a burning desire for vengeance and for restoring his pride, he summarily rejects Gulnare's representations in a language which rules out even an interest in money, let alone any love for it:

Gulnare! if for each drop of blood a gem  
Were offered rich as Stamboul's diadem;  
If for each hair of his a massy mine  
Of virgin one should supplicating shine;  
If all our Arab tales divulge or dream  
Of wealth were here - that gold should not redeem!  
(III, 153-58)

Seyd is devoid of almost any redeeming feature. Again, however, Byron does not link his vices to his faith as part of any polemical design. As an embodiment of sexual and political tyranny he receives Byron's trenchant criticism.

A study of Conrad's character in itself would be out of place for the purposes of examining Byron's Oriental characters. However, since

Conrad appears for some time in the poem disguised as a Dervise, the Oriental equivalent of an ascetic, it seems in order to discuss how far Byron's representation of this 'figure' is authentic and to what effect he uses the Dervise's Oriental pretensions.

What strikes us first about Conrad is his abstinence - his subsistence on 'Earth's coarsest bread' (I, 71) and his shunning of 'the grosser joys of sense' (I, 75). This point is worth noting on more than one count. First, it helps to bring out in sharper relief Seyd's pleasure-seeking lifestyle, marked by 'feast' (II, 3), 'banquet' (II, 31), 'pilaff' (II, 31) - the Oriental word for an exotic food - 'forbidden draughts' (II, 32), 'berry's juice' (II, 33) and 'Almahs' dancing 'to wild minstrelsy' (II, 36). Moreover, Conrad's later disguise does not appear too incongruous in that a Dervise practises the same self-denial as is ascribed to Conrad in the early part of the poem.

Conrad's disguise is not merely functional; in his dress, vocabulary and outlook, he performs as a genuine Oriental. First, a word about the Oriental items of his dress. His 'dark-green vest' (II, 53) is in line with the privileged position of the green colour in Muslim culture, to which I have referred earlier. Moreover, it conforms to the practice of most Dervise orders, which make it compulsory for members to wear always a green dress. His 'sable locks', 'lofty cap' (II, 57 and 58) and 'robe' (II, 146), comprising his 'saintly garb' (II, 144), perfectly befit a Dervise. The last two items of his dress are of special interest in that with the 'change of form' (II, 143), revealing him as a pirate chief who had made his way into Seyd's palace, he 'Dashed his high cap, and tore his robe away -' (II, 146), signalling the end of his pretence.

Not only in dress but in the use of the language the disguised Conrad appears as a thorough Oriental. Significantly enough, Oriental expressions are employed by him only during this interlude, neither before nor after it. Some examples of his Oriental vocabulary are: 'Alla' (II, 68), 'Pacha' (II, 76) - the Turkish title of a ruler; 'Divan' (II, 106) - the Turkish term for a ruler's court; 'Sultan' (II, 129) - another Oriental appellation for a ruler; and 'Prophet's rage', 'Mecca's dome' and 'pilgrimage' (II, 131 and 132) - in the context of the annual Muslim ritual of pilgrimage. More importantly, the authenticity of the Dervise is corroborated by his wide familiarity with and correct understanding of Oriental traditions and customs. He appears before the ruler, Seyd, as is customary, with folded arms (II, 153), and waits till 'the Pacha's will' allowed him to speak (II, 64). Again, in the usual Oriental fashion, he addresses Seyd as the 'most mighty Pacha' (II, 76), and as a Dervise he shuns sumptuous food (II, 113-16) on the grounds that its consumption will infringe his Dervise order's rule, which will, in turn, bring about 'the Prophet's rage' (II, 131). Like Seyd, he is quite familiar with the Oriental tradition of the 'sacred pledge' (II, 119), relating to the host's bread and salt 'Which, once partaken, blunts the sabre's edge, / Makes even contending tribes in peace unite, / And hated hosts seem brethren to the sight!' (II, 120-22).



That the disguise is not some crude device employed simply in accordance with the dictates of dramatic action is further confirmed by the fact that it does leave some lasting effect on Conrad. The 'stern Conrad' (I, 506) who was 'Too firm to yield, and far too proud to stoop' (I, 255) and 'hated man too much to feel remorse' (I, 262) becomes a somewhat tamed, generous and submissive person after his period in the role of Dervise, as if the 'change of form' (II, 143) did bring about a transformation, or even regeneration. In subsequent passages he displays compassion towards the Harem women at risk to his own life. The change in him is sudden: 'for on his ear the cry / Of Women struck, and like a deadly knell / Knocked at that heart unmoved by battle's yell' (II, 200-02). . The unrepentant and irreclaimable pirate chief starts thinking that 'Heaven will not forgive / If at my word the helpless cease to live;' (II, 207-08) and he speaks of his soul lightening of 'at least a crime' (II, 210). The very act of rescuing 'the defenceless' (II, 218) Gulnare from flames is in the same vein of sacrifice and atonement.

Little wonder then that he tries hard to dissuade Gulnare from falling for him, telling her '"Lady - methought thy love was his, for whom / This arm redeemed thee from a fiery tomb"' (II, 497-98). Overcome by remorse over his 'many a lawless deed' (III, 287), he asks Gulnare not to 'seek an outlaw's life to spare / And change the sentence I deserve to bear' (III, 284-85). Deep moral considerations lurk beneath his utter shock over Gulnare's murder of Seyd, though her act guarantees a new lease of life for him. As to his meekness, as we noted earlier, he follows Gulnare 'at her beck, obeyed' (III, 448). As a true recluse, indifferently resigned to fate, 'Nor cared he now if

rescued or betrayed' (III, 449). Above all, he responds stoically to the devastating news about his beloved Medora's death: 'He turned not - spoke not - sunk not - fixed his look' (III, 599). All this suggests that his disguise is not merely cosmetic; he appears to have imbibed, though in part, the very essence of a Dervise. In his case 'the change of form' seems quite genuine. Not only does Conrad appear outwardly as a true-to-life Dervise, he tends afterwards to behave in the manner of a Dervise. In acting a pose Conrad, in a sense, seems to discover his true self.

#### The Siege of Corinth

Although Coumourgi figures as an Oriental Pasha in The Siege, Byron portrays this character quite sketchily. First, there is a passing reference to the 'Spahi's bands' advancing under 'each bearded Pacha's glance' (32-33) and 'the turbaned cohorts thronging the beach' (80); which is followed by a highly generalised account of Coumourgi who 'cursed the Christian's victory' (101) and 'led the Mussulman' in order to 'refix the Moslem's sway' (107-08). Some insights into his character may be obtained from the speech he delivers before the war commences. It reflects an interest in bloodshed - and his scant knowledge of the Islamic law of war:

Leave not in Corinth a living one -  
A priest at her altars, a chief in her halls,  
A hearth in her mansions, a stone on her walls.

(665-67)

Coumourgi's command to kill every Christian and raze the town to the ground appears to be taken straight from some account of the Crusades. Islam, no doubt, allows war, mainly in self-defence, but it strictly forbids the slaying of non-combatants, particularly harming the clergy and destroying property and crops.

What little Byron says about Coumourgi is somewhat in line with the conventional image of the Oriental chief given to wanton killing. Nevertheless, his account of the Muslim warriors has none of the rancour and abuse that permeates the descriptions in The Songs of Geste and in Southey's Roderick; rather it suggests their positive nobility:

The bands are ranked; the chosen van  
Of Tartar and of Mussulman,  
The full of hope, misnamed 'forlorn',  
Who hold the thought of death in scorn,  
(189-92)

Though portrayed in passing, Coumourgi's significance consists in his being the representative of Islamic religious tradition in a poem which juxtaposes two traditions - Islamic and Christian - in order to examine their role in public life. Religion has an all-embracing part in The Seige. Both Turks and Venetians are driven by zealotry in trying to gain control over the town, of which the residents are innocent non-combatants. Francesca appears throughout as a spokesperson for Christianity: Coumourgi's statements and the response of the Turkish army in general are loaded with Islamic religious overtones; and Alp, the central character, changes his religion from Christianity to Islam, amid constant appeals by Francesca to turn back to his ancestral faith. The actual battle, culminating in all-round

destruction and death, is fought in the very interior of a church.

With the Muslim and Christian armies set against and intent on destroying each other, The Siege initially evokes the stereotype of conventional literary Orientalism that would depict with great relish the total rout and ignoble defeat inflicted by Christians on Muslims, as Southey does in Roderick. Byron, however, rejects such prejudices: the Muslims and Christians in The Siege are indistinguishable in their bigotry and their pursuit of violence and bloodshed. Above all, Byron does not flatter the Western readers by describing the Christian's victory; both the warring groups - Christians and Muslims - perish: 'Thus was Corinth lost and won!' (1032).

For his having embraced Islam, Alp's character merits some attention in a discussion of Oriental characters. Despite being thus converted, he never feels at ease with his new faith, a point to which we will return later. By recounting his dilemma and by emphasizing the religious motives of the siege and battle, Byron, it seems, intends to question the place of religion in both private and collective life. As to its role in individual existence, it leaves Alp spiritually and emotionally impoverished; on the more general level, it brings about mass killing in a struggle for supremacy between Turks and Venetians. Francesca, the embodiment of Christianity, fails to offer any comfort or peace to Alp.

She makes an impassioned speech, adorned with religious motifs, exhorting Alp to return to Christianity. To Alp, however, her very form appears unappealing and lifeless:

The rose was yet upon her cheek,  
But mellowed with a tenderer streak:  
Where was the play of her soft lips fled?  
Gone was the smile that enlivened their red.

...

Her rounded arm showed white and bare:  
And ere yet she made reply,  
Once she raised her hand on high;  
It was so wan, and transparent of hue.

(501-04 and 513-16)

She repeatedly asks Alp to 'sign / The sign of the cross' (532-33) but he remains unmoved. Her exhortations do not affect him and finally when he turns to her, this is what he witnesses:

Nothing is there but the column stone.  
Hath she sunk in the earth, or melted in air?  
He saw not, he knew not; but nothing is there:

(630-32)

Francesca's inability to move Alp seems to epitomize the failure of religion itself.

A study of Alp's character assumes greater significance in this context in that he neither integrates into the new faith nor finds in it any stabilizing influence or sense of direction. If we examine his experience of this faith, what strikes us most is that he is often referred to as 'alone' (133, 251, 261 and 309) and 'renegade' or 'traitor' (133, 261, 354, 806 and 851) - the former signifying his marginal condition, and the latter, possibly the narrator's viewpoint, condemning his conversion outright. Alp's discomfiture is symbolically conveyed with reference to an item of his Oriental dress: 'The turban on his hot brow pressed' (293). Neither the zealot Muslims' emotionally

surcharged war cry nor the Muslim dogma about the eternal joys of Muslim paradise, including the coveted company of houris, strikes a chord with him:

He stood alone among the host;  
Not 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:

(251-56)

That his acceptance of Islam is only skin deep further comes out in his unexpected encounter with the vision of Francesca. Bewildered, he calls out: 'God of my fathers! What is here?! (490). His exclamation in both the tenor and vocabulary betrays a momentary reversion to Christianity. He is not indifferent to Islam alone, he spurns also Francesca's repeated pleas for him to undo the 'fearful deed / In falling away from thy father's creed' (530-31). Significantly enough, she repeatedly makes her point by exhorting him to 'dash the turban' (532) and 'tear that turban' (585).

Religion is not only the source of carnage in The Siege, but also a silent spectator before it, as is suggested with reference to Madonna's image: 'Still she smiled; even now she smiles, / Though slaughter streams along her aisles' (913-14). The theme of human mortality is brought into sharper relief by the spectacle of dogs 'gorging and growling o'er carcase and limb' (411) and the wolf, the vulture and birds having their share of 'the human prey' (431).

Byron's Alp perhaps is the only character in Western literary

Orientalism who converts from Christianity to Islam, though his commitment to Islam, as we noted is not deep. Byron's Orientalism in portraying Alp marks a significant and positive departure from convention: whereas numerous Orientals embrace the promises of Christianity, Alp stands at the other end of the scale. This does not help him achieve redemption; but Byron is simply not concerned with linking his Oriental characters in The Seige to polemical concerns. His interest, it appears, lies more with the effects of religion itself and with the human drama of Alp's step into a dimension that he can neither fully absorb nor be absorbed by.

The portrayal of Alp brings to a questioning conclusion Byron's series of Oriental characters. These, as we have seen, are treated both as individuals and as representations, and are the context for exploring a spectrum of particular and interrelated themes. There are some obvious lines of development. In the despots of the 'Turkish Tales', for example - Hassan in The Giaour, Giaffir in The Bride, Seyd in The Corsair and Coumourgi in The Seige - the despicable features, especially a preoccupation with violence and bloodshed, are stressed more and more in each subsequent 'Tale'. And almost as a corollary to this, those challenging their oppression - Selim in The Bride and Conrad and Gulnare in The Corsair - attain relatively greater success in overthrowing them. These rebels, however, fail to bring about a real or lasting change in the structure of authority; the status quo survives. For example, despite bringing about all the crisis of gender, Gulnare in The Corsair she ultimately reverts to her traditionally accepted gender role of a predominantly male society. Nonetheless, Byron's portrayal of Oriental despots undoubtedly reflects his growing

aversion to political tyranny and corrupt authority.

The females - Leila in The Giaour, Zuleika in The Bride and Gulnare in The Corsair - are all, in varying degrees, embodiments of idealised beauty, but have also in common the darker features that they are victims of loveless marriage and of injustice. While Leila and Zuleika, cast in a traditional mould, suffer silently and are the cause of tragedy and conflict in others, Gulnare actually revolts against the conventional gender role. In Gulnare Byron makes trial of a new concept of force and unsettlement: she, a woman, succeeds in rebellion where Selim, a man, fails, though ultimately and disturbingly she is denied the centrality she had earned and is returned to a position of unsatisfactory marginality. The turns and twists of Gulnare's story, like those of the semi-converted and semi-apostate Alp, bring home to us finally the relative sophistication of Byron's use of Oriental materials, which in the final analysis is decidedly transient in its meanings.

To sum up, Byron's Oriental characters are, on the whole, true-to-life, subtly used, and reflective of his cross-cultural sympathies - qualities which are conspicuous by their scarcity in both his predecessors and, as we shall now begin to see, his contemporaries.



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## Chapter 6

BYRON'S ORIENTALISM IN COMPARISON TO SOUTHEY'S AND MOORE'S

Having discussed at some length the sources of Byron's Oriental material, and his Oriental diction, imagery and characters, I would like to move towards some conclusions about Byron's Orientalism, especially by way of comparing it with the Orientalism of two of his contemporaries, Robert Southey and Thomas Moore. Both Southey and Moore have to their credit poems using Oriental mythology and imagery, not least Southey's Thalaba the Destroyer (1801) and Roderick, the Last of the Goths (1814) and his unfinished 'Muhammad' in its outline form, and Moore's Lalla Rookh (1817) and The Loves of the Angels (1823). Like Byron, the two authors appear to have perused a wide range of writings on Oriental religion, history, legend and customs, as is evident from the copious notes appended to their works.

We may proceed by examining what image of the Orient is found in their productions and whether it differs, in any remarkable degree, from Byron's. This comparative study may then help to bring out relative strengths and weaknesses in all three writers' approaches to the Orient.

#### Robert Southey

What prompts Southey to employ Oriental mythology, apart from the popular interest of the day in the Orient, is his grand plan of 'exhibiting the most remarkable forms of Mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the ground-work of a narrative poem.'<sup>1</sup> With regard to his intention in writing another epic, he tells C.W. Williams Wynn: 'You know my plan to exhibit all the fit mythologies in this form. After this there will remain the Runic,

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1. Poems of Robert Southey, ed. Maurice H. Fitzgerald (London, 1909), p. 15. All quotations of Southey's poems are from this edition.

the old Persian, the classical - ...and perhaps the Japanese, the Jewish as romancified by the Rabbis, and the Catholic in all its glory.'<sup>2</sup> His preoccupation with the same project is evident from his letter to Anna Seward: 'My old design was to build a metrical romance upon every poetical faith that has ever been established, and have gone on after the Mahomedan in Thalaba, and the Hindoo in this present poem (The Curse of Kehama), with the Persian, the Runic, the Keltic, the Greek, the Jewish, the Roman Catholick and the Japanese.'<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, in composing these epics he was prompted by a simple and overarching moral ideal - the victory of good over evil: 'I dream of many things - of a poem built upon the Zendavesta, wherein the Evil Powers should be leagued against a son of the Great King and by every new calamity which they inflict upon him evolve in him some virtue which his rank had stifled.'<sup>4</sup> The same point comes out more clearly in his letter to James Montgomery (1771-1854), himself the author of epics, The West Indies and The Wanderer of Switzerland:

You and I have only contemplated the same subject for a poem, ...Our hopes, as well as our daydreams, have the same direction. I feel as ardently as you do respecting the Missions, and I look forward as you do to a state of things on earth, when the perfect establishment of the system of Christ Jesus will extinguish moral evil, and therewith that physical evil which is the result.'<sup>5</sup>

In pursuance of this aim, his narrative poems Thalaba, Madoc (1806) and The Curse of Kehama (1810) deal with Islamic, Aztec Indian and Hindu mythologies respectively.

2. New Letters of Robert Southey, ed. Kenneth Curry (New York, 1965), I, 378.
3. New Letters of Robert Southey, I, 476.
4. New Letters of Robert Southey, I, 536.
5. New Letters of Robert Southey, II, 14.

Above all, these epics are implicated in matters of ideology - socio-political as well as religious. In terms of their political context and content they belong to what Marilyn Butler brands 'a school of new powerful politicised poetry.'<sup>6</sup> For all these epics, especially, Thalaba and The Curse of Kehama present a negative picture of Islam and Hinduism or Oriental and Hindu societies respectively. This, in turn, underlines the need for the civilizing mission or Evangelical work in these degenerate societies. At the time of the composition of these epics India was rapidly falling under the British rule and the Clapham sect, an Evangelical group, had mounted a vigorous campaign for seeking parliament's approval for conversion and mission. Set against this backdrop, Southey's vitriolic attacks on the corrupt, evil practices of Oriental society in Thalaba and on the barbaric Hindu customs such as 'sati' (widow burning on the husband's death) in The Curse of Kehama seem to endorse the Evangelists' call for rooting out such abominations. Like Charles Grant, the author of Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, which was in private circulation years before its publication in 1813, Southey appears to press home the point in The Curse of Kehama that the British rulers must respond to the divine call for carrying out civilizing missions in India. The Curse of Kehama projects Hinduism as an evil system devoid of any good hence Christianity should play its redemptive role in India. Let us, however, focus on Southey's design in writing Thalaba.

#### Thalaba

Southey himself states why he embarked on this plan by drawing

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6. Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East', p. 68.

first on Oriental material:

I began with the Mahommedan religion, as being that with which I was then best acquainted myself, and of which every one who had read the Arabian Nights' Entertainments possessed all the knowledge necessary for readily understanding and entering into the intent and spirit of the poem.<sup>7</sup>

The first germs of Thalaba, recorded in his Common-Place Book, throw a less neutral light on his outlook:

Cannot the Dom Danael be made to allegorize those systems that make the misery of humankind?...Can the evils of established systems be well allegorized?...Certain lines to this purport: the Evil Power may fence themselves round with dangers, but wisdom and courage may subdue them all - so God in his justice had appointed.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly enough, the concern to denounce the 'Evil Power' underlines Southey's conception of Thalaba. Its Oriental setting is to serve as a context for 'allegorizing' 'the evils of established systems'. The 'Evil Power' stands for both the magicians and the Oriental or Islamic code of life. The magicians' evil practices correspond to the corrupt, despotic way of life in the Orient. As a quest romance Thalaba relates in rich detail not only the perfection of an individual, the eponymous hero, it also describes in the Biblical fashion the life, decline and fall and redemption of a nation. Thalaba's heroic battle against the wicked magicians represents Southey's revolutionary vision of the overthrow of the corrupt social and political order prevailing in the Orient. This point comes at its sharpest in Thalaba's destruction of 'The Paradise of Sin' (Books 6 and 7) and his call for redeeming the 'fallen Bagdad' (V, 72-85), the centre of the then Islamic civilization.

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7. Poems of Robert Southey, p. 15.

8. Southey's Common-Place Book, ed. John Wood Warter, Fourth Series, (London, 1851), pp. 182, 183 and 188.

We shall revert later to the point how Southey trades in the common concerns of the Evangelicals and endorses the imperialist project of the day.

First a word about the Oriental material of Thalaba itself. Southey speaks of this work on one occasion as 'profoundly an Arabian Tale' marking his attempt to 'bring into view the best features of that system of belief and worship which had been developed under the Covenant with Ishmael, placing in the most favourable light the morality of the Koran.'<sup>9</sup> His account of the design of the poem, however, abruptly descends to a diatribe against Oriental faith and practices:

It would have been altogether incongruous to have touched upon the abominations engrafted upon it [the Mahomedan religion]; first by the false Prophet himself, who appears to have been far more remarkable for audacious profligacy than for any intellectual endowments, and afterwards by the spirit of Oriental despotism which accompanied Mahomedanism wherever it was established.<sup>10</sup>

Such remarks, expressing as they do Southey's opinion of Islam and the Prophet, and re-echoing medieval polemics, betray an inkling of the image of the Orient across his poetry. Not unsurprisingly, despite his avowed intention to represent the Orient 'in the most favourable light', Thalaba and Roderick teem with inaccuracies, misrepresentations and distortion.

By Southey's own account his first and foremost source in writing Thalaba is Robert Heron's Arabian Tales, or a Continuation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, the English translation of La Suite des Mille et Une Nuit, Contes Arab by Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte. Common to

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9. Poems of Robert Southey, p. 15.

10. Ibid., p. 15.

both the Arabian Nights' Entertainments and Thalaba are Domdaniel, a seminary of wicked magicians engrossed in combating religion and goodness, and their eventual destruction at the hands of a missioned hero. This material from the Arabian Nights' Entertainments was well suited to Southey's purposes and he uses it to establish the victory of truth over evil. More important is the point that Southey also adapts some of the material inconsistent with his ethical outlook - the sensual paradise is destroyed and monogamy is celebrated in Thalaba. His practice of making his materials subservient to his principles may be seen in his plan of writing a Persian romance, though he could not compose it:

My next mythological poem, should I ever write another,  
would be founded upon the system of Zoroaster...In the  
hope that the fables of false religion may be made  
subservient to the true, by exalting and strengthening  
Christian feelings.<sup>11</sup>

In Southey's poem Thalaba is this hero, the lone surviving member of Hodeirah's family which has been exterminated by magicians who have learned of their downfall by a member of this family. Thalaba is brought up by a simple bedouin family. Although the magicians try their utmost to kill Thalaba, their appointed scourge, they fail and he, after undergoing an arduous ordeal, finally succeeds in wiping them out.

Both Thalaba and its accompanying notes and sketch of the poem in the Common-Place Book<sup>12</sup> point to Southey's familiarity with writings on the Orient, particularly Sale's English translation of The Quran (1734).

11. The Life and Correspondence of the Late Robert Southey, ed. C.C. Southey (London, 1849), III, 352.
12. Southey's Common-Place Book, pp. 97-98, 101-02 and 181-89.

Little wonder then that Thalaba abounds in references to several Oriental legends and in allusions such as the ones related to the angels Harut and Marut, the earlier communities of Ad and Irem and their ruler Sheddad, and the miraculous Zemzem well.

A striking point about the Oriental material in Thalaba is that it appears to have been bodily lifted, though with due acknowledgement, from Oriental sources. Southey does not even attempt to assimilate it or draw any insightful inferences from the mass of reports on Oriental history. He seems content with raw historical facts, showing no predilection, as we would expect from a poet, for the sense of history.

In terms of sheer volume the Oriental content in Thalaba exceeds that of Byron's 'Turkish Tales'. However, in his treatment of this material, to which we will return later, Byron shows far greater judiciousness, sensitivity, ingenuity and sympathy; in Southey's poems it merely floats on the surface whereas in Byron's it is integrated inseparably. A few instances from Southey's poetry will illustrate his weakness in dealing with Oriental material and his prejudices against the Orient.

Take first his choice of the name Thalaba as the hero of his 'Arabian Tale'. Thalaba is no doubt an Arab, about whom a detailed report is recorded in Sale's Quran<sup>13</sup>. In the Islamic tradition, as corroborated by Sale's report, he is, however, a discredited figure, condemned by the Prophet for his covetousness. Southey's choice of the name for a hero who is inspired by Islamic ideals to sacrifice everything, including his life, strikes a jarring note.

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13. The Quran, II, 303.



His other unfortunate choice of Oriental name is Aloadin, represented as the 'child of Hell' (VII, 179). Southey censures Aloadin, and rightly so, for his sensuality, his 'Paradise of Sin' and his opposition to Thalaba. The insensitivity, however, lies in selecting a designation for an embodiment of evil which sounds too closely similar to the highly popular Arabian Nights character - Aladdin with his legendary lamp and cave. This familiar figure of Aladdin has none of the associations of evil which Southey ascribes to his Aloadin.

Byron's selection of Oriental names, on the other hand, is always apt. His use of the most appropriate ones for given situations helps him to achieve verisimilitude. Leila and Zuleika, heroines of The Giaour and The Bride of Abydos respectively, are popular love figures in Oriental lore. Likewise, the epithet 'the Giaour' - an Arabic-Turkish word commonly used of a non-Muslim - is discerningly employed for the leading figure in The Giaour. Coumourg and Alp, warriors in The Siege of Corinth, are once again familiar Oriental characters, already renowned for the very roles Byron assigns them in his poem. The rich associations of Byron's names point unmistakably to a careful, rather painstaking study of the Orient, which Southey evidently lacks. (A study of Byron's Oriental names follows in the Appendix 2 of this thesis).

Since all characters in Thalaba are Oriental, one might naturally expect them to use Oriental expressions. Southey never rises to the occasion on this count: they are found uttering, surprisingly enough, Biblical ones. Zeinab's prayer is a manifest case in point:

...Zeinab turn'd her eyes  
To heaven, and praised the Lord;  
'He gave, he takes away!'  
The pious sufferer cried,  
'The Lord our God is good!'

(I, 38-42)

The same invocation is repeated a little later as well (I, 174-75 and VIII, 74). This Biblical matter, particularly 'He gave, he takes away!' (Job 1, 21), hardly befits a Muslim character, who would instinctively say 'Allah'. Pertinently, S.T. Coleridge criticises Southey for this incongruous usage: 'I should think that in Thalaba it would be better on many accounts, if Allah were uniformly substituted for God - the so frequent repetition of that last word gives somehow or other a sermonic cast.'<sup>14</sup> Byron's close attention to authenticating detail in the 'Turkish Tales' is well illustrated by the fact that this fundamental Oriental expression - Allah - occurs many times, almost invariably when some Oriental character pledges an oath.

Southey's use of other Biblical expressions in Thalaba is also out of place - 'the Man of God' (I, 455 and I, 473), 'Father', (V, 60), 'baptism' (IX, 518), 'promised coming' (XII, 245), 'Deliverer' (XII, 243) and 'Son of Man' (XII, 217). Neither are his Oriental characters actually Oriental in their manners and customs. So, in Thalaba the Muslim liturgical formula 'Bismillah', pronounced by Orientals on a variety of occasions, appears in its dull, soulless and very inexact translation as 'in God's name and the Prophet's!' (III, 72), and 'In the name of God / And of his Prophet' (X, 164-65). In a sharp contrast to this Byron's Hassan in The Giaour (568) recites this Muslim formula in

14. The Unpublished Letters of S.T. Coleridge, ed. Earl L. Griggs (London, 1932), I, 126.

its original Arabic in a perfectly suitable context, with Byron providing an accurate translation in his note.<sup>15</sup> Again in Thalaba, the customary Oriental salutation, 'Salam', is mentioned in its crude, barely identifiable translation as 'the friendly saluting of peace' (II, 322). Byron, however, retains the Oriental expression in The Giaour (358) and offers its proper explanation in his note.<sup>16</sup>

Another significant instance of the divergence in the approach of the two writers is afforded by their respective accounts of Muslim prayer. Southey describes it thus: 'When the Cryer from the Minaret / Proclaims the midnight hour' (VIII, 87-88 and 114-15). We have here first a factual mistake; there is no 'midnight' prayer in Islam. Next, the expression 'Cryer', rather than 'Muezzin', used of the person inviting his co-religionists to perform prayer dampens local colour. As opposed to this, in Childe Harold (II, 59), The Bride (II, 402), The Seige of Corinth (221) and Don Juan (VIII, 141), Byron uses the proper Arabic word 'Muezzin' of this person. More importantly, he brands the Muslim call to prayer as 'blest' (The Bride of Abydos, II, 402), 'musical' (The Seige of Corinth, 225), and 'solemn' (Childe Harold, II, 59); and he provides in Childe Harold (II, 59) a correct translation of part of the call.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Byron, far from appreciating Oriental faith and practices Southey seems to have a strong distaste for them. Illustrative of his scornful and derisive attitude are Mohareb's remarks on the prayer and the Quran:

...I have led  
Some camel-knee'd prayer-monger  
through the cave!

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15. Poetry, III, 113.

16. Poetry, III, 104.

17. Poetry, III, 120.

...Thou  
should'st have a hut  
By some Saint's grave beside the public way,  
There to less-knowing fools  
Retail thy Koran-scraps...

(V, 434-35 and 436-39)

The culmination of Southey's revulsion for the Orient and his imperialistic leanings are to the fore in the following passage recording Thalaba's observations on Baghdad, capital of the Muslim empire of the day:

Thou too art fallen, Bagdad! 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!

(V, 72 and 83-85)

Reading the above passage, one feels that as Thalaba is set to save the world from the Domdaniel magicians, so does Southey see the future winning of Baghdad, the then centre of Islamic civilization, from Islam. The germ of Southey's missionary zeal in this passage may be traced back to his firm conviction of the melioristic power of Christianity, expressed in the Quarterly Review: 'This cannot be denied, that under the Christian dispensation man has been progressive, and that his future and perpetual progression is provided for, and encouraged and enjoined by it: whereas every other system of belief tends to keep the human race stationary or to degrade them.'<sup>18</sup> His proposed policy for British India (outlined in the Annual Review), which lays stress on the social value of Christianity, is in a similar vein. It stems from his belief

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18. Quarterly Review, I (1809), 216.

that if India became a Christian country it would bring an end to such rampant social evils as polygamy, infanticide and human sacrifice: 'If ever any permanent good be conferred by Europe on Hindustan [India], it must be by means of these country born children...the Englo-Asiatics, by raising up a native race, whose mother tongue is English and whose religion is the religion of England.'<sup>19</sup>

Southey's deep but narrow-minded commitment to Christianity in all of this is borne out by his correspondence with Bedford, who had objected to the strong religious feeling in the following lines of Southey's 'Ode written during the War with America', in which he urges Britain to

Send forth thy humanizing arts  
Thy liberal polity, the Gospel-light,  
Illumine the dark Idolater!  
Reclaim the Savage.

Southey vindicated his stance by saying:

I write religiously because I write as I feel. Not being of the Church, I hold the Church Establishment one of our greatest, perhaps the greatest of our blessings; and conscientiously desire to strengthen and support it...I hold its general circulation as one of the greatest benefits which can be conferred upon mankind...I believe that Christianity is a divine religion, and that it is our duty to diffuse it.<sup>20</sup>

His visit to Portugal and his first-hand observation of Portuguese squalor and superstition had convinced him of the superiority of the English way of life: 'I have learnt to thank God that I am an Englishman'. The same holds true for his observations on Scotland, where the language seems grotesquely, even comically, inordinate:

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19. Annual Review, 6 (1807), 646.

20. Geoffrey Carnall, 'A Note on Southey's Later Religious Opinions', *Philological Quarterly*, 31 (1952), 401.

Edinburgh is a magnificent city - too good for the villainous country in which it stands. I took with me no great liking for Scotland and have returned with less - above all with an utter abhorrence of Presbyterianism...the Kirk such that no English pig would condescend to set foot in it. The land of itch and oatmeal was truly called by Johnson a dolorous country.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, and put more positively, he held that Christian morals were 'calculated to produce the greatest possible good'. This, in turn, drew him closer to the work being carried out in the ever-growing colonies of the British empire. Convinced that the introduction of Christian institutes would bring about the extirpation of social evils in non-Christian lands, he strenuously supported missionary activities, as is evident from his following contributions to the Quarterly Review: 'On the Evangelical Sects' (November 1810), 'Missionaries' Letters on the Nicobar Islands' (April 1814), 'Church of England Missions' (June 1825), 'New Testament in the Negro Tongue' (October 1830) and 'Moral and Political State of the British Empire' (January 1831).

Moreover, as we hinted earlier, there is an implicit political dimension of the passage calling for 'redeeming' Baghdad. The magicians' world as well as Baghdad, the capital of Oriental civilization, appear to Southey as the manifestations of the evil and corrupt political authority of Oriental despots hence his revolutionary fervour reflected in the desire to overthrow and salvage it. And for redeeming it he has in mind the Christian/Western model. What characterizes this passage is its double perspective - the stamp of Evangelicalism and imperialism as well as the revolutionary vision of liberation. It is perhaps worth reminding at this juncture that Byron's 'Turkish Tales' reject the former, though they too vibrate with

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21. New Letters of Robert Southey, I, 406.

the latter.

Through his epics, both historical (Joan of Arc, Madoc and Roderick) and mythological (Thalaba and Kehama), Southey aims, then, at promulgating a particular message. All his protagonists are warriors of morality engaged in 'quests for personal purification and social purgation.'<sup>22</sup> This is what drives Thalaba to faith and Roderick to penance. By Southey's own account, 'the warning of the Angel "Remember, Destiny hath marked thee from mankind"' (VII, 128) is essential to the poem (Thalaba); an unmistakable moral strain elevating Thalaba to the role of a missioned hero runs throughout the poem. He is consistently described in such glowing terms: 'the delegated youth' (IV, 3), 'the Servant of the Lord' battling hard against Satan the 'evil guide' (V, 502-03), 'the chosen Arab' (VI, 29), 'the appointed youth' (VI, 50) following 'the path prescribed / By Destiny' (VI, 152-53), 'the fated Youth' on 'his wondrous way' (VI, 210), 'the Appointed' (VII, 114), 'the Appointed Youth' (VII, 190 and 284), 'the Destroyer' of darkness and demons (VII, 270 and XI, 333 and 402), 'the agent of Heaven' (VII, 297), 'the chosen Servant of the Lord' (V, 457) with 'the inspiration and the mood divine' (V, 484), 'the chosen youth' (IV, 398) ever engaged in fulfilling his 'quest' (VIII, 156) 'to root from earth the accursed sorcerer' (X, 405), 'the Chosen' (XI, 402), 'the Deliverer' (XI, 482) and 'the doom'd Destroyer and Deliverer' (XII, 103 and 243).

As a corollary, the enemies of the hero are portrayed in the darkest of colours. Being embodiments of evil, the magicians receive Southey's choicest abuses, indicating his abhorrence of all that subverts moral order. Throughout Thalaba these characters - Lobaba,

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22. Richard Hoffpauir, 'The Thematic Structure of Southey's Epic Poetry', The Wordsworth Circle 6 (1975), 241.

Mohareb, Aloadin and others - are inveighed against in such terms as 'the evil race' (IV, 225), 'the accursed' (IV, 228), 'the wily' (IV, 403), 'wretch accurst!' (IV, 473), 'Infidel accurst' (IV, 553), 'Child of Sin' (IV, 555), 'Servant of Hell' (IV, 562), the 'evil guide' (V, 502), 'Child of Hell!' (VII, 179), the 'Accursed Spirit!' (X, 373) and 'the wretched' (XI, 21). At places their whole progeny is condemned as 'the blinded multitude' (VII, 214) of the 'Race of Hell' (XII, 220).

Apart from reflecting Southey's indignation, zeal and didactic outlook, this wide range of invective is significant on another count; some of it is re-used later in Roderick (1814) for calumniating Orientals. Whoever is outside Southey's fold - one thinks also of the Moors in Roderick - is condemned outright.

The moral ~~lesson~~ of Thalaba comes out sharply in the following passage enumerating 'the lesson Nature gave' the hero:

It was a Cedar-tree  
Which woke him from that deadly drowsiness;  
Its broad round-spreading branches, when they felt  
The snow, rose upward in a point to heaven,  
And standing in their strength erect,  
Defied the baffled storm.  
He knew the lesson Nature gave,  
And he shook off his heaviness,  
And hope revived within him.

(X, 54-62)

Nature appears serving Thalaba's sacred purposes; Thalaba receives a sign and the tree becomes an encouragement to him, helping him to shake 'his heaviness' and 'revive' him. Needless to say, the whole event is divinely inspired, strengthening the hero further in his moral drive.



More important is the section of the poem on 'The Paradise of Sin' (Books 6-7), indicative of both the moral and socio-political content and context of Thalaba. First, let us focus on its moralistic perspective. In a straightforwardly didactic way it censures the gratification of base desires proffered by 'a troop of females' in this paradise:

Anon a troop of females form'd the dance,  
Their ankles bound with bracelet-bells,  
That made the modulating harmony.  
Transparent garments to the greedy eye  
Exposed their harlot limbs,  
Which moved, in every wanton gesture skill'd.  
With earnest eyes the banqueters  
Fed on the sight impure;

(VI, 362-69)

At one level, this 'sight impure' registers Southey's condemnation of the sensual Muslim paradise, a recurrent target of attack on Islam in Western literary Orientalism. 'The Paradise of Sin' characterised by its 'songs of mirth', 'music of festivity', 'festive train', 'golden goblets', 'tents of revelry', 'festal bowers' and 'unveiled women' inviting everyone to 'come merry-make with them' (VI, 305-400) reflects Southey's repugnant view of the Muslim paradise. The Quran, no doubt, mentions certain rewards promised to the righteous in the Next Life. Southey, however, distorts the Quranic account by acts of both omission and commission in that he disregards altogether the spiritual aspect of Muslim paradise and harps to the point of exaggeration and even invents its sensual features.

This polemical strain apart, 'The Paradise of Sin' encapsulates, at another level, Southey's political, revolutionary ardour. For 'The Paradise' stands also for the decayed Oriental civilization, its unjust social order, its corrupt political system, its false religion and its untenable ideology. With all its despicable features this 'Paradise' is the Oriental society itself. And its demolition by Thalaba enacts Southey's vision that seems to support wholeheartedly the Evangelical campaign and colonial incursions of the day.

Southey believed that 'polygamy' was 'perhaps the radical evil of the east.'<sup>23</sup> Accordingly Thalaba, though an Oriental, is projected throughout as a one-woman man. Though Southey fails to deliver a moving account of the love relationship between Thalaba and Oneiza for the want of imaginative sympathy, he makes it a point to present them, at least, as a devoted couple, loyal to each other. This point comes at its sharpest in Thalaba's union with Oneiza in the Hereafter, in which she, being his 'wedded wife' (VII, 399), appears as a 'hourī' (XII, 507-08) welcoming 'her husband'. This signifies further Southey's indictment of the Muslim paradise, which promises the believer an unlimited number of hourīs who need not and cannot be one's wife. He deliberately alters the Muslim concept to serve his revulsion at polygamy.

As noted earlier, Thalaba performs the heroic deed of razing 'the Paradise of Sin'. His exploits - his overpowering of magicians in each individual encounter as well as his eventual destruction of them all and his rescuing of Oneiza whom even her father 'could not save' (VII, 11) - constitute the crux of the poem: the other characters and events are

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23. Southey's Common-Place Book, Fourth Series, p. 212.

subordinated to Thalaba's venture.

This means that there is little social activity in Thalaba. Most of the action is located in deserts and wastelands; and Thalaba himself is a solitary wanderer in solitary surroundings, so that there is little of human interest to excite readers. The characters are either paragons of virtue or loathsome evil spirits; human beings with their strengths and failings, with whom one may identify, are absent from this text. That Thalaba lacks life is easily exemplified.

While recounting the main traits of her slain husband, Hodeirah, to young Thalaba, Zeinab has only this much to say: 'The blessings of the poor for him / Went daily up to Heaven; / In distant lands the traveller told his praise' (I, 74-76). This account provides merely a vague view of Hodeirah's charity, hospitality and benevolence. We are reminded here of Byron's moving account of a near-identical situation in The Giaour relating to the slain Hassan's deserted palace. Byron's lively presentation of Hassan's generosity, with specific references to 'the Fakir' and 'wandering Dervise', brings out in full his 'courtesy' and provision of 'refuge' to the 'weary stranger':

Gloom is gathered o'er the gate,  
Nor there the Fakir's self will wait;  
Nor there will wandering Dervise stay,  
For Bounty cheers not his delay;  
Nor there will weary stranger halt  
To bless the sacred 'bread and salt'.

...

For Courtesy and Pity died  
With Hassan on the mountain side -  
His roof - that refuge unto men -  
Is Desolation's hungry den -

(The Giaour, 338-43 and 345-48)

The effect is enhanced by the personification of courtesy and pity and these strongly elegiac lines pointedly refer to loss and desolation that mars the place. What had provided sustenance and refuge undergoes a reversal in that it is inhabited now by desolation.

Though Oneiza is referred to as 'the loveliest of Arabian maidens' and mention is made of 'how happily the years of Thalaba went by' (III, 226-27), Southey never elaborates on either her beauty or the intricacies of the feelings and passions of their mutual love. This deficiency strikes us most in the following passage, which marks the final parting between the lovers - Oneiza and Thalaba. The style here is too laconic and flatly unsublime to admit the expression of tender feelings and emotions:

'I would be gone', the youth replied,  
'That I might do my task,'.

...

Then Thalaba exclaimed, 'Farewell,  
My father! my Oneiza!'

...

'God will conduct me!' said the faithful youth.  
He said, and from the tent,  
In the depth of the darkness departed.

(III, 480-81 and 518-20)

One recalls here the intensely moving and poignant farewell scenes in Byron's 'Turkish Tales' - Medora being separated from Conrad in The Corsair and Zuleika from Selim in The Bride. Thalaba is so much devoted to his 'task' under divine guidance that he never misses or remembers Oneiza during his long, arduous journey. The lovers in Byron's 'Turkish Tales' abound in substantial human passions and responses - the Giaour spends the rest of his life in the memory of his

beloved, Leila in The Giaour and Zuleika and Medora die of grief on being separated from their lovers in The Bride and The Corsair.

The Giaour's intense love for Leila is to the fore when he vents his feelings before the friar:

She sleeps beneath the wandering wave -  
Ah! had she but an earthly grave,  
This breaking heart and throbbing head  
Should seek and share her narrow bed.  
She was a form of life and light -  
That seen - became a part of sight,  
And rose - where'er I turned mine eye -  
The Morning-star of Memory!

(The Giaour, 1123-1130)

The passage registers the Giaour's strong desire for Leila. More important is the point that for him 'light' and 'life' are beamed up in her being. A similar interplay of powerful feelings and emotions marks the following lines in The Corsair depicting Medora's impatient waiting for Conrad's safe return and her heart-rending agony:

The night-breeze freshens - she that day had past  
In watching all that Hope proclaimed a mast;  
Sadly she sate - on high - Impatience bore  
At last her footsteps on the midnight shore,  
And there she wandered heedless of the spray  
That dashed her garments oft, and warned away:  
She saw not - felt not this - nor dared depart,  
Nor deemed it cold - her chill was at her heart;

(The Corsair, III, 75-82)

She appears to be carried along by her feelings, as is evident from the dexterous personification of 'Hope' and 'Impatience'. Her

being 'heedless of the spray' suggests that she is shut up in a world of her own centred on Conrad alone, which makes her totally unconscious of what is around her. Likewise, the contrasting use of the expressions 'cold' and 'chill' standing for the outside and inside of her being underlies her intense feelings for Conrad. The lovers in Thalaba share none of such powerful feelings and emotions.

The personages of Thalaba are ciphers, including the eponymous hero himself:

'Son of Hodeirah!' the Death-Angel said,

...

'Thou art chosen forth  
To do the will of Heaven;

...

To work the mightiest enterprize  
That mortal man hath wrought.  
Live! and REMEMBER DESTINY  
HATH MARK'D THEE FROM MANKIND!'

(I, 663, 665-66 and 669-72)

Thalaba's aim, set forth in capital letters, results in removing this saintly figure from humankind. Elsewhere the same point is made, but with the stress on Thalaba's solitariness one who must

Keep his heart pure and uncontaminate,  
Till at the written hour he should be found  
Fit servant of the lord, without a spot.

(III, 235-27)

Projected as 'fit servant of the Lord' Thalaba looks like an Old Testament figure called to the service of God. Behind his resolve to

implement the divine will is very much the religious idea of 'calling' and 'election'. Southey, no doubt, deserves credit for his deep concern for life-sustaining religious and moral values. However, as a result of this, Thalaba grows into a figure too pure and sinless to admit any real human quality. Ever responsive to 'the call of Heaven' (III, 378) even in his 'dream' and 'visions' (III, 379 and 381), he lives only in and for his destined role.

On Oneiza's untimely death Thalaba does seem overcome with grief (VIII, 1-35), in an account somewhat reminiscent of the Giaour's lot after Leila's murder in The Giaour. How despondent and desolate the Giaour feels comes at its sharpest in these passages:

She was my life's unerring light -  
That quench'd what beam shall break my night?

...

Leila - each thought was only thine! -  
My good, my guilt, my weal, my woe,  
My hope on high - my all below.  
Earth holds no other like to thee,  
Or if it doth, in vain for me -  
For worlds I dare not view the dame  
Resembling thee...

(The Giaour, 1145-46 and 1181-87)

As the 'unerring light' Leila brought the Giaour guidance and her departure has left without bearings. His total dependence on her is conveyed by using a series of expressions 'my good', 'my guilt', 'my weal', 'my woe' / 'My hope on high - my all below'; their alliteration intensifies further the depth of feelings.

However, in Thalaba, the human touch is relegated to background

effect, with repeated references to 'the Angel of Death' (VIII, 27) executing Oneiza's death; Thalaba's suffering is seen mainly as divine retribution. The whole episode is narrated in terms loaded with overtones relating to providence, 'Judgement' (VIII, 32) and the 'wrath of God' (VIII, 18), which reinforce the moral tenor of the poem but divest the account of all drama.

Although both Thalaba and its explanatory notes point to Southey's extensive Oriental reading, his account often suffers from inaccuracies which may be attributed to his lack of first-hand knowledge or to carelessness. A few examples will substantiate this point. Southey speaks of 'a white flag waving on the neighbouring Mosque' (VIII, 95); but such a thing is highly uncommon in the Orient. As hero, Thalaba is referred to as 'the chosen Arab' (VI, 29). In employing this epithet Southey betrays his scant understanding of the Orient, in that this title is exclusively reserved for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet's proper name 'Mustafa' literally means 'the chosen one'. Describing the Muslim belief about 'the most holy night' (IV, 492-502), Southey brands it 'the Sabbath', which is simply not true. Islam does not admit any concept of Sabbath.

Discussing Maimuna's burial (X, 16-28), Thalaba mentions the absence of any 'Iman over her perfumed corpse' (X, 19). The proper expression in this context would be 'Imam', meaning the person leading prayer for the dead; 'Iman' is actually the Arabic word for 'faith' or 'belief'. (One is reminded here of Byron's Bride of Abydos (II, 625-31), full of authentic details about the Oriental funeral). Thalaba is spoken of as 'the servant of the Prophet'. In Islam Muslims



are subservient to God alone; any notion of subservience to the Prophet is inimical to their creed.

On a more general level, Southey fails to appreciate the Islamic conception of the Prophet, in that he holds the Prophet synonymous with God/Allah, whereas a sharp distinction between the two in terms of master and servant should be strictly maintained. Not unsurprisingly, Southey is often found confusing the two: Zeinab seeks the Prophet's 'pardon' (I, 55); Khawla speaks of the Prophet's omnipresence (II, 88-89), invokes his 'power' (II, 128) and refers to his 'slaves' (II, 180-82); Thalaba asks for pardon 'in the name of the Prophet' (X, 165); and Lobaba beseeches 'Mahommed's holier power' (IV, 223) and Thalaba 'Mahommed's holier might' (III, 192). All the above attributes, ascribed to the Prophet, are exclusively God's in the Islamic creed.

Any anthropomorphic account of God is anathema to Islam; Southey perhaps unwittingly flouts this norm in speaking of 'the Arm of God' that 'had drawn a mighty chain' (I, 572-73). Likewise the demon's statement about the 'eyes that view / Allah's glory-throne' (II, 150-51) and Khawla's to 'Bring the dead Hodeirah here' (II, 154) are contrary to the Islamic concept of Godhead.

Another incongruity lies in the dogs accompanying and licking Moath's 'hands' (III, 246-49). In Islam a dog is regarded as an unclean animal, and no Muslim takes it as a pet. If Southey cannot be faulted much for not understanding such finer details about Islam, his failure to employ such Islamic terms as the Quran for 'the holy book' (III, 316) or Salam for 'the mutual salutation' (IV, 60) or Azan for 'the due rites of holiness' (IV, 239) or Allah for 'the Holy Name' (V, 283) betrays a

basic ignorance and leaves Thalaba shorn of genuine local colour.

Southey's hostility to Islam often surfaces in Thalaba, though the poem has an all-Oriental cast and its hero is a devout Muslim inspired by his religion. In describing the practices of his hero Southey is, at times, overcome by his hatred of a non-Christian faith. The following account of prayer, for example, amounts to a severe indictment of the Muslim mode of worship:

And Thalaba awoke,

...

And with the outward forms

Of righteousness and prayer insulted God.

(IV, 236 and 241-42)

In sum, Thalaba projects a distorted image of the Orient in terms of its inaccuracies about the Oriental life, its negative picture of the Oriental society synonymous with the wicked world of magicians and its underlying call for the liberation of the Orient by the Evangelicals and Western civilizing mission.

'Mohammed'

The lack of concern for accuracy, which we noted in our study of Thalaba mars also Southey's intended collaboration with Coleridge 'Mohammed' (1799),<sup>24</sup> of which, apart from the 'Sketch of the Poem',<sup>25</sup> he could compose only 109 lines. This fragment does not actually get around to presenting any impression of the Prophet, but in view of

24. Robert Southey, Oliver Newman: A New England Tale (unfinished): With Other Poetical Remains (London, 1845), pp. 113-16.

25. Southey's Common-Place Book, pp. 19-20.

Southey's low opinion of the Prophet, as expressed in an earlier quotation and in the following letter to John May, it is not difficult to guess what image he would have projected:

What was Mohammed? self-deceived, or knowingly a deceiver? ...But of Mohammed, there is one fact which in my judgement stamps the imposter - he made too free with the wife of Zeid, and very speedily had a verse of the Koran revealed to allow him to marry her. The vice may be attributed to his country and constitution; but the dispensation was the work of a scoundrel imposing upon fools. The huge and monstrous fables of Mohammedanism, his extravagant miracles, and the rabbinical tenets of his followers appear nowhere in the written text...There is but one God - this the foundation; Mohammed is his prophet - this is the superstructure. His followers must have been miserably credulous...The system has been miserably perverted and fatally successful.<sup>26</sup>

It will perhaps suffice here to point out some of the inexact historical details in 'Mohammed'. At its end Ali is found informing Mohammed of his wife Cadijah's serious illness, while she had in fact died years before the Prophet's journey to Madina. The 'Sketch of the Poem', too, refers to events in the Prophet's life and Islamic history which simply did not occur; Okail deserting his brother Ali; Sebena and Miriam, Egyptian captives, playing an important role in the Prophet's life; the mountain miracle; the conversion of Caled during the Ohud battle; and Henda dying in the state of unbelief. On the basis of Southey's bare outline it appears that he makes these 'events' up with a view to playing down the achievements of the Prophet of Islam. For example, the prominence accorded to Sebena and Miriam, Egyptian captives, insinuates that the Prophet was indebted to them for his knowledge of the Judaeo-Christian tradition which he passed off with some alterations

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26. Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, ed. John Wood Warter (London, 1856), I, 77-8.

as the divine revelation sent down to him. Likewise, the early conversion of Caled to Islam, an illustrious Arab military general, is intended to suggest that the credit for Islam's phenomenal military victories in its early years goes to Caled, not to the Prophet. Had Southey introduced alterations in the Prophet's biography as part of imparting dramatic effect, or in line with other dictates of his plot, it would have been perfectly reasonable. He is, however, found incorporating tendentious 'events' for discrediting the Prophet, as was the practice of medieval polemicists writing on Islam.

Roderick, the Last of the Goths

Now let us turn to Southey's Roderick, the Last of the Goths (1814), which is full of Oriental content and context. The Spanish uprising in 1808 against French domination had aroused a considerable interest in Spanish history, exemplified not only in Roderick itself but in Sir Walter Scott's Vision of Don Roderick (1811) and Walter Savage Landor's Count Julian (1812). What attracts Southey to 'select' his subject is that 'the circumstances sufficiently resemble those of the present context to call forth the same feelings.'<sup>27</sup> In other words, by recounting the spirited resistance of the Spaniards against the Moors in the eighth century, he aims at urging the Spaniards of the day to defeat the French in the same way as their forefathers had earlier defeated their Moorish adversaries.

As in his other epics, notably Thalaba and The Curse of Kehama, all the characters and action of Roderick are subordinated to the hero's quest to uphold truth and crush falsehood. Orientals in this case

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27. New Letters of Robert Southey, II, 14.

represent the latter. The main characters are Roderick, Count Julian and his daughter, Florinda, whom Roderick had ravished. In order to take revenge Julian seeks the help of the Moors, who invade Spain and defeat Roderick. Soon Roderick repents his misdeed and undergoes penance and suffering that transform him in both heart and appearance. In a dream he is exhorted by his mother to rise and liberate Spain from the Moorish yoke. Dressed as a hermit, he embarks on this undertaking, gathering around him patriotic Spaniards with whom he finally accomplishes his mission. Count Julian, who had converted to Islam in a fit of anger, reverts to Christianity at the close of the poem.

Right from the beginning of Roderick the theme of Spanish nationalism is anchored in deeply Christian concerns in a polemical vein. The Spanish resistance is seen in terms of a Crusade; Roderick's inspiration and aim derive their sustenance throughout from the 'Cross' and other Christian symbols (I, 90 and 116). In line with the promulgatory spirit of the poem, shaped to celebrate the redemptive power of Christianity, Roderick, the vanquished ruler with a moral stigma, attains salvation and self-regeneration by taking on a priestly form. Aided by 'Jesus's mercy' and 'Heaven' (II, 173-74), his project is

To rouse the land against  
This impious, this intolerable yoke, ...  
To offer up the invader's hateful blood, ...  
This shall be my employ, my rule and rite,  
Observances and sacrifice of faith;

(III, 407-11)

Nationalistic and religious motives are deftly interwoven. 'In the name of Christ' and with 'His gracious promises' (IV, 307 and 309), Roderick proceeds to 'breathe' 'a voice / Of spirit-stirring power, which, like the tramp / Of the Arch-angel, shall awake dead Spain' (V, 240 and 241-42). His vow to undertake this arduous plan is once again laden with unmistakable Christian imagery:

He lifted up his hands and eyes toward  
The image of the Crucified, and cried,  
O Thou who didst with thy most precious blood  
Redeem us, Jesu! help us while we seek  
Earthly redemption from this yoke of shame  
And misbelief and death.

(VIII, 201-06)

Clearly, Southey feels most at home in blending moral, nationalistic and religious aims.

At another level, however, Roderick upvalues not the claims of nationhood and religion, but even <sup>the</sup> more dubious one of vengeance which is the driving force of all the main characters in Roderick. Having abandoned 'All human loves and natural charities; / all womanly tenderness, all gentle thoughts', Adosinda's only preoccupation is 'Revenge and death' (III, 293-94 and 298). For the Spaniards, hatred of the Moors becomes 'the life of life' (III, 327) and assumes the sacredness of being 'holy hatred' (VII, 117). So strong is the sway of revenge and hate that even in their dreams they take on 'the infidels' (VIII, 150-55). Repeated references to vengeance and avenging in the following passage capture the essential spirit and mood of the poem:

Vengeance is due, and vengeance will be given,  
Rest innocent blood! The appointed age is come!

...

Lo there the Avenger stands! Lo there  
He brandishes the avenging sword! Lo there  
The avenging banner spreads its argent field  
(XVIII, 287-88 and 290-92)

Muslims play only the role of an invading enemy and object of antagonism, and about them Roderick resurrects the whole stock of negative medieval images. Here are some of the epithets employed by Southey to describe the Moors: 'A dreadful brotherhood, / In whom all turbulent vices were let loose' (I, 20-21), 'misbelievers' (I, 35, V, 126 and 185 and XIII, 38); 'merciless misbelievers' (I, 179); 'miscreant host' (I, 258); 'miscreant child of Hell' (III, 322); 'hell-dog' (III, 328); 'loathsome villain' (III, 341); 'lustful miscreant' (IV, 114); 'infidels' (IV, 293, V, 119, VIII, 150 and X, 208); 'lewd barbarian' (V, 30); 'murderous tyrant' (V, 86); 'tyrant-enemy' (X, 209); 'an impious foe' (XII, 177); 'miscreant race' (XIX, 83); 'faithless race' (XX, 147); 'misbelieving multitudes' (XXIII, 13); 'miscreant murderer, child of Hell' (XXIII, 238); 'African dogs' (XXIV, 98) and 'cursed Africans' (XXIV, 245).

Muslims are, moreover, 'like a cloud of locusts, whom the South / Wafts from the plains of wasted Africa' (I, 12-13), and a similar repulsive imagery characterises the account of the Moors:

They came in myriads. Africa had pour'd  
Fresh shoals upon the coast of wretched Spain;  
Lured from their hungry deserts to the scene  
Of spoil, like vultures to the battle-field,

Fierce, unrelenting, habited in crimes,  
Like bidden guests the mirthful ruffians flock  
To that free feast which in their Prophet's name  
Rapine and lust proclaim'd.

(XX, 7-14)

Apart from the sheer abuse of phrases like 'mirthful ruffians', a noteworthy aspect of Southey's terms of reference is the dehumanizing effect of the animal and insect imagery - 'a cloud of locusts', 'hell-dog', 'African dogs' and 'vultures'. Another striking feature is the association of Muslims with such predatory and scavenging species. Elsewhere, Adosinda makes this point, saying 'they who from this race / Accurst for pity look, such pity find / As ravenous wolves show the defenceless flock' (III, 307-09). Siverian dubs the Moor killed by Roderick as a 'carrion' (V, 223). The 'accursed armies' of Moors are perceived as 'the ravenous fowls' (XVIII, 321 and 323).

A deep hatred for Muslims, whatever their nationality, permeates several passages, including the following melodramatic rhetorical surge:

Woe for the circumcised! Woe for the faith  
Of the lying Ishmaelite that hour!

...

...wretches! whom the righteous arm  
Hath overtaken! ...Join'd in bonds of faith  
Accurs'd, the most flagitious of mankind  
From all parts met are here; the apostate Greek,  
The vicious Syrian, and the sullen Copt,  
The Persian cruel and corrupt of soul,  
The Arabian robber, and the prowling sons  
Of Africa, who from their thirsty sands  
Conjoin'd...

Beneath an impious faith, which sanctifies  
To them all deeds of wickedness and blood, ...

(XXV, 521-22 and 532-43)



A motley of all nations, Muslims are joined together by the motive of plunder and by faith that permits them vices of every sort.

Particular mention is made of their prayer, once again with contempt and derision:

The misbelieving multitudes perform,  
With hot and hasty hand, their noontide rite,  
Then hurryingly repeat the Impostor's prayer.

(XXIII, 13-15)

It is the sight of Muslims at prayer that makes Roderick's heart burn with indignation so that he resolves to 'inflict the punishment, and make / These wretches feel his wrath' (III, 153-54). For he beheld:

The turban'd traitor show his shameless front  
In the open eye of Heaven, ...the renegade,  
On whose base brutal nature unredeem'd  
Even black apostacy itself could stamp  
No deeper reprobation, at the hour  
Assign'd fall prostrate; and unite the names  
Of God and the Blasphemer, ...impious prayer, ..  
Most impious, when from unbelieving lips  
The accursed utterance came.

(III, 141-49)

The poem contains a fairly correct translation of the Muslim call to prayer made by the 'crier' (XXI, 11), along with some appreciation for his 'sonorous voice' and 'melodious modulation' (XXI, 12-13). For Southey, in general, however, Orientals are a loathsome lot with 'strange language, evil customs, and false faith' (XII, 169).

Even the medieval calumnious report about the Prophet's suspended

coffin hanging in the air, figuring in Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Beaumont's Scornful Lady, resurfaces in Roderick:

Life hath not left his body, which bears up  
By its miraculous power the holy tomb,  
And holds it at Medina in the air  
Buoyant between the temple's floor and roof;  
(XXIII, 147-50)

As we noted earlier, Southey uses the magicians' evil world in Thalaba (1801) as a metaphor for the degenerate Oriental society. In Roderick (1814) there is no such pretext even; he presents a negative, rather repulsive picture of the Orient, marking perhaps his total identification over the years with the Evangelical campaign in Britain's new imperial dominion, India. Incidentally British parliament had amended the East India Act in 1813, granting Evangelists the permission to carry out missionary work in India. In Roderick, the function of Southey's rhetoric in representing Orientals devoid of any good is then to construct, or continue, an image of other nations and their faiths that justifies and encourages both Evangelism in colonies and colonization of non-Western nations.

Not only should the usurping Orientals be driven away from Spain, as Roderick and his men do, they, Southey seems to suggest, do not deserve even a right to exist in view of their false religion, evil way and abhorrent ideology. Their salvation lies only in greeting the enlightening message of Christianity. This point is forcefully made with reference to the regeneration of the eponymous hero, Roderick. Guided by the life-sustaining values of Christianity he repents his earlier recalcitrance and derives physical, moral and spiritual strength,

once again by drawing on the message of Christianity, to salvage himself and liberate his suffering countrymen. For Orientals too this is the only way out for attaining redemption. This explains also Southey's diatribe against the apostate Spaniards in Roderick, which we shall examine later.

Downright calumny apart, as in Thalaba many details about Oriental life in Roderick suffer from inaccuracy. Like Byron and others writing on the Orient, Southey rightly uses the 'turban' and 'crescent' as outward symbols of Orientals. Roderick therefore attacks 'the apostate's turban, and through all its folds / The true Cantabrian weapon making way / Attain'd his forehead' (XXV, 495-97). Witiza's sons who had embraced Islam appear having 'put the turban on their recreant heads' (IV, 214). Likewise, in one scene Count Julian stoops 'for his turban that he might not lack / Some outward symbol of apostacy' (XXI, 92-93). In many other instances, however, things Oriental are represented erroneously. For example, one of the Moors is found exclaiming: 'Allah is great! / Mahommed is his Prophet' (XIII, 16-17). Though both the parts of this statement are genuinely Islamic, from a Muslim viewpoint it betrays an odd and unjustifiable mixing, in that the former is the Islamic war cry and the latter part of the Muslim credal utterance. Southey, who might have come across these two independent formulations in some work, unwittingly combines them and so renders them almost meaningless. His lack of understanding of Oriental religious tradition is again apparent when 'the Akbar' is spoken of as a 'holier name' (XVIII, 341). 'Allah-o-Akbar' is in fact an Islamic formula literally meaning 'Allah/God is great'. What Southey does is to reproduce only 'Akbar', one element, literally meaning 'great'; this

expression on its own, severed from the other part, is pointless and does not connote any 'holier name'. This mistake is repeated later on (XXV, 161).

Like most non-Muslims Southey wrongly assumes that Muslims 'bow in reverence at Mahommed's name' (XX, 20). Though the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) holds a pivotal position in Islam, it is to Allah alone that Muslims bow in reverence. Similarly, mention is made of 'the Prophet's law' (XX, 247) and the Prophet's 'servant' (XXV, 250). In Islam only God has all the prerogatives; law and servant are only God's; in the Quran the Prophet himself is described as God's servant.<sup>28</sup> Southey's detailed description of the Muslim call to prayer (XVI, 11-20) is marred by two inaccuracies; 'the highest name' of God is 'pronounced' only twice not 'thrice' (XXI, 13 and 14) and part of the call 'come to salvation' has been left out. The Moors are shown turning 'their faces to the earth' while praying (XXI, 22). Once again this is incorrect, for they turn towards Makkah, their holiest city.

Southey shows some familiarity with Oriental legends, though his touch is not always sure. For example, on witnessing Roderick's feats in battle the Moors assume that he has 'drank of Kaf's dark fountain, and he comes / Strong in his immortality' (XXV, 188-89). The Oriental legend about the fountain containing the nectar of life and bestowing immortality has, however, nothing to do with the Kaf, the legendary abode of fairies in the Caucasian mountain range. This further betrays Southey's lack of mastery over Oriental material. His reference to another Oriental legend about 'the Humma' bird (XXIII, 31) which ensures

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28. Sale, The Quran, III, 55.

royalty on the 'chosen head' that comes under the shadow of its wings, is much more accurate, save a slight mistransliteration in describing it as 'Humma' rather than 'Huma'.

Count Julian's conversion to 'the Impostor's faith' (XXIV, 184) and subsequent reversion to Christianity provides Southey with another opportunity to assail Islam. Far from being drawn to Islam by any of its features or teachings, Count Julian, it is emphasised, is prompted by 'a private wrong' and 'Mad to wreak / His vengeance' (I, 7 and 8-9) turns into a 'desperate apostate' (I, 12); and later on we are told that someone's 'villainy makes honest men turn Moors' (XXI, 168). In other words, Islam per se does not have any attraction for anyone. By contrast, the redemptive power of Christianity is brought into play throughout the poem with reference to Julian's return to his ancestral faith. Little wonder then that Julian, having renounced from his soul 'The Impostor's faith, which never in that soul / Obtain'd a place' (XXIV, 183-84), dies 'in the Church'. It is worth recalling that, like Count Julian, Alp in Byron's Seige of Corinth embraces Islam for selfish reasons, but though Francesca, 'The maid who might have been his bride' (The Seige, 500), tries hard to win him back to Christianity, Alp spurns her. Byron has none of Southey's zeal to 'pluck the Crescent' and 'plant in its fanes triumphantly the Cross of Christ' (Lines prefixed to Madoc).

Another pointer to the polemical design of Roderick is that, along with the Moors, the Spaniards who had embraced Islam in the wake of the Moorish victory are constantly denounced. For forsaking 'their King, their Country, and their God' (V, 111), 'Witiza's hateful progeny' is

likened to 'the viperous brood' (V, 113 and 115). The 'circumcised apostate' (V, 122) with his 'turban'd head' (V, 123) is supposed to have been 'moulded in a wicked womb' with 'leprous taint' (V, 278 and 280) for his 'irrevocable act of infamy' (V, 295). The apostate Prelate is seen as 'the Arch-villain' with 'deadly rancour' (VIII, 30 and 36). Some of the abusive epithets heaped on them - for example, 'miscreant' (IX, 79) - are exactly the ones applied to the Moors. Orpas, another Spaniard who embraces Islam, appears as 'the foulest and the falsest wretch' of 'adulterous birth' pursuing 'a hideous course' (XX, 53, 54 and 60). Southey's fervour compels him to represent them as 'fiend-like' (XX, 89) and to relish their ultimate killing, related with a sense of mighty relief and great joy. For example, gory details of Simibert's (XXV, 439-49) and Ebba's killing (XXV, 490-97) at Roderick's hands emphasise both the vindictive spirit and moralistic tenor of the poem, while signifying also the ultimate downfall of evil brought about by the missioned hero.

A more important aspect of this denunciation is the extreme configuration of Southey's antagonism towards, and caveat against, any cross-cultural sympathy or intercourse. For him the Western/Christian tradition is the norm and those outside it are perceived as utterly loathsome, be they the Moors or apostate Spaniards. Southey simply cannot stand them. This stance is evidently implicated in the imperialistic and missionary ideology of the day which called for the conversion of colonized nations to Christianity at the expense of obliterating the native traditions, be it of Islam in Thalaba or of Hinduism in The Curse of Kehama. The apostate Spaniards are subjected to ever harsher invective for their treachery against the very ideals which Southey champions.

Roderick and the Spaniards finally defeat the Moors and win back their country. Southey appears to exult in recounting the rout, killing and humiliation:

They perish, all their thousands perish there, ..  
Horsemen and infantry they perish all, ..  
The outward armour and the bones within  
Broken and bruised and crush'd.

(XXIII, 265-69)

And he [Roderick], rejoicing in his strength, rode on,  
Laying on the Moors with that good sword, and smote,  
And overthrew, and scatter'd, and destroy'd,  
And trampled down;

(XXV, 472-75)

The Edinburgh Review rightly notes 'the peculiar gusto with which the Saracens are slaughtered all through the twenty books of Don Roderic';<sup>29</sup> and in another review on Roderick the same journal takes strong exception to

the outrageously religious, or rather fanatical, tone which pervades its whole structure; - the excessive horror and abuse with which the Mahometans are uniformly spoken of on account of their religion alone, ...The spirit which is evinced towards the Moors, ...is of savage and bigotted persecution; and the heroic character and heroic deeds of his favourites are debased and polluted by...the sanguinary fanaticism, which he is pleased to ascribe to them.<sup>30</sup>

Significantly enough, in The Siege of Corinth, Byron, dealing with a similar situation Muslims and Christians engaged in battle, does not rejoice in the defeat or killings of either party, but is more concerned with the devastating human suffering and loss:

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29. Edinburgh Review, 68 (1839), 372.

30. Edinburgh Review, 25 (1815), 3.

Spire, vaults, the shrine, the spoil, the slain,  
The turbaned victors, the Christian band,

...

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,  
And each nursing mother smiled  
On the sweet sleep of her child,  
Little deemed she such a day  
Would rend those tender limbs away.

(The Seige of Corinth, 971-72 and 994-1002)

Compared to Southey's exultation in vengeance exacted amid the cry of blood, Byron's account is characterised by sombre reflections on the violence and bloodshed unleashed by war. Unconcerned with the victory of either Christians or Muslims, he concentrates on points of common, shared humanity through the universal imagery of mother and child (The Seige of Corinth, 997-1002).

As human beings Christians and Muslims are indistinguishable for Byron in that one cannot tell which are which in the gore of war. Moreover, the image of limbs being torn gives a sharp edge to the elegiac reflections. Byron's concern is centred on the human tragedy of war and its devastating effects whereas Southey appears to flatter his Western readers by describing with relish the Orientals' disgraceful defeat.

In the manner of Beckford's Vathek, Thalaba overemphasises the miraculous and the supernatural in the Orient in harping endlessly at magicians, jinns, fairies, talisman, enchanted lands, demons and spirits.



Likewise, in Roderick, there are hardly any Oriental individuals; they appear in multitudes, to use Southey's favourite image, as hordes intent solely on destruction. This emotional distancing on Southey's part, in denying Orientals average human characteristics, stems from his lack of identification with the Orient and a temperamental hostility towards it, particularly its religious creed. He seems intent on producing only negative images which would, in turn, justify the missionary work.

In his epics, Thalaba and Roderick included, Southey appears remarkably responsive and faithful to a certain calling. As a result, these works are characterised by a distinct piety, an abhorrence towards evil, and an unmistakable ethical spirit. Both the heroes Thalaba and Roderick are inspired by lofty aspirations, acting throughout as select servants of God. The latter, being a former sinner, is a more worthy model in that he endures punishment and attains self-regeneration and redemption through penance. His redemption stands out as the model for Orientals to emulate. Following in his footsteps and embracing Christianity and its life-giving values they too can find the way out of the morass of false religion and attendant evils in which they are presently steeped. Though a testament to his religious ideals and moral idealism, the militant thrust of Southey's epics, particularly at the missionary level, works against human interest and artistic ingenuity. In a sharp contrast, Byron opposes both the Christianised and popular varieties of imperialism. The latter point is an important one in the words of Marilyn Butler: 'Byron's concept of other nations' independence was that of an Enlightenment intellectual, who respected the autonomy of other cultures, but was inclined to admire them precisely for their otherness, their unreformed feudal "romantic" features.'<sup>31</sup>

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31. Marilyn Butler, 'The Orientalism of Byron's Giaour', p. 85.

At a more basic level, to which I have tried to do full justice throughout this thesis, the difference between the Orientalism of the two authors is that Byron's is never purely a library Orientalism; it is distinguished by a mass of finely realised details about Oriental life and a genuine effort to enter into the feelings and perspectives of Orientals. Byron never looks like a stranger in a strange land. Nor does he tend to endorse the missionary and imperialistic projects of the day.

Thomas Moore

For his Lalla Rookh (1817) and The Loves of the Angels (1823), which are quite rich in Oriental material, Thomas Moore (1779-1852) deserves to be included in this comparative outline - all the more so because it was Byron who urged him to draw on the Orient. Apart from this exhortation, Byron's letter to him contains perceptive remarks on Southey's Orientalism:

Stick to the East; - the oracle, Stael, told me it was the only poetical policy. The North, South, and West, have all been exhausted; but from the East, we have nothing but S's [Southey's] unsaleables, - and these he has contrived to spoil, by adopting only their most outrageous fictions. His personages don't interest us, and yours will. You have no competitor; and if you had, you ought to be glad of it. The little I have done in that way is merely a "voice in the wilderness" for you; and, if it has had any success, that also will prove that the public are orientalizing, and pave the path for you.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, Byron suggested to Moore some works on Turkish history when he was contemplating the composition of Lalla Rookh.<sup>33</sup> Lalla Rookh was published in 1817 when all of Byron's 'Turkish Tales' had already appeared.

32. L & J, III, 101.

33. L & J, III, 102. Byron recommended him the following works on Turkish history: (i) A.L. Castellan, *Moeurs, usages, costumes des Othomans* (Paris, 1812), and (ii) Giovanni Bat ista Toderini, *Della Letteratura Turchesca* (1787).

Unlike Southey, Moore was never interested in any grand plan of dealing with 'the most remarkable forms of Mythology among mankind' in writing his 'Oriental Romance'. He appears to have been attracted in the first place simply by the contemporary vogue for Orientalism, popularised chiefly by Byron's own successful forays. It took Moore about five years to compose Lalla Rookh: his correspondence of the period 1812-1817 makes frequent reference to his being at work on the poem.

Moore's principal concern emerges as that of using the Oriental setting to express his views about the Irish cause. About a proposed poem he writes to Byron:

In my hero (to whom I had given the name of "Zelim", and who was a descendant of Ali, outlawed, with all his followers, by the reigning Caliph), it was my intention to shadow out, as I did afterward in another form, the national cause of Ireland.

I chose this story because one writes best about what one feels most, and I thought the parallel with Ireland would enable me to infuse some vigour into my hero's character.<sup>34</sup> [*Italics mine*]

As to the political content and context of Lalla Rookh itself, Byron anticipates them, and rightly so, in his Dedication of The Corsair (1814) to Moore:

I trust, truly, that you are engaged in the composition of a poem whose scenes will be laid in the East; none can do these scenes so much justice. The wrongs of your own country, the magnificent and fiery spirit of her sons, the beauty and feeling of her daughters, may there be found;<sup>35</sup>

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34. L & J, III, 194.

35. Poetry, III, 223-24.

Moreover, the note of anti-authoritarianism and revolt against an old and corrupt order in Byron's 'Turkish Tales', especially The Corsair, may have served as a model for Moore for the political dimension of Lalla Rookh. Southey's poems with their distinct socio-political stamp as noted by us, may too have prompted him to imbue his work with a political message.

Little wonder then that in two stories of Lalla Rookh, namely 'The Veiled Prophet of Khoassan' and 'The Fire-Worshippers', the heroes are rebels, taking up cudgels against the Establishment. There is striking similarity between the struggle of the 'Fire-worshippers' and the Catholic uprising in Ireland; Hafed and Hinda, the leading characters, have much in common with Robert Emmet and Sarah Curran, champions of the Irish cause. Mokanna in 'The Veiled Prophet' is patterned after Daniel O'Connell, the Irish demagogue, in order to condemn a religious fanatic; Mokanna fans the prejudices of the masses and this eventually leads to sheer anarchy. Robert Emmet and Sarah Curran reappear once again in 'The Veiled Prophet' as Azim and Zelica - young naive lovers with revolutionary ardour.<sup>36</sup> Another possible contemporary implication of Lalla Rookh is that in sketching Mokanna Moore had in mind Napoleon Bonaparte, a demagogue turning later into a ruthless tyrant. Likewise, the caricature of Fadladeen has a contemporary ring. Is Moore satirising Francis Jeffrey in attacking this character's pretended literary credentials, his obstinacy, his bigotry and his literal-mindedness?

A similar motivation is indicated by Moore's prefatory note to

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36. Terence De Vere White, Tom Moore: The Irish Poet (London, 1977), p. 133 and G.M. Wickens, 'Lalla Rookh and the Romantic Tradition of Islamic Literature in English', Year Book of Comparative and General Literature, 20 (1971), p. 63.

Lalla Rookh itself, which describes what impelled him to compose the poem:

...the thought occurred to me of founding a story on the fierce struggle so long maintained between the Ghebers, or ancient Fire-worshippers of Persia, and their haughty Moslem leaders. From that moment a new and deep interest in my whole task took possession of me. The cause of tolerance was again my inspiring theme; and the spirit that had spoken in the melodies of Ireland soon found itself at home in the East.<sup>37</sup>

The 'fierce struggle' between Zoroastrianism and Islam in 'The Fire-Worshippers' re-enacts allegorically the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism in Ireland. Like the native fire-worshippers in Persia persecuted by votaries of a new religion, Islam, the Catholic Irishmen suffer at the hands of Protestants. The fire-worshippers' oppression and misery rework the pathetic lot of Irish nationalists reeling under British rule.

In laying bare the deceit and imposture of Mokanna in 'The Veiled Prophet' Moore's contemporary implication is to expose the 'true face of Jacobinism'. Moreover, the depiction of an unsuccessful revolution in 'The Veiled Prophet' 'stands as a warning to his [Moore's] fellow Irishmen against the "French" principles which had led to such disastrous consequences in Ireland in 1798.'<sup>38</sup>

As already noted, Byron's 'Turkish Tales' had paved the way for Lalla Rookh with the reading public; that some twenty editions of Moore's work appeared between 1817 and 1840 will illustrate the bias of

37. This and all quotations from Moore's poetry are from The Poetical works of Thomas Moore (London, n.d.), p. X.

38. Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East, pp. 112 and 113.

contemporary taste. In a highly favourable review, the Edinburgh Review credited Moore with 'an entire familiarity with the life, nature, and learning of the East.'<sup>39</sup> This is a rather exaggerated account of Moore's knowledge of the Orient, to which we will return later. His works, accompanied by exhaustive notes, display a wide Oriental reading, possibly wider than Byron's, but in terms of accurate representation he does not match Byron. The unique advantage of being on the spot and being gifted with a temperament and outlook sympathetic towards other cultures places Byron on firm ground, enabling him to appreciate finer details and nuances.

Lalla Rookh is a collection of four narrative poems with frequent interjections in prose. Moore appears to have taken this very idea of a collection of tales on a variety of themes from the Arabian Nights. A brief summary of each of its plots will bring the nature and range of the work into view. The first story, 'The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan', is centred on Mokanna, the Arabic word for the veiled one: Hakem bin Hashim, a heretic and claimant to prophethood, was so known because he always wore a silver veil. Mokanna revolts against the Muslim ruler of the day, al-Mahdi, and for long thrives on the credulity of the masses, promising them rewards in both the worlds. Receiving the report that his lover Azim had died ~~in~~<sup>in</sup> a battle, Zelica seeks solace by joining Mokanna, who takes her as the 'Priestess of Faith'. Soon Zelica realises the imposture and wickedness of Mokanna and warns Azim, her former lover, who had actually survived the battle and was about to band together with Mokanna in order to overthrow al-Mahdi. Meanwhile al-Mahdi resolves to strike first and crushes Mokanna's rebellion. The besieged Mokanna eventually commits suicide.

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39. Edinburgh Review, 29 (November, 1817), 1.

The next tale, 'Paradise and the Peri', which shows strong affinity with what Martha P. Conant calls the 'moralistic' Oriental tale,<sup>40</sup> recounts the story of a Peri barred from paradise unless she brings 'the gift that is more dear to Heaven'. She attempts to gain entry by first offering the drop of a patriot's blood, then 'a precious sign / of a pure, self-sacrificing love', but neither of these offerings wins her back entry into paradise. Finally her present of a tear of a repentant sinner seeking genuine forgiveness brings her success.

'The Fire-Worshippers' relates the struggle of the Ghebers, non-Muslim natives of Persia, against their oppressive Muslim ruler. Hafed, the leader of Ghebers or Zoroastrians, falls in love with Hinda, the daughter of the Muslim ruler. Hinda betrays her father and almost abandons her Muslim faith in her love for Hafed. The last story, 'The Light of the Haram', focusing on Oriental palace life, describes Selim's love for Nourmahal.

Most of Moore's Oriental characters are conventional, conforming to the tradition of Western literary Orientalism. Feramorz, the narrator in Lalla Rookh, is the self-accusing Muslim condemning his own religion. His anthropomorphic description of Allah is tantamount to blasphemy:

The pomp is at an end - the crowds are gone -  
Each ear and heart still haunted by the tone  
Of that deep voice, which thrill'd like Alla's own!

(p. 207)

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40. Martha P. Conant, p. xviii.

Likewise, his account of the Muslim paradise and his sympathy for Mokanna, who lays a false claim to prophethood, and for the Ghebers, enemies of Muslims, hardly befit a Muslim.

In 'The Fire-Worshippers', Hinda, the daughter of al-Hassan, the Muslim ruler, deserts both her father and her religion:

Yes - Alla, dreadful Alla! yes -  
If there be wrong, be crime in this,  
Let the black waves that round us roll,  
Whelm me this instant, ere my soul,  
Forgetting faith - home - father - all -  
(p. 253)

She is quite willing to kneel 'at any God's shrine' in her strong love for Hafed. In being treacherous to her faith Hinda resembles the Oriental females in The Songs of Geste, Massinger's Donusa and Dryden's Morayma. One is reminded here of Gulnare in Byron's Corsair who betrays her husband in eloping with Conrad but does not abandon her faith in Islam.

Fadladeen, chamberlain of the harem, who accompanies Lalla Rookh on her journey from Delhi to Bucharia, is tyrannical, fanatical, philistine and opportunist. Here are the main traits of his character:

Toleration, indeed, was not among the weaknesses of Fadladeen; - he carried the same spirit into matters of poetry and religion, and, though little versed in the beauties or sublimities of either, was a perfect master of the art of persecution in both. His zeal was the same, too, in either pursuit; whether the game before him was pagans or poets, - worshippers of cows, or writers of epics.  
(p. 239)



The moral and political points imbedded in the passage are unmistakable - authoritarianism and repression are Moore's main targets of attack which in the Irish context assume greater force and meaning.

Though 'Paradise and the Peri' in Lalla Rookh is essentially a 'moralistic' Oriental tale of the eighteenth century, concerned with interweaving the expression of universal values of repentance and redemption with the exotic appeal of the Oriental background, it does evoke the conventional image of the Oriental despotic ruler given to violence, plunder and lust. In keeping with the stereotype, Moore portrays Mahmood

Of Gazna - fierce in wrath  
He comes, and India's diadems  
Lie scatter'd in his ruinous path. -  
His bloodhounds he adorns with gems,  
Torn from the violated necks  
Of many a young and lov'd Sultana:  
Maidens, within their pure Zenana,  
Priests in the very fane he slaughters,  
And chokes up with the glittering wrecks  
Of golden shrines the sacred waters!

(p. 234)

Muslims are denounced for their tyranny and intolerance and for molesting the paradisaal land of India by their invasion. In 'The Fire-Worshippers', too, the medieval imagery is employed for the tyrant Arab ruler who sleeps 'Calm, while a nation around him weeps; / While curses load the air he breathes' (p. 242). In fairness to Moore, it should be, however, pointed out that though Mokanna, the heretic and enemy of Muslims, is the central character in 'The Veiled Prophet of

Khorassan', far from glorifying him Moore constantly refers to him as 'the impostor' and 'false Prophet' and lays bare his evil nature. Once again, Moore uses the Oriental pretext for bringing home the ideas close to his heart. The diatribe against Mahmood and Arab invaders is reflective of his revulsion at the British domination in Ireland whereas his condemnation of 'the impostor' Mokanna is directed against zealotry and demagoguery which has its parallels in the contemporary Irish political situation.

Moore faithfully retains another feature of Western literary Orientalism - calumnious stories about the Prophet, some of which figure also in Southey's works, but, significantly enough, none in Byron's. There is, for example, the reference to the Prophet's hanging tomb:

...what! - give up all  
Thy chaste dominion in the Haram Hall,  
Where now to Love and now to Alla given,  
Half mistress and half saint, thou hang'st as even  
As doth Medina's tomb, 'twixt hell and heaven!  
(p. 213)

And there is the repetition of a medieval report on the Prophet's amorous life:

And here Mohammed, born for love and guile,  
Forgets the Koran in his Mary's smile;  
Then beckons some kind angel from above  
With a new text to consecrate their love.  
(p. 218)

Another medieval notion, this time about Muslims' supposed hostility to knowledge and their burning of libraries, carried out in particular by the Caliph Omar, resurfaces (possibly via Pope's Dunciad)

in Moore's 'To Lady J\*~~R~~\*Y, On Being Asked to Write Something in her Album':

Oh albums, albums, how I dread  
Your everlasting scrap and scrawl!  
How often wish that from the dead,  
Old Omar would pop forth his head,  
And make a bonfire of you all!

(p. 493)

In the same vein is the ridiculous report about Muslims' supposed  
revulsion for lizards:

Fadladeen...had also opportunities of indulging, in a  
small way, his taste for victims, by putting to death  
some hundreds of those unfortunate little lizards,  
which all pious Mussulmans make it a point to kill;  
- taking for granted, that the manner in which the  
creature hangs its head is meant as a mimicry of the  
attitude in which the Faithful say their prayers.

(p. 265)

There are many other errors that call in question the Edinburgh Review's lavish praise for Moore's 'entire familiarity with the life, nature, and learning of the East'. In the introduction of Lalla Rookh we are told about Abdalla's 'pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet'. In Islam, pilgrimage is made only to Makka in which is situated Kaaba, the House of Allah, whereas the Prophet is buried in Madina, another town some three hundred miles away from Makka. Pilgrims to Makka may visit Madina but it is not part of pilgrimage. Then, again, for Hinda, Hafed's voice is as 'sweet as the angel Israfil's' (p. 260); and a little later Israfil is described as 'the angel of music'. Both these statements are simply untrue. In Islamic tradition Israfil is the

angel entrusted with the assignment of blowing the trumpet on the Last Day when its devastating sound will cause everyone to die. To refer to this deadly sound in terms of sweetness and music is a cruel joke. Selim in 'The Light of the Haram' is found quaffing goblets of Shiraz wine. This betrays either Moore's ignorance of or indifference to the Islamic prohibition against wine. Some of Byron's Muslim characters in the 'Turkish Tales' flout this Islamic norm but Byron is sensitive enough to make clear both the Islamic norm and its non-observance by deviant Muslims.

Moore, however, shares with Byron an aesthetic appreciation of the Muslim call to prayer and prayer itself. The spectacle of the Muslim prayer does not arouse Moore's indignation, as it does Southey's:

But, hark! the vesper call to prayer,  
As slow the orb of daylight sets,  
Is rising sweetly on the air;  
From Syria's thousand minarets!

(p. 237)

Here the music of pray'r from a minaret swells,

...

The minaret-crier's chaunt of glee  
Sung from his lighted gallery,

(p. 266)

Before passing on to Moore's Loves of the Angels, which is an interesting but crude attempt to Orientalize a poem which did not originally have anything to do with the Orient, it is worth noting his lesser-known ode 'Gazel', which shows him at his best in drawing on Oriental material. It is addressed to the beloved Maami and blends excellently the Oriental legend of the rose and the nightingale with the present amatory theme:

O haste, for this impatient heart,  
Is like the rose in Yemen's vale,  
That rends its inmost leaves apart  
With passion for the nightingale;  
So languishes this soul for thee,  
My bright and blushing Maami!

(p. 493)

Even the title 'Gazel' is an intelligent adaptation of the Persian word 'Ghazal', used in Persian literature for the genre covering amatory poems and odes. There is a reference to the 'Syrian Rose' in his other 'Gazel' (p. 313). Elsewhere, Moore employs some typically Oriental images in 'From Abdallah, in London, to Mohassan, in Ispahan', which is concerned, in the main, with sectarian disputes among Muslims:

Whilst thou, Mohassan, (happy thou!)  
Dost daily bend thy loyal brow  
Before our King - our Asia's treasure!  
Nutmeg of comfort; rose of Pleasure!

(p. 312)

Here Moore's melodious lyricism captures something of the spirit of the original.

#### The Loves of the Angels

With The Loves of the Angels (1823) we return to the use of Oriental materials to express presupposed or extraneous subjects, though originally the poem was inspired by a passage in the Book of Enoch:

It happened, after the sons of man had multiplied, in those days, that daughters were born to them, elegant and beautiful; and when the angels, the sons of Heaven, beheld them, they became enamoured of them.

Accordingly, in the first, or Christian, version of the poem, each angel recounts his story

Of that hour unblest  
When, like a bird, from its high nest  
Won down by fascinating eyes,  
For woman's smile he lost the skies.

Like Byron in the verse drama Heaven and Earth, Moore makes trial of the theme of the descent of the soul of man from its original purity.

Moore had high hopes for the popularity of this work, but to describe the love of celestial angels with terrestrial women was widely seen as blasphemous. The periodical magazines were outraged by its 'grossness', 'bad taste', 'irreverence', 'levity', 'licentiousness' and 'blasphemy'. John Bull was most severe in its criticism of the poem, declaring it 'not fit for the public'. Similar unfavourable reviews condemning Moore for blending eroticism and Christian theology were published in London Magazine, British Critic, London Museum, Blackwood's, Monthly Censor and Monthly Magazine.<sup>41</sup>

In order to acquit himself of the charge of 'impiety' and 'blasphemy',<sup>42</sup> and to de-Christianize the poem, Moore resorted to Oriental colour: 'My angels will all be turned into good Mohammedans in the forthcoming Edition, which metamorphosis would be a most edifying subject for the succeeding number [of the Quarterly Review] to dilate upon.'<sup>43</sup> Soon after John Bull's harsh review he realised that he 'should not wonder now if the tide were to set decidedly against it,'<sup>44</sup>

41. Howard M. Jones, The Harp That Once - A Chronicle of the Life of Thomas Moore (New York, 1937), pp. 179-81.

42. The Letters of Thomas Moore, II, 511.

43. The Letters of Thomas Moore, II, 512-13.

44. The Journal of Thomas Moore, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden (New York, 1984), II, 614.

and he resolved to 'make the "Angels" completely eastern, and thus get rid of that connection with the Scriptures, which they [Longman, his publishers] fear will, in the long run, be a drag on the popularity of the poem.'<sup>45</sup> Driven by this consideration, he says that he 'turned over D'Herbelot' [the author of Bibliothèque Orientale, a treasure of information on the Orient] for the project of turning the poor "Angels" into "Turks".<sup>46</sup>

By 'translating the angels into Turks' Moore may have exonerated himself from the charge of blasphemy but it reflects poorly on his approach to Oriental material. His very ideal of conflating 'angels' and 'good Mohametans' is a fine tribute to his ignorance about the Islamic creed. First, angels in Islam are neither 'Mohametans' nor 'non-Mohametans'; these beings, having nothing in common with man, are devoid of any faith or feelings; they simply serve and praise God. On this transformation, Howard M. Jones makes a valid point: 'There being no Mohammedan theologians in London, no one raised the question why, if picturing Christian angels in love was impious, picturing Mohammedan angels in love was not equally impious.'<sup>47</sup>

The poem is marred further by the inclusion of a medieval story about the Prophet's dove or pigeon whom he had trained and presented it to his followers as a divine sign that brought him revelations. Nonetheless, unlike Southey, Moore is not all hatred against the Prophet of Islam in that he speaks of him at another place as 'the Sealing One', a Quranic epithet, implying that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the seal or final prophet in the long chain of messengers.

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45. The Journal of Thomas Moore, II, 617.

46. Ibid., II, 617.

47. Howard M. Jones, The Harp That Once, p. 222.

The substitution of some Oriental expressions, such as Allah for God, though not uniformly, and Gehim for hell and Eblis for Lucifer, constitute the other crude vein of Orientalization in The Loves of the Angels. For all Moore's interest in 'good Mahometans', most of the allusions and legends and notes of the poem turn out to be related to Zoroastrian, Syrian, Greek, Sabean and Jewish mythologies, culled from D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Orientale. Not a single character in The Loves of the Angels is Muslim even in name. The poem contains many passages of which the Biblical origin is unmistakable; as, for example, the following account of creation which, though attributed to 'Alla', does not feature in any Islamic source:

The workings of th' Almighty Mind,  
When first o'er Chaos he design'd  
The outlines of this world; and through  
That depth of darkness -

(p. 288)

Notwithstanding the insertion of the expression 'Alla', which however soon reverts to 'the Lord', the following passage is also marked by strong Biblical overtones:

Spirits, who once, in brotherhood  
Of faith and bliss, near Alla stood,  
...  
Creatures of light, such as still play,  
Like motes in the sunshine, round the Lord,  
And through their infinite array  
Transmit each moment, night and day,  
The echo of His luminous word!

(p. 279)



Lalla Rookh, too, had contained references to such Biblical concepts as the Fall of man and man's creation in the image of God, which do not have any Islamic counterpart.

Though an old and special case of hybridization, The Loves of the Angels makes manifest a discordancy and incongruity that runs through the works of Moore, and of Southey - and is absent from Byron's 'Tales' with their 'samples of the finest Orientalism' (Beppo, 51).

APPENDIX I

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BYRON'S ORIENTAL READING

On the basis of Byron's letters and journals, his 1807 Reading List, the 1816 and 1827 Sale Catalogues, and other sources, an attempt has been made to assemble a comprehensive bibliography of Byron's Oriental reading. To the best of my knowledge, such a bibliography has not hitherto been compiled.

A.

Richard Knolles, The Turkish History with a Continuation by Sir Paul Rycaut, 3 vols (London, 1687-1700).

Demetrius Cantemir, The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire (London, 1756).

Baron de Tott, Memoirs of the Baron de Tott on the Turks and the Tartars, translated from the French, 2 vols (London, 1785).

Vincent Mignet, The History of the Turkish or Ottoman Empire, translated by A. Hawkins, 4 vols (London, 1787).

George Sale, The Koran, to which is Prefixed a Preliminary Discourse (London, 1734).

David Jones, A Compleat History of the Turks, 4 vols (London, 1719).

Lord Teignmouth, The Works of Sir William Jones with the Life of the Author, 13 vols (London, 1807).

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Works, 5 vols (London, 1803).<sup>1</sup>

1. All these titles on the Orient in this section figure in Byron's 1807 Reading List in Thomas Moore, The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron (London, 1920), pp. 46-47.

B.

Jonathan Scott, Arabian Nights, 6 vols (London, 1811).

James Bruce, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1805).

Jean Chardin, Voyages en Perse et Autres Lieux de l'Orient, 10 vols (Paris, 1811).

Edward Daniel Clarke, Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa, 16 vols (London, 1812).

John Cam Hobhouse, A Journey Through Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey (London, 1813).

Costume of Turkey (1802).

John Kinneir, A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire (London, 1813).

Piere Bayle, A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical, translated by Bernad, Birch and Lokman, 10 vols (London, 1734-41).

Barthelemi D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale (Maestricht, 1776).

John Richardson, A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic and English, to which is prefixed a dissertation on the languages, literature and manners of Eastern Nations, 2 vols (Oxford, 1777).

John Galt, Letters from the Levant (London, 1815).

John Malcom, History of Persia, 2 vols (London, 1815).

C.S. Sonnini, Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt (London, 1800).

Letters of a Mameluke, 2 vols.

Saugnier and Brisson, Voyages to the Coast of Africa, tr. from the French (London, 1792).

Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 12 vols (London, 1807).

Mountstuart Elphinstone, An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul (London, 1815).

Tales of the East, 3 vols (London, 1799).

William Beckford, Vathek (London, 1782).

Mungo Park, Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa (London, 1815).

William George Browne, Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the Years 1792 to 1798 (London, 1807).<sup>2</sup>

C.

James Dallaway, Constantinople, Ancient and Modern (London, 1797).

Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, Relation d'un Voyage du Levant, 2 vols (Paris, 1717).

Mouradja D'Ohsson, Tableau Generale de l'Empire Ottoman (Paris, 1787).

Antoine Louis Castellan, Letters sur la Moree, etc. (Paris, 1808).<sup>3</sup>

D.

Antoine Louis Castellan, Moeurs, usages, costumes des Othomans, 6 vols (Paris, 1812).

Giovanni Batista Toderini, Delle Letteratura Turchesca, 3 vols (Paris, 1787).<sup>4</sup>

2. Reference to the titles in this section is found in Byron's 1816 Sale Catalogue. William H. Marshall, 'The Catalogue for the Sale of Byron's Books, Library Chronicle, 34 (1968), 24-50 and Harold S.L. Wiener, 'Byron and the East: Literary Sources of the "Turkish Tales"' in Nineteenth Century Studies, ed. Herbert Davis et al. (New York, 1968), pp. 89-129.
3. E.H. Coleridge mentions these titles as Byron's Oriental sources in his edition, The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry (London, 1922), III, 90, 111, 176 and 249.
4. Byron himself refers to these two titles. Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London, 1974), III, 102.<sup>72</sup>

E.

Stephen Weston, Moral Aphorism in Arabic and a Persian Commentary in Verse, translated from the Originals, with Specimen of Persian Poetry (London, 1805).<sup>5</sup>

F.

W. Gally Knight, Eastern Tales (London, 1800).

Humphrey Prideaux, Life of Mahomet (London, 1723).

Richard Tully, Narrative of a Ten years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli (London, 1816).<sup>6</sup>

G.

John Louis Burckhardt, Travels in Nubia (London, 1819).

\_\_\_\_\_. Travels in Syria and the Holy Lands (London, 1822).

George Fitzclarence, Journal of a Route across India, through Egypt to England (London, 1819).

Antoine Hamilton, Antar, a Bedoueen Romance, 4 vols (London, 1819).

William Macmichael, Journey from Moscow to Constantinople in the years 1817-1818 (London, 1819).

Murray, History of Discoveries in Africa, 2 vols (London, 1817).

Walpole, Travels in Various Countries of the East (London, 1820).<sup>7</sup>

5. Bernard Blackstone presents this work as one of Byron's Oriental sources which influenced him. Bernard Blackstone, 'Byron and Islam: The Triple Eros', Journal of European Studies, 4 (1974), 333-43.

6. These titles on the Orient are gathered from 'Books Read by Byron', The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals, ed. Rowland E. Prothero (London, 1901), VI, 500-04.

7. All these titles on the Orient figure in Byron's 'Sale Catalogue' (1827) which is reproduced in Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), pp. 245-54.

## APPENDIX II

### Naming the Oriental Names in Byron's 'Turkish Tales'

That Byron employs several Oriental proper names for his Oriental characters in his 'Turkish Tales' sounds quite common-sensical. What is striking, however, is that his choice is almost always apt and, at times, can be quite purposeful. It demonstrates also an astonishingly wide and varied spectrum of knowledge of Oriental history and legends.

Comments on the conscious intent behind some of Byron's names are made in the body of this thesis, particularly in chapter 6 where his skill in this regard is set against Southey's unconvincing procedures on this count in his 'professedly Arabian Tale', Thalaba. What follows here is a catalogue of each of Byron's Oriental names, arranged alphabetically, with a view to identifying possible sources and examining functional use, if any.

#### - Alp (The Seige of Corinth)

Upon his conversion to Islam the essentially Western leading character in The Seige assumes an Oriental name - Alp. Since he is presented throughout the poem as an outstanding warrior, this at once links him with the historical figure of Alp Arsalan (1026-1072), an exceptionally brave military leader who had founded the Seljuq dynasty in Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> Byron might well have come across a detailed account of Alp's conquests and military abilities in Gibbon's work.<sup>2</sup>

1. This and other pieces of information about Oriental history are drawn from The Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, 1936), unless otherwise specified.
2. Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J.R. Burv (London, 1928). VI. 236-43.

- Ali Coumourgi (The Seige of Corinth)

Byron's own detailed note, appended to The Seige, on Ali Coumourgi presents him as a real, historical person - the grand vizier to the Turkish ruler who attacked Corinth in 1716 and loathed Christians. This thumbnail sketch in the note is developed in the portrait of him in the poem (96-108).

- Giaffir (The Bride of Abydos)

Though Byron scholars have rightly pointed to a close resemblance between the portrait of Giaffir in The Bride and Ali Pasha,<sup>3</sup> the chief of an Albanian province whom Byron had met in 1809, and though frequent references to the latter occur in the correspondence,<sup>4</sup> Byron names his character after Giaffir Pasha, a victim of the authoritarian Ali Pasha. In choosing this name - Giaffir - Byron may have wished to conceal a direct reference to Ali Pasha. He may also possibly have had in mind the association with 'gaffer', for Giaffir in The Bride is a commanding, patriarchal figure.

- Gulnare (The Corsair)

Byron provides a literal translation of this Persian name: 'A female name; it means, literally, the flower of the Pomegranate.'<sup>5</sup> Since William Jones defines this Oriental expression in similar terms,

3. William A. Borst, Lord Byron's First Pilgrimage, pp. 76-77 and Anahid Melikian, Byron and the East, p. 52.

4. Byron's Letters and Journals, I, 225, 226, 227-38, 231, 234, 238, 249 and 254; II, 11, 21, 22, 83, 102, 113, 114, 124, 262 and 263; III, 110-11 and 111-12; IV, 299; VI, 4; X, 180 and XI, 158.

5. CPW, III, 448.

Byron may have gleaned it from his Works.<sup>6</sup> Again, from reading Jones's translation of Oriental poetry Byron appears to have learned that in the East the image of the pomegranate connotes beauty, youthfulness and a passionate nature. Gulnare in The Corsair is abundantly invested with these very features.

- Hassan (The Giaour)

A clue to the identity of Hassan is contained in the 'Advertisement' to The Giaour when Byron sets the poem in the period 'soon after the Arnauts were beaten back from the Morea.'<sup>7</sup> It was Hasan Pasha (d. 1791) who had launched the war against Russia (1769-1774), which is celebrated in Baron de Tott's Memoirs.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, this is Byron's source. Byron assigns the same role of warrior to his Hassan in The Giaour.

- Paswan Oglou (The Bride of Abydos)

Like Ali Coumourgı, Passwan Oglou (1758-1807) is another historical figure that Byron picks from Turkish history and grants the same role in the poem as in history. Giaffir encounters 'Paswan's rebel hordes' in The Bride (II, 220). Byron's explanatory note brings out details of Passwan's revolt against the Turkish ruler of the day.

- Leila (The Giaour)

Leila and Mejnoun are to Oriental tradition what Romeo and Juliet are to that of the West. Leila was separated from her lover,

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6. The Works of Sir William Jones, V, 422.

7. CPW, III, 40.

8. Baron de Tott, Memoirs, III, 171-201.



for they belonged to mutually hostile tribes. Unable to bear her grief, Leila died - while the lover turned mad, 'Mejnoun' literally meaning a mad person. The Giaour thus draws, to some degree, on this Oriental legend. Byron might have learnt about 'Mejnoun and Leila, the Romeo and Juliet of the East'<sup>9</sup> from reading Jones's pieces on Oriental literature.

- Selim (The Bride of Abydos)

Selim is a fairly common Turkish name. Selim III (1761-1808) was the twenty-eighth ruler of the Ottoman empire; and at least two of his namesakes, Selim I (1512-1520) and Selim II (1566-1574), had earlier held the same position. What may have prompted Byron to choose this name for his character in The Bride is that Selim III had initiated a number of reforms in the decaying institutions of the empire. His efforts to change the order of things resulted in his deposition and tragic killing. Selim in The Bride revolts against the old order symbolised by Giaffir and pays the price with his life. Byron's concern with the reform of the institutions of contemporary England and his sympathy for his contemporary reformist may have impelled him to grant the same name to his hero in The Bride.

- Zuleika (The Bride of Abydos)

By his own account, Byron was fully familiar with the legendary figure of Zuleika, as a result of his reading 'Jones-D'Herbelot - Vathek or the Notes to the Arabian Nights'.<sup>10</sup> The Bride was initially

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9. CPW, III, 436.

10. Byron's Letters and Journals, III, 164.

entitled Zuleika, as is evident from Byron's letters.<sup>11</sup>

The Oriental fable relating to Joseph and Zuleika, rooted in the Quran,<sup>12</sup> however, depicts her as a seductress. Byron's choice of the name for his heroine in The Bride, who embodies innocence and purity, thus assumes an ironical touch. Even in representing ideal women - Leila and Zuleika - Byron, it seems, could not help letting in hints about feminine deception and guile, though his main point concerns the contradictions - the bright and dark sides - of human agency and the human condition.

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11. Byron's Letters and Journals, III, 195, 205 and 206.

12. The Quran, chapter 12.

APPENDIX III

'The Tale of Calil'

Written in 1816, Byron's 'Tale of Calil' was first published only in 1985.<sup>1</sup> The letters and journals are silent on the genesis and composition of this tale in prose. Being satirical, it is thematically close to Don Juan; and Leslie A. Marchand regards it as a 'trial run' for the style and tone of Byron's epic. Since the tale consists of Oriental material, some of which is traceable to earlier 'Turkish Tales', some comments seem in order.

Unlike Byron's imaginative 'Turkish Tales', 'The Tale of Calil' has an affinity with the genre of 'satiric' Oriental tales which were highly popular in the eighteenth century. Accordingly, it is firmly rooted in history: its opening sentence sets out its spatio-temporal moorings - 'in the city of Samarcand in the 800th year of the Hegira...';<sup>2</sup> then there are several references to the life and career of 'Timour Lenc-or-Timour the Lame' - his originating from Samarcand, his military exploits and his barbaric acts. Other main characters - Calil and Demir Tash - also belong to the house of Tamerlaine.

1. Leslie A. Marchand (ed.), 'The Tale of Calil', Times Literary Supplement, 17 May, 1985, pp. 541-42. Also reproduced with extensive annotations in Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), pp. 51-58 and 324-29. All subsequent references are to the latter source, cited as CMP.
2. CMP, p. 51.

Since the Elizabethan period, and especially after the publication of Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1590), Tamerlane had been a favourite Oriental figure with English authors. In celebrating his heroics these writers had, in fact, an axe to grind, for he had brought a crushing defeat upon the Turkish army in 1402. The then-advancing Turkish empire headed by the Sutlan Ba Yazid, known as Bejazet in the West, posed a serious military threat to Western Europe, which accounts also for the popular report in the West about Tamerlane arresting and exhibiting Bejazet in a cage. Byron takes an entirely different approach, depicting Tamerlane as a barbaric savage, who extorts 'taxes-duties-customs' from his own countrymen and gets the heads of his foes piled into pyramids. Other themes treated thus cynically are devastation caused by war, betrayal and treachery by ambassadors, and a demagogue's exploitation of the masses. Byron scholars therefore see in this 'Tale' oblique references to such contemporary events as the rise and fall of Napoleon, the continuing witch-hunts on the Continent of Napoleon's supporters by the restored Bourbon regime, Prince Talleyrand's desertion of Napoleon, and the Property Tax issue.<sup>3</sup>

On Byron's possible sources for 'The Tale' and some similarity of its material with that of earlier 'Turkish Tales' Leslie A. Marchand and Andrew Nicholson, recent editor of Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose, say almost nothing. This should not, however, detract from acknowledging that the quality of Nicholson's annotations in explaining most of Byron's Oriental allusions in the 'Tale' is exceptionally high, and much more accurate and substantial than that of Jerome J. McGann's notes on the 'Turkish Tales'.

3. Leslie A. Marchand, Times Literary Supplement, 17 May, 1985, p. 542; CMP, pp. 324-26; Michael Foot, The Politics of Paradise (London, 1988), pp. 169-70 and Byron Journal 14 (1986), p. 61.

Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire seems Byron's source for certain Oriental details in 'The Tale'. For example, the Mongols' inclination to believe in the influence of stars on one's birth, mentioned in the context of Demir Bash's birth,<sup>4</sup> is perhaps taken from Gibbon,<sup>5</sup> as is Tamerlane's custom of erecting pyramids from the heads of his vanquished foes,<sup>6</sup> hinted at in 'The Tale' with reference to 'a pyramid of the numskulls of Samarcand.'<sup>7</sup> However, the most significant, and so far unacknowledged, borrowing from Gibbon is the name of the leading character, Calil Basha (d. 1629), the grand vizier of the Turkish ruler, Sultan Mohomet II. In attempting to identify Byron's Calil, Andrew Nicholson instinctively mentions Calil (or Khalil) Sultan - Tamerlane's grandson - which is, at best, a well-meaning but misleading guess. Byron's Calil has much in common with Calil Basha who was an excellent diplomat and whose friendship for the Christians 'stigmatized him with the name of Gabour Ortachi, or foster brother of the infidels.'<sup>8</sup> Along the same lines Calil in 'The Tale' betrays the confidence of the people of Samarcand and unabashedly joins hands with their adversary.

Some 'Mahometans' who were not 'rigid' appear 'drunk' in the 'Tale'.<sup>9</sup> This brings to mind the following passage in The Corsair, which makes exactly the same point about the prohibition of wine in Islam and the deviation from this norm by some erring Muslims:

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4. CMP, p. 51.
  5. Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J.B. Bury (London, 1928), VII, 44.
  6. Gibbon, VII, 56 and 57.
  7. CMP, p. 57.
  8. Gibbon, VII, 168.
  9. CMP, p. 53.

High in his hall reclines the turbaned Seyd;

...

Forbidden draughts, 'tis said, he dared to quaff,

Though to the rest the sober berry's juice,

The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem's use;

(The Corsair, II, 29 and 32-34)

Similarly the festivities on the occasion of Demir Bash's birth include the illumination of 'Mosques...with circles of lamps as during the Bairam',<sup>10</sup> which reminds us of The Giaour:

The Mosque's high lamps are quivering still;

...

To-night - the Bairam feast's begun -

(The Giaour, 223 and 229)

Byron's description of a 'Crier from the Minaret' reading out Timour's decree to the people of Samarcand is remarkably genuine in that the opening part of the royal decree is studded with such pompous titles for 'Timour the lame' as 'the brother of the Sun and Moon - cousin to the planets - ...the king of the world to whom nothing can be refused -'.<sup>11</sup> That the application of such glowing terms to kings is customary in the Orient is borne out by Firdausi's Shah Nameh<sup>12</sup> (The Book of Kings) with which Byron was familiar.<sup>13</sup> As to Byron's use of the expression 'Crier from the Minaret', rather than 'Muezzin' which he adopts in Childe Harold (II, 59), The Bride (II, 402) and The Seige (266),

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10. CMP, p. 53.

11. CMP, p. 54.

12. The Shah Nameh of the Persian Poet Firdausi, ed. J.A. Atkinson (London, 1832), p. 340 and Anthology of Islamic Literature, ed. James Kritzeck (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 204.

13. Byron's Letters and Journals, III, 101.

this displays a fine understanding of Oriental religious tradition. The Arabic word 'Muezzin' denotes a person calling his co-religionists to prayers, precisely as Byron employs it in the above instances, whereas in 'The Tale' the figure is performing a secular duty in reading out the royal decree - hence the ordinary, non-specific expression 'Crier'.

Although Byron treats Oriental social life at length in the 'Turkish Tales' by examining the harem and matrimonial relations, he says almost nothing about the practice of polygamy, otherwise a constant target of attack in Western literary Orientalism. In 'The Tale of Calil', however, Byron turns to ridicule it.<sup>14</sup>

Tamerlane's 'legal number of wives' and his 'indulgencies of chaste concubinage' are derided. A comment of similar import is made in Beppo:

the Turks so much admire philogyny,

...

They have a number, though they ne'er exhibit 'em,  
Four wives by law, and concubines 'ad libitum'.

(Beppo, 70)

The several references to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the 'Turkish Tales' are singularly free from any polemical thrust. 'The Tale of Calil', however, contains reference to 'the pigeon that picked the pease from the ear of Mahomet -',<sup>15</sup> which derives

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14. CMP, pp. 52 and 57.

15. CMP, p. 58.

from the medieval fabricated report about the Prophet's pretended miracle that he had trained a pigeon or a dove to pick peas or barley from his ear which his credulous followers took as a visit from the arch-angel Gabriel for conveying to the Prophet divine revelations. This legend, which has no basis whatsoever in Muslim tradition, originated from polemical writings exemplifying the Prophet's imposture and deceit and found its way into works by Shakespeare (1 Henry VI), Sir Walter Raleigh (The History of the World), Thomas Nashe (Lenten-Stuffe and The Terrors of the Night) and Fulke Greville (A Treatise of Monarchy). Significantly enough, an identical report occurs in Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to explain what drove Byron closer to conventional Western literary Orientalism at the time of writing 'The Tale' and led him to draw on partisan attitudes which are called in question by his 'Turkish Tales'. Was it simply the passage of time, since his visit to Turkey in 1810, which made him less and less sympathetic to the Orient? Or was it his growing scepticism that reaches its climax in Don Juan.

Andrew Nicholson's annotations on Oriental details in 'The Tale' are wide-ranging as well as mostly accurate and helpful. Occasionally, however, he slips into error for want of in-depth knowledge. For example, he makes a wild and far-fetched conjecture in suggesting that the name of Calil's wife, Sudabah or Subadah, has something to do with the Oriental expression 'Subahdar', which means 'master, or governor of a "Subah" (province) in Indian.'<sup>17</sup> Byron actually names her after a Persian queen 'Sudaveh', described in

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16. Thomas Moore, Lalla Rookh, p. 231.

17. CMP, p. 326.



Firdausi's Shah Nameh. The Persian expression 'Subahdar', which Nicholson mistakenly refers to as 'Indian', is in fact a title to describe a governor of a province. More importantly, this designation is used exclusively for males; 'Subahdarni' would be the correct title for a female governor. Moreover, there is no such language as 'Indian' to which Nicholson attributes the expression 'Subahdar'.

The correct Islamic term for 'The Muslim Messiah' is Mahdi, not 'Madhi',<sup>18</sup> as Nicholson would have it. In explaining 'opodeldoc', the name of various plasterers, Nicholson makes no reference to the two pieces published in the Times Literary Supplement soon after the first appearance of 'The Tale of Calil' in the same journal.<sup>19</sup> Nicholson defines 'Sophi' as 'Shah or ruler, or king'.<sup>20</sup> This is partly true in that 'Sophi' is actually the anglicized form of the Persian word 'Safavi', which stands for the Iranian dynasty (1500-1736).

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18. CMP, p. 327.

19. Brian Woods, 'Letter to the Editor', in the Times Literary Supplement, 24 May, 1985, p. 579 and Nora Crook, 'Letter to the Editor', in the Times Literary Supplement, 24 May, 1985, p. 579.

20. CMP, p. 328.

APPENDIX 4

A Bibliography of Southey's Oriental Reading

The following bibliography, drawn from several sources,<sup>1</sup> provides a list of Southey's Oriental Reading. As is evident from his notes to Thalaba, The Curse of Kehama and Roderick, Southey's Oriental material is derived from some of the following works on the Orient:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Ali, Mohammed     | <u>Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, by himself</u> , tr. Balfour (London, 1830)               |
| Antes, John       | <u>Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Egyptians</u> (London, 1809).                 |
| Assemani, J.S.    | <u>Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana</u> , 4 vols (Rome, 1719).                        |
| Bayle, Pierre     | <u>Dictionnaire Historique et Critique</u> , 16 vols (Paris, 1820).                             |
| Beckford, William | <u>Vathek</u> (London, 1786).   |
| Bell, John        | <u>Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia</u> , 2 vols (Glasgow, 1763). |

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- Boulainvillers, Henri      The Life of Mahomet (London, 1731).
- Bruce, James                Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, in 1768-73, 6 vols (Dublin, 1790).
- Buckingham, J.S.           Travels in Palestine (London, 1821).
- Bourke, Thomas            History of the Moors in Spain (London, 1811).
- Burckhardt, John Lewis    Travels in Arabia, 2 vols (London, 1829).
- Burder, Samuel            Oriental Customs (London, 1822).
- Cardonne,                  Histoire de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne sous la Domination des Arabes, 3 vols (Paris, 1765).
- Chandler, Richard         Travels in Asia Minor and Greece in 1775-76, 2 vols (London, 1817).
- Chardin, J.                 Voyages en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient par Langles, 10 vols (Paris, 1811).
- Chenier, Louis             State of the Empire of Morocco, tr. from French, 2 vols (London, 1788).
- Clarke, E.D.                Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa, 11 vols (London, 1816-1820).
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- Gibbon, Edward The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 12 vols (London, 1788).
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et des Maures en Espagne et en  
Portugal, 3 vols (Paris, 1825).
- Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley Works, 5 vols (London, 1803).
- Morgan, J. History of Algiers (London, 1728).
- Morier, James Two Journeys through Persia, Armenia  
and Asia Minor in 1808-16, 2 vols  
(London, 1812-1818).
- Murray, H. Historical Account of Discoveries  
and Travels in Asia, 3 vols  
(Edinburgh, 1820).
- Neale, W.H. The Mohammedan System of Theology; or,  
A Survey of the History and  
Doctrines of Satanism contrasted

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- Niebuhr, C.                        Voyage en et Description de l'Arabie  
4 vols (Amsterdam, 1774).
- Norden, Frederic Louis           Voyage d'Egypt et de Nubie  
(Copenhagen, 1755).
- Ockley, Simon                    History of the Saracens, 2 vols  
(London, 1757).
- D'Ohsson, Mouradja              Tableau Generale de l'Empire Ottoman  
(Paris, 1787).
- Olivier, G.A.                    Travels in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt  
and Persia, 2 vols (London, 1801).
- Park, Mungo                      Travels in the Interior of Africa, 2  
vols (London, 1817).
- Paynard, de Laval               Voyage aux Indes Orientales (Paris,  
1679).
- Pitts, Joseph                    A Faithful Account of the Religion  
and Manners of the Mahomedans  
(London, 1731).
- Pococke, Richard                A Description of the East, 2 vols  
(London, 1743-45).
- Price, Major David              Memoirs of the Principal Events in  
Mohammedan History, 3 vols (London,  
1811-1821).
- Purchas, Samuel                His Pilgrimage, Contayning a History  
of the World, in Sea Voyages and  
Lande Trauells, 5 vols (London, 1625-  
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- Russell, Alexandar      The Natural History of Aleppo, 2 vols  
(London, 1794).
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- Thevenot, Jean de The Travels of Monsieur Thevenot into  
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APPENDIX 5

A Bibliography of Moore's Oriental Reading

This bibliography lists works on the Orient which Moore drew on in providing notes to his Lalla Rookh and The Loves of the Angels:<sup>1</sup>

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Belzoni, G.	<u>Voyages on Egypte</u> , 2 vols (Paris, 1821).
Bey, Ali	<u>His Travels in Morocco, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, etc.</u> , 2 vols (London, 1816).
Bruce, James	<u>Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile</u> , 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1805).
Burder, S.	<u>Oriental Customs</u> , 2 vols (London, 1807).
Castellan, Antoine Louis	<u>Moeurs, usages, costumes des Othomans</u> 6 vols (Paris, 1812).
Champion, Joseph	<u>The Poems of Ferdosi</u> (London, 1788).
Chardin, J.	<u>Voyages en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient par Langles</u> , 10 vols (Paris, 1811).
Chishull, E.	<u>Antiquitates Asiaticae</u> (London, 1728).

1. This bibliography is culled from The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore (London, n.d.); The Letters of Thomas Moore, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden (Oxford, 1964); Sale Catalogues of the Libraries of Eminent Persons: Poets and Men of Letters, ed. A.N.L. Munby (London, 1971).

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(London, 1816).
- Rennel, James                  Memoirs of a Map of Hindoostan, or  
the Mughal Empire (London, 1793).
- Richardson, John               A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic and  
English, to which is prefixed a  
dissertation on the languages,  
literature and manners of Eastern  
Nations, 2 vols (Oxford, 1777).
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(London, 1848).
- Russell, Alexandar              Natural History of Aleppo, 2 vols  
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- Wittman, William      Travels in Turkey, Asia-Minor, Syria and across the Desert in Egypt, 1799-1801 (London, 1803).

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