

# Sense of Exoticism Among English Travel Writers of The Nineteenth Century to the Near East

Jamil Al-Asmar

Al-Azhar University – Gaza

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## Abstract:

*During the Victorian Age the mode of travel writing had been changed. Britain became the major world power, extending its influence into all parts of the world, colonizing vast areas of land on earth. In consequence, Britain fully enjoyed the lion's share of exploiting the ideas of Orientalism. Tales of others' lands ministered the love of the romantic, the strange and the alien.*

*No doubt that every exotic is the outcome of different societies and climates. This will be shown in this research where I will try my best to show that the sense of the love of the exotic lies behind the Victorian travellers' sojourns to the Arab East, and that these Orientalists concentrated, very much, on bringing out every exotic to their readers in Europe and in Britain in particular.*

*This research clarifies certain travellers' exotic feeling concerning Arabs' hospitality which has, for ages, been considered as a striking point of values among Arabs. Not only is hospitality seen and praised as exotic, but also women affairs among Arabs have been depicted as arguable sensitive matters. Death and burial customs among Arabs, too, proved to be exotic among the Orientalists. Finally, I am going to concentrate on Arab Eastern landscape which proved, in its turn, to be the thing of exoticism to the Victorian travelers. All of these factors have proved to be things of attraction on this particular piece of land of the world.*

## ملخص:

لقد تغيرت طريقة كتابة الرحالة وأسلوبهم خلال الحقبة الفكتورية، فأصبحت بريطانيا القوة الوحيدة الممتدة إلى أجزاء كبيرة من الكرة الأرضية. لذا فكان للإنجليز نصيب الأسد في استغلال فكرة الإستشراق. فقد تربعت قصص الآخرين في الشرق على

عرش حب الرومانسية والغربة المضادة بالنسبة للمستشرقين . لاشك أن كل غريب هو نتاج المجتمعات والمناخات المختلفة ، وهذا ما سيتم توضيحه في هذا البحث حيث سأبذل قصارى جهدي لإظهار حب الغربة الذي يكمن خلف رحلات الفكتوريين إلى الشرق العربي ، فالمستشرق منهم ركز جل اهتمامه على كل غريب وغير مألوف ونقله إلى قرائه في بريطانيا على وجه التحديد .

وهذا البحث يوضح شعور الرحالة الفكتوريين فيما يتعلق بالكرم العربي كقيمة أخلاقية متأصلة عندهم . كما يتناول البحث أيضا شؤون المرأة والزواج والمهور والتي صورها الغربيون كمسائل ذات حساسية . وقد اثبتت عادات الموت والدفن انها مواضع غربة بين الفكتوريين والأوروبيين . واخيرا فأن هذا البحث يتناول المنظر العام الطبيعي والمناخ العربي ، وهذه الموضوعات أثبتت انها ذات جاذبية وتتصف بالغربة بالنسبة لهؤلاء المستشرقين .

### Introduction:

Exoticism pronounces itself among an endless monochrome of wind-ridged sand stretched to the horizon. The eye there in the East grew weary and the brain numbed by the sheer monotony of mile after featureless mile. The long black beans of the carob trees and algarroba bushes, curling in skinny realism like witches' fingers, beckon derisively. A hot searing wind blow across the scarred bluffs of sandstone which are tonsured with prickly scrub such as nettle and artichoke, the famous weeds known in the Arab landscape. Devoid of life, it seems the end of nowhere, with neither bird nor flower to soften the scene- a forgotten land under the uncaring vast blue bowl of the sky. This is the characteristic of the other part of the Arab deserted land.

Not only the Victorian age witnessed an up rise in novel writing but also the travel gate was left opened to the East and to the Arab World in particular, where thousands of books were written on it.

Nothing stirred there, only the dust still whirled along the rough track over which the Victorians have to go; the track which despite the erosive action of heat and cold, ran like a thin nerve in a ravaged body, through the wind-bitten bushes, a country desolate to a degree yet possessing a strange beauty of its own. It is the exotic desert of

the Arab Peninsula. Here lies the beauty of the Arab land; the virgin beauty that enticed the Victorian travelers to journey to the others' land. On this land, they were received and well-hospitalized as we shall see in the research.

It is difficult to realize the utter isolation in the great distances between the hair-tents of the scattered Arabian tribes existed in this part of the Arab world. The Victorian travelers were rare as there are very few waterholes outside these tents boundaries, and if one left the track, it would be the easiest thing to wander round, completely lost, until one die of heat-crazed thirst. Even the side of the track itself is littered here and there with the brittle glimmer of animal bones half buried in the sand. Here lies a complete picture of strange exotic land, peopled with strange atmosphere of dry life of man. Despite the hard life, the Victorian traveler was enticed to launch a journey through this vast land, which also contains the other side of the natural beauty of man and nature mixed with every article of exoticism to these travelers.

Every exotic is the product of different societies and climates. It is perhaps familiar that everything in the East, is considered exotic in the West and vice versa. When a writer or a traveler sees an exotic and astonishing scene, to him, it is an exotic and to his readers too. For instance, the issues of women, marriage and death were also topics of Exoticism that will be considered in the article. The Victorian travelers concentrate, to a large extent, on wonderful things. One of their motives is to transfer to their readers in Britain every exotic, striking and exalted scene in the Arab World<sup>(1)</sup> The Victorian, upon reading the exotic

descriptions of the East, gives the bridle to his mind to go in deep contemplation, and sometimes to dwell upon the mighty achievements of the ancient men of the East<sup>(2)</sup>

The pleasant weather, and the landscape in general, entice launching voyages upon the Nile, which makes travelers more curious to make for the East. A traveler there in the East finds himself surrounded by scenes and objects which are closely associated with the ancient world. The gleaming waters of great rivers such as the Nile, the Euphrates and the Jordan rushing in a careless everlasting flow, and many other streams which splayed out into four or five marshy waterways. The Pyramids, Palmyra, Petra and Sinai

surrounded by mysterious monuments refer back to gray antiquity. Frequent villages along the banks of these rivers, each in the bosom of its own orange groves, graceful palm trees or olive groves are of special attraction. The barren mountains stretching in long chains within which the desert is continually to touch the large ocean or great sea. All of these objects are regarded only with lively emotion would attract the Victorian travelers to visit the East.

This is not only a scene of still life, the boat gliding up and down over these mighty rivers of the Arabs, and the water wheel which is called "sakeyeh" in Arabic by which water is raised in an exotic way to irrigate the surrounded fields. The land which possesses more springs to bring out the 'untamed beauty' to these Victorian travelers; the herds of cattle, buffaloes (in Egypt and Sudan), and flocks of camels (in Syria); large flocks of pigeons, ducks and wild geese cover the Tigris and Euphrates, the exotic sight of crocodiles sleeping on the sandy banks of these surrounding waters. The mountains had remained aloofly inaccessible, wrapped in blue lavender flavour, a scene is unmatched all over the world. They seem to open their arms and close them upon the Victorian travelers to show the signs of welcome to them. The valleys around acted like funnels for the bitter winds that were sweeping down to these white guests. Doubtless, then, that all of these queer things arouse, in both travelers and readers, the yearning to see such scenes which enhance their interest and curiosity.

There in Egypt, the kings of the nations lay in glory, everyone in his own grave, and there the tombs of the priests and other persons of Muslim leaders are to be found in special grave-yards. So, these attractions had, also, been traced by most of the European travelers to the East as exotic points.

In this context, I may introduce one of the most prominent Victorian travelers to the near east who charms its beauties and delicateness. Eliot Warburton (1845), like other travelers and scholars, went to the East, used to stroll by the sunshine or moonlight under the shades of the avenues of sycamore, fig or olive trees<sup>(3)</sup> Nature was so beautiful, that A. H. Layard (1849), another Victorian traveler to the east, "almost forgot the havoc of man, and envied the repose of these secluded habitations"<sup>(4)</sup> This charm, in Lady Blunt's (1881) view, lies in "the absence of intellectual life there ..." <sup>(5)</sup>

This Arabian exotic landscape could stand as one of the main factors, which enticed the Victorian travelers to make for the East. These landscapes include human, natural and animal scenes. According to S. Nasir, a researcher in the Victorian affairs, (1976) these exotic landscapes “added considerably to the gathering store of ideas about the Arabs in England during the nineteenth century”<sup>(6)</sup> That the European public was deluged with accounts “of Arab customs, Arab ways, Arab qualities, houses, dresses, women ...”<sup>(7)</sup> Therefore, the Victorian reports and volumes play as a means of relaxation and, perhaps, purgation through the truth concerning the alien customs of the others.

### **Arab Hospitality:**

To the European, in general, the most striking of the human scenes among the Arabs is their hospitality and food. The Arab race, as W.G. Palgrave’s (1865) experience goes, is the “best tempered, the most hospitable, in a word the most amiable of all.”<sup>(8)</sup> This view agrees with the views of other travelers who spoke much of it, for the Arabs offer freely “fish, flesh, prawns, eggs, vermicelli, rice, sweet meats of all kind, honey, butter, dates, good leavened bread, before their guests”<sup>(9)</sup> The variety of dishes the Arabs offer for their guest makes the scene really an exotic before the European travelers who did not expect generosity from them, for they depicted them as poor ones, but, in the same time forgetting that the Arabs generosity springs from their religion and belief.

One of the exotic scenes, J. L. Burckhardt (1822) had seen in Syria, was the raw-meat eating: “the Druses are extremely fond of raw meat: whenever a sheep is killed, the raw liver, heart ...are considered dainties”<sup>(10)</sup> This adds much to the exotic scene among the Arabs concerning their food and hospitality. Here E. W. Lane (1860) confirms the Egyptian respect for bread as a stuff of life. He often observed an Egyptian takes up a small piece of bread that had fallen in the route or street, the person “kisses it and put on the forehead three times and place it on one side, in order that a dog might eat it, rather than let it remain to be trodden under foot”<sup>(11)</sup> This may prove an exotic scene to the European, who may not appreciate the idea.

When the Arab had no meat at home, he according to Isabel Burton (1875), used to catch a hedgehog for his food. She narrates to her eager readers the exotic way the Arab handles his meal: “the

Arabs roll it round in the mud, dig a hole, put hot braise into it, and bake it; the mud and the prickly skin come off, and the flesh is as tender as a young partridge's."<sup>(12)</sup> In England, Burton says that this kind of food is only eaten by a gipsy. But C. M. Doughty, the professional Victorian traveler to the east, who spent more than three years among the Arabs of the Peninsula writing his *Arabia Deserta* (1888), found himself in a position of his nation's defender when the Arabs taunted him upon the Christian eating swine's flesh, he reproached them by giving several unclean creatures' flesh the Arabs eat, he told them in a surprised tone:

Some of you eat crows and kites, and lesser carrion eagle some of you eat owls, some eat serpents, the great lizards you all eat, and locusts, spring-rats, many eat the hedgehog, you can not deny it! You eat the wolf too, and the fox and the foul hyena, in a word, there is nothing so vile that some of you will not eat.(13)

This list of strange food, the Arabs eat, would sound odd to the taste and appetite of these Europeans who consider their food only. However, the flavor of the Arabs' food flows from time to time upon these travelers whether they praise or attack, and that they ought not behave negatively since they were participants of these food.

The guest among Arabs, Doughty adds, is the guest of Allah, and in case a stranger enters "a vine-yard or orchard, he is a guest of that field."<sup>(14)</sup> Doughty sees that the source of hospitality, among Arabs, stems from their religion, he adds "the gentle entertainment of passengers and strangers in a land full of misery and fear, we have seen [them] to be religious." Despite this misery, the Arabs are so hospitable<sup>(15)</sup> Doughty's host through the desert journey to Hayil delayed him before leaving in the morning, because the former refused to send Doughty into the wilderness without anything to eat through his journey, he shouted: "my wife ... is rocking the Semila, have patience till the butter come, that she may pour you out a little Liban."<sup>(16)</sup> This is the generosity and kindness of an Arab who refuses his guest to leave for the unknown without food or water. It is an uttered hospitality whether the others agree or not.

Emphasizing the law of hospitality among Arabs, Lady Hester Stanhope (1845) would provide her reader with a living example of this hospitality. She and her group arrived at a village near Jerusalem. The group was received by its chieftain or Shiekh of Abu Gosh,

whose wives served the group. One of his wives presented “a dish of rolled vine leaves, containing minced meat. From another Kussa (known in England as vegetable marrow) stuffed with rice and minced meat from the third, a lamb roasted whole. From the fourth, an immense dish of boiled rice, surrounding and covering four boiled chickens.”<sup>(17)</sup>

This hospitality brings a strange taste and flavor to the Victorian readers through the travelers’ reports; this custom would sound exotic among the Western streams of eager societies for the new exotic life of others. Not only hospitality which tastes odd to these Victorian readers and travelers, but also the strange custom and tradition of Arabs would leave a positive impression on the Victorian community, although this custom is unfamiliar to the Victorians. These reports take women’s affairs as examples of exoticism among Westerners.

### **Women Among the Arabs:**

The Victorian inherited a view of the Arabs nourished by centuries of intermittent contact and periodic conflict. The image of the Arab women was purveyed through the accounts of Crusaders, explorers, travelers, merchants and scholars who were exploited in contemporary European literature especially in nineteenth century. By the first half of the century certain features of Arab women had been signaled out as particular attention to these features in the records of their own experiences and both confirmed and qualified previous ideas of Orientalism.<sup>(18)</sup>

The Western travelers depicted women in a distorted way though the picture was grotesquely inaccurate. In R. Kabbani’s words (1986) the woman in the East is portrayed as “a narrative creation that fulfilled the longing of Western imagination”<sup>(19)</sup> The Victorian travelers’ feelings about Arab women were always equivocal ones, vacillating between “desire, pity, contempt and outrage.”<sup>(20)</sup> They were painted in colours selected by Western travelers to fit both an Eastern setting and the European image and understanding of them. Women were depicted as “erotic victims” and sometimes as “scheming witches.”<sup>(21)</sup> An exotic Arabian woman, in the Western imagination, spends her time enslaved in a double humiliation. T. J. Assad (1964) argues that the first humiliation consists in “the

domination of her father” before marriage, and the second is when she passes to the “domination by her husband.”<sup>(22)</sup>

The Victorian inherited this traditional image of Arab women from the sixteenth century travelers such as Ludovico Di Varthema who gave a portrait of Arab woman being treated as if she was a piece of furniture in her own household. Burckhardt was surprised at the manners of people in Horan country, which is located between Syria and Jordan, where he found that adultery is punished by the death of the woman, while the man according to him “is ruined by the heavy penalties exacted by the government in expiation of his guilt.”<sup>(23)</sup> Burckhardt, in his book *Travels in Syria and The Holy Land* (1822), went on to tell his readers more exotic stories about the custom and the habit of Arabs of Horan. He narrated that: “last year a married Turkish woman at ... a village in the Loehf, was caught in the embraces of a young Christian; her three brothers hastened to the spot, dragged her to the market place, and there in the presence of the whole community, cut her into pieces with sword, loading her at the same time with the most horrible imprecation. The lover was fined ten purses.”<sup>(24)</sup> An act that would horrify the Western traveler or at best would entice him to make his/her way to join his fellow travelers to the East.

J. L. Stephens, in his book *Incidents of Travels in Egypt, Arabia, Petra and The Holy Land* (1838) emphasized his fellow travelers’ point concerning women punishment. The writer had been told by the Bedoin that “the guilty woman having her head cut off by her own relations, while her paramour, unless caught in the act, is allowed to

Escape.”<sup>(25)</sup> The Arabs law of chastity the writer says “is a pearl above all price.”<sup>(26)</sup> It is really a pearl above all values since it is inherited religiously from the Islamic law, despite the fact that Islam doesn’t allow killing either of the lovers in the way practiced by the people.

The exotic view of the Arab women is continued by Lady Hester Stanhope (1845). Her narrator found women oppressed in Egypt and treated as being inferior to men, and their position in general was insecure. He depicted them as living in an almost perpetual state of alarm surrounded by animals, men, running women and straggling children. This picture, Stanhope claimed to have seen and witnessed



almost everyday<sup>(27)</sup> This matter has also occupied a space in Layard's book *Nineveh and its Remains* (1849) who learned from the Arab mouth about a strange habit that when a woman commit adultery she is divorced: "if an Arab suspects the fidelity of his wife, and obtain such proof as is convincing him, he may kill her at the spot"<sup>(28)</sup> This, is seen in Europe and in Britain, in particular, as strange and odd.

But, E. Robinson (1856) took the matter of honour among Arabs from different angle. For the matter to him needs not blood and killing, he assures that if a "Bedawy" discovers his wife or his daughter in illicit intercourse, he does not kill her, he only turns away and conceals the fact from everyone. He continues that: "afterwards he will let daughter marry" or "after a long time perhaps divorce his wife"<sup>(29)</sup> The motive behind this concealment, according to the writer, is to avoid disgrace. While Lane(1860) stretched the matter and treated lawfully with it rather than socially. In his opinion: "to establish a charge of this crime against a wife, four-eye-witnesses are necessary" and in case the woman is found guilty, "she is to be put to death by stoning"<sup>(30)</sup> But the case among the peasants is different. However, the way the Egyptians deal with this matter seems to the Europeans more exotic than the above mentioned ways. Lane says: "when a Fellahah is found to have been unfaithful to her husband, in general he or her brother throws her into the Nile"<sup>(31)</sup> The relations of the lady are considered more disgraced and often despised if they don't punish her. The Victorian readers, however, find the "stone tied to her neck" very exotic and strange enough to entice them to travel to the East, or at least, to have an eager appetite to read the travellers' reports from the land of the strangers<sup>(32)</sup> In his book *Leaders into Unknown Lands* (1891) A. Montefiore, a commentator on various travellers' accounts of other peoples, says that an Arab woman "became a chattel- now a slave, and now plaything; and man refused to accept responsibility for either her bodily or spiritual welfare"<sup>(33)</sup>

### **Death and Burial**

The customs and traditions among the Arabs are also very striking and sound odd and, perhaps, unacceptable customs to the English travelers among them. So the Arabs ways in death and burying their dead ones sound strange and exotic among their guests travelers. For instance, on one side of the Khartum and before

leaving, J. Hamilton (1857) and his train heard loud shrills of human beings, they saw, on the bank a group of women “covered with gold ornaments, but with torn dresses, their faces and breasts besmeared with mud, who stood watching with straining eyes and dark fluttering handkerchiefs.”<sup>(34)</sup> The train also saw boats crossing to other side of the river, the men of the boats were “carrying a bier” but from time to time “the women raised the funeral wail.”<sup>(35)</sup> Such shrills and cries are not familiar to the Victorians who, too, cry in England for the dead person but in different way; rather in a smooth way. Despite the fact that what controls the sad person's excitement and deep sorrow is the kind of relation the dead one has to the mourner, and depends on the kindness of the former. However, the way the Arabs mourn their dead ones, does not appeal to the Victorian travelers.

Lane (1860), in his turn, would not hide his long experience among the Egyptians who, for example, saw a dead man surrounded by men and women and children. But the most striking thing to the writer was the scene of the mourners, particularly the women, who “seemed to be completely carried away by their grief, and with loud cries, tearing their hair and beating their breast, threw out their arms towards the corpse, and prayed, and wept, and then turned away with shrieks piteous enough to touch the heart of the dead”<sup>(36)</sup> Somewhere E. Warburton, in his book *The Crescent and The Cross* (1845), emphasized the idea of exotic surrounding concerning the dead person when the Muslim's last hour comes, he adds, the people around turn his\her face in the direction of Meccah. Then the family raise cries upon his death such as: “Oh, my camel!” “Oh, my lion!” “oh, my only one!” or “Oh, my buffalo”<sup>(37)</sup> All this Warburton says simply means that the deceased was their best supporter and friend. Lane assures that when a learned or a pious Muslim feels that he is about to die he “performs the ordinary ablution, as before prayer, that he may depart from this life in a state of bodily purity”<sup>(38)</sup> This readiness for death among the Arabs is not to be found among the Victorian English. That is why it is strange and striking to the Westerners in general, because it is a part of the Arab Moslem belief.

Doughty says that the deceased is buried on the same day. The corpse is washed and “decently lapped in a new calico cloth.” The Arabs, he adds, dig “their graves in the desert mined by foul hyenas and the winding-sheet lay half above ground”<sup>(39)</sup> But

when a woman dies, the Arabs, adds Doughty, “sprinkle her bier with perfumes when she is carried out. The matter which, socially and religiously accepted among Arabs, although the perfume is nearly forbidden for a female to sprinkle herself and go out while in her life. When one is dead, his "kinsmen sacrifice at his grave [an] ewe.” The Arabs “boil and distribute the meat to the funeral company ...for the deceased woman, they keep no sacrifice.”<sup>(40)</sup> These exotic scenes among Arabs, particularly death and burial custom would, by and large, add to the already accumulated great deal of exotic information among the westerners about the Eastern Arabs.

### **Marriage Among the Arabs:**

The exotic scene continues among the Arabs. But this time, it involves the marriage custom which will entice, to a large extent, the westerners either to read about it, if possible, or to launch voyages into exotic East to stand on the edge of the so-called primitive simplicity.<sup>(41)</sup> For Layard would not hesitate to attract his western readers when he narrates the way the Arabs pay dowry to their wives. While he was in his tent, a pretty girl dashed in seeking Layard's protection against the dashing wolfish husband, the girl gave a shrill squawk of protest. Her mother followed them, the case of their distress was that:

The father, who was dead, during his life-time agreed to marry his daughter to the man who had followed to the tent, and the price [dowry], fixed at two sheep, a donkey, and a few measures of wheat, had been partly paid... but the girl had convinced a violent hatred for him, and absolutely refused to marry<sup>(42)</sup>

Layard, here, wants to emphasize that the woman, among the Arabs, worths nothing, and her will is buried in the dust of her husband's. Her value is measured by a trifle price- that is one or two sheep or may be a donkey or a measure of any kind of corn. Moreover, she has not to refuse the man they want to connect her with as in the story of Layard. This strange choice of spouse entices the Victorian readers to read more about others' exotic and strange

customs in eagerness. Lane, would be engulfed, as his previous fellow Orientalists, in finding and reporting more about the exotic East. What strikes him, too, among the Arabs of Egypt, is the way they marry and engage their females. Therein, he says that the "khat'beh" he means the woman who gives report to the man about his lady, "gives her report confidentially, describing one girl as being like a gazelle, pretty and elegant and young ..." <sup>(43)</sup> Lane continues: "if satisfied with her report, he gives a present to the "Khat'beh" and send her again to the family of his intended wife to make known to them his wishes." <sup>(44)</sup> The bridegroom, Lane adds, invites his relatives and friends, and he generally sends with them "sugar, coffee, rice, wax-candles, or a lamb." These things are generally sent two or three days before the marriage feast. But on the preceding day of the wedding the bride "goes in state to the bath." The procession, to the bath, is called "zeffet el-Hammam" which is "headed by a party of musicians with a haut-boy, or two, and drums of different kinds" <sup>(45)</sup> Lane does not forget to tell his English readers that "at the head of the bride's party are two men who carry the utensils and linen used in the bath upon two round trays, each of which is covered with an embroidered or a plain silk kerchief." <sup>(46)</sup> Lane transfers his eager readers to know more about this exotic custom of the Egyptians, but this time among the higher and middle classes in Cairo who, on the occasion of a marriage "hang chandeliers in the street before the bridegroom's house." <sup>(47)</sup> This procession, Lane continues, is not left without the one whose role is to protect any person whom he is asked to perform such charm for his\her sake, the man proceeds to say: "I charm thee from the eye of girl, sharper than a spike; and from the eye of woman, sharper than a burning-knife; and from the eye of boy, more painful than a whip; and from the eye of man, sharper than a chopping-knife..." <sup>(48)</sup>

Lane, thereto, goes on attracting his reader to follow what is else concerning marriage among the Egyptians, he notices that: "on the seventh day 'yom-es-Subooa' after a marriage, the wife receives her female relations and friends during the morning and afternoon; and sometimes the husband entertains his own friends in the evening, generally hiring persons to perform a khatmeh or zikr" <sup>(49)</sup> which means to recite verses from the holy Koran. That concerns the first week of the marriage, but on the fortieth day, Lane adds: "Yomel-

Arba'een" after the marriage, the wife goes, with a party of her females friends to the bath. Her companions return with her to her house and "about the asr, afternoon; partake a repast, and go away."<sup>(50)</sup> The question of the bath and the procession to that place with the bride looks odd and full of strangeness as compared to the customs of marriage in the West.

However, Isabel Burton, who, too, is very eager to show her anxious readers some of these strange and, to them, exotic customs among the Arabs concerning women and their affairs, for in her book *Inner Life Of Syria* (1875), she continues her reports on this social part of life of the Easterners, trying her best to bring out every exotic custom that belongs to the Oriental world which is, too, a focus of exoticism among the European travelers as well as their readers. She will narrate about how an engagement takes place in Syria. Therefore, she inquires from the ladies about how the marriage is performed since women or girls or men are not allowed to see each other before marriage. One of the women replies when she is asked by Isabel about the customs of marriage and engagement among the Arabs of Syria:

Well, the mother and the aunts of the young man whom they want to marry go about visiting all the harims, and have fixed upon a girl likely to suit, and have made all necessary inquiries concerning her, they go home and describe to the son her appearance, what she can do in the house, what she is likely to have in worldly possession.<sup>(51)</sup>

Thus, was the importance of these reports to the Victorian travelers who insisted either on travelling abroad to live factual times among the owners of this 'stagnated' culture or to possess a copy of this traveller's volume or that.

### **Arab Landscape:**

Not only human scenes are striking to the Victorian travelers but also the Arab landscape is a thing of admiration to these Orientalists and to their readers too. The Victorian reader may feel ambitious to

watch personally the whole fantastic landscape of splintered rocks which is being described to him by a hero narrator of a certain excursion. This reader finds himself before the natural elements with his writer when he halts “under the shade of a sycamore”<sup>(52)</sup> B. Fairly (1927) says that Doughty finds Arabia landscape dreadful, consisting of volcanic fields and hills. In Doughty’s view Arabia land was the ground of romantic poets, and the land became the chosen land “of exotic romance.”<sup>(53)</sup> Some of these travellers, however, find in the Arab land, a land of adventures and dream. D. G. Hogarth, another commentator on Victorian travellers to the East says, in his book *Penetration Of Arabia* (1905), on the tongue of the French traveller, Eliting, that “Nafud is like a snow-field, and the southern dunes are white under the sun”<sup>(54)</sup> On the Arabian coast “balsam” is found among many kinds of herbs of “every fragrant smell”<sup>(55)</sup> E. Said in his book *Orientalism* (1977) says that the French orientalist particularly Nerval and Flaubert “were touched by the Oriental renaissance.”<sup>(56)</sup> These travelers “sought the invigoration provided by the fabulously antique and the exotic.” For each of them Said adds “the oriental pilgrimage was a quest.”<sup>(57)</sup> It is true that the East was a quest to them because it was a queer and perhaps strange to the Western culture although the East was the cradle of cultures.

Hence, the Western readers find outlets to their long perplexing questions concerning the Arab East and its tradition. These reports give them relaxation and even purgation to their wandering feelings and images of the others. For instance Egypt has been depicted by the European travelers and poets of the time as a large museum. This is confirmed in the Victorian poet’s verses. For example I may take James Montgomery, and Alfred Tennyson the late Victorian (1897) poet who spoke of the Oriental landscape out of their admiration:

Egypt’s tall obelisk, still defying Time, While  
cities have been crumbled into Sand, Scattered  
by winds beyond the Arabs desert, Or melted  
down in the mud of Nile.<sup>(58)</sup>

J. Montgomery

**And:**

Thence through a garden I was drawn A realm  
of pleasure- many a mound, All many a  
shadow- chequered lawn Full of the city's  
stilly sound; And deep myrrh cedars,  
tamarisks Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks  
Graven with emblems of the time<sup>(59)</sup>

A. Tennyson

This picture of Egypt and the Arabian desert serves as an exotic scene for the Victorian travellers. They fully imagine themselves eye-witness the ruins of ancient Egypt. This scene is continued as an inheritance from the Romantic period on the tongue of one of those Romantic poets- P. B. Shelley (1792-1822) who met a traveller from an antique land of Egypt. The traveller told the poet that he had seen a trunkless legs of stone deep rooted in the Egyptians desert. The traveller told the poet, too, that he had read the following lines on the pedestal of the great statue:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look  
on my works, ye Mighty, and despair! Nothing  
beside remains. Round the decay Of that  
colossal wreck, boundless and bare, The lone  
and level sands stretch far away<sup>(60)</sup>

P. B. Shelley

Concerning the houses of the Arabs of Oman J. R. Wellsted, an other Victorian traveller to the East, in his book *Travels in Arabia* (1838) notices that their houses have "ceilings of wood and the walls are white washed, formed of cane, around these houses the Arabs hang, on pegs, their horses and camels trappings." They, Wellsted continues, "make their floors of earth smoothed and hardened by rollers, and unusually cover them with a mat"<sup>(61)</sup>

The weather, too, on the Arab land is a thing of exotic to the Europeans who are not familiar with a cloudless sky which is known only outside Europe. In this context J. Stephens (1838) shows a clear picture of the sun setting in Egypt:

The sun was about setting in that cloudless sky known in Egypt; for a few moments their lofty summits were heightened by a realm of lurid red, and, as the glorious orb settled behind the moun-tains of Libyan desert, the atmosphere became dark and more indistinct, and their clear outline continued to be seen after the whole earth was shrouded in gloom<sup>(62)</sup>

Stephens, here, depicts a new natural scene of different country to his readers in the West. This time from Palestine where he and his train were wandering among olive trees which mark the area's old age. He says: "in a few moments walk a person can reach the top of the mountain of Olives." The view around is considered as the most "interesting" object in the world. The writer overlooks the valley of "Jehoshaphat, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the city of Jerusalem, the plains of Jericho, the valley of the Jordan, and the Dead Sea."<sup>(63)</sup>

Stephen continues that the valley of Nablus, to him, was more beautiful in the morning than any valley in Europe: "almonds and apricots in full bloom, and bounded by lofty mountains ... and nothing would be more beautifully picturesque than the little mill on its banks."<sup>(64)</sup>

E. Warburton (1845) strikes the ears of his readers about Egypt, the large museum. He repeats the word "here" to make his reader a real eye-witness of what he himself is looking at:

In Heliopolis, the Oxford of old Egypt, stood the great temple of the sun. Here the beautiful and the wise studied love and logic 4,000 years ago. Here Plato and Herodotus studied and here the darkness which relied the great Sacrifice on cavalry was observed by a heathen astronomer. Here is the garden of Matarieh, where grew the celebrated palm of Gilead, presented by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, and brought up by Cleopatra.<sup>(65)</sup>

Even before Warburton, the East was still a place of wonder, a place of romance and a place of every exotic to man on earth not only in Europe. For J. P. Petres in his book *Nippur* (1897)



found the cities of the East fascinating because of the “strange mixture of squalor and magnificence, ugliness and glorious beauty, misery and merriment”<sup>(66)</sup>

### **Conclusion :**

Thus was the East to the West, was the effect of these Victorian travellers by the Arab lands, and their reports were as the glittering light through which the Westerners can feel their way through the paths of the ‘gloomy’ East throughout the ages of man’s life. Their oriental works play a substantial role in placing the East, to the Western readers, as a ready-made and even a digestive meal to enjoy. This enjoyment is touched throughout the details of the above mentioned subtitles of the research. This also shows that these Victorian traveler were eager to please more than to instruct or educate through their reports. The one of them believes that he presents a complete canvas of the East to his eager readers in the West.

We can also conclude that the Victorians were, to some extent, exaggerated in their reports on Arabs' life in general, and sometimes they waded through the sense of mythomania. Like any other writers whose main concern is to please their readers, particularly when the reports are on the savage beauty of others' customs and traditions as the Victorian did in the case of the Arabs and their landscapes, that had an untamed beauty, that was pleasanter to their eyes. That landscape among which the Western physicians advised their patients to stay for a long time, for the only Eastern breezes could rescue their health. In Lane's reports, too, each line rather each word, he wrote on the Arabs' customs, would sound odd to his readers particularly women and marriage customs among the Arabs.

The Western readers found their quest turning over the pages of volumes written on the East and particularly the Near East which means the Arabs and their ‘stagnated’ culture as they depicted it. Yes, they found their quest among the Arab queer custom of hospitality, which contained them generously for a long time. This is why the gate was left open for the great number of the Victorian travelers to make to the East, to stand personally on the soil of a strange nation whose customs and traditions have proved alien to theirs.

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