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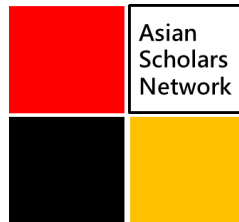
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Victorian Orientalist Poetry: Origins and Meanings

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Abstract: *Orientalism in the Victorian era has two controversial issues, namely, origin and meaning. In relation to meaning, Orientalism has both positive and negative understandings: underestimation of the Oriental world or actual representation of that world, a fact epitomized in Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) and criticism on that work. While its origin is traced back to various sources in different periods from historians predating Homer to nineteenth century literary and cultural development. However, this paper, and for the purpose of its construction, argues that Oriental studies in the Victorian period have roots in four critical aspects of eighteenth–and–nineteenth century Western culture: first, Europe's allure for and translation of The Arabian Nights; second, the Romantics' representation of the Orient; third, the depiction of opium obsession; fourth, the rediscovery of The Epic Gilgamesh made by the English Assyriologist George Smith in 1872. This paper will follow these origins as well as Edward Said and Orientalist discourse, Orientalism in Victorian art and literature, and for the purpose of this paper, the orientalist elements in the Victorian poetry. The paper concludes that Victorian Orientalist poetry is extremely ambivalent due to the various origins and meanings of the Oriental thought, resulting in misinterpretations.*

Keywords: Orientalism, ambivalence, Victorian poetry, the Orient, the Occident

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1. Introduction

1.1 Edward Said's Orientalism and Orientalist Discourse

In his introduction to *Orientalism* (1978), Said means by Orientalism three interdependent things: first, an institutional scholarly research of the Orient; second, a Western technique of idea built on "an ontological and epistemological distinction" between the East and the West; third, an Occidental method created to reconstruct, dominate and have power over the Oriental world. Said applied the Foucauldian discourse proposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), an attempt to better characterize and examine the Oriental discourse (p. 3). This means that the Western perspective of the exotic was sufficiently conceived during late 18th century and early 19th century, the time when Britain's imperialism was expanding. For Said, the world of the Orient was not based on objective reality, but rather on "battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections" (p. 8). Due to such imaginative examination of the Oriental World, there emerged variant forms of Orientalist literary productions and politicizing practices in the Victorian period. Said distinguished between latent Orientalism, "an almost unconscious … positivity," and manifest Orientalism: a variety of Occidental visions of Oriental scholarship and "differences in form and personal style." Such difference between latent and manifest Orientalism suggests the possibility of variant types of Orientalist writing. However, the variations of the Victorian writers' Orientalist ideas are more manifest that latent, that is, the

differences between their postures of the Orient are mostly in subjective structure and hardly in content (p. 206).

However, this Said's distinction is inaccurate explanation of the variety of the Victorians' attitudes toward the Orient. One can note overgeneralizations in Said's text, among them is the statement that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (1978, p. 204). Kennedy (2017) writes that Said's theorizing on Orientalism, in addition to its ignorance and reduction of female writers, there are numerous visions and attitudes in Victorian Orientalist writings (p. 2). Salavati (2020) writes that although no one can disregard the importance of Edward Said's Orientalism, many points in his book, dealing with imperialist and colonial attitudes, are to be challenged, demonstrating that the Romantic and Victorian Orientalists "were not all the representatives of Colonialism; rather, some of them were the agents upon whom a bridge was made between the cultures and nations" (p. 7).

However, Said (1978) is to be on safer ground in some other points. This provides an opportunity for future explorers to pay tribute to the diverse attitudes towards the East in the Victorian era. First, he states that the distance between the Orient and the Orientalist or Occident was reduced in the Victorian period (p. 222); second, his proposition that variant types of Occidental representation are based on the "textual attitude" or textual representations rather than on actual experience or objective reality is suggestive (p. 93). Correspondingly, his statements that a lot of Orientalist literary production accentuated past Oriental glory as compared to the West's 20th century decadent and barbarian attitudes, and that the Orientalist sometimes produced the Oriental culture and literature exactly and positively (pp. 52, 79) are also notable. Ismailinejad (2015) states that the Oriental societies represented as mediocre, barbarian and passive (p. 69). This is the negative side of Ismailinejad's thesis, but Ismailinejad continues defining Said's "textual attitude" as "an unknown, doubtable situation in which books or texts can provide the readers with clue or knowledge about the real lives of human beings but there is a constant danger of falling into superficial conclusions or misapprehensions that are the result of baises incorporated within the text" (p. 70).

Said's Orientalism, a corporate organization cooperating with the East, was established during the late 18th century and dominated the 19th century, was in an interdependent relation with the imperial project. Said (1994) writes that during the Victorian era Orientalism and imperialism cannot be easily separated. Moreover, the Western Imperialism emphasized the idea that the western culture is superior to Eastern cultures, a fact that formerly outlined 18th century Western false perception of the Orient. This false perceptivity of the Orient is illustrated by Said (1978) when he describes the Orientalists as "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, and without natural suspicion," whereas the Orients are "none of these things" (p. 49). Kennedy (2017) made a general suggestion that there were more than one version of Orientalism which dominated the Victorian literature and society (p. 3).

Said's Orientalism was complemented later by some writers. Emily A. Haddad (2002) added new aspects of Orientalist with reference to Victorian poetry and travel writing. Haddad argues that the most important aspect of Victorian Orientalism in travel writing and poetry is "its ontological unnaturalness" (p. 201). Rana Kabbani and Linda Nochlin complemented many of Said's points.

Nochlin (1989) argues that French Orientalist paintings would be better studied with regard to imperial politics and dominant ideology, reproduction of orientalist cliché such as the mysteries of the Orient (pp. 34-35). Kabbani (1994) developed Said's point of the connection between "the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex." She emphasized the Orient's "a sexual space", "an escape from the dictates of the bourgeois metropolis" (p. 67). These contributions made by Haddad, Kabbani and Nochlin are important developments to Said's Orientalism.

1.2 Orientalism in the Victorian Arts and Literature

Orientalist art in the Victorian era is a diverse field that has several aspects, mostly dominated by imperialist and exoticist ideas: portrayal of patriotism and/or important historical happenings and personages relevant to the British Commonwealth; representations of Westerners in non-Westerners guise; paintings; Oriental man and his harem or Oriental women, the Turkish hammam, or slavery market; sketches, paintings, and photographs of animate and inanimate objects produced by Easterners on their traveling; and varied explanations of works like *The Arabian Nights* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1891). The Oriental tropes dealt with in the Victorian art and literature are mostly the same: the imperialist, the exotic and ideas related in social critical theory.

Nochlin (1989) makes a political evaluation of imperialist and exoticist Orientalist clichés in the European art of painting. Mackenzie (1995) attempted to adjust Said's points on the association between Orientalism and imperialism, but he disregarded the imperialist aspect (pp. 1-19). He proposed that what influenced Victorian Orientalist art was the proximity of Islamic schools of thought in the Middle East and its biblical and ancient associations and Eastern Mediterranean tourism expansion, rather than "direct imperial rule" (p. 52). Elizabeth Butler (1879) shows a single figure, William Brydon, the only one who survived from the British retreat from Kabul, at the center (qtd. in Smith et al, 2015, pp. 114-115). Kennedy (2017) notes that John Frederick Lewis's *The Siesta* (1876) is somehow similar to Emily Pfeiffer's poems and Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* (1853), and its fictional character Lucy Snowe, in relation to Orientalist representations of the enslaved woman, concubine harem.

2. Literature Review

Much has been said about Orientalism in the Romantic and Victorian era and literature, but it is always wise to survey some current views relevant to this paper's explanation of Orientalism in the period. Kennedy (2019) wrote that "Orientalism in Victorian poetry is a predominantly male domain" where the translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Romantics' images of the Orient and the Easterners' appreciation of their culture became sources of inspiration (pp. 5-9). Al-Leithy (2020) investigated the most significant early nineteenth-century Orientalist British poems and noticed an unusual interest in Islam and Muslims. Such poems are Southey's "Thalaba the Destroyer and Roderick", Scott's "The Vision of Don Roderick", Byron's "The Giaour", Harold's "Pilgrimage and The Corsair", Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh", Coleridge's "Mohammed", Shelley's "Prologue to Hellas." Al-Leithy's conclusion was that nearly all of the poems "show misinformation, accusations or prejudice against Islam and Muslims. Such inaccuracies and false claims about Islam and Muslims presented a distorted image of Islam and Muslims to European readers of the time" (p. 75). He added that, in Said's Orientalism, the term Orient was used interchangeably with Islam and Muslims (p. 79).

Belenli (2017) wrote that the 19th century tendency to translate and publish *The Arabian Nights* is an epitome of Victorians' taste for the Orient (p. 289). Salavati (2020) dealt with Sir William Jones and his translations "as the counterexample of Said's archetype of the Occident, investigated "the influence of Jones' translations on European literary works during the 118th and 19th centuries in Britain and concluded that literature in the period is "contrary to Said' hypothesis. Salavati's thesis also proved that "some Orientalists devoted their life to transfer the literature and culture of the Oriental lands to the world, not to dominate them, but based on love and enthusiasm" (p. 2). Cannon (1990) emphasized that "Jones's actions and ideas, which stand for themselves and show that he always resisted any political aspects of scholarship" (p. xv). One can conclude that discussion of Oriental subjects anticipated ambivalence and ambiguities in terms of origin and meaning.

3. Origins of Orientalism in the Victorian Period

Due to the ambivalent nature of the idea of Orientalism, one cannot attribute a single origin to its presence, but various sources associated to its construction. The origins of Orientalism can be traced back to ancient Greece, or to Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1789, to mention two. Ibn Warraq (2007) suggested that Ancient Greek writers are to be considered as founders of Orientalist literature (p. 75). Said (1978) was mostly concerned with nineteenth century culture, a culture of Western imperialism. and this because of his interest in the culture of the period. But for Said, the East-West division started since the time of the Homeric epics (p. 39). However, and for the purpose of this paper, I offer four origins that well combined to construct Orientalism in the Victorian period, namely, *The Arabian Nights*, The Romantics' representation of the Orient, the depiction of opium obsession and finally, the rediscovery of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

3.1 The Arabian Nights

The 18th century European fascination with *The Arabian Nights* is considerable part of the origin of Orientalism in the Victorian Age. Theodore Ziolkowski (2011) writes that *The Arabian Nights* has inspired many European writers, became so popular, and generated many translations and retellings since it was first collected and translated by the French archaeologist and orientalist Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717 (pp. 190-191). Ballaster (2007) writes that the work was also translated into English by many British orientalists (p. 57,108).

In her discussion of Said's "textual attitude," that is, misunderstanding of the Oriental texts, Ismailinejad writes that *The Arabian Nights* is subject to the misapprehension of the East because of its ambivalent, sometimes negative, representation of East (p. 70). Ballaster (2007) assumes that *The Arabian Nights* began to be treated in the Age of Imperialism as a text offered to Children. The Romantic poets Wordsworth and Byron referred to the enjoyment they gained from learning the narratives in their childhood and Dickens's works full of references to the Nights, associating them with the world of childhood innocence and happiness (p. 361). Meester (1915) defines *The Arabian Nights* as valuable source for the European understanding of the Oriental World of Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Persia and Africans (p. 14).

Dickens' writings contain many Victorian Orientalist trends, importantly in his ironic and satirical references to the *Arabian Nights* and exportation of opium, an imaginative representation of south Asian individuals and lands (Kennedy, 2017, p. 7). Dickens' narratives reveal a notable association

with *The Arabian Nights*. The main character of David Copperfield (1850) announces that *The Arabian Nights* remarkably "kept alive his fancy" and he hopes to avoid imperialist universe (David Copperfield, p. 66).

3.2 The Romantics' Representation of the Orient

The importance of *The Arabian Nights* is enriched by Romantic works like Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (1812, 1814, and 1816), six "Turkish Tales: The Giaour" (1813), "The Bride of Abydos" (1814), "The Corsair" (1814), "Lara" (1814), "The Siege of Corinth" (1816), and "Parisina" (1816). Although these aforementioned texts were studied for the purpose of the Byronic Hero, they are, however, full of references to Islam. Khrisat (1813) writes that Byron "adopts an unfair attitude towards the Orient" (p. 59), while Peter Cochran (notes that "The Giaour" is expressed partly from Islamic perspective, and the setting of "The Bride of Abydos" is the Turkish Sultan's court (qtd. in Kennedy, 2017, p. 5). Leask (1992) explains that Byron's "Turkish Tales" historically changed the West's relation to the East (p. 22).

Other writers also used Western settings in their works, like "Kubla Khan" and "The Revolt of Islam." Kennedy (2017) argues that these works display the influence of Oriental themes. Thomas Moore's "Lalla Rookh" also utized Oriental setting and the Oriental people. Bohls (2013) writes that Moore was adviced by Byron to write a narrative poem with an Oriental setting (p. 155). Other works by Moore like *Irish Melodies* (written between1808 and1834) produce a distinctive Orientalist vision (p. 5).

3.3 The Depiction of Opium Obsession

De Quincey's magnificent work *Confessions* (1821) took great role in developing Victorian Orientalism. The work represents the danger of Eastern societies and cultures. Malay, as an Oriental figure, is portrayed as and downscaled to body-organs and reduced as being "used to opium" (Confessions, pp. 63-64).

Dickens' use of the opium obsession and trade is for the purpose of satirical points. Works like *Bleak House* (1853) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) focus on the themes of hypocrisy and destructiveness. The Chinese-like English mistress, Puffer, and the depiction of the opium den in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is notable. In *Little Dorrit* (1857) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), the motif of the exportation and selling of opium in China, or sailing to China to bring opium is also suggestive. Dickens' Orientalism helped him in his criticism of the British society but also his representation of the Orient as inferior to the Europeans (Kennedy, 2017, pp. 6-8). Dickens's essays like "The Niger Expedition" and other works, demonstrate his ironic and satirical style and references to Eastern people. These works represent all Western races as superior to non-Westerners (Dickens, 1987, p. 167).

3.4 Rediscovery of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Much has been said about the Oriental Influences on the English writings in the Victorian Age, but surprisingly no explanation given for the position of *Gilgamesh* in this process. Therefore, this paper puts Gilgamesh inside the box of origin of Orientalism in the Victorian literary production. Gilgamesh is the earliest universal coherent masterpiece of literature. It was lost, together with the cuneiform writing ceased to be used, for more than two millennia since around the first century

AD. The stories record the adventures and heroic deeds of the ancient Babylonian king reported to have exercised authority in the early third millennium BC. Due to the many versions discovered, there is a possibility of making an interesting and intelligible reconstruction. Therefore, *Gilgamesh* is still in the process of discovering (George, 2010, pp. 3-6).

The rediscovery of *Gilgamesh* in 1872 by the pioneering English Assyriologist George Smith (1840-1876), self-educated in Biblical and Near East Eastern Archaeology, changed the Victorians' relation to history and time, recalling the instinctive tension and instability of the Victorian vision of history. The Mesopotamian epic included stories that had been believed and taught to be originated in the Old Testament (1200-165 BC). However, *Gilgamesh* was written at least two millennia before the original Bible. Vybarr (2013) explains the way the discovery was put down in global news and the deal with the adventures of Gilgamesh in scholarly geographical publications indicates the taste for history in the period, therefore, Gilgamesh began to represent a better "form of historical evidence" such as the question of whether there had ever been a story of universal flood and the Deluge. Thus, there is a connection between the rediscovery of Gilgamesh and the tension in beliefs about the past, present and future in the Victorian era (pp. 3-5, 38). This means that the rediscovery and translation of *Gilgamesh* emerged from and contributed to the ongoing tension in the nature of history and ideas during the nineteenth century. Vybbar divides the nineteenth century writers into two groups. The first group was engaged in the ideas of Darwin's evolutionary theory, while the second group was engaged with the geological discoveries and debates, alternative narrative and historical sublime in the Victorian culture, that is alerting to the nineteenth century uncertainty about the nature of the past (p. 7). The aim of Vybbar's book is "to provide a reassessment of how history was (or was not) understood by the Victorians, and how that tension was so very productive in nineteenth-century culture" (p. 8).

There is a rich thematic relevance between Gilgamesh and the age of its rediscovery. Mythology, story and inevitability, immortality and value of death are inevitable and unavoidable themes in almost all the Ages. These themes and motifs are to be found in the late 19th century writings (Vybbar, 2013, p. 28). Theodore Ziolkowski (2011) writes that the search for Gilgamesh was demonstrated by a "hunger for myth" that had been promoted by some figures, among them are Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche (pp. 9-26). George Smith's "The Chaldean Account of the Deluge" (1872), a paper presented before the Society of Biblical Archaeology, was a cultural event that caused a sensation, at least among those who were engaged in Oriental studies. As a result, Smith is known as 'the decipherer of the now world-famous "eleventh-tablet," which contained the Chaldean [Neo-Babylonian] story of the Flood, had changed the intellectual life of the Victorians. Vybbar (2013) writes that Smith's this very paper and other pieces by him and by Sir Henry Rawlinson got respect by "the Department of the Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum" (p. 39). Vybbar adds that Smith's interesting foundations contributed to the "Victorian understandings of the difference between natural and cultural history" (p. 41).

Smith departed for Iraq in 1875 on his project of *Assyrian Discoveries* (1875), a project that is mostly an account of his travel to and from and the East rather than an archaeological study, so to speak. Such accounts on the global flood and the Deluge open a novel domain of inquiry in early division if the Old Testament history. Eric Ziolkowski (2007) writes that "much excitement generated by the epic's incorporation of a story a great deluge that seemed to foreshadow, parallel,

thus, for some, 'support' the Noachic flood tale in Genesis" (p. 55). *Gilgamesh*, one can think reasonably, was involved in the emergence of cultural history and doubted the biblical accuracy, as well as the Greeks, as the origin of western culture, therefore, made the Victorians go back to ancient Eastern Oriental cultures like the Mesopotamian culture, for the purpose of understanding the origin of earth and beings rather than depending on the Darwinian paradigm, a paradigm that dominated the modern Western culture. This means, one may add, that the rediscovery of *Gilgamesh* was not only by chance but as a result of secularism and dissatisfaction that dominated the Victorian era. It was re-discovered unintentionally and then intentionally. Schmidt (2019) states that Gilgamesh was rediscovered by and for the Victorians "by chance and then by design" (p. xiii). The tension, doubt, and instability that Gilgamesh caused can be seen in Vybbar's words:

> The Victorians, it seems, were persuaded by both Smith and his more conservative allies that the biblical account was not the sole source for information on the Flood, that it was constructed from older traditions, and that Gilgamesh proved the existence of such traditions, but that none of this had any necessary bearing on the question of the overall 'reliability' of Genesis. (2013, p. 58)

Theodore Ziolkowski (2011) viewed Gilgamesh as a new "phenomenon", "a late episode in the general Western fascination with the Near East that has existed in various forms since antiquity" (p. 189).

4. Orientalist Elements in the Victorian Poetry

Victorian Orientalist poetry is written chiefly by male poets. However, there are a few female poets, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, already made references to the Orient in their poems, but they are outside the scope of this very paper. Orientalism is to be found in Tennyson, FitzGerald, Browning, Arnold, Wilde and Rossetti. Like their Romantic predecessors, these poets were indebted to Orientalist writings by travelers to the East. Bongie (1991) analyzed some Orientalist elements in Victorian poetry, where he used the terms Orientalism and Exoticism interchangeably (pp. 16-17). Kennedy (2017) suggests that Bongies' imperialist Orientalism and Exoticizing Orientalism is to be found in Tennyson, but also in FitzGerald, Arnold and Kipling, denoting the ambivalent approaches and meaning of these Victorian poets' writing.

4.1 Edward FitzGerald
Edward FitzGerald is perhaps the best example of Victorian poets' engagement in Orientalist writings. His "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" (1959) is a primary text in the domain of Victorian poetry. The poem is an unusual free adaptation of Omar Khayyam's work "rubāʿiyāt" (1048-1131). FitzGerald's poem, as Karlin writes, is published anonymously and its Oriental elements began not as "a literary choice" but "a linguistic exercise" (xvii, xxxv). The poem is an attempt to combine East and West and it was not the only poem in which FitzGerald served as a translator. Drury (2008) writes that some think that for FitzGerald, translation of Oriental texts became a means to an end. Drury also notes that FitzGerald used this same approach in translating works from Greek, Spanish as well as from Persian, translations redated and followed "Rubáiyát." Such works are his two poetic dramas "Six Dramas of Calderon" (1853) and "Agamemnon of Aeschylus" (1876-1865) (pp. 37-38).

Around 1855, in a letter to his tutor of Pescian Edward Byles Cowell, a scholar of Oriental languages who edited part of Rubáiyát of Oman Khayyam for the purpose of removing sensitive information believing that being Easternly enigmatic is to be preferred to Westernly obvious, FitzGerald writes about their intention of translating Persian poetry. FitzGerald suggests that their translation should represents the Persian poetry as it is and not from a Western perspective (qtd. in Arberry, 1956, p. 20). FitzGerald, in fact, intended to recreate the spirit of the Persian original. His translation has literal faithfulness: metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation (1903, p. 3). However, FitzGerald needs not to make his translation as faithful literal one since "literal version," continues Fitzgerald, "would scarce be intelligible" (p. 2).

In Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), FitzGerald's translation of *Rubáiyát* is a subordinate level of Orientalist writing founded by "Oriental enthusiasts" as it free-floatingly mythologized the Orient (p. 53). Due to the ambivalent meaning of Orientalism, FitzGerald's Rubáiyát is a central text in the discussion of Victorian Orientalist poetics. Conant (1966) notes that *The Arabian Nights* paved the way for the Victorians to get gains from the Oriental historiography (p. xxii). Moreover, it can be regarded as a transitional work between Romantic Orientalism and late Victorian tension and skepticism. On the one hand, it was associated with Romantic Orientalism and translation of William Jones; on the other hand, it has the characteristic of the Victorian Orientalist poets' longing for past Oriental glory and courage. Such Victorian poets are Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. There is also the possibility of some affinity between Fitzgerald and Omar Khayyam as both felt dissatisfied with the beliefs and sentiment at their times. Norton notices a similarity between Fitzgerald and Khayyam on the subject of of "materialistic Epicureanism" and religious skepticism (qtd. in Karlin, 2010, p. 99). In *Rubáiyát*, the idea of lost Oriental courage or glory is portrayed through historical figures like "Irám" and "Sev'n-ring'd Cup" who have gone with their beauty and courage (Karlin, *Rubáiyát*, p. 17) and "this first Summer Month that brings the Rose / Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away" (Ibid., p. 21).In addition to nostalgia for lost glory, FitzGerald gives greater emphasis to present pleasure: "But come with old Khayyám and leave the Lot / Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot; / Let Rustum lay about him as he will, / Or Hátim Tai cry Supper—heed them not" (Ibid., pp. 33–36). FitzGerald emphasized that translation theory was either to keep the Oriental text "as Oriental as possible" (qtd. in Karlin, 2010, pp. xlii-xliii).

4.2 Alfred Lord Tennyson
There is some affinity between Tennyson's poetry and William Jone's writings and travel writings. Tennyson's poetic writing demonstrates exoticism, imperialism and social criticism. While Tennyson's early poetry demonstrates the proposition of Orientalism as a superficial mythologization of the East, his later poetry reveals imperialistic and social criticism of Orientalism. His poems like "Two Brothers" (1827) and "Timbuctoo" (1829) call forth longing for lost past Oriental courage and glory. However, at some stages, adding to the ambivalence of his poetics, "Timbuctoo" underestimates the Oriental glory. This is epitomized in Keen Discovery's revelation of the "brilliant tower", the "fair city", as "Low-built", and "Barbarian settlements" (*Works of Tennyson*, pp. 242, 247).

Thus, "Two Brothers" mourns the past glory of successive Oriental empires, especially in Iraq and Persia: "glory" and "splendour" are words used frequently in Tennyson's poems. "Bassorah", modern day Basrah, for example, calls forth Bassra in "splendour retiring" with "majesty" and

"the bright glory. (*Poems of Tennyson*, p. 40). "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" (1830) celebrates "the golden prime" Of great "Haroun Raschid," of Baghdad (*Works of Tennyson*, p. 143). Tropes and motifs of lost Oriental glorious deeds in Iraq and Persia continues in Tennyson's poems. Orientalist and exotic tropes are to be found in "You Ask Me, Why, tho' Ill at Ease" (1842). The poem calls for a departure from Victorian England and a preference of the Orient which is still deteriorated. The speaker concludes by announcing that "I seek a warmer sky, / And I will see before I die / The palms and temples of the South" (*Works of Tennyson*, 120).

4.3 Matthew Arnold

Although Matthew Arnold's Orientalism participated in a wider cultural cosmopolitanism, including Greek and Roman Orientalism and Orientalism in antiquity, it was travel writing and Oriental scholarship and historiography that determined his Orientalism. Some poems of Arnold, like "Constantinople" (1839) and "The Sick King in Bokhara" (1849), are highly valuable in the discussion of Orientalism (Kennedy, 2017, p. 13).

Arnold's poetry recalls FitzGeral's and Tennyson's poetry and the impact of travel writing and Orientalist scholarship and historiography of their works. Two early poems, "Land of the East" (1838) and "Constantinople" (1839), recall Tennyson's Orientalist idea of "glory gone" and the "palmy days of old" East in association to the defeat of Constantinople under Turkey in 1453 and the Roman conquest of Jerusalem (*Poems of Arnold*, p. 628). "The World and the Quietist" (1849) evokes Oriental scholarship, wisdom and detachment as well as criticism of modern—Victorian—England. (Ibid., pp. 106-107). Arnold's "A Southern Night," an elegiac poem for William, Arnold's brother, utilizes Oriental images and settings, criticizing the materialistic thinking of English people who pass through "Mediterranean", the Eastern land, and wander from side to side (*Poems of Arnold*, pp. 496-498). The poem "Obermann Once More," evokes the speaker's description of and reaction to the Roman conquest of the East and the Orients' reaction to this conquest (*Poems of Arnold*, p. 566). "Sohrab and Rustum" (1853) is perhaps the best example of his Orientalist poetry. Javadi (2005) writes that Arnold contributed to the poem by adding the irony of fatalism (pp. 142-144). Sohrab informs his father that he will "have peace" by returning "home over the salt blue sea, / From laying thy dear master in his grave" (*Poems of Arnold*, p. 829). Another example is when Sohrab asks the son "Art thou not Rustum?", illustrating Sohrab's failure to identify the son (p. 335). The poem concludes with the theme of lost glory. Arnold's poetry, like that of Tennyson and FitzGerald, represents the Orient in the lens of its past glory.

4.4 Robert Browning

Robert Browning poses an unusual ambivalent Orientalism in his poetry, a poetry that is full of dramatic monologues that contain wide and rich variety of European and non-European speakers. His poetic plays "Luria" (1846) and "The Return of the Druses" (1843) are two major Orientalist works. Other poetic dramas include "Muleykeh" and "Clive" (both 1880), "Waring" (1845). These works and others demonstrate the Browning's passions for the Arab and Persian scholarships.

Browning's poetry incorporates high level of ambivalence. His ambivalent approach is in relation to the dramatic monologues, including English, Italian, Roman and Greek charaters as well as Jewish, Arab, and Persian characters. Browning's ambivalent Orientalism is perfectly to be found in his dramas "Luria" and "The Return of the Druses". Since these dramatic works were rejected

or not performed or not intended to be performed on stage (Hair, 1972, p. 57), they are to be dealt with as poetry for the purpose of this paper as they place too low a value on the binary division between the Occident and the Orient. For Manor, these two works picture Browning's imperialist Orientalism and they suggest their openness to Eastern cultures (qtd. in Kennedy, 2017, pp. 15-16).

Browning's plays present encounters between the superior Occident and the inferior Orient. The best explanation for such an opposition would be that the poet perhaps hoped to understimate the Easterns-Westerns dichotomy or division. In Browning's Orientalizing "Luria" (1846), Luria is torn between her East and the foreign, West (Kennedy, 2017, p. 17). Luria is described as "an utter alien", later "an alian force", has neither past nor future (*Poetical Works of Browning*, p. 204). Luria was "born a Moor," "lived half a Florentine," and "punished properly, can end, a Moor" (p. 254). The two themes of warning and past glory are clear in Browning's ambivalent method in his poem:

> Oh, never star
> Was lost here but it rose afar!
> Look East, where whole new thousands are!
> In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
> (Poems of Browning, 492)

4.5 Oscar Wilde and Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Oscar Wilde is known for his "The Sphinx" (1894), a long poem representing the Sphinx and images about the supernatural and exotic, demonstrating Said's explanation of Orientalism. Wilde's other poems like "Ave Imperatrix" (1981) and "Athanasia" (1881) are ambivalent in their critiques of imperialism and Orientalism, having both positive and negative attitudes towards the Orient (Kennedy, 2017, pp. 19-20). Dante Gabriel Rossetti is also an important Victorian poet who offers Oriental Exoticism in some of his works, but in a notably different version. "The Burden of Nineveh" (1850), like "Ozymandias", glorifies the Assyrian religion and the authority of Nineveh's political system.

Wilde's Orientalism is to be found in his "The Sphinx" (1894). The poem has many images of linking the exotic and the supernatural and mysterious: the "beautiful and silent Sphinx" and "exquisite grotesque" becomes "lovely languorous Sphinx" (*Complete Poetry of Wilde*, pp. 142–143). Wilde seems to emphasize, on the one hand, the immortality of the East, and on the other hand, the possibility of the death of the West. Orientalism in "The Sphinx" can be found in the apostrophe directed to the Sphinx to "wake in me each bestial sense" and "foul dreams of sensual life", and "make my creed a barren sham" and "what I would not be" (*Complete Poetry of Wilde*, pp. 150–151). Other poems like "Ave Imperatrix" (881) and "Athanasia" (1881) refer to the timelessness and immortality of the East, but ambivalent and ambiguous in their explanation. However, I exclude them out of the box of the present paper.

Like Wilde, Dante Gabriel Rossetti portrayed the theme of Oriental exotic in his special way. His poem "The Burden of Nineveh" is a dramatization of the conflict between the exotic Oriental and Nineveh condition, and Western empires. There is Rossetti's imagination of the Nineveh status

having been refounded through "Some tribe of the Australian plough", bearing "him afar,—a relic now / Of London, not of Nineveh." Thus, Rossetti links and identify the expansion of British colonialism with the adventures of Nineveh and Assyria, and neither them will be immortal (qtd. in Kennedy, 2017, p. 19). Rossetti identifies the God of Nineveh with the God of nineteenth-century. In its representation of the past Oriental, the poem is psychological, social and political.

5. Conclusion

The paper may now be concisely summarized. Orientalism has various origins and meanings, constructing its deep ambiguity, leading to a certain ambivalence in Victorian writers' attitudes to the Orient. On one issue, one that stands at the heart of Oriental studies and the thesis of this paper as well, the points at which Orientalism began its course or existence are enormously varied. The origin of Orientalism is traced back to the times of Greek historians like Herodotus; Oriental Antiquity; Oriental Renaissance where India and the East, from a western perspective, were rediscovered (1680-1880); European translations of Eastern texts, et cetera. In addition to its references to these aforementioned origins, this paper elaborated on more direct responsible sources for Orientalism in the Victorian Age and its art and literature, especially poetry. These direct sources are the ambivalent reception of The Arabian Nights, Romantics' perception of the Orient, the portrayal of Opium obsession, and most importantly and original, the rediscovery of The Epic of Gilgamesh, an event that, to a great degree, weakened the Victorians' belief in the ancient religious texts and the Greeks as their ultimate origin. On a different issue, Orientalism is understood as a Western purposeful attitude toward the East positively or negatively, sometimes a parallel between the Occident and the Orient, sometimes bearing ambiguous attitudes, especially in the Victorian poets' works. Poets like FitzGerald, Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, Wilde, and Rossetti, used ambivalent Orientalism in their poems, recalling European misunderstanding of Oriental texts epitomized in Said's "texual attitude," and causing later oriental studies' negative evaluation of the Victorian poets, therefore, neglecting their appreciation of the past Oriental glory and grandeur. By using this research, one can continue to analyze and describe various modes of ambivalent and still ambiguous Orientalism in the Victorian period and literature through the lens of Victorian poets.

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