1949

Oriental influence upon eighteenth century English literature as shown in four representative works

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/21518
Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

ORIENTAL INFLUENCE UPON EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
ENGLISH LITERATURE AS SHOWN IN
FOUR REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

1949
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INTRODUCTION

The eddy of Orientalism in the main current of English Romanticism is a very significant one. Oriental accounts, so long forgotten, came to England like a fresh sea breeze, soothing yet stimulating, bearing the tang of unfamiliar spices and exotic sensory perceptions. Today wizirs, magic lamps, caliphs, black giants, remarkable slaves, treasure hoards, genii, jewels, and "Open Sesame" are part of our household vocabulary. They have an ageless lure into the world of romance, adventure, and imagination where the impossible can happen. We find in Oriental stories a "surcease of asphalt pavement and the blasting and drilling of the rapid transit subway and the clamour of the city streets and election echoes, and walk through mysterious caverns of Cathay in company with Aladdin and his Princess." 1 To most of us the East is ever mysterious and beckoning, with its strange customs, its passion, its fatalism, its pomp, and its pageantry.

Early in the eighteenth century translations and imitations of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Chinese tales flooded England in great numbers. The Oriental story or essay enjoyed immense popularity during the remainder of the century. It is said that Antoine Galland, first translator of the Arabian

Nights into French, was roused in the middle of the night by a crowd of clamoring Parisians, who wished to hear more of the strange and wonderful immigrant tales. Professor George Sherburn of Harvard University speaks of them as being stories "of escape." R. C. Whitford of the University of Illinois speaks of them as being "...among the terror novels of the wild-oats youth of the Romantic Movement." Certainly there are many types and contrasts. Martha Pike Conant, who has written the most complete monograph in existence on the subject of the Oriental tale, classifies them in four groups: Imaginative, Moralistic, Philosophic, and Satiric. The imaginative group includes the Arabian Nights Entertainments and Vathek. The moralistic and philosophic groups are important in the essays of Addison and Dr. Johnson. The philosophic group includes translations from Voltaire's Contes Philosophiques. The satiric group is chiefly personified by Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World.

English Romanticism is often treated as a single movement, when the masters shared a harmony of taste and a unity of doctrine. However, competent scholars suggest that


Romanticism is rather a name which has been applied to many divergent or inconsistent schools, the meeting place being the impulse "to find the old clothing inadequate for the new thoughts, which caused dissatisfaction with the old philosophical and religious or political systems and aspirations, and took a corresponding variety of literary forms."\(^5\) This variety of expression of unity of mental impulse has been compared to a tree "...with many branches, from which are heard songs by no means in accord."\(^6\) The Oriental movement, then, is an episode in the development of English Romanticism, and includes a variety of songs—those of the Arab translated with varying degrees of success; those of the imaginative Englishmen who could pretend to be themselves seated before a tent in the distant deserts of Arabia; those of the heavily moralizing Johnson, who found in them a vehicle for his messages; those of Voltaire, who discovered a cloak with which to shield his offences and extravagances from attack; and those of Goldsmith, singing of his life and times, in essays strung upon an Oriental thread.


In any consideration of the Oriental literature of the eighteenth century in England, the highlights would fall upon the Arabian Nights, Beckford's Vathek, Johnson's Rasselas, and Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World. Of these four, only one can be considered truly Oriental. The Arabian Nights were written in the original native tongues and translated into English. Vathek, Rasselas, and The Citizen of the World are pseudo-Oriental, in that they were written originally in English and only purport to have come from a foreign country. It is the purpose of this thesis to consider these four representative works and to compare them for the purpose of ascertaining the elements of the true Oriental and how well the pseudo-Oriental writers captured the spirit of the east.

There is no existing study which has considered this problem in any detail. The most valuable work available is Miss Martha Pike Conant's study of The Oriental Tale in England. It is a general survey of all Oriental and pseudo-Oriental fiction that appeared in England during the eighteenth century. It is the purpose of this thesis to confine itself to considering the contrast between the truly Oriental tale, the Arabian Nights, and its three most successful pseudo-Oriental off-shoots, Vathek, Rasselas, and The Citizen of the World.
In the eleventh century, descriptions of the wonders of India were translated into Anglo-Saxon concerning Alexander the Great. During the Middle Ages, the spirit of adventure stirred and grew and the three great trade routes of Genoa and Venice and the Great Silk Route were thronged with caravans and dusty travelers. Marco Polo gave a written account of his travels. Merchants, crusaders, explorers, missionaries, pilgrims, adventurers—all carried tales of the wonders they had witnessed or heard told. Scholars contributed Latin translations of four collections of Oriental stories: Sendebár; Kalila and Dimna, or The Fables of Bidpai; Disciplina Clericalis; and Barlaam and Josaphat. Some of these reached England in the form of metrical romances, apologues, legends, and stories. The Fabliau of Dame Siriz, The Proces of the Seyvn Sages, Mandeville's Voyage, Chaucer's Squier's Tale, and possibly other Canterbury Tales are instances.  

The sixteenth century was a period of much translation, and the first English editions of Gesta Romanorum and The Fables of Bidpai Englished out of Italian by Thomas North in 1570. Queen Elizabeth during her reign followed an entirely different course from her predecessors encouraging exploration and adventure, discovery and commerce. English ships circumnavigated the globe, and intercourse between England and the Far East increased. Furthermore, since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the menace of the Turks had turned all eyes Eastward.  

7 Conant, op. cit. pp. xix-xx
In the seventeenth century the works of travelers, historians, and translators reflect this interest. Knolles' *General History of the Turks* appeared in 1603, and Mlle. de Scudery and others saw their pseudo-Oriental heroic romances translated; Sir Roger L'Estrange wrote a new version of *The Fables of Bidpai*. Edward Pococke translated an Arabian philosophical romance.

During the eighteenth century, England established her naval supremacy, carried on the great tradition of her earlier navigators and explorers, extended her trade to the ends of the earth, conquered India and Canada, began her colonization of Australia, and in spite of the loss of her American colonies, founded the world's greatest empire.

During the eighteenth century the literature evolved gradually in an age of reason, understanding, and enlightenment. The spirit has been resolved into the following elements: (1) the impulse of critics, (2) the reconstruction of science, (3) imagination, (4) learning. The Oriental tendency manifests itself best in the last named two, imagination and learning. The translators brought the Oriental tale to English life through their learning, and the unleashed imagination of Beckford and others opened wide new vistas of beauty and charm.

CHAPTER I

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

The Arabian Nights outshines all imitations in the field of Oriental literature. Who really told the stories first, in what language, or where, we have no way of knowing with any certainty. From 1704-1712 Antoine Galland "rubbed his translator's magic lamp, and spilled out the gold of the Mille et une Nuit before the delighted eyes of Europe." 9 He himself guessed that the tales had come to Arabia from India via Persia. Some authorities follow them back to India. Others, like Burton, the most famous and thorough translator, would place them in Persia. Still others insist they are in substance, as well as form, Arabian. Some of the tales have been assigned to the 13th century, and others to the 15th. It is supposed that they were written after the period of the Arabian conquests in the west, which would be between the 13th and 14th century. The military spirit of the Arabs had evidently abated, for there are no heroes of the battlefield or soldiers in the stories. 10 It is not even known whether they are the work of one author or the compilation of many. It seems most likely that the work of many authors was put together by one individual. Some stories seem to be the product of persons familiar with Baghdad; others, Damascus or Cairo. Manuscripts of the stories

are not in existence, with a few exceptions—and probably never were. 11

There is a tradition among the Arabs that the tales were first written for Princess Omai, daughter of Esther and Xerxes.12 There is a theory that Abu Abdulluh Mohammed al Gahshijari searched for tales illustrative of Oriental life in the 9th century. He supposedly collected four hundred and eighty—enough for one thousand and one nights.13 These tales may be the basis for those stories featuring Haroun-al-Raschid.14 Sir Richard Burton, who is generally respected as an authority, gives these conclusions:

1. The framework of the book is purely Persian perfunctorily Arabized.

2. The oldest tales, such as Simbad (The Seven Wazirs) and King Jil'ad, may date from the reign of Al-Mansur, eighth century A. D.

3. The thirteenth tale mentioned as the nucleus of the Repertory, together with Dalilah the Crafty may be placed in the tenth century.

4. The latest tales, notably Kamar al-Zaman the Second and Ma'aruf the Cobbler are as late as the sixteenth century.

5. The work assumed its present form in the thirteenth century.


13 "How the Arabian Nights Came to Us," The Mentor, 10:14-28, March, 1922.

14 The Bookman, 14, op. cit., p. 341.
6. The author is unknown for the best reason: there never was one: for information touching the editors and copyists we must await the fortunate discovery of some MSS.15

But the important matter is the story, regardless of from whom or whence it comes. It belongs to the East, but the wisdom which is evident in it is not the East's alone; and the stories seem to bear the experience of uncounted generations, not one alone. Whatever the source, they spread rapidly because of the immense thirst of mankind for escape and imagination to enable the passage from the real to the contemplation of the desirable.16

Like the story of Shylock and the pound of flesh which travelled on the seashores of Syria, the tales of the Nights spread about the Mediterranean Sea, to Sicily and Malta and thence to Italy. Many of the legends and much of the folklore of the Italians is analogous to that of the Persians and the Arabs, except for minor modifications to suit the life and conditions of the persons living there.17 In a similar way the tales spread to Spain, and thence to France.

The professional story teller or rawy is an important figure in the spread of these ideas. He is still popular in the East. He tells stories in homes, marketplaces, streets, docks—wherever people gather. He is a master of the art of bringing the story to a crucial place, and then slipping quietly

15 Cerf, op. cit., p. viii.
away, to return another day. The rawy is credited with popularizing the Arabian Nights in Asia and carrying them to Europe.

Lane heard him in Egypt; Galland imported him from Aleppo to Paris; Burton travelled with him in the desert, being himself a 'rawy' of considerable skill. As far back as the 13th century, an Arab poet of Granada, Ibn Sa'id by name, travelled in Egypt, and in a book he wrote on that country mentions the tale-tellers of Cairo and some of the stories he heard which resembled, he tells us, The Thousand Nights. And Ibn Sa'id, after his return from Egypt, related some of these stories to his friends in the pleasure gardens of Granada. This, probably, is the first instance we have of the migration of the Nights into Europe.17

The tales which travelled into Italy can be seen in Boccaccio's Decameron very clearly. The mechanism of both is the same, both picture an attempt to escape catastrophe, and there is a frame-tale. There are many other similarities which can be noted in a careful examination.

The footprints of the Arabian Nights are again visible in France four centuries before the first major translation in two romances; The Cleomades, by Adenet le Roi in the latter part of the 1300's, and The Meliacin, by Girard of Amiens, about the same time. That there were Spanish translations we can be nearly certain, but they have been destroyed. Fragments have come down to us in folklore.

The first appearance of the Arabian Nights as such came from the pen of Antoine Galland. He was born in Picardy of a poor family wherein he was the seventh son. His education at

17 Ibid. p. 366
the College Royal was through the interception of the minister of the king, who took a kindly and personal interest in the talented boy. He liked to listen to the story tellers as a child, and on reaching maturity set off on several tours of the Orient. It was while Galland was in Aleppo that he heard many of the tales he incorporated into his version from a rawy there. His Mille Et Une Nuit was published in 1704, with volumes eleven and twelve following in 1717. The stories were immensely popular, and pirated editions appeared at once in Holland and Paris.18

Galland's story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves has been found in manuscript form in the Bodleian Library, where it has reposed since 1860.19 Other than this, very little actual Arabic has been located as sources other than the rawy who accompanied Galland back to France from Aleppo, whose name appears in Galland's diary as Hanna Diab.

All France was greedy for more of the tales brought from the East. Here were great, outstanding characters and pure adventure—Sinbad the Sailor, the Old Man of the Sea, Ali Baba and Cassim, Aladdin... In the tales could be seen the life in an Eastern city, the leisurely pace of work and thought, the bazaars, the pageantry, the exotic and mysterious charm.


Galland's work was called "an attempt to transplant into European gardens the magic flowers of Eastern fancy." His translation is. . ."paraphrased, abridged, amplified in places, and titivated withal to suit the taste of the French public." The style was easy and vivacious, but far more French than Arabic. Galland omitted stanzas and poetic sections because they interfered with the narration. "And how could a French reader suffer this?" Galland also attempted to expurgate the implications of sex, and in so doing, distorted the natural and simple into the forbidden and shocking. His translation was fantastic and remote from true Orientalism.

His Jinn talk like boulevardiers, his women chatter like courtesans, and the absolutely French manner of ending is quite amusing. King Shahriar, bored by the last story, orders her head cut off—but she produces three little children, pleads for them, and is pardoned.

Partly as a result of this translation, Europe was deluged with a flood of picaresque literature for many years following.

Despite all faults, Galland's version was a very popular one, and it was translated into many languages. In England it reached the tenth edition before any attempt was made at direct translation.

21 Rihani, op. cit. p. 368
22 Ibid. p. 370
23 Ibid. p. 370
The framework of the Galland work was briefly as follows: two kings, brothers, learn that their wives are unfaithful, and put them to death. They travel through the world looking for evidence of women's perfidy. On their return home one brother, Sharyar, resolves to marry anew each day, and put her to death the next morning. This policy is followed until the supply of unmarried women in the country runs dangerously low. The king's grand vizier has two daughters. The elder, Sheherazad, resolves to correct matters. She becomes the king's wife, and, on pretension of saying goodbye to her younger sister, begins a story. When it is not completed in the morning the execution is postponed... for a thousand and one nights. The king recognizes the virtue and charm of his wife and forgets his hatred for the sake of the three sons she has borne him. In Germany, Christian Maximilian Habicht was the first translator of the Arabian Nights. His work is largely discounted, for "he thought nothing of stealing or mangling a manuscript so it fit in the general frame of his work." Other translations were made by Baron Von Hamner and Gustave Weil, which greatly improved upon the literary enormities of Habicht. Max Henning's translation is in Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek. It is as nearly complete as may be. The prose is simple and excellent, but the verse poor. It is not considered to be of great literary merit.

24 "How the Arabian Nights Came to Us", The Mentor, 10:16 March, 1922.
26 "On Translating the Arabian Nights" Nation 71:185, Sept. 6, 1900
The first attempt to work from a literary standpoint came from J. C. Mardrus, of France. His Arabic scholarship was poor. He expanded and improved and has caught and expressed true Oriental flavor except where misled by ignorance. However, he...

"gilds gold and paints the lily until the Nights grow pallid and dull beside his distant descendant."27

There seems to be no clue as to when the Arabian Nights first appeared in English. Some unknown denizens of Grub Street were responsible for changing Galland's artistic French into a strange English. They..."pitchforked into Gallic English the French paraphrase of Galland 1704-1717."28 He—or they—seem to have rendered from a La Haye edition. At the beginning of Volume III it seemed necessary to introduce a link to the "Story of Sindbad," and we find one which is present in no French edition. This unknown person or persons also invented the title, The Arabian Nights Entertainments, which has been used ever since; it was even translated back into Arabic for the Calcutta edition in 1839-42.29

Furthermore, this title was so well known in 1709 that we have an allusion to it in The Golden Spy: A Political Journal of the British Nights Entertainments of War and Peace, and Love of Politics:...London, 1709. This book is ascribed

27 Ibid. p. 168
28 Ibid. p. 167
29 MacDonald, Library Quarterly, op. cit., p. 405.
to Charles Gildon. In the dedication (to Swift, because of his
Tale of a Tub) we find this reference: "The Arabian and Turkish
Tales were owing to your Tale of a Tub". The Turkish Tales were
published in 1708. Thus it seems probably that the Arabian
Nights were rather generally known in 1709. Galland's Nights
appeared in Paris in 1707. It seems logical to assume, then,
that the earliest English translations appeared sometime between
1707 and 1709. These parent translations gave birth to number-
less "new and complete editions," "careful revisions after the
original," "new translations from the Arabic," and others.

The first appearance of the Nights in English literature
came in Addison, who told the story of the Physician and the
King in his essay on Temperance. He also gave in "The
Spectator" the story of Alnachar on November 13, 1712. But
these specimens came to nothing. "The seeds were frosted in the
'Spectator'." 30

The great work of translation from the Arabic was not
undertaken until the next century. The story of the nineteenth
century is beyond our consideration here, but in order to make
the picture complete, and to help clarify the analysis of the
Arabian Nights which is necessarily based upon the later trans-
lations, the story is briefly concluded as indicated here.

Jonathan Scott tried to translate but fell to copying
Galland with omissions and additions. In 1811 he published

30 Rihani, op. cit., p. 504.
the prettiest edition of the Arabian Nights so far extant." 31

He planned to eliminate the controversial material, and said,
"Modesty will not permit, nor is it necessary, to relate what
happened between the twain." 32 All in all, his work was color-
less and insipid, and very unsatisfactory.

In 1838 a more serious attempt was made in the East by
Henry Torrens, an Irish novelist and poet. Like Madrus, Torrens
felt the glamor of the East. He knew India; but he was unacquain-
ted with Arabia. He was extremely lacking in the Arabic
language, and knew even less of the dialects of Egypt and Syria.
Although he published but a single volume, full of errors, it
falls nearer the mark of genuine Orientalism. He showed "that
literary instinct and feeling which is more necessary even
than scholarship to the successful translator." 33

The appearance of Lane's translation in 1839 unluckily
stopped Torrens at the end of the first fifty Nights. His
version was voluminous with voluble notes. He was a thoroughly
competent Arabist, who added an elaborate commentary on the
customs and life of the mediaeval Arab. Lane lacked the
imagination necessary to produce the illusion of a true Oriental
style. His method of writing was semi-Biblical; dignified,
essay like, insipid. Leigh Hunt once remarked that Lane's
failure to see the incongruity of his Koran-like essay as

31 Athenaeum, 3310:437, April 14, 1891.
32 Rihani, loc. cit.
33 "On Translating the Arabian Nights," Nation, 71:167,
August 30, 1900.
compared with the out-at-elbows fashion of the original made him "resemble an Arab full dressed, compared with the lighter half-apparel of Mr. Torrens."34 His verse, like his prose, was accurate but flat. "He pushed pedantry too far."35

John Payne (1882-1884) gave a complete version. With Payne the Nights again became a story book, rather than a textbook of sociology as it had been in the hands of Lane. However, the story book was that of mediaeval Europe, rather than the mediaeval East. It "suffers a sea change into something rich and strange."36 The Nights become more sentimental, and pathos touches more directly. Payne published nine volumes of folk tales, told without art, in the style of fairy stories.

No one knew the Nights as well as did Sir Richard Burton. He is said to have spoken thirty-five languages, and had lived in Bombay, Africa, Egypt, and Brazil. He left to us a literary heritage of thirty-seven volumes, including seventeen volumes of the Thousand and One Nights. It was a labor of love to Burton, who found in them solace in all his travels and exiles.37

In Burton's version the nature of the charm of the Orient is given free reign. The imagination and indescribable fancy-power make the reader dream of the strange and unexpected—in fact, all the glamor of the unknown. Burton's medium, however,

34 Nation 70, op. cit., p. 168
36 Nation, loc. cit.
fails him because of his literary eccentricities. There are lengthy scientific and anthropological dissertations; furthermore, he retains the entire mechanical structure of Arabic rhetoric, which is extremely lengthy and unwieldy. Perversities of phrasing make it difficult to understand, and phrases such as "a red cent", "belle and beldame", "O, my cuss", "thy hubby", and "a Charley", do not carry the Arabic idea very well to us. The magic and music of Arabic poetry are lost; because the shortest vowel-wave in the shortest meter has not the minimum power of a dactyl or anapest. This continuous flow of unaccented syllables gives lyric charm in Arabic, but become cumbersome, long, and loping, in English.

The "Library Edition" of twelve volumes is the most common in use today. It is the version referred to most often in this thesis. Probably, no more complete English edition can be published. 38

Lady Burton edited her husband's works, and said in her preface, "I guarantee that no mother shall regret her girl's reading this," but her deodorized version never became a popular book. 39


The tales told by Scheherezad have enchanted the entire Western world. Interestingly enough, one of the persons who fell under her spell was Cardinal Newman, who wrote (in his Apologia), "I used to wish the Arabian tales were true." She speaks audibly in Rimsky-Korsakoff's Scheherezade Suite for all to hear. What is the nature of the magic which enchanted the world? What are the elements of the charm which has placed these tales in our common literary heritage?

One of the chief ingredients of the spell of the Arabian Nights is the all-pervading sense of mystery and magic. The arrangement of the stories helps to enhance the impression. The device of the frame tale is a relatively simple one. Scheherezade tells a long series of stories to the cruel sultan. Within this setting is a veritable Oriental carpet of intricate designs, a kaleidoscope of shifting colors and lights and shades, all interwoven and varied—apologues, romances, anecdotes, and fables. For example, Scheherezad tells the tale of a merchant trader who, after completing a lonely lunch far in the desert, tosses aside a date stone. A horrible 'Elfreet appears, saying that the stone struck his son upon the chest and killed him; therefore the merchant must be killed in revenge. In great despair, the merchant begs time to go home and arrange his affairs, which is granted. Upon the proper day, the merchant returns, and sits down, weeping, to await the 'Elfreet. Three sheykhhs appear, and hear his story. The first sheykh begs a third claim to the blood of the merchant if he can tell a wonderful story. Then

Conant, op. cit., p. 3
follows the tale of the "First Sheykh and the Gazelle". The second sheykh begs permission also and wins one third of the merchant's blood with his tale, the "Second Sheykh and the Two Black Hounds"; and the third sheykh completes the winning of the merchant's life with "The Third Sheykh and the Mule". "But this is not more wonderful than the story of the fisherman", and that follows. 1

The fisherman manages by a trick to get the horrible Jinn back into the small bottle, and says, "Thou lie st...: I and thou are like the Wezeer of King Yoonan and the sage Dooban". "What was their story?" asks the Jinn, and another tale is told within the other tales. 2 When one story finishes, Scheherezad says: "I am acquainted with many other stories that are much more wonderful", or "O my sister", says Dunyazad, "an thou be not asleep, tell us one of thy pleasant stories." 3 The stories are divided at interesting points with this formula: "and Scheherezad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say." 4 The next night begins: "She said, "It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that. . . . ." and she repeats the closing sentence of the preceding night. Then we are plunged immediately into a land of Jinns and Jinneeyehs, goolehs, 'Elfreets, mysterious smoke which blinds the eyes, talking birds

2 Lane, op. cit., p. 75
3 Rihani, op. cit., p. 270
4 Lane, op, cit., Vol. I p. 40 and others
and animals, couches of alabaster inlaid with pearls and jewels, with a musquito curtain of red satin suspended over it, men and women changed to black charcoal, a mountain of loadstone to draw ships to it and extract all the nails and metal parts, enchanted cities, lakes, mountains, maidens endowed with perfect beauty, a poisoned book and a talking head, afternoon prayers and wedding feasts and bazaars, subterranean treasure caves, genii and magicians, magic carpets and lamps and rings, talking fish, flying horses, fairies who pour out bags of gold and treasure or transform enemies into loathsome shapes. We have the horrible 'Elfreet, whose

head was in the clouds, while his feet rested upon the ground: his head was like a dome: his hands were like winnowing forks; and his legs, like masts: his mouth resembled a cavern: his teeth were like stones: his nostrils like trumpets; and his eyes, like lamps; and he had dishevelled and dust-coloured hair.\textsuperscript{45}

We have Sindbad the Sailor, Aladdin, the humpback and his brothers, the Caliph of Baghdad, and a glittering assortment houris and dancing girls.\textsuperscript{46} The wonderful horse of brass is as marvelous as the roc, "a white bird of monstrous size and of such strength that it takes elephants from the plains to the tops of the mountains."\textsuperscript{47} There is a wonderful mirror which shows character by becoming cloudy in the presence of those

\textsuperscript{45} Lane, op. cit., p. 71


\textsuperscript{47} Conant, op. cit., p. 4
who are not pure in heart. Sindbad, when shipwrecked, meets giants, dwarfs, and the Old Man of the Sea. The sea is peopled with monsters and mermaids; the desert, with invisible jinns who know no bounds of time or space. In enchanted lands one encounters blinding flashes of lightning, tremendous thunder, earthquakes, and horrible storms. There are transcendent horrors and surpassing beauty.

Nothing can be more unlike the idea of barbaric splendour, of excessive and heterogeneous ornament, that we are accustomed to associate with the name, than the majority of the tales that compose the collection. The life described in it is mainly that of the people, those Arabs so essentially brave, sober, hospitable, and kindly, almost hysterically sensitive to emotions of love and pity as well as to artistic impressions. . . The splendours of description, the showers of barbaric pearl and gold, that are generally attributed to the work exist but in isolated instances. The descriptions are usually extremely naive.

In spite of the extravagances and the atmosphere of wonder and magic, there is a thread of reality in the midst of unreality. Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, the Seven Seas—all are real places and can be located on the globe, although at such a distance that they seem like fairyland. Great pains are taken to give us pseudo-historical details.

There was a king of India and China who had two sons; one of whom was a man of mature age, the other a youth. Both were brave horsemen—especially the elder, who inherited the kingdom of his father, and governed with great justice. One was called King Shahriyar; the other, Shah-Zeman. Each ruled for twenty years.

49 Lane, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 2
In "The Story of the Three Apples", we find the Khaleefeh Haroon Er-Rasheed speaking to Jaafar, his Wezeer, and they journey in disguise about the city to look for entertainment. Haroun Alrashid was an actual person, who ruled after Charlemagne, probably between the eighth and the sixteenth century. Haroon Er-Rasheed says to a fisherman, "Return to the Tigris and cast your net." Any of us can locate the Tigris River; but no one, the mysterious fish netted there as told in this account. It is easy for us to imagine ourselves as being present when Caliph Mu'awiyah sat in his palace at Damascus, in a room with windows open on all four sides that the breeze might enter from every quarter, when the Badawi enters to plead for justice and the return of his wife. The palace is located south of the Great Mosque in what was actually known as the Coppersmith's Bazar. We can picture Sindbad the Seaman throwing the devil off his shoulders, and overcoming him; the King of the Black Islands telling the story of how he became marble from the waist down; the porter in the strange house of the three ladies of Baghdad; the unfortunate confectioner being carried off for an over-supply of pepper in the pomegranate cakes; the lady magician who changed into the form of an enormous serpent, who crept after her enemy in the shape of a scorpion; after which, the scorpion became an eagle, and the serpent a

50 North, op. cit., p. 289
51 Lane, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 223
52 Burton, op. cit., Vol. 5 p. 321
vulture; the latter then transformed himself into a black cat, and the King's daughter a wolf; then the cat, seeing himself overcome, into a large red pomegranate and the wolf into a cock in order to pick up the grains.\textsuperscript{53}

There are many references to chemicals which are known and used today. Houris and dancing girls used henna and blacking called "kohl" from which is derived our term, alcohol. Bedoins understood aphrodisiacals as a cure for impotence and we find mention of hypnotics, sedatives and narcotics as bhang, hashiah, henbane and hemp.\textsuperscript{54}

Religious customs are dealt with in detail and with a ring of authority. Few sentences pass without a reference to Allah. The entire series of stories begins thus:

Praise be to God, the Beneficent King, the Creator of the Universe, who hath raised the heavens without pillars, and spread out the earth as a bed, and blessing and peace be on the lord of apostles, our lord and master, Mohammad, and his Family; blessing and peace, enduring and constant, unto the day of judgment. To proceed. \textsuperscript{55}

It is the universal custom of the Moslems to write this phrase at the commencement of every book and to pronounce it before commencing every lawful act of any importance. Throughout the stories we find references such as "...warbling of birds who

\textsuperscript{53} Lane, op. cit., Vol. I p. 156-157

\textsuperscript{54} C. J. Brockman, "Chemistry and Alchemy in the Arabian Nights", \textit{Science}, 62:16 July 3, 1925

\textsuperscript{55} Lane, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 1
sing praises of the One, the Almighty", 56 and "The pen hath written what God hath decreed". 57

Other customs are described in vivid detail. We see the greeting and entertainment of travelers, the courts of the sultans, the processions, the feasting, music, and dancing of the marriage ceremonies. The Mohammedan religion is ascendant over the cruel rites of the fire-worshippers and idolists. Devout Mussulmen observe their daily rituals of prayer, attend the mosques, and make pilgrimages to Mecca.

One of the most significant pictures of Oriental life is that of the rawy, or story teller. The professional reciter is still as popular in the East as the dervishes who scorn him and his profession. In the village cafes, in front of the desert tent, the center of attention is the rawy; the people listen enraptured to the comic or tragic tales—tales which may come from books, from other rawies, or from his own invention. For he is an author-actor-manager of an art which has its own traditions and techniques which have been handed down from antiquity and must be observed. "Too much of a tale worketh ill," is one of these precepts. Therefore the story is divided into many parts. . . and the more parts, the more evenings will be occupied by the telling, and the more lucre which he may receive in the form of coins or in food or drink. It is some-

56 Loc. cit. p. 170
57 Loc. cit. p. 175
times very entertaining to see the rawy leaving the scene after reaching a critical point in the story, while the audience attempts to hold him back. "Another evening," he says. "Too much of the tale worketh ill". In one of the manuscripts of the Nights is found this suggestion:

If your audience be of the common people, recite to them the fables, which are in the first part of the book; and if they are of the governing class, recite the martial adventures, the stories of chivalry and heroism, which are in the last part.²³

It is of little wonder, then, that each narrator exerted himself to the utmost to outdo his predecessors, and promised greater wonders next time. This accounts for the artistic excellences and limitations of the collection and for the fact that adventures succeed adventures in kaleidoscopic rapidity, bearing little bands of unity, except the mere presence of the hero.⁵⁹ The chief appeal is to the curiosity of the reader.

Even though there are groups of tales somewhat united in cycles, as the twenty-seven in volume five (Burton translation) which are grouped about the theme of the craft and malice of woman; the seven voyages of Sindbad the Seaman and Sindbad the Landsman, and the cycle of love tales scattered through the Nights, in general there is little structural unity. Many of the individual incidents are perfect dramatic sketches, each

⁵⁸ Rihani, op. cit., p. 366
⁵⁹ Conant, op. cit., p. 8
complete in itself, with an introduction, a climax, a
denouement, and characterized by rapid movement and compact
expression. Such is the story of King Yoonan and the sage
Dooban. The theme is this: "Spare me. . . and so may God spare
thee; and destroy me not, lest God destroy thee."^ A king
had been cured of leprosy by a sage of the kingdom. The Wezeer
counseled the king against his benefactor, saying that a
magician of such power could easily kill the king, and urging
him to betray the other before he was himself betrayed. The
king therefore called the sage to him and told him he must die.
The sage promised that after his death, if his head be cut off
and put upon a tray, and the king open a book to a certain
page, the head would talk. The execution was accomplished, the
head spoke, and the king moistened his fingers from his mouth
as he turned the pages of the book, only to die from poison
contained therein. The story is complete in itself, moving
rapidly to a high point and ending with a snap immediately
after. Other stories which are perfect dramatic sketches include
the day-dream of Alnaschar, the glass merchant; the adventures
of the Barber's third brother, Al-Fakik the Gabbler, who was
blind, and the "Story of the Sleeper Awakened." The denouement
in that tale happened thus: the caliph had offered a thousand
dinars to anyone who proved whether the husband or the wife
died first. "Instantly a hand was held out, and a voice from

60 Lane, op. cit. p. 84
under Abon Hassan's pall was heard to say, 'I died first, Commander of the Faithful, give me the... gold.'  Many of the introductions are dramatic intrinsically. The caliph wanders through the city in search of adventure, or a kalandar explains, "I was not born one-eyed, it came to pass thus...", or an Arab appears in great grief, weeping and lamenting in sorry fashion; or sudden exclamations stimulate curiosity. "'For God's sake, sir', replied the stranger, 'let me go! I cannot without horror look upon that abominable barber!"  

In the story of the slave Nozhatan of Khalif Omar we find a poor old woman kindling the fire. The king, in disguise, happens upon her, and feels pity for her misery. She tells him that a king who is unaware of the unhappy condition of his subject is of no avail. In remorse, the monarch carried supplies to her upon his own back. This tale, a complete dramatic sketch, shows a deeply penetrating wisdom based upon a profound injustice found in all the Nights--the degradation of women.  

The story-teller does not go much farther than incident and situation. He is a teller of adventures, and the characters are often a bundle of attributes, rather than living flesh and blood.  

61 Conant, op. cit., p. 10  
62 Ibid. p. 10  
Various figures recur repeatedly: the prodigal youth, forsaken by his fair-weather friends; the tyrant sultan; the clever man; the superlative hero; the unjust judge; good and bad viziers; and good and bad sons. 64

To this list we might add the unfaithful wife, the love-smitten youth, the fair dancing girls, the wicked genii, the royal magician.

Characters act often without any visible motivation. "I will not go until I have entertained thee three days", 65 although there is no particular reason for that time. "I am going to kill thee because thou has liberated me", 66 says the Jinn to the fisherman--surely not a logical conclusion. In the story of the Third Royal Mendicant, he is warned, "While all this shall be done to you, utter not the name of God." 67 Illogical precepts are laid down, to be obeyed under threat of dire consequences.

Destiny is the ruler of all, and again and again we see the fatalistic doctrine of the Arabs that what God wills must occur, in spite of puny mankind. Stories begin thus. "He walked on, not knowing whither to go, until destiny urged him to the tomb of his father." 68 Or: "God gave permission to some

64 Conant, op. cit., p. 10-11
65 Lane, op. cit., p. 3
66 Ibid, p. 73
67 Ibid. p. 163
68 Ibid. Vol. I p. 241
angels to cast at the 'Elfreet a shooting-star of fire, and he was burnt."69 In the story of the Humpback, the tailor's wife took a large piece of fish and crammed it into the Humpback's mouth, holding it closed with her hand; it contained a bone, and the Humpback, "destiny having so determined", expired. The tailor exclaimed, "There is no strength nor power but in God, the High, the Great! Alas, that this poor creature should not have died but in this manner by our hands!"70 And later, we find the tailor saying, "Curse upon this night, in which the destiny of this man hath been accomplished by my hand!"71

Above all, the supreme attraction of the Nights is the charm of pure adventure, the appeal to the curiosity of the reader to see what will come next. There are only eight tales of sentiment in the entire collection.72 For the most part we find the emphasis upon events. Exciting incidents follow one upon another, with brilliant details, until the reader forgets the lack of characterization and comes under the spell of true romance.

Across the scene moves the seemingly endless, ever shifting pageant of dramatic personae, all sorts and conditions of men; princes and viziers, ropemakers and fishermen, dervishes and cadis, sheiks and slaves, queens and beggar-women. One can see them, hear them speak, and

69 Ibid. p. 250
70 Ibid. Vol. I, p. 292
71 Ibid. Vol. I, p. 293
72 Conant. op. cit., p. 11
guess at their characters as one might in observing passers-by in the bazaars of some strange Eastern city.\textsuperscript{73}

It is easy to follow Ali Baba, Hindbad, and the other familiar personages about their adventures. In the story "The Caliph Omar bin al-Khattab and the Young Badawi" we have violence upon violence. A man cast a stone at a stallion which struck him in a vital spot and killed him. The owner "felt live coals of anger kindled in his heart" and so took up another stone and threw it, killing the one who had wronged him. "Thus his own wrongful act returned to him anew, and the man was slain of that wherewith he slew."\textsuperscript{74} In the "Story of the Third Royal Mendicant", the hero escapes in the skin of a ram carried by an enormous white bird.\textsuperscript{75} Almost every story has a strange and marvelous happening to relate until the reader, like a child, loses all power to maintain a realistic balance, and takes the supernatural element as calmly as he reads stories of scientific wonders and miracles. To the native reader, jinns and 'Elfreets are real and existing, and completely credible. In that desolate land solace for the loneliness is found in the imagination where Jinns steal mortals for their own purposes; "the floor of the chamber clove asunder and there rose before me an 'Elfreet. ... who seized me and soared. ... through the air: then descended, and dived into the earth."\textsuperscript{76} There exist

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. p. 12
\textsuperscript{74} Burton, op. cit., Vol. IV pp. 64, 65
\textsuperscript{75} Lane, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 169
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. pp. 58-61
enchanted and under-ground palaces of marvelous splendor; men who soar to a height where the world is "like a bowl of water"; Jinns have "hands like winnowing-forks, legs like masts, eyes like burning torches." A man of brass rowed a shipwrecked sailor near a mountain of loadstone which pulled out all nails in passing ships.

Upon the summit is a cupola of brass supported by ten columns, and upon the top of the cupola is a horseman upon a horse of brass, having in his hand a brazan spear, upon his breast suspended a tablet of lead, upon which is engraved mysterious names and talismans—no one is safe until the horseman fall from the horse.

There is an ebony horse, with a mane of white crystal filled with cleansed sesame, who expanded a pair of wings and flew. Surely no earthly creatures can equal this.

Thomas Wright, who wrote the life of Burton, pointed out that one of the most curious features of the Nights is the promptness with which everyone—the caliphs and serving men alike—recites poetry. "It is as if a cabman, when you paid him your fare, were to give you a quotation from Omar Khayyam, or a cripple, when soliciting charity, should quote Swinburne." Then, in abrupt contrast to this atmosphere of culture, kindliness, generosity, and simple merriment, we come upon a tale with a staggering commencement: "When Haroun-al-Raschid

77 Ibid. Vol I, p. 156
78 Ibid. p. 161
79 Ibid. p. 182
80 Mentor, Vol. 10, op. cit., p. 26
crucified Ja'afar", and we prepare for a thrill and shudder.

Scheherezad does not hesitate to interrupt the flow of adventure tales with remarkable stories of animals. On the 146th night she says to the Sultan and her sister, Donyazad, "If you have admired the history of King Omar-el-Newman, how much would you not like to hear the birds and beast discourse?" "By Allah!" cries the Sultan, "that would be truly delightful," and we have a story of the wilderness, probably as old as Aesop.81

A peacock and peahen lived in peace on a beautiful island far from all troubles. A wild goose came in great trepidation, because he had "seen a man, an Ibn-Adam! Allah, deliver us all from Ibn-Adam!" While flying from man, the goose met a lion, and urged him to go forth and slay the enemy. The lion met an ass, a horse, a camel, all fleeing from man. An old carpenter came next, and built a cage upon the pretext of making a house for the lion, and tricked the lion into it.82 This beast fable is often left out of current versions of the Arabian Nights, but is one of the arguments of the Nights antiquity.

We find many references to animals talking. In the "Story of Shems-ed-deen and his Daughter" we find the bride wearing a gown "embroidered with red gold, presenting forms of wild beasts and birds, hanging over her other clothes."83

82 Ibid. p. 473
83 Lane, op. cit., Vol. I p. 247
A common source of abuse and derision in the Arabian Nights is the schoolmaster. "The wise are agreed in a lack of wit in their children's teachers." \(^8^4\) "I left having assured myself of the weakness of the gerund-grinder's wit." \(^8^5\) "Verily no schoolmaster who teaches children can have a perfect wit, though he know all the sciences." \(^8^6\) These examples are among the few bits of humor found in the Nights. In general, that which appeals to the Arab—a coarse jest, a practical-joke situation—does not come through to us as such. There are many apt phrases which are in common use today that can be traced to the Nights, such as "give up the ghost," \(^8^7\) "his life-breath was in his nostrils" \(^8^8\) (his heart was in his mouth), "an thou wouldst be obeyed, abstain from ordering what may not be made." \(^8^9\)

The companion-piece to the Arabian Nights and collection of tales next in importance is the Persian Tales, 1714. In general the two collections are similar; in the mixture of reality and unreality, and in dramatic presentation. This was followed by the Turkish Tales, 1708-1714, which varied from its more important brethren in that it was in a more satirical spirit. After these three collections, the best imaginative Oriental

\(^8^4\) Burton, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 79
\(^8^5\) Ibid., p. 80.
\(^8^6\) Loc. cit.
\(^8^7\) Ibid., Vol. V, p. 192
\(^8^8\) Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 48
\(^8^9\) Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 7.
tales are English versions of the so-called pseudo-translations. These came by way of eighteenth-century France from sixteenth-century Italy. Examples of this include the *Chinese Tales* (1725), the *Mogul Tales* (1736), the *Tartarian Tales* (1725), and the *Peruvian Tales* (1764). None of these achieved the recognition of the *Arabian Nights*, and were, in effect, capitalization on the popularity of their predecessors.

The reception by the English of the *Arabian Nights* and its kin was a warm one, but not as enthusiastic as the ovation France gave to its new and exotic plaything. In France the movement was begun with some highly imaginative translations contemporary with the fairy tales of Perrault. It was continued by imitations which blended elements of both Oriental and fairy tales in extravagant inventions; by literary parodies and social satires which used the form for an unfamiliar and misallied purpose. The decline of the Oriental interest was hastened by the extreme license on the one hand and the moralistic lecturing on the other. In England, there was no such sudden flowering of imaginative literature as there had been in France. The first efforts of the English were toward translation. Fairy stories were neglected; Perrault was not even translated into English until 1729. In France, after the first great impetus, no new kinds of Oriental stories appeared, while in England, all through the century, imaginative fiction was written in varying forms, including a tale of terror,
Vathek, various realistic stories, letter form, The Citizen of the World, and many others.

As has been already noted, the Oriental stories represent very well the romantic reaction to the Augustans. Pope is said to have sent a copy of the Arabian Nights to Dr. Atterbury, asking for his opinion. He replied:

'And now, Sir, for your Arabian Tales... Indeed they do not please my taste; they are writ with so romantic an air, and, allowing for the difference of eastern manners, are yet, upon any supposition that can be made, of so wild and absurd a contrivance (at least to my northern understanding), that I have not only no pleasure, but no patience, in perusing them... They may furnish the mind with some new images, but I think the purchase is made at too great an expense.'

This, then, was the Augustan attitude toward Romanticism in 1720. However, in spite of the opposition of the classical schools, very gradually and almost unconsciously, the romantic movement spread... in an instinctive longing for fresh woods and pastures new." It was... the heart of the people asserting itself—timidly yet instinctively—against the domination of a critical school."

This longing of the time for freedom, adventure, strong action and emotion, was satisfied by the Oriental tales of imagination. They met a need which had not been filled either

91 Ibid. p. 173
92 Loc. cit.
by the rationalizing wits of the Augustan age or by the romanticizing poets with their reflective or impassioned elegiac strain. The long absent power of exciting the tragic emotions of pity and terror is restored in William Beckford's *Vathek*, who extended the tale of Oriental adventure from the space of that which could be related in a few nights to a book-length, sustained piece of fiction, which will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

VATHEK

The History of the Caliph Vathek, published in French in 1787, in English in 1786, occupies a unique and deservedly high place in English literature of the eighteenth century. Hillaire Belloc speaks of it as being of first class excellence, now unfortunately partially forgotten. He goes on thus:

In the whole range of English literature there are but two short stories in the old sense of the word 'short story', a completed piece of fiction, that can take their rank with the fifty or more of the French model from which they derive.  

These two are Rasselas and Vathek. Although Rasselas is greater, Vathek is the more remarkable; Rasselas is more weighty, yet Vathek is a triumph in the deep etching of a single lesson. It stands unrivalled with respect to imagination as a picture of an impressive catastrophe.

There is not, in all probability, any modern Oriental story except Vathek, which might appear without disadvantage with Aladdin on its right hand and Ali Baba on its left. It has the most genuine Oriental flavor of any of the products of the time with the exception of the Arabian Nights, which is truly Arabic, translated; while Vathek is an improvisation in the imaginative Oriental vein.


Vathek was written originally in the French tongue, but is actually the product of an English mind.

The book is at once very French and very English, very Oriental and very European, very frivolous and very tragic, very shallow and very profound. In this it represents the author, a child of the eighteenth century unconsciously inspired by the nineteenth. 3

Its French flavor rather helps the illusion it creates, for we must remember that even after our modern translators have done their best, or worst, it is the English rendering of Galland which gave us our most popular Arabian Nights. Many poets were directly inspired by Vathek, notably Southey, Moore, and Byron.

"Nothing in art or literature has ever survived by making a mere appeal to fashion." 4 And so it is that we must search beyond the Oriental craze which swept England for the elements which have made Vathek survive all shifts and changes of modes, so that the stories are as fresh today as when they were written.

Let us consider first the man whose imagination created this singular work. "It may be said with truth that there are few famous men born in the eighteenth century of whom less is known than of William Beckford of Fonthill, the author of Vathek." 5 We have only a maze of legends, and the work of a

biographer who was classified as "a vulgar gossip." Probably the entire truth of William Beckford will never be known, because of the suppression and loss of a large amount of his correspondence in the hands of the Hamiltons. Furthermore, some of his own statements have proved false and misleading.

Beckford was "born into singularity." His father, twice Lord Mayor of London, was the richest parvenu in England; and he married one of the aristocratic Hamiltons. Ten years after a male heir had made his appearance, the father died, leaving the first William Pitt as godfather to the infant. He was said to be "strong, lusty, and handsome, of enormous vigour and of furious mental energy." As to his education, it was of the best. "The most eminent in every line tutored him." Mozart taught him music, and Sir John Chambers, architecture. He was a precocious pupil and learned to read and speak French before he was four years old. However, fates and his educators overdid it, and he came into violent collision with a public narrow and earthy. The clashes became more and more frequent, and when Beckford erected an immense wall about his estate to keep out foxhunters, it was an unforgivable affront to the English people, and the battle was on.

7 Ibid. p. 385
8 Loc. cit.
Beckford spent some time in the court of Portugal and his experiences there were fantastic yet splendid. His writings were suppressed by the conventional and he was fast becoming an ogre with which nursemaids frightened children. His travel diaries, the result of tramping about the European continent, were published about 1929, and were considered "masterpieces of experience."\(^9\)

His reputation for eccentricity, even lunacy, grew, together with the rumor of a monstrous defiance of moral laws. He was accused of every crime; John Mitford, in an unpublished notebook, even accused Beckford of poisoning his wife at Cintra. It was said that there were niches in the walls of the staircase in Beckford's home in Lansdown Crescent so that female servants could conceal themselves upon hearing the footsteps of their master. One girl did not hide, and was supposedly seized by the waist and thrown over the bannisters.\(^10\) Other such absurd tales circulated, stemming from Beckford's love for seclusion and his sincerity.

Beckford merely lived the life he intended to live, and allowed nothing seriously to interfere with the execution of his plan. What was expected of him, ... went for nothing in his estimation.\(^11\)

He was a many-sided man. He shows humour in his Biographical

9 Ibid. p. 386

10 Melville, op. cit., p. 1012

Memoirs, imagination in Vathek, and great powers of observation and description in his books of travel. He was a connoisseur of art and libraries. From such a complex person, it is not surprising that the literary product is a complex one.

Although the form in which Vathek is cast was inspired by the Arabian Nights, the author is probably more indebted to the satirical romances of Voltaire and Hamilton. We find traces of French wit and malicious satire, such as we see in 'Zadig.' Vathek is no unique performance, but an epitome of most of the leading characteristics of the Oriental tale as already developed in the East and copied and magnified in Europe. Beckford gathered the ideas together and improved upon them.

Beckford maintained that he wrote Vathek in a single sitting. It has been since disproved through his own correspondence, in which he mentions his work upon the Caliph Vathek, over a period of many months. He may have finished a large section of it at one time. He says of his work, "I had to elevate, exagerate, and orientalize everything. I was soaring on the Arabian bird roc, among genii and enchantments, not moving among men." At any event, it conveys a powerful

13 Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 382
14 Melville, op. cit., p. 142.
sense of unity. It was completed originally in French about 1783, and was published in that language in 1787. A translation into English was made by the Reverend Samuel Henley, with notes; and in disobedience to orders, was published before the French original in 1786. Furthermore, Henley pretended that the story was translated not from the French but from Arabic. Henley's only defense in the matter of this breach of trust is that Beckford never intended publication.

In the main, *Vathek* is original. However, T. S. Gueullette's *Mogul Tales* contain an incident of sinners with flaming hearts, which may be the source of Beckford's Eblis. The *Mogul Tales* are in the catalogue of Beckford's library. The points of similarity and the superiority of *Vathek* are given in an excellent comparison in Dr. Conant's book, *The Oriental Tale in England*, pp. 37-8. Beckford himself told Cyrus Redding that he got the idea from Fonthill.

Fonthill had a very ample, lofty, loud echoing hall, one of the largest in the kingdom. Numerous doors led from it into the various parts of the house, through dim, winding passages. It was from that I introduced the hall—the idea of the Hall of Eblis being generated from my own. My imagination magnified and colored it with the Eastern character.

17 Lewis Melville, "Vathek", *The Athenaeum*, 4283:658, Nov. 1927
18 Melville, op. cit., p. 142.
The females in the book, he tells us, were portraits of the servants.

The style of Vathek is lucid and penetrating; a contrasted, rhythmical, balanced style characteristic of the eighteenth century, but with slightly shorter sentences and meter, seasoned with the macabre. Often it is crisp and witty. The vividness of the episodes are reflected in the vividness of the idiom, and it is "...not a philosophy, but a parable of the wages of sin and of death."19

The story of Vathek is simple. It is the watching of inevitable doom in spite of man's action; the retribution reaped by those who defy the gods. Vathek was the commander of the faithful in the early ages of Islam.

His figure was pleasing and majestic: but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired. For fear, however, of depopulating his dominions, and making his palace desolate, he but rarely gave way to his anger.20

He built palaces of Unsatiating Banquets, Temples of Melody, Delight of Eyes, Perfumes, Joys, where appetites of hunger, thirst, and sexuality might be gratified; and the senses of hearing, vision, and smell might be charmed. He attempted to build a tower reaching to the stars for the gratification of

his scientific curiosity. He developed a predilection for theological controversy, and drifted from the Mohammedan practices. His indulgences became more and more unrestrained, until Mahomet said, "Let us see to what lengths his folly and impiety will carry him: if he run into excess, we shall know how to chastise him. Assist him, therefore. . .".\textsuperscript{21} Vathek was filled with curiosity for new and vivid experiences. He wished to see for himself that which cannot be seen without supernatural aid. He wished to visit the tombs of the pre-Adamite kings in the far-off mountains of the Persian border. A demon made a compact with him to fulfill his wish.

The Caliph's train paused on their journey midway and he met and seduced Nouronihar, daughter of his host. She was of extreme beauty, and there was a pretty idyll of her and her cousin Gulchenrouz until the coming of the sensual, degraded monarch.

The description of the caliph's amatory emotions on this occasion is one of the truest in literature. Not satisfied to behold, he wishes to hear her voice. . ."\textsuperscript{22} and pursued her, violating all rules of Muslim hospitality. He sneered and laughed at devotional fervor. The control of his will left him. He showed an exuberance of animal spirits as he pursued his course of wickedness. "His extravagant profligacy,

\textsuperscript{21} Beckford, op. cit., p. 5
\textsuperscript{22} Keegan, op. cit., p. 676.
by operating upon the nervous stability, and thence upon the
mind, ... generates cruelty, atheism, and insane ambition."23

Lured on by insane ambition, he embarked with Nouronihar upon
the last stages of his journey toward the dark mountains of
Istabar.

Among the most poignant of the shining passages is where
Vathek came, near the end of his journey, upon a mysterious
being disguised as a shepherd of the hills, who "began to pour
forth from his flute such airs of pathetic melody as subdued
the very soul, and, wakening remorse, drove far from it every
frivolous fancy,"24 His song almost wooed the Sultan to
repentance, but at the last moment the Sultan decided to
continue his evil course. The sun shone again brightly, ", ... 
and the shepherd vanished with a lamentable scream."25

A deathlike stillness reigned over the
mountains and through the air; the moon
dialed on a vast platform the shades
of the lovely columns, which reached
from the terrace almost to the clouds;
the gloomy watch towers, whose number could
not be counted, were covered by no roof;
and their capitals, of an architecture
unknown in the records of the earth, served
as an asylum for the birds of the night,
which, alarmed at the approach of such
visitants, fled away croaking.26

They proceeded across the terrace until it trembled, and the
watch towers threatened to tumble about their heads. They

23 Ibid. p. 677
24 Beckford, op. cit., p. 136
25 Ibid. p. 139
26 Ibid. p. 140-1.
descended a black marble staircase into a fog-shrouded chasm. "They seemed not walking but falling from a precipice."27

Their progress was halted by a huge ebony portal, where a Giaour awaited them, key in hand. On entering they found a spacious and lofty cavern, where "a vast multitude was incessantly passing, who severally kept their right hands on their hearts, without once regarding anything around them."28 The Caliph and Houronihar talked with King Soliman, and discerned through his bosom, which was transparent as crystal, his heart was enveloped in flames. Vathek soon found himself, suddenly, unexpectedly, dreadfully damned. His wicked mother and Houronihar were likewise doomed. Their illicit passion had changed to hate and they plunged into the group, "there to wander in an eternity of unabating anguish."29

The power of imagination is expanded to its utmost possible limit. Space is stretched out to its utmost possible capacity; and the various objects which are fitted to gratify the senses are accumulated in vast extent and endless diversity... Truly it is a spectacle of incomparable sublimity, and fully competent to deaden the edge of sensual indulgence and to inspire a wholesome dread of that pain which inevitably follows in the wake of all illicit human pleasure.30

In the whole range of letters there are few descriptions of the loss of a soul which can be compared with the last chapter of

27 Ibid. p. 143
28 Ibid. p. 144
29 Loc. cit.
30 Keegan, op. cit., p. 678
It is marvelous that such an effect is created with such economy of material. Its superb theatrical quality has been mistaken for a sudden moral qualm of the author.

Unlike the Arabian Nights, Vathek has a plot which leads with an insistent march to the climax. There is a unity of purpose and a singleness of thought which cannot be found in the stories of the Nights, strung as they are upon the thin thread of a frame tale. Although the plot wanders, following grotesque incidents (such as the "cursed Indian" who is spurned in the madness of the people "like an invulnerable football") the main direction of the road is clear.

Vathek bears a close kinship to the tales of terror. It has been called "a link between the Gothic tales of terror and the fashionable cult of Arabian fable." "The grim, the grotesque, and the sublime are embodied in turn in the fantastic Sultan, his insatiable mother, the atrocious crimes of the Mephistophelean Giaour, and the torments of the Hall of Eblis." Dr. Conant makes an interesting distinction between the kind of horror present here and in the tales of the Arabian Nights. In the latter it is more objective and lacks the psychological,

31 Belloc, op. cit., p. 193
33 Elton, op. cit., p. 206
35 Loc. cit.
uncanny quality. **Vathek** gives the impression of an extraordinary nightmare. Charming scenes of pastoral beauty are followed by sudden horror. Nouronihar is led by a strange globe of fire through the darkness.

She stopped a second time, the sound of waterfalls mingling their murmurs, the hollow rustlings amongst the palm-branches, and the funereal screams of the birds from their rifted trunks, all conspired to fill her with terror; she imagined every moment that she trod on some venomous reptile; all the stories of malignant Dives and dismal Goules thronged into her memory; but her curiosity was, notwithstanding, stronger than her fears.36

Vathek epitomizes many of the characteristic features of the Oriental tale, although it is not the product of an Oriental mind. It would be difficult to realize the amount of allusion garnered by Beckford from his reading were it not for the extensive notes given by Henley. Dives, Giaours, and gauls people the book; there are "rich manchets, amber comfits, flagons of Shiraz wine, porcelain vases of snow, and grapes from the banks of the Tigris".37 There are eunuchs and camels, arbours of roses entwined with jessamine and honeysuckle; all the Oriental pageantry and color which charm us in the Arabian Nights are present. We find the same tendency to give a pseudo-historical accuracy, as when reference is made to Ethiopians,

36 Conant, op. cit., p. 66
37 Beckford, op. cit., p. 64
and Vathek himself is described as "ninth caliph of the race of the Abassides, the son of Motassem, and the grandson of Haroun al Raschid."38

The most serious defects are these: excessive mockery and sensuality, and typically Oriental lack of characterization. The mockery "has frequently a repulsive quality; it is brutal as well as cynical, and usually dwells with repellent emphasis on the things that appeal to the senses."39 There is too great a tinge of sensuality in his descriptions of beauty—indeed, sensuality intermingled with cynicism. "At the mention of the subterranean palace, the caliph suspended his caresses (which, indeed, had proceeded pretty far), to seek... an explanation."40

As in the Arabian Nights, there is a lack of perceptive characterization. The hero is again a bundle of attributes—voluptuous, cruel, ambitious, uncontrolled, irreligious, self-indulgent. He is not a living individual in whom good and bad are mixed to a varying degree. Hence the catastrophe fails to arouse true tragic pity.

As in the Arabian Nights, we find exhaustive details of a religious nature. There are endless references to Allah and Mahomet. Emissaries bring to the Caliph "one of the precious

38 Ibid., p. 1
39 Conant, op. cit., p. 69
40 Beckford, op. cit., p. 110
besoms which are used to sweep the sacred Cahaba; a present truly worthy of the greatest potentate on earth."\textsuperscript{41} Vathek, however, profanes his present by sweeping down the cobwebs. Eastern customs regarding the reading of the Koran, the passing of a caravan, bathing in rose water...all are faithfully set down in accurate style. These all contribute to the sense of reality in the midst of unreality which \textit{Vathek} shares with the \textit{Nights}.

Fantastic and shining, brilliant in coloring; weak in characterization; marred by sensuality and mocking; grotesque, and purely imaginative; \textit{Vathek} resembles the Arabian \textit{Nights} more closely than any other product of the eighteenth century in England. It holds a deservedly high place, not only as an example of an Oriental type of tale, but in the consideration of the world's classics.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid. p. 51
CHAPTER III

RASSELAS

The culmination of the fiction of the Rambler and the Idler, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, is often regarded as the best type of the serious English Oriental tale. While Johnson, in Rasselas, does not show great merits as a story-teller, he rises to great heights as a moral philosopher.

Johnson wrote Rasselas in the evenings of one week in January of 1759 to pay the expenses of his mother's funeral and some small debts that she had accumulated. Although darkened by the immediate grief of the situation, it reveals the author's somber philosophy of life, and the illusoriness or at least the dissolution of happiness is its constant refrain. The theme is clearly that of "the vanity of human wishes."¹

Animals can eat, sleep, and be content; man who is both animal and immortal is torn by desires that this world cannot satisfy; for him a 'stagnant mind' is brutal, a restless mind, inevitable—and unhappy.²

Rasselas, the Prince of Abyssinia, lived in a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara. Here "all the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature collected, and its evils extracted and excluded".³ In spite

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2 Baugh, op. cit., p. 99½.

3 Johnson, Samuel, The History of Rasselas (New York: A. L. Burt Co.) p. 177
of the joys of the happy valley, the Prince was melancholy and bored. He longed to see the miseries of the world, "since the sight of them is necessary to happiness".\(^4\) He and his sister Nekoyah flee, searching for a lasting happiness beyond the gratification of desire. They journeyed into the world only to find misery everywhere. They met an old man named Imlac, and journeyed about at random. Unable to govern even a small kingdom with perfect benevolence, Rasselas resolved to return to Abyssinia. In sight of this conclusion, the Princess remarks: "The choice of life is become less important. I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity."\(^5\) The story is broken by extensive philosophising.

Johnson meant, by showing the unsatisfactory nature of things temporal, to direct the hopes of man to things eternal. \textit{Rasselas} . . . may be considered as a more enlarged and more deeply philosophical discourse in prose, upon the interesting truth. . . .\(^6\)

There are serious and leisurely conversations upon many and varying subjects, such as: the problems of government; the question of good and evil; immortality of the soul; the nature of elusiveness of happiness; and free choice.

It is interesting to see Johnson writing a book that is strikingly similar to Voltaire's \textit{Candide} at about the same time.

\(^4\) Ibid. p. 185

\(^5\) Conant, op. cit., p. 141

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Candide was published in February, 1759, but did not reach England until after Rasselas appeared (March or April of that year). The themes of the two books are superficially parallel. Voltaire asserts that the world is full of unhappiness due to misfortune and crime, and optimism is futile. Johnson is not so much concerned with the system of the world, or universal harmony, "as he is with the imperfect ability of man to adjust himself to practical life".⁷

As a devout, though despondent, Christian Johnson might have saved the case for cheerfulness by introducing the popular orthodox idea of rewards and punishments in a future state; but this he refrains from doing.⁸

There are many episodes in the fable, each used to point out the errors in many ideas current in his day besides optimism. Each endeavor to find happiness is unsuccessful; pastoral life, monastic life, the hermit's flight from reality, courtiers, Stoic pride, people who live only for the pleasure of the day, life according to nature; marriage and celibacy, the loneliness of old age and the uncertainties of youth; all these plans and conditions for happiness prove futile.

Near the end of Chapter twenty-seven Princess Nekayah discourses upon "whether perfect happiness should be procured by perfect goodness."

⁷ Baugh, op. cit., p. 994
⁸ Loc. cit.
... We do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue. All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, a steady prospect of a happier state. This man enables us to endure calamity with patience: but remember that patience must suppose pain.\(^9\)

Then the question arises whether or not good men do have quiet consciences; or whether an uneasy conscience is a necessary attribute of virtue.

There are many references to the problem of wise government. "Discontent. . .will not always be without reason under the most just and vigilant administration of public affairs."\(^{10}\)

The redeeming circumstance is the power of man to attain knowledge and to retain integrity. The quiet conscience and knowledge help to win serenity.

To Johnson, thoroughly convinced that life ought to be viewed from the moralistic side, knowledge is valuable only when ideas are applied to life, and his philosophizing continually verges toward the dividing line between speculation and conduct.\(^{11}\)

He rebukes those who have made their choice and then pass the time away in delay and idle speculation. Rasselas says, "... My time has been lost by the crime or folly of my ancestors and the absurd institutions of my country. . .I have lost that which can never be restored."\(^{12}\) He believes work is the best cure for

\(^9\) Hilaire Belloc, "Mrs. Piozzi's Rasselas", The Saturday Review of Literature, 2:37-8, August 15, 1925

\(^{10}\) Loc. cit.

\(^{11}\) Conant, op. cit., p. 143

\(^{12}\) Johnson, op. cit., p. 189
sorrow, and that there is a consolation offered to man by
knowledge and faith in a future existence. "The present life
is but an imperfect state, and only a passage to a better..." 13

If we look further for the meaning of Johnson's allegory,
the Happy Valley is the symbol for man's environment, and
Rasselas is the optimist. "Gradually the conviction is borne
in upon Rasselas that every search for happiness is futile, and
his efforts end in 'a conclusion in which nothing is concluded."
14

The effect of Rasselas is illustrated thus by Courtenay:

'Impressive truth, in splendid fiction drest,
Checks the vain wish, and calms the troubled breast;
O'er the dark mind a light celestial throws,
And soothes the angry passions to repose:
As oil effus'd illumes and smooths the deep,
When round the bark the swelling surges sweep.' 15

The charm of this book is its humanity, the
sweetness and wholesomeness of the long
melancholy episodes, the wisdom of the moral
reflections and disquisitions; nor is there
wanting here and there the gentle sunshine
of a sort of half-suppressed humor. 16

The events of the book are not the chief concern of
Johnson. He chooses the simplest possible frame, and places
no undue emphasis upon events to distract the attention from
the main theme--the author's reflections upon happiness. The
only happenings are the uneventful flight from the Happy Valley,

13 Boswell, op. cit., p. 398
14 Conant, op. cit., p. 146
15 Boswell, op. cit., p. 399
16 Edmund Gosse, Eighteenth Century Literature, (London and
the adventure of Pekuah, and the aimless and nondescript wanderings. The Orientalism is purely a device "for effacing any bias of locality and reducing life to a sort of biblical universality". 17

Johnson's knowledge of the East was that of any unspecialized man of letters of his time. In a letter to Warren Hastings he confessed the lack of information. "His imagination, like that of many eighteenth century authors, felt itself free to shuffle on a Persian coat and to dilate itself at ease in fable or fantasy." 18

Rasselas was written so hurriedly that Johnson had neither time nor inclination to turn to sources to obtain genuine Oriental references. However, Boswell states that the power of his memory was incredible. The character of Rasselas is very similar to that of the king of Damascus, Bedreddin, in The Persian Tales. Both attempt to find happiness by traveling incognito, but for different ends. Both have conclusions which conclude nothing; Bedreddin remains a frustrate lover, and Rasselas returns to Abyssinia with no more definite ideas than when he started. Bedreddin shows the unhappiness of kings, and Rasselas has a chapter in which he shows a similar attitude


(Chapter twenty-seven, "The Disquisition upon Greatness"). It seems probable that Johnson had read the Persian Tales, but the debt that he owed to them would not be a verbal one. 19

Johnson's use of Oriental names and references is of the vaguest. The Happy Valley might really be located anywhere. He speaks of the Nile, and Cairo; they take passage in a ship to Suez. Imlac was born in the kingdom of Goiama, not far from the fountain of the Nile. His father traded between the inland countries of Africa and the ports of the Red Sea. These places are spoken of in such a general way that the reader feels that their names were simply lifted from an atlas. Johnson abstains from the specific and prefers the generality in nearly every case. The climate is spoken of thus: "The close of the day is, in the regions of the torrid zone, the only season of diversion and entertainment". 20

Johnson's method for orientalizing his tale was a very simple one. "Imlac in Rasselas", he says, 'I spelt with a c at the end, because it is less like English, which should always have the Saxon k added to the c'". 21 There is no local color on any of the farflung journeys of Rasselas and his companions. The language occasionally introduces figures such

19 Loc. cit.
20 Johnson, op. cit., p. 200
21 Boswell, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 31
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as "the frown of power", "the eye of wisdom," "the rocks of treachery".\(^\text{22}\)

Rasselas is a very generalized person, completely lacking in characteristics of an individual. In this we find a resemblance to the average Oriental tale. There is no particular adventure for the emphasis is not upon the conventional subject matter of the Oriental tale. Nor is it a land of mystery and enchantment. In Number four of the "Rambler" Johnson wrote a deprecation of marvels and magic in fiction, and this held good even in his Eastern tale. His one character with superhuman powers, the astronomer who controls the weather, is miserable because of the social responsibilities of his position.

Johnson's Rasselas excels, therefore, not in its veneer of Orientalism, which is of the thinnest, but in its dignity and wisdom of life.

\(^{22}\) Conant, op. cit., p. 152
CHAPTER IV

THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

It is usually assumed that Horace Walpole's Letter from Xo Ho. A Chinese Philosopher at London, to his friend Lien Chi, at Peking, published anonymously in pamphlet form in 1757 as a squib on English inconstancy, furnished the plan for the Chinese Letters which later became The Citizen of the World. Walpole's remarks on the Admiral Byng trial appeared in the Monthly Review where Goldsmith was employed.¹ The work was brief, consisting of only five folio pages. It was furthermore restricted to political affairs. It is fairly certain that Oliver Goldsmith did, however, take the name Lien Chi Altangi for use in the Chinese Letters published a year later in Newberry's Public Ledger (1760-61).

The foreign observer type of letter had been used in France and England before Walpole. This essay type made the writer a foreign traveler (preferably Oriental, for philosophy came from the East) writing letters home describing the strange lands and criticizing the old customs he sees.² Goldsmith was the first to make a practice of casting the essay into this form.³

He was interested in the Orient and thoroughly familiar with social and political happenings of his time.

The Chinese tradition was widespread throughout England during the eighteenth century. It made them into a race of philosophers,

embodiments of simple reason and common sense; people who lived in a patriarchal society or under an absolute but perfectly benevolent emperor. They honored men of letters above conquerors and military heroes, and were in religion rationally devout, tolerant—and altogether void of bigotry and 'superstition'. In a word, the Chinese traveler embodied the pure light of reason, and his mind played effectively over the customs of England and of Christendom in an impartial and at times devastating fashion. to him nothing established had an absolute validity: in the Orient, as these essayists all loved to remark, polygamy was perfectly respectable; in Christendom the marriage customs were frequently shocking. All things were relative... The excellence of all customs was to be estimated according to human and common-sense standards.4

Goldsmith asserts that his metaphors and allusions are all drawn from the East.

One of the earliest of these traveller's accounts was an eight volume series, perhaps by G. P. Marana, entitled Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy who lived five and forty years undiscovered at Paris: Giving an Impartial Account to the Divan at Constantinople, of the most Remarkable Transactions of Europe, and Discovering several Intrigues and Secrets of the Christian

4 Baugh, op. cit., p. 1059
Courts (especially of France) from the year 1637 to the year 1682. It was first published in England in 1689, and ran to twenty-six editions. The English editor claimed to have translated the material from an Italian version, written by a Turk, who left it in a lodging house in Paris, and translated from the Arabic into Latin by the discoverer. Its value is historical; it records facts, intrigues, politics, persons, occurrences. The Chinese Letters develop ideas in straightforward essay style; they ridicule minor vices and foibles; they give a picture of the middle and lower classes in mostly fictitious characters and happenings.\(^5\)

Another forerunner of Goldsmith was Montesquieu, who published his Lettres Persanes in 1721. He pretends to be translating actual letters received from Persians who had been his house guests. This device was a mask assumed for the purpose of satirising the social, political, ecclesiastical, and literary follies of the French.

There is a confused and flowery romantic story for the purpose of unifying the Persian Letters. Goldsmith has no need for any such device since all the letters he uses are represented as being sent or received by one man. Montesquieu, since he had no particular moral destination to achieve, includes a great deal of Persian customs, termed "purple patches of French

\(^5\) Davidson, op. cit., p. 216
A link between Montesquieu and Goldsmith is found in George Lyttelton, who published in 1735 *Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan*. It is criticized as being too long drawn out. It covers the same type of subject as does Montesquieu, but is "not so applicable in teaching, so catholic in view, so unified in structure, so good in portraiture, or so sympathetic and realistic in treatment."  

The *Spectator* for April 27, 1711, carried an account of an alleged Indian king visiting England; Defoe published in 1724 his *Tour Through England* (supposedly by a foreigner); in 1726 William Lloyd contributed *Letters from a Moor at London to his Friend at Tunis*; and in 1752, Graffigny's *Letters Written by a Peruvian Princess*, and *Letters of Aza, a Peruvian*, came out.  

In spite of the numbers of predecessors to Goldsmith who had experimented with this type of writing, his use of the medium was very different. He has given us some excellent examples in character delineation (a far cry from the *Arabian Nights*) in Beau Tibbs and the *Man in Black*. In his attempt to instruct and improve the reader he varies from his forerunners.

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8 Davidson, op. cit., p. 219
"He attaches a strangely English moral to an Oriental story". He furthermore makes Lien Chi, to all intents and purposes, an Englishman, and "avoids the harmful effects which may result from using a disguise too faithfully."

The question of Goldsmith's indebtedness to DuHolde's History of China is extremely debatable. A consideration of this subject can be found in Mr. Hamilton Jewett Smith's Oliver Goldsmith's Citizen of the World; A Study. It has been refuted to such an extent as to make discussion here impractical.

The Citizen of the World contains a great variety of subject matter. The mind of the author, stored to bursting with miscellaneous observations of many years and an intimate acquaintance with London and society, turns from one subject to another, "with a freshness and a variety which delight us almost as much as they must have delighted the readers of his own day."

10 Loc. cit.
11 Hamilton Jewett Smith, Oliver Goldsmith's Citizen of the World: A Study (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926)
12 K. C. Balderston, Review, Modern Language Notes, 43:403-5 June 1928
13 Austin Dobson, Life of Oliver Goldsmith, (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., ) p. 82
Instead of attempting a detailed description of the Chinese Philosopher, Lien Chi Altangi, the first letter is devoted to the character of the bearer of the credential. "He is a native of Honan in China, and one who did me signal services, when he was a mandarine, and I a factor, at Canton. . . I am told he is a philosopher--I am not sure he is an honest man: that to you will be his best recommendation."  

His friend, Fum-Hoam, remains in the shadows as the correspondent to whom he addresses himself. There is frequent mention of Lien Chi's longing for home, to give sincerity, and a romantic love story of his son. The heroine, a beautiful slave, is actually the niece of Lien's best friend in London. The Oriental decorations and figures are, in general, very limited; and are actually elements of humor. Occasional remarks in character give a sense of incongruity. "I submit to the stroke of Heaven: I hold the volume of Confucius in my hand, and, as I read, grow humble, patient, and wise."  

He quotes from Confucius, "the Arabian language", "Ambulaachamed the Arabian poet," and "a South American Ode". The London streets are spoken of as "a great lazy puddle" and contrasted with golden Nankin. Feminine beauty is contrasted with Chinese standards.  

15 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 31  
16 Conant, op. cit., p. 192
Occasionally places in the Far East are mentioned in passing.

The only purely Oriental part includes the story of an "Ephesian Matron a la Chinoise". Insincerity and an overly audible grief are illustrated in an amusing tale of a widow who, in her haste to remarry, fans her husband's grave to make it dry more quickly. In the Apologue of Prince Bonbennin and the White Mouse the form is Oriental but the subject matter is Goldsmith's comments on Georgian England. There are other Eastern apologues used to illustrate some generalization.

Letter 82 tells the story of an elephant who prayed to be as wise as mankind, and found disadvantages and suffering until returned to former ignorance. "A Chinese fable, . . . Five animals at a meal" (Letter 98) exemplifies the greed of lawyers. "An Apologue of the Genius of Love" is about false idolatry (Letter 114) and the "Glass of Lao" (Letter 156) reflects the true character of all those who look into it.17

Meanwhile the Chinese formality is carefully preserved. Many Chinese tenets are illustrated.

The Chinese are grave and sententious; so is he. But in one particular the resemblance is peculiarly striking; the Chinese are often dull, and so is he.18

17 Ibid. p. 195-7
18 Ibid. p. 192-3
Goldsmith often begins with an Oriental metaphor which soon subsides into plain and ordinary English. Occasionally the letters are closed with Chinese figures of speech. In general, Goldsmith's sense of humor guided him to use sparingly such absurdities.

He draws a satiric picture of the republic of letters in Number XX.

Each looks upon his fellows as a rival, not an assistant in the same pursuit. They calumniate, they injure, they despise, they ridicule each other: if one man writes a book that pleases, others shall write books to show that he might have given still greater pleasure, or should not have pleased. If one happens to hit upon something new, there are numbers ready to assure the public that all this was no novelty to them or the learned... Thus, instead of uniting like the members of a commonwealth, they are divided into almost as many factions as there are men; and their jarring constitution, instead of being styled a republic of letters, should be entitled, an anarchy of literature.19

Literature plays a large part in Lien Chi's observations. One of the best letters is devoted to a whimsical description of the vagaries of some of the humbler professors at the Saturday Club. Other and graver letters lament the decay of poetry, the taste for obscene and pert novels (especially Tristram Shandy), and the folly of useless disquisitions; the necessity for intrigue or riches as a means of success; the acceptance of products of art or literature of poor quality merely because

19 Dobson, op. cit., p. 118
they were created by famous or highborn people; the situation of art and drama; political affairs in Europe; elections; gaming; travellers and their trivialities; and many other varied topics. Occasionally he pokes fun at the fashionable type; the fine-art connoisseur; the funeral customs of the great; the absurdity of titles; the coronation, the courts of justice, the racecourse at Newmarket. Quacks, gaming, paint, mourning, mad dogs, the Marriage Act, all take their turn. Lien Chi talks of the horrors of the penal codes and public morality, the irreverent behavior of St. Paul's congregation, and the absurdities of public monuments. False politeness, the folly of avarice, misgovernment, the love of monsters, and the advertisements of the day—could a more diversified collection of topics be found?

Goldsmith was by nature sympathetic with the poor and downtrodden. It was a natural Irish tenderness which came from the Heart. It is seen particularly clearly in No. 4 of "The Bee" called "City Night-Piece" which was reprinted as letter 117 in The Citizen of the World.

The slightest misfortune of the great, the most imaginary uneasiness of the rich, are aggravated with all the power of eloquence, and held up to engage our attention and sympathetic sorrow. The poor weep unheeded, persecuted by every subordinate species of tyranny; and every law which gives others security becomes an enemy to them.20

20 Charles G. Osgood, Jr., "Notes on Goldsmith", Modern Philology, 5:241-52, October 1907
Several tales of travel are found as the Philosopher's journey to Europe is mentioned.

What in the Chinese letters is even more remarkable than their clever raillery of social incongruities and abuses, is the occasional indication of the author's gift for delineation of a humorous character.

One of the most interesting features of the Chinese Philosopher is that we have a foretaste of those marvelous character sketches to come. We have the eccentric philanthropist with his "reluctant goodness" christened the Man in Black. He presents a contrast between "credulous charity and expressed distrust of human nature, simulated harshness and real amiability", a type which combines many of the Goldsmith family traits.

The picture of the tarnished and pinched little Beau Tibbs follows. This poor little pretender with his mechanical chatter and ragged finery, with his reed-voiced, simpering helpmeet, is a masterpiece. The Wooden-Legged Soldier is also a famous sketch.

If Goldsmith had written nothing but this miniature trilogy...he would still have earned a perpetual place among English humorists.22

In style we have "ease without weakness."23 In letters 15, 18, 60, 62, 87 the author mentions first the scene, then

21 Dobson, op. cit., p. 120
22 Ibid. p. 123
introduces the people with remarks on their appearance and character; there are a few allusions to nature and a few metaphors. This pattern is followed in each instance. Where the subject is either Oriental or classical, the style is formal and monotonous, artificial, and balanced. In lighter moments, there are innumerable instances of gay and sparkling facetiousness.

Goldsmith's greatest gift was that of transformation. "The earthly he renders unearthly; the commonplace, strange." His greatest value to us is that he epitomizes the London life of his day and age, and he gives to us a picture at once clear and colorful.

In a consideration of the relationship between The Citizen of the World and the other Oriental fiction of the eighteenth century, the chief interest lies in the ease and facility with which the Oriental material is handled. Goldsmith is frankly wearing a false countenance, and it is frequently dropped, to reveal the true English character behind it. Superficial references and metaphors, occasional apologues and allegories, tales of travel; these are the Oriental decorations. However,

24 Osgood, op. cit., p. 248.
26 Osgood, loc. cit.
repeated references to the Chinese attitude of mind or phraseology; or what Goldsmith pretends would be the attitude, adds humour and charm, and gives the book its claim to being the best collection of pseudo-Oriental essays of the eighteenth century. "His purpose is to say something serious under the guise of entertainment, to instruct as well as to amuse". This use of a Chinese Philosopher adds poignancy to his philosophical reflections.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

When people begin to parody a literary type, its popularity is on the wane, and its days are numbered. So it was that the publication of Horace Walpole's Hieroglyphic Tales in 1785 marked the end of an era; when criticism and mockery had grown to the extent where the structure of the extremely successful Oriental and pseudo-Oriental was attacked, and eventually driven out of existence.

On Walpole's own MS this note is found: "Only six copies of this were printed, besides the revised copy."¹ These Tales were six short fairy stories which he wrote in 1772, partly to amuse a child--Caroline Campbell, Lady Ailesbury's little niece--partly for his own enjoyment. They are in a mad vein. Of them he writes, "I have some strange things in my drawer, even wilder than my Castle of Otranto...they were not...written when I was out of my senses."² His imagination is completely unbound. One story begins in this way:

There was formerly a King who had three daughters--that is, he would have had three, if he had had one more--but somehow or other the eldest was never born. She was extremely handsome, had a great deal of wit, and spoke French in perfection, as all the authors of that age affirm, and yet none of them pretend

¹ Austin Dobson, Horace Walpole (London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine and Company, 1890. p. 356
² Loc. cit.
that she ever existed. It is very certain that the two other princesses were far from beauties; the second had a strong Yorkshire dialect, and the youngest had bad teeth and but one leg, which occasioned her dancing very ill. 3

Even though this is mere moonstruck nonsense, it is significant as a straw in the wind, to show how public feeling was shifting.

The preface is a satire on the pretentious, pseudo-scholarly prefaces to Oriental tales, and informs the reader that

...the Hieroglyphic Tales were undoubtedly written a little before the creation of the world...and preserved by oral tradition in the mountains of Crampercraggi, an uninhabited island not yet discovered. 4

The first of the short stories is entitled "A New Arabian Night's Entertainment". The scene is laid in Larbidel.

The other side of the mountain was inhabited by a nation of whom the Larbidellians knew no more than the French nobility do of Great Britain, which they think is an island that somehow or other may be approached by land. 5

The stories are all parodies. The titles follow: "The King and his Three Daughters"; "The Dice-box"; "The Peach in Brandy"; "Mi Li, a Chinese Fairy Tale"; and "Venetian Love-story".

The attitude of mockery evinced in this trifling work echoes the critical opinion of the time. One of the best

4 Conant, op. cit., p. 221
5 Loc. cit.
expressions of such criticism is found in Oliver Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World, Letter XXXIII. English writers of Eastern tales and Oriental histories are thoroughly ridiculed. "Oh, there is nothing like sense in the true Eastern style, where nothing more is required but sublimity," sighs the hostess of a dinner party. 6

Oh, for a history of Aboulfaouris, the grand voyager, of genii, magicians, rocks, bags of bullets, giants and enchanters, where all is great, obscure, magnificent, and unintelligible!" "I have written many a sheet of Eastern tale myself," interrupts the author, "and I defy the severest critic to say but that I have stuck close to the true manner. I have compared a lady's chin to the snow upon the mountains of Bomek; a soldier's sword to the clouds that obscure the face of heaven. If riches are mentioned, I compare them to the flocks that graze the verdant Tefflis; if poverty, to the mists that veil the brow of Mount Baku. I have used thee and thou upon all occasions; I have described fallen stars, and splitting mountains, not forgetting the little houries, who make a pretty figure in every description. But you shall hear how I generally begin--- "Eben-ben-bolo, who was the son of Ban, was born on the foggy summits of Benderabassi. His beard was whiter than the feathers which veil the breast of the penguin; his eyes were like the eyes of doves when washed by the dews of the morning; his hair, which hung like the willow weeping over the glassy stream, was so beautiful that it seemed to reflect its own brightness; and his feet were as the feet of the wild deer which fleeth to the tops of the mountains.' There, there is the true Eastern taste for you; every advance made towards sense, is only a deviation from sound. Eastern tales should always be sonorous, lofty, musical, and unmeaning." 7

6 Goldsmith, op. cit., pp. 126-7

7 Loc. cit.
Unfortunately, many of the tales which were published in England in the eighteenth century, actually were "sonorous, lofty, musical, and unmeaning." The wave of popularity of all things Eastern carried with it a great deal of waste material which merely availed itself of the flood tide of demand. Even architecture and house furnishing went through the craze.

The first consideration for the lesser branches of architectural design in the eighteenth century were novelty, variety, and the power to amuse. . . so we get that strange madley of fashions, rococo, the Chinese taste, and the Gothic. One may quote the words of an American designer's advertisement of 1759, 'All sorts of Rooms after the manner of the Arabian, Chinese, Persian, Gothic, Muscovite, Palladian, Vitruvian, and Egyptian'.

Sir William Chambers, in his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, suggested that a remedy for the tedium of English gardens was to add a Chinoiserie Pagoda (embellished with gilded dragons) as an element of surprise. The Oriental craze found its way into the house also. Chinese wallpapers, sometimes gifts from ambassadors and merchants, were hand painted in brilliant colours. They were evidently regarded as interesting and curious novelties. Sir Joseph Banks in his *Journal of 1770* says:

A man need go no further to study the Chinese than the China paper, the better sorts of which represent their persons and such of their costumes, dresses, etc. as I have seen, most strikingly like, though a little in the caricature style. 9

Furniture makers specialized in Chinese or Gothic style or mixed them together. Edwards and Darly in 1754 published a book entitled A new book of Chinese designs calculated to Improve the Present Taste, consisting of Figures, Buildings and Furniture, Landskips, Birds, Beasts, Flowers and Ornaments. 10

All these are evidence that the Oriental appealed intimately to the popular tastes and minds, for literature and architecture go hand in hand, "there being something of the same difference between Greek and Gothic architecture that exists between Classic and Romantic poetry." 11

Increasing trade and travel, the new democratic belief in the brotherhood of men of all the earth, commercial intercourse with the East—all had combined to break down the traditional insularity of England and provide novelties of expression.

A writer in the World, No. 70, feels that the one quality in the craze for the oriental tales which redeemed it from

9 Ibid. p. 133
10 Ibid. p. 145
barbarism was that they contained "useful morals and well-drawn pictures from common life." Unfortunately, most of them have gone down into oblivion, with the exception of the four major works which have been considered.

Among these four books we find an extremely diversified nature. The Arabian Nights represents the true colorful collection of Eastern tales, Vathek is a fantastic adventure with a highly moral lesson, Rasselas has a thinly disguised philosophical purpose, and The Citizen of the World is in letter form covering social and political essays on life of the times. However, there are certain common qualities which can be traced through them all.

All four books present an extremely thin thread of plot, in none is the plot the essential element. In all four the characterization is slight. In the Arabian Nights we have types: the complaining porter, the sheyk of the desert, the ruler who desires entertainment, the cruel or mischievous 'Elfreets. Vathek is sensual and cruel, filled with curiosity, degraded. In no situation does he show a conflict of characteristics or inclinations. Rasselas is merely the personified optimist; and Lien Chi Altangi allows no picture of himself to enter into his consideration of the life in London. The only exception is where the sketch of Beau Tibbs,

12 Conant, op. cit., p. 225
and the Man in Black, enter into the Citizen of the World, representing the Anglicizing of the oriental tendency.

The scene in three cases is laid in the East. In the genuine Oriental translation, the Arabian Nights, there is a wealth of background of Eastern customs, such as kissing the threshold upon entering a Moslem home; the kerchief of immunity; hooreeyehs; religious ideas and references to Allah and his prophet. There are descriptions of actual places that have a ring of authenticity, as that of the pyramids "nor is there on the face of earth aught like them for height and fashion and mysteries. . . The monuments survive the men who built Awhile, till overthrown by touch of doom." There is generous use of magic and enchantments; talking beasts and birds, jinns, people turned to apes; magical inscriptions and incantations, weird and inexplicable adventures. Vathek comes closer to approximating genuine Eastern customs and phraseology, partly because of the nature of the story, partly because the exotic nature of Beckford himself led him to exhaustive scholarly studies of the Eastern languages and writings, even though he never travelled out of Europe. At the other end of the scale we find Goldsmith and Johnson, whose allusions are superficial, the background pale and shadowy, the details sparse, the references to magic and enchantment and religious customs and places are rare. The flavor of all this literature is distinctly

13 Lane, op. cit., Vol. IV pp. 68-69
exotic, spiced with the unusual. Oriental nomenclature and phraseology shades from brilliant and copious to occasional references to Africa and Peking by Goldsmith and Johnson. These two almost completely Anglicized the language which they used, with rare exceptions.

The environment into which the Arabian Nights came was largely responsible for the transition. The eighteenth century was characterized by a tendency to moralize, and gave itself freely to rationalistic prose and satiric verse. This urge to "teach a lesson" has been called fundamental to the British character; and at this time it pervaded nearly all the literature. It is the first obstacle we find to the free development of an Oriental type of literature.

Too exotic to become easily acclimated, such tales were regarded as entertaining trifles, to be tolerated seriously only when utilized to point a moral. The moralizing tendency and the rationalistic mood were two barriers opposed to the free development of imaginative oriental fiction.¹⁴

A second barrier was the insular attitude of the English. There was little intercourse with any country save France; and French classicism received undue attention and was very influential. The Far East was little understood until the beginnings of the expansion of the British Empire. England felt a smug superiority in all things British, and considered the ideas of other countries to be bizarre or merely a novel curiosity.

¹⁴ Conant, op. cit., p. 233
A third obstacle to the free development of the oriental tale came because of the poor quality of translation of the existing oriental fiction. Galland expurgated most of the coarseness of the original, but also most of the minute details which make the reader feel that he has actually visited the picturesque East. Burton's later translations attempted to remedy this fault, but there still does not exist a great classic translation. This lack of vivid and detailed description made a pale and colorless story which had little to recommend it except novelty.

Furthermore, the development of the Oriental tale was handicapped by the fact that it held no part of the national heritage. The Eastern fiction was alien; its atmosphere, incidents, and fancies, spun for a breathless audience by the rawy before his tent in the desert, seemed to be too grotesque and new to the English readers to have more than a limited appeal.

If the oriental tale had emphasized the more fundamental elements of human character—the passions of love, hate, ambition, revenge—in addition to the spirit of adventure and delight in the picturesque and the mysterious, then whatever was alien in setting or incident would have been no barrier.15

If the appeal had been to universal sentiments of romance, then the exotic details would have been secondary in interest, rather than primary; and we would have had a more universally appealing

15 Ibid. p. 237
story than merely travel incidents.

In spite of all the barriers to the free development of this type of fiction—the tendency to moralize, the rationalistic classicism, the insular attitude, the poor quality of translation, and the alien ingredients of the oriental tale—the popularity was undeniably great. The reasons can be found in a consideration of the Romantic movement and an analysis of the significance of this type of fiction as a manifestation of Romanticism.

The first reason for the welcome given by the London of the coffee houses and literary gentlemen was that it came from France. "The propensity to moralize and philosophise, the love of satire, and the incipient romantic spirit, were common to both countries, although present in varying degrees." 16 Since 1660, French influence prevailed in England, and French literary fashions were followed. Since the vogue in France of orientalism was so great, it naturally echoed in England. Furthermore, England had shown a particular taste in satire, and Marana's Turkish Spy letters, which influenced The Citizen of the World, were well received.

The history of the novel gives us another reason for the warm welcome which the Arabian Nights received. The elements necessary to great narrative art include plot, character, and

16 Shepard, Wood, op. cit., p. 26
background. The Sir Roger de Coverley papers possess two: characterization and background; the Arabian Nights supplied the element of plot which had been lacking in the periodical sketches. "The Arabian Nights was the fairy godmother of the English novel."17

The rule of reason, order, and classicism was unquestionably the master of England. Yet the people of the day played occasional truant and allowed their fancy to stray beyond the limits of traditional art.

The men of the eighteenth century were not devoid of passion and imagination; they were not without a love for the country, though they liked the town far better; they were not without an appreciation of nature, though they preferred cultivated plains to 'horrid Alps'; but they considered it bad form to express such feelings in polite society or in serious literature. Oppressed by the bare and hard rationalism of the day, people craved more and more earnestly adequate food for their imagination, their fancy, their emotion.18

Therefore, the chief reason for the popularity of the Oriental and pseudo-Oriental fiction was its romantic character. The growing demands for color and spice gave variety to the comparatively gray and dreary life of Augustan England, and brought with it the mystical glamour of the East.

But before the death of the last great classicist of the

17 Conant, op. cit., p. 243
18 Ibid. p. 245
of the century, new forces were working. The Orient was to come closer, and the knowledge of Eastern life and literature was opening a fresh chapter on Oriental influence on England—a fresh century.
ABSTRACT

Orientalism came to England in the eighteenth century as gaily and freshly as a sea breeze, wafting strange sounds and scents of unfamiliar and exotic lands as mysterious as they were alluring. To a land still insular and self-sufficient, classic and ordered, Oriental tales offered escape to distant places and times. To a land just beginning to throw aside the long accepted classical restrictions, such tales became a significant eddy in the current of the Romantic movement.

In any consideration of the Oriental literature of the eighteenth century in England, the highlights would fall on the Arabian Nights, William Beckford's Vathek, Johnson's Rasselas, and Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World. Of these four, only the Arabian Nights can be considered truly Oriental; for it was written in the original native tongue and translated, first into French by Antoine Galland, de la Croix, and others; then into English by an unknown Grub Street worker, followed by Jonathan Scott, Henry Torrens, Edward Lane, John Payne, and Richard Burton. The Arabian Nights contains elements which set it apart from all imitations and pseudo-translations, as follow: an all-pervading sense of mystery and magic; the arrangement of the stories within the frame tale; the thread of reality in the midst of unreality; the detailed description of religious customs; the wealth of Oriental customs and manners; the lack of characterization; the
charm of pure adventure.

The History of the Caliph Vathek was written in French by an Englishman, William Beckford, and masqueraded as an Oriental translation. It stands unrivalled in English literature as an impressive picture of a great catastrophe. Unlike the Arabian Nights, there is a plot which marches steadily to a climax. It bears a kinship to the tales of terror in its grotesque and imaginative pictures. It contains a great quantity of Oriental allusions and much of the Oriental pageantry and color. Vathek is marred by mockery and sensuality, and the typically Oriental lack of characterization. It is a link between the true Oriental tale and the thinly disguised English imitations which follow.

Rasselas is an English story written in English by the Englishman Johnson. Here the Oriental allusions are vague and general, and used as an inconspicuous vehicle to reveal the author's philosophy of life—that happiness is illusory and vain. The story is unimportant, and it is broken by dissertations upon many and varying subjects. Rasselas excels not in its veneer of Orientalism but in its dignity and wisdom of life.

Goldsmith gave us one of our best examples of the foreign observer type of letter. The Citizen of the World is a Chinese philosopher in London, who writes to his friend in Peking his views on many different phases of society and literature in
England. It was written by Oliver Goldsmith, whose knowledge of the East was of the sketchiest; it excels in the picture it gives to us of London life of its time, rather than its Orientalism.

The effects of this literature upon the society of the eighteenth century is discussed. Art, architecture, gardening; literature and drama; the wave of popularity for all things Eastern carried all before it—even waste material. The environment into which these tales came was largely responsible for the transition discussed in the preceding chapters from the true Oriental adventure stories to the moralizing of Johnson and the satire of Goldsmith. The British desire "to teach a lesson"; their insular attitude; the poor quality of the translations; the fact that Orientalism held no real part in the national heritage—all these reasons contributed to the change in Oriental stories and hindered their free development. The chief reason for the popularity was the romantic character of the fiction. The growing demands for color and spice gave variety to the comparatively gray and dreary life of Augustan England.

But before the death of the last great classicist of the century, new forces were working. The Orient was to come closer, and the knowledge of Eastern life and literature was opening a fresh chapter on Oriental influence in England—a fresh century.
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