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Development as Artistic Trope in Selected Texts from 19th
Century English Fiction

أصول الصور النمطية للعرب والمسلمين وتطورها كأداة فنية مجازية في
نصوص مختارة من الأدب الروائي الانجليزي في القرن التاسع عشر

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The Origins of Muslim/Arab Stereotypes and Their Development as Artistic Trope in Selected Texts from 19th Century English Fiction

Abstract:

'Arab', 'Muslim' and 'Middle Eastern' are terms frequently used synonymously and interchangeably in global media and popular culture. Consequently, they are problematically conflated, particularly in the West. They are not only lumped together regardless of ethnic, national, linguistic and cultural affiliations, but are also often negatively stereotyped. The negative stereotypes of the Arab/Muslim were and are used not only to cater to a Western audience thirsting for the exotic, but also to serve a tacit political agenda the roots of which extend far back to the beginning of religious and political conflicts and colonial contests for territory between the West and the East. This study aims at examining how and why the stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs originated in English literature and at following their trajectory over three centuries as they permeated all forms of Western literary culture from anthropological writing to travel narratives to mainstream popular culture, finally developing into artistic trope fiction writers in the 19th century could employ to convey social, cultural and political messages.

Key words: 19th Century English novel, Muslim/Arab stereotypes, colonialism, representation, gender relations

أصول الصور النمطية للعرب والمسلمين وتطورها كأداة فنية مجازية في نصوص مختارة من الأدب الروائي الانجليزي في القرن التاسع عشر

'العرب' و'المسلمون' و'الشرق اوسطيون' مصطلحات تستخدم غالبا في وسائل الاعلام الدولية والثقافة الشعبية بشكل متبادل وكأنها تحمل نفس المعنى مما يؤدي الى مشكلة تضارب وخط بين مدلولاتها وخاصة في الغرب. وسائل الاعلام لا تجمع فقط بين هذه المفردات بعض النظر عن التاريخ والعلاقات الخاصة بالعرق او القومية او اللغة او الثقافة للشعوب التي تشير اليها ولكن ايضا غالبا ما تكون مقولبة بشكل سلبي. هذه القوالب السلبية المتداولة كانت ومازالت تستخدم لخدمة المشاهد او القارئ الغربي المتعطش لكل ما هو غريب وايضا لخدمة التيار السياسي الصامت الذي تمتد جذوره الى بدايات الصراع الديني والسياسي والمنافسات الاستعمارية بين الغرب المسيحي والشرق المسلم. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى البحث في كيفية وأسباب نشأة هذه القوالب في الأدب الانجليزي وتتبع مسارها على مدي ثلاثة قرون وكيف تغلغت في كل أشكال الثقافة والأدب الغربي لتصبح في القرن التاسع عشر أداة فنية مجازية يوظفها الكتاب الروائيون لخدمة وتوصيل رسائلهم وموضوعاتهم.

The Origins of Muslim/Arab Stereotypes and Their Development as Artistic Trope in Selected Texts from 19th Century English Fiction ¹

'Arab', 'Muslim' and 'Middle Eastern' are terms which are frequently used synonymously and interchangeably in global media and popular culture. As a result, they are problematically conflated in the minds of the general public, particularly in the West, in spite of the fact that not all Arabs are Muslims, not all Middle Easterners are Arabs, and not all Muslims are Arabs or Middle Eastern. However, in the media they are not only lumped together regardless of their ethnic, national, linguistic and cultural histories and affiliations, but are also often negatively stereotyped. In his book, *Reel Bad Arabs*, Jack G. Shaheen investigates and analyzes the image of the Arab and Muslim in Hollywood films from the beginning of the silent movies to the present. He contends that in countless films, starting with the 1920s silent films, Hollywood has continually "vilified a people," often representing Arab men as "brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women" (2), while it has represented Arab women in a variety of degrading images. Arab women in Hollywood films appear as 1) "bellydancers" or "scantly-clad harem maidens, [...] closeted in the palace's women's quarters"; 2) "Beasts of Burden, carrying jugs on their heads"; 3) "shapeless Bundles of Black [...] trekking silently behind their unshaven mates"; 4) Cleopatra images, "labeled [...] 'serpents' and 'vampires'"; and finally, 5) "bombers intent on killing Westerners" (22-23). This set of stereotypical images has become "all-pervasive," Shaheen asserts, not only in Western culture, but all over the world because of "Hollywood's celluloid mythology [which] dominates the culture" and because of the "vast American reach via television and film" (4-5). Yet these images did not originate in Hollywood films. The negative stereotypes of Muslims/Arabs as Roland Stockton contends in his study, "Ethnic Archetypes and the Arab Image," are "rooted in a core of hostile archetypes that our culture [the Western culture] applies to those with whom it clashes. The roots of these archetypes lie in ancient conflicts or cultural teachings that go back centuries or even millennia"

(120). Professor James Emery, in "Arab Culture and Muslim Stereotypes", traces the emergence of these hostile stereotypes to times before the Crusades, to "the fall of Jerusalem to Islam in 638 A.D.", (n.p.). This suggests that these negative stereotypes emerged in response to religious, cultural and political conflicts. However, the persistent presence and influence of these images not only in popular culture, but also in English literature begs for investigation. When did they emerge? How did they gradually develop and crystalize as an artistic device employed in the service of thematic representation and character portrayal in English literary tradition? The stereotypical images of Muslims/Arabs may have originated as early as the period of the Crusades, but then they have taken form and solidified in the early modern period in response to political and religious conflicts between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Following their trajectory as they permeated different forms of western literary culture, this study examines their development into an artistic trope fictional writer in the 19th century could fall back on to convey social, cultural and political messages. The study will focus on four canonical writers and texts: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1823), Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1854), Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (1825), and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898),

In the period from the late 16th century to the early decades of the 18th century, the Islamic Ottoman Empire was at its zenith, extending its territory over much of southeastern Europe. This territorial expansion coincided with a European pre-colonial, or, to be more accurate, a nascent colonial interest in trade, especially in Eastern markets. Trade and political relations between England and the Ottoman Empire during the early modern period began with the establishment of British trading companies in different Turkish and Arab territories under the control of the Ottomans. These relations brought about a close encounter which was recorded in travelers' tales that became increasingly popular at the time. These tales were, as Kenneth Parker maintains in *Early Modern Tales of the Orient*, a hybrid form of literary production combining inventive fictions, "'facts' of 'scientific' discoveries", private diaries, letters and autobiographical material, as well as public official discourse (1).

Produced at a time when England was undergoing major cultural and political changes and when "a new sense of national identity [was] in the process of being formed" (10), these tales represented the Turks or Ottomans ("used synonymously with Muslims", according to Nabil I. Matar in "The Representation of Muslim Women in Renaissance England", (n.p.)) not only as a politically threatening Other, but also, equally importantly, as cultural foils of the English. The fear of being conquered by this Other and/or of "turning Turk" as a result of close encounters with foreign ways and customs influenced and shaped the literary production of the period. Although there were some positive accounts, many of the representations in the travelers' tales of Turkish/Muslim men and women were misinformed at best and/or fabrications informed and formed by religious and political bias at worst. The stereotypes that emerged out of these tales, and which endured and prevailed in the literary tradition, were those of the Terrible Turk and the enslaved and oppressed Muslim harem woman.

One of the most influential books about Turks, i.e., Muslims, published during the late 16th century in England was Fletcher Giles's *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597).² In his note to the reader at the beginning of the book, Giles's avowed purpose for writing the book betrays what Gerald MacLean calls, in "Ottomanism before Orientalism?," "imperial envy"—the mixed emotion of fear and admiration inspired by the "threatening but also enviable model of imperial might" posed by the Islamic Ottoman Empire (85). In the opening sentences, Giles points out the implied fear and "admiration (as it semeth)" which "proceedeth onely of ignoraunce" of

manie men [who] doe wonder at the great power ... of the Turks: And they think it strange, how this nation (being a people most rude and barbarous, and their beginning most base, vile, and ignominious) could attain within the compasse of so few years to the excessive height of their present greatnes (n.p.).

Concerned that this admiration might become a threat to British religion and culture, Giles felt called upon "to collect into English the summe of the Turks Religion; the manners, life and custom of that people in general" with the aim of bringing about the "discoverie of these things" that would afford his readers "good consequence both for pleasure of delite, and of knowledge for your profit" (n.p.).

To 'educate' his readers and wean them of their admiration of the Turks and also feed their fear of "Turning Turk", Giles in his initial address plays on the most sensitive emotional strings of cultural identity—national pride and security, and religious sentiment. The "furie" of the Turkish armies, he reminds his readers,

hath not onely ... swallowed up infinite, and those most mightie nations in the East but the terror of their name doth even now make the kings and princes of the West, with the weak and dismembered reliques of their kingdoms and estates, to tremble and quake through fear of their victorious forces.

However, the most formidable aspect of the Turks was that they were motivated in this fierce military expansion by their "immoderate zeale" for the spread of their religion and their "inveterate hatred against Christians and Christianitie." Giles's purpose in writing the book then was to "make knowne their barbarous customs and most cruel disposition" (n.p.). The following chapters of *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* are then dedicated to the deconstruction and demonization of the Turks and their religion, Islam.

Claiming that he collected his information from known "histories", Giles gives an entirely fabricated account of the person and history of the Prophet of Islam in which he vilifies and denounces Mohammed as "a false prophet" and Islam as "a monstrous and most devilish religion." In this account he was building on an already existing all-encompassing negative stereotypical image of Muslims. Although he states in the opening sentences of his first chapter that the Turks are "a distinct nation from the Sarracens [Muslim Arabs]" (2), he also

emphasizes that because both "embrace and professe" Islam, they are equally corrupted and inimical to Christianity and Christians. This religious hostility towards Muslims, Matar contends in *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685*, already existed in Protestant eschatological discourse from the Middle Ages³, but flourished and "transformed from dogma to race" in the early modern period when the Islamic Ottoman Empire became a formidable political threat. What was a predominantly religious hostility in the Middle Ages, metamorphosed during the early modern period into a racial hatred, producing stereotypes and "deprecatory references to the Turks and their religious predecessors, the Arabs and Saracens" which "were not confined to university-bound theologians," but also pervaded social and political discourse (154-155). In sync with the religious and political ideology of his times, Giles then blatantly demonizes all followers of Islam, denouncing them as "licentious ... brute and savage beasts" who "do abandon their minds to all voluptuousness, and doo seeme to be led only by the sensualities of their lusts and filthie appetites" (41).

Giles's book became an authority for a number of other writers of the period. William Biddulph, the first English preacher to publish an account of his travels in the Ottoman Empire, *The Travels of Certaine Englishmen into Africa, Asia, Troy ... and Customes of Forraine and heathen Countries* (1609), follows Giles in what MacLean calls, in *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, the "Protestant tradition of anti-Islamic propaganda." Copying word for word the account given by Giles of the life of the Prophet, Biddulph "belongs firmly within this tradition of bigoted disinformation" (85). After pronouncing Islam as a "devilish religion" and its Prophet "first thief, afterwards a seditious soldier, then a renegade, after that a captain of a rebellious host" (94), Biddulph proceeds to comment on and refute what he calls "Muhammad's laws and 8 commandments." Other travel writers also followed in the footsteps of Giles and Biddulph. John Cartwright's *The Preacher's Travels* (1611) and William Lithgow's *The Totall Discourse* (1632), to name only a few, give almost identical negative accounts of Islam and Muslims, whether Turks or Arabs. However, most of these travel writers, MacLean

contends, did not write their travel accounts from actual personal experience. Fearful of being influenced by foreign beliefs and customs and hence "turning Turk", they, "like most Western Christian commentators of the time ... had no desire to understand Islam;" they "'wanted merely to refute it.'" (*The Rise of Oriental Travel* 85-87).

The persistent repetition of the negative representations which demonized Muslims and Turks fulfilled its educational purpose only too perfectly by creating an insidious stereotypical image of all Muslims to which western audience responded and still "respond almost reflexively" (Shaheen 1). The terms 'Turk' and the 'Terrible Turk' were so powerful they became expressions common enough in the English language to be included and defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED):

Turk: (Applied to) anyone having qualities historically attributed to Turks; a cruel, rigorous, or tyrannical person; any one behaving barbarically or savagely. Also: a bad-tempered or unmanageable person; a man who treats his wife harshly. Often (with alliterative qualification) terrible Turk; (also) young Turk, an unmanageable or violent child or youth (OED).

Similarly, the term "Saracen" acquired a proportional power. According to the OED, the term was initially used to refer to "the nomadic peoples of the Syro-Arabian desert which harassed the Syrian confines of the Empire; hence, an Arab; by extension, a Muslim, *esp.* with reference to the Crusades." After the Crusades, it started to acquire new connotations, "a non-Christian, heathen, or pagan; an unbeliever, infidel." Later still, it was used to refer to "an ignorant and tasteless person, a 'barbarian'." Both definitions of "Turk" and "Saracen" extend the same derogatory language to Turks, Arabs and Muslims. In time the two terms were conflated in the minds of the general public, creating a binary opposition in which the "tasteless barbarian" Muslim, whether Arab or Turk, is set against the "civilized" Christian, and by extension, the East against the West.

What is also noteworthy in the definition of the "Turk", aside from his being "terrible", is that he is "a man who treats his wife harshly" (OED). This draws attention to the other side of the stereotypical image, born out of the travel writers' intriguing preoccupation, one is tempted to say pathological fascination, with gender relations and marriage in Islam and the Turkish/Arab world—a preoccupation that has also endured to our present day.

In his account of marriage and family relations, Biddulph, again echoing Giles, is quite eloquent:

Their seventh commandment is concerning marriage: that every man must of necessity marry, to increase and multiply the sect and religion of Muhammad. Their custom is to buy their wives off their parents, and never to see them until they come to be married; and their marriage is nothing but enrolling in the Cadi's book. And it is lawful for them to take as many wives as they will, or as many as they are able to keep. And whenever he dislikes one of them, it is their use to sell them or give them to any of their menslaves. And although they love their women never so well, yet they never sit at table with men. No, not [even] with their husbands; but wait at table and serve him. And when he has dined, they dine in secret by themselves, admitting no man or mankind amongst them, if he is above 12 years of age. And they never go abroad without leave of their husbands; which is very seldom, except it is either to the bannio (or hot bath), or once a week to weep at the graves of the dead...

If their husbands have been abroad, at his entrance into the house, if any one of their women is sitting on a stool, she rises up, and bows herself to her husband, and kisses his hand, and sets the same stool for him whereon they sat, and stand so long as he is in presence. If the like order were in England, women would be more dutiful and faithful to their husbands than many of them are. And especially if there was the like

punishment for whores, there would be less whoredom. For there, if a man has a 100 women, if any one prostitute herself to any man but her own husband, he has authority to bind her, hands and feet, and so cast her into the river with a stone about her neck, and drown her. And this is a common punishment among them; but it is usually done at night. And the man, if he be taken, is dismembered (95).

This lengthy and obviously fabricated portrayal of gender and family relations does not only represent Muslim men as despotic tyrants, but also shows Muslim women/wives to be little more than slaves who are sold, bought, given away and punished subject to men's will and pleasure. The contradictions in Biddulph's last statement, however, are noteworthy. The reader might well wonder why, if the men have the "authority" to inflict such "common" and atrocious punishments on their wives, this would be done "at night" and why they, the husbands, would be "dismembered" if caught? It is also interesting to note that, when it came to gender relations, Biddulph found that the Muslims had something worth emulating after all. As MacLean points out, the preacher in Biddulph "admired the way he imagined that married life was conducted in Muslim households ... [and] warmed to the imaginative possibilities of punishment" (*The Rise of Oriental Travel* 88) for wives who prove less dutiful or unfaithful.

Matar argues that with the beginning of the transformation of the role and position of women in Europe and England from the medieval context of "enclosure, silence, chastity and dependence" to a more visible position during the early modern period and the Elizabethan Age, the initial representation of Muslim women in English patriarchal travel literature during the period was as "the foil of English women and the hoped-for model [to be emulated] in Christendom." This was part of the "policing effort" in England and Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries which sought to control women who were beginning to defend their rights and demand a more visible social position. These patriarchal writers regarded as positive the "model of the female docility among Muslims." However, this changed in the second half of the 17th century as writers

"implicitly admit [ted ...] their inability to understand Muslim social customs," although they still remained fascinated with the "totally inaccessible" and separate world of the harem. The inaccessibility of this world "transformed [it] in the English imagination from a place of incarceration to an exotic and romantic domain for women." This resulted in the emergence of the "romance of the Harem" with all its exotic representations of Muslim women, living immured in the harem and subject to the will of their masters/husbands, yet also developing their own dangerous romantic intrigues. Most travel writers took their cue from exotic representations which "invariably serves to associate the one who is exoticized with the wondrous and the unreal" ("The Representation of Muslim Women in Renaissance England", n. p.), and in the process aggravated the already negative image of Muslim women, as will be discussed in the following pages.

In spite of the influx of false and fabricated travel accounts during the late 16th and 17th centuries, occasionally there were other accounts which attempted to give a more truthful representation of the East. Joseph Pitts, an Englishman who was taken captive and enslaved in the Ottoman Empire in the period from 1687-1694, and who had "turned Turk" and converted to Islam while in captivity, published an account of his captivity, *A Truthful and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammedans* (1704), after he was ransomed and returned to England. Pitts's captivity and subsequent conversion to Islam allowed him a closer and more intimate social and cultural interaction with the Muslim community; and though he reverted to Christianity and published his account hoping to "make some manner (at least) of restitution and reparation for my past defection [conversion]" (221), he was not influenced in recording his experiences by a biased religious agenda. Daniel J. Vitkus explains in *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption* that Pitts's narrative and account are different from other accounts because he "asserts the truth value of his account, but in his case, there is an emphasis on empirical truth and accuracy of information rather than the 'revealed truth' of religion" (218). Therefore, his account of his captivity and life in the East clearly reviews most of the previous reports. Setting the record straight concerning the claim that Muslim men can

"take as many wives as they will, or as many as they are able to keep", he reports,

there is not one in a thousand hath more than one wife, except in the country, where some here and there may have two wives, yet I never knew but one which had as many as three wives (243).

However, though his narrative was reprinted several times over the following years, it seems not to have had the powerful influence which earlier narratives and accounts had, perhaps because, as Vitkus suggests, Pitts's conversion to Islam and his "intimate and extended contact with the Islamic other" would have made his contemporaries regard him as "contaminated" (219) and therefore not to be trusted.

Another important figure whose travel accounts contradicted and attempted to refute many of the early accounts is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Lady Mary traveled in the Turkish Empire with her husband who was appointed as ambassador in Istanbul in 1716-1717. She recorded her experiences and observations of the Turkish Empire in letters which she sent home. However, these letters were not collected and published as *Turkish Embassy Letters* until 1763, a year after her death. Lady Mary writes that

'Tis certain that we have but very imperfect relations of the manners and religion of these people, this part of the world being seldom visited but by merchants, who mind little but their own affairs, or travelers who make too short a stay to be able to report anything exactly to their own knowledge. The Turks are too proud to converse familiarly with merchants etc., who can only pick up some confused informations, which are generally false, and can give no better account of the ways here, than a French refygee lodging in a garret in Greek Street, could write of the court of England (60).

Muslim men and women and their lives and relationships in their families and communities and the *Haramlik*, or women's quarters (more commonly known as the Harem), were thus at best exaggerated

misrepresentations and at worst fabricated falsehoods. For as Lady Mary concludes, since the "harems are always forbidden ground," "the common voyage writers ... [are] fond of speaking of what they don't know" (85) and give accounts "which are generally so far removed from the truth and so full of absurdities ... of the women, which 'tis certain they never saw" (104).

Lady Mary's experience with Turkish women and their relationships and activities were quite different from what was usually reported. Comparing Turkish women to European women, she deconstructs both the myth of female subjugation and of male barbarity, and ironically reverses the roles. Unlike European women of the time "The Turkish women are the only free people in the Empire," she reports; "they have more liberty than we have." Also, Muslim women's economic independence gives them freedom and autonomy; and they did not have "much to apprehend from the resentment of their husbands, those ladies that are rich having all their money in their hands, which they take with them upon a divorce with an addition he is obliged to give them" (71-72)⁴. A visit to the bath or *Hammam*, left Lady Mary impressed with the civilized and "polite manners" of the ladies who were devoid of "impertinent curiosity," unlike the ladies of European courts who would not have "behaved themselves in so polite a manner to a stranger" (58). Another visit to the *Haramlik* of the wife of a high official left her "fancying I had been some time in Mohamed's paradise." The grace, refinement, civility and hospitality of the Turkish lady persuaded Lady Mary that "could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous" (89-90).

Lady Mary's account of her travels into the Ottoman Empire was not the most influential one in forming the general public perception during the period. The reason may have been that she was seen as "a woman subverting class and gender norms by travelling" (MacLean, "Ottomanism before Orientalism?" 85), or because her travels as Anita Desai suggests allowed her to break away from the mental, intellectual and rigid physical confinements of her society and to become open to and

to express new impressions and points of view which were not acceptable in her time and place (xxvi). This probably explains why her *Letters* did not appear in print until after her death and against her family's desperate attempts to prevent their publication. What is more unfortunate still is the fact that even her description of the Turkish *Hammam* was used by painters of the 18th and 19th centuries whose works helped in the propagation of misconceptions about and misrepresentations of Islam and Muslim men and women. In the 19th century the French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, commissioned to paint a harem scene by Napoleon, produced his famous *Le Bain Turc*, which was inspired by Lady Mary's description of her visit to the Turkish bath. However, the painting proved too graphic and was returned to him, not to be revealed to the public until 1905 after his death (De Vergnette n.p.)⁵.

Probably one of the most important works during the 18th century which inspired many artists and painters of the time and had a deep and lasting influence on the European, and particularly the English, perception of the East, especially the Muslim East, was the translation of the *1001 Nights* into French and English. The *1001 Nights* was first translated into French by Antoine Galland and was published in seven volumes from 1704-1706. Galland's volumes of *Mille et Une Nuit* were quickly translated into English immediately after their publication in France, became extremely popular and, according to Ros Ballaster, had "an influence which cannot be overestimated" on the literary tradition and imagination of England. But what is most significant is that Galland "framed his text for consumption by a European readership [...] insisting that the tales provided an insight into the lives of contemporary oriental cultures despite his own extensive knowledge of the varied histories, languages, religions, and mores of these territories" (16). The frame story of the *1001 Nights* popularized the already existing stereotypes. The despotic and oppressive Shahryar who marries a new virgin everyday only to cut her head off the next morning is nothing but the extreme embodiment of the Turk who treats his wife harshly. Scheherazade is the exoticized young and intelligent bride who lives under the constant threat of losing her head, but ingeniously manages to mesmerize him with her fantastic tales to keep herself alive one day at a time. Additionally,

Galland's deliberate obfuscation of the cultural individuality of the various eastern regions involved in the tales added to the already confused Western perception of the East, Islam and Muslims.

Thus the misconception of Islam and Muslim people prevailed and took root, informing and shaping the perceptions and literary production of even those who claimed superior intellectual standing in Western literary tradition. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), condemning her culture's treatment and education of English women which turned them into "weak beings ... only fit for the seraglio," (13)⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the foremothers of feminism, was herself indiscriminately echoing the beliefs of her time. Accusing her society and culture of treating the English women of her time, "in the true style of Mohametanism, [...] as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as part of the human species" (10), Wollstonecraft was echoing, Deidre Shauna Lynch points out, "a common but mistaken opinion among Europeans that in the Koran, the sacred text of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed taught that women have no souls and would not be permitted an afterlife" (10, n. 6). In defending the right of English women to a proper education and a more visible position in society, Wollstonecraft was at the same time deliberately representing Muslim women as a negative foil from which she sought to distance herself, and subtly appealing to western Christian men to distance themselves from "Mohametanism" by giving women their rights. In both her representation and appeal Wollstonecraft was, Bernadette Andrea points out, adding to the "fallacy of the enslaved Muslim wife." Falling back on the readily available stereotype, feminism's foremothers like Wollstonecraft fell in "complicity with [...] orientalist and racist ideologies" and gave rise to "feminist orientalism" which added to the "monolithic conceptualization" (275-276) and stereotyping of Muslim and Arab women.

By the end of the 18th century, the negative stereotypes of Muslim men and women have solidified, forming a repertoire of images fictional writers could draw from and utilize. In the 19th century, a century which witnessed English colonial expansion and great social change, both female and male canonical fiction writers, like Mary Shelly, Charlotte

Bronte, Sir Walter Scott and Arthur Conan Doyle, used these stereotypical images as a backdrop against which their characters could be drawn and through which comparisons and contrasts could be made to promote desired social change and affirm English/Western cultural superiority.

More than two decades after the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Shelley, Wollstonecraft's daughter, echoes her mother's earlier views about men and women in Islam in her novel *Frankenstein* (1818/1823), one of the most popular novels of the Romantic period. *Frankenstein* encloses many inner narratives often not given their due by readers and critics fascinated by the story of Victor Frankenstein and his monster. One of these enclosed stories is the one of the De Lacy family and the "sweet Arabian", Safie. The De Lacys are the unfortunate noble French family (the blind father and his daughter, Agatha, and son, Felix) who become unwitting mentors and protectors of the outcast monster, and whose referent misfortune is the result of Felix championing a Muslim Turkish merchant, the father of Safie. The way the Turkish merchant and Safie are represented clearly reflects the fact that by the early 19th century the stereotypical perception of Muslims has become not only firmly established in western tradition, but also the barbarity of the Muslim man and the subjugation of the Muslim woman have become a readily available artistic trope with which the putative superiority and civilization of the Christian West can be enhanced.

Persecuted in France because of his religion and wealth, the Turkish merchant is accused of a crime he did not commit, is arrested and condemned to death. Felix, who was present at the trial, feels "uncontrollable" "horror and indignation" at this unjust sentence and vows to deliver the "unfortunate Mohametan." After many attempts, he succeeds in contacting him and offers his help. The Turkish merchant offers rewards and wealth which the noble Felix rejects with "contempt". However, when Felix meets Safie, he is captivated by her, and "the Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix, and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage." Though the Turk "loathed the idea

that his daughter should be united to a Christian" (111-113), to serve his purposes, he encourages the mutual attraction and intimacy growing rapidly between the lovers. When Felix finally manages to help the Turk to escape, he himself comes under the sever hand of the law and is exiled along with his family. The Turk meanwhile basely abandons the man who risked everything to deliver him and escapes, giving orders that his daughter should follow him. From the start, the text contrasts Felix De Lacy with the merchant who is not even dignified with a name, but is merely identified as a Turk and a Mohametan, drawing on the long-standing stereotypical expectations of the reader. Felix's nobility is not only heightened by his disinterested chivalric championing of the Turk, but also by being juxtaposed to him—the Turk is a manipulative dishonorable man who is not above using his own daughter and betraying his deliverer, thus failing miserably to measure up to the nobility of Felix.

The representation of Safie feeds even more into orientalist stereotyping. When first introduced, Safie is described as "dressed in a black suit, and covered with a thick black veil," and when she throws up her veil, she is revealed to be of "angelic beauty and expression. Her hair is of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were black ...; her features of regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with lovely pink." And "she sang ... like a nightingale of the woods" (106-107). However, the exotic in this "sweet Arabian" needs to be balanced by virtue and nobility to make her worthy of the noble Felix. But how can virtue and nobility exist in the daughter of a man like her father? Safie's saving grace is her mother, a Christian Arab who was kidnapped and enslaved by the Turks and was later taken as a wife by Safie's father who was captivated by her beauty. Before her death, Safie's mother "instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion, and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independent spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Mohamet." Her mother's instructions made Safie ashamed of her father's betrayal of the man who saved him, and urged her to escape because she

sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia, and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with puerile amusement, ill suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and noble emulation of virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society, was enchanting to her" (112).

It is important here to note that Safie's mother would not have been her daughter's saving grace had she been a *Muslim* Arab; it is absolutely necessary that she be made a Christian, otherwise she would not have had the "grand ideas" and the "virtue" which she instilled in her daughter. Yet one cannot but note an obvious paradox in the novel which also echoes a paradox in Wollstonecraft's earlier *Vindication*. In condemning Islam or "Mohamatenism" for treating women as "a kind of subordinate beings", Wollstonecraft is establishing Muslim women as a negative foil from whom she seeks to distance herself and the women of her culture. Paradoxically, however, she also pronounces the women of her culture "a frivolous sex" who are brought up to sacrifice "strength of body and mind [...] to libertine notions of beauty, the desire to establishing themselves, —the only way women can rise in the world, —by marriage" (13). It seems that being western Christians did not afford the women of Wollstonecraft's time the "rank in society" or the "grand ideas" that Mary Shelley claims for them. Similarly, Shelley's portrayal of other western Christian women in *Frankenstein* pales in comparison to her portrayal of Safie. Agatha, Felix's sister, is a shadowy presence; a young woman who was brought up to rank among the ladies of her society, she was trained like all the women of her station to fulfill, according to Johanna M. Smith, the "gendered expectations" of her society, which confined her within "the feminine sphere of domesticity" (315). Thus while Felix was "constantly employed out of doors," she "arranged the cottage and prepared the food" (101). Agatha and all the other female characters in the novel, apart from Safie, are "oppressively feminine women" who "seldom venture far from home" (Smith 313-317) and who seem to lack autonomy. Safie, on the other hand, has an "independent spirit" which allows her to defy her tyrannical father and travel alone across Europe,

not hampered by her lack of knowledge of language, culture or geography in search of the man she loves. The question that poses itself then is, is Safie's strength and autonomy the result of the teachings of her *Christian Arab* mother? Or inherited traits from her *Christian Arab* mother? One does not wish to impose on the text, especially that Shelley herself does not say much about Safie's mother. However, it would seem that managing to survive enslavement and living in a foreign culture while remaining steadfast to her religion, though married to a man of a different faith, Safie's mother must have had extraordinary strength and resilience. These traits can only develop in an environment that fosters them, and though we do not know anything about the mother's upbringing, we can assume that her original culture must have given her the space to grow as an independent strong woman. It may be also assumed that she had that same space after her marriage to Safie's father, though he is represented as a manipulative tyrant. After all, she was allowed to not only keep her faith, but to also pass it down to her daughter. This recalls Lady Mary Montagu's earlier observations that Muslim women "are the only free people in the Empire" and that "they have more liberty than we have" (71). It seems that Shelley's portrayal and characterization of Safie defeats her purpose of establishing the superiority of Western or English culture. Safie's strength and independence not only expose the oppressive dependence of other female characters in the novel, but also paradoxically make her more representative of the feminist sentiments both Shelley and Wollstonecraft were battling to promote.

Strongly reminiscent of Wollstonecraft and Shelley's representation of Muslim women as foils of Western Christian women is Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1854). The novel offers another instance of an established western literary figure indiscriminately echoing the misconceptions of her time and culture. Bronte does not devote the same space as does Shelley to draw comparisons between Western and Muslim cultures, but in what seems to be a minor climatic point in the relationship between Rochester and Jane, the stereotype of Muslim gender relations is again readily available for the author to draw a contrast that reinforces Jane's character as a strong, independent woman. Disconcerted by

Rochester's attempt to shower her with silk and jewels as an expression of his love, Jane feels that "his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched." The mental Eastern image makes her "burn [...] with a sense of annoyance and degradation", and, refusing to be "dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester," she decides to continue to maintain herself as governess until their marriage. The "Eastern allusions" (229) in her and Rochester's bantering altercation that follows gives validity to Margaret G. Hunt's contention that "one of the foundational truths of Western modernity" is "the claim that western European Christian women were the most fortunate women in the world, and Muslim women were the most oppressed" (qtd in Bernadette Andrea 275). Rochester's declaration that he "would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio," disconcerts Jane even more as she refuses to be "an equivalent for one [seraglio]." His dehumanizing comment on "tons of flesh and [...] an assortment of black eyes" elicits from her a response that reflects her sense of superiority to that which she refuses to be compared to or equated with: she will "go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved—your harem inmates among the rest" (229-230). It is obvious that both Bronte and her heroine see the eastern Muslim woman as a degraded "doll" or "slave" who needs to be saved and taught freedom. Juxtaposed to the stereotype of the Muslim woman and portrayed as an independent, strong woman who would act as a missionary, Jane both embodies Bronte's feminist message and reflects and echoes the same sense of cultural superiority Shelley articulates when she says that Safie was "enchanted" by the prospect of "marrying a Christian and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society".

Male writers of the 19th century were also influenced by and utilized the same stereotypes, though they shifted the focus to lay more emphasis on masculine relations and representations. Amidst an overwhelming negative representation of Islam and Muslims, Sir Walter Scott's, *The Talisman* (1825), the second volume of his *Tales of the Crusades*, seems to offer a different perspective. Scott's page on the Edinburgh University

library website describes the novel as "perhaps the first novel in English to portray Muslims in a positive light" (n.p.). *The Talisman* portrays the relationship between the Saracens (Muslim Arabs) and the Crusaders, particularly the relationship between Saladin and Richard the Lion Heart, towards the end of the third Crusade. It opens with an encounter between Sir Kenneth, the Knight of the Leopard, and the Saracen Emir, Sheerkohf, who turns out later to be Saladin himself. Though in the initial encounter "the Saracen Emir formed a marked and striking contrast with the western Crusader" in physical attributes and manners, this contrast does not cast the Emir in any negative light. On the contrary both men are equal in bravery, strength and dignity, and "the manners of the Eastern warrior were grave, graceful, and decorous" (16). Later on, when Saladin disguises as a physician and manages to gain entrance into the camp of the Crusaders to attend King Richard who is bedridden with a dangerous fever, he is again portrayed in a positive light. As a Hakim or physician he is wise and extraordinarily skilled, and though plainly dressed and small in stature compared to the western men, "there was something striking in his manner and countenance" which compelled respect (58). Moreover, in the character of Saladin he is vouched for by King Richard himself as "a noble Soldan" (56), while pronounced by Sir Kenneth as "a generous and valiant enemy" who is "true-hearted and loyal" (50-51). Nor does Saladin prove otherwise throughout the events.

However, this favorable image, which at times verges on the romantic, is counteracted as the novel in general echoes the persistent view of Islam as a "devilish" and "false" religion, giving the impression that Saladin is perhaps an anomalous or rare individual case who is nevertheless not completely exempt from the corrupting influence of his religion. King Richard wonders incredulously how "a valiant and worthy Soldan should believe" in such a religion (56). Scott himself, using the same derogatory language which recalls previous works, often describes the Emir, particularly in chapter I in his encounter with Sir Kenneth, in an assortment of terms used interchangeably and synonymously. The Emir is an "infidel", "heathen", "Saracen", "Arab", "Moslem" and "paynim [pagan]" who is in confrontation with a "Christian Knight." It could be

argued, of course, that Scott was merely recording the terms, commonly used by Crusaders, to reflect Sir Kenneth's perception of his opponent. However, this argument is qualified by the tale the Emir narrates of his descent from "Genii" in the mountains of Kurdistan:

From whom should the bravest boast of descending, saving from him that is bravest? From whom should the proudest trace their line so well as from the Dark spirit, which would rather fall headlong by force than bend the knee by his will? Eblis [Satan] may be hated, stranger, but he must be feared; and such as Eblis are his descendants of Kurdistan" (24).

The fantastic tale and concluding boast associate the Emir with the diabolic and confirm the popular belief that Islam originated from the "Evil One", as Sir Kenneth says. From what source, then, did the generosity and true-heartedness of Saladin spring? Scott has actually anticipated this question in the opening paragraphs of chapter II. Over the long years of war and "intervals of peace" between the Crusaders and the Saracens, the formers' "spirit of chivalry"

has extended itself gradually from the Christians to their mortal enemies the Saracens ... The latter were, indeed, no longer the fanatical savages who had burst from the center of Arabian deserts, with sabre in one hand and the Koran in the other, to inflict death or the faith of Mohammed, or, at best, slavery and tribute, upon all who dared to oppose the belief of the prophet of Mecca ...; the Saracens gradually caught part of their manners, and especially of those chivalrous observances which were so well calculated to charm the minds of a proud and conquering people (13-14).

Saladin's chivalry then is nothing but Western Christian chivalry learnt first and then reflected back. It is no wonder that Scott himself comments in his introduction to *The Talisman* (1832) that "Saladin ... displayed the deep policy and prudence of a European sovereign" not "the cruelty and

violence of an eastern Sultan" (4). It is only by comparison to a superior European model that Saladin could be admired.

Like all works that deal with Islam and Muslims, *The Talisman* does not fail to touch on the issue of gender relations and the position of women. In Sir Kenneth and Emir Sheerkohf's discussion of polygamy and women in chapter II, the Emir draws a comparison between men and women and his signet ring with its magnificent central diamond and encircling smaller stones,

The central diamond is man, firm and entire, his value depending on himself alone; and this circle of lesser jewels are women, borrowing his luster, which he deals out to them as best suits his pleasure and his convenience. Take the central stone from the signet, and the diamond itself remains as valuable as ever, while the lesser gems are comparatively of little value.

This analogy and Sir Kenneth's response to it invoke the established stereotypes of Muslim men and women and draws the inevitable contrasts between them and Western men and women: "the poor sensual slaves who form thy harem" cannot be compared to the women of Europe whose beauty "gives point to our spears and edge to our swords; their words are our law"(18). Thus while Sir Kenneth is the perfect Knight and European women are "mistresses" who command devotion, the Emir barely escapes being a perfect "Turk", and Muslim women, though allowed to be jewels and gems rather than slaves, remain lesser beings, subject to men's pleasure and convenience. It seems that although *The Talisman* does to some extent portray Muslims and Arabs in a comparatively more favorable light, Scott has not been able to completely break away from the influence of his culture and times. He may not have unqualifiably demonized Saladin, but still he, like Shelly and Bronte, uses the same juxtapositions and contrasts to ascribe superiority to Western Crusaders over their Muslim opponents.

Interestingly enough, more than seventy years after the publication of *The Talisman*, Arthur Conan Doyle's novel, *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, follows the same line of representation, again focusing mainly on contrasting European and Muslim Arab men. Published in 1898, *The Tragedy of the Korosko* testifies to the fact that by the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the binary opposition of East and West, Muslim and Christian has trickled down to the most popular forms of mass entertainment. The novel portrays a group of European and American tourists on a trip up the river Nile who are attacked and taken captives by a band of Arab and Dervish marauders in the southern region of Egypt bordering the Sudan. Drawing on the preconceptions in the minds of his readers, Doyle draws a sharp contrast between his "modern type" western characters and their Muslim and Arab abductors who still seem to belong to the "seventh century" in spite of their modern weapons. He blatantly states that these attackers have "nothing to distinguish [them ...] from the desert warriors who first carried the crescent flag out of Arabia. The East does not change, and the Dervish raiders are not less brave, less cruel, or less fanatical than their forebears" (30). 'The East does not change' seems here not to function only as an instrument of recall to evoke the readers' prejudices, but also as a warning against the still threatening Other, echoing not only the same religious and political discourse registered by Giles and others three hundred years earlier, but also Scott's description in *The Talisman* of "the fanatical savages who had burst from the center of the Arabian deserts" (13). The only difference here is that this religious and political discourse is now employed in the service of Britain's colonial and imperialist project in the East at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. It is interesting to note that the western characters are not all British, but are a mixture of British, French and American, representing the civilized West brought into direct confrontation with the barbaric and backward East which is resisting civilizing endeavors.

Doyle's representation of the Dervish and the Arab marauders draws heavily on the established stereotype, and except for the Syrian guide, Mansour, who is a Christian Arab, and the Baggara Arab chief of

the attacking band, Ali Wad Ibrahim, who is described as "one of the most fanatical of the Khalifa's leaders" (31), all the other Arab characters are treated as a single barbaric entity. "With little, vicious eyes, and thin, cruel lips" (30) they attack the westerners with "cold-blooded, deliberate ferocity" and after the capture treat them with "brutal and unreasoning violence." Yet when one of the Europeans, the normally placid clergyman of Birmingham no less, is stirred, with "heroic energy" into retaliation by the blood of "some Berserk ancestor" coursing in his veins, they turn into dehumanized "shrinking, snarling savages" (29). The retaliator is a clergyman with the blood of heroic Scandinavians, and as such he is superior to savage fanatics who can only bring him down with brute force and sheer numbers. It is the Christian West versus the Muslim East on a minor scale. However, the contrast does not end here. While "the Arabs [... were] accustomed to associate religion with violence," the westerners, in spite of their different denominations, are united and made more human in the time of adversity by their religion, and "already frivolity and selfishness had passed away from them, and each was thinking and grieving only for the other" (34). Interestingly, even their Christianity seems to be a different brand from Arab Christianity. The righteous bravery of the clergyman is reflected also in the other captives who remain steadfast and refuse to "change religion under compulsion" and convert to Islam even when threatened with instant death by the Baggara Arab chief (31). Their bravery stands in sharp contrast with the cowardly behavior of their Syrian Christian guide who, to save his own life, not only converts without a second thought, but also adds another dimension to the contrast between the Western men and their Eastern counterparts by betraying the existence of the women whom the men hid when the attack began.

The existence of the two women, the American Miss Adams and her niece Sadie, among the captives is instrumental for Doyle. They seem to have no function in the novel other than to complement the civilized image of the Western men and to further demonize the Muslim Arab man as a lustful abuser of women. Thus while the European men believe it "a thousand times better to die" (32) than to let the women be taken captives,

the Syrian guide, whose Christianity did not avail him much, betrays their existence; and when they are roughly dragged out of their hiding place, "the chief's dark eyes" burn "with smouldering fire" (33) as he looks at the young attractive American.

The Tragedy of the Korosko, unlike *The Talisman*, is uncompromising in its negative representation of Muslim Arabs. Doyle, as suggested above, relies heavily on the established stereotypes to affirm the superiority of western culture and to provide justifications for Britain's colonial and imperialist project. *The Tragedy of the Korosko* was adapted by Doyle into a play, *Fires of Fate*, in 1905, and later the play was twice adapted, first into silent film in 1923 and then with sound in 1932. The silent film was released in England under the same title of the play, and in the U.S. as *Desert Sheikh*. This repeated adaptation of the novel testifies to its popularity and implies the effect it must have had on western audiences during the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. It also testifies to how the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs were disseminated and engrafted as they were adopted into more consumer-oriented and more accessible visual texts.

Though the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs were popularized through Hollywood films since the beginning of the silent cinema, they in fact have their origins in the early modern period. At their inception, these stereotypes were not intended to cater for a western audience thirsting for the exotic; they were used to serve a cultural and political agenda the roots of which extend far back to the beginning of religious and political conflicts and colonial contests for territory between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Appearing first in anthropological writings and travel narratives, intended as an antidote to a growing admiration of and fascination with Ottoman political and military might and Muslim culture, these stereotypes gradually permeated other forms of literary production to finally solidify in the 19th century, functioning as a literary trope or device which writers employed to convey their messages. Female writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Charlotte Bronte found through the stereotypes of Muslim men and women and gender relations avenue to express their feminist

sentiments as well as their own sense of cultural superiority. Sir Walter Scott and Arthur Conan Doyle also fall back on these stereotypes to affirm the superiority of Western culture. However, their works, though also touching on gender relations, focus more on masculine encounters, thus betraying a more politically oriented agenda, serving Britain's colonial enterprises in the 19th century. The stereotyping of Muslim men and women and misconceptions about Arab and/or Muslim culture still endure until today in both literature and media. Further study is needed to investigate whether and how these stereotypes evolved in the 20th and 21st centuries and how they function in a globalized world in which boundaries are dissolving, creating new forms of cultural and political encounters.

Notes

¹The present paper is a part of a larger project started by the author in 2010 to investigate and explore the images and representations of the Arab and Muslim in English and American literature. The project initially began with a study investigating the images of Muslim and/or Arab women in American Literature and how Arab-American women writers respond to these images. This study was presented at the AUB CASAR 3rd International Conference in 2010, and the author gratefully acknowledges the feedback and suggestions which urged her to trace the images back to their historical origins and to expand the study into a more comprehensive project, not only exploring the historical origins of the images, but also their development and trajectory over centuries until the present day. The outline and main ideas of the project were then presented at Al Qurain Cultural Festival in Kuwait in 2015, and the author wishes again to gratefully acknowledge the feedback and discussions which contributed to the formulation and development of the present paper.

² In all references to this book and all other works of the same period, the language of the original texts, with all its peculiarities of spelling and mechanics, is maintained.

³ Matar explains that eschatology is "a genre of religious discourse which examined contemporary and future events in the light of Christ's Second Coming as propounded chiefly in the books of Daniel and Revelation" and which established "an irreconcilable polarity [...] between Protestant Christians and Muslims [...], so much so that in the nature of God's scheme there could be nothing but warfare between them" (153-154). For a more detailed analysis of eschatology and Islam and Muslims, see Matar's *Islam in Britain*, Chapter Five, "Eschatology and the Saracen," (153-183). See also Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁴ The concept of "overture" in the British common law subordinated women/wives to their husbands legally and financially. A woman's entire property was passed on and automatically belonged to her husband at marriage. This did not change until the passage of the Married Woman's Property Act in 1882 which allowed women to have control over property gifts given to her by parents upon her marriage. However, women did not have full legal control over all their property of any kind until the passage of the Married Women Property Act of 1893.

⁵ Other European painters who exoticized the harem and the Turkish bath are the French Jean Jacques François le Barbier, *A Female Turkish Bath*; the Austrian-French Rudolf Ernest, *The Harem Bath*; the Italian Domenico Morelli, *Turkish Bath*; and the French Jean Leon Gerome, *Harem Bath*, to name only a few.

⁶ 'seraglio' is an Italian word derived from the Turkish word 'Saray', meaning 'palace'. It is used to designate the harem or women's quarters

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