

## **Inventing a Myth: The Medieval Islamic Civilization through Western Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

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Due to the huge expansion of the Islamic Civilization in the Medieval times, its scientific, philosophical and literary fruits were transmitted to Europe, first to Spain and then to Italy. The tolerance of Islam was evident in these regions where a spirit of freedom permitted Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars to mingle freely and pursue a cultural *convivencia*. However, many Western writers have ignored or distorted such a civilization by presenting a horrific and an exaggerated image of Islam and the Muslims. The main topic of the present paper has not been dealt with in depth. In this respect, it aims to trace three Western attitudes and review critical studies about the Medieval Islamic civilization, its direct or indirect impact on Western thought, and its manifestations in the Western literary writings, fiction or non-fiction, from the Medieval times to the present. The paper attempts an exploration of the prejudiced views of some works that embody previous Western biases against Islam and the Muslims, shedding light on how the constant falsification of the earlier images and stereotypes produced a myth that, according to Edward Said, was invented by the West, i.e., the primitive inferior "Other" in contrast with the civilized superior West. By mixing fiction with facts, many new myths are added.

The paper is structured into three divisions. The first division is an introduction giving a historical background and dealing with two questions: What is the definition of civilization? What does this term characterize in Western writings that display the influence exerted by Medieval Muslim scholars and the changes they brought about? It is an attempt to explore how Western attitudes shaped by ancient stereotyping, prejudice and aversion are reflected in the portrayal of Islam that was conceived as heresy in the Medieval Ages and the Muslims who were viewed as pagan, infidel, violent and sensual. This distorted image was conveyed by Western writers' own imagination and creativity. The second division is concerned with another type of

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writers whose attitude is two-fold; they displayed recognition of the merit of the Islamic civilization but at the same time reflected explicit aversion through using recurring stereotypes of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Such contradictions are reconciled in the poetic works of Dante and Chaucer, and the theatrical representation of the Islamic Other employed by Voltaire. Although ideas of identity and values of the West were emphasized, the western perspective on the east and Islam, as that of the Romantic writers in the 18th century, revealed a slight change particularly after Lord Byron's "seeming positive attitude to Islam". For the first time in the West, a Muslim can be seen as a decent fellow, and not only the stereotyping 'infidel' who represents tyranny and evil of former centuries. Furthermore, conflicting attitudes of Western writers continued to be created due to a fascination with the exotic or images of the East in the next two centuries. Fictitious, or factual and specific Oriental characters, locations and events are directly referred to with some distortion and fallacy from a biased perspective. A good example of this is Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1985).

The third division explores other popular Western writers who, out of their considerable research or direct contact with the East, show a tremendous respect for the Muslims and their Civilization. Despite the distorted images represented in real life, a different image of Muslims is constructed. Sir Walter Scott's historical fiction *The Talisman* (1824) emphasizes their noble conduct, tolerance, honesty, generosity and humane treatment, and their respect for other peoples' beliefs, represented in the benevolent character of Saladin. Non-fiction writings also present a historical truth without being antagonistic portraying the Medieval Islamic world as far more advanced than Europe. They give us an insight into the debt Western culture owes to the Islamic civilization; its existence. The conclusion is a summing up of the ideas and points discussed in the paper.

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**Keywords:** Medieval Islamic civilization, Western literature, fiction and non-fiction, Westernness versus Otherness, stereotyping

## Historical Background - Introduction to Islamic Civilization

*If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilization owe to the Islamic world. It is a failure, which stems, I think, from the straight-jacket of history, which we have inherited. The medieval Islamic world, from central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society, and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history. (Prince Charles, October 27, 1993)*

It is interesting that the above quote is taken from a 1993 speech by Prince Charles on "Islam and the West" at Oxford University in which he acknowledges that the contribution of Medieval Islamic civilization is being ignored. His reference to the "debt our own culture and civilization owe to the Islamic world" and "ignorance" and "enemy of the West" provides some context for the present paper represented in the Western writings. At this point, a definition of the word 'civilization' is required. 'Civilization' is a term derived from the Latin word '*civis*', meaning 'citizen', and '*civitas*', meaning 'city'. It has been defined in a number of ways, but there is no widely accepted standard definition. It is sometimes used as a synonym for the term 'culture' and may also refer to society as a whole or describe a state of achievement in human history. I googled the definition of 'civilization' to find a website<sup>1</sup> with a cluster of definitions. Andrew Targowski attempted to extract "a composite definition" as follows:

Civilization is a large society living in an autonomous, fuzzy reification (invisible-visible) which is not a part of (a) larger one and exists over an extended period of time. It specializes in labor and differentiates from other civilizations by developing its own advanced cultural system ... It also progresses in a cycle of rising, growing, declining and falling." (Letter to Melko, Feb. 2008)

The definition of civilization refers to the total human knowledge and culture as represented by the most scientifically "developed" or "advanced" society at a particular time. A logical opposition implied by this, though not mentioned explicitly, is terms like "barbarity" and "savagery".

What makes a civilization successful is its ability to facilitate the transfer of its knowledge and history to future generations, and to leave a great impact on another civilization. This was the case when the Islamic Civilization influenced Latin-Europe in the Medieval times. From the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic empire grew in power, from the Arabian peninsula, expanding east and west from Morocco and Islamic Spain (Andalusia) to Central Asia and India across the spice route to China. "Western Europe was weak in comparison with the Orient." Furthermore, "In contrast, Europe was militarily ill-equipped to defend itself against Muslim expansion" and "was helpless to stop the Islamic revival of the fourteenth century" (Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, 1995, pp. 32, 36).

The powerful influence of Islam, the security, commerce, wealth, and stability of Islamic society, and the open atmosphere of tolerance fostered by Muslim rulers helped spur intellectual collaboration allowed and even encouraged scholars of different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs to participate in any scientific activity. Under their patronage medicine, botany, pharmacology, astronomy, geography and other studies developed.

However, it seemed to some western writers, whose picture of the Arab or Islamic contribution to science appear distorted, that it was not more than imitating the Greeks, "as though Greek knowledge was kept in a freezer and then centuries later it was handed over to thaw in Europe ... the "freezer model" of transmission" (Ghazanfar, 2003, p.26). They also claimed that it was copied from the civilizations of non-Arab Muslims or half-Arabs or Arab Jews and Arab Christians. Mr. Dirk Struik declared at a symposium held at Boston University, published in the *American Monthly Review* (1995): "Incidentally, we often speak of the Arabs. But these "Arabs" were Persians, Tadjiks, Jews, Moors, etc., seldom Arabs. What they had in common was their use of the Arabic language" (Qtd.in Sindi, n.d., radioislam.org). The questions to be raised here are: From where does Mr Struik get this view? Has he lived sometime in the East? Has he read what has been written by the Arab-Muslims? In fact, Struik's view is merely based upon a limited knowledge acquired from Western translations.

Scientific or intellectual works were written in Arabic, the language of the learned and "the literary and scientific *lingua franca* of the time" (Nagamia, 2003, p.20). Ironically, the European priest Alvaro, a Cordoban bishop, lamented in the ninth century all the young Christians who distinguish themselves by their talent, know the language and literature of the Arabs, read and study books by the Arabs, and everywhere proclaim with a loud voice how admirable is that literature. Alvaro noted that many of these students studied the Mohammadan theologians and philosophers, but not always with a view to refuting them. (Briffault, *The Making of Humnaity*, 1919, pp.198, 217). He also complained about their command of the Arabic language and their inability to write letters in Latin. Mr. Struik, then, was mistaken in his reference to the Jews "as a distinct nationality", trying to bury a basic fact that the Jews "are nothing but the adherents of the Jewish faith regardless of their race or language," and that "the Arab Jews have always existed even up to the present time." (Sindi, n.d., radioislam.org). So, it is not fair to consider the Moors as non-Arabs, while the Moors are North African Arabs.

According to a tradition set by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), anyone whose primary language is Arabic is an Arab despite his ethnic origin, place of birth, or national origin. Unfortunately, with the unseating of the Arabic empire after the Ottoman occupation of Byzance in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Arabic became less prevalent.

Other writers' attitudes towards the Islamic civilization were even antagonistic; they refused to recognize it. The science historian Toby E. Huff (2012), for example, in an article titled "What the West Doesn't Owe Islam" minimizes the fact that some of the great pioneers of modern Islamic science were building directly on the work of Muslim scientists by merely acknowledging a debt to certain aspects and habits that were introduced into the daily style of life of the citizens in Medieval Europe:

None of this is meant to deny the transfer of small and large elements of daily life that were transmitted to Europe in the distant past. Surely coffee, coffee houses, "Turkish" baths and Turkish towels, various food items, and even architectural elements were transmitted to Europe from the Middle East. But such things are not the foundation of contrasting societal and civilizational developments that emerged in the Muslim world and Europe over the centuries" (pp.128-29).

These views are distortions that are no more than "garbled falsification" and "colossal misrepresentation" (Briffault, 1919, p. 189, p. 201). In his book *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science*, Harold Nebelsick discusses the achievements of the Arab-Islamic scholars and how they "appropriated, appreciated and preserved Greek classical learning and built upon it," (p. 5) and —thus, laid the foundations for a quite unprecedented revival of learning in Europe" (Ibid., ix). Further, Montgomery Watt, in *Islamic Surveys* (1972), has also pointed out that "Because Europe was reacting against Islam it belittled the influence of Saracens [Medieval Europeans used to refer to Muslims as 'Saracens,' Islam's Adherents] and exaggerated its dependence on its Greek and Roman heritage. So today an important task for us is to correct this false emphasis and to acknowledge fully our debt to the Arab and Islamic world" (p.84).

A number of outstanding and assorted Arab scholars and scientists, Muslims as well as some occasional Jews and Christians, both from the East or Andalusian civilizations, had a tremendous influence on the West.

Some took on alternate Latinate names, such as Avicenna, Rhazes, Albucasis, and Haly, and even found way in Western literature as great Arab scientists. However, as their names have been distorted, their works have been distorted likewise although they excelled in numerous fields. Other brilliant polymaths of the Islamic Golden Age also include Al-Kindi<sup>ii</sup> and al-Farabi<sup>iii</sup> (also known as Alfarabius). Ehsan Masood in his book *Science and Islam* (2009) documents some evidence as to the influence of a few prominent early Islamic scholars whose writings contributed to European awakening:

Jabir ibn-Hayyan (Geber in Latin) was among those laying the foundations of chemistry around nine centuries before Robert Boyle. The Andalusian engineer Abbas ibn-Firnas worked out theories of flight, and is believed to have carried out a successful practical experiment six centuries before Leonardo drew his famous ornithopters. Some researchers show that some of the great pioneers of modern science were building directly on the work of Muslim scientists. George Saliba of Columbia University, for example, demonstrates in his book *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* how the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus drew on the work of Islamic astronomers for the groundwork to his break through claim in 1514 that the earth moved round the sun. Historians of mathematics have also shown how algebra was developed in 9th-century Baghdad by Musa al-Khwarizmi. Modern science depends, too, on the solutions to complex quadratic equations devised by the poet and scientist Omar Khayyam. And much of our understanding of optics and light is built on the pioneering work of Hassan ibn al-Haitham (Alhazen in Latin) in 11th-century Cairo. (Masood, pp.4-5).

The developed concepts of these scholars could be traced in diverse spheres of the Medieval Western thought and were widely studied at the universities of Europe.

The impact of the Islamic Civilization, figures and advances in science and philosophy are also reflected in the literary Western writings. Two outstanding Medieval European poets should be mentioned in this regard: the Italian poet Alighieri Dante (1265–1321) and the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (1342-1400). In the *Divine Comedy* (1310), Dante "does not devote much space to Muslims; however, his depictions do merit attention because of his tremendous impact on Western literature." (Meri, 2006, p.243) For Dante, three contemporary names in particular are worthy of their honored position in the Christian tradition, and of "the highest placement a non-Christian could hope for, and this included Old Testament figures."

(Matsushita, 2010, p.125) These three figures, Saladin, Avicenna, and Averroes, are held in high esteem by Dante to be assigned to Limbo, as they were respectable in medieval society.

In the same vein, in the "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1390), Chaucer shows in his portrait of the 'Doctour of Phisyk' how Islamic science, particularly the medical knowledge and philosophy, were well known in Europe in the Medieval Ages:

With us there was a Doctour of Phisik  
 In al this world ne was there noon him lyk  
 To speke of phisik and of surgerye...  
 Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,  
 And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,  
 Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,  
 Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,  
 Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,  
 Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.  
 Of his diete mesurable was he, ...  
 ("General Prologue", lines 411-435, *The Colledge Chaucer*, 1913)

Chaucer admits admiringly that his contemporary wise men and great scientists from the Medieval tradition of the twelfth century include Arabs such as Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Ibn Sina or 'Avycen', was a rarity among medieval practitioners: a *Doctour of Physik*, and therefore, was known to Chaucer's physician pilgrim who had been university-educated. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, Chaucer also refers to Ibn Sina and his *Canon of Medicine*: "*But certes, I suppose that Avycen/ Wroot nevere in no canoun, ne in no fen*" (lines: 889-90). Ibn Rushd<sup>iv</sup> (latinized 'Averroës') was among those wise men celebrated by Chaucer; the most renowned scholar of Cordoba, a philosopher, physician, and jurist. Indeed, "Avicenna and Averroës were lights from the East for the Schoolmen, who cited them next to the Greeks in authority" (Durant, 1950, p.342). Chaucer names other famous Arab physicians and philosophers such as Ibn Sarabiyun or Serapion, a ninth century Syrian physician; Ali Ibn Abbas or Haly, and Al-Razi or Razis, great tenth century physicians.

Chaucer also refers to Argus [al-Khwarizmi (780-850)] in 'Book of the Duchess' (435); Alchabitius [Abd al-Aziz (c.960)] in *Astrolabe* (1, 8, 13) as well as Azrachel [al-Zarqali (1029-1087)] (2, 45, 2); and Alocen [Ibn al-Haytham (965-1039)] in *The Squire's Tale* (232). (Ali, 1961, p.580). They were familiar and esteemed names to Chaucer's audience. Placing the Arab wise men in high ranks as placed by Dante before suggests an informed engagement with the Middle East, albeit from a Medieval Christian viewpoint.

In 1080, during the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, the Arab astronomer Abu Ishaq ibn-Yahya al-Naqqash, better known as al-Zarqali, who Chaucer calls 'Arsechieles', was ingenious in designing astronomical devices; he invented and developed an astrolabe.

In the hands of the Arabic craftsmen and astronomers, the astrolabe became one of the most beautiful scientific instruments ever made. It was not only the wonderful craftsmanship that made these brass mechanical computers such attractive objects; it was the increasingly intricate and precise design that meant that they were the medieval equivalent of a GPS unit. The astrolabe was a model of the universe that you could hold in your hand. By using it to measure the angle of stars and the sun above the horizon, it could tell you anything from your current latitude to where stars will appear in the sky. It became the main navigational aid for many centuries, celebrated in Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, until it was superseded by the simpler quadrant. (Masood, 2009, p.124)

In addition, al-Zarqali's accurate measurements helped to edit the astronomical Tables with a group of Toledan astronomers based on both al-Khwarizmi's tables and al-Zarqali's observations. They allowed people to easily compare the Islamic calendars with others and for the first time (Ibid, pp.73-75). Chaucer named these tables "Arsechiele's Tables" in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* composed in 1391 (2, 45, 2). Moreover, in Chaucer's "The Franklin's Tale" the astronomer and magician of Orleans, whose natural magic causes the rocks lining the coast of Brittany to disappear beneath the waves, uses the Toledan Tables to calculate the best time of the year to perform his trick (lines 1273-74). The clerk proudly brings out his 'Tables Tolletanes', adapted to Orleans, and renowned for their accuracy and later quoted by Copernicus.

As Chaucer was interested in medieval science and philosophy and used such learning in his literary works, he was also the first to use new loanwords from Arabic. According to Cannon's *Historical Dictionary*, no other British author of the Medieval or Renaissance period (including Shakespeare) employed an Arabic loanword for the first time. Arabic loanwords<sup>v</sup> first recorded in Chaucer's works include: astronomy: Almagest, almanac, almucantar, alchemy, Alnath, nadir; chemistry: alkali, azimuth, borax, tartar, amalgam (as a verb); clothing: satin, gipon; military: lancegay, jupon; games: fers, checkmate; miscellaneous: Damask, Sarsenish, fen, Arabic, ribibe, carrack, dulcarnon. The popularity of the game of chess is evident from Chaucer's use of words like 'checkmate' and 'fers.' In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer makes no overt reference to the game when he has Criseyde announce her determination not to remarry: "Shal noon housbonde seyn to me 'Chek mat!'" (2, 754). However, in his poem, *The Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer explicitly mentions 'chess' before he introduces the new word 'fers', deriving from the Arabic word *firzan*, meaning "wise man or counsellor" (Oxford English Dictionary), as the name for the queen chess piece. The Black Knight imagines that he has lost the chess game with Fortune:

At the ches with me she gan to pleye;  
 With hir false draughtes dyvers  
 She stal on me and tok my fers  
 And whan I sawgh my fers awaye  
 Allas, I kouthe no lenger playe. (lines: 651-6)

Arab culture has "a deep and rich tradition of love songs, poetry and romantic literature, some of which would undoubtedly have crossed over and synthesised with similar literary traditions in Europe. These traditions include the idea of doomed love – an early example of which is the 7th-century story of Layla and Majnoon and its countless variants, including of course Romeo and Juliet." (Masood, 2009, p.14) Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is based on the tradition of oral literature. Its narrative technique or the frame-story, structure, content, narrative style, and vocabulary are definitely reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights*. As Chaucer borrowed ideas of astronomy and astrology from Arabic sources, the courtly love tradition is believed to have taken most of its ideas and themes from Arab poets. Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* is a strange narrative of love and betrayal located in the Mongol empire. It can be read in combination with its companion narrative, the *Franklin's Tale*.

Chaucer was influenced by the contemporary Oriental literature, not only from the *Arabian Nights*, but from those related to Muslim Spain as well. A few tales by Chaucer were taken separately or collectively and translated into Spanish and Latin at about the early decades of the 13th century via Hebrew. Through these tales, medieval story-tellers and writers in Spain, Italy, France and England came to employ for the first time a new element in their works, i.e., a flight-motif prevalent in many Arabic fables that had recurred in the Nights. The motif reveals man's old dream to fly like a bird as Sindi-Bad of the *Arabian Nights* who in one of his very famous travels flew high in the sky with the aid of a huge eagle. Chaucer in *The House of Fame*, Book II, employs this Sind-Badic flight-motif through portraying his character clinging in its dream to a shining golden eagle. Chaucer also depends on the Frame-story as a technique that was used earlier during the century by Boccaccio (1313-1375).

### **East Meets West in Muslim Spain and the Crusades**

To answer the question: How the reservoir of Arab-Islamic knowledge became available to Latin-Europe and constituted the "roots" for Europe's Renaissance in Italy, it is necessary to shed light on the sources of Medieval East-West connection. After the horrific Mongol raids had been launched on the flourishing Islamic cities in the 13th century, "Islam turned inwards and intellectual life declined." (Masood, 2009, p.9) They seriously hampered the cultural and intellectual growth of Islamic civilization and led to the destruction of political authority in its major parts. Yet, the crisis was short-lived as the Mongols converted to Islam and became the harbingers of a new renaissance of Islamic civilization. Ironically, the spread of medieval Islamic science and discoveries exerted an enormous impact on Western thought.

The medieval connections, through which knowledge from the early Islamic world was transmitted to the Latin-West, include translations, travels, oral tradition, effective trade, and most important, Muslim Spain and the Crusades. The first translation movement of the Greek heritage into the Arabic language during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries was followed by a second one from Arabic into Latin in Toledo, Sicily, Salerno, Italy, and France during the 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries and beyond, with a growing interest in the most influential works of Arab culture, notably treatises on astronomy, medicine, physics and philosophy. It deserves to be noted that during this second movement of translations, plagiarism was common in Spain. Briffault (1919) suggests:

discussions as to who are the originators of the experimental method, like the fostering of every Arabic discovery or invention on the first European who happens to mention it, such as the invention of the compass to a fabulous Flavio Gioji of Analfi, of alcohol to Arnold of Villeneuve, of lenses and gunpowder to Bacon or Schwartz, are part of the colossal misrepresentation of the origins of European civilization (p.201).

After centuries of regular anti-Jewish process encouraged by the Christian West, the Jews experienced what is known as the Jewish Golden Age under Muslim rule in Spain. Not only did they enjoy freedom from oppression, but also they enjoyed a remarkable cultural, scientific, philosophical, and religious revival. Their translations occupied a special place in bridging Arabic and Latin learning "in what is called the Toledo School, translating works of Arabic into Latin" (Masood, 2009, p.70). The inherent tolerance of Islam observed by the Muslim rulers contributed to the flowering of intellectual life and created "one of the most constructive forms of confluence between Islam and the West. Mutual contacts and material benefits were developed amongst diverse classes of the community in cities like Cordoba, where Christians, Jews and Muslims lived and shared together in *convivencia* (a Spanish term that means peaceful 'co-existence') until the Spanish Catholic Inquisition began. Cordoba then was a melting pot that brought East and West close to each other.

Following the fall of Granada and the Christians' *reconquista* of Spain in 1492, the Jews were expelled by royal edict and turned to the Ottoman provinces where Sultan Bayezid II fully observed their rights for refuge and protection according to the Islamic instructions. They were also welcomed in other Muslim lands throughout North Africa, where there was no class distinction, joining the Jewish communities that had already prosperously lived. Those who remained in Spain were converted by Church to Christianity or murdered. Indeed, "This event in the history of Europe gave rise to the doctrine of the purity of the blood...With the deliverance of Europe from the external enemy following the final retreat of Islam from the Iberian peninsula," and in the process of transformation from Christendom to Europe to the notion of the West, "the new dichotomy of Self and Other came to rest on the myth of the savage and on the internal enemy, the Jews." (Delanty, pp. 43, 47) Even so fierce a critic of contemporary Islam as Bernard Lewis cannot but confirm the facts of history as regards the true character of Muslim-Jewish relations until recent times.

In his book, *The Jews of Islam* (1984), Lewis observes that even though there was a certain level of discrimination against Jews and Christians under Muslim rule:

Persecution, that is to say, violent and active repression, was rare and atypical. Jews and Christians under Muslim rule were not normally called upon to suffer martyrdom for their faith. They were not often obliged to make the choice, which confronted Muslims and Jews in reconquered Spain, between exile, apostasy and death. They were not subject to any major territorial or occupational restrictions, such as were the common lot of Jews in pre-modern Europe (p.8).

Therefore, starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, "this confluence has been proceeding in reverse; the Muslim world learning from the superior civilization of the West with the same ardour as Medieval Europe learnt from the Muslims in Spain." (Obeidat and Mumayiz, 2001, p.2).

### **Western Writers' Portrait of the Islamic East**

Western writers viewed the Muslim world as a major threat to the Christian Occident, or Christendom. Their image of the Orient is presented in stereotyped ways and distortions in their writings. The origin of the conflict between Christendom and Islam "goes back to pre-medieval times. The nomads of the Arabian desert were seen by the Christian West as descending from Abraham's wife Sarah; whence "Sara-cen". The more the Saracens harassed the Eastern borders of the Christian Roman Empire, the more they acquired the reputation of being vicious raiders, enemies of God and Man." (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.1) In the early Western writings, the Arabs were only depicted as good fighters when they defended Christians against their enemies, the Persians. Otherwise, they were condemned for being heathens and were even accused of being brutal, violent, and infidel.

Faced with the expansion of the Islamic empire, other visions were added to the Western pejorative view of the Islamic East. In fact, the brilliant Muslim civilization in Muslim Spain in the West mitigated this negative image. Furthermore, Western writers came into contact with the Arab World through the six crusades spanning two centuries from 1095 to 1292. The Crusaders settled in the Levant that gave room to knowledge transmission, mutual tolerance and cultural interaction.

The difference between the resident Crusaders and new comers from Europe in their attitude toward the Muslims is noted in contemporary Arab sources, as for example, *The Memoirs of Usamah Ibn Munqidh* (Izzedin, 1953, p.41). The influence of contacts through the Crusades is evident in the public steam baths which began to make their appearance in Europe, and the establishment of its first hospital in Paris 'Les Quinze-vingt' by Louis IX modeled largely on those founded by the Orders of the Holy Land. However, this does not mean that these contacts were smooth and peaceful, for according to Norman Zacour (1990), "even during periods of truce with Islamic states, the tension between Christians and those Muslims who lived within Christian territory remained severe" (p.22). Unlike the West's scholarly interest in Muslim learning in Spain, religion played a key role in the clash between the two cultures in the age of the Crusades. "The protracted duration of the Crusades— in contrast to the swift Muslim conquest of Spain —aggravated the hostility between the West and Islam." (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.3)

The negative view of Arabs and Muslims was aggravated particularly when most Western writers used the highly imaginative works written by some early Western travelers—as pilgrims, scholars, or crusaders—to construct their own works, which in turn consciously or unconsciously helped popularize false images of the Islamic East. Others' attitude was merely based upon their limited knowledge about the Arabs as "obscure or second-hand sources," from Western translations, "and the result is a combination of a little fact and much imagination of a very biased character" (Jones, 1942, p.202). Not only did these writers lack firsthand experience, but they also cared mainly about fascinating their readers with exotic scenes and incredible fantasies presented in Oriental material. Most importantly, they built their attitude upon the recurring stereotypes of the old Christian theologians, portraying certain elements of the Muslim East such as Eastern events, settings, characters, customs, costumes, diction and especially religion.

The clash between the East and the West shows how religion can be used as a pretense to cultural superiority. European scholars during the crusades viewed Islam as "the great enemy and the great source of higher material and intellectual culture" (Watt, 1972, p. 172) at the same time. Such views "fuelled polemical writings against Islam as the enemy against whom religious passions must be inflamed. ... This religious polemicism was first launched by Pope Gregory VII in 1075 to be taken up with added heat by Pope Urban II in 1095." (Obeidat and Mumayiz, pp.2-3)

Whereas the Crusades "stimulated the intellectual life of Europe and its literary output by broadening the horizons of knowledge and imagination; ... [and] were an inspiration to artists, poets, and singers for many generations" (Izzedin, 1953, p. 42), the Muslim rule was viewed as "a preparation for the final appearance of Antichrist" (Southern, 1962, p. 17). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was regarded as "a parody of Christ ... Pope Innocent III characterized Muhammad as the Beast of the Apocalypse. This was the spectre that conferred legitimacy on western counter-offensives against Islam throughout the Middle Ages. The idea of the barbarous Muslim world inhabited by evil tribes was a dominant theme in medieval literature." (Delanty, 1995, p.87) According to Anwar Chejne (1983):

Muslim reverses in Spain, the success of the Normans in Sicily, and the launching of a successful Crusade in the Holy Land were great blows to Islamic predominance in the West and, at the same time, gave credence to old myths about Islam and the Arabs, to which many new ones were added. People who participated in the Crusades and clerics who visited the Holy Land went back to Europe with accounts about the savagery and infidelity of the Muslims. They mixed fact with fiction to denigrate the Prophet Muhammad and his religion (p.73).

However, Islam as a 'heresy', Muslims as 'Infidels', Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as 'Satan' and an 'impostor' had long prevailed in the European literary tradition. Dante and Chaucer, for example, convey "an awareness and recognition of the merit of Arabic culture and at the same time a great aversion to Islam and its founder." (Chejne, 1983, p.74) Both contributed a great deal to the defamation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers. In *Divine Comedy*, Dante emphasizes that all non-Christians are sent to Hell, but Muhammad (PBUH), together with Ali, are assigned to the deepest (Ninth) Circle of Hell "among the sowers of discord and the schismatics, being lacerated by devils again and again."

While my gaze was on him occupied, he looked at me, and with hands laid bare his breast. "Behold how I am rent," he cried. "Yea, mark how is Mohammad mangled. There in front of me doth Ali weeping go. Ripped through the face even from chin to hair. And all the rest thou seest with us below were sowers of schism and dissension, too. During their lives and hence are cloven so." (*Inferno*, Canto XXVIII)

Dante was influenced by some Arabian stories that deal with travelling to celestial worlds such as *The Ascent of the Prophet Mohammad to Heaven*, *The Poetic Narratives* and other stories written by the sufi-poets such as Ibn Shahid and Ibn Arabi.

The same image was conceived by Chaucer in many references such as the *Man of Law's Tale*, in which the King of Syria converts to Christianity to marry a Christian princess, Constance. When the sultan met his advisors and knew that he cannot marry her, for no Roman emperor would allow his daughter to marry a Muslim, and reminding him that, "no Cristen prince wolde fayn / Wedden his child under oure laws sweete / That us were taught by Mahoun, oure prophete." (1, 222-24) No, "Rather than I lese / Custance, I wol be cristned, douteles" (1, 225-26), he regretted. He was baptized and ordered his subjects to become Christians as well. Eventually, Syria was announced a Christian nation by the pope. Furthermore, Constance sadly told her father she would marry a man from a foreign country that she described as "Barbre nacioun" or a pagan land.

The early Medieval Western writings depicted the Islamic East in several forms of literature, in a way that fit Christian needs, and accordingly helped popularize a distorted image. In his book *Medieval Islamic Civilization* (2006), Josef Meri observes the attitudes of Christian Europeans in both worlds: fiction and non-fiction.

[M]edieval Christians imagined and recorded Muslim identity in diverse ways. Those who traveled to Muslim lands also provided accounts of their experiences. In the world of non-fiction, Christian Europeans produced propaganda, travel accounts, chronicles, and theological treatises in which they addressed Islam, often from an adversarial stance that aimed at disqualifying Islam's claims to the status of a revealed religion. Christian theologians in particular generated much debate about Islam, challenging it in terms of doctrine in a variety of tones ranging from pacifist invitations to conversion to obvious belligerence (p. 243).

The boundary between fiction and reality seems extremely blurred; in the world of fiction, throughout the European Middle Ages, Muslims were often portrayed as heathens, Saracens, infidels, murderous, and inferiors, whereas antonyms such as civilized, superior, trusted are used to refer to Westerners.

Meri further remarks that "Islam and the Muslim were portrayed in medieval European fiction [...] by each author's own creativity and engagement with literary tradition" (p.243). More explicitly, *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) by Torquato Tasso (1544–1595) portrayed the Muslims "as sorcerers, pagans, and enchanters celebrating the liberation of Jerusalem during the first Crusade circa 1099 CE" (Ibid, p.243). Thus, "Rinaldo, a Crusader knight is captivated by Armida, a pagan (Muslim) enchantress who exercises her charms on him in a pleasure garden which she creates through her magic" (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.6). Samuel Chew observes that the influx of literary themes and subjects of fantastic Arabian tales were brought from Palestine during the Crusades; the Western writers "had their part in filling the popular imagination with [positive] dreams and fantasies of the East" (Ibid, pp.6-7).

Furthermore, Medieval works may "contain references to the Saracen (Muslims) as the enemy, highlighting the courage and faith of the Christian warrior through the deserved defeat or ill-gained success of the Muslims" (Meri, p. 243). An example of this is embodied in the classic French epic poem *La Chanson de Roland* (ca. 1100 CE) told of Charlemagne and his heroic knight Roland fighting valiantly against a Muslim army. "[I]n a remarkable historical coincidence, the West presented Harun [the caliph Harun al-Rashid who ruled from 786 to 809] with a rival in both power and territory. It was Charlemagne, grandson of the Frank Charles Martel, who had halted the Muslim advance in France. When the pope crowned Charlemagne emperor of the West in 800, it marked the start of another world power, the Holy Roman Empire..." (Hotaling, 2003. P. 103). In the poem, the Christian Basques consider the Muslims as the sole respectable enemy in the battle, a Saracen knight "took Jerusalem by treachery", in contrast to what happened in reality; where the Christian Basques, with the aid of Muslim armies, chased Charlemagne's army out of the Iberian Peninsula and killed Roland in the process.

The 'Crusading aspect' is clear here implying a negative vision towards the Muslims: "we find swine and dogs eating "Mahomet" while he lay unconscious in an epileptic fit. *Roland* is essentially a poem of the Crusades where anyone who attacks the crusading knights is labelled as a Saracen, regardless of race or religion" (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.5). Eventually in the poem, a massive conversion is done by more than a hundred thousand heathen Saracens to Christianity. This conversion or religious triumph "was to be followed by cultural domination: first, the Crusade to Baptize, then, the Crusade to Latinize" (Ibid, p.6).

The anonymous poet makes a comparison between Christians and Saracens although they share many equivalents.<sup>vi</sup> The Saracens become a mirror image of the Christians in their religious beliefs and their social aspects. Whereas the Christians are religious and good men, the Saracens are heathen, Apollo-worshipping, evil, and dark-skinned devils. "The pagans are wrong and the Christians are right" (l. 1015). However, Saracens are regarded as worthy and respectable foes in terms of chivalry for the Christian army; they are the "perfect foils to Charlemagne and Roland, the Christian heroes." The poet admiringly says: "Had he been a Christian, he would have been a worthy baron" (l. 899). Indeed, "by empowering the enemy with flattering depictions in battle literature, the European side also empowered itself, for if the enemy was weak then a Christian victory would not be as noteworthy, and a Christian defeat would be far more shameful" (Matsushita, 2010, p.128). The Muslim enemy, therefore, is honoured, but he must be converted or defeated.

The Christian versus the Muslim was also the theme of the *Spanish poem of the Cid* (1140) translated by Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry. Again, the Muslims or Saracens are depicted as enemy and prototypes of the infidels whom the crusaders fought in the Holy Land. We are introduced to Yusuf, King of Morocco, leading an army of "infidel hordes" (ii, 89), who are cunning, treacherous and hostile to Christendom. "The emphasis on Christendom rather than Europe was not surprising since between 1099 and 1187 when Jerusalem was occupied by the crusaders, Christianity extended beyond frontiers." (Delanty, p.35) Unlike Roland the Christian, Cid, a corruption of the Arabic *Sayyid* or Master, fights other Christians as well as Moors: "Both Moors and Christians go in fear of me" (iii, 122). Cid's sons-in-law "plotted an act of treachery" (iii, 126) in abandoning Cid's daughter and plotting the death of Abengalbon, a close Moorish friend of the Cid and governor of Molina, to get hold of his wealth. The Spanish poem presents Islam as an enemy and shows Muslims as cruel creatures who are obsessed with power and wealth. (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.33)

### **Conflicting Attitudes toward the East**

Western writers presented conflicting attitudes towards the East and Muslims after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, "an epochal break between the Orient and Occident," in which the "capital of the thriving Islamic civilization in the world was now located in Europe, giving birth to what for centuries was to be known as 'Turkey in Europe'" (Delanty, p.36).

An 'increasing awareness' and a balance of power between the East and West were available. "[T]here was a veritable wealth of information, and misinformation, regarding Muslim culture, and the Christian world found these societies simultaneously fascinating and abhorrent" (Matsushita, pp.117-118). Such depictions "contained biases, embellishments ... [T]he Christian world was able to alternately criticize and empathize with the foreign East, and to ultimately construct ideas of its own identity and morality" (Ibid, p.118). Yet "it was an identity that was shaped more by defeat than by victory and was buttressed by the image of the Orient as its common enemy" (Delanty, p.36). After the discovery of the two Americas in 1492, the Islamic 'infidel' was substituted with "the new construct the 'savage'. The idea of 'civilisation' became associated with Europe, which gradually began to replace Christendom and became an absolute value." (Ibid, p.45)

Following the expansion of the Turkish supremacy over the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Western antagonistic attitude toward Islam and the Muslim increased. References to Moors, Saracens, or Arabs were commonplace in Spanish, French, Italian, German, English, and other European literature. Luther, for example, "had hoped that Latin Christendom would be able to heal its self-inflicted injuries and take up the mission of the cross against the Muslim infidels. In his 'War Sermon' in 1529, Luther gave vent to the 'Great Fear' of peasants in Germany and central Europe that they would be over-run by the Turks in the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy." (Delanty, p. 37) Within the decline in Turkish supremacy in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and 'the completion of the conversion of Europe to Christianity', "the idea of Europe tended to lose its strictly religious meaning and acquired a secular resonance. The term 'barbarian', for instance, rather than infidel tended to be increasingly applied to the inhabitants of the non-European parts of the world" (Ibid, p.45).

The image of Islam as a heresy and of the Muslims as fierce, savage, infidel, and new-barbarians was recurrently established in the literary tradition of the West, more explicitly when the Turkish advance at the gates of Europe constituted a dreaded threat to Europe. Elizabethan and early seventeenth century English literature utilized legends about Islam that had accumulated in the European tradition.

The Turkish threat aggravated Crusader prejudices and anti-Islamic polemicism. Muslim Turkish cruelty, sensuality, and lack of restraint became a target for Elizabethan plays, and are still common themes in novels about the Muslims.

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1590) depicts the Arab betraying his own gods if they do not fulfill his material and worldly ambitions. The Elizabethan theatre audience were satisfied with this play as "a triumph over a Turkish emperor, an augury, perhaps, of Christian conquests". Here, the quote shows how Marlowe was very critical of the role that religion plays in justifying the reasons for the conquest of another country. It is interesting how the words 'triumph' and 'Christian' are used in conjunction to bring about this conquest. Marlowe's view of Islam is concisely accumulated in Tamburlaine's rejection of Islam in the end:

Tamburlaine: Now, Casane, where is the Turkish Alcoran  
 And all the heaps of superstitions books  
 Found in the temple of that Mahomet,  
 Whom I have thought to be a god? They shall be burnt. (V, i)

Marlowe was obviously working on public feelings: His semi-pagan hero, Tamburlaine (Taymur Lenk), not only defeated the Turkish Emperor Bajazeth (Bayazid) but also sought to relieve the conquered Christians in Constantinople who had long been under siege (Obeidat and Mumayiz, pp. 42-43). He also holds up the contemporary Turks as the Muslim foe. The word "Turk" connoted absence of morality and religion (Ibid, pp.7-8).

### **The Romantics: The West's Confluence with Islam (A Two-Fold Attitude)**

The eighteenth century Western writings repeated traditional clichés on Islam that go back to early medieval periods. Theological intolerance was shown in the range of works that examined the life of the Prophet. Some writings viewed "the Prophet as a false messenger of God, his doctrine as a Christian heresy characterized by force and deceit." (Ibid, p. 8) Voltaire (1694–1778) in his tragedy *Mahomet* (1741), as well as in other writings, approves the actor's simian appearance complemented character descriptions of the Prophet within the tragedy.

Late in the play, when her eyes have been opened to his machinations, Palmira rejects Muhammad, calling him a "bloody savage. . . , infamous seducer" and a "monster" (V, ii, 80-81).

But now he is a conqueror and a king;  
Mecca's impostor at Medina shines  
A holy prophet; and nations bend before him,  
And learn to worship crimes which we abhor.  
Even here, a band of wild enthusiasts, drunk  
With furious zeal, support his fond delusions,  
His idle tales, and fancied miracles. (I, i, 17)

Voltaire's hostility towards Muslims is explicit in recalling the medieval literature, when Muhammad was referred to as the "impostor" and the Arabs were labeled as "Saracens." (Al-Tae, 2010, p.35) He employs recurring stereotypes of Prophet Muhammad into a theatrical representation that represents the Islamic Other. In her article on the French Enlightenment's portrayal of the Orient through philosophers' contributions in the *Encyclopédie* (1751-72), Rebecca Joubin argues that the degradation of Islam and Muhammad also function as a means of "cultural self-criticism" of Christianity and Christ to shield themselves from censors and a way of constructing their own historical reality. She adds that Voltaire's *Mahomet* indirectly criticizes French beliefs, and that Voltaire portrays Muhammad as a surrogate for Christ. She says: "while Arab scientific civilization was applauded for their contributions, Islamic dogmas were described as irrational, founded by a violent and false imposter. Since science was based on reason and leads to truth, they argue that Islamic teachings were based on superstitions and falsehood." (Qtd. In Al-Tae, p.58).

The Romantics had a two-fold attitude towards Islam and the Muslims who represent tyranny and evil, and simultaneously there was a fascination with the exotic or images of a foreign culture. The medieval theological polemism was replaced by political despotisms. Hence, the Romantics' attitude to the Muslim Orient was "vague, contradictory, and ambiguous. The Enlightenment project of the eighteenth century paved the way for new ideals of liberty, tolerance, and brotherhood that influenced some literary writers of the time, and although the Orient was still considered violent, sensual, and exotic, may looked at Islam as a complement to, if not a replacement for, decay-riddled Christianity."

(Al-Tae, 2010, p. 9) The western perspective on the east and Islam revealed a slight change after the publication of James Bruce's (1730–91) *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* that awakened evocations in the Romantic imagination. It portrayed an image of the Arab nomad as a noble savage, a version of Rousseau's "Man of Nature".

Sir William Jones (1748–94) in his *Discourse on the Arabs* (1787) describes the people of Arabia as "eminently civilized for many ages". Besides, the eloquent translation of the Koran in 1734 by George Sale (c. 1697–1736) was well-known to the Romantics, and to Lord Byron (1788-1824) in particular. Byron's "seeming positive attitude to Islam" was realized in his four Turkish Tales: *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair* and *Lara*; "The Giaour", a Turkish word that means the 'infidel' or 'non-believer' illustrates the idea of Orientalism with its characters. He allows for contrast in Christian and Muslim perceptions of love, sex, death and the afterlife. Byron "who respected Christianity as long as it was divorced from English cant, was much more friendly to its fellow-monotheism" (Cochran, 2006, pp.23, 18). His "Orientalism is often praised, and used as a contrast with that of other "romantic" writers, because it was based on experience" (Ibid, p.15). For the first time in the West, a Muslim can be seen as a decent fellow, and not only the stereotyping 'infidel' of former centuries.

### **Westernness versus Otherness: The Orient as a distorted mirror image of the West**

While the "Other" is identified by "Us", the "Self" seems to be the opposite of "Other". Edward Said, in his provocative book *Orientalism* (1978), explains the concept of 'orientalism' as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (p.1). The Orient described by European Orientalists, according to Said, is nothing but an invention of their own (Khrisat, p.20), a place of romance full of exotic beings, experiences and memories, and one of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the 'Other.'" In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said, p.1). Similarly, Gerard Delanty insists that European identity is defined in opposition to the "Orient".

"[T]he idea of Europe found its most enduring expression in the confrontation with the Orient in the age of imperialism. It was the encounter with other civilizations that the identity of Europe was shaped. Europe did not derive its identity from itself but from the formation of a set of global contrasts. In the discourse that sustained this dichotomy of Self and Other, Europe and the Orient were opposing poles in a system of civilizational values which were defined by Europe." (1995, p.84)

Furthermore, Edward Said describes how the American media represents Arabs and Muslims: they "only understand force; brutality and violence are part of the Arab civilization; Islam is intolerant, segregationist, 'medieval' fanatic, cruel, anti-women religion" (p.295). Said points out that the relationship between Oriental Islam and Western Christianity, or East and West, has been essentially political. The "other-oriented" that is inferior has frequently occurred throughout different periods of European history. This was especially common in the eighteenth century, when numerous English fiction writers believed in the superiority of Christianity and the West and the inferiority of Islam and the Arabic culture, and consequently their attitudes are revealed in their literary works.

Samuel Johnson's attitude toward the East as "other" inferior is very well represented in his oriental tale *Rasselas: The Prince of Abbyssina* (1759). Johnson has never travelled to any Arab or Islamic country. Besides, he had no knowledge of the Arabic language, and his knowledge of the Orient is inaccurate as it is not based on reliable sources, but is gathered from various translations. His attitude is built upon the conceptions and stereotypes established by early medieval Christian theologians. Johnson's view in *Rasselas* can be understood in terms of the issue of conversion: the "Christian who converts to Islam is like a person who exchanges truth for error" (20). He describes the Arabs and Muslims as infidels, erotic, untrusted, uncivilized, violent, and irrational, who initiate wars against the civilized nations, patriarchal, ignorant, and inferior to the Europeans in knowledge and system of governments.

*Rasselas* can be seen as an allegory of life, a journey on a road with many directions, and an imaginative narrative, in which the narrator, Imlac, *Rasselas*, and Pekuah are interpolated narrative or characters who step forward to tell their tale. The Abyssina prince mediates on the universe: "What makes the difference between man and the rest of the animal creation?"

In response to the old instructor's advice: "If you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state," *Rasselas* says: "You have given me something to desire; I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness" (45).

Johnson's prejudicial view reflects the attitude of many Western writers toward the Arabs and the Muslims who are depicted as "infidels", whose rulers are cruel and despotic in general. They have nothing to contribute to civilization, and therefore they must learn wisdom and knowledge from the westerners.

From a postcolonial perspective, Johnson's negative portrayal of the Arabs and Muslims justifies the colonization of Muslim lands by Western powers for the purpose of domination. Creating the image of an uncivilized Islamic world justifies a Western notion to "civilize" the non-West. Observing the life and the political system in Cairo, the Prince notes that "at the Court of Bassa," the governor of an Egyptian Province "has the power to extend his edicts to a whole kingdom" (90). Members of the government live in belligerence: "a continual succession of plots and defectors, stratagems and escapes, faction and treachery," they are spies sent by the Turkish Sultan to surround the Bassa and "to watch and report" his conduct (90), and eventually "the Bassa was carried in chains to Constantinople and his name was mentioned no more" (91). "Oppression is, in the Abyssina dominions, neither frequent nor tolerated" (92), says Imlac.

The English people have the advantage of constitutional monarchy whereas the Arabs have deficiency in their governmental system: therefore, they must look for a sound and rational system such as the one used by the Westerners. According to Johnson, the English people are superior whereas the Arab and Muslim systems are inferior. The Arabs and Muslims could learn from the West; at the same time, the Westerners have to teach and help the Orientals overcome their problems. ... The duty of the Europeans, particularly the English, is to rescue the Orientals from the "darkness and doubt" in which they exist. (Khrisat, 1759, p.23)

The image of the superior West is aggravated through the character of Imlac who describes the nations of Europe as: "are now in position of all power and all knowledge; whose armies are irresistible, and whose fleets command the remotest parts of the globe." (*Rasselas*, p.65).

They have "all knowledge" that "will predominate over ignorance as man governs the other animals" (p.63). Whereas the Arabs and Muslims are portrayed as aggressors, 'terrorists', "pastoral and warlike; carrying on perpetual, aimless war with mankind. They are just Bedouins moving from one place to another, and whose wealth is only flocks of camels" (119). This biased description is envisaged in Johnson's reference to the Arabs as "sons of Ishmael" (120), following the Bible's definition of Ishmael: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Genesis 16: 12). Therefore, the duty of these nations is to unite against these "terrorist", cruel and aggressive murderers.

In *Rasselas*, Johnson also describes Arab women with much prejudice presenting them as knowing nothing, imprisoned in their homes, weaving and cooking and doing all housework: "They ran from room to room as a bird hop from wire to wire in his cage. They danced for the sake of motion, as lambs frisk in a meadow" (124). They are depicted as pleasure objects in the hands of their men; a recurring English stereotype of Arabs. Nekayah plays with the Arab girls as if they are "inoffensive animals" (92), the narrator says. The Arab and Muslim society is patriarchal, paying no attention to women. Pekuah says: "When they [women] were playing about him [the Arab Chief], he looked on them with inattentive superiority" (12).

The popularity of *The Arabian Nights* inspired the Eighteenth century Western writers to develop a new genre, the Oriental tale, of which Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* is the best example. Johnson sets his tale in an Orientalist setting and an exotic location, *Abyssina*, today's Ethiopia. It is modeled largely on the *Arabian Nights*; its opening is an attempt to imitate it with a call to the reader's attention: "It is said, O wise and happy King, that once there was a prosperous merchant who had abundant wealth and investments and commitments in every country. He had many women and children and kept many servants and slaves" (17). The Arab world achieved amazing results in lyric poetry that influenced Europe especially through Islamic Spain. Exaggerated though this may be, *Rasselas* expressed his fascination with the poetry of the East (60-1) and Imlac is depicted as having excellent knowledge about the pre-Islamic poetic masterpieces known as *Mu'allaqat*: "I read all the poets of Persia and Arabia, and was able to repeat by memory the volumes that suspended in the mosque of Mecca" (61). Poetry, though an essential feature of the *Arabian Nights*, is regarded by Johnson as the Arabs' sole achievement.

Furthermore, the episodic structure of *Rasselas* is made likewise in an interesting series of story-within-story true to the spirit of the *Arabian Nights*, even though the incidents are often unrelated describing the adventures of Rasselas. The element of the romance and adventure, the fantastic, Orientalist, exotic features of the Arabian tales found their way to the Western literature via cultural transmission and oral communication, for the purpose of attracting the Western readers to the idea of the inferiority of the Orient. Notwithstanding, true to the spirit of the *Arabian Nights*, *Rasselas* enjoys a feature in common with the picaresque novel; the characters Rasselas, Imlac and Nekaya of *Rasselas* are portrayed as naïve and simple.

Johnson's contradictory attitudes are revealed in his fascination with the various civilizations of the East. He portrays the natural beauty and luxury of the East. The descriptions of the Royal Palace in the Happy Valley (39-41), the Egyptian generosity and the Palace of the Bassa of Egypt (83) recall the luxurious scenes of the palaces of the Muslim Abbaside Caliphes such as that of Haroun al-Rashid. Pharonic Egypt, its people, monuments and pyramids are also discussed: "The ruins of their architecture are the schools of modern builders" (103).

Notwithstanding, in a short interlude from the whole narrative, Pekuah is abducted by a troop of Arabs for seven months, and can be only restored in return for two hundred ounces of gold. For Imlac, Arabs are not to be trusted; it is the "Other", and for Pekuah they are 'robbers and savages', though they observe "the laws of hospitality with great exactness to those who put themselves into his power" (118). Moreover, the Pekuah's Arab abductor, as Edward Tomarken rightfully emphasizes, is not "a swarthy villain, but polite and well-behaved, instead of ravishing his virgin captive, he treats her respectfully, teaches her astronomy, and enjoys her company" (1989, p.89). The Egyptian astronomer is greatly amazed, incidentally, by the amount of knowledge Pekuah has on the stars. His new friends ridicule the enormous cosmic power he has realizing that he is no more than "one atom in the mass of humanity" (373). This contradictory attitude of praising and criticizing the Arabs reveals the English novelist's confusion and biased views.

Due to obvious links of language and culture late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American literature also reflected the traditional European view towards Islam through perpetuating established stereotypes. However, they were likewise influenced by exotic Oriental tales.

Benjamin Franklin, for instance, wrote short narratives as "A Narrative of the Late Massacres" (1764), "An Arabian Tale" (1779), and "On the slave Trade" (1790). The American view of Islam was based, not only on reiterations of Medieval European anti-Islamic polemics, but also on the personally experienced Barbary wars (1785–1815), the first actual encounter between the Muslim East and the young American Republic. These wars provided adequate literary material for works such as Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), John Howard Payne's *Fall of Algiers* (1826) and Richard Penn Smith's *The Bombardment of Algiers* (1829).

The Barbary wars threat gave rise to a polemical view of Islam in literature which is similar to the contemporary threat of 'terrorism'. These works generally presented a horrific image of 'Barbary' piracy in North Africa, and in the Persian Gulf, exaggerated and enlarged to reflect adversely on Islam and Muslims who are portrayed as 'villainous' and 'barbarous'. Prominent among these works is *The Algerine Captive*, a fictitious travel narrative of the character Uptake Underhill during his captivity in North Africa. Feeling tired from the manual labor, he thinks to free himself from captivity by converting to Islam: "the prospect of some alleviation from labour, and perhaps a curiosity to hear what could be said in favour of so detestably ridiculous a system as the Mohammadan imposture" (*Algerine Captive*, p.127). Its theme of the Orient tempts the readers read what they want to, not what was actually observed. Underhill performs a ritual cleansing process, before meeting the Muslim Mollah. At the end of his conversation on the Prophet and the Koran, Underhill is "disgusted with the Mullah's fables." (Obeidat and Mumayiz, p.10).

### Popular Muslim Literary Figures

Western writers treated Prophet Muhammad literally as the Islamic figure *par excellence*. Nasser Al-Tae (2010), who authored a book with a chapter titled "The Character of Muhammad: a Model of Violence and Sensuality in the European Image of the Orient", stated that according to the 19th century negative criticism of Orientalist scholars, as exemplified in the Scottish biographer Sir William Muir's *The Life of Mahomet* (1861), Islam was a religion of the sword: "The sword of Muhammad and the Quran are the most stubborn enemies of Civilization, Liberty and Truth which the world has yet known" (Qtd. In Al-Tae, p. 35).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century writings, Islam was seen as a false religion and Prophet Muhammad as an impostor as portrayed by such American writers as Washington Irving whose *Mahomet and his Successors* (1849–1850) heavily relied on inaccurate contemporary European sources. Despite the slight change that occurred in portraying Prophet Muhammad in literary writings since the Middle Ages which encouraged Dante to place Him in Hell, the image of Prophet Muhammad as an impostor was the norm.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western writers depended either on their imagination or on the writings of the earlier travelers, the contrast between the inferior Orient and superior West was again emphasized in their literary works. In an attempt to entertain the readers, they portray the past Islamic figures as the embodiment of "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and... 'the Occident'." (Said, p.2) Traditional images are reemerged by reference to certain oriental settings and events, using fictitious oriental characters portrayed as villains, or treating historical figures in terms of savagery, brutality and sensuality. One of the three men that Dante placed in Limbo, in the Middle Ages, is an example to illustrate this point in terms of the figure of Salah a-Din, or Saladin (r. 1169-1193 CE), as known to the West. Salah a-Din, the Sultan of Egypt in the late twelfth century and prominent Muslim leader during the Third Crusade is put in pairing as a foil to Richard the Lionheart, leader of the European Crusaders, "with whom it was said he shared a chivalrous, respectful rivalry. The importance of this pairing in the European imagination is illustrated perfectly ... Thus, the two men were essentially seen as equals; as Richard's mirror-image in the Muslim world, much of the respect and admiration for the English king was conferred on to Saladin as well" (Matsushita, 2010, p.126). Both can be placed opposite to each other. Despite the fact that Saladin was a Muslim and actually fought against the Christian Crusaders, he was a popular literary character in European literature because of "The innate goodness" attributed to him. "However, it should not be ignored that stereotypes of the East were still in play: for one thing, Saladin went to Italy in the first place in order to spy on the Christians in preparation for the coming war. It was not forgotten that he was the enemy." (Ibid, p.127)

### Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (1825)

The word civilization in the context of a group of people being civilized, cultured or advanced is not necessarily used in the broader sense of the word, but it may imply a sort of refinement in its people conduct in a respectable, humanitarian manner, especially when presented with persons of an alternate culture or society. So the implied meaning of civilization in this context is related to the humane treatment of others. Praising the fictional Sultan by Sir Walter Scott, an English Romantic era novelist and poet, in *The Talisman* (1825), is not far removed from the historical ruler in terms of character. The novel draws a sympathetic portrayal of Crusaders and how they are humanly treated by the Muslim leader Salah a-Din.

Nevertheless, *The Talisman* can be read as an East versus West text or as a pro-Eastern novel in a light adventure form intended by its author. The benevolent character Salah a-Din is depicted as a representative of Arab and Islamic values and morals. Scott praises the Arab Muslims for their civilized manners, emphasizing their noble conduct and respect for other peoples' religions and beliefs. Muslims, in general, are presented as being generous, noble, faithful, and honest. In chapter 10 Sir Thomas of Gilsland clashes with Kenneth over a Muslim physician Kenneth has brought to the camp. When Kenneth disdains to fly to the Muslim camp out of fear of being forcibly converted, Adonbec the physician, a Moorish Hakim, tells the Christian Nazarene that:

Saladin makes no converts to the law of the Prophet, save those on whom its precepts shall work conviction. Open thine eyes to the light, and the great Soldan, whose liberality is as boundless as his power, may bestow on thee a kingdom; remain blinded if thou will, and, being one whose second life is doomed to misery, Saladin will yet, for this span of present time, make thee rich and happy. But fear not that thy brows shall be bound with the turban, save at thine own free choice (Scott, *The Talisman*, p.55).

The idea of a competent Muslim physician in the Christian camp is completely plausible, as Arab medicine was certainly more advanced than western European medicine at the time of Crusades. Religion did not prohibit practising medicine; in a coincidence, one of the historical Sultan Salah a-Din's physicians was an Arab Jew, Moses ibn Maimon— Maimonides in Latin<sup>vii</sup> (1135-1204), the original of Hakim Adonbec created by Scot in *The Talisman*.

Hakim successfully cures King Richard of his illness during the Third Crusade and King Richard fails not to appreciate his accomplishment: "And these are all nobles of Araby" (350). Through Hakim Adonbec's wisdom and tolerance, Scott sings the praises of Medieval Spain's distinctive intellectual growth, which produced such physicians as Maimonides.

The sultan's sense of equality is not based on class distinction. Hakim Adonbec saves Sir Kenneth (Prince David of Scotland in disguise) and develops a fast friendship that highlights mutual cultural contact despite their difference in beliefs.

The reason for such a relationship is that the Christians are entitled to their right for Muslim protection, even if they live on lands encroached upon by Crusaders:

But unto the good men who, without stirring up nation against nation, worship sincerely in the faith of Issa Ben Mariam, we are a shadow and shield; and such being he whom you seek, even though the light of the Prophet hath not reached him, from me he will only have love, favour, and regard. (Scott, *The Talisman*, pp. 24-25)

*The Talisman* provides the causes that shaped the geographical and cultural aspects of Islamic civilization during the twelfth century. It also provides the framework for understanding the cultural background of Saladin; it ends with Arabic sources of his life. "Scott decisively makes Saladin a most orthodox Muslim. Towards the climax of the novel, Saladin engages in a long soliloquy where he not only affirms his faith in Islam as a "faithful follower of our Prophet" ... but also rebukes himself for not firmly quashing any hopes others had in his conversion. (Zaman, p.7)

From a European Christian Perspective, Salah a-Din is viewed as a "noble heathen," for his chivalry and humane treatment of his rivals at war, and at the same time he is the enemy and an infidel. Most Western readers are aware of his wars against the Crusaders. In one of the most famous scenes of *The Talisman*, Richard the Lionheart and Salah a-Din meet and demonstrate a symbolic representation of their power:

The two heroic monarchs, for such they both were, threw themselves at once from horseback, and the troops halting and the music suddenly ceasing, they advanced to meet each other in profound silence, and, after a courteous inclination on either side, they embraced as brethren and equals. (*The Talisman*, p.335)

This scene is honored for its contrast of the brute brawn of Christian Europe with the sophisticated finesse of the Muslim Middle East of the Middle Ages. Richard asked Salah a-Din to meet with him for peace negotiations when he first arrived, but Salah a-Din insisted that kings do not meet while at war. After the truce was signed between them, Richard would not visit Jerusalem because he did not capture the city. There is no doubt that the two men developed mutual respect and admiration.

This is more explicitly stated by Salah a-Din to Hubert Walter, one of Richard's key advisors in the Middle East, a man who took the trip to Jerusalem after the truce as a pilgrim, and met with Salah a-Din. Richard expressed his sentiments of respect more than once during his meetings with Salah a-Din's brother al-Adil, whose son, future Sultan al-Kamil, was awarded knight spurs by Richard during a banquet.

Some works of Western writers feature the implementation of disguises in the Middle Ages, an exemplary feature or tradition that its heirs borrow from the exploits of Harun al-Rashid in *The Arabian Nights*. (Zaman, 2010, p.2). Scott confesses in the Introduction to *the Talisman*: "I felt the difficulty of giving a vivid picture of a part of the world with which I was almost totally unacquainted with, unless by early recollections of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments" (p.3). Scott utilizes disguised royals as a feature of 'nobility'. After encountering King Richard's wife, Berengaria and cousin, Edith Plantagenet, Salah a-Din confesses to Kenneth that he ventured forth thither in "disguise, and thereby procured a sight the most blessed that I have ever enjoyed - that I ever shall enjoy, until the glories of Paradise beam on my eyes" (Scott, *Talisman*, p.284).

The boundary between the fictional world and the real world finds expression in Scott's Introduction to *The Talisman*: "It may be said, in general, that most of the incidents introduced in the following tale are fictitious; and that reality, where it exists, is only retained in the characters of the piece." (p.8) Themes of nobility, justice, generosity, and austerity are personified in the character of Salah a-Din as a ruler for his time, whereas Richard is characterized by strength and imposing presence. *The Talisman* "reveals a healthy admiration" for the Sultan Salah a-Din "as an exemplary character", and "as a civilized and cultured gentleman, learned and equitably disposed to Muslim and crusader alike" (Zaman, pp. 40, 43). Yet, historical events are not precisely depicted by Scott who is not trying to be accurate in a fictional art-form, as he declares in the introductory statement.

As *The Talisman* includes factual characters, such as Salah Addin, Richard II, King Philip II of France, Conrad of Monferrat, there are also fictitious characters like Sir Thomas of Gilsland and the Knight of the Couchant Leopard, Kenneth of Scotland as is his lord, King David of Scotland. Sir Walter Scott was from Scotland, and accordingly he lays emphasis on Scotland in *The Talisman* that was not present during what history now refers to as the Third Crusade (1189-1193).

Following the victory at the Battle of Hattin in 1187, that destroyed the Christian army in the Middle East, Salah a-Din captured Jerusalem. The European reaction to Hattin led to the famous confrontation between the Christian forces led by Richard and Muslim forces led by Salah a-Din. Culture and religion are contrasted as these characters interact. Historical events are set in contrast with the subjective discussions in *The Talisman*. Although it was the time of Muslim expansion and capture of Jerusalem by Salah a-Din, Scott discusses the absurdity of the title, "The King of Jerusalem". "The crusaders were also unable to overcome the differences that existed between them (I mean crusaders). The unity of Christendom was only a unity in the face of a common enemy. The crusaders were also disadvantaged by the revival of Muslim military power in the twelfth century." (Delanty, p. 34)

*The Talisman* gathered attention in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Although *The Talisman* is considered one of the few works that were written in favour of Arabs, Said's book denotes an artificial dichotomy between Occident and Orient, and asserts that certain Western scholars fabricate the East in terms of an entity to be derided and subjugated militarily, culturally, intellectually etc. Therefore, Sir Walter Scott is one such probable individual with his crusading tale (Said, p.101). It is ironical that the Crusades were initiated by the medieval popes as Holy Wars for the grand liberation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land; creating the crusader, a "knight for Christ." The Crusades touched upon almost every aspect of life; they were more than just *military* exploits.

"Medicines," he said, "like the medicines which they employed, were often useful, though the one were by birth or manners the vilest of humanity, as the others are, in many cases, extracted from the basest materials. Men may use the assistance of pagans and infidels," he continued, "in their need, and there is reason to think, that one cause of their being permitted to remain on earth, is, that they might minister to the convenience of true Christians—thus, we lawfully make slaves of heathen captives" (Scott, *Talisman*, pp. 103-4).

It was seen as legitimate to enslave free born knights; they, according to the Archbishop of Tyre, become *lawful captives*, doomed to *slavery*. Kenneth is seen as a property by Richard who finds no problem to accept an Ethiopian Christian slave as present.

By his side stood the seeming Ethiopian slave, holding the noble dog in a leash, such as was used in wood-craft. It was a circumstance which attracted no notice, for many of the princes of the Crusade had introduced black slaves into their household, in imitation of the barbarous splendour of the Saracens (Scott, *Talisman*, p. 292).

More explicitly, Scott reflects that Muslims are termed by the Crusaders as barbarous Saracens, pagans and infidels. Further, "Scott displays the depth of his perception and historicity, by not lumping polytheism with Islam but attributing it to the ignorant crusaders. He slips up just once when Adonbec deems the Muslim princes of Spain as "Mohammedan" (implying that Muslims worship the Prophet of Islam) though this may have been a simple oversight on Scott's part." (Zaman, p.6)

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century Image of the "Orient"**

As the term "Orient" was used in the Eighteenth-century to refer to Europe's colonized regions: Middle East, Asia, and Africa, due to the huge expansion of colonialism, the impact of the ongoing process of the stereotyping of the Islamic Orient increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction. Yet close observation reveals that a few popular western writers, especially travelers, or those notable for their extensive research, have begun to portray the Islamic character and culture as truthful as they are as a result of their familiarity of the value of Islamic achievements. In her book *The Ornament of the World* (2002), the Cuban historian Maria Rosa Menocal presents a respectful view of the Islamic civilization in Spain where an example of creativity in diversity is provided. The book gives us an insight into the debt the western culture owes to this glorious civilization:

[M]edieval culture positively thrived on holding at least two, and often many more, contrary ideas at the same time. This was the chapter of Europe's culture when Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance. ... The very heart of culture as a series of contradictions lay in al-Andalus. [...] It was an approach to life and its artistic and intellectual and even religious pursuits that was contested by so many—as it is today—and violently so at times—as it is today—and yet powerful and shaping nevertheless, for hundreds of years. (Menocal, 2002, pp.10-12)

This fairly positive view of the Islamic civilization was particularly used by the American author Louis L'Amour in his bestselling historical fiction, *The Walking Drum* (1984). More explicitly, the book described the century following the death of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in 632: "The empire of the Arabs was larger than that of Alexander the Great or of Rome. Under the *flush of greatness* for more than five hundred years, the Arabs carried the torch of civilization" (pp. 171-172). The fiction is set in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Europe and Asia shedding a positive light on the many contributions of the Islamic world that gave rise to the development of the Western and modern civilization. In the Author's Note that followed *The Walking Drum*, L'Amour maintains that "Cultural diffusion" from the Islamic civilization in regions in contact with the Islamic world especially in Islamic Spain and Islamic Sicily and a part of France "had much to do with the beginning of the Renaissance in Europe" (p. 465). Under the Islamic rule, Jews and Christians were allowed to "keep their religion as long as they paid a tax. In this respect the Islamic empire was more tolerant of Jews and Christians than Christian Europe was of Jews and Muslims during much of its history." (Seigle and Tom, 2001, [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org))

Although Louis L'Amour is better known for his westerns, he usually reflects his vision by connecting it to the education and character development of his protagonist. *The Walking Drum* is an epic adventure that traces the relationship of Arabic culture and the hero's identity and objectives. Kerbouchard seeks his corsair father throughout the brilliant society of Muslim Spain, becoming a translator there; he reflects the author's obvious and deep appreciation for Arabic culture.

In this gripping novel Louis L'Amour tackles the 12th Century at a time when much of the world was dominated by the Arabs and Muslims. He does it through the eyes of a great adventurer who shows tremendous respect for Arab culture.

At the center of *The Walking Drum* is Kerbouchard, one of L'Amour's greatest heroes. Warrior, lover, scholar, Kerbouchard is a daring seeker of knowledge and fortune bound on a journey of enormous challenge, danger and revenge. From castle to slave gallery, from sword-racked battlefields to a princess's secret chamber, and ultimately, to the impregnable fortress of the Valley of Assassins. He travels throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia on his journey and overcomes numerous obstacles along the way. (*The Vested Owl.com*)

The action is interesting in its oriental material and form of adventure. The book has lots of escapes, battles and wounds, and is written in a rather breathless style that is not very graceful. At the same time, however, the reader learns much about the thinkers and their ideas at the time. L'Amour extensively portrays the Islamic world as far more advanced than Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. L'Amour writes in *The Walking Drum*: "These gifts were magnificent indeed, but any traveling scholar, at almost any town in Islam, could expect the same. Wisdom was revered; whereas in Europe he might be burned as a heretic."(p.401). It is interesting to find Kerbouchard in the guise of an Islamic scholar, and during his journey from one country to another, in search of his father, is at the same time able to make a good living, copying and translating books, seeking knowledge, studying and discussing Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine*. "He grows talented in ways surely unique in history and even in fiction. He becomes a sailor; a horseman; a fierce warrior; a merchant with caravans ("the walking drum" pounds out their marching pace); an acrobat, juggler, and magician; a fluent linguist in Arabic, Frankish, Greek, Hindi, Latin, Persian, and Sanskrit; a versatile scholar and scientist mastering botany, chemistry, explosives, geography, history, literature, medicine, military tactics, music, philosophy, and theology; and a storyteller. He is also a L'Amour-style lover." (www.enotes.com).

Kerbouchard goes to Spain that was ruled by the Al Mohads after Ummayyad Caliphate, yet was still "the center of learning, arts and science in medieval Europe. Here scholars (not only Islamic) gathered, in the magnificent city of Cordoba, and the libraries of Cordoba alone had more books than the rest of Europe together." (Balancing Life, 2005). In Cordoba Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars mingled freely in *convivencia*.<sup>viii</sup>

## Conclusion

Durant remarks that "civilizations are units in a larger whole whose name is history" (1950, pp.343-44). The paper's aim is not intended, in any way, to point out historical inaccuracies in Western literature. It provides, instead, a general picture of the Western writers' view of the influence of one civilization upon another. This is especially true with respect to the intellectual armory acquired through major contacts between early Islamic civilization and Latin-Europe: Muslim Spain and the Crusades.

It was largely through contact with this thriving civilization—whose scholars excelled in several disciplines—that a few popular writers have begun to portray the Arab character in its true light, since they have either visited some parts of the Arab world, have met Arab travelers, or they are known of carrying out extensive research. This is why Western writers, such as Sir Walter Scott, have literally treated such popular Muslim figures, like Saladin. Some named them as Chaucer and Dante possibly because of the general respect with which these men were held by erudite medieval Europeans. Besides, there is a plethora of Western writers who have documented and gratefully acknowledged the part played by Muslims in the awakening of Europe.

Western writings come across as biased or illogical due to the traditions of Christian dogmatism. Muslims and the Muslim world played a complex, and sometimes two-fold, role portrayed in various genres of Western literature of the middle ages until the Romantic period. Muslims were portrayed in European poetry and drama as pagans, and heretics. Moreover, they were looked upon as brutal and violent savages. For the European scholars during the crusades, Islam was the great enemy but at the same time have the great source of intellectual splendour. In modern writings, the Western perspective on Muslims revealed a slight change, with the horror which made Dante deposit Prophet Mohammed in Hell. Out of prejudice and fear, early negative images of Islam and the Muslims as pagan idolaters, infidels, barbarian, and 'terrorists who initiated wars' are conveyed by Western writers who relied upon their imagination, Christian stereotyping, and second hand sources.

Fascinating their readers with exotic scenes and incredible fantasies presented in Oriental material and modeled on narratives from Arabic culture, writers created new frames in European literature in which they could define their own identity. This reflected their lack of knowledge and tendency to dehumanize the enemy, to assume a superior posture and an Islamic inferior "other". All this is particularly surprising when juxtaposed with the contemporary view of Muslim society as being theocratic and backward, and may reveal the European assumption that civilization represented progress and signified the 'barbarity' of uncivilized communities. "The idea of Europe became increasingly focused on the idea of progress, which became synonymous with European modernity. This was above all an achievement of the Enlightenment." (Delanty, p.65)

Whether old or modern, the impact of the continuous process of the medieval literary stereotypes of the Muslim participates powerfully in perpetuating an image that is still held as hostile or "terrorist", exaggerated and enlarged upon particularly at times when Islam was conceived as a cultural danger, let alone a militant religion. The important task is not to correct the Western writers' "false emphasis" or to convince them to acknowledge their debt to the Arab and Islamic world. However, it is not fair to consider the depiction of Muslims and Islamic civilization in western literature as only antagonistic, there is a number of Westerners who provide a fair depiction in their comparisons between the Orient and Occident.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC).

<http://www.wmich.edu/iscsc/civilization.html>.

<sup>ii</sup> Al-Kindi's two treatises on geometrical and physiological optics were utilized by Roger Bacon (1214-1292).

<sup>iii</sup> The influence of Al-Farabi upon two of 13th century's most prominent Latin scholastics, Albertus Magnus and his student, St. Thomas Aquinas, is profound. Thus, "we see without doubt the influence of the former [Al-Farabi] on the latter [St. Thomas] but not vice versa" (Hammond, 1947, p. 29). Further, "Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas and others borrowed from him a great amount of material hitherto regarded by many as a product of their speculation, while in reality it is not" (Ibid., p. ix).

<sup>iv</sup> Abu Al-Walid Ibn Ahmed Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) wrote 20,000 pages including works in philosophy, medicine, biology, physics, and astronomy. He wrote a 7-volume medical encyclopedia, *Kitab al-Kulliyat fil-Tibb* (hence the Latin name 'Colliget', a corruption of the word —kulliyat, meaning —generalities). Ibn Rushd was the ultimate rationalist, the Aristotelian heretic of early Islam and Christianity, best known for his commentaries on Aristotle. He wrote the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* "to rebut al-Ghazali's (1058-1111) polemic against science in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*." For Ibn Rushd, "the Qur'an instructed humans to look for knowledge, so the search must at least be right. He believed revelation to be the highest form of knowledge, but felt that the majority of people were ill-equipped to grasp the complexities of the religious experience and therefore needed something simpler, which was a theology based on human reason. Ibn-Rushd had a significant influence on thinkers in the Latin world, such as Thomas Aquinas." (Masood, pp.76-77) And, "since Ghazali placed science, philosophy and reason in position inferior to religion and theology, the Scholastics accepted his views, which became characteristic of most medieval philosophy." (Ibid, p.53)

<sup>v</sup> For further study of Arabic terms in medical English, see my own paper titled: "A quest for reviving the past: Arabic lines in English translation and terminology", October 6 University Journal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume, January 2014.

<sup>vi</sup> It was said that "Harun communicated with Charlemagne ... [who] was quite accomplished for his time. He maintained libraries of Greek and Roman manuscripts and could speak German, Latin, and Greek." (Hotaling, P.103) However, the Lebanese American historian

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Philip K. Hitti in *The Arabs: A Short History* (1964) has made a very perceptive remark: "For while al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun were delving into Greek and Persian philosophy, their contemporaries in the West, Charlemagne and his lords, were reportedly dabbling in the art of writing their names....No people in the early Middle Ages contributed to human progress as much as did the Arabs." (p.120)

vii Maimonides of Cordoba was a Jewish philosopher and brilliant scholar in Arabic medicine. He fled in 1160 with other Jews to Fez in Morocco and later migrated to Palestine. He finally went to Cairo, where he entered medicine as a career for financial needs, and where he acquired a high reputation that he eventually became a physician to the sultan Salah a-Din. His writings included wise advice on diet, hygiene, first aid, poisons, and general medical problems, but his essential interest was in philosophy. He tried to reconcile scientific reasoning and religious faith; hence he advanced the "heresies" of Ibn Rushd. Orthodox Jews of his time were hostile to his views, whereas Jewish intellectuals wholeheartedly accepted him as a great philosopher and physician only after his death.

viii See "East Meets West in Muslim Spain and the Crusades" in this paper.

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