

ENGLISH LITERARY INTEREST IN EXPLORING THE ROMANTIC EASTERN WORLD

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Abstract: This article examines the stories which based on authentic East in the early English Romantic literature and their main role of interest to create an extraordinary eastern world and motifs. By examining these historically important researches, I clarify that how the concept of Orientalism appeared in English literature. This article is written on the basis of the issues of historical eastern formation of the oriental stories. It expresses such features as a genuine Oriental environment and the ancients' oriental works which many foreign scholars and diplomats of the late eighteenth century were interested in. The Oriental literature was really a manifestation of the general change in taste from neo-classicism to romanticism. In the first half of century the tendency of writers of Oriental fiction and poetry was to use the Oriental material as a means of moralizing of satirizing the follies of their own culture.

Keywords: The Eastern motifs, Oriental prose, writers of Oriental fiction, scientific works, Oriental environment, "The history of Charoba", languages.

INTRODUCTION.

Around the 1770s, the great European movement of thought began, aimed at reaching to give freedom Western countries from the ingrained belief that the only sources of light and knowledge came from Greco-Roman culture. Most of the English writers thought that the mythology of classicism and its associated themes,

which had been in use in art since the Renaissance, needed to be supplemented by fresh types of imagery, subject matter and models. The Orient was studied in two ways: philological investigations of Eastern languages and literature by scholars, and accurate accounts of the East written eagerly by travellers and diplomats upon returning from tours of Eastern countries.

In the eighteenth century, English interest in exploring the Eastern world had increased tremendously. Orientalism was recognized as a cultural phenomenon and it had a great influence on architecture, gardening, art and literature too. As for the poets and writers, the oriental environment created a different mood and new modes of expression that inspired them to compose works with the eastern motifs. The main contribution of Orientalism to English literature was a distraction of the poets' mind from outdated ideas and filling it with fresh views.

In the first half of the century, the authors portrayed bad manners that belonged to their own culture in satirical verses with the help of oriental peculiarities. During this period, drama plots depicted the inevitability of punishment for sinners and disgusting things. But in the next part of the eighteenth century, poets focused their attention mainly on the exotic and mysteriousness of the East. Therefore, in order to present Oriental features, there was a strong need for fresh shapes, ornaments and figures that had never been used before. On the stage, the fondness for pantomimes and melodramas became progressively greater. In English Romantic literature, dramas appeared that were completely ornamented customs and fanciful decorations.

THE MAIN PART.

At the end of the 18th century all the book markets in England were full of books about various journeys. Among them was the most popular collection of letters written by Lady Hary Iltortley Hontagu at Constantinople in 1716, the author of this book was considered the wife of the British Ambassador. They were masterly letters describing Turkey and other Mediterranean countries, and they

made a great contribution to the exchange of ideas between Turkey and Europe. Other scholars and diplomats of the late eighteenth century who were interested in the East included: Sir William Ouseley, Sir Gore Ouseley, James Justinian Morier, Sir John Malcolm, Edward Backhouse Eastwick, Charles Augustus Murray, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, Eyles Irwin, Stephen Weston, Richard Hole, and Francis Douse. But these are unimportant in comparison with the acknowledged founder of Oriental scholarship in England, Sir William Jones (1746-1794). In 1768 he was the only person in England who knew enough Persian to translate the **Life of Nadir Shah** for the King of Denmark. His scientific works were of inestimable value to the writers of the time, and evidence of his influence can be found in their footnotes:

...among his contemporaries he stimulated Gibbon, Burke, Dugald Stewart, Beckford, Thomas Campbell, and John Scott of Amwell. He helped incite the Oriental vogue among the Romantics Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Southey, Moore, and Landor, and probably influenced Tennyson, Emily Bronte, Fitzgerald, Disraeli, Swinburne, and possibly Arnold and Bowring. He incited much of the Concord Hinduism of Emerson, Thoreau, and Bronson Allcot, and he provided a source of Oriental information for Irving and Melville. Herder and Goethe were influenced through Jones's translations. The fact that poets like Bryant, Campbell, Emerson, Gosse, Markham, and Southey included Jones in their collections of favourite poems poses possibly more influences. There may be still others.¹

¹ Garland Cannon, "The Literary Place of Sir William Jones (1746-1794)", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, II (1960), p. 61.

Thus, the social environment was created for writers of Oriental fiction. Up to this time, French translations had served as a model; now the discoveries of scholars and travel descriptions could not be ignored, and English writers began to adorn their stories with impressive sets of notes demonstrating their familiarity with the authentic East. In a long line of Oriental prose tales stretching from Tom Brown and Addison, "The history of Charoba" was also attempt to portray a genuine Oriental environment. In 1785, this work appeared, which is written in the same volume as Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance*. Strictly speaking, *The History of Charoba* is not a romance. The authoress saw elements of romance in the original narrative and dressed it up to suit the tenets of "good tasten".² The original was an episode from the history of Egypt by Murtada Ibn al-KHafif, which was published in 1672 as "Egyptian history", treating the pyramids, the flood of the Nile and other wonders, according to the opinions and traditions of the Arabians: written in the Arabic language by Nurtadi and translated into French by Mons. Vattier, then with interest translated into English by J. Davis. Mrs. Reeve didn't just upgrade the language of the story as it had appeared in Davies ' translation, but also changed the story itself. Exaggerations were toned down, unnecessary characters or episodes were eliminated, contradictory evidence was explained and the result was a short story that retained its Arabic spirit while remaining well-suited as reading material for English women. For, as she wrote in her novel "The progress of romance" fairy tales "create and encourage the wildest trips of the imagination, which it is or should be the duty of parents and mentors to restrain, and to give them a just and true idea of human nature, as well as of the duties and practices of ordinary life". The tale gains additional interest as the direct source of Landor's poem *Gebir* (1798).

² An account of her adaptations is given by Stanley T. Williams, "The Story of Gebir", *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVI (1921) pp. 615-631.

Since Vatek was not immediately popular, the Eastern prose story for the most part went its own way without hindrance. Subsequent Eastern fiction includes stories adapted from or influenced by the Arabian nights, as well as works from Islamic sources. "Mejnoun and Leila" (1797), a novel by Isaac Disraeli, tells the story of a lover who goes mad because of a failed love and wanders in the desert among wild animals. It originates from a Persian poem. Even more important, however, is that Disraeli attaches a full set of Notes to his story to check the details, however insignificant they may be. He quotes famous Eastern scholars of the time and refers to Vatek's text and notes. Thomas Moore-the epicurean, written around 1820, describes the Greek philosopher's spiritual conversion from Epicureanism to Christianity. Events take place in temples and caves under the Egyptian pyramids. Moore's footnotes are much more extensive than Disraeli's, reflecting his broad reading. Sir Walter Scott, writing his novel the Talisman (1825), apologized for not being able to provide a detailed backstory.

... and not only did I labour under the incapacity of ignorance - in which, as far as regards Eastern manners, I was thickly wrapped as an Egyptian fog - but my contemporaries were, many of them, as much enlightened upon the subject as if they had been inhabitants of the favoured land of Goshen. The love of travelling had pervaded all ranks, and carried the subjects of Britain into all quarters of the world... Had I, therefore, attempted the difficult task of substituting manners of my own invention instead of the genuine costume of the East, almost every traveler I met who had extended his route beyond what was anciently called "The Grand Tour",

had acquired a right, by ocular inspection, to chastise me for my presumption.³

This summary of English Eastern fiction in the first quarter of the nineteenth century demonstrates the importance of direct experience, which led to the growth of realism. It remains to mention two of the best examples of realism: “Anastatius or Memoirs of a Greek” (1819), by Thomas Hope (1770-1831), traveler or virtuoso, and “The adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan” (1824), by James Justinian Morier (1780-1849), writer of travel books and attache to the British embassy in Persia.

Myths of origin represent an attempt to render the universe comprehensible in human terms. Greek creation myths (cosmogonies) and views of the universe (cosmologies) were more systematic and specific than those of other ancient peoples. Yet their very artistry serves as an impediment to interpretation, since the Greeks embellished the myths with folktale and fiction told for its own sake. Thus, though the aim of “Anastatius or Memoirs of a Greek” is to astonish the West by lifting the curtain of ignorance which had encouraged enmity against the East. The hero of Hope Anastasia was fearless, curious, cunning, ruthless, brave and, above all, sexy. As the son of a respected Greek Dragoman, he converted to Islam early on, allowing the renamed Selim to take the reader on a journey deep into the vast and dangerous Ottoman Empire. In this book, we will meet a certain Eastern villain, different from the giaours and corsairs from the tales of the eighteenth century. He is a conscious villain who knows the difference between right and wrong. He prefers to do wrong and does not have the saving virtue to recommend himself to English readers. Yet the book was accepted. According to one reviewer:

If it is the picture of vice, so is Clarissa Harlowe,

³ Scott, “The Talisman” (1901), pp. v-vi.

and so is Tom Jones. There are no sensual or glowing descriptions in *Anastatius*, - nothing which corrupts the morals by inflaming the imagination of youth; we are quite certain that every reader ends this novel with a greater disgust at vice, and a more thorough conviction of the necessity of subjugating passion, than he feels from reading either of the celebrated works we have just, mentioned.⁴

But the main interest is still local information, and for this reason *Anastatius* lost his appeal. The numerous Russian-Turkish wars, the strange system of government in Egypt, and the peculiar customs and customs of the Turks (whose Affairs the Europeans were no less interested in than, say, the Vietnamese now) lost their appeal. There's nothing interesting about *Anastasia* right now. During the 35 years described in the book (1762 - 1798), the reckless *Anastatius/Selim* infiltrated the ranks of the deadly Wahhabis in Arabia, fought the Mamluks in Egypt, and sailed the Mediterranean with the Turks. He was imprisoned, shipwrecked and became a victim of hunting. He embraced lovers, killed enemies, and had his heart broken forever in Trieste. In *Anastatius* you can find some of the most eloquently written English works since Shakespeare. When it was completed in 1819, it was a work of such academic interest, unbridled excitement, and descriptive power that the legendary London publisher John Murray produced it. The first edition became a sensation overnight, and the second sold out in twenty-four hours. It was quickly followed by foreign publications. This remarkable new edition presents all three

⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, XXXV (1821), p. 102.

volumes together for the first time. In addition, in a series of bespoke appendices, an international team of academic experts examined Nadiya's life, political influence, and artistic legacy, the latter being a groundbreaking study of the author's famous portrait portrayed as an Ottoman nobleman. In accordance with its academic mission, the royalties for this new edition are donated to the National portrait gallery. The opening of this book in 1819 would open a gateway to a forbidden part of the world that the average reader would never expect to visit. However, open the book today and Anastasius will once again weave his charming story of travel, love and war, all the while demonstrating the human harmonies that still link East and West.

James Justinian Morier's "The adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan", the author's meticulous picture of Persian life and morals, based on the years he spent in the British Embassy in Persia, grew better over the years.

Morier was a diplomat with extensive experience in Persia in the early 1800s. As I understood from the prologue-message, he wanted to make an authentic account of Persia for the English readership. Hajji Baba is the quintessence of his insightful observations of this nation and its people in the form of a picaresque novel. The novel is a chronicle of the adventures of Hajji Baba, originally a Barber originally from Ispahan. We follow him through various places whose very name evokes visions of adventure and romance: Shiraz, Mashhad, Etchmiadzin, the icy peaks of mount Damavand, the bustling megacities of Tehran and Istanbul. Hajji is not a heroic character, he is not too slick, just every person. Often, as soon as he gets out of one trouble by some ill-considered machinations, he stumbles into another. Ultimately, through experience, Hajji learns many important lessons, which are presented in the form of shrewdly worded aphorisms about how to deal with the many uncertainties of life. The narrative is replete with subtle details of the social customs and practices of the era. Often we find characters digging into this reservoir of wisdom, Great Persian poets including

Sadi, Hafiz, and Firdousi (as opposed to the modern Western world infatuated with Rumi), to get their point across.

Thus, James Justinian Morier's "The adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan" is not only a fascinating adventure novel, but also an insightful introduction to the Persia of that time. This is a genre that has been very popular in the past.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the following oriental stories which written in the past can be considered as one of the greatest contribution of the eighteenth century English romantic poetry to literature. At the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, an oriental culture was highly developed in English literature. So the writers began to write true stories representing real life of the Orient. Composed performances depicting oriental customs and traditions were also prohibited.

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