

AN ORIENTALIST READING  
OF ROBERT BARON'S *MIRZA*

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## ABSTRACT

Edward Said's Orientalism has revolutionized the history of literary criticism since its publication in 1978. It challenges and questions the old established norms of evaluating literary works by offering a new perspective for the readers and researchers. This article aims at the application of Said's views to Robert Baron's closet drama *Mirza*. The researchers contend that Baron, like his contemporary writers, has misrepresented and demonized Islam and Muslims due to his Eurocentric perspectives with a view to establishing and asserting the cultural superiority of the West. He did so because of the pervasive dominant ideology of the early modern English period which was to portray Islam as a fake and fraud religion and Muslims as sensual beasts. The findings of this study bear out the researchers' contention that Baron has deliberately misrepresented and demonized the Muslim characters in *Mirza* which is in line with Said's views in his work *Orientalism*.

## 1. Introduction

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is a seminal work in the history of literary criticism. The term Orientalism had academic and cultural connotations in its traditional sense. But Said employs this term in a political sense to deconstruct the Eurocentric perspectives of the West. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Said critiques the Oriental discourse prevalent in the literary representations of the Western writers. Through this study, he reveals how the Oriental discourse enabled the West to create the Orient of his own will and subsequently helped the West hegemonize and dominate the Orient. The West through this process not only created the reality of the Orient but defined himself also. Thus West and East constitute a binary opposition in which West symbolizes superiority, intelligence, civilization, education and all other positive epithets which may come in our mind whereas the East stands for inferiority, insanity, backwardness, ignorance, irrationality and brutality. Said's focal point in this work is that the Western writers have not honestly and objectively represented the Orient, Oriental people and their culture. Instead of impersonal and objective representation, the West has misrepresented the Orient due to their vested interests. In this paper, the researchers will give special focus on Said's views about representation which he has dwelt on in his work *Orientalism* and employ them as criteria to assess whether there is (mis)representation in Robert Baron's *Mirza* or not. Said's *Orientalism* was first time published in 1978 but the researchers will use the edition of Said's *Orientalism* published in 2003 throughout this article for referential purpose.

## 2. Research Questions

- a) In what way(s) does Robert Baron portray the Oriental characters in his play *Mirza*?
- b) To what extent do the delineations of the Oriental characters in *Mirza* reveal Baron's Eurocentric perspectives?
- c) What sort of effects does Baron want to achieve through the representations of the Oriental characters as cultural stereotypes?

### 3. Methodology

While using the qualitative research paradigm, the researchers have applied Edward Said's views to Robert Baron's *Mirza* for the textual analysis of the play. Said's main stance that the Western writers have misrepresented the Orient and Oriental people due to their Eurocentric perspectives has been explicated in the play. For this purpose, the researchers have focused and analyzed the dialogues, representation of the Oriental characters, and the discourse used in the play in detail. The whole analysis has been supported and substantiated with the textual quotations and scholarly evidence wherever it is possible.

#### 1. Baron's Eurocentric Perspectives

Robert Baron's closet drama *Mirza* (c. 1642) is an extension and elaboration of the Eurocentric perspectives which are visible in Baron's contemporary play *Sophy* (1642) by John Denham. Despite the fact that both plays have similarities "in terms of plot, genre and theme"<sup>1</sup> Baron's *Mirza* is different in some other matters. Firstly, Baron, again and again, asserts the veracity of his story due to his reliance upon the authority of Sir Thomas Herbert. Secondly, Baron distinguishes Persian Shi'a belief by introducing the term 'by Mortys Aly' from the Ottoman Sunni belief. Thirdly, Baron has incorporated lengthy annotations in the play to provide the background knowledge to his reader. Fourthly, Baron makes Mirza kill his daughter, Fatyma to achieve "the completest conquest that ever Revenge obtained over Virtue"<sup>2</sup> and allows Shah Abbas to survive. Disregard of these differences, Baron's *Mirza* reflects the Eurocentric perspectives of the playwright in the same way as Denham's *The Sophy* does.

Though it is customary to mention the year 1642 as the publication date of Baron's *Mirza* yet the recent scholarship agrees that it "was published in 1655 and clearly intended to be read rather than performed".<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of lengthy annotations consisting of nearly one hundred pages makes the play a scholarly text. These annotations reveal Baron's erudition and are "meant to contain or control the reader's response to the play proper".<sup>4</sup> Baron claims whatever he is writing, there is truth in it since he draws upon the authority of Sir Thomas Herbert.<sup>5</sup> Besides Herbert, Baron also cites Richard Knolles and George Sandys in the annotations to assert the authenticity of his material.<sup>6</sup> Whatever Herbert, Knolles and Sandys have said is correct and needs no confirmation. The predecessors are authentic. Therefore, the successors took them as an authority and cited them as such to create the reality of the Orient. This is what

Edward Said argues that “Orientalism is, after all, a system for citing works and authors”.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Representation of Prophet Mahomet and Islam

The Western writers have produced the Orient through their representations which have purposes and accomplish one or many tasks.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, most of these travel and history works like the literary works of the period serve as an ideological tool which provide “much coveted information” to the early modern English reader and at the same time “implicit in these histories was the comparison between East and West, between barbarity and civility”.<sup>9</sup> So, such works enable the West to establish “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures”.<sup>10</sup> These works may be described as what Said calls “political knowledge”<sup>11</sup> hence they lack honesty and objectivity. Therefore, Baron’s claim becomes dubious since Herbert’s own account is full of inaccuracies and generalizations which reveal his biased attitudes toward the Orient.<sup>12</sup> For an instance, Herbert portrays Mahomet as an enemy of Christians who with the army of Tartars and Arabians “dared to assault the infeeble Christians”<sup>13</sup> a sexual monster<sup>14</sup> a fraud prophet who attracted many people towards his false religion “by bribery, magic and other means”.<sup>15</sup> While describing the Indian Mahometans, he calls them “superstitious Mahometans” who are “crafty, cowardly sort of people”.<sup>16</sup> He reports, “Polygamy is odious among them in which respect they cease not to vilify Mahometans as people of an impure soul”.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, while describing Persian Shah Abbas, Herbert comments that “Mahometan princes are terrible crafty or mysteriously politicians” and further adds, “such is the hardheartedness of Mahometans, a wicked people for cruel inventions”.<sup>18</sup> It is in the context of this biased background, Baron represents the Prophet Mahomet. Assuring Shah Abbas of his unflinching support, Beltazar tells him:

Let not my sovereign doubt my proved faith,  
That would open Mahomet’s Shrine at your command.<sup>19</sup>

Apparently, Beltazar is telling Abbas that he can do impossible things for him. But in reality, these two lines of Baron have deeper ideological implications. Firstly, no Muslim can imagine uttering such words as opening the Prophet’s Shrine. This is blasphemy and profanity. Secondly, by making a Muslim character utter such profane comments, Baron is showing his biased attitudes. His biased attitudes find detailed expression in the annotations where he describes the false story of Mahomet’s death. According to Baron’s story, which he draws on Sandys and Herbert, Mahomet was a

Saracen Law giver who died when he was sixty-three years old. He had given a promise to his seduced sect that he would resurrect after the third day of his death. But this never happened and he remained unburied till thirty days so much so that that the air was “infected with the monstrous stink of his carcass”.<sup>20</sup> All this is a representation and nothing else since representation is either formation or deformation.<sup>21</sup> Through these types of sweeping statements and generalizations, Herbert and Baron have defamed the Prophet as well as his followers and such statements obviously indicate the Western Eurocentric perspectives. As Mathew Birchwood acknowledges that by heaping “the litany of Imputations on Mahomet”, Baron’s *Mirza* manifests “a version of the bivalency that had long characterized the English treatments of Islamic other”.<sup>22</sup>

What Herbert and Baron say in their works is not something new or individual. Rather, it betrays the collective thoughts and attitudes which the West had towards the Orient and Islam during the early modern period. As Mathew Dimmock records that for most of the early modern readers the term Mahometanism was more familiar than the term Islam and “Mahomet was imagined as a false prophet, a cynical manipulator of his followers, a fabricator of miracles: manipulative, lascivious, and violent, a juggling mortal who fraudulently performed divinity”.<sup>23</sup> There is consistency in the stereotypical images of Islam and prophet with the passage of time. For instance, Edward Said points out the same fact that “since Mohammad was viewed as the disseminator of false Revelation, he became as well the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries”.<sup>24</sup> That is why, the literature of the early modern period portrays “Islam as a sensual religion” because the writers were bound to do so under the ideological and legal pressures of the time.<sup>25</sup> Thus, if a Prophet and a leader are corrupt, if religion is fraud, its practitioners and disciples will definitely inherit all these traits. It is in this light the Western poets, playwrights, historians and travelers have portrayed the Orient, Oriental characters, Islam and Muslims. The same is evident in the case of Baron who has represented the Islamic Persian characters in this light.

### **3. Representation of Shah Abbas**

Baron’s *Mirza* registers the Eurocentric perspectives which have been discussed above and the playwright has depicted Abbas in the play in the same way as Denham has done him in *The Sophy*. Like *The Sophy*, the play also highlights Abbas’ cruel and unnatural acts like parricide, fratricide and filicide. The ghost of Emir-Hamze calls his brother Abbas a “tyrant” and appears to warn him to:

leave thy Adulteries,  
Thy Rapes, thy Incests, heaps of Perjuries,  
And Ghomorean sports, no sting behind?<sup>26</sup>

Explaining the murder of Emir Hamze under the eponymous entry, Baron comments in the annotations of the play that it is “A crime most usual in these Eastern princes”.<sup>27</sup> This remark of Baron serves a clear example of “the Renaissance imperialist discourse”<sup>28</sup> or the Orientalist discourse which is homogenizing and based on generalizations. Referring to this remark of Baron, Linda McJannet (1999) notes that such “confident generalizations recall Said’s description of the Orientalist discourse”.<sup>29</sup> The Western poets, playwrights, historians and travelers have been employing this type of discourse to define and describe the cultural others. As a cultural other, Shah Abbas, the Muslim King, is depicted as an enemy of Christianity. While recalling the atrocities of Shah Abbas, Emangoly says “What signified his wrong to the poor Christians”.<sup>30</sup> In the annotations, Baron further explains that it was Abbas who caused the death of “no less than the lives of 1000 (some say 1200)”<sup>31</sup> innocent Armenian and Georgian Christians when they tried to show their affiliation with the Church of Rome. As a cultural other, Abbas is shown an epitome of all evil traits. He is portrayed as a murderer, tyrant, superstitious and a jealous person. He is a viper, unnatural, lethargic and a lusty fellow. Abbas’ Concubine, Floradella, his Counsellour, Beltazar and his Favorite, Mahomet Ally Beg tell Abbas that he is nothing but “A good effeminate Prince”<sup>32</sup> as compared to his great ancestors like Cyrus, and Darius. The Persian people say that he

Lie[s] wallowing here

In pleasures, and will one day take a surfeit<sup>33</sup>.

They fan Shah Abbas’ jealousy and fear by informing him that his son, Prince Mirza has more popularity and is “the peoples common theam” due to his valiant deeds than he and there was

A panegyric, sung by hired Eunuchs,

In adulation of the valiant Mirza.<sup>34</sup>

The befooled and blinded Shah Abbas accepts the words of the evil trio as ultimate truth and declares his verdict to penalize his son, Mirza:

No more debate; the sentence is justly pass’d,

The execution rests....<sup>35</sup>

Finally, it is decided that Mirza should be asked to come back from the battlefield to the court where he will be arrested and imprisoned. This task is assigned to Mahomet Ally Beg who sends a messenger to Mirza to tell him to return to the court. Abbas assigns

the joint command of the Persian army to Beltazar along with Duke Emangoly to counter Mirza's influence and authority in the army. Floradella is asked to visit the royal ladies frequently so that they may not suspect anything wrong. Meanwhile, Shah Abbas plans to dismiss Emangoly from the government of Shiraz and Elchee from the government of Hyrcania. Mahomet Ally Beg is appointed as next Duke of Shiraz in place of Emangoly. When Mahomet Ally and Floradella meet, they are pleased with all this development and consider:

Tis a good prologue to his sons Tragedy.<sup>36</sup>

The provoked Abbas in league with Mahomet Ally appoints seven mute Executioners to strangle Mirza but then Abbas relents and orders for Mirza's blindness and lifelong imprisonment so that he may be considered "only careful and not cruel".<sup>37</sup> Mirza calls him "cruel", "unnatural Father",<sup>38</sup> "Tyrant Father"<sup>39</sup> "dotard Tyrant, Serpent"<sup>40</sup> and plans to kill his own daughter Fatyma to take revenge from his father Abbas since Fatyma is Abbas' favorite child. Abbas describes himself in the words:

I have been a tyrant, nay a monster long.<sup>41</sup>

Baron, in all these textual references, represents Shah Abbas as a negative character, a tyrant, cruel, unnatural person and a sexual monster. It has been already mentioned above in detail that neither Herbert nor Denham has pointed out any positive aspect of Abbas' personality. Rather, they have transformed the historical Abbas into the cultural stereotype.<sup>42</sup> Like Herbert and Denham, Baron has depicted Shah Abbas as a tyrant on the pattern of other Oriental barbarians, particularly the Turk sultans. As Mathew Birchwood suggests that "Lurking behind King Abbas are Turkish counterparts, archetypes of cruelty, and lasciviousness who, although politically inimical in the narrative, are clearly imaginatively related in the drama".<sup>43</sup>

#### **4. Representation of the Ottoman Turks**

Like Denham, Baron's Eurocentric perspectives can be observed in case of the Ottoman Turks and other Islamic Persian characters that have been delineated as negative characters and cultural stereotypes. For example, the Turks have been shown the sworn enemies of Persians. But through this indirect way, Baron demonstrates the English's hatred against the Turks. Mirza's return from battlefield to the Persian court is described in terms of "Plot of some Turk to ruin Persia".<sup>44</sup> The Great Turk is represented as a proud king who sets him "too high".<sup>45</sup> Mirza's sword "is drunk and glutted with Ottoman blood".<sup>46</sup> Mirza's stars can "eclipse the Turkish Moon or daub her horns with Ottoman blood".<sup>47</sup> Under the entry of



the Turkish Moon in the annotations, while drawing on the authority of George Sandys, Baron explains that “The half moon, or crescent, is the Turks Armes, nor do they honor that planet onely in their Ensignes, but also in their devotions, superstitiously gratulating the discovery of the new Moon”.<sup>48</sup> Here, both Sandys and Baron, on the one hand, are mocking the Muslims’ religious custom of sighting the new moon by which they calculate the days of a lunar month, and on the other hand, asserting that the Muslims are superstitious. This becomes more prominent when Baron comments under the entry of ‘Ottoman blood’ that the Ottoman Turks “in honour of their false prophet, the Turke having now embraced the Mahometan superstition”<sup>49</sup> established their new Empire in the year 1030. The Prophet of the Muslims was false and superstitious, so are his disciples. It is not only Baron who is saying this. Rather, he is saying this after deriving the authority from Herbert, Sandys and Knolles. Thus, there is “discursive consistency”<sup>50</sup> in all these works since all are clearly characterized by the Western biases and prejudices.

### **5. Representation of Mahomet Ally Beg**

Baron’s Eurocentric perspectives can also be traced out in the depiction of Mahomet Ally Beg whose name has “religious connotations”.<sup>51</sup> Like Denham’s Haly, Baron’s Mahomet Ally Beg has been modeled on Dante’s, Sandys’ and Herbert’s Ali. While using the authority of Sandys and Herbert, under the entry of Mortys Ally, Baron notes that “This Ally was cosin to Mahomet, the Persian Prophet, to whom he gave in marriage his daughter Fatyma born of his first wife, and made him his heir, and head of his superstition, by the title of Caliph”.<sup>52</sup> The leaders and spiritual mentors of Muslims are false, fake, fraud, superstitious and same is the case with the Muslims. Mahomet Ally Beg inherits and embodies all the evils which the Western poets, playwrights and historians have represented in the Muslim leaders, particularly in the characters of Mahomet and Ali.

In *Mirza*, Baron portrays him Shah Abbas’ Favorite, who was “raised to that height from obscure descent” but, actually, he was a “mean” person.<sup>53</sup> Mahomet Ally becomes so ambitious that he wants to be the future Persian king. For this purpose, he uses Abbas’s concubine, Floradella “as an instrument to besot the King”.<sup>54</sup> An important point with reference to the character of Floradella is that she is “not derived from Herbert but [is] the pure invention” of Baron to whom he has used as a “vehicle for much of the play’s moralizing”.<sup>55</sup> Mahomet Ally is so crafty that he corrupts the great, buys the needy, fawns upon all and insinuates the people and makes

them rebel authority.<sup>56</sup> Because of these characteristics, Mahomet Ally admires himself and feels pride:

How shall I fall in love with mine own parts,  
That have so conn'd all cunning mystique Arts.<sup>57</sup>

He is a true Machiavellian figure, a great manipulator and an exploiter. Equipped with all these negative traits, he can easily befool Shah Abbas. It is Floradella who rouses fear and jealousy of Abbas by telling him that people love Mirza more than Abbas but it is Mahomet Ally who confirms it by saying that a panegyric was being sung in the praise of Mirza. Mahomet Ally tells Abbas that Mirza is a traitor and “treason is a kind of Hectiquefeaver”<sup>58</sup> that should be cured as early as possible. He further convinces Abbas by informing him that Mirza is ambitious and “Ambition knows/ No kindred”.<sup>59</sup> Mahomet is a crafty and coward fellow who instructs Abbas:

All cruel actions must be safely done,  
And all their safeties lies in privacy.<sup>60</sup>

Abbas, consumed by jealousy, believes whatever Mahomet Ally tells him. He is even determined to kill his son and so much so that he utters “I’ll ruine all mankind first”.<sup>61</sup> Shah Abbas trusts him so blindly that he calls him “my beloved Mahomet”,<sup>62</sup> “Wise Mahomet” and “modest Ally Beg”.<sup>63</sup> Like a preying bird, he is vigilant of every movement and waiting for a suitable opportunity. As he mentions to Floradella that “No fish shall ‘scape us when the water’s troubled”.<sup>64</sup> He is a selfish and self-centered person. He is sincere to none, not even to Floradella whose strings are being moved by him. He calls her “Poor credulous cockatrice”<sup>65</sup> to whom he uses to catch the big fish, Abbas:

Thou art a good close spie, a bosometraitour,  
And a fair bait for some smooth liquorish Sultan,  
Whom Ile perhaps buy with thy prostitution.<sup>66</sup>

He thinks that once he becomes a King of Persia after the deaths of Abbas and Mirza, he will be worthy of Princess “Nymphadora “a young widow lusty in her blood”.<sup>67</sup> Mirza can see through Mahomet’s tricks and knows his true nature. As Mirza describes him:

He has his ends if he  
But speaks, or bowes, or nods to any man.  
His very looks and smiles are all design.<sup>68</sup>

Because of his flattering habit and devious methods, Mahomet Ally is soon able to replace Duke Emangoly and becomes the “second in glory”.<sup>69</sup> Shah Abbas bestows on him the titles of “Lord Treasurer”<sup>70</sup> and “Angel Guardian of Persia”<sup>71</sup> under whose care Shah and his Empire will be secure. Mahomet Ally and Floradella rejoice over this great victory and envision themselves as the king

and queen of Persia. They will build a “Seraglio”<sup>72</sup> in which they will have all sorts of luxuries at their will. They will also build a city where they imagine that:

We'll lie on beds of Gold and Ivory,  
Richer then that BythinianPythius gave,  
Our great Darius: Golden Vines shall shade us,  
Studded with pearls, whose artificial clusters  
Shall be the freshest Rubies. Thus we'll tyre  
Nature and Art, and ourselves too, with pleasures.<sup>73</sup>

## 6. Representation of Harem or Seraglio

Baron's Eurocentric perspectives can be found in the representation of harem or seraglio. In the annotations, Baron, citing the authority of Sandys, elaborates that seraglios are the “Bawdy houses in which the noble men and Princes in Persia, Turkie, and indeed all over Asia keep their Concubines”.<sup>74</sup> In Islamic culture, Seraglio or ‘harem’ means a forbidden and a sacred place in Muslim households. It is meant for women and only the owner of the house and seraglio can enter it. Other men cannot even come close to this place. But, the Western writers, travelers and historians have represented seraglio as a brothel house and a place where Oriental women lose their freedom in their works. They have represented Muslims' harems in negative terms to establish and assert their cultural hegemony since most of their representations related to Seraglios are based not on their own actual experiences but on their imaginations and false reports. In case of actual experiences, the picture is quite contrary. In this respect, Isobel Grundy's is a significant work in which she has narrated the actual experiences and memories of Lady Mary's journey (1716-1718) of Turkey. She records that Lady Mary “learned that the Harem rested less on sexual than family politics; that women (veiled of course) moved freely about streets; that the segregation of the sexes created a female space with its own culture and hierarchy”.<sup>75</sup> Thus, these representations of seraglios may be described as Western constructions. These are the part of the Orientalist and colonial discourse as these explicitly introduce the binaries between self versus other and East versus West, and, are in line with the perception of “Islam as a sensual religion”.<sup>76</sup> It is because of such images as depicted in the above passage, the East has been perceived as an exotic land, a land of luxury, a land of adventures, a place of fascination and desire to be possessed and enjoyed by the West. Masoud Farahmandfar rightly(2016) argues that in this context, Persia “denoted an exotic land much famed for its lavish splendor and arbitrary authority- all that was antithetical to European values”.<sup>77</sup>

If Denham criticizes Haly with reference to religious hypocrisy, duality and duplicity of Islam as embodied in the character of Caliph in *The Sophy*, Baron criticizes Mahomet Ally with reference to sensuality and sexuality of Islam through the characters of Floradella and her maids in *Mirza*. The point is: one says that the Muslims are hypocrite and the other says that Islam is a sensual religion. Such misrepresentations clearly reveal the Eurocentric perspectives of both playwrights in their plays because both playwrights have represented the negative and stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims. These facts may be traced out in the Islamic setting of the play, Islamic characters, and other Islamic references which are scattered in the whole play. For instance, Floradella advises Mahomet Ally to use the Muslim priests to inveigh against Abbas' tyranny:

T'were good you won the Muftie to your purpose;  
And some of the Abdalls, that at publique meetings,  
And market Lectures, may expound the Text  
Oth' Alchoran, according to your comment.<sup>78</sup>

These lines serve an ample proof of Baron's Eurocentric perspectives because in these lines, he has mocked and criticized all the Muslim priests along with Mahomet Ally who can appropriate the Quran for the sake of material benefits:

Good cheer is bait enough for these poor spirits,  
Fil them with that, and the bagpipes will sound  
What tune you'l turn them to, when they are full.<sup>79</sup>

Once they are baited, they will be at your beck and call and serve you the way you want. Mahomet Ally agrees with Floradella and informs her:

Tis true, great wit, these mercenary Priests  
Are the best fire-brands, such I've ready kindled.<sup>80</sup>

### **7. Representation of the Quran and Muslim Clergymen**

The Quran is a holy book; it is like the Bible for the Muslims. Therefore, neither the laity nor the religious ministers can ever imagine distorting or changing it as this act is sacrilegious and blasphemous. But, because of their Eurocentric perspectives, the English perceive it "as the expression of a depraved heresy".<sup>81</sup> So, by making the Islamic characters utter the above-mentioned lines, Baron is expressing his biased attitudes. This becomes more prominent in the explanation of these Islamic terms in annotations. Under the entry of the Muftie, Baron, drawing on the authority of Sandys and Herbert, notes that Muftie is a high priest, a supreme judge in Islamic culture. At the end of this term, he adds that "nor is he [Muftie] restrained, nor doth he restrain himself from plurality of

women, and the delights of a Seraglio, a commendable recreation surely for so grave and infallible a Prelate”.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in the term Abdals, Baron defines them mendicant Islamic monks. He describes them as “the wiser wolves in sheep skins who preach lying wonders, and expound the Alcoran according to their occasions or inventions”.<sup>83</sup> These comments of Baron are not only ‘confident generalizations’ which may be quoted as instances of Said’s Orientalist discourse but also confirm Said’s statement “that people, places and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes” since “Expertise is attributed to it”.<sup>84</sup>

Baron’s Eurocentrism finds full expression in the explanation of the term the Alcoran. He has devoted nearly eight pages to the explanation of this term and in all these pages he tries to convince his readers that the Quran is “a Fardel of Blasphemies, Rabbinical Fables, Ridiculous Discourses, Impostures, Bestialities, Inconveniences, Impossibilities, and Contradictions”.<sup>85</sup> Mahomet, the Muslim Prophet, is an imposter, a friend of devils, a thief, a lecher who has composed the Quran to justify his sins and so on. For the sake of authority, Baron cites almost a dozen of Western authors and scholars such as Sandys and Herbert who see the Quran, Islam and Muslims in this light. If such explanations of Islamic names and terms, on the one hand, demonstrate Baron’s erudition, on the other hand, these reflect his “extreme prejudice and hostility”<sup>86</sup> towards the Quran and the tenets of Islam.

### **Conclusion**

The application of Said’s views to Robert Baron’s *Mirza* indicates that the playwright has misrepresented the Muslims and Islam under the influence of the dominant ideology of the period. This play may be taken as a part of the ensemble of the Oriental discourse which enabled the West to create, control and manipulate the East. This Oriental discourse empowered the Western writers intellectually and imparted them authority to portray the Oriental people as negative and evil force which needs to be managed and tamed by the positive and virtuous West. Consequently, this facilitated and legitimized the job of the West to colonize the Oriental states and their people in the future.

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