

The English Koranic Images in Some Literary Writings

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Abstract—The Qur’ān translations into English appeared first in 1649. This English translation entitled the Arabic Qur’ān as the Koran and ambiguously represented most of the authentic Islamic teachings. Some misinformation is directed against the Prophet and the divinity of the Qur’ān. In modern English literature, the reader encounters an increasing diversity of references to the English Koran. For instance, Prophet Muhammad is an imposter and his Koran is a stock of heresy. The Koranic Satan becomes a font of challenge for the righteous. The Koranic paradise has interesting details for English readers. The Koranic image of Hell trees becomes common in the West. The Koran has been presented to the Western world as promoting Islamic extremism and threatening the Western civil society. For some modern diehard fanatics, smashing or burning copies of the Arabic Qur’ān is a symbol of personal revenge and attack on Muslims’ dignity. The spread of genuine information about Qur’ān and Prophet Muhammad helps to appreciate Islam and Muslims.

Index Terms—Qur’ān, Koran, translation, Muhammad, Satan, paradise, English literature

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern English literature, the Arabic Al-Qur’ān is mentioned in English form as the Koran. The Arabic word *Qur’ān*¹ is derived from the Arabic word '*Qaraa*' which means 'to read,' 'reading,' or 'what ought to be read.' The Qur’ān has a variety of other names, "*Al-Keitaab*," the book; "*Al-Mosehaf*," the volume; "*Al-Forkaan*," the book distinguishing between good and evil (Stobart, 1895, p. 197). The story of The Qur’ān goes back to 610 of the Christian era (the era of the Hejira would not begin until twelve years later) when Muhammad, at the age of forty, received the first revelation of the Book of Allah. John Hughes (1677-1720) admires the story of first revelation on Muhammad. He depicts the vision of the first brightness of the divine contact between Gabriel, the Guardian angel of the revelation, and Prophet Muhammad in *Hera*'s cave:

The light divine whose beams
Pierc'd thro' the gloom of Hera's scared cave
And there illumined the great Mahomet,
Arabia's morning star, now shines on thee
Arise salute with joy the guest from heaven
Follow her steps and be no more a captive
Turn thy eye to Mecca! Mark
How far from Cabba first, that hollow'd temple
Her glory dawn'd, then look how swift its course
As when the sun beams shooting thro'a cloud
Drive o're the meadow's face the flying shades. (*The Siege of Damascus*, 39-40)

Prophet Muhammad was of a sincerely spiritual nature and had long ostracized the corruption of his culture. It turned into his habit to contemplate from time to time in the Cave of *Hera* close to the apex of *Jabal al-Nur*, the "Mountain of Light" next to the Grand Holy Mosque of Mecca. He was promoted to Prophethood at the age of forty, on Feb. 12th 610 A.D. His initial revelation appeared whilst he was prompting and observing nighttime vigil among the climax of Mount *Hera* as angel Gabriel emerged to him. God says to Muhammad in the Holy Qur'an: "*Recite in the name of your Lord who has created, Created man out of a germ-cell. Recite for your Lord is the Most Generous one, Who has taught by the pen, Taught man what he did not know!...*" (Ali, 1997, 36: 1-5).

Turks, Moors and heretics alike, treat Muhammad as an idol worshipper. They believe in the Holy Qur’ān as a source of their canon. Blasphemy of Saracen characters was given a wider prevalence in the early fourteenth century and was common until seventeenth century (Al-Olaqi, 2012, p. 65). Chaucer talks of 'mammatte' that had been turned into a legend in *The Man of Law's Tale*. The term "Maumerie" refers to the idea of idolatry (Davies, 1987, p. 51). The term 'Mahometans' or Muslims means idolaters — a belief common in the Middle Ages — arose the French mahomet, an idol; mahumerie idolatry, or an idolatrous temple, as here. For instance, Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400) describes the Muslim Sultan's rebellious blasphemy with outrage over Islamic faith, the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* - the tradition of the Prophet:

¹ The Arabic word 'Qur’ān' is going to be used to refer to the original Arabic text, while the term 'Koran' refers to the English translation.

The hooly laws of our Alkoran
 Yeven by Goddess message Makomete.
 But oon a vow to grate God I heete
 The lyf shal rather but of my body stertic
 Or Makometes lawe out of myn hertel. (2.3. 322-36)

Islam has been an object of curiosity about Muslims worldwide. Like Hughes, early English churchmen were interested in learning more about the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān has become a scholarly interest for churchmen to refute it. For instance, the first translation of the Qur'ān was done in Latin by the Reverend Robert of the Italian city, Ketton in 1143, on the initiative of Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny. Peter the Venerable had developed his interest in Islam over some travels in Muslim Spain. His study of Arabic material disabused him of some of the absurd fantasies about Islam. Consequently, his attitude was somewhat modified and became less malevolent than that of his predecessors, particularly those who wrote during the last quarter of the eleventh century. Peter's preface set the example for future translations of the Qur'ān. The "fear of contamination" referred to above accounts for the inclusion of condemnatory introductions to almost all works which dealt with Islam, particularly the translations of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, Peter rejected Muhammad as a prophet and denied the Qur'an's divine origin. Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1724) an English churchman and Orientalist, quotes Peter's words which seemed to bounce back and forth, classifying Islam as heresy or paganism:

I cannot clearly decide whether the Mohammedan error must be called a heresy and its followers, heretics, or whether they are to be called pagans. For I see them, now in the manner of heretics, take certain things from the Christian faith and reject other things...For in company with certain heretics (Mohammad writes so in his wicked Koran), they preach that Christ was indeed born of a virgin, and they say that he is greater than every other man, not excluding Mohammad...They acknowledge that he was the Spirit of God, the Word-but not the Spirit or the Word as we either know or expound. They insanely hold that the passion and death of Christ were mere fantasies, but did not actually happen...They hold these and similar things, indeed, in company with heretics.²²

The first English translation is attributed to Alexander Ross (1649). George Sale's the *Alkoran of Mohammad* appeared in 1734. These English authorities concluded that the Qur'ān contains many teachings of the old divine books. English writers have diverse incomplete references to the Koran. Many quotations are descriptive. For instance, Victorian writers got to know from travel books how Muslims respect the Qur'ān. Byron seems indebted to Sale's scholarly notes in his English translation of the Koran. Southey seems acquainted with Koran's terminology. William Beckford and Thomas Moore happen to exploit their own literary interests in the Koran. For many Muslims, the Arabic Qur'ān has great meanings as being the Word of Allah, the Almighty. The English translations even by Muslims do not perfectly convey the meaning of the verses as it is meant by Allah.

II. ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'AN

The first Latin translation of the Qur'ān in 1143 was intended to refute the Qur'ān itself. This translation made the Qur'ān very weak. Along with this weakness, Peter included his own *Summa totius haeresis Saracenorum*, or "Summary of all the Heresies of the Saracens" (Iogna-Pratt, 2005, p. 327). Thereafter, the Latin translation was printed in 1509, but readers were not allowed to circulate its copies as the edition was not accompanied by a refutation. Munro (1939) speaks of Peter's translation of the Qur'ān as '... unfortunately very inaccurate and full of errors, but it was the only one known in the West until the end of the seventeenth century' (p. 337). In 1594, Hinkelmann published his translation of the Qur'ān; it was followed in 1698 by the Italian cleric Ludovici Marracci's translation which included a refutation. Subsequently, translations of the Qur'ān began to appear in modern European languages such as English, French, German, Italian and Russian. The admirable exploration of the three French travellers, Jean Bapptise Tavernir, Jean de Thevenot, and Sir Hahn Chardin, helped them to translate the Qur'ān into English between 1677 and 1684. They turned out to be rightfully popular. Alexander Ross, the Scottish author of *The Al-coran of Mohamet* (1649) wrote a book on comparative religion. This shoddy translation, based on Andre Du Ryer's French version, and not directly on the Arabic version, contains many distortions and misinterpretations. George Sale's translation in English *The Koran*, commonly called the *Alkoran of Mohammed*, was in 1734. It is widely circulated translation with more than 125 editions has been published so far. Though this translation is a paraphrase and not a literal translation; it is one of the accessible translations so far. Sale's English translation of the Qur'ān was the most popular and the best for readers (Burman, 1998, pp. 703-732).

In early European Church, any translation of the Holy Arabic Qur'ān was considered as a crime. In anticipation of this criticism, in the eighteenth century George Sale realised that his Koran, the translation of the Qur'ān, might inflame a huge argument. Before Sale, any Western investigation of the Qur'ān has centred less on the theological significance and more on the impact of the holy text. Sales's translation was an innovation in Islamic studies in Europe. Western critics such as Theodor Biblander, Martin Luther and Thomas Browne were impressed by Sale's translation. Thomas Browne reports George Sale's *The Koran* includes criticism over his translation of the Qur'ān. It might provoke George Sale who wrote in the introduction that "they [critics] must have meant the opinion of the Christian religion, who can

² See Lewis, B. and Holt, P. M. (ed.) *Historians of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962),p. 293.

apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery" (Simon, 1931, p. 259). Sale understood the Western Church apprehension over the Islamic theological challenge which might create an appreciation among the Christians. On the other hand, Sale's *The Koran* does show a certain ideological connection of the Qur'ān with the old scriptures. The Christian Church deals with this connection as evidence to falsify the Qur'ān. For the fifth and sixth centuries Jewish and Orientalist like St. John of Damascus (d. 750 AD),³ the Jewish and Christian stories and doctrines are intermingled in the Quran with some rabbinical fables. Some Orientalists assert that Abdia Ben Salem, a Jew, and the Christian monk, Sergius or Bahifa, aided Muhammad to compose the Qur'ān. They think Muhammad had access to the old scriptures during the journeys to Syria in his early life. On the other hand, this connection of the Qur'ān with the old scriptures seems doubtless since the Qur'ān owes everything to scripture, except its spirit, and its deep manifest contradictions (Green, 1914: 149). The Koran says on this point:

They say, certainly some man teaches him; he

Whom they mean speaks a barbarous language; but the

Koran is in the Arabic tongue, full of instruction and eloquence. (Sale, 1734: xvi)

The first English translation, which is attributed to Alexander Ross (1649), appeared with 'A Needful Caveat,' or Admonition for them. Ross's desire was 'to know what use may be made of, or if there be a danger in Reading the Al-Coran' (Lewis, 1962, p. 290). Despite all such religious and secular perspectives from which the Qur'ān is approached, Muslim and Western analysts agree that the Qur'ān is a beautiful, lyrical, and powerful work. Many attempts to translate the Qur'ān continued with much interest in Oriental studies. For instance, in the seventeenth century travel literature has played a great role in presenting Islamic accounts to Europe. The English academicians were acquainted with Koranic accounts such as Islamic social issues like the deprivation of women's rights, the description of hell, and the images of the two hell angels, Munkar and Nakeer in the Qur'ān (Smith, 1977, pp. 22-23).

Throughout the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, travel to the Islamic World became increasingly popular, and travel reports were distinguished as a distinct sort of literature. Wallace Cable Brown (1939), a modern literary critic, has investigated the enormous influence of this travel trend on the social and literary activities of the time. He explains that 'The great vogue for writing and reading of Near East travel books between 1775 and 1825, naturally had a marked influence on contemporary thought and activity'. He underlines that 'these travel books helped to create at home a large body of poetry and prose, of which this region is the theme or background' (pp. 79-80). Brown notes that the Romantics' interest in Levant matter was for personal literary reasons, not for religious and/or political propaganda (Ibid). In addition, on a high scholarly level, the translation of Islamic religious and literary works into English by scholars such as Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelly, William Beckford, Thomas Moore, Edward William Lane, Edward Gibb, Richard Burton, and Godfrey Higgins, helped kindle and sustain public interest in Islam, throughout their scholarly works on a range of aspects of Islam.

Translation of the Qur'ān has always been a problematic and difficult issue. Many argue that the Qur'ānic text cannot be reproduced in another language or form. Furthermore, an Arabic word may have a range of meanings depending on the context, making an accurate translation even more difficult. The nineteenth century saw further advances in the English translations of the Qur'ān. John Meadows Rodwell's *Translation of the Koran* (1861) rearranges the Koran in chronological order to understand the Qur'ān. In this methodology Rodwell tries to establish the hypothesis that the basic source of the Qur'ān lies in Jewish and Christian scriptures. The chronological sequence of the different *Suras* or chapters is to be gathered alone from the subject matter, and from clear references to passing events, which may be discovered in the Qur'ānic chapters. Edward Henry Palmer's *The Koran* (1880) was not without merit, but it passed over in favour of more recent ones. In the twentieth century, Marmaduke Pickthall produced his translation entitled *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, (1930). The British translators have occasionally preferred archaic English words and structures in excess of their more contemporary or conservative comparables; for instance, two extensively interpret translators, A. Yusuf Ali and M. Marmaduke Pickthall, employ the plural and singular "ye" and "thou" rather than the more frequent "you". The effect of this Middle English language is to place the Koran on a similar basis to the Biblical translations. Unlike Pickthall, Richard Bell translated the Qur'ān in 1937. The modern English translators have favored modern English to translate the Qur'ān. These are the most famous English Koran translations. All these translators were non-Muslims. Nevertheless, there have been numerous translations by Muslims.

III. IMAGE OF THE KORANIC DEVIL

Literature is both a determiner and a denominator of culture. T.S. Eliot (1915) remarks that the civilizing legacy of a country has an enormous significance and brunt over the structure of literature through times (p. 12). The impact of Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'ān lasted to 1542 (Bald, 1998, p. 140). In the sixteenth century drama, Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1587) was influenced by this interpretation in making references to the Qur'ān. *Tamburlaine* contains reference from the Koran that the Christians and devils are going to hell. Marlowe was well enough acquainted to use some verses, metaphors and even Arabic words from the Holy Qur'ān (Al-Olaqi, 2012: 2, p.180). For instance, after the death of the defeated King Sigismund, the Turkish captain detective Orcanes accounts

³ St. John (d. 750 AD) was a Christian priest and the founder of the Christian tradition towards Islam. In his book *De Haeresibus* (730) he tries to prove that Muhammad wrote the Quran.

that the Koranic penalty of Christians and Sigismund is to be eaten from a tree with bitter leaves, 'Zoacum,' which can only be created in hell. Marlowe uses the same Koranic name and description of the hell tree, 'Zaqqum,' whose branches are like the heads of devils. He Marlowe formulates the same depiction:

... feeds upon the baneful tree of hell,
That *Zoacum*, that fruit of bitterness,
That in the midst of fire is ingrafted,
Yet flourisheth as Flora in her pride,
With apples like the heads of damed fiends. (*Tamburlaine*, P II, II.iii.16–20)

To contrast this citation with the Qur'ānic verses, it appears as if Marlowe entirely used the unique text of the Qur'ān; Allah says:

62. *Is that the better entertainment?
Or the Tree of Zaqqum?*

63. *For We have truly
Made it (as) a trial
For the wrong-doers.*

64. *For it is a tree
That springs out
Of the bottom of Hell-fire:*

65. *The shoots of its fruit-stalks
Are like the heads
Of devils.* (Ali, 1997:1350–1351)

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, authors such as William Congreve, Alexander Pope and Robert Southey spoiled Qur'ānic information with prejudice over the authenticity. Southey's note in *Thalaba* (1801) is that 'The tame language of the Koran could be remembered by the few who have toiled through its dull tautology' (Oueijan, 1996, p. 114). Out of Southey's deep reading, he concludes that he found out many errors in the Qur'ān such as the repetitions of stories (Ibid). Southey seems acquainted with the Koran's terminology. *Thalaba* wants Oneiza to 'Retail thy Koran-scrap' in which he comes to speak about an unpleasant story he has to sell that in Hell there is a cup of 'the unallowable bitterness' called 'Of Zaccoum's fruit accurse' (Book VII, 1. 184). According to the Koran, the *Zaccoum* is a tree that grows from the bottom of Hell. Its fruit is food for the damned. These eighteenth and nineteenth centuries authors had known through travel books how Muslims respect the Qur'ān as it contains faith and law. Therefore, they understood the Qur'ān as the high Islamic authority. Despite this attitude, they attacked the Qur'ān and Prophet Muhammad. For example, Alexander Pope (1688-1744) depicts Prophet Muhammad as 'Arabian Prophet' whose Qur'ān is full of evil laws. Pope describes the Qur'ānic laws of *Shariah* as full of 'ignorance (Pope, 1897, pp. 79-80). William Congreve's play, *The Way of the World*, displays Islamic jurisdiction. Congreve looks down on the Islamic rules in the Qur'ān saying:

To drink is a Christian diversion
Unknown to the Turks or the Persian
Let Mahometan fools
Live by heathenish rules. (VI, ii, 45-48)

Eblis is the principal devil jinni in Islamic mythology. He is an invisible spirit mentioned in the Koran. Eblis as a "deceiver" directs forces of darkness. William Beckford wrote *Vathek: An Arabian Tale* in 1782. Beckford powerfully stirs the reader's imaginative faculty into deeper Koranic dimensions of the soul and its mysteries, perhaps most remarkably in the tale of the Hell of Eblis. The chief of evil stands for the spirit Eblis, father of Gennis, in the Koranic tradition. Eblis did not prostrate to Adam as obedience to the command of Allah. The angels prostrated themselves to Adam in obeisance to Allah. Eblis said: 'I am better than he [Adam]: You created me from fire, and him; You created from clay', Allah said in the Holy Qur'ān: 'Then get you out from here: for you are rejected, accursed; And my curse shall be on you till the Day of Judgment' (Ali, 1997, 38: 73-78). Beckford represents Eblis in Hell. The icon of Hell evokes fear and horror. It has a connection with the Koranic account. With its 'halls and galleries', 'long curtains brocaded with crimson and gold', 'choirs and dances', 'gleam brightening through the drapery' and 'chambers' are a fantastic portrait of paradise (Lonsdale, 1983, pp. 11, 115). It looks more like a big chimney than the horrifying, bottomless ditch of the unappeasable flame. This vision is portrayed as the Hell in Islamic tradition, as for example, in the following Qur'ānic text: 'Those in the hell will be in the midst of a fierce blast of fire And in boiling water, And in the shades of black smoke, Nothing will there be to refresh, nor to please' (Ali, 1997, 56:42-44). Beckford's incapability to seize the Islamic conception of 'Eblis' for Koranic Satan tarnishes the portrait of Eblis: 'His person was that of a young man, whose noble and regular features seemed to have been tarnished by malignant vapours. In his large eyes appeared both pride and despair; his flowing hair retained some resemblance to that of an angel of light. In his hand, which thunder had blasted, he swayed the iron sceptre that causes the 'monster *Ouranbad*, the *afrits* and all the powers of abyss to tremble' (Lonsdale, 1983, p. 111). Beckford's formidable 'Eblis' seems a more heartbreaking figure than Milton's Satan does.

IV. THE KORANIC PARADISE

The description of Paradise in the Koran evokes admiration from the English authors. In *The Siege of Damascus* (1720), John Hughes (2010) is captivated by the Muslims' Paradise such as those rivers of milk, honey and wine (pp. 25-26). His description resembles the real Qur'ānic Paradise like the interpretation of some verses in the Qur'ān, Chapter Muhammad (Ali, 1997, 47:15). The work of Lord Byron contains many Koranic terms such as 'Allah', 'Allah-O-Akbar', 'Koran', 'Bismillah', 'Ramazan', 'Haram', 'Houris', etc (Kidwai, 1995, pp.77-122). This usage indicates his wide Islamic knowledge. In his poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron speaks admirably about the call of prayer from the top of minaret of a mosque. The muezzin's sound loudly calls to come and pray Allah, the Only God:

Hark! From the mosque the nightly solemn sound,
The muezzin's call doth shake the minaret,
There is no god but God!— to prayer— lo! God is great!' (II, 37-39)

The faith ceremony, 'There is no god but God! God is great,' is also adopted from its Arabic translation - '*lallaha Illallah-Muhammad Rasullah*'. For such type of factual description of Islam, Byron seems indebted to Sale's scholarly notes in his English translation of the Qur'ān (1734) (Siddiqui, 2010, p. 26). Byron's representation of some Koranic theology is very clear in his allusion to famous verses in the Koran like 'Al-Sirat's arch' in *Giour*, p.483, which is in the Koran (Ali, 1997, 1:5). Byron ironically scorns the vision on the Koranic reference to the only way to paradise called *Al-Sirat*, the path, which is very critical for all Muslims as it is lighter than a single hair. Byron claims to dance on it and whispers to women for love. He says:

By Alla, I would answer nay,
Though on *Al-sirat* arch I stood,
Which totters over the fiery flood,
With Paradise within my view,
And all his Houris beckoning through. (III, 55)

The 'ayat al Kursi' (the throne verse) is as an amulet protection from danger when it is recited. In *Giour* (p.490), Byron's description to the 'Houris' like toys in Paradise for tyrants' lust as 'a vulgar error; the Koran allots' (p. 894), is an unpleasant depiction of the Qur'ān. This allotment is neither in the Qur'ān nor in any Islamic text.

Byron referred to the Koran several times in *The Bride* (1813), an Islamic tale. He speaks about reciting 'Koran verse that mourns the dead' (*Giour*, p. 726). He calls the readers as 'Koran-chanters' (*The Bride*, II, 189). In the same poem, the poet assumes that Muslim women have fewer rights than the men in the Koran. He unfairly claims that Prophet Muhammad has deliberately concealed the women's celestial pleasure in paradise.

And oft her Koran conn'd apart;
And oft in youthful reverie
She dream what Paradise might be:
Where woman's apart soul shall go
Her prophet had disdain'd to show. (*The Bride*, II, 629)

Byron's Baba, in *Don Juan*, is a Muslim character full of faults: 'he said, and swore on/ The holy camel's hump, besides the Koran' (VI, 102). Byron draws between the Prophet's she-camel called 'al-qaswa' and the Qur'ān for Muslims which is untrue. No Muslim ever swears by the Qur'ān than by the 'al-qaswa'. Allah prohibits all Muslims to swear by anything but His attributed names (Al-Bokhari, 2000, Hadith No. 6646).

Thomas Moore (1734), another nineteenth century writer, goes a step further in accusing the Prophet of Islam in *Lalla Rookh* with inventing the Qur'ānic text to gratify his lust' (p. 218). Moore's extensive use of Islamic material rendered *Lalla Rookh* a source of Islamic and Qur'ānic images. He enriches his poem with Qur'ānic illustrations to decorate his poetic themes. For instance, Moore describes earth discharging its stuff at the day of doom as in Sale's translation of the Koran: 'and gladdened Earth shall thro' her wide expanse/ Bask in the glories of this countenance!' (p. 214). Sale (1734) appreciates the Koranic story of the good believer to be rewarded for his devotion: 'The righteous shall be given to drink of pure wine, sealed: the seal whereof shall be musk' (chap, p. lxxxiii). Moore's extraordinary visualizations of the Koranic images enriched his poetry with Islamic colours. Moore's poems were very famous in the nineteenth century. One of these Koranic images is the *Tooba* Tree in paradise. Moore describes the tree:

Passing away like a lover's sigh; --
My feast is now of the Tooba Tree
Whose scent is the breath of Eternity!
Farewell, ye vanishing flowers that shone
In my fairy wreath so bright an' brief;--
Oh! What are the brightest that e'er have blown
To the lote-tree springing by ALLA'S throne
Whose flowers have a soul in every leaf.
Joy, joy forever. --my task is done—
The Gates are past and Heaven is won! (*Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*, 176-185)

The paradise's sweet trees as recorded in the Koran attract writer to describe some Koranic trees. For instance, the 'Tooba Tree' is a very huge tree in paradise with a shadow that a horse-ride traveller needs hundred years to pass' (Al-

Bokhari, 2000, Hadith No. 3251). Moore repeats D'Herbelot's description of Muhammad's palace in Paradise, and it stands to 'signify beatitude or eternal happiness' for Muhammad (Kidwai, 1995: 104). Another beautiful landscape is of 'the lote-tree springing by Allah's throne.' It is the *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*, the highest spot in Paradise, in the seventh Heaven, on the right hand of the throne of God. Thomas Moore quotes Sale's translation of the Koranic verses in the Star chapter (Sale, 1734, pp. 53:7-18). Like Moore, Byron remarks on the end of the seventh Heaven which Prophet Muhammad saw the real physic of the Angel Gabriel by Cedar tree. Byron describes the deep silence and calmness of the seventh Heaven in which the divine tree of Cedar is the eternal home of Muslims: 'Cedar tree, 'beyond which there is no passing: near it is the Garden of Eternal Abode' (*The Bride*, II, 73,103, 189, and 629.)

As religious duty, some Christians do respect sacred scriptures like the Qur'an. In *Irene* (1749), Dr. Johnson speaks about Muslims' reverence to the Koran. Muslims strongly hold that salvation could only be found in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, Prophet Muhammad's tradition. William Hodson's play, *Zoraida: A Tragedy* (1779), criticizes the Islamic theology regarding the 'black stone' as given to Adam from heaven. Hodson refers to the description of Paradise and Allah, the Almighty, as in the Holy Koran (1880: 55:46-69). Sultan Selim takes oaths to Zoraida by the tree trunk of the Throne of God. He says, 'By the sacred trunk\ Of Zedrat's tree whose everlasting foliage\ Shadows the throne of Allah' (II, 37-39). The *Kursi* or Throne of Allah, attracts the English readers. It stirs the imagination of Western writers and their public with the glamour of the Throne and its Maker. The Koran contains a verse called *Kursi*, which Hodson illustrates in depicting 'Allah sits enshrined, spontaneous chime\ To more than mortal minstrelsy' (*Zoraida*, II. 2. 36-37) In another picture from the Koran (1880: 55:70-74 and 76:17), Hodson describes how 'Houris invite' the warriors 'to their arms' with 'spicy Zenzibil' glass of juice (*Zoraida*, II.2. 54).

The Koranic theology of levels of Islamic Paradise fascinated Western authors. The top of paradise is the throne of God. Europeans were curious to know about the divine message of the Holy Qur'an. For instance, Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) amazes his Elizabethan audience with this description of Qur'anic God, suggested to be taken assertively as the same Christian Godhead. He speaks marvelously of the oneness of God, declaring: 'The God that sits in heaven.../ For he is God alone, and none but he' (Part II, 5.1.199-200). Carleen Ibrahim (1996) remarks that Marlowe means the verse of *Ayat Al-Kursi* (Throne), a great verse in the Noble Qur'an (2.255) (p. 67). The verse's meaning is employed by Marlowe in *Tamburlaine*:

He that sits on high and never sleep,
Nor in one place is circumscribable,
But everywhere fills every continent,
With strange infusion of his sacred vigour. (Part II, 2.2.49-52)

The verse means that the throne of Allah in the sky includes all things, world, planets and skies. The following is the verse:

Allah! There is no god but He, - the Living, the Self-Subsisting Supporter of all. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what (approaches His creatures) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory). (Qur'an: 2.255)

The image of Paradise is fascinating for English authors. This literary paradise secularizes Islamic traditional theological concepts of divine heaven. Its interest in Koranic matters is used by English authors to enrich their literary themes. For them, these pictures enrich the spectrum of imagination, but for readers they create a romantic construction of the Oriental Other. Dryden's Oriental play introduces an Islamic theology in looking at God in paradise 'O holy Alla that I live to see'. In *Don Sebastian*, Dryden represents Sultan Almanzor 'swear[s] on the Alcoran' (5, 191). Dryden talks about 'fasting' as an Islamic 'law,' and the same law 'forbids to wed a Christian' which is in the Qur'an (2: 221; 60:10).

V. THE PROGRESS OF THE KORAN'S IMAGE

An important event that marked awareness of Islam in England was the translation of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* into English from the French version of Antoine Galland. For many ages, writers remained under the spell of the Orient through those available translations. Others contributed to a better understanding of Islam and its Koranic teachings like the work of Jonas Hanway, a merchant and a philanthropist, who published his *Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea* in 1733. Hanway's work contains comprehensive observations on the Qur'an.

British residents in Muslim countries made some more important contributions to the issue. Their records showed years of communal and business contact. A good example of that is *The Natural History of Aleppo* (1756) by Dr. Alexander Russell. The book presents a topographical description of Aleppo, an assessment of its population, and a description of the flora and fauna life in it. Such works gave the English readers a virtual representation of Islamic world and an opportunity for acquiring information about the Muslim society. Such positive understanding of Muhammad is written in Edward Gibbon's description of Prophet Muhammad in his book *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). For the first time, the Prophet is shown in a seemingly positive image. Gibbon goes on

portraying his accounts of the holy Koran to his English readers - not a totally objective approach especially so when he sees Muhammad as an imposter, a biased view deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian culture.

In *The Fire Worshipper* (1836), Thomas Moore attacks Muslims and the Koran. He believes that the Koran approves bloodshed and violence with rewards in Paradise for the killer. He asserts that the Koranic amulet works as 'light in blood;' in *The Princess*, the Holy war is in every heavenly religion but there are restrictions. Moore draws a deductive image of the Koran to approve killing in the name of God. He says:

One of that vainly, murderous brood,
To carnage and the Koran given,
Who think through unbelievers' blood?
Lies their directest path to heaven; -
One, who will pause and kneel unshod,
In the warm blood his hand hath poured,
To mutter over some text of God
Engraven on his reeking sword. (Burt, 1920: 99)

Thomas Moore refers to Prophet Muhammad's letter to George the Makawkas,⁴ viceroy of Egypt, who answered that he would believe the suggestions, and sent amongst gifts, two youthful maidens. One of them is Mary, who was fifteen years old. Moore depicts Prophet Muhammad's happiness with the young slave girl and his debauched lifestyle in sex. He depicts Prophet Muhammad as unfaithful in his Koran when he calls some angel to approve his love with Mary by a new Koranic text. Now, a revelation comes which is recorded in the sixty-sixth chapter of the Qur'ān (pp. 66:1-5), releasing the prophet from his oath, and allowing him to have concubines, if he wished. This is a negative remark on Prophet Muhammad as he receives revelation while he is in the embrace of his wife, Ayesha, whom Allah has selected to be his heavenly wife. Once the Prophet was asked about the best beloved person for him, he said 'Ayesha' (Al-Bokhari: 2000, Hadith No. 3662). Thomas Moore, the poet, thus alludes to the circumstance in *Lalla Rookh*:

And here Mohammed, born for love and guile.
Forgets the Koran in his Mary's smile,
Then beckons some kind angel from above.
With a new text to consecrate their love! (*Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*, 83-86)

Misunderstanding made some English writers like Sir Walter Scott identify Muslim soldiers in Palestine as the immortal enemies of Christians who became the fanatical savages of Arabian deserts. He depicts them with the 'sabre' in one hand and the Koran in the other, raising an infliction of 'death or the faith of Mohammed' (Scott, 2002: 230). They are knights 'with an accuracy' of the Qur'ān as 'a better religion.' They are 'faithfully observed' and 'given occasion for display of good faith, generosity, clemency, and even kindly affections.' They are 'apt to shoulder for a length of time in the bosoms of those who are so unhappy as to be their prey.' The character of Arab physician utters some verses from 'the Koran,' like 'God be our guide, and Mohammed [is] our protector in the desert as in the watered field' (Ibid, 230). Furthermore, John George Edgar (1834-1864), a British author and biographer, cites a dialogue between Bibars Bendocdar, an Egyptian Muslim, and a crusader Frank in *The Boy Crusaders: A Story of the Days of Louis IX* (1865): Bibars Bendocdar describes his campaign to Egypt as unfair and he is punished as a promise by God as the Koran states: those 'who make war unjustly shall perish;' at the same time, Frank answers proudly a 'Saracen' or 'an Anglo-Norman gentleman does not regulate his conduct by the Koran;' Bibars, shouts loudly at Frank; 'Infidel!', 'you know not of what you speak. You will have to account for your faith to the angels *Munkir* and *Nakir*.' The Frank exclaims with an air of perplexity that '*Munkir* and *Nakir*!' 'beshrew me if I ever before heard of their names' (Edgar, 1865, p. 45). In Islamic theology, *Munkir* and *Nakir* are angels who attend every man and note down his good and evil deeds. They are the formidable inquisitors of the dead.

The historical authenticity or doctrinal autonomy of the Qur'an abdicates the universal mission and it hence poses no challenge to the West. Such attempt of intercultural understanding, at least, seems to help some authors to appreciate the Qur'an. For instance, Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) admirably speaks about Akbar's hypothesis of religious unification in *Akbar's Dream*. The seventeenth century Indian thinker Akbar dreams of one 'new Koran' and one place of worship with permanent opened-door, neither like 'Church nor a Mosque,' but a loftier temple. However, unlike other dreams, Tennyson advances man's quest beyond the normal dimensions of intellectuality and imagination to find his identity in a place to every breath from heaven and Truth, and peace.

Like the English, French writers to have their own criticism about Islam. M. De Voltaire's French tragedy of *Mahomet* (1736) represents medieval tradition of the accumulated accusations that the Western Christianity had recorded against the Qur'ān and Muhammad. In that epoch, those accounts inspired Englishmen as well as other Europeans. Nevertheless, they were modified in meaning and depended on approaches to attract Islam by history and culture. Little has changed over the past few centuries. This current "threat" of Islam, in fact, has brought the Western world closer to the sort of polemic-filled invective that distinguished the West's relations with the Islamic world during the "Ottoman threat" in the sixteenth century till the late eighteenth century.

⁴ Prophet Muhammad wrote at the same time to the world emperors - Heraclius the emperor of Byzantium, Chosroes II the emperor of Persia, the Negus of Ethiopia, Harith Gassani the governor of Syria and Munzir ibn Sawa the ruler of Bahrain.

Most of the nineteenth century authors, such as Johann von Goethe and Robert Southey, did not set foot on the Eastern soil, but they had a deep understanding of Islam. Goethe was extraordinarily fascinated in Islam when he noted down in his *West-Oestlicher Divan* in 1814-1815. In it, he attempted to reproduce the verses of the Qur'an, which he studied in German and yet learned this diverse interpretations into other Western languages. Goethe, though, firmly believed that all translations were deficient because throughout that period in Jena he had been studying to read and write Arabic. Accordingly, he could have read verses of the Qur'an in their novel language. In his *West-Eastern Divan*, he marks:

Whether the Koran is of eternity?

I don't question that!

That it is the book of books

I believe out of the Muslim's duty.⁵

Much added that Goethe's curiosity in the Qur'an as a sacred text with supreme magnificence of Arabic; its religious teachings were his concern. About the Prophet and the Qur'an, Goethe has so much to say in the following statement: "He is a prophet and not a poet and therefore his Koran is to be seen as a divine law and not as a book of a human being, made for education or entertainment." In a further part of his *Divan*, Goethe states his rejoiced verses, which Carlyle (1950) pays attention to Islam in his *Hero and Hero Worship*: "If Islam means submission to God,/ We all live and die in Islam" (p. 243). On February 2nd, 1816, Goethe went as far as indicating that he would not refute others' suspicions that he was a Muslim. Goethe's positive perceptions of Islam drove Shaykh 'Abdalqadir Al-Murabit' to claim that Goethe 'should be known among the Muslims as Muhammad Johann Wolfgang Goethe.'

In his book *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1840s), the British historian and author Thomas Carlyle held Islam in a high esteem for its wonderful vitality. Carlyle concluded that 'the word this man spoke has been the life-guidance, now of a hundred and eighty millions of men for twelve hundred years...A False man found a religion? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house' (Armstrong, 1993, p. 24). Shortly in the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle endorsed the above views in a lecture entitled "*The Hero as a Prophet, Mahomet, and Islam.*" The speech was conveyed in London on May 8th, 1840, to a great viewers, among whom, were literary men and bishops. After giving a brief biography of the Prophet and praising him for his genuineness, truthfulness, and legitimacy, Carlyle contrasted Christianity and Islam to prove that their principles and teachings are fundamentally the identical and ended this part by constructing an indication to Goethe, who states: 'If this be *Islam*, do we not all live in Islam?' (Carlyle, 1950, p. 74). His explanation of Islam as a bewildered form of Christianity is fascinating. His affirmation lies on 'the highest Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth' (pp. 80, 85, 88). Carlyle evaluates Prophet Mohammed's exploit of the sword in change with 'Charlemagne's conversion of the Saxons which was not by preaching'. About the Qur'an, Carlyle had greatly to declare. However, his most influential justification is understandable in his statement that it is a communication sent down from Heaven. Carlyle ended his talk by condemning Prideaux and others for their misapprehensions and distortions of Islam and their people.

In this respect, misapprehensions and distortions of Islam and the Muslims by a number of Western artists and fictional writers, who needed higher human ideals in their words, were and still are mediators of disagreement and dissection between the Orient and the Occident. Sir William Muir, the writer of a four-volume life story of Prophet Muhammad, which has been famous within Oriental literature since the middle of the nineteenth century, is one of those Orientalists who pioneered Orientalism. Muir's most significant basis was to switch Muslims to Christianity. In *The Life of Mahomet* (1861), Muir systematized the Christians' dubieties and scepticisms about the Qur'an and Muhammad. Sir William Muir says, 'the sword of Mahomet and the Coran are the most fatal enemies of civilization, liberty and truth which the world has yet known' in the nineteenth century (Buaben, 1998, p. 111). Thomas Carlyle remarks in his second lecture of *Heroes and Hero Worship* on May 8, 1840, that the English Koran by Sale is known to be 'a very fair one' but he has condemned Sale's writing style. Carlyle expresses his impression in reading it:

... as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite;—insupportable stupidity, in short! Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran. We read in it, as we might in the State-Paper Office, unreadable masses of lumber, that perhaps we may get some glimpses of a remarkable man. It is true we have it under disadvantages: the Arabs see more method in it than we (Carlyle, 1950: 179).

Carlyle did not examine the Quran himself. He depends on Sale's interpretation which was incomplete. Thomas Carlyle admires Godfrey Higgins in using logic to prove the authenticity of the Prophet and the Qur'an. Godfrey Higgins (1772-1833), a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, charges researchers for their biased opinions on Islam; he protects Muhammad against charges of lust, dream and untruth and proves that Islam and Christianity have the same original fundamentals and ethics. In his "Preface," Higgins writes:

The object of the following essay is to abate the mischievous spirit of intolerance, which has hitherto existed between the followers of Jesus and those of Mohamed, by showing that the religions of both . . . are the same in their original foundation and principles (Bennett, 1991, p. 16).

⁵ All quotations by Goethe are taken from "Was Goethe a Muslim?" by Shaykh 'Abdalqadir Al-Murabit. Available online on: www.themodernreligion.com/converts/converts_gorthe.html. Johann von Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* (WA I, 6, 203).

Higgins refutes charges of the Prophet's ambition and lust, and Islam against accusations of sensuality and violence. He has so much to state about the genuineness of Prophet Muhammad, but he condenses his observation in stating: 'In a word, he may justly be said to have lived as a hero and to have died like a philosopher' (Ibid).

In the twentieth century, with the revolution of media, knowledge became accessible for public. The works of the most influential British Orientalists such as William Muir, David Samuel Margoliouth and William Montgomery Watt, attempt to justify the historical background and roots of the negative image of the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muhammad in the West. Though in his book, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Professor Watt claims that he has better understanding of Islam than early Orientalists, he insists for example, that the Holy Qur'ān is 'a subdued revelation' with old scriptures and Satan. For Watt, the Qur'ān is not wholly true. He identifies some verses in the Qur'ān as Satanic Verses in Surat Al-Najem (Ali, 1997, 53:19-23). In this story he rejects Islamic authentic reports that Satan whispers in the ears of the Meccan polytheists about their idols with the name of God so they prostrated with the Muslims in the last verse of the Al-Najem (Ali, 1997, 53:19-23). Like other Orientalists, Watt (1966) insists that those two verses permitted intercession to the deities at some of the shrines round Mecca and Muhammad later realized that these verses could not have come to him from God and must have been suggested by Satan (p. 26). For Muslims, Allah assures that He has tightened the revelation to Muhammad and saves the Qur'ān as a final text for mankind. Therefore, no interferences can be made by any man. In fact, the use of the authentic information would have contributed towards more awareness of the Qur'ān and Muhammad. Throughout many sources of information, peoples can understand each other better than in the past. Norman Daniel (1966) describes the misunderstanding as a process by which the 'other' became the opposite of our own self-image (p. 65).

VI. CONCLUSION

The spread of accurate information about Qur'ān and Muhammad helps the West to understand Islam and Muslims. The academic research in the translation of the Qur'ān can create a new stage in Western interpretations of Islam. Western investigators require open understanding to Islam from its own sources. The 1400-year-Christian-Muslim heritage of an approximately steady progression of misinterpretation and distortion, the assignment of merely being truthful with each other and about each other's devotion is itself a colossal dispute. In the past, Christopher Marlowe's reference to the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muhammad in *Tamburlaine* (1587) the 'Turkish Alcoran' is to attack the Turkish pride in affronting it. However, to burn the Qur'ān, Marlowe disparages it, and unjustly fake deeds to Prophet Muhammad. Marlowe's hero Tamburlaine identifies the Qur'ān as a foe of the Elizabethans (Al-Olaqi, 2012, 2, pp. 177-201). Nowadays, the crimes and evil characteristics are attributed to the negative stereotyped images of Muslims. Some politicians believe that the Qur'ān promotes violence. Some Western academic opinion makers have articulated the West's attitude towards Qur'ān as a source of immorality for the Western communities. By 9/11 some Americans think that the Qur'ān is the spiritual architect of Islamic radicalism which stands on the motif of the terrorist attack on America. As a result, burning the Qur'ān is an individual tendency for some Western fanatics to defuse their fury and a remark of attacking Muslims' dignity. The evangelist Orientalist Jerry Farwell describes Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist. He consciously or unconsciously presents to his followers the same sort of negative portrayal of the Prophet of Islam that Voltaire did. Voltaire degraded the image of the Qur'ān. And other communal religious groups take more severe stances against Islam, echoing association of Muhammad with the devil and Islam is a threat. Nevertheless, many Europeans respect Islamic books including the Qur'ān, and appreciate the contribution of Islamic civilization and its legacy in human heritage. In addition, the increased number of converts to Islam proves that the Qur'ān and its teachings have enough truth and divinity that a human mind can peacefully realise it. Karen Armstrong (1993), a contemporary English biographer of Islam, remarks that it is a reappearance of the medieval accounts to attack on the Qur'ān and its Prophet (p.42).

Things are changing today. Prophet Muhammad is no longer believed to be an impostor; he is instead considered a reformer. The Qur'ān is a holy scripture. Islamic culture is no longer considered a curse to Christianity. With the real contact of the Orient, images of the Islam and its Prophet in literature go on in another direction far away from any misconception. However, those misleading views and attitudes about Islam and its Prophet have not vanished entirely from the Western media even in the dawn of the global century. More investigation in the English Oriental library to the sources of information is needed to help English writers to properly understand Prophet Muhammad. The unexamined works inspire men of letters in the current century who wants to approach Muslims in the context of history, culture, religion, and customs. Making a truthful image of the Prophet is part of knowledge, understanding, communication, and dialogue of civilizations between the Islamic World and the West.

In conclusion, the conventional description of Islamic events has remained astonishingly robust, even among modernist thinkers in the West. The writings of affiliated scholars of University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies in the 1970s such as John Wansbrough, Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, Andrew Rippin and Gerald Hawting, question Islam's origins from Islamic sources and perceptions. They call their works on this hypothesis a 'new history' of Islam (Hawting, 2002, p. vi; and Wansbrough, 2004, p. 23). This hypothesis examines the production of the Qur'ān which has been a matter of concern to Western researchers for a long time. It totally ignores Islamic sources. They claim that the Qur'ān is not quite truthful, as it seems. Those Orientalists have developed new intellectual techniques with a biblical understanding to Islam. Wansbrough thinks that the Koran is a literary text with devotional

references. Andrew Rippin, a professor of Islamic history at the University of Victoria in Canada, is the author of a revisionist history of Islam published by Routledge. He says that ‘the Sana'a manuscripts [of the Qur’ān] are part of the process of filling in the holes in our knowledge of what might have happened.’⁶ Ziauddin Sardar (1999) calls their works ‘Euro-centrism of the most extreme, pure blind kind, which assumes that not a single word written by Muslims can be accepted as evidence’ (p. 16). Sardar (1999) firmly situated the Western revisionists in the post-colonial Orientalist camp from where colonial ‘experts’ are constantly saying to Muslims that Western revisionists ‘know best about the origins of their primitive and barbarian religion.’ ‘The triumphant conclusion of Crone and Cook,’ Sardar adds, “was that Islam is an amalgam of Jewish texts, theology and ritual tradition’ (p. 16).

The Bible is different from the Qur’ān. Prophet Muhammad derives his importance from the Qur’ān but the Bible gains its significance from Prophet Jesus. For many Christians, Islam is heretic. The development of bogus accounts to attack Islamic teachings was widespread. It was indistinctly echoed in the West. Prejudice over the Holy Qur’ān is striking in many English writings. The spread of genuine information about Qur’ān and Muhammad helps to appreciate Islam and Muslims. Western researchers need to comprehend Islam from its own sources. Given the 1400-year Christian-Muslim legacy of an almost unbroken series of misunderstanding and falsification, the assignment of simply being truthful with each other and about each other’s devotion is itself an enormous challenge.

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⁶ See the article of Martin Bright. Bright is home affairs editor of the Observer Martin Bright *The New Statesman Special Report - The great Koran* cons trick the Observer Version: 13th July 2009.

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