

Social Conflict, Nation and Empire: From Gothicism to Romantic Orientalism

GARY KELLY

THE GOTHIC AND the Oriental have been used over several centuries to figure the other and the alien in European culture and literature (Said 1-2). They have been used as figures not only of danger from without, but as the enemy within. The Renaissance and the eighteenth century were particularly rich in such representations of the Gothic or Oriental as any enemy of the dominant culture and classes in the West. The Gothic was the Other of a self-consciously classical culture (OED, "Gothic," sense 3); the Oriental was supposed to embody the opposites of a Christian, rationalist, humanist culture serving the dominant classes of Western and Northern Europe. But Enlightenment writers such as Voltaire and Gibbon could also use the Gothic and Oriental as figures for the irrational, unenlightened, tyrannical or subservient elements in their own societies and cultures. Less provocatively, the Oriental tale, in verse or prose, was used in the eighteenth century to present philosophical, moral, or other ideas in narrative form for a wider readership. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the *topoi* of Gothic and Oriental continued to be used in these ways; they were also turned in new directions, as ways of expressing, representing, or grasping new and increasing social changes and conflicts. Certainly Gothicism and Orientalism of this period have been treated in literary history and criticism as escapist fantasies for jaded middle-class readers, as powerful expressions of the human psyche, and, more recently, as rich if contradictory figurings of patriarchal and bourgeois ideology. The Gothic and the Oriental were also powerful figures for male sexual and social power over women (Kabbani; Marcus). The critical literature on the Gothic is extensive and still growing; its development may be

represented by the work of Birkhead, Summers (1938), Varma, Howells, Wilt, Punter, Poovey, Cottom, and Napier. Orientalism has gone from being an antiquarian study to a revelation of deep cultural and political anxieties, represented by the work of de Meester, Saffari, Schwab, Said, and Kabbani. Such work makes it clear that there is still much to be said on the Gothic and Orientalism in literature. In this paper, however, I'll consider the Gothic and Oriental as major ways of representing class conflicts within Britain and between Britain and other powers during the crises of the French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars, and post-war movements for political and institutional reform, for these literary appropriations of Gothic and Oriental lived on into imperialist and even post-colonialist ways of thinking.

The Gothic, as is well known, was a dominant formal and thematic complex in fictional (and dramatic) "literature of the day" for the middle classes from the 1790s to the 1820s. It was an extension of the late eighteenth-century novel of manners, sentiment, and emulation as developed by novelists such as Frances Burney. Novels of manners depict the effects of decadent court culture and social practices — "manners" — on the emulative members of the gentry, middle, and servant classes in contemporary society. Such novels also celebrate inward moral and intellectual attributes — "sentiments" or "sensibility" — at the expense of merely social categories of meaning and value, for the merely social was seen to be under the hegemony of the courtly classes. In short, such novels mount a critique of court politics and culture from the point of view of the "progressive" middle classes and such novels display and criticize the dissemination of courtly hegemony through the fashion system and the increasing commercialization of culture (Kelly 42-48).

Writers of "Gothic romance," then, take elements of seventeenth-century courtly *nouvelles* and Heroic Drama (many of which had Oriental settings) in order to extend and heighten the novel of manners' critique of court culture and celebration of bourgeois values of selfhood and the "domestic affections," including definitions of gender. In novels of manners, sentiment, and emulation the distribution of vice and virtue is according to class as found in contemporary English society; in Gothic romance the

distribution is extended in a covert form of Romantic nationalism. Decadent court culture is associated with Catholic and autocratic southern Europe (or occasionally the feudal north of Europe), especially Spain and Italy; in fact, there is a considerable body of Enlightenment sociological historiography behind this characterization, and the genesis of the Gothic villain often has some kind of explicit or implied sociological explanation, as in Dr. John Moore's *Zeluco* (1789) or M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). By contrast, the moral and intellectual rightness and plenitude of self of the heroine (to a lesser extent, the hero) seem to be personal absolutes, transcendental, not explicable in sociological terms, except perhaps through recourse to the orphan-daughter trope: left to herself by fate or design, the heroine has only to cultivate (and discipline) the innate riches within. So cultivated and disciplined, she is ready to survive or is perfected in surviving the relativities, conflicts, dangers, and undisciplined individualism found in the social world around her.

The gendering of moral antinomies is probably a reworking of social paranoias left over from earlier forms of social conflict represented in seventeenth-century literature and early eighteenth-century novels: the impecunious aristocrat or courtier, ruined by extravagance and conspicuous consumption considered the mark of a gentleman, seeks to recoup his fortunes by exercise of gallantry in seducing and/or marrying a daughter of the mercantile middle classes. Worse still, perhaps, is the aristocrat who seduces merely to exercise his social power. The significance of these characters and plot figures is less erotic (let alone psychosexual), however, than social. In the Gothic romance the gendering of vice and virtue, social and subjective, casts the former term as foreign and "not English" and thus casts the latter as English. In this way the elements of court culture and politics in British society are alienized, and bourgeois anti-court values are made the national characteristics. Indeed, complaints that Gothic villains were too alien to be plausible abound in the criticism of the day; these complaints lie behind Henry Tilney's rebuke to Catherine Morland in volume II, chapter nine of *Northanger Abbey*. But the perception also lies behind the remark of Mrs. Barbauld on Dr. John Moore's villain *Zeluco*, one of the most popular of the 1790s: "The whole char-

acter has a darker tinge of villainy than is usually found in this country. . . . It reaches, like the character of Satan, the sublime of guilt" (Moore v).

Clearly there is great ambivalence in the appeal of the Gothic to good British middle-class readers, male or female. Nevertheless, the Gothic romance is undoubtedly a fairly sophisticated development of the critique of court culture found in novels of manners, sentiment, and emulation, and is part of a broad embourgeoisement of culture and society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Not only does Gothic romance suggest that court culture and values are somehow "not English," it also depicts the courtly as shallow, ineffectual in the long run, and doomed to fail in the face of bourgeois values. At the same time, bourgeois confrontation with the courtly is not cast as rebellion or direct challenge (except in the case of the odd misguided and soon-chastened Gothic hero, as in Radcliffe's *The Italian*); rather, the bourgeois triumphs by wise passiveness — a remarkable model for non-violent overthrow of a hegemonic order, especially considering the spectacular alternative being enacted across the channel (and threatened from some social quarters within Britain itself) during the first and most notable decade of success of Gothic romance in Britain, the 1790s. France had a revolution; Britain read Gothic romances. For the most part, then, the Gothic romances were "progressive" in their critique of court culture and their use of narrative devices of revelation, demystification, and enlightenment; but they also include typical characterizations of the common people as individually feckless, superstitious, garrulous — in short, immersed in mere sociability and orality and lacking rich subjectivity or reflectiveness, as in Radcliffe's novels — and collectively given to mob displays of ferocity and brutality, as in volume III, chapter 3 of *The Monk* or volume III, chapter 12 of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. More than one contemporary critic compared the Gothic romance to French Revolutionary Terror (*Monthly Magazine*).

The political implications of Gothic romance were made much more explicit, of course, in kinds of novel associated with Gothic in the 1790s, particularly the English Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin novels. These use the scenes of contemporary life characteristic of

novels of manners, but include prison and madhouse scenes, extravagantly egotistical villains, episodes of persecution, harassment, flight and pursuit, tribunals, secret intrigues and cabals, and association of the villainous with the courtly and the foreign. The different political attitudes of Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin novels simply represent different factions of the professional middle-class intelligentsia in the 1790s, struggling for ideological leadership and the power to define the character and social programme of the novel-reading classes.

In summary, the Gothic romance of the 1790s was a successful new development of late eighteenth-century criticism of court culture and a significant advance in ideological self-definition of the professional middle classes in literature, responsive to a decade of acute foreign and domestic crisis.

After 1800, the Gothic romance held its popularity, and tended to follow the line of extravagance in form and subject set by "Monk" Lewis rather than the chaster Gothic of Ann Radcliffe. But critical opposition to the Gothic romance increased and even in the 1790s many critics complained that the kind had become trite ("Terrorist Novel Writing"). In fact, in the first years of the nineteenth century the initiative returned to the novel of manners, in the hands of Maria Edgeworth, and there were new initiatives in the fiction of subjectivity and domestic feeling, led by Amelia Opie and others. Another notable development was the embourgeoisement of rural life in such different novels as Elizabeth Le Noir's *Village Anecdotes* and Thomas Surr's *A Winter in London* (Jones ch. 6; Kelly 87-89). The fusion of gentry and professional values figured forth in the earlier novels of manners was continued in Edgeworth and the novels Jane Austen was writing or revising during the 1800s. This work defined the English, of course; and Edgeworth, in her "Irish tales" and even in her novels of manners such as *Belinda* and *Patronage*, tried to represent a British identity, at least for the professionalized ruling class — an identity at once local or regional and "national" in a way that could be seen to encompass the diversity of the new "United Kingdom" of Great Britain and Ireland (united in 1800).

More prominent in the decade and a half up to the publication of *Waverley*, however, was the so-called "national tale" written

by Lady Morgan, the Porter sisters, and others (Hook; Jones ch. 4-5; Kelly 92-98). The "national tale" responds directly to the sense of national identity and struggle in an international context, engendered by the expansionism of Napoleonic France, national self-defence and liberation movements in central Europe, and the threat to Britain's empire represented by events such as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. National unity and disciplined political and social leadership seemed more necessary than ever; but they could be called for within the continuing project of criticism of court culture, which was now seen as offering inadequate leadership in domestic and international crisis, and embourgeoisement of all aspects of society, now proposed in the name of a new kind of "imagined community." This "imagined community" was only accessible, or figurable, in such widely disseminated forms of print culture as the social-historical novel and the newspaper or miscellany magazine, for reasons proposed by Benedict Anderson. The "imagined community" was already being fashioned, in fakelore and folklore, from the poems of Ossian to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and in new kinds of "national" history in quest of "national" origins in the past, and pursued in language in the subordination of dialect and non-standard English to a written and spoken standard, represented in fiction in the omniscient third-person narrative characteristic of many "national tales" and social-historical novels, including, of course, those of the Wizard of the North, Sir Walter Scott (Wilson; Hobsbawm; Smith).

It was not a novelist but a poet, however, who shifted the combined topic of critique of court culture and national identity and defensive mission from the Gothic to the Oriental. Robert Southey, Scott's friend and, to some extent, client, was one of several major Romantic writers who had moved from English Jacobin to Tory, but like the others he persisted in his critique of court culture and the British ruling classes' failure to provide national leadership. Southey tried to alert the reading classes, the "public" that mattered, to the seriousness, as he saw it, of Britain's national and international crisis. Southey was also already implicated in several ways in the matter of Spain, as well as in the matter of the Orient. In his poems *Thalaba* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), he used the Orient to mount critiques of what he saw as the deca-

dence of the West and of Britain in particular. But these two poems also show that the Orient was not a fixed figure. For in *Thalaba* Southey uses the young Arab Thalaba to represent the youthful vigour of a barbaric society eventually overcoming the illusions and enchantments of a decadent society — here the magicians are readily translated into the mystifying ideologues and agents of court government and culture. Here Southey could draw upon a well-established response to Oriental culture inspired by the tremendous popularity of the *Thousand and One Nights*. For while many critics and intellectuals saw these Arabian tales as the childish extravagances of a childish culture, appealing to the childish in the West (mostly women and children), others, including Clara Reeve (in *The Progress of Romance*, 1785) and Richard Hole (1797), argued that the tales, especially the adventures of Sinbad, had the simplicity and force of epic literature that only a vigorous, youthful culture could produce.

In *The Curse of Kehama* Southey takes a somewhat different locale in the East. Here the tyrannical Rajah Kehama stands for corrupt and corrupting court culture, its power represented in the curse that returns to destroy the curser, thanks to benevolent gods. In these poems Southey was working in a Romantic vein of political myth-making, exploiting a great deal of late Enlightenment sociology of religion, primitive and civilized societies, and culture, including those of the East, under the shadow of the epoch-making French Revolution (Schwab ch. 1-2). The supposedly ruthless and fanatical aspects of the East, its mode of government and its religions, are drawn on here, as a parallel to the ruthlessness, fanaticism, and terrorism of the Revolution. A few years later Charles Maturin would draw the same analogy in the “Tale of the Indians” in his Gothic extravaganza, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).

The rise of Napoleon and the Peninsular War in Spain, however, offered a new challenge to Southey and others who saw these events as critical to Britain’s survival. In 1808 the daring woman poet, Felicia Hemans, placed the struggle of chivalric Goths against Oriental, Islamic invaders in a long history of struggles for freedom, often against alien hordes, from ancient Greece’s resistance to Persia, to the present crisis. Such struggles had internal and

domestic implications for Britain, as well as international ones, as is suggested in Hemans's title, "England and Spain." It was left to Southey, though, to turn the crisis into a new kind of historical-political epic, *Roderick, Last of the Goths* (1814). Walter Savage Landor had already explored the struggle of Goths and Moors in his poetic drama, *Count Julian* (1812). In Landor's poem and Southey's *Roderick*, the Gothic, now read as the historical Germanic tribe, represents the nation divided from its primitive "barbarian" virtues, divided within by aristocratic faction and feud, and thus vulnerable to what is depicted as the Oriental cunning, fanaticism, and vigour of the Moors. Southey's poem has an obvious reference to the corruption and incompetence, the favouritism and lack of leadership of Britain under the early Regency, especially such episodes as the royal Duke of York's mistress selling military commissions. More broadly, the poem offers its British readers a historical myth of national self-regeneration, liberation, and international mission in light of a transcendental moral code and a trans-historical national community, and under the leadership of a ruling class guided by a kind of chivalry already imbued with bourgeois values. Southey uses the Moors to stand for Napoleonic, revolutionary, Jacobin France, but both are figures for the Other of Christian Europe as imagined by Southey, partly on the ground of Edmund Burke's crusading (appropriate metaphor) Anti-Revolution tracts of the 1790s.

Southey's poem certainly aims to transcend the mere Gothic of the "trash of the circulating libraries," but it may be that Southey's figure of the Moors gained something in rhetorical force from an earlier Gothic novel, inspired by Lewis's *The Monk*. Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1807) was highly popular and in most ways a typically extravagant Gothic romance; but it also attempts an Enlightenment sociology of courtly decadence in accounting for the vitiated character of its heroine (Summers 1928; Jones ch. 8; Kelly 105-08). The model here would be Dr. John Moore's *Zeluco*. The Moor of Dacre's novel turns out to be Satan (an anticipation of Mrs. Barbauld's comment on *Zeluco*), but he has many negative characteristics of the Oriental as defining other of the Enlightenment bourgeois ideal — cunning, ambiguous, possessing magical powers, glamorous in the original sense. Dacre's

Gothic romance pushes the site of the other from Catholic Mediterranean to the Muslim Levant.

This resiting was confirmed particularly in some of Byron's enormously popular poems of the 1810s, such as "The Giaour," and of course the earlier cantos of *Don Juan*. Byron certainly knew his Enlightenment historians, he knew his Heroic Drama, and he could mount a comprehensive satire of courtly, *ancien régime* Europe, taking his hero through the varieties of decadent court culture to be encountered from Spain, to the Levant, to autocratic Russia, to something like Regency England. He knew his Gothic romances, too, and affirmed that Childe Harold was to be "perhaps a poetical Zeluco" ("Addition to the Preface," *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*).

Byron the liberator of Greece from the Oriental yoke also probably knew the Abbé Barthélemy's *Voyage of Young Anacharsis in Greece* (1788) — a copy was owned by his friend Hobhouse's father and was inherited by Hobhouse (the copy is in the British Library). Barthélemy's work is a quasi-fictional survey of the ancient Greek world just before it lost its liberty to a series of autocratic governments, ending of course with Turkish rule. Like most such works, Barthélemy's is less about ancient Greece and its orientalizations than about contemporary, pre-Revolutionary Europe, and it is an oblique satire on court government.

Late in the 1810s Barthélemy's quasi-novel and Byron's poem together inspired an English novel that was widely supposed to have been written by Byron, Thomas Hope's *Anastasius; or, Memoirs of a Greek* (1819). *Anastasius* is set at the time of the first, abortive Greek uprising against the Turks in the 1780s — in other words at the other end of two millennia of subjugation of Greece by despotism, including Oriental despotism, from the time of Barthélemy's young Anacharsis. The character and the adventures of Anastasius, the picaresque shape of his life, the conflict between his patriotism and his opportunistic self-interest exemplify the social construction of the individual under court government. The system of patronage, favouritism, intrigue, false gallantry, self-disguise and self-suppression, envy, individualist competition, lack of public spirit, degraded domestic life and condition of women, superstition, opportunism, and popular lottery mentality are all

seen to be consequences of the dissemination of court politics to every level of society. Hope was, of course, interested in Greek liberation, and he was a leader in the "Greek revival," a movement of taste and fashion in the 1810s and 1820s. But *Anastasius* is less about the confrontation of West and East in the Levant than about the condition of England in the late 1810s, as viewed by the professional middle classes, with a decadent, orientalized aristocracy and political ruling class and common people reduced to the condition of an Anastasius by centuries of court hegemony over British society as a whole. Hope's novel was published in the year of "Peterloo" and of Hone's *Political House that Jack Built* and at a time of growing sense of crisis in a Britain with alarmingly politicized and restless lower classes and an alarmingly incompetent aristocratic leadership (Butler ch. 6; Evans ch. 19).

The orientaling of Britain's ruling classes remained a recurrent theme in literature of the 1920s. Sir Walter Scott had presented his own apprehension of the crisis of British society in his Scottish novels of the mid and late 1810s; but in the first of his non-Scottish novels, also published in 1819, he, too, meditates on the orientaling of the chivalric culture of the historic western ruling class, particularly in the figure of the Templars in *Ivanhoe*, while the rulers of Britain are distracted by chivalric folly of another kind in the Crusades and social conflict and injustice become rife in England itself. As Marilyn Butler puts it, *Ivanhoe* is Scott's "most contemporaneous novel to date [1819]. Its plot turns on class warfare . . ." (Butler 149). Interestingly enough, *Ivanhoe*, which suffers low critical esteem nowadays, was probably the most admired, copied, and influential of Scott's novels throughout Europe, and, indeed, the world, as various writers like Scott tried to compose their own fictional representations of the "national" community, its origins, character, and destiny, as part of their own professional and middle-class challenge to a historic ruling class. To writers like Scott in Italy, Eastern Europe, Greece, and even the Levant and the Far East, the image of "orientalized" ruling class and lower classes could be powerful, even revolutionary political propaganda.

Meanwhile, the *topos* of the Orient was being treated in a different but related way in religious tract literature, fictional and

non-fictional. The missionary and Bible societies looked to the East with aggressive, imperial intent, as field for religious (that is, ideological) conflict and conquest (Brown ch. 7). The missionary and Bible societies were arms of a large, Evangelical and Dissenting middle-class movement of social reform and social control, outside the state apparatus which was seen to be still subject to aristocratic control, inadequate for the task of social reform, and itself in sad need of such reform, if not overthrow. Thus the Evangelical movement, as an element of professional and middle-class social reconstruction, took the Orient (and Africa) as part of a comprehensive vision including the embourgeoisement of both domestic, British society and foreign, imperial domains. So comprehensive and widely disseminated was the Evangelical social vision that the opuscles of the Religious Tract Society, Mary Sherwood, and others may have been more important than high literature of the Romantic period in shaping early nineteenth-century and Victorian (not to say modern) myths of the nature of English and British society and of Britain's imperial task in the East and elsewhere. The economy of the Evangelical social vision is parallel to that of the Romantic Orientalists, however: many Evangelical tracts, from Hannah More's Cheap Repository of the 1790s on, depict a society reformable and reformed by the middle classes, just as other tracts show the necessity of extending these values (albeit in diminutive form) to coloured races and other continents, to the Empire.

One consequence of Evangelical Orientalism, together with the embourgeoisement of chivalry, from Burke through *The Broad Stone of Honour*, was revived interest in the Holy Land itself, combined with interest in the Crusades as a figure for national sense of unity and international sense of purpose or mission. Mark Girouard has shown us the importance and pervasiveness of bourgeois chivalry in nineteenth-century Britain. For many, however, the return to Camelot was routed through the Holy Land and thereby implicated in the kinds of Orientalism already described here. This routing is seen partially in the preface to one of the most important and long-lived Orientalist novels of the 1820s, Morier's *The Adventures of Hajji Baba, of Ispahan* (1824), one of the few Romantic novels apart from Scott's to enjoy repeated

printing through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Morier was himself the son of Smyrna merchants and an envoy on two British diplomatic missions to Persia, missions in response to other initiatives in the area from France and Russia, perceived as challenges to Britain's Oriental empire. *Hajjî Baba* is in the line of Hope's *Anastasius* as a representation of a "pre-modern" society under court hegemony, ripe for reform and modernization by the West, yet paradoxically full of a sense of its own superiority to that West. But *Hajjî Baba* is more thorough, more pointed, less Byronic, more in the line of progressive bourgeois Enlightenment sociology than *Anastasius*. *Hajjî Baba* is central to the kind of Orientalism still with us, and described critically by Edward Said (although Said does not pay much attention to Morier's novel). Morier's novel certainly suggests, in fact explicitly so, that the East is ripe for modernization — a duty and challenge for the imperialist West. But like earlier Enlightenment and Romantic Orientalist texts, *Hajjî Baba* is less about the East's ripeness for the West than about residual or dangerously new elements of the East in the West. To make this point clearer, and perhaps to moderate the sharpness of contrast of East and West in *Hajjî Baba*, Morier followed up his success with a sequel, *The Adventures of Hajjî Baba in England* (1828). These further *Adventures* are a response to a sense of moral decay and failure of social leadership in the highest ranks of society during the last years of the reign of George IV. In fact, the novel is set during the reign of George III, portrayed as a sensible, public-spirited, professional sort of gentleman; but the evil influence of the fashion system through emulation by the foolish middle classes was more an issue of novels of the mid and later 1820s, particularly the so-called "silver-fork novels" of Lister, Disraeli, Bulwer, and others, and an issue later treated definitively in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

Not surprisingly, however, the most complex literary response to what was perceived as the Orientalizing of Britain's ruling classes in the later 1820s may be found in the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Scott took up issues, topics, and figures broached in *Ivanhoe*, as well as the themes of the Holy Land, chivalry, and the Crusades, as major elements in his last series of meditations on the contemporary condition of British society, the international situation, and

the immediate future of domestic and social change and reform and imperial power. Significantly, Scott saw clearly the Enlightenment social critique implicit in Morier's *Hajjî Baba* novels (he wrote a long review of them). In *The Talisman* (one of the two "Tales of the Crusaders" published together in 1825) Scott returned to the matter of King Richard, flower and fool of chivalry, and the collision of East and West in Palestine. He reiterates the image of the Templars as self-interested, orientalized, decadent, autocratic — a figure for courtly values at their worst masquerading as Western medieval civilization at its best. The contrast of the noble, if barbaric, unintellectual, and irrational Richard to the equally noble, sophisticated, and wily Saladin implicitly proposes a melded character one might think of as the ideal professionalized gentleman of much fiction and social commentary after 1800 (including the novels of Jane Austen). The characters of Kenneth and Edith suggest the bourgeois recuperation of chivalric values proposed at least as early as William Robertson's *History of Charles V* (1769) and repeated in numerous writings on chivalry in the next four or five decades. On the other hand, the known historic fate, the futility of Richard's enterprise, the decadently coquettish circle of Frankish ladies, including Richard's own Queen, and the situation of the Crusader camp in Palestine, swarming with all the alien races of the Levant, riven with conflicts between the various Western nations, and open to penetration by Saladin himself as well as by assassins — all these constitute a warning to the ruling and novel-reading classes of Scott's own day and country.

As Britain's crisis of leadership seemed to deepen in the last years of the reign of George IV, whom Scott had always despised, Scott returned to the orientalizing of the West with renewed anxiety, even in the face of his own personal crisis of financial bankruptcy and the near-loss of his hard-won status as a landed gentleman, and in the face of his physical and mental impairment from a series of strokes. *Count Robert of Paris* is one of what Scott himself referred to as his "apoplectic books," that is, one of the novels interrupted by or written after strokes impaired his ability to speak, spell, write, or even think clearly. *Count Robert* was heavily revised, apparently without Scott's knowledge, by his son-in-law

Lockhart before it was published, but the intent of the book can be seen (Gammersschlag). Drawing from Gibbon's chapters on the confrontation of the First Crusade and the empire of Byzantium, the novel explores the contrast between a crescent but still semi-barbaric West and the over-civilized, orientalized remains of the once mighty empire of Rome. The late Byzantine empire is a warning to late Georgian Britain of what it might become if it did not reform and regenerate itself with positive elements of youthful barbarism. What Scott intended in his last attempt at a novel, the unfinished "Siege of Malta," is less clear, for the manuscript is incoherent at every level (Millgate). Nevertheless, it is clear that Scott intended to represent the collision of East and West yet again, in the struggle of the Turkish forces with the Knights of Malta for that important bastion of Mediterranean power. "The Siege of Malta" seems to argue that the moral and social otherness represented by the East, and especially by the Turks, can be pushed back if the West — figure for Britain — calls upon its original values, represented in chivalry and Christianity, and finds proper leadership.

By the late 1820s, then, the Oriental had just about replaced — or absorbed — the Gothic as the major way of figuring the Other according to the professional and middle classes' vision of British society and Britain's international mission. Throughout the Romantic period the Gothic and the Oriental had been used in response to developing domestic and international crises and conflicts, but, not surprisingly, it served the interests, evolving interests, of those who produced and consumed such literature as novels, religious tracts, and even poems. One strong line in Romantic literature was to depict the authentic inward self as an alternative to merely social identity, in a variety of forms from the familiar essay through the "Gothic romance" to the prose autobiography, personal lyric, and mythic autobiographical poem. A second major line was to depict the embourgeoisement of rural Britain, traditional home of the gentry and their semi-feudal (as it seemed) peasantry, in a variety of ways from the Romantic georgic poem to the Cheap Repository tract and the "sketch" of rural life, as an independent genre or as part of a novel. A third line, an increasingly strong one through the period, was the depiction of the exotic,

be it the Gothic, the Oriental, or the feudal and historic. But all three lines were part of a movement, which we now know as Romanticism, aiming to supplant or appropriate aristocratic and gentry hegemony and to refashion all levels of British society and all regions of Britain in the image of the professional middle classes. The image was certainly not monolithic; and to a large extent Romantic literature was a field of struggle for domination within those classes, the future leaders of Britain and rulers of empire, as historians such as Martin Wiener and others have argued. In that struggle the Gothic and Romantic Orientalism played a major role, and one always responsive to the vicissitudes of public and political issues of the time. But the attitudes of Gothicism and Romantic Orientalism lived on in Victorian and modern imperialism and colonialism; that is another story.

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