

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atkinson, Brooks (ed.). **The Selected Writings** of Ralph Waldo Emerson. New York: The Modern Library, 1964 .
- Benet, W. R. and Pearson, N. H. (ed.). **The Oxford Anthology of American Literature** . New York : Oxford University Press, 1938 .
- Bradley, Sculley, Beaty, R. C. and Long, E. H. (eds). **The American Tradition in Literature** . 2 Vols . New York : W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961 .
- Davidson, Edward H. **Poe: A Critical Study**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.
- Emerson, Edward W. and Forbes, Waldo Emerson (eds.). **The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson**. 10 Vols., Boston and New York : Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1909 - 1914 .
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. **Society and Solitude**. Boston and New York : Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1904
- Finkelstein, Dorothea M. **Melville's Orienda**. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961 .
- Irving, Washington. **The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow and other Selections**. New York: Washington Square Press, 1964 .
- The Life of Mahomet**. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1944.
- Longfellow, Henry Wordsworth. **The Poetical Works**. London : Oxford University Press , 1965.
- Wagenknecht, Eward. **Edgar Allan Poe: The Man Behind the Legend** . New York: Oxford University Press, 1963
- Wager, Willis **American Literature: A World New**. New York: New York University Press, 1968 .

feats of fairies and magicians and kings
and queens, was more dear and wondrous
a circle of children than any orator
in England or America is now (25)

Melville's interest in the East was of a different nature. "Fragments from a Writing Table," "is an adventure in an oriental setting and is closely patterned on a typical scene in *The Arabian Night*, which exerted a direct impact on the composition of these "Fragments." Melville frequently used Arabic names or variations of Arabic names in his works. But gradually, the East came to have a deeper significance for him than merely a source of romance with which to ornament his books. He began to search for some solution to his lost faith in religion and America itself. His visit to the Middle East in 1857 is closely tied up with this personal sense of despair and dismay at what western culture was coming up to. His long allegorical romance, *Mardi*, is filled with Islamic characters and symbols; Taji searches through a fantasy world for his lost love, Yillah when Taji first meets Yillah he is dressed in Eastern robes looking like "an Amir." In *Clarel* a young divinity student visits the Holy Land in search of faith, which he does not find. And since neither Clarel nor Melville find faith, Taji concludes in *Mardi*: Oh, Ourienda, in thee tis vain to seek Yillah. (26)

The American scholars of the nineteenth-century who looked to the East can be roughly divided into three groups: The Romantics, the Philosophers and the Skeptics. The Romantics needed and found splendor, excitement and enchantment. The East for them was a fairy land to satisfy their need for romantic imaginative escape from sordid everyday affairs. The philosophers needed to affirm their ideas in the solid intellectualism of the East. The Skeptics needed to find themselves and to vindicate their losses.

What has been presented is not a conclusion but a beginning, not a discovery but an exploration. Needless to say, the subject is ripe for further investigation, since every facet merits closer attention.

(25) Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Society and Solitude* (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1904) P. 100.

(26) For full treatment of the subject see: Finkelstein, op.cit.

own ideas and philosophy. His essays and Journals contain many references to and quotations from *the Quran*. In Heroism "Courage" and other essays he exemplified the virtue of heroism by Arab-Islamic illustrations. Ali Ben Abu Taleb, Saladin and Abduel-Kader Emerson also included in his Journals the story of Hatem Tai who never liked to eat alone; Hatem Tai even roasted his matchless and wonderful horse because he had nothing else to offer his guests. In Courage he again referred to Hatem Tai's extreme hospitality. For Emerson this hospitality is a kind of heroic act since the host must first overcome self love and covetousness. "Arab hospitality was of course proverbial and was frequently alluded to in the literature of the time (23) Arabian proverbs were used by Emerson as confirmation of his ideas. In *The American Scholar* after expressing the need for the lamps of the East he says :

We hear that we may speak The
Arabian proverb says "A fig tree,
looking on a fig tree becometh
| | fruitful (24)

Scheherazade of *The Arabian Nights*, who fascinated the West, astonished Emerson by her eloquence and stratagem to save her life. In "Perpetual Forces," and "Eloquence," he referred to her and presented her as a universal expression of joy and youth unmatched in the West :

The whole world knows pretty well the
style of these improvisators, and how
fascinating they are, in our translations
of the Arabian Nights. Scheherazade tells
these stories to save her life, and the
delight of young Europe and young America
in them proves that she fairly earned it.
And who does not remember in childhood
some white or black or yellow Schcherazade,
who, by that talent of telling endless

(22) Ibid .p 22

(23) Finkelstein , op. cit .p. 41 .

(24) Atkinson ,op.cit .p.50 .

Of a love that shall not die
 Till the sun grows cold,
 And the stars are old ,
 And the leaves of the Judgment
 Book unfold !(18)

This certainly sounds like a free translation of an Arabic poem -the sentiment and the expression testify to this . Among Taylor's publication that deal with the East are *Land of the Sarcens* (1855) and *Cyclopaedia of Modern Travels* (1856) .

The same romantic elements of an oriental nature can be found in Edgar Allan Poe's works .Yet,in Poe, "...the tendency is naturally inclined towards the Arabesque and the Gothic". (19) In 1840, he published his first collection of short stories , *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. To these tales Poe had given the 'aesthetic creativity' of the Arabesque. His greatest stories have been classified among the Arabesque, because their material is selected "...with care on account of their strangeness,their appeal to the faculty of wonder".(20) Two of Poe's poems bear Islamic titles, "Al-Aaraaf," and "Israfel." Al-Aaraaf is not only the Qur'anic region between heaven and hell but "...the name Arab astronomers assigned the planet in Tycho's nova or constellation".(21) In Poe's poem Al- Aaraaf there is a wandering planet where Nesace ,the titular ruler ,dwells in search of awareness in order to ...restore the eternal harmony to the cruelly deranged and fractured world of men (22)

For Ralph waldo Eoerson, the East was not simply a fantasy land in which romance still lived but rather the home of the oldest philosophic truth. Therefore he sought in the East truth and ideals to help him form his

(18.) William Rose Benet and Norman Holmes Pearson .eds ., The Oxford Anthology of American Literature (New York :Oxford University Press, 1938) pp. 855-856 .

(19) Finkelstein ,op, cit .P.17.

(20) Edward Wagenknecht , Edgar Allan Poe: The Man Behind the Legend (New York :Oxford University Press, 1963) P. 157 .

(21) Edward H. Davidson. poe: A Critical Study (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1964) P. 15.

his "dreamy eyes" stretch across this Arabian desert like a panoramic picture of history, and watch the successive passage of "weary centuries"-the passage of Moses, Mary, Christ and pilgrims until:

The vision vanishes ! these walls again
Shut out the lurid sun ,
Shut out the hot ,immeasurable plain ;
The half-hour's sand is run !(16)

The East has become a poetic source that nourishes imaginative creativity. The walls that shut out the sun are a condemnation of a mechanical industrialized civilization which he found barren. Longfellow's poem *Allah*, which he translated from German, seeks light in the midst of the prevailing confusion and darkness that surrounds him:

Gladly to Allah's dwelling
Yonder would I take flight ;
There will the darkness vanish ,
There will my eyes have sight .(17)

Bayard Taylor's desert was not as visionary as that of Irving or Longfellow. In 1851 he visited the Near East and travelled extensively in the area. He studied Arabic poetry, which he was able to read in the original, and imitated this poetry in *Poems of the Orient*, Published in 1854. In *Bedouin Song*, for example, he transplanted into English poetry a traditional Arabic poem of wooing the beloved. The images are all culled from a fanciful, oriental -colored setting :

Look from thy window and see
my passion and pain ;
I lie on the sands below,
As I faint in thy disdain
Let the night-winds touch thy brow
With the heat of my burning sigh,
And melt there to hear the vow

(16.) Ibid. .p.187.

(17.) Ibid .p.757.

traveller who is carried by the south wind to Arabia & succeeds not only in seeing the «gay bazaars» but also in smelling the perfume of Arabian gales:

I see below

The long line of the Libyan Nile,
Flooding and feeding the parched land
With annual ebb and overflow,

...

This city , in whose gay bazaars
The dreaming traveller first inhales
The perfume of Arabian gales ,
And sees the fabulous earthen jars ,
Huge as were those where in the maid
Morgiana found the Forty Thieves
Concealed in midnight abmuscade ;
And seeing ,more than half believes
The fascinating tales that run
Through all the Thousand Nights (14) and One,
Told by the fair Scheherezade .

Here *The Arabian Nights*, mixed with travellers' tales ,are Longfellow's sources. They give exotic flavor to his poem. His readers response must have been immediate since they were familiar with *The Arabian Nights*. In «Sand of the Desert in an Hour-Glass» he dreams of a freer, more exciting world -gazing at :

A handful of red sand, from the hot clime
of Arab deserts brought,
Within this glass becomes the spy of Time,
The minister of thought . (15)

The ancient Eastern primitive device of measuring time has become "a minister of thought" for the poet. It allows room for meditation .And then

(14.) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow .*The poetical Works* (London :Oxford

University Press, 1965) P. 727 .

(15.) Ibid . P. 186 .

him ; how they galloped over bush and brake. over
hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge;
when the horseman suddenly turned into a
skelton , threw old Brouwer into the brook, and
sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of
thunder... This story was immediately mactched by ...
Brom Bones ...he had been over taken by this mid -
night trooper... but just as they came to the church
bridge,the Hessian bolted , and vanished in a flash
of fire .11

The Tales of the A lhambra ,which Irving published in 1830, includes
fantastic legends and superstitions still alive among the gypsies and peasa-
nts, and it is full of the flavor of *The Arabian Nights*. *The Life of Mahomet*
followed in 1832. He admitted that ...most of the particulars for the book
were drawn from Spanish sources, and from Gagnier's translation of the
Arabian hitorian Abulfeda, a copy of which he found in the Jesuits Library
of the Convent of St. Isidro, at Madrid.(12) Irving's slove of chivalry, hero-
ism, romance and legend so dominated this book that it is considered
more as ... a picturesque biography of a hero of Arabian romance than an
adequate account of the founder of Islam. (13) Such a presentation of pro-
phet Muhammad reveals Irving's romantic temperament in treating a reli-
gious topic, and the appeal that the East held for him.

Similar familiar features are found in Henry W. Longfellow's poem in
which his imaginary desert is filled with caravans ,minarets ,noble Arabian
warriors , and palaces of delight . His interest in Islam and Arabia was
also aroused by a visit to Spain in 1827. In his poem «Keramos,» the dreamy

(11.) The Legend of The Sleepy Hollow and other
Selections (New York :Washington Square Press, 1964)PP.28-29.

(12) Iruing. *The life of Mahomet*, op - cit., p.1

(13) Finkelstein, op. cit., q.17.

American journals and books .Beginning with January 1836, the third year of its publication ,the *Knickerbocker Magazine* ... carried articles on Near Eastern lands, life, and manners in almost every number (.8) The same approach was taken by the *Knickerbocker* rival, the *Democratic Review* a few years later .(9)

From 1826 to 1829, while Emerson was still contemplating the mystery and greatness of the East, Washington Irving Lived and studied in Spain and his interest in Islam, Arabia and Prophet Muhammad was aroused. In Spain and Andalusia, he was fascinated with scenes so oriental that he felt the early associations of Arabian Romance . He discovered traces of the courage ,urbanity, high poetical feeling and elegant taste of the Arabs in Spain. Irving is well known for his love of the exotic and picturesque:

I longed to wander over the scenes of renowned achievement - to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity-to loiter about the ruined castle -to meditate on the falling tower - to escape in short , from the commonplace realities of the present , and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past . (10)

In "The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow," he strove to give the charms and spells of legends and romance from Arabia :

This was one of the favorite havnts of the headless horsman ...The tale was told by Brouwer , a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts,how he met the horseman returning from his foray in to Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind

(8.) *Finkelstein .op. cit . P. 19 .*

(9.) *Ibid . P. 21.*

(10.) *Washington Irving. The Life of Mahomet (London: J.M. Dent and Sons , Ltd., 1944) P.1.*

felt that the time had come when their sluggard intellect must look from "... its iron lids," and do something "...better than the exertions of mechanical skill,." (6) In that period of scientific discovery and doubt , there was also a desire to know and to experience if possible, the land and the original source of great religions :

...when the intervals of darkness come , as
come they must - when the sun is hid and
the stars withdraw their shining - we
repair to the lamps which were kindled by
their ray , to guide our steps to the East
again, where the dawn is .(7)

A tabulation of the material from which nineteenth-century American scholars drew their knowledge of the Islamic World reveals numerous travel books , histories and translations of Arab-Islamic literature - *The Quran* , *The Arabian Nights*, romances and poetry. Various examples follow: Thomas Carlyle's *On Hero and Hero-Worship* , Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, James Bruce's *An Interesting Narrative of Travels into Abyssinia to Discover the Source of the Nile* , William Beckford's *Vathek*, Simon Ockley's *The Conquest of Syria Persia and Egypt by the Saracens: Containing the Lives of Abubeker, Omar and Othman ,the Immediate Successors of Mahomet*. These are only a few of the sources among the inexhaustible reservoir of material available for the American scholars of the nineteenth-century. Arab-Islamic literature in translation includes George Sale's translation of *the Qurān* ,first published in 1734, many American editions of *The Arabian Nights* (as early as 1815) and translations of romances and poetry ,such as *Antar : A Bedouen Romance*. It is evident that this orientalizing tendency drew at the beginning on European sources .But by the middle of the century original American compositions on the East and the Near East began to appear in several

(6) Atkinson, op., cit ., P. 45 .

(7) Ibid. P. 50 .

In 1837 Ralph Waldo Emerson asked American scholars to tear America away from lavish adherence to European thought and literary models. In his famous, enthusiastically received, address entitled *The American Scholar*, he asserted that scholars "... have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe"⁽¹⁾ and should now guide their steps to the East. A year later in *An Address* delivered at Harvard Divinity School he noted that "Europe has always owed to oriental genius its divine impulses,"⁽²⁾ and looked for the hour when "... that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, shall speak in the west also".⁽³⁾ Seven years later in his *Journal* of 1845 he wrote: "The East is grand and makes Europe appear the land of trifles"⁽⁴⁾.

This desire to turn America from Europe in the early years of the nineteenth century was accompanied by active interest and preoccupation with the East, and this desire manifested itself on the American literary scene during that period. Although this interest "... was an integral part of a general Western preoccupation with the East that characterized the larger movement of European Romanticism"⁽⁵⁾ yet it was American in its eclecticism. In most of the American scholars who turned towards the East there was nostalgia for the past and for a sense of tradition - a need for conscious historical awareness. There was also a reaction against what was happening in America - an escape from the ugliness and corruption associated with industrialism and the prevalence of materialistic values. Scholars

(1) Brooks Atkinson, ed *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: The Modern Library, 1964) P.62.

(2) *Ibid.*, P. 71.

(3) *Ibid.*, P. 84.

(4) Edward W. Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, eds. *The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1909 - 1914) vol V11, P. 305

(5) Dorothee M. Finkelstein. *Melville's Orienda* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1961) P. 13.

1. The first part of the report is a general
description of the project and its objectives.

2. The second part is a detailed description of the

methodology used in the study, including the
data collection and analysis techniques.

3. The third part is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part is a conclusion and recommendations.

5. The fifth part is a list of references.

ARAB – ISLAMIC ELEMENTS IN NINETEENTH-
CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

ANAS AL-SHAIKH ALI
DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES
UNIVERSITY OF MOSUL
MAY 1978

*The East is grand and makes Europe appear
the land of trifles
Emerson, Journals, 1845*