

A STUDY OF LORD BYRON'S THE TURKISH TALES IN TERMS OF ORIENTALISM

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ABSTRACT:

Lord Byron was a significant figure of XIX century English literature. He is well-known for his journey through Orient as well as his writings as a product of this journey. Subject matters used in these writings served as a revelation of the eastern values which now could challenge western world on the stage of morality and courage. He started with Oriental themes in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and continued with Turkish or Oriental Tales, hence carried the matter to higher level.

Subject of our study Lord Byron's Turkish Tales consists of five tales such as The Giaour, Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, Lara and Siege of Corinth. The authenticity of these Tales made this work not focus to one direction but in the style of octopus to spread and catch the most genuine parts of them. Thus it goes from narrative technique to language, from moral to tradition and religion, from typical to extraordinary gender representatives, from brave heroines to emasculated heroes. All this was depicted within Oriental setting and value as well as usage of oriental character names such as Zuleika, Leila and Hassan, not omitting the authentic language.

Key words: Orient, Tales, setting, variation, self-reflectivity, hero, heroine.

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ORYANTALİZM AÇISINDAN LORD BYRON'UN TÜRK HİKÂYELERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

Özet

Lord Byron XIX. Yüzyılda yaşamış İngiliz edebiyatının önemli şahsiyetlerindedir. Doğuya yaptığı seyahatlerle bilinir. Ele aldığı temalar ve kurguladığı tiplerle Batı dünyasının o zamana kadar azımsadığı/küçümsediği doğunun gerçek değerlerini ve güzelliklerini ele alır. Bu durum Batı dünyasında hem ahlaki hem mertlik düzeyinde bir tartışmayı başlatır. Byron'un Oryantal konulara olan ilgisine ilk defa Childe Harold'un Hac Seyahati adlı eserinde karşılaşıyoruz. Bu ilgi, Türk ve doğu hikâyeleriyle üst seviyeye ulaşır.

Çalışmamızın konusu olan Lord Byron'un Türk Hikâyeleri, Gavur, Abidos'un Gelini, Korsan, Lara ve Korint Kuşatması olmak üzere beş anlatı şiirinden oluşur. Bu hikâyeler, ahlaktan gelenek ve dine, tipik cinsiyet temsilcilerinden özel temsilcilere, cesur kadın kahramanlardan emasküle edilmiş erkek kahramanlara kadar pek çok tem ve tipi konu alır. Yazar bunları anlatırken de gerçek ortam, mekan ve yerel değerlerden faydalanır. Kahramanlarını Züleyha, Leyla ve Hasan gibi Türk isimlerinden seçer. Bilhassa kullandığı dil ve anlatım tekniklerine dikkat eder.

Bu çalışmada amacımız, Oryantalizm açısından Lord Byron'un Türk hikâyelerini incelemektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Doğu, Hikâye, çeşitlilik, ortam, kahraman, kadın kahraman*

1. Lord Byron and Orientalism:

Orientalism is a term used by art historians and literary and cultural studies scholars for depiction of aspects of Middle Eastern and East Asian cultures.¹ Orientalism is a term used to refer to Middle Eastern and East Asian cultures. Usage of Orientalism dates from the period of European Enlightenment as it defined Eastern nation and culture as wild, exotic, uncivilized and taboo, adding to European's definition of themselves "as the superior race compared to the Orientals."² Yet it was Edward W. Said³ who is

1 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orientalism>

2 Haroon Khalid, An Introduction to Edward Said's Orientalism, <http://www.renaissance.com.pk/FebBoRe2y6.htm>.

3 Edward W. Said was a Palestinian –American who fought for rights of Palestinian people.. He was a professor in Columbia University as well as critic, academic and writer. He is well known for his book Orientalism where he protected Orientalism against descriptions given by European scholars.

one of the first names to protect the concept of Orientalism, who gave his opinion on the Orientalism which was created and used by Europeans.⁴

Subject of orientalism in English literature started in the early eighteen century with the translation of the *Arabian Nights* into English language, some of the writers of the period such as Robert Southey, P. B. Shelley and Thomas Moore raised their interest to the oriental subject but readers did not truly recognized Orient until Byron came to the scene. Their not experienced writings based solely on word of mouth were experienced by him. He based his stories to what he saw and heard; to what he experienced and observed.

Lord Byron is an aristocrat who at the age of ten inherited his title of lord after the death of his uncle. His character was composed of divergences; as though of a noble family he did not have flawless upbringing coming from a sloppy mother and poor financial state hitherto he often presented the behavior of spoiled aristocrat in his private life.

Lord Byron showed impact with his works as much as with his personality. Being a free thinker, supporter of liberation movements in Europe and not rarely rebellious of English life-style gave him the status of an outsider and struggling character. Not being accepted by the English upper class due to his writings against them made him avoid England. This situation and the interest of Romanticism for a new, wilder, untrammled and "pure" nature, led him towards opposite of what his country is. This will be no other than the east, orient. On the other side we should mention the fact that Byron was attracted by Orient from his childhood as he appeared in a masquerade dressed as a Turkish boy.⁵

Years 1809-1811 were years of his journey to Portugal, Spain, Malta, Turkey, Greece and Albania. During his visit to Albania he writes *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, while Turkish Tales are written upon his return to England. These Tales are product of the traces of Balkan, respectively Albania journey. Impacts of it made him experience the culture from within. This subsidiary of Ottoman Empire, which is very much detached from European culture, gave him a glimpse of Orient. The impact of these places to his creativity and genuineness was expressed with the words: "*With these countries, and events connected with them, all my really poetical feelings begin and end.*"⁶

In some occasions this journey was commented as being undertaken by Byron due to his yearning for Helen civilization and great desire to see the ruins

4 Edward W. Said, "*Orientalism*", Vintage Books, New York, 1979, pg. 1

5 Ann R. Hawkins, <http://www.re.umcd.edu/reference/chronologies/byronchronology/1801.html>

6 Byron Blackstone, "*Byron and Islam: The Triple Eros*", *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, UK, 1974, p. 325-63

of Roman period.⁷ Moreover, Byron's participation to Greek war of independence was connected to this as well. However, Cavaliero denies this saying that Byron undertook this journey "because he had been fascinated by the Ottomans since his childhood"⁸ of his admiration to Orient since his childhood. Writing in his letter to his wife gives a good proof of this "I am close to become a Muslim". Thus he considers Byron's participation in Greek war of independence as one with political reason. However as many of the Europeans he saw Greece as cradle of civilization consequently he could not reconcile with the fact of its being under Ottoman ruling going further to criticizing them for losing their power:

*"Twere long to tell, and sad to trace,
Each step from Splendour to Disgrace;
Enough – no foreign foe could quell
thy soul, till from itself it fell"*

Giaour, 136-139

Detailed traces of Byron's journey are depicted in his work *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which brought him over the night fame that he did not want to loose and continued with whatever attracted the readers. The attraction dwelt in touching the oriental subjects not common for English aristocracy and the upper class. Moreover it never stopped the opinion of Byron's personal reflection on his heroes such as Childe Harold who was depicted as a young man, precipitately bursting by sin, who wanders about in an attempt to escape society and his past, as mentioned by Gilbert Phelps "Although Byron himself always denied it everybody assumed that he and his hero were one and the same person –and it is undoubtedly true that many of the more flamboyant aspects of Byron's temperament, together with many of his attitudes and emotions, find an outlet in the poem."⁹

7 Yahya Kemal in his work *The Open Sea (Acik Deniz)* emphasizes the resemblance of his yearning for Balkan geography where he spent his childhood to Byron's longing for past ages; thus he writes:

*"While my childhood passes in Balkan cities,
There burned in me a longing like a flame.
In my heart the melancholy that Byron knew.
I wandered the mountains, dumb in my day-dreams.
And felt the passion of my raiding ancestors, of their charge
Ever northward, in many a hundred summers."*

The Open Sea, 1-6

8 Roderick Cavaliero, "Ottomania, *The Romantics and the Myth of the Islamic Orient*", I.B. Tauris, London-New York, 2010, pg.81

9 Gilbert Phelps, *The Byronic Byron*, Longman Group Ltd, London, 1971, p.8

It is well-known that he was criticized for following the same subject due to fear of losing the recognition he gained with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* but the general belief is that this did not put any shadow to his uniqueness. He observed thoroughly and mirrored everything in his works to follow focusing on; Mediterranean life-style, the wars, the struggle, the costumes, the architecture, life in mingled society, the hospitality, the strength, the weakness and this is what arouse curiosity of the European readers.

2. Lord Byron's Tales from Oriental viewpoint:

Once he threw a net ¹⁰ on the eastern world and oriental themes he went further with narrative poems called Oriental tales or Turkish tales containing five tales in verses such as *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara* and *The Siege of Corinth*. Each of the five tales brought different novelty from the western world. Some depicted as rebellious heroes as Byron himself, some the mysterious environment, some the customs, some the women rights, some love and some ethics but all in all they depicted Orientalism. The choice of subject and dominant Oriental content in Tales fortifies Byron's admiration of this region. His motto was to "stick to the East" as "the public was Orientalizing"¹¹ this is how he continued and advised his friends to do the same. Hence we should question the fact of how well did Byron do this? Or more precisely how true and just was he in his depictions? Was he seeing everything from the European viewpoint? We will try to answer all the questions within the work.

Turkish Tales attracted its readers with the visual depictions and protagonists who were some perceived as figure of abhorrence and some as figures of enthrallment. Substantial oriental colors and the violent events exposed in the plots are praised by Abdur Raheem Kidwai as all described with Byron's "eye for detail, his meticulous accuracy, and his positive appreciation of the Orient."¹² Subsequently compilation under one name as *Turkish Tales* and having the similar if not the same cultural impact depicted relies to this fact.

Peter Thorslev, in a study of the Byronic hero, says that "all of these romances depend primarily on their protagonists, rather than on plot or verse, for their effect."¹³ We definitely do not deny this yet we want to point out that genuineness of the Tales lies in their setting as well. Most of the *Turkish Tales* are sited in the Greek scene which confirms the point of his admiration to

10 Bernard Blackstone, *Byron, I. Lyric and Romance*, Longman Group Ltd., London 1970, p.14

11 The Norton Anthology of English Literature,

http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_4/welcome.htm

12 Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Orientalism in Lord Byron's 'Turkish Tales'*, Mellen Press, Lampeter 1995, p.30

13 Peter Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero; Types and Prototypes*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1962, p.147.

Greece not forgetting the impact of the fact that Greece was a part of Ottoman lands at that time. The brilliant and moving description of landscape, as rocky coast of Greece and seascape, as blue waters of Aegean carry its own value which is rather discordant with the violent actions of the characters; yet this is the true beauty of the poet. Knowing that one of the strong sides of his tales is the setting itself he never alienated himself from the lyrical description of the Greek islands, visualization of the surrounding with the oratory which would give perfect picture of the scenery such as the case of depiction of Islamic graveyard.

Byron also prides himself on his knowledge of the language of the East. There is a generous usage of Turkish and Arabic words in the poems the fact that added to poet's originality. He adorned his narration with the references from oriental vocabulary which offered closer emotional discharge and picturesque depiction for the reader of the time. For the sake of better perception we find it appropriate to give a list of used vocabulary as well as some verses they were mingled in:

Chart 1: Chart of the Orientalisms used in Tales¹⁴

| Word | Definition | Verses the words were used in |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Allah | God | A spark of that immortal fire With angels shared, by Allah given, To lift from earth our low desire. (The Giaour, 1132-1134) |
| Giaour (Gavur) | Infidel, non-muslim | The hour is past, the Giaour is gone (The Giaour 277) |
| Harem (Harem) | the separate part of a Muslim household reserved for wives, concubines, and female servants | The Bat builds in his Haram bower And in the fortress of his power The Owl usurps the beacon- tower... (The Giaour, 292- 294) |
| Serai(Saray) | palace | Not thus was Hassan wont to fly When Leila dwelt in his Serai (The Giaour, 443-444) |
| Rhamazan(Ramaz an) | the ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset. | To-night, set Rhamazani's sun (The Giaour , 228) |
| Mufti (Müftü) | a Muslim legal expert who is empowered to give rulings on | On her might Muftis gaze, (The Giaour 491) |

14 Definitions are taken from Turkish Language Society online dictionary and en.wikipedia.org web site

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| | religious matters | |
| Koran (Kur'an) | the Islamic sacred book | The Koran verse that mourns the dead, (The Giaour, 726) |
| Arnaut (Arnavut) | Albanian | Stained with the best of Arnaut blood, (The Giaour, 525) |
| Turban (Türban) | a man's headdress, consisting of a long length of cotton or silk wound around a cap or the head, worn esp. by Muslims and Sikhs | Since his turban was cleft by the infidel's sabre (The Giaour, 351) |
| Ataghans (Yatağan) | The yatagan or yataghan is a type of Ottoman knife or short sabre used from the mid-16th to late 19th centuries | And silver-sheathèd ataghan (The Giaour,355) |
| Houris (Huri) | a beautiful young woman, esp. one of the virgin companions of the faithful in the Muslim Paradise. | Like Houris' hymn it meets mine ear, (The Bride of Abydos, 147) |
| Osmanlie (Osmanlı) | An Ottoman Turk | There sleeps as true an Osmanlie As e'er at Mecca bent the knee ; (The Giaour, 729-730) |
| Sultana (hanım sultan) | a wife or concubine of a sultan. | Sultana of the Nightingale,(The Giaour, 22) |
| Bairam (Bayram) | Islamic festival | To-night, the Bairam feast's begun(The Giaour, 229) |
| Pasha (Paşa) | a higher rank in the Ottoman Empire political and military system | The Pachawood as if he deemed the slave Just seem delighted with the heart he gave;(Corsair , 870-871) |
| Sherbet (Şerbet) | an effervescent drink | Yes!thy Sherbet to-night will sweetly flow, See how it sparkles in its vase of snow!(Corsair , 425-426) |
| Muezzin (Müezzin) | is the person appointed at a mosque to lead, and recite, the call to prayer | As rose the Muezzin's voice in air (The Siege of Corinth, 266) |
| Janizar(Yeniçeri) | A soldier in an elite Turkish guard organized in the 14th century and abolished in 1826. | Forms in his phalanx each Janizar (The Siege of Corinth,774) |
| Minaret (Minare) | a tall, thin tower of a mosque | Quick at the word — they seized him each a torch. And fire the dome from minaret to porch.(Corsair 501-502.) |

Byron knew the power of these “mystique” words such as harem, serai, houris etc; the vocabulary was distant for his reader and the meaning was transmitted only through notes. This emphasized “*his role as bold traveler, and*

expert in unknown areas that fascinated and thrilled”¹⁵ who claimed “thereby an intimacy with Islamic culture.”¹⁶ Besides the oriental vocabulary the usage of Oriental names is yet another flavor added to English literature. Usage of names such as Hassan, Leyla, Zuleika, Gulnare, Seyd Pasha show the effect of the region.

The mystery of the tales is hidden in different parts. This led us to expending this study and compressing everything in just one work. Hence we are to study different aspects of different tales as they have different points of attraction such as the setting, language, narration, the plot, the strength of male characters, the determination of female characters, the moral, the tradition as well as the religion.

The first of Oriental Tales is *The Giaour*. Giaour, carries the meaning of the foreigner or infidel and it is more complicated than any other Turkish Tale. The length and constant revision of the original version turned it into ‘*snake of a poem*’¹⁷. However the expanded form was loved by the readers as Marchand remarks, because of the “*lushness of its descriptive passages.*”¹⁸

Plot-wise it is of triangular love-hate relationship between Hassan, Leila and the Giaour. Leila is a girl in Hassan Pasha’s harem, who falls in love with the Giaour. Leila’s act of infidelity is punished by being drowned in the sea by Hassan. Upon this Giaour feels the need to revenge her lover Leila and kills Hassan after which he enters a monastery due to penitence.

Mainly the poem can be divided in two parts where in the first part up to line 786 we see most of the action. The story is said to be conform to Muslim traditions when it comes to Leila’s punishment due to her infidelity.

The second part consists of dialog between the fisherman and the monk commenting the Giaour, which ends with Giaour’s dying confession to the monk, sharing his reality of life since Leila’s and Hassan’s death. Female character Leila is not defended in any way what so ever nor anyone expresses her side giving the hint of Byron’s doubts of Muslim customs yet it is the fisherman that should be followed for full appreciation of the poem. Turkish fisherman due to some prejudices expresses his hatred towards the Giaour; while his support of Leila’s punishment is stirred by Muslim ethics. The Giaour’s rage and hatred towards Muslims cannot be ignored neither. The

15 Peter Cochran, *Byron and Orientalism*, Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, 2006, p. 12

16 Cochran, (2006:12)

17 Rowland E. Prothero, George Gordon, *The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals*, Octagon Books, Inc., New York 1966, p.28

18 Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, I (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957, p. 400

Giaour himself is not criticized due to his Christian religion but more because of his disrespect of the tradition and disloyal deeds driven by personal passion. This drives to the opinion shared by Hassan and the fisherman on judging the Giaour for not having moral and loving married woman going further on revenging the angry husband more than for not sharing the same religion. This is why the reader shares his view in condemning the Giaour up to the point when he gets a chance to defend himself admitting his revenge being motivated just by his love for Leila.

Except the general language and settings used in the Tales, each tale carried different value thus among genuine parts in the first Tale *The Giaour*; more than the plot we are to touch narrative side of it where changing narrators give “*conflicting points of view from which that plot could be viewed.*”¹⁹ Poem is divided between four different narrators: line 1-179 the storyteller, line 180-797 Turkish fisherman, 798-970 dialogue between the Christian monk and the fisherman, 971-1994 the Giaour's confession.

The first narrator is the fisherman. His depiction of Giaour is clearly based on Muslim customs. He blames Giaour for Hasan's death and gives him the profile of the illicit with the words “*turban was cleft by the infidel's sabre*”. The second narrator is the Christian monk who is expected to justify his fellow believer, Giaour's deeds. Nevertheless this does not happen. Monk surprises the reader with his hostile opinion of the Giaour. He mentions him as true infidel who does not share Christian morals which are represented by his church, going even further by worrying that their church can be cursed for accepting the Giaour whom he considered has broken Christian moral code. The last narrator is the Giaour himself who wants to justify his deeds in the eyes of the monk. While he defends his killing of Hassan he does not deny their resemblances in character where he says he would do the same if Leila had betrayed him, nonetheless Byron emphasizes the difference since Giaour's rage comes out of love and not feeling of loss as in Hassan's case. Trying to justify the deed because of the cause did not foreshadow the fact that these two male characters of the tale carry similar mentality as a result of being brought up in the same region. Nevertheless, Byron presents Giaour as worthy of divine feeling of love thus elevates him to higher level in comparison with Hassan and purifies him in the eyes of the readers.

If we touch the viewpoint of the storyteller we can see how it differs from the fisherman and how he empathizes Western world rather than Eastern where he laments the weakness of the ancient heroic Greece surrendered to Turkish power. Apart of this section where he zealously depicts Greek incapability, the

19 Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1967, p.101

storyteller mainly struggles to stay neutral in inclining the reader yet he cannot withhold himself from calling upon the Greeks to take courage from their past and fight present oppressor.

If we look at Byron's purpose of writing the story where he depicts Ottoman customs upon a betrayal, it might be commented as he wanted to degrade Ottoman society. Hereby we see Leila who is not content of her social position as a part of harem and for not being valued and given the status that a young woman deserves by which he insinuates that Ottomans were not able to truly love and appreciate their female companion giving them the significance of an object, a trophy and no further than that. With the condition she is set in, Leila does not represent solely herself but Orient women's state in overall. At this point Giaour is presented as a superior being, as person able to love and as civilized as to give a woman the appreciation it deserves.

*“The cold in clime are cold in blood,
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava flood
That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.”*
Gaiour, 1099-1102

With these words Giaour is scornful of Oriental society and Byron gives them the character of incapable to understand his sensitive side; turning it into the case of Giaour versus Ottoman Hassan; true love against sexual slavery; Christian way versus Muslim way; civilized way versus oriental way. By all these we can criticize Byron for taking side of a non-Muslim Giaour and presenting Muslim Hassan as incapable to love.

J.J. McGann evaluates it as containing political and cultural points where the conflict of these two characters are involved in something that cannot be solved by love; they are victims of two different worlds that are not meant to be together. In these two worlds Byron favors heroes who are part of western world and tradition while describes Turks as cruel and tough in battle as well as in love.²⁰

The second place of Turkish tale belongs to *Bride of Abydos*. Each tale is a new experiment for Byron whereas this tale continues analyzing the most interesting aspects of east. Passing to *Bride of Abydos* we notice that it is the

20 James Soderholm, “Byron and Romanticism: An interview with Jerome McGann,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Baltimore, 2001, p. 50

same by being typical Oriental Tale with authentic background of Muslim customs.²¹ It is the only tale in which the hero and all the other characters are Turkish in origin then again the genuineness of the Tale lays in its mirroring of Byron. How and to what extent does this really mirror him?

This well-constructed story leads to catastrophe of characters. Giaffir Pasha has two children a son, Selim and a daughter, Zuleika. The supposed son Selim is rather rebellious in nature and his relation with his sister Zuleika is much of lovers than of brother and sister. Their close relation becomes even more cherishing when Giaffir decides to marry Zuleika to Carasman Oglu. Social background and Muslim customs prevent these emotions from being revealed since it can lead to being stigmatized by the society. Hiding these emotions spares them from being judged by the society nonetheless they do not cease existing, thus Zuleika hesitates in enlightening her love but does not deny its existence. She certifies this by saying that her love "*never was less, nor can be more.*" The story proceeds with Selim's revealing to Zuleika that he is not her brother but her cousin, accusing Giaffir for killing his brother, Selim's real father, and adopting Selim to prevent the discovery of his deed. In this Hamletian plot Selim, out of zeal to marry Zuleika and revenge his father comes to the head of pirates and fights Giaffir just to be killed by him whereas Zuleika dies of grief.

Our point of interest in this tale is the incestuous side of this attraction which was considered to be brought to light by Byron due to the resemblance of his relationships with women. Byron himself admits that the work was written "*in four nights...for the sake of employment, to wring my thoughts from reality, and take refuge in "imaginings," however horrible.*"²²

With this confession it is obvious that he was trying to escape the forbidden attraction to his half-sister Augusta Leigh and his friend's wife Lady Francis Webster²³ as well as society's condemnation of this fact. Being common for him, Byron sought tranquility in east and fleeing from his own reality; as well as in attempt to justify himself and his incestuous attraction, he once again uses eastern setting and eastern culture to mirror his own situation. This fortifies the fact that Tales in overall by some means are the self-reflection of Byron. Additional resemblance of the story is the point where Zuleika negates their relationship which reflects the case of Augusta who denied her affiliation with Byron. This act rescues them from being judged and isolated from the society since Byron as well as Selim felt secluded and not at all common man.

21 Leslie Marchand, *Byron's Poetry: A Critical Introduction*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1968, p.63

22 Thomas Moore, *Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, J&J Harper, Digitized 2007, London (1830), p. 197

23 Lady Caroline Lamb, *Lord Byron's Lovers*, <http://englishhistory.net/byron/lclamb.html>

Opposite to what it turned out to be, Byron headed to depict this story as a typical Oriental one and some characters as insensitive Turks; but the actions of the characters and the mood of the story resulted as Byronic and the hero Selim reflected some of Byron's own passion²⁴ the thing which attests that the *Bride of Abydos* mirrors Byron. We can add to this what he wrote in his letter of November 23, 1813 about the process of writing the Tale "I ran into realities more than ever; and some would have been recognized and others guessed at."

Apart from the fact that incestuous side of the *Bride of Abydos* is considered to mirror Byron and his relationship with forbidden women, it also contains some other sides which are perceived to be offensive by some critics. At this point it will be useful to mention Seyed Mohamed Marandi's essay "the *Bride of the East*" where he writes about *Bride of Abydos* that "makes some damaging points about the way Byron portrays Islamic society in the *Bride of Abydos*. Amongst other things he points out that Byron treats Islam as monolithic, speaking of Ottoman society as if there were no other kinds in Islam: that he is wrong about Islamic ideas of female soul... that he would have us believe that all Moslem fathers are tyrannical, that all young Moslem women harbor incestuous feelings, and that the only civic virtues in the Islam world are ones which come fortuitously from one's having Greek blood."²⁵ as Selim had Greek blood by his mother's side.

In the third tale *The Corsair* prevailing point is Byron's opinion on the position of women in Ottoman society. He initially touched this subject in his first narrative poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* where he points out humbleness of women in Albania as part of Ottoman society. The meekness of Ottoman women did not represent weakness hence in *The Corsair* Byron depicts the tough side of them which is exposed whenever necessary.

Hereby he again turns to harem. Surely, European cannot omit his obsession with harem and its mystery. They see it as something taboo, ambiguous and based on eroticism. This being the case, women needed being rescued from this "oppression" and who is to save them except someone opposite from this "misogynic" society; Byron again presents a cruel Pasha versus civilized Conrad adding to it some qualities of Oriental woman.

Plot starts with Conrad, the pirate leader who leaves his beloved Medora behind since he decided to attack Seyd Pasha. During the fight, Conrad hears cries of women from harem; he turns to rescue the women from burning castle and rescues the queen of harem, Gulnare. On their flee Conrad is captured and

24 Marchand, (1968:63)

25 Cochran, (2006:11)

imprisoned. Gulnare feels attracted to Conrad and decides to return the favor and rescue him. Seyd Pasha feels suspicious and refuses Gulnare's beseech to release Conrad, threatening to kill her and Conrad. Thus Gulnare takes control in her hands gives Conrad a knife to kill Seyd in their escape. Conrad refuses killing Seyd without fair fight leaving Gulnare in the position to act herself. She then kills Pasha and rescues Conrad bringing him back to his homeland. Upon their return Conrad discovers the death of his beloved Medora leading to his disappearance as this situation crushes his soul.

There is a point where Gulnare introduces her power of decision and ceases her destiny as an object of Seyd Pasha's desire. She for the first time feels tenderness towards women in Conrad's eyes, the affection she never felt from Seyd Pasha. Upon this Gulnare is eager for a free and bold life which leads her to killing Seyd Pasha and rescuing Conrad. With this deed Gulnare deserves the recognition of the most striking female character of the Tales where her rich female figure becomes even more appreciated when her value is recognized. From this point on Gulnare is mental and physical equal of Conrad and by mirroring him takes the role of something more than just a female character. However, this did not get just appreciation, the part where Gulnare's eastern blood boils is criticized as being polluted and becoming as unwomanly as Lady Macbeth:

*“spot of blood, that light but guilty streak,
Had banish'd all the beauty from her cheek”*

Corsair, 1593-1594

This bloody act equalized her to Conrad; she was triumphant in what she planned; she became practical and capable and took her destiny into her hands. Thus, Gulnare is the first woman in Oriental tales to pass to male territory of deeds. It is her who leads Conrad from the palace to the sea, it is her who kisses Conrad and cancels all the classical signs of femininity. However revealing is the story of Eastern woman, Byron did not forget praising Conrad as Western hero. Conrad is admired for his courteous attitudes towards women something that Eastern Pasha could never have. Hereby he once again points out cruelty and disrespect for women coming by Pasha as well as the sensibility coming from Conrad. On the other side however bold described, Gulnare was given the role of dark heroine in contrast to Conrad's first love Medora who is the fair heroine and true woman who deserves to be loved and pampered.

“The first named type [the fair woman] breathes a fine femininity, a tender and sacrificial maternal spirit, fighting the battles of life with the weapons of resignation and tears, and bringing to love everything that is divine,

passion excluded. The second type, [the dark woman] more spiritedly poetical, is represented in the independent and oppositional beauty, who feels deeply, demands freedom of movement and choice, and is not impervious to passion.”²⁶

As Byron did not want to use two heroines in his Tale, he eliminates Medora in the way that will give her saintly qualities by killing her while giving Gulnare Macbethan qualities and in the point of comparing two of them, rising Medora with her female sensitivity and giving Gulnare feature of woman who did “*deseccration of feminine gentleness*”²⁷ in order to gain her freedom.

If we touch the previously mentioned point of favoring of western hero over the eastern one, we can add an observation of Peter Thorslev as he writes: “*according to the sentiments of age, of course, any act of cruelty or even of unkindness and disrespect for women was unforgivable:...and Byron takes advantage of this fact when portraying their Noble Outlaws. Make your protagonist a Hero of Sensibility in his regard for women, and this characteristic alone will mitigate all of his other crimes, no matter how Gothic...a Romantic love for his mistress and a courteous attitude toward women in general is the ‘one virtue’ amidst a ‘thousand crimes’ which makes Conrad ...a character over whose death readers could weep.*”²⁸

This supports the fact that in an attempt to forgive every other guilt Byron gives his Western hero something that will make reader forgive him, as he has a tender heart and consideration towards women; the feature that he did not grant to his eastern hero thus depicted him as true villain of the tale. Nevertheless, if we consider the tale as a whole, we can say that by breaking off the gender relations Byron secretly emphasizes human values of eastern men that he inwardly envied. In fact, we can say that he attempted to change European norms with the norms he experienced in Balkans. We mention this based on the fact that he never denied East as the source of tranquility and his shelter.

The following Turkish Tale is *Lara*. By the end of *the Corsair* the hero Conrad disappears just to reappear in *Lara* which Byron pointed out that is a sequel to *the Corsair*. Upon this the audience expected the same characters and rather similar plot.

After Count Lara was suspected of murdering a man who would reveal his past crimes he joins a serf uprising where he was killed and died in the

26 Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*, Routledge & Sons Ltd, New York 1927, p. 291

27 G. Wilson Knight, *Poets of Action*, Routledge, Abington2002, p. 184

28 Thorslev (1962:55)

hands of his page, Kaled. After Lara's death Kaled's true identity is discovered, she goes mad and dies.

Count Lara which is the name of former Conrad departs from Balkan setting that we previously had in the *Corsair*, abandoning his name and life returning to his homeland. Beside Lara is an oriental page, Kaled. Kaled, is in fact Gulnare in disguise where she acts as male character, once more changing the gender roles and entering to male field of action.

Poem contains very few descriptions of eastern settings but its impact did not totally disappear as Lara shows it in his language which carried traces of western accent. Lara uses foreign language that can be understood just by Kaled. Kaled's unique behavior of loyalty introduced the western world the value of devotion that can rarely be expected from a modern European woman of Byron's age. Kaled, who is Gulnare dressed as page was ready to give up everything that identified her by wearing male clothing, going as far as giving up her sexuality. She steps away from traditional role of a woman but she does not alienate herself from the quality of eastern female who sacrifices herself for the man she loves and respects. She is elevated for her loyalty:

"she for him had given

Her all on earth, and more than all in heaven!"

The Corsair, 1696-1697

As a result it is seen that Gulnare in both *Corsair* and *Lara* is given more progressive and independent features as improvement to conservative opinion of women, especially women of east. Her losing of passive role for the active engagement added her a certain degree of violence as well; the feature that had to be embraced as a part of independent character. Hereby, Byron gives some appreciation to women by breaking some traditional female codes.²⁹ The difference is that in *Corsair*, Gulnare was a typical eastern female who not typically stepped ahead and entered male area of deeds; while in *Lara*, she returns to Conrad, respectfully Lara the power of leading by being just his page.

By returning Gulnare or now Kaled into passive role Byron also goes back to what he would define as typical eastern woman that he once saw in Albania respectively, Ottoman society. The meekness, the humbleness, the content with only what male character gives her, creates the picture of woman not knowing better and being passive solely with the productive role of a mother and wife. Decision of Byron to terminate courageous deeds of Gulnare

29 Cheryl Fallon Giuliano, "Gulnare/Kaled's "Untold" Feminization of Byron's Oriental Tales" Academic journal article from Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, Vol. 33, p. 4

and passivize her might be partially seen as a decision of a person who is victim of prejudice and his prior education against Ottomans.

The last of Turkish Tales is the *Siege of Corinth*. Its uniqueness was the use of history as a background of the story. Departing from the romantic scenery did not mean totally breaking away from it but flavoring it with some historic events. Not typical of Turkish Tales, the poem does not contain Muslim character as both main characters are infidel, but they present two separate forces that of Christian and Muslim.

The details of the story and the battle cannot be said were Byron's acquaintance of historical background it was rather collecting from oral sources as well as anonymous book *History of the Turks*.³⁰

The emphasis of our work will not be the battle but the male character of the Tale, Alp. Alp is young and zealous. Containing the best features of valor and passion did not bring him blessing in life. Lanciotto, known as Alp was Venetian who was unjustly accused for treason by his fellow Venetians with the aim of separating him from Francesca, Venetian leader, Minotti's daughter. In anger, Alp gives up his country and his faith, thus becomes Muslim and leader of Ottoman forces and fight Venetians in Siege of Corinth where he loses his life.

*“Corinth's sons were downward borne
By the long and oft renewed
Charge of the Muslim multitude.
In firmness they stood, and in masses they fell,
Heaped by the host of the infidel.”
The Siege of Corinth 701-705*

Alp was called *infidel* in these verses but this fact did not distance him from Ottomans in the social standpoint. He was embraced by the east, by the society, by the religion, by the army as much as he embraces it himself and embodies it more resolute than any other. *“And although Alp, in the Siege of Corinth is a convert to Islam and not native Turk, his conversion drives him to adopting an even more extreme stance of virility as honour and consistency.”*³¹

30 Peter Cochran, <http://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/the-siege-of-corinth.pdf>

31 Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 1994, p. 249

It was really this what Alp did, he not just converted to Islam he absorbed the core of it and became even more extreme than any ready born Moslem.

But why is Byron so interested in Alp, is it maybe because he finds something of himself in Alp. Does this status of Alp anyhow resemble to Byron? The answer must be *Yes*. Thus except the historical background, the genuineness of the tale lays in Byron's resemblance to Alp. Byron, though being a Lord, he was never accepted by upper English society. He was never welcomed in the House of Lords. This was partially because of his stance to political issues as he was always supporter of the weak, oppressed side; partially because of his behavior and romantic relationships. Still, Byron felt excluded and alienated by English society. This unjust treatment connected him to Alp. Their response to this was affiliation to another culture such as eastern culture. Alp found home among Ottoman forces, Byron found serenity and inspiration in eastern countries. And upon his knowledge of this world we can mention Mohammed Sharafuddin's writing on Byron and his knowledge of Orient "*Even if Byron is exaggerating his precociousness, the range and depth of his (oriental) reading cannot be doubted*".³²

Whereas Roderick Cavaliero defines the resemblance of Byron and Alp with the words: "*It is not a poem about the unsurpassable barriers that culture and destiny put between people, but about the equally unsurpassable disgust with lands that deny their sons, as Venice denied Alp and Byron deemed England had denied him.*"³³

On the other side, however just Byron was towards Turks and recognizing their qualities and their power he was never able to forget things he was taught as a child and that is to consider Greece his spiritual home; thus he puts Alp, the renegade on the head of the Ottoman army and introduces him as one of the best commanders. Upon this we can repeat Marandi's words that he presented the stories in a way "*that the only civic virtues in the Islam world are ones which come fortuitously from one's having Greek blood.*"³⁴ or we can say Christian religion. This can lead to impression that Ottomans depend on Christians for their success. Such belief was presented by Cavaliero as well when he writes "*Few Ottoman rulers were our Turks; their ancestral blood could be very mixed.*"³⁵

32 Sharafuddin, (1994:215)

33 Cavaliero (2010: 91)

34 Cochran, (2006:11)

35 Cavaliero, (2010:21)

3. Conclusion:

Turkish tales written with orientalist perspective and carrying traces of Eastern civilization arouse curiosity of English reader. The genuineness of Turkish Tales and attraction of the reader comes from brilliant colors, passions and settings he candidly transmitted to his reader based on what he has seen and experienced. His narration marvelously depicted various aspects of Ottoman life-style and culture which never stopped mingling with other cultures. Due to the culture gap this mingling not always brought serenity to ottoman society nevertheless it brought flavor to the tales. Having the objective of reflecting some of this flavor as well as better comprehension of our work, the conclusion we came to is favorably presented in these key points:

1. Setting of the tales in Balkans as a part of Ottoman lands which adds to mysterious presence of the Tale and offers perfect visual imagery to the reader.

2. Oriental vocabulary and names in the tales gives closer emotional discharge and picturesque depiction for the reader of the time.

3. The first of the Turkish Tale is "*The Giaour*". It depicts Ottoman's viewpoint of women. Disrespect of love coming by Ottomans is connected to their tough characters thus Ottoman society is degraded. Another remarkable element of the Tale is the narrative technique with its division between four narrators. The tale emphasizes religiously-moral relations, where particularly moral values are supported by both Muslim fisherman and Christian monk.

4. In "*Bride of Abydos*" Muslims are given uncivilized features. It promotes the idea that civilized behavior can be presented just by someone who carries Greek blood. The Tale is full of offensive and unfavorable declarations. By satirizing Muslim customs Byron actually gives the hint of his relation with his half-sister Augusta Leigh.

5. Although Byron tries to give bold virtues to Gulnare of "*Corsair*" by stepping to male field of deeds, he does not equalize her with the tender eastern Medora, but gives her violent features.

6. As much as the fourth tale *Lara* depicts devotion of eastern woman, disguised Gulnare, with her new name Kaled is passivated and put under the shadow of the Christian character Count Lara. As well as treated in other tales, Byron in one way constantly supported Christian characters.

7. Converted Alp character in the "*Siege of Corinth*" adopts Islam to the core and became even more extreme than any ready born Moslem. Resemblance of Alp and Byron lies in being estranged by their own society. Nevertheless by putting Alp on the head of Ottoman army emphasizes the opinion of Ottoman's depending on Christians.

As a conclusion Byron did not just mirror East but he went further and mirrored himself through the Eastern setting, life and culture revealing his secret admiration to Turks. He absorbed from the East and absorbed some more and in the end he turned to his reminiscence and used it just to prove to Europe what it was missing.

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