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Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition: The Historical Roots and the Reiterations

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Obeidat & Mumayiz

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

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- Metlitzki, Dorothee: *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, 1978.
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- 78 *Byron: Letters and Journals*, ed. Rowland E. Prothero (London: John Murray, 1898–1901), I, 309.
- 79 Sharafuddin, pp. 213–217; 229–267.
- 80 For a lengthy and extensive list of bibliographic resources on Orientalists and Orientalism see the following site on the Internet:
< www.lib.umich.edu/area/Near.East/Orientalism/html>
- 81 Scholarly interest in Arabic and Islamic studies in the age of Romanticism and post-Romanticism was due mainly to the continuing support by European governments and other authorities for new Chairs of Arabic to be established, in addition to chairs endowed in previous centuries. In France, for example, the Convention (of the Revolution) created the School of Modern Oriental Languages in 1795.
- 82 For an excellent recent discussion on this subject, see Abderrahim Lamchichi, *Islam– Occident, Islam–Europe: Clash of Civilizations or Co–Existence of Cultures?* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000), and Samuel Huntington’s article “The Clash of Civilizations,” available online.

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Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

- 61 The modern edition is edited by Henry A. Pochman and E.N. Feltskog (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), p. 196. For another view of Irving, see Clinton Bennett's *In Search of Muhammad* (1998).
- 62 Marwan M. Obeidat, "George Henry Miles's "Mohammad": America's First Play on the Arabian Prophet". *The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol xxxv, 4, 1991, p. 260.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 In January 1816 the "Derya Dowlat" an East India company armed vessel manned entirely by natives of India was attacked by Juwasim pirates off Dwarka, near the Gulf of Cutch, in the Gujarat coast of India. The Juwasim had boarded the "Derya Dowlat" killed seventeen of its thirty-eight crew and carried away eight as prisoners to the Juwasim stronghold of Ras al-Khaima, and the remainder landed on the Indian coast (Wilson, p. 206).
- 65 In 1614 Shah Abbas issued three "farmans" (decrees) ordering that all assistance be rendered to British (East India Company) vessels in Persian waters. And in 1616 he pledged all possible assistance to the EIC (Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia* (1921), vol II, pp. 188, 189). From this close alliance with Shah Abbas, the East India Company's political and naval power, first in the Gulf, and then in the East, became a reality. "From 1622, when, in agreement with Shah Abbas, the East India Company undertook to keep two men-of-war constantly to defend the Gulf" (F.J. Moberly, ed. *The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918* (London, 1923-1927), vol I p. 43).
- 66 M. Epstein, *The Early History of the Levant Company* (London, 1908), pp. 7, 8.
- 67 Mohammad Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994), p. xxi. See also Ahmad Gunny, *Images of Islam in Enghteenth-Century Writings* (1996).
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 *Ibid*, xxii.
- 70 *Ibid*, xxxiv.
- 71 Sharaffuddin, pp. 88, 89, quoting from Sales' Preface.
- 72 *Ibid*, xxxii.
- 73 Letter to John May, dated July 29th 1799, in *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. John Wood Warter (London: Long man, Brown and Green, 1856), I, pp. 77-78.
- 74 Sharaffuddin, p. 44.
- 75 *Ibid*, p. 50.
- 76 *Ibid*, p. 55. The precise contours of Southey's positiveness are shrouded in vagueness, but his favorable attitude is comparable to other enlightened Romantic attitudes of Lessing and Goethe.
- 77 *Ibid*, p. 129.

- Hormuz, then to India. After six years of traveling in the Orient, he arrived back in London, also on the “Tiger” on April 29th 1591. He was a founder of the British East India Company. (*Dictionary of National Biography*, Ralph Fitch).
- 51 Bernard Lewis, “British Contributions to Arabic Studies” (Long man booklet published for the British Council, 1941), pp 12,13. See also his other book, *Islam and the West* (1993).
- 52 Albuquerque the Great’s (1453–1515) strategic planning ensured complete Portuguese domination of the Gulf from the early sixteenth to the mid–seventeenth century. After his death in 1515, his successors followed in his strategic footsteps, which ensured Portuguese supremacy in the Gulf for more than a 130 years. The Gulf was no longer a Portuguese lake, when early in the seventeenth century the British East India Company formed a strategic alliance with Abbas the Great (1587–1629), Shah of Persia, to drive their common enemy, the Portuguese, out of the Gulf. See A.T. Wilson, *The Persian Gulf* (London, 1920).
- 53 Wilson, p. 200, n.1.
- 54 *Ibid*-p. 205. The Juwasim pirates were finally defeated in 1819. A powerful British force was assembled at Bombay under the command of General Keir. Keir’s troops were landed two miles from Ras al–Khaima, and after stiff resistance the town was taken on Dec. 19th 1819. The leading sheikhs of the “pirate coast” were compelled by the Government of British India to sign a “General Treaty of Peace” on January 9th 1820, after which “The Pirate Coast” was renamed “The Trucial Coast.” (See Wilson, pp. 205–207).
- For further details see the Internet site:
www.Slider.com/enc/41000/Persian-Gulf.html
- 55 “Bathmendi”, *The Columbian Magazine* (Jan–Feb. 1787); 246–292; “Salyma and Osmin”, *The American Magazine* (May–June 1788: 363–439); “Omar and Fatima”, *The Literay Magazine and American Register*, (1808: 5–301).
- 56 *Magnalia* (Hartford, 1854), II, 671.
- 57 Cited in Mukhtar Ali Isani, “Cotton Mather and the Orient”, *New England Quarterly*, 43, (March– Dec. 1970, 52–53).
- 58 See Lotfi Ben Regeb, “To the Shores of Tripoli: The Impact of Barbary on Early American Nationalism”, Indiana University, Ph.D. Diss. (1981). See also Robert L. Allison’s investigation in *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (1995), and Marwan Obeidat, *American Literature and Orientalism* (1998).
- 59 Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive* (New Haven, Conn: College and University Press, 1970), p. 135.
- 60 *Ibid*, p. 143.

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

- brigands from Northern Spain and Southern France, the chivalric poem, *Song of Roland*, portrayed the Arabs as the enemy (Nasir, p.6).
- 33 *Poem of the Cid*, trans. Rita Hamilton and Janet Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).
- 34 On Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, the standard work is Aldo Scaglione (ed) 2 Vols (Turin, 1963), trans. Charles Ross (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989). See Charles Ross *Boiardo* in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 100, and 101. On Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the standard translation is by William Stewart Rose (Indianapolis, 1968). On Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, there is Edward Fairfax's translation, edited by Robert Weiss. A modern translation is by Maria Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford, 1973).
- 35 Metlitzki, p. 197.
- 36 *Ibid*, p. 198.
- 37 John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (London: Early English Text Society, No. 123, 1924), pp. 920–23.
- 38 *Cambridge History of English Literature* (1988), p. 70.
- 39 "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama", *MP* 12 (1915), 423–47.
- 40 Myron P. Gilmore, *The World of Humanism 1453–1517* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), pp. 20, 21.
- 41 See Robert Schoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk* (Nieukoop, 1967).
- 42 Paul Coles, *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1968), pp. 145–147.
- 43 Byron Smith, *Islam in English Literature* (Beirut: American Press, 1939), p17.
- 44 *Tamburlaine*, Part II, (V, I, 172–175).
- 45 See *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Joseph Schacht, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 9–62.
- 46 Richard Hardin on "Adicia", and "Souldan" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 7.
- 47 William Kennedy, *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 625.
- 48 *The Works of Francis Bacon* (London: H. Bryer, 1803), II, 279.
- 49 D.M. Palliser *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Late Tudors* (London, 1982), pp. 289, 290.
- 50 *Ibid*. This sizeable community was well known in England. In *Macbeth* one of the three witches declares "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master O' the Tiger" (III, I, 7). The Tiger was a well-known English ship of the 1580's, which operated regularly between the ports of London and Tripoli on the Syrian coast. In February, 1583, the merchant traveler Ralph Fitch (1550–1611), on direct orders from Elizabeth to reach India specifically through the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and then the Persian Gulf, embarked on the "Tiger" reaching Tripoli late April. From Aleppo, he sailed down the Euphrates reaching Basra (May–July 1585) to

- 20 Metlitzki, p. 201. William of Tripoli's account entitled "Guilelmi Tripolitani Ordinis Praedicatorum Tractatus de Statu Saracenorum et de Mahomete Pseudo-propheta et eorum lege et fide incipit" is reprinted in Hans Prutz, *Kultur Geschichte der Kreuzzuege*, pp. 575–98.
- 21 Mitlitzki, p.203, and Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1942 ed.), p. 246.
- 22 John of Damascus was the first to spread the unfavorable portrayal of Muhammad and Islam. John was instrumental in beginning the long tradition of attacking Muhammad for "bringing in God-Simulating revelation in order to justify his own sexual indulgence", Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.4; Nasir, p.5. John discredited the new religion and its founder on the grounds that Muhammad, acting on Bahira's advice, manufactured the Koran from the Old and New Testaments to satisfy his own personal interests (Nasir, *Ibid*). For further details on John of Damascus, see Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1942 ed.), p. 246; John W.Voorhis, "John of Damascus on the Muslim Heresy" *Muslim World* 24, October 1934, pp. 391–398; and Voorhis "The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen" *Muslim World*, 25, July 1935, pp. 266–273.
- 23 *The Christian Approach to the Muslim*, p. 28.
- 24 See Dana C. Munro, "The Western Attitude Toward Islam During the Period of the Crusades", *Speculum*, VI, No.3, (1931), pp. 329–343.
- 25 Metlitzki op.cit.
- 26 See *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It has an excellent entry on the Crusades.
- 27 *Ibid*. The Knights Hospitalers were "Knights of the Order of the Hospital of Saint John in Jerusalem"; the Hospital was originally one for sick pilgrims. After the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, Crusader knights remaining in Jerusalem fought as members of that order. The Templars, or "Poor Knights of Christ's and of the Temple of Solomon", a religious-military order of knighthood, was founded in the early years of the kingdom of Jerusalem. Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, gave them quarters in the area of the former Jewish Temple of Solomon; hence their name. See Runciman, *Crusades*, Passim, and Karen Armstrong *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World* (Harvard University Press, 2000).
- 28 Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.1.
- 29 *Ibid*. p. 68.
- 30 Metlitzki, p. 4.
- 31 J. S. P. Tatlock "Mohammad and His Followers in Dante", *Modern Languages Review*, 27 (1932), p. 192.
- 32 References in the text follow *The Song of Roland*, trans. D.D.R. Owen, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972). In 778 Charlemagne sent troops to fight the Muslims in Spain but was beaten back. One of the Frankish leaders who fought heroically was Roland. Although the actual adversaries of Roland were Christian Basque

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

- were learning to write their names”. *The Arabs* (Princeton: University Press, 1943), p.2.
- 10 Metlitzki, p. 10, quoting P. de Gayangos, *The History of the Mohammadan Dynasties in Spain* (London, 1840), xl.
 - 11 Metlitzki, p. 11, quoting Karl Sudhoff, (ed.) *Daniels Von Morley Liber de Naturis Inferiorum et Superiorum* (Leipzig, 1918), p. 7. The superiority of Arab learning was reinforced in the twelfth century by Robert of Chester as well as by Daniel of Morley who, dissatisfied with the Frankish Universities, went to the Arabs “to seek the wider philosophers of the Universe” (Nasir, p. 20).
 - 12 The first Crusade, which followed Pope Urban’s fiery outdoor speech at the Council of Clermont on November 18, 1095, in which he cried out against the molestation of Christian pilgrims and the plight of Eastern Christians and appealed to all Christians to “enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre”, was followed by successive expeditions in 1145, 1188, 1199, 1215 and 1227. What maintained the momentum of the Crusades, amongst other factors, were stories circulating in Europe about the Arabs’ barbaric attitudes towards Christians: The Golden Cross being thrown down from the Dome of the Rock, the Crucifix dragged through the streets at the tail of an ass; holy pictures put to insult; captured Christian children forced to spit on the cross, massacres of defenseless Christians, and numerous other stories. “To kill the Muslim Arab was to slay for God’s love” became the slogan in Europe. Daniel refers to several “serious writers” who advocated the “complete annihilation of all infidels”. (Nasir, p.7). See also Steven Runciman *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (1951–1954, reissued 1975) and Jonathan Riley Smith *What were the Crusades* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
 - 13 R.W Southern, *Western Views of Islam In The Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.17.
 - 14 Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches towards the Muslims* (Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 45.
 - 15 James T. Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Muslims* (Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 35.
 - 16 See: George Sale, trans. *The Koran: Commonly Called Alcoran of Mohammad* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co, 1876).
 - 17 Metlitzki, p. 203. See Sir W. Muir, Ed. *The Apology of al-Kindi* (London, 1887).
 - 18 Metlitzki, p. 201.
 - 19 One well-informed authority on the Saracens, the converted Jew Petrus Alfonsi, one who “had read their books and knew their language,” chooses a culprit other than Bahira: a heretical Christian archdeacon of Antioch who seeks refuge with Muhammad and “together with two native Arabian Jews inspires the heresy of Islam which spreads at first among the heretical Jews and Christians of Arabia” (Metlitzki, pp 202, 203).

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Notes

- 1 William Kennedy: on "Paynim" *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, (Toronto, 1997), p. 536. James A. Montgomery's *Arabia and the Bible* points out that the first reference to the Arab appeared in the Old Testament in Isaiah 13:20. "The Arab shall not tent there", and in Jeremiah 3:2, in an address to Judah: "thou hast sat for them like an Arab in the wilderness". The Biblical Arab is also seen as a mercenary: "The enemies of Judas could hire Arabs against him (Macabees 5:59). See Sari J. Nasir, *The Arabs and the English* (London: Longman, 1979), p.4.
- 2 Western perceptions are undoubtedly confused about these ancient associations. The Muslim Arabs trace their descent from Ismail, through Abraham's other wife, Hagar, not Sarah.
- 3 Another eccentric personal reading of this literary Ishmaelite that balances a negative portrayal of a wandering figure with a positive one is the famously attractive wanderer Herman Melville uses to narrate *Moby Dick* (1851): "Call me Ishmael" is one of the best known novel openings in the English speaking world.
- 4 Montgomery W. Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p.4. The image of the Arab as a wandering Ishmaelite continued up to the mid twentieth century. European travelers in Arabia saw themselves as wandering there with the Arab Ishmaelite. One such traveler, Carl R. Raswan, dedicates his book *Black Tents of Arabia: My Life Among the Bedouins* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1947). "To my beloved parents for all their love and patience with me during my years as a wandering Ishmaelite".
- 5 Watt, *Islam and Christianity*, pp. 4-6. Norman Daniel, in his book *Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1966), states that medieval European views of Islam, aside from depicting Muhammad as a "cunning pseudo prophet", described Mecca, the Holy city of Islam, as a "prostitute", and claimed that Islam was perceived as being forced on people by the sword, which explains the reason for its swift spread, p.4.
- 6 "The Conventional Saracen Song of Geste". *Speculum*, 17, (1942) p. 202.
- 7 Frank Magill, ed. *Masterpieces of World Literature*, Vol. 2 (Harper & Row), and p.818. See also Edward Said *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994) on the earliest Western views of the Islamic East.
- 8 H.S. Gehman, "The Arabic Bible in Spain" *Speculum* 1 (April 1926), p.220.
- 9 Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (1978), p.5, quoting R. Dozy *Spanish Islam: A History of the Moslems in Spain*, translated by F.G. Stokes (London, 1913), p. 268. As Sari J. Nasir points out: "although Arab conquests in Europe were halted in 732 by Charles Martel in the battle of Tours, there had been time enough to develop a flourishing civilization far superior to anything found as yet in Europe". *The Arabs and the English*, p.6. Philip Hitti notes "Arab Scholars were studying Aristotle when Charlemagne and his lords

and/or change in outlook contemporaneous with one another in both the Western and the Islamic worlds similar to European Romanticism and Arab liberalism, make far more constructive Western–Islamic relations.

In the absence of such conveniently simultaneous changes in both sides that would lead to better relations between them, what is presently required of both are sustained and effective public relations campaigns to acquaint one another with patterns of the political and social thought of each other. The Western world needs to know how the Arab and Islamic side are thinking and what its grievances against the West are. Such grievances have been aggravated to such horrendous extents as to lead to the present outbreaks of terrorism. The Arab/Islamic Street is also in dire need to be acquainted with Western political and social institutions and their patterns of thought. The religious factor, per se, should be relegated to a second place of priority: The present debacle in Western–Islamic relations is, first and foremost, political rather than religious. It is well to hold Islamic–Christian conferences, seminars and forums to discuss differences between the two faiths and ways and means of finding common ground. But the danger here is that such meetings may wander into mazes of abstruse and esoteric theological disputation, which would remain largely exercises in academic theology. The crucial issue that cries out to be addressed is the political one: the foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle–East is foremost among the issues that bedevil, and constantly aggravate Western–Islamic relations.⁸² But that is another story!

الإسلام والمسلمون في التراث الأدبي الأنجلو أمريكي:

الجدور التاريخية والتداعيات

مروان عبيدات وإبراهيم المميز

قسم اللغة الانجليزية وآدابها، الجامعة الهاشمية، الزرقاء، الأردن

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث العلاقة ما بين الإسلام والغرب منذ ظهور الإسلام وحتى نهاية القرن التاسع عشر، مستعرضاً الصور الأدبية النمطية عن الإسلام التي ظهرت في التراث الأوروبي عقب الحروب الصليبية (1095-1291) فالأمريكي لاحقاً عقب حرب البربر (1785-1815). في هذا السياق، يلقي البحث الضوء على تلك الصورة المشوهة للإسلام خلال العديد من الحقب التاريخية، ليتنهي إلى تأكيد ضرورة الوصول إلى فهم أفضل للثقافة العربية/الإسلامية من خلال تعزيز مفاهيم الحوار والتواصل الثقافي مع الغرب؛ فالخلاف المتأصل بين العالمين عائد أصلاً إلى خلافاً سياسية مؤد لجة في جوهرها. وفي جميع الأحوال فإن هذه الخلافات غير ثقافية أو دينية.

spanning two centuries, gave rise to reviling images of Islam and its prophet which persisted for two more centuries, only to be aggravated still further by the dreaded Turkish threat. A respite came with growing trade links between Europe and the Levantine provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Wealth accruing from sound, effective trade agreements with the alien Ottoman power facilitated a more open-minded outlook. Mutual material benefits led to a more respectful understanding of the dreaded Muslim adversary and a growing interest in its heritage. Thus, mutual material interest, based on equity, forms a sound basis for Western-Islamic understanding.

Momentary, localized disruptive factors should not be allowed to ruffle a would-be strategic, long-term understanding between the two sides, or cancel present, past or future improvements in relations. The Crusades arose, we are told, because of Christian pilgrims falling victim to local bandits who infested the Holy Land due to a local breakdown in government. American reiterations of Medieval European polemics against Islam arose from feelings running high due to the Barbary Wars. Piracy, festering due to weak governmental control and administration in the Barbary States (of North Africa), and in the Persian Gulf, also reflected adversely on Islam. Both the Crusades, and the Barbary Wars, show that Western-Islamic relations are endemically brittle and fragile and liable to be shattered by pebbles of lawlessness against Western individuals, property, or interest. This is as true today as it ever was. What is direly needed today if other Crusades, or Barbary Wars, or indeed our contemporary onslaught on Islamic "terrorism" are to be avoided, is the establishment of an international Western-Islamic body with its own active mechanisms that deal with any serious infringements of Western-Islamic relations.

The most potent factor bolstering sounder Western-Islamic relations is that of internal change in both sides making for a more constructive confluence between the two. The Romantic movement in Europe, politically and socially as well as artistically speaking, was in the nature of a revolution against classicism's reactionary patterns of thought and attitude. Age-old polemical views against Islam incubated within such reactionary patterns. The Romantic revolution went against all that reactionary establishmentarianism upheld, including anti-Islamic polemicism. On the other, the Islamic, side of the divide, the "liberal age" in the Arab world was contemporaneous with European Romanticism. The Arab liberal age is generally held to have begun with Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, which should not be viewed in an entirely negative light. The aftermath of Napoleon's invasion saw the introduction of European scientific, medical, educational, archaeological, and technical innovations into the Arab Muslim world, such as the Arabic printing press which Napoleon brought with him to Egypt. Internal reform of thought and attitude

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

revelation. Authentic description of scenery and costume conferred a reality on Islam as a way of life. Byron's politics lent a keen edge to his opening-up to Islam as a way of life. He was a post-revolutionary liberal, against the European "New Order" established by the Congress of Vienna, and highly critical of the British political establishment represented by George III, Castlereagh, and Wellington. He had full contempt for imperialism and a natural sympathy for subject nations, especially those languishing, like the Greeks, under the Ottoman yoke. To Byron, Islamic political and social tyranny is offset by Western cultural domination, and his praise for the Islamic East and his declamatory identification with its spirit reflects his contempt for Western self-regard and cant. Byron is not sympathetic to the Christian morality of meekness, humility and self-denial. His hero is "aggressive, uncompromising, commanding and sustained by pride", characteristics he found in the Turkish East which, unpleasant though they may be, have immense dramatic appeal. Such dramatic appeal generated enthusiasm in the West for the verve and colour of the Muslim Orient⁸⁰.

In the last analysis, Romanticism with its basic freedom from strictures on feeling and imagination and its shaking off of draining constrictions imposed in the name of order, tradition and reason was instrumental in opening the Western mind and soul to Islam in a way never known in Europe before. One of Romanticism's main constituents, the appeal of the exotic, facilitated this refreshing confluence with Islam. The Koran and the Bible, having so very much in common, came as a wondrous revelation. For the first time in the West it was realized that a Mussulman, more often than not, could be found to be a really fine fellow, in contrast to the reviled infidel of former centuries. This novel view of Islam led to a profusion of scholarly interest in Arabic and Islamic studies in the late eighteenth, throughout the nineteenth, and in the early decades of the twentieth century, and was carried out by such brilliant scholars as Reissue, Ahlwardt, Von Kramer, Von Hammer, Von Grunebaum, Sir Charles Lyall, Magroliouth and R.A. Nicholson; to name but a few who are, sadly, no longer with us.⁸¹

Finale: Summary and Conclusions

The relationship between Islam and the West was first troubled by biblical texts pejorative of the Arabs, and the rise of Islam in the seventh century aggravated this negative view of Arabs and Muslims. Although the brilliant Muslim civilization in Spain mitigated this negative image, Western fears of Europe's Latin Christianity being caught by the pincer of Muslim Spain in the West and Levantine Islam from the East gave rise to the Crusades that sought to drive a wedge between the two flanks of Islam by seizing the Holy Land and thereby neutralizing the Islamic threat. The Crusades, virulent religious wars

“The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey”

(Canto IX, xxiv).

The Romantics heavily influenced one another in their views of the Muslim Orient. In 1798 Walter Savage Landor’s *Gebir* came into the hands of Southey and influenced *Thalaba*. The Romantics veered from the old polemicism and took a fresher, more objective view of Islam. Southey, for one, makes a distinction between the Koran as a divinely inspired book and the allegedly “huge and monstrous fables of Moammadanism, its extravagant miracles, and the rabbinical tenets of its followers (which) appear nowhere in the written book (The Koran)”⁷³. Admit the inspiration of the writer, Southey continues, “and there is nothing to shock belief. There is but one God—this is the foundation; Mohammad is his Prophet—this is the superstructure”.⁷⁴ Southey’s enthusiasm for the Koranic spirit of Islam is expressed in a letter to his publisher Joseph Cottle in August 1798: “ My intention is to show off all the splendours of the Mohammedan belief; showing thereby a commitment to Islam and the human values it may contain”.⁷⁵ To liberate the West from its biased medieval perspective, Southey sought to discover “the common ethical denominator between Islam and Christianity”, driving towards a deeper understanding of Islam as part of a universal intuitive morality as opposed to values acquired socially because Man is surrounded by an external divinity omnipresent in nature.⁷⁶ Southey was deeply inspired by Islam in writing *Thalaba* that “became a vehicle for the communication of the Islamic faith in the West, in England in particular. It treated Islam with scholarly seriousness that left its impact on many Romantic poets”⁷⁷. In *Thalaba* Islam is held up as a model for a regenerated European civilization to emulate. Southey’s belief that Islam possessed a morality of considerable appeal and depth led him to use Islam to examine religious and political forces at work in the society of his time. In *Thalaba* Southey did more than any Western writer had done to explore the common ground between Christianity and Islam. “The idea of an affinity between the Bible and the Koran”, Sharafuddin explains, “dominates *Thalaba* to such an extent that Southey came to believe Islam and Christianity shared a common source”.⁷⁸

Byron is distinguished from other Romantic narrative poets in his direct experience of the Orient. He was “convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind instead of reading about them.”⁷⁹ To Landor, Southey and Moore, literature was a means of generating more literature. Byron, though a voracious reader well acquainted with Islamic poetry such as translations of Hafiz and Stephen Weston’s *Specimens of Persian Poetry* (1805), had direct experiences of the Muslim Orient and the Levant. His grand tour (July 2nd 1809 to July 14th 1811) took him to Albania, Greece, and Turkey, and provided rare poetical

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

91) whose *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* created in the Romantic imagination a view 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". The translation of the Koran in 1734 by George Sale (c. 1697–1736) was well-known to the Romantics, and Sale's eloquent translation led Byron to laud the poetic sublimity of the original. Sale, in pointing out common ground between Islam and Christianity, heavily influenced the Romantics' sympathetic and understanding view of Islam. In his preface, Sale explains the Mohammedan belief that the Caaba, in Mecca, was built by Adam after his expulsion from Eden; and who begged God that he might erect a building towards which he would direct his prayers and that God let down a representation of that building "in curtains of light and set it in Mecca perpendicularly under its original, ordering the Patriarch to turn towards it when he prayed". "After Adam's death" Sale continues his prefatorial exposition of Islamic belief on the origins of the Caaba, "his son Seth built a house in the same form of stones and clay, which being destroyed by the Deluge was built up by Abraham and Ismail at God's command in the place where the former had stood". Not very far from Adam's place of banishment at Mecca, Eve was banished to a place since called Djidda (the modern port city of Jedda in Saudi Arabia) "which signifies 'the first of mothers'".⁷¹

The Muslim Orient provided the Romantics with an outlet through which to throw off the shackles of restraint. In Samuel Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) the Orient became, as Sharafuddin explains, "an opportunity for experience... an expression of one's inner world... a projection of an amoral secret self into the public domain, giving a free reign to an outlawed self".⁷² The Western Romantic jinn were striving to get out of the Augustan bottle. Collective happiness, the Romantic optimistically concludes, could be achieved by shaking off the shackles of inherited tyrannical institutions. Muslim Turkish tyranny became a target for Romantic revolutionary poetry. Shelley was the Romantic poet most vociferous in his denunciation of Ottoman rapacity, cruelty and inordinate greed. In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley shows how Ottoman tyranny despoils the masses for its luxury:

"Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries"
(Canto V, xxxii).
To Shelley:

hit the very heartland of the British East India Company's sphere of influence.⁶⁴ The Juwasim pirates had dealt a painful blow to the pride and power of the company, which had dominated the Gulf for two centuries.⁶⁵ Aside from its military, naval, and commercial power, the EIC's political and financial influence was such that British ambassadors in Constantinople continued to be appointed, and paid, by its twin sister, the Levant Company, until 1803.⁶⁶ American suffering at the hands of the Barbary pirates, on the other hand, was, by comparison, less horrendous than what the Gulf pirates inflicted on the EIC. The young American republic had no political, naval or commercial dominating influence on the Barbary Coast comparable with that of the EIC in the Gulf. The plight of American captives was that of innocent wayfarers who had inadvertently wandered into dangerous waters. Their plight as unfortunate individuals did provide suitable thematic material for such literary works as the *Algerine Captive*. Here, personal suffering exuded pathos in a work that presented Islam as the religion of those who ruthlessly inflict suffering on innocent strangers. A religion inflicting such suffering was censoriously examined by Royall Tyler's Updike Underhill, and found wanting.

British Romanticism: A Fresh View of Islam

The Romantics had a two-fold attitude towards Islam. On the one hand it (Islam) offered a convenient symbol of the tyranny they all sought to overcome, but on the other it offered an alternative to the compromised or corrupted political and social systems of Europe.⁶⁷ In the century that led up to the Romantics, Oriental despotism was "an article of faith" in the West. Voltaire (1694–1778) in his play *Mahomet*, as well as in his other writings, used the Prophet "to show up credulity and superstition as lying at the root of every religion", and Antoine Boulanger in his *Recherches Sur les Origines de Despotisme Orientale* (1761) argued that "oriental despotism was not merely an immoral phenomenon, but the product of a religious and cultural matrix"⁶⁸. Thus the Enlightenment writers introduced a new slight against Islam. Gone were the old theological polemics, to be replaced by political ones: that Islam was the religion of illiberal, reactionary, unenlightened despotisms, while enveloping the Muslim despot with an air of inscrutable mystery.

Hence, the English Romantics sought to de-mystify the image of the inscrutable Orient insofar as the mystification of the Orient sought to serve Anglo-centric interests and attitudes. The English Romantics' attitude to the Muslim Orient was ambiguous: "It provided allegories of political despotism to be eschewed" as Mohammad Sharafuddin points out, "but also images of a foreign culture to be seduced by".⁶⁹ Byron wrote to Francis Hodgson on Sept. 3rd 1811: "I will bring you ten Mussulmans [who] shall shame you in all good will towards men, prayer to God and duty to their neighbors".⁷⁰ James Bruce (1730–

the bizarre, and the weird. Underhill's narrative reflects a genre of travel-writing that reported what readers wanted to read, not what was actually observed. *The Algerine Captive* is a specimen of fictitious travel-writing about the Orient in which a vast gap exists between what is seen of the subject and what is said about it. The book also reflects the American inheritance of the age-old European polemicism against Islam. Underhill defends the verity of the Christian creed against "So detestably ridiculous a system as the Mohammadan imposture."⁵⁹ A dialogue takes place between Underhill and a Muslim Mullah (priest) on the Prophet and the Koran at the end of which Underhill is "disgusted with the Mullah's fables"⁶⁰.

The American interest in Muslim culture and history reached its peak in Washington Irving's two-volume *Mahomet and his Successors* (1849–1850). Irving relied on contemporary European sources that were inaccurate, unauthentic, and defective, which led Irving to a final verdict on Muhammad being "an enthusiast acting under a species of mental delusion"⁶¹. George Henry Miles's play *Mohammad; the Arabian Prophet* (1850) depicts the Prophet as "a sincere impostor" who invented visions granting him supernatural authority as a Prophet of God, a bitter sneer at human credulity. Muhammad is a sensualist vulnerable to feminine charms, a polygamist who conceived his Paradise wholly in terms of sexual laxity.⁶² It becomes clear that the difference is slight between Miles's Muhammad and the "Mahounde" of the middle Ages. Although the older legends about Muhammad's death being "brought on by drunkenness," his being "deoured by swine," the trained pidgeon picking grain from his ear and the bull bearing the Koran on its horns were no longer reiterated, and the tenacious view of the Prophet as an impostor remained popular.⁶³ Thus, the nineteenth century American view of Islam was based on both a reiteration of the traditional European view and on the personally experienced Barbary wars. The plight of Americans captured by Barbary pirates was instrumental in fomenting still further nineteenth century American polemicism against Islam. Moreover, New England Puritanism provided a suitable hotbed in which such polemicism festered. Americans were appalled by what was seen as the sexual laxity and sensuality of Islam.

A divergence is seen to emerge between the American and the British view of Islam in the aftermath of the pirate threat. While in America the Barbary wars gave rise to a burgeoning literature with a censorious, pejorative, and polemical view of Islam, the Jawasim pirates of the Persian Gulf gave rise to no such literature. Only a muted British literary silence ensued as if the painful pirate episode had to be forgotten. Here, an analogy with our contemporary threat of terrorism is apt: The deeper one feels the horrors of terrorism, the more one is disinclined to treat it as a suitable subject for literary writing. Piracy in the Gulf

Due to obvious links of language and culture, the Americans maintained the older European attitudes towards Islam. American literature reflects this by perpetuating established stereotypes. Late in the eighteenth century literary magazines provided American readers with such exotic Oriental tales as “Bathmendi” (1787); “Salyma and Osmin” (1788); and “Omar and Fatima” (1807).⁵⁵ Benjamin Franklin wrote such shorter works as “A Narrative of the Late Massacres” (1764), “An Arabian Tale” (1779), and “On the slave Trade” (1790). But one of the earliest Americans to be grieved by North African piracy was Cotton Mather who, in 1702, wrote:

God hath given up several of our sons into the hands of the fierce monsters of Africa. Mahometan Turks, and Moors, and devils are at this day oppressing many of our sons with a slavery wherein they wish for death and cannot find it; slavery from where they cry and write unto us. It had been good for us that we had never been born⁵⁶.

Mather employed his “knowledge” of Islam in a work he intended to distribute along the Barbary coast: *A Pastoral Letter to the English Captives in Africa* (1698), in which he advised these captives to use the Koran in defense of their creed: “If any Mohametan tempters do assault you, let the words of their own Alcoran serve to answer them”. He quotes his version of the Koranic text stating that “The Spirit of God hath given testimony, to Christ, the son of Mary; He is the messenger of the Spirit and the word of God: His Doctrine is perfect”.⁵⁷

The Barbary Wars (1785–1815) were the first actual encounter between the Muslim East and the young American Republic. These wars provided ample literary material for such works as Susanna Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive* (1797), John Howard Payne’s *Fall of Algiers* (1826), Richard Penn Smith’s *The Bombardment of Algiers* (1829), and Joseph Stevens Jones’s *The Usurper* (1855). These works generally presented a polemicist image of North African privateering and a horrific image of “The Barbary”, exaggerated and enlarged.⁵⁸ Prominent among these works is *The Algerine Captive*, a travel narrative whose principal character, Updike Underhill, could be described as the first American innocent abroad. The book informs the reader about the Barbary States, the Muslim East, the Prophet, and Algerian Social life in general. Underhill, aboard a slave-ship named “Freedom”, is bound for Africa to bring slaves. Underhill himself is captured by “Algerines” and sold into slavery. Eventually, he finds his way to the Islamic second holy city, Medina. Passing through “Arabia Petraea”, Underhill hears many dreadful stories told by fellow travellers of “poisonous winds”, “overwhelming sands” and of “wandering Arabs who captured whole caravans and ate their prisoners.” The marvelous, the exotic, and the fabulous go hand in hand with the grotesque,

seven volumes; Edmund Castell (1606–1685), the first Cambridge Professor of Arabic who compiled an eighteen–volume dictionary of all Semitic languages and wrote poems in Arabic, and Edward Pococke (1604–91), the first professor of Arabic at Oxford who was taught Arabic while very young by Bedwell and who then went to Aleppo for further Arabic studies where he was supervised by an Aleppine scholar, Sheikh Fathallah. Appointed Oxford Professor of Arabic in 1636, Pococke required all undergraduates to attend his Arabic lectures; the first series of which were on the sapiential sayings of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, the Prophet’s cousin.⁵¹

The lesson to be learned from this British opening up to Arab–Islamic culture is that mutual material interest leading to material remuneration, and based on an equitable balance of power and good relations between a Western and an Islamic power, forms the best possible basis for a fair, open–minded interest in Islamic culture and civilization. The English merchant community in Aleppo that carried on a thriving trade in peace and security naturally developed an interest in the culture within which it prospered.

A Relapse: The Islamic Pirate Threat

The last years of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth, a period contemporaneous with the Romantic period, witnessed the increasing activity of Muslim pirates which severely threatened British mercantile shipping in the Persian Gulf, and that of the U.S. on the Barbary coast of North Africa. The British, by the end of the seventeenth century, had completely dislodged the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf,⁵² but they had to face another formidable adversary, the “Qawasim” pirates, subjects and followers of the Qasimi Sheikh of Sharja, whose H.Q. was at the coastal settlement of Ras al–Khaima.⁵³ The Qawasim (or, colloq: Jawasim) attacks on British, especially East India Company vessels, were relentless. In 1797 they captured their first British vessel, the “Bassein”. In 1808 the Jawasim boarded the British merchant ship “Minerva”, slaughtered its crew, took her to Ras al–Khaima, mounted twenty guns on her, and sent her cruising with the rest of the pirate fleet. Shortly after, the East India Company cruiser “Sylph” was taken by the Jawasim. The Jawasim pirate fleet consisted of 63 large vessels, over 800 smaller ones, all manned by a total force of 19,000 men.⁵⁴ These pirate wars in the Persian Gulf were not, however, reflected in British literary productions descriptive of these wars in spite of the wealth of potential literary material they provide, in contrast to the relatively prolific American literary works descriptive of the Barbary wars (vide infra).

Elizabethan and Stuart prose saw Muhammad principally as a failed Prophet who cannot perform miracles. In his essay “of Boldness” Francis Bacon tells a story of a miracle of Muhammad that failed to materialize:

“Mahomet made the people believe that he would call a hill to him, and from the top of it offer up prayers for the observers of his law. The people assembled. Mahomet called the hill to come to him again and again; and when the hill stood still he was never a whit abashed, but said, “If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill”⁴⁸

This story is so familiar that most English-speaking people use the phrase, “If the mountain won’t come to Muhammad, then Muhammad will come to the mountain” without realizing the origin of the story or the intentional mockery.

Late seventeenth century English prose 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. Crusader polemicism against Islam, after a relative lull of some three centuries, re-emerged with a vengeance through the Turkish threat. Addison’s biographical treatment of Muhammad, in *First State of Muhametism, or an account of the Author and Doctrine of that Imposture*, published anonymously in 1678, views the Prophet as a false messenger of God, and his doctrine as a Christian heresy characterized by force and deceit. *The true Nature of Imposture Fully displayed in the life of Mahomet* (1697) by Humphrey Prideaux shows how the true nature of imposture is embodied in Islam, and capitalizes on such themes as the sensuality of the Prophet, emphasizing carnality as the first criterion of imposture

A Turn for the Better: The Dawn of English Arabism

The first substantial contact between England and the Arab world since the Crusades took place at the end of the sixteenth century. In the early 1580’s, a deal was struck between Queen Elizabeth and the Ottoman Sultan Murad, whereby England allowed the export of lead and tin from its Cornish mines to the Sultan who needed them for his armament industry. In return, he permitted complete freedom of movement, residence, and trade of merchants from “Anletar” (England) in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁹ As a result, a large community of English merchants took up residence in Aleppo, Syria, to sell English woolen cloth, especially kersey, throughout the Near East, and to buy Damask silks, Muslin (from the city of Mosul in Iraq) and Turkish carpets.⁵⁰ This community became well informed of the richness of Arabic language, culture, and civilization, and was most probably instrumental in establishing a professorship of Arabic at Oxford. In the seventeenth century, Arabic Studies flourished luxuriously in England. The more notable of seventeenth century British Arabists were William Bedwell (1561–1732) who compiled an Arabic lexicon in

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

to the Muslims, and, at the same time, inexplicably responsive to the Christians and their heroic aspirations.⁴³ All of Tamburlaine's victories are scored against Muslims, making a Christian audience more ready to identify with him. Eventually Tamburlane renounces his religion: "Now, Casane, where is the Turkish Alcoran and all the heaps of superstitious books found in the temple of that Mahomet, whom I have thought to be a god? They shall be burnt".⁴⁴ Marlowe's play was popular because Tamburlaine not only defeated the Turks, but also at the end of a sad career, rejected Islam. The conception of Islam and the Prophet in Renaissance English Literature, thus, remained practically unchanged since medieval times. Muhammad was still held as a heretic, a false prophet, and an author of a religion based on deceit.⁴⁵ Yet what fuelled Renaissance polemicism, aggravated as it already was by the Turkish threat, was Christendom's own religious sectarianism. The Catholic-Protestant divide and its ensuing vicious sectarian strife whetted European appetites for religious persecution. The imposition of coercive penal laws on non-conformist sects generated festering feelings of intolerance, which applied to Islam even more than it did to those Christian sects, be they Catholic or Protestant, which did not conform to the official state religion.

However, the image of Islam in English Elizabethan poetry differed from that of Islam in Elizabethan drama. Islam was most suitable as a potent rouser of antagonistic passions among theatre-goers. Yet epic poetry, read in privacy and at ease, required a calmer reflectiveness, where Islam was the enemy of 'yore and times long gone before'. In *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe holds up the contemporary Ottoman Turks as the Muslim foe. Spenser, in the *Faerie Queene*, draws on the more traditional Saracen "paynim" as representing the Islamic adversary. Saracen rulers are depicted as cruel and unjust. In Book V the Souldan's (Sultan's) wife is named Adicia (Greek 'Adikia'— injustice). The Souldan represents the purported despotism of Muslim rulers and he inflicts the "great wrongs" through his unjust and raging wife Adicia (Book v, viii, 24) thereby appearing as the stock example of an irrational and violent tyrant.⁴⁶ Spenser inherited his pejorative views on Muslim rulers from Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (vide supra). Both exalt Christian chivalry crusading against the Muslim infidel. In the *Faerie Queene* Spenser envisages a war with the Muslims where Gloriana, the Faerie Queene will help the Britons confront the Saracen (*FQ*, I, xi, 7). Spenser's view of Islam is concisely encapsulated in the names of the three Saracen brothers: Sansfoy (without faith), Sansloy (without law) and Sansjoi (without joy) "caring not for God or Man a point" (*FQ*, V, ii, 12).⁴⁷

Prophet's ear and a bull carrying the Koran on its horns so that, finally, Muhammad

Like a glotoun deied in dronkenesse Bi excesse of Mykil drynkyng wyn Fill in a podel, deuoured among swyn (ii, 152–4)³⁷.

Lydgate's polemicism was greatly facilitated by his well-known, even notorious, verbosity rather than by any doctrinaire stance against Islam, which could be attributed to him personally. His poem pictures the Prophet as a drunk in order to distort and dehumanize him. His polemicism had provided an outlet for his long-windedness. The antiquary Joseph Ritson who in 1802 catalogued an enormous number of his compositions calls him "a voluminous, prosaic and drivelling monk".³⁸

Islam in Elizabethan and Seventeenth-Century English Literature

Elizabethan and early seventeenth century English literature using, or misusing, Islamic material utilizes legends about Islam that had already accumulated in the European tradition. Louis Wann has surveyed Elizabethan plays based on Oriental themes. Wann observes that forty-seven plays on oriental themes were written between 1558 and 1642. He suggests that for many Elizabethans the Orient was "a domain where war, conquest, fratricide, lust and treachery had far freer play than in lands nearer home".³⁹ The dreaded Turkish threat had consolidated this tendency. The Ottoman advance was at the gates of Europe, and the Turks were seen as posing more of a direct, menacing threat than the Saracens ever did. The Muslim Turks were considered to be fierce, savage, and bloodthirsty by nature, and this was firmly established in the literary tradition of the West.⁴⁰ The word "Turk" connoted absence of morality and religion. It represented, as Robert Schoebel suggests, the enemy of the cross, the treacherous infidel, the new barbarian.⁴¹ Paul Coles observes that "as one moved Westward into the hinterlands of European society, the Ottomans became increasingly the object of loathing and fear... the Turks, it was argued, were beyond the pale not merely of Christendom but of civilization itself". The Turkish Islamic threat was at its highest when Christopher Marlowe wrote his *Tamburlaine*, and in Marlowe's hero Elizabethan theatre-goers watched with satisfaction "a triumph over a Turkish emperor, an augury, perhaps, of Christian conquests"⁴². Marlowe was obviously working on public feelings: His hero, Tamburlaine (Taymur Lenk) not only humiliated the Turkish Emperor Bajazeth (Bayazid) but also sought to relieve the conquered Christians in Constantinople who had long been under siege. Thus Marlowe, as Byron Smith suggests, created a hero who could—as the Elizabethan Christians would like to believe—take the cross against the infidels. Ironically enough, the Muslim Tamburlaine is presented as a semi-pagan hero, well-read in classical tradition, utterly unkind

plethora of European themes the Islamic infidel more or less recedes into the background and hardly appears except as a shadowy pagan. In Torquato Tasso's (1544–95) *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered (1581) Muslims are depicted as wily pagan sorcerers and enchanters. 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. The poem is rich in artistic colour, with pagan maidens bathing in the fountain of laughter. (xv, 58–66). Ariosto's work shows a preoccupation with an Aristotelian concern for epic unity and well-rounded, graphic characterization rather than an overt polemicism. Muslim pagans are merely an enemy, per se.³⁴ Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso display undoubted artistic virtuosity. Tasso's *Gerusalemme* when first published in 1581 was judged to be the greatest achievement of modern poetry. These works show that art mitigates polemicism. Here energies are channeled towards artistic perfection rather than to polemical ire. The higher the literary standard sought, the lower the polemical level one finds.

Islam in Medieval English Literature

In earlier Medieval English literature, the view of Islam was surprisingly tolerant, probably due to the influence of Englishmen such as Adelard of Bath, Robert of Ketton and Daniel of Morley who studied in Arab universities and who respected Islamic learning and scholarship. William Langland's (b. 1331–2) view of Islam and its Prophet represents, as Dorothee Metlitzki points out, the most liberal opinion in the Medieval outlook on the religion of the Saracens.³⁵ Langland accepted Islam as a monotheistic faith "seeming to our belief", believing that Saracens, like Jews, may aspire to Salvation. Langland's treatment of Islam in *Piers Plowman* "reflects a tradition of Christian polemical scholarship which drew on original Muslim sources and represented the most serious medieval attempt to grapple with the spiritual problem of Islam".³⁶ Langland grappled with this problem in accepting Islam as a monotheistic faith, but he also underlined its schismatic nature which laid it open to charges of heresy.

Later in the fifteenth century, John Lydgate (1370–1451) repeated the more vituperative of Western polemics against Islam. Lydgate's "off Machomet the false prophet and howe he beyng dronke was deuoured among swyn" is one of the earliest polemical treatments of the prophet in the English literary tradition. Lydgate collects a number of contemporary myths and legends of a highly polemical nature about the Prophet. He sees Muhammad as a magician of low birth who studied the Bible in Egypt and claimed that he was the "Messie" (Messiah, 1, 75), and he also notes that he was an epileptic who believed that "Gabriel was sent to him from the heauenlie mansion be the Hooli Goost to his instructiyn". Lydgate repeats the fable of a dove picking grain from the

dichotomies like Heathendom vs. Christendom, Evil vs. Good, the army of Christ vs. the army of Muhammad. In it good and godliness finally prevail leading to wholesale conversion of the Saracens to Christianity. By the end of the poem over a hundred thousand infidel Saracens are baptized except for the queen whom Charlemagne wants “through love to take the faith” (cclxvi). Following her conversion the Saracen queen Bramimonde assumes a new name, Juliane. That *The Song of Roland* ends with massive Saracen conversion suggests not only a religious, but also a cultural triumph, which sheds further light on the medieval Western–Islamic conflict. Religious triumph was to be followed by cultural domination; first, the Crusade aimed to conquer; then, the Crusade fully expected to convert.

The Christian vs. the Muslim is also the theme of the *Spanish Poem of the Cid* (1140). We are introduced to Yusuf, King of Morocco, leading an army of “infidel hordes” (ii, 89)³³. 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). Here, the Christian–Muslim divide is blurred and dramatically involved. The Cid’s sons-in-law “plotted an act of treachery” (iii, 126) in abandoning the 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. Thus Medieval European poetic epics in which Islam is present reflect each European country’s own specific contacts with Islam. The French *Roland* depicts Muslims as an alien, overseas enemy whilst the Spanish *Cid* sees Islam as an enemy co-existing with one on one’s native soil for centuries.

European Renaissance epic poetry inherited the conversion theme when dealing with its non-Christian, especially Islamic characters. Matteo Maria Boiardo’s (1441? – 94) romantic epic *Orlando Innamorato* (Roland in Love, 1483 first full ed. 1495) is an intermediate source between earlier medieval romances and the sixteenth century chivalric poems of Ariosto Tasso and Spenser, in which Saracens and “Paynims” do not fail to appear. In the *Innamorato*, Boiardo borrowed his Christian knights from earlier medieval romances to which he added his Saracens, like the enchanting Angelica, the Tartar king Agricane, the love lorn Sacripante, the female warrior Marfisa, and Rodamonte. Love stories and Arthurian legends infiltrate the military tales of Charlemagne dating from Crusader times. Polemics against Islam do not figure as prominently in the *Inamorato* as they might have done. Its Saracens are merely no Christian infidels awaiting conversion to Christianity.

The centuries–old European fascination with Arthurian and Carolingian romance is clearly shown in Lodovico Ariosto’s (1474–1553) epic, *Orlando Furioso*, to which is added the constituents of the Classical epic; and in this

prevailed and became a constituent of the Western literary ethos for centuries to come.

Islam in Medieval and Renaissance Continental European Literature: A Reiteration

The polemicism generated during the Crusades reflected itself in the literature of the period. In Dante's *Inferno* the Prophet and Ali, the Prophet's cousin, are consigned to the eighth circle of Hell among the Schismatic:

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".³¹

Mohammad had congealed in the European psyche as a loathsome schismatic heretic. J.S.P. Tatlock observed that such a treatment "is not only the most hideous mutilation of all in this valley; it is hardly equaled anywhere in the *Inferno* for repulsiveness, certainly not for ignoble bodily exposure and grotesqueness of description." Dante severely punishes Muhammad for being a sower of discord and scandal. Other Muslims whom Dante more leniently places in the first circle of Hell are virtuous pagans like Avicenna, Averroes and, Salad in. The first two are philosophers and the third, though a pagan (i.e. unbaptized) was noble and virtuous enough to be placed in the first circle. He, and the two philosophers have a relatively easy punishment, seven times lighter than that inflicted on Muhammad.

This distorted conception had long prevailed in the earlier European literary tradition where the Prophet is depicted as an impostor, the Koran as his fabrication, and Islam as a Christian heresy. As early as 1100, in the French poem *La Chanson de Roland* we find swine and dogs eating "Mahomet" while he lay unconscious in an epileptic seizure. *Roland* is essentially a poem of the Crusades, so anyone who attacks the crusading knights is labeled a Saracen, regardless of race or religion. The Basques in 778 attacked Charlemagne's army and thus were transformed in *Roland* into Saracens, prototypes of the infidels whom the Crusaders fought in the Holy Land. Saracens are ethnically characterized by hostility to Christendom, by their acceptance of a corrupt form of Christianity, and by innate cunning and treachery. In *Roland* a reference is made to a Saracen knight who "took Jerusalem by treachery" (cxvii)³². For purposes of contrastive enrichment, the poem employs a set of analogies. If the Christians have a trinity, so do the Saracens. The French army has twelve peers, so the Saracens too have theirs (lxxviii). The poem uses traditional Western

deceptive Christian rhetoric to convert people to Christianity, was Ramon Lull (1235-1315)²⁵.

The Crusades formed an abyss in Western–Islamic relations. What the Crusaders finally took away with them after their last kingdoms were expelled from Syria was a series of anecdotal stories about the Muslims. Till today, the term “Crusader” evokes dread and horror for the Muslim Arabs who had to fight against them because the Christian soldiers behaved with less than Christian mercy.²⁶ Among the Crusader soldiery that Templars and Knights Hospitallers became notorious for their excessive brutality, which led Salad din—for all his chivalry—to order the execution of 200, captured Templars and Hospitallers after he won the battle of Hittin on July 2nd 1151²⁷. “The points in which Islam and Christianity differ have not changed” suggests Norman Daniel “so that Christians have always tended to make the same criticism, and even when, in relatively modern times, some authors have self consciously tried to emancipate themselves from Christian attitudes, they have not generally been as successful as they thought themselves to be”²⁸. Daniel explains further that “whatever in Islam was most repellant to the Christian seemed to him also to be the most typical of it, and it was easy to set up standards against which all prophet hood be tested and Muhammad’s be dismissed”²⁹. The Crusades aggravated polemicism by taking certain events in the Prophet’s life to cast doubt on his credentials of Prophet hood; they related at length his numerous marriages, affirming thereby his sensuality which they promptly contrasted with the purity of Christ, and concluded that he was an imposter because he performed no miracles. By and large, Islam was, during the Crusades, viewed as a corrupt form of Christianity.

The Crusades could have been a unique opportunity for Western–Islamic confluence as Muslim Spain had been, because of the enormous cultural impact of the Muslim East on the West through the Crusades. This impact has been explained in magnificent detail in Hans Prutz’s monumental work *Kulturgeschichte der Kreuzzuegue* (Berlin, 1883) a work, which has not been superseded, as Dorothee Metlitzki observes, to this day. Prutz showed the extent of Arab influence on Frankish military technique, vocabulary, food, astronomy, clothing and ornamentation³⁰. But the sad point here is that this impact did not lead either to confluence, or to recognition, or to a respectful opening up of the West to the Islamic East. Anti–Islamic polemicism and religious bigotry during the Crusades were effectively instrumental in the formation of a Western attitude that simply took these Arabic contributions to Medieval Europe, and accepted them readily without recognition, and without any softening of its virulent polemicism. A violently pejorative view of Islam, with some small exceptions,

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition

The Western anti-Islamic polemicism during the Crusades was influenced, albeit in an indirect way, by Eastern Christian polemics. The most remarkable Eastern Christian polemicist to enter into confrontation with Islam was John of Damascus (d. 749), commonly considered as the last of the Greek Fathers. As a Syrian who spoke Aramaic at home and knew Greek and Arabic, and as the boon companion of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid, John of Damascus was well placed, and well-equipped for a theological confrontation with Islam. He consolidated both Greek, and Eastern Christianity in Syria, and his main work, *The Sources of Knowledge*, laid the basis for Medieval European scholasticism through the application of Greek Philosophy to Christianity. This work includes an important chapter, “Concerning Heresies”, dealing with Muslims and regarding Muhammad as a Christian heretic. Thus Islam, designated as a Christian heresy, infiltrated—through John of Damascus—to the very heart of Medieval scholastic thought, which formed the intellectual and philosophical dimension of the Medieval Latin Church, thereby aggravating anti-Islamic polemicism during the Crusades. John’s “Dialogue with a Saracen on the Divinity of Christ” was well-argued in comparison with the vilifying and scurrilous indigenous European polemics. John’s “Dialogue” was well-known in Christian as well as Muslim religious circles in Syria, and Professor Hitti states that John held many theological debates in the presence of Umayyad Caliphs²¹. A far more virulent Eastern Christian form of polemicism was voiced by Nicetas of Byzantium who, as James Addison points out, tried his hand at a refutation “of the foolish and infamous book of the Arab Mohammad”. Muhammad and the Koran are bitterly attacked, and the Muslims, according to Nicetas, are far gone in heresy²².

These Eastern polemical writings of the eighth and ninth centuries, be they rational and well-argued like those of John of Damascus, or more vituperative as in Theophanus and Nicetas, provided the Crusaders with their much needed edge of religious passion in prosecuting their war against the Muslim infidel, whose religion was depicted as inferior and their prophet as a “lustful, voluptuous, veritable devil”²³. However, polemicism against a hated foe fought against over two centuries eventually simmered down to a level of objectivity as reflected in William of Tripoli’s *On the Condition of the Saracens* (vide supra) in which opposition to Islamic beliefs co-exist with points in which Islam and Christianity are virtually in agreement. Less objective is William’s contemporary Ricoldus de Monte Crucis who wrote *Confutatio Alcorani* in which Islam, the Koran, and the sexual morality of the Muslims are systematically attacked²⁴. The thirteen and early fourteen centuries, in the aftermath of the Crusades, saw what could be described as the dawn of European missionary activity, and much of it used already established anti-Muslim rhetoric to uphold Christian truth. One medieval missionary, who practiced this kind of

incited further polemics. Peter the Venerable's work was frequently imitated, and polemical writings appeared in various forms with the aim of not only refuting the Koran, but also ridiculing it. Peter's translation did much to perpetuate false beliefs and hostile attitudes towards Islam from the twelfth till the eighteenth century when George Sale's version of the Koran appeared in London in 1734.¹⁵

Peter the Venerable, in his translation, had made good use of the most famous Christian apology in the Arab World, "The Apology of al-Kindi". This epistle (*risalah*) in defense of Christianity against Islam was reported to have been written by a Nestorian at the court of the Caliph al-Mammon in Baghdad in the ninth century. Well known to the Christian world, the apology was placed in the final part of Peter the Venerable's Koranic translation¹⁶.

Western polemicists, including Peter the Venerable, to depict Islam as a heresy because it was one of the "sins" persecuted by the Church, used the Bahira legend. In Muslim tradition, the boy Muhammad, accompanying the trade caravans from Mecca to Syria, met a Christian monk, Bahira [Aramaic: The Elect] who revealed to the youth his prophetic destiny. In Byzantine polemics against Islam, the earliest of which is by Theophanus (d. 818), Bahira becomes a heretical Christian monk, the inspirer and accomplice of the "false prophet" who in the West becomes "a crystene clerke accursed in his soule"¹⁷. This legend, in fostering the image of Muhammad as a Christian heretic, added a fresh virulence to Western polemics. Heresy in the European Middle Ages and well into the sixteenth century was the most unpardonable of sins. When Islam is depicted, in its very best form, as a Christian heresy, the Church further incites Europe's anti-Islamic polemicism against Muhammad and his heretical, schismatic religion.¹⁸

William of Tripoli, the Dominican Friar of Acre provides an accurate Islamic account of the Bahira legend in "De Statu Saracen rum" (vide infra). He does not condemn Bahira as a heretical monk, but rather as a source of divine inspiration who taught the boy "to flee the cult of idols, to worship one God, and to invoke Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary with all his heart"¹⁹. William of Tripoli thus represents the most accurate depiction of Islamic writing during the Crusades. The Bahira legend influenced European vernacular literature. It is accurately reported in the "Roman de Mahomet", a metrical composition based on a twelfth century Latin poem written in Laon by, Alexander du Pont, a French monk, only thirty-three years before the Crusades were finally over and the last Latin kingdoms were expelled from Syria. Du Pont traces his material to a converted Muslim, a resident of Burgundy.²⁰

The Muslim world learns from Western civilization with the same ardor as Medieval Spain learnt from the Muslims.

The Crusades: A Relapse

Whereas Muslim Spain was most helpful and fertile in providing Medieval Europe with the wealth of Islamic civilization marking unprecedented European receptivity to Islamic culture, the Crusades represent one of the most hostile confrontations between Christian Europe and the Muslim East. The protracted duration of the Crusades— in contrast to the swift Muslim conquest of Spain— aggravated the hostility between the West and Islam. The six Crusades lasted from November 1095, when the first Crusade was launched, till 1291 when the Latin Kingdoms were expelled from Syria.¹²

Notwithstanding Pope Urban II's emotional declamations at the Council of Clermont on November 18, 1095 urging a "Crusade" to relieve Christian pilgrims persecuted by the Saracens, it was the realization by the best informed authorities in the West at that time that the power of the Muslim world now seriously menaced the West; and it was this realization that stimulated official action to launch the Crusades. Unlike the enthusiastic scholarly interest shown by the West in Spanish Muslim culture, the Crusaders, aware that they were facing a formidable enemy whose military might was redoubtable, showed no scholarly interest in Muslim learning. In-depth knowledge of the Muslim enemy, military intelligence, was the top priority. The Muslim enemy was fierce and cunning and needed to be closely watched rather than—as was the case in Spain—studied with respect and scholarly devotion. Also unlike the Spanish case where a spirit of learning prevailed, the age of the Crusades was "an age of ignorance", as R.W. Southern observes, during which all that was known about Islam was inspired by the view that Muslim rule "was a preparation for the final appearance of Antichrist"¹³. Such prejudicial views of Islam generated during the Crusades fuelled polemical writings against Islam as the enemy against whom religious passions must be inflamed. The Christian call to arms played on the people's fears of the Arabs as anti-Christians as well as on their own personal desire to strike a blow against the anti-Christ, this virulent polemicism, which maintained the momentum of the Crusades across two centuries, was first launched by Pope Gregory VII in 1075 to be taken up with added heat by Pope Urban II in 1095¹⁴ (vide supra).

During the Crusades, polemical writings against the Muslim enemy concentrated on refuting Muslim beliefs. Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, in his visit to Spain c. 1141 commissioned a translation of the Koran. The translation, by three Christian scholars and an Arab, was inaccurate, shallow, and full of errors. This erroneous translation gave a pejorative view of Islam and

the Aeschylean tragedy, received its earliest conception of the Orient as a threatening alien power bent on destroying the cradle of Western civilization.⁷

The Muslim Conquest of Spain: A Constructive Confluence

When Tariq bin Ziyad landed at Gibraltar (Djebel Tariq, The Mount of Tariq) in 711 and brought the dreaded Saracens into the European mainland, the confrontation between Western Christendom and the Saracens soon proved to be not an entirely military one, but one which swiftly led to an active cultural cross-fertilization. The Latin West, severely jolted by the Muslim conquest, assiduously sought to find out what it was that gave the “Ishmaelite” Saracens their stupendous power of momentum. Within a decade of Tariq’s landing, the language of the Koran was used among the Christians of Spain, and as early as 724 John, Bishop of Seville, translated the Bible into Arabic⁸. A hundred years later the state of Arabization among Spanish Christians was such that Alvaro, Bishop of Cordova, despaired of the future of Christian youth:

“Who today among our faithful laymen is able to understand the Holy Scriptures and the books which our doctors have written in Latin? Who is there inspired with the love of the Gospel, the Prophets, and the Apostles? Are not all our young Christians... most conspicuous for their erudition, and perfected in Arabic eloquence? They eagerly study Arabic books, read them intently and discuss them with ardor. Alas! Christians are ignorant of their language. The Latins do not care for their own tongue.”⁹

Books poured into Muslim Spain from other parts of the Muslim world. Al-Hakam II, Second Umayyad Caliph of Spain, (961–76), according to Said bin Ahmad, Qadi of Toledo (d. 1070), “caused all sorts of rare and curious books to be purchased by his agents in Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Alexandria... no work on ancient or modern science that was discovered, was not immediately procured at any cost and sent to him... and the learned of the Andalusia devoted their attention to the study of sciences contained in the books of the ancients”¹⁰. With the conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI in May 1085 the Christian world opened up still further to a civilization, next to which the Latin West seemed, to quote Daniel of Morley, “infantile, provincial and barbaric”¹¹. Christian scholars began to flock to Toledo, and its “arm ariarabum” – as Dorothee Metlitzki points out – the rich library of the Arabs now contained in Spain’s cabinets. From about 1150 to 1250, Toledo was the center of an extraordinary movement of translation from Arabic into Latin. The Muslim conquest of Spain forms a unique phase of Western-Islamic relations. The enthusiasm with which Western Christendom approached Spanish Muslim civilization to learn from the Muslims in Spain constitutes one of the most constructive forms of confluence between Islam and the West. Since the eighteenth century, the opposite has been true.

Islam and the West: Roots of the Conflict

The roots of the confrontation of Christendom with Islam go 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. After their wholesale conversion to Islam in the seventh century, and especially after the Crusades began in 1096, "They came to represent non-Christian belief, which is no belief at all"¹. The common basis of the Saracens being seen in the West as a vagabond, godless race rests on Abraham's son Ishmael from whom the Muslim Arabs descend, and who in Western lore is still depicted as a non-conforming outcast². In Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*, for instance, the solitary, very odd Diggory Venn is described as an "Ishmaelite"³. From these earliest cultural and historical roots, Christian men of letters produced unflattering representations of Muslims that amount to a distorted image not only of Islam as a religion, but also of Muslims as individuals⁴. Westerners came to believe that the descendants of the Ishmaelite embraced a religion of violence, that Muhammad was the author of a false religion based on deceit, and that Muslims were infidels identified with the devil. This distorted image dominated Western thinking till the early eighteenth century, when a more tolerant, more sympathetic image of Islam had, to some extent, been attained through the work of scholars who had acquired accurate information and a growing understanding of Islam as a religion⁵. Having come to assume certain myths as facts, Western writers played an effective role in perpetuating a distorted image of Islam. As Meredith Jones points out, "The (Western) conception of Mahomet and his teachings came from literary sources rather than from actual observations of the Muslim people... usually writers drew on obscure or second-hand sources, and the result is a combination of little fact and much imagination of a very biased character."⁶ Those who escaped the advancing Muslim armies of the Ottoman Turks on several fronts in Eastern and Southeastern Europe provided these sources. These people had limited knowledge of Islam because, in most cases, they were not Muslim. They also saw Arabs as the enemy to be concurred in the name of Christendom.

Edward Said rightly argues, in *Orientalism* (1978), that the relationship between Oriental Islam and Western Christianity, or East and West, has been essentially political from its earliest beginnings. Ever since the Greek-Persian encounter in the fifth century B.C., the West has represented the East in hostile terms, as is the use in Aeschylus' *The Persians* (472 B.C.). Greece is glorified through its brilliant victory over the Persians, while the Persians are maligned after 310 Greek vessels destroyed 1200 Persian ships. Western culture, through

North Africa), and in the Persian Gulf, also reflected adversely on Islam. Both the Crusades, and the Barbary Wars, show that Western-Islamic relations are endemically brittle and fragile and liable to be shattered by pebbles of lawlessness against Western individuals, property, or interest. This is as true today as it ever was. What is direly needed today if other Crusades, or Barbary Wars, or indeed our contemporary onslaught on Islamic “terrorism” are to be avoided, is the establishment of an international Western-Islamic body with its own active mechanisms that deal with any serious infringements of Western-Islamic relations.

The most potent factor bolstering sounder Western-Islamic relations is that of internal change in both sides making for a more constructive confluence between the two. The Romantic movement in Europe, politically and socially as well as artistically speaking, was in the nature of a revolution against classicism’s reactionary patterns of thought and attitude. Age-old polemical views against Islam incubated within such reactionary patterns. The Romantic revolution went against all that reactionary establishmentarianism upheld, including anti-Islamic polemicism. On the other, the Islamic, side of the divide, the “liberal age” in the Arab world was contemporaneous with European Romanticism. The Arab liberal age is generally held to have begun with Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt, which should not be viewed in an entirely negative light. The aftermath of Napoleon’s invasion saw the introduction of European scientific, medical, educational, archaeological, and technical innovations into the Arab Muslim world, such as the Arabic printing press which Napoleon brought with him to Egypt. Internal reform of thought and attitude and/or change in outlook contemporaneous with one another in both the Western and the Islamic worlds similar to European Romanticism and Arab liberalism, make far more constructive Western-Islamic relations.

In the absence of such conveniently simultaneous changes in both sides that would lead to better relations between them, what is presently required of both are sustained and effective public relations campaigns to acquaint one another with patterns of the political and social thought of each other. The Western world needs to know how the Arab and Islamic street is thinking and what its grievances against the West are. Such grievances have been aggravated to such horrendous extents as to lead to the present outbreaks of terrorism. The Arab/Islamic side is also in dire need to be acquainted with Western political and social institutions and their patterns of thought. The religious factor, per se, should be relegated to a second place of priority: The present debacle in Western-Islamic relations is, first and foremost, political rather than religious. It is well to hold Islamic-Christian conferences, seminars and forums to discuss differences between the two faiths and ways and means of finding common ground. But the danger here is that such meetings may wander into mazes of abstruse and esoteric theological disputation, which would remain largely exercises in academic theology. The crucial issue that cries out to be addressed is the political one: the foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle East is foremost among the issues that bedevil, and constantly aggravate Western-Islamic relations. But that is another story!

Islam and the Muslims in the Anglo-American Literary Tradition: The Historical Roots and the Reiterations

Marwan Obeidat* & Ibrahim Mumayiz**

Abstract

The relationship between Islam and the West was first troubled by biblical texts pejorative of the Arabs, and the rise of Islam in the seventh century aggravated this negative view of Arabs and Muslims. Although the brilliant Muslim civilization in Spain mitigated this negative image, Western fears of Europe's Latin Christianity being caught by the pincer of Muslim Spain in the West and Levantine Islam from the East gave rise to the Crusades that sought to drive a wedge between the two flanks of Islam by seizing the Holy Land and thereby neutralizing the Islamic threat. The Crusades, virulent religious wars spanning two centuries, gave rise to reviling images of Islam and its prophet which persisted for two more centuries, only to be aggravated still further by the dreaded Turkish threat. A respite came with growing trade links between Europe and the Levantine provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Wealth accruing from sound, effective trade agreements with the alien Ottoman power facilitated a more open-minded outlook. Mutual material benefits led to a more respectful understanding of the dreaded Muslim adversary and a growing interest in its heritage. Thus, mutual material interest, based on equity, forms a sound basis for Western-Islamic understanding.

Momentary, localized disruptive factors should not be allowed to ruffle a would-be strategic, long-term understanding between the two sides, or cancel present, past or future improvements in relations. The Crusades arose, we are told, because of Christian pilgrims falling victim to local bandits who infested the Holy Land due to a local breakdown in government. American reiterations of Medieval European polemics against Islam arose from feelings running high due to the Barbary Wars. Piracy, festering due to weak governmental control and administration in the Barbary States (of

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