

AN ORIENTALIST READING OF THOMAS PRESTON'S CAMBYSES: A LAMENTABLE TRAGEDY MIXED FULL OF PLEASANT MIRTH

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Abstract

The study aims at the application of Edward Said's views in his seminal work *Orientalism* (2003) to Thomas Preston's play *Cambyses*. After thorough study, the researchers have extracted some of the key and relevant assumptions from Said's *Orientalism* and rigorously applied them to the play. The researchers' main contention is that Preston, like other contemporary writers, has intentionally misrepresented the Orient and Oriental characters with a view to establishing and asserting the Western cultural superiority. The playwright did so due to the pervasive ideology of the period which was based on denigration and demonization of the cultural others. The findings of the research substantiate the researchers' contention that Preston's *Cambyses* explicitly evinces his Eurocentric perspectives which is Said's focal point in *Orientalism*.

Keywords: Orientalism, Misrepresentation, Demonization, Cultural others, Eurocentric Perspectives

1. Introduction:

The word Orient literally means the sunrise and refers to the Middle Eastern countries, Pakistan, India, China, Japan, Afghanistan and the countries of Africa. The term Orientalism, in its traditional sense, refers to the studies of languages and cultures of various countries of the Middle East and the Far East. But, Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* (2003) has dwelt on it from a new angle. Now, it carries deeper meanings than the traditional and neutral meanings which were once attached with it. Said (2003) defines the term Orientalism from three different perspectives. One, in academic sense, it refers to "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient... is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (p. 2). In this category, one can include the travelers, religious people, administrators, anthropologists, historians and philologists who studied the Orient as a source of information. Two, in general sense, as a style of thought it means the epistemological and ontological difference between the Orient and the Occident. In this class, there are the literary figures, scholars, and philosophers who have portrayed the Orientals as cultural others and highlighted the differences. And, three, as a corporate Orientalism, it alludes to "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (ibid, p. 3). The third definition refers to the discourse of Orientalism which enabled the West to hegemonize the East.

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The first two definitions relate Orientalism to, in the words of Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999), “the textual creation” of the Orient whereas the third definition deals with how the West used the discourse of Orientalism in the East to “execute domination” (p. 69).

Said finds a relationship between Orientalism and theories of racial discrimination and moves to the conclusion that after 1870, there is a shift in Orientalism “from an academic to an instrumental attitude” (Said, 2003, p. 246). The western attitude towards the Orient has been dual i.e. both of attraction and repulsion. Right from the ancient times, the East has been a land of fascination, opportunities, and romance with haunting memories and, therefore, has a great attraction for the West. But at the same time, it has been a distant and dangerous place inhabited by the cultural others which evokes fear and hatred. Therefore, the East as an object of fascination and as a cultural other has been a desired object, a land to be conquered and possessed. Seen from this perspective, according to Said, the relationship between the West and East has been a relationship of power, of domination, and of complex hegemony (ibid, p. 5).

The existing traditional criticism has investigated the play in political and moral perspectives. The critics like W. A. Armstrong (1950), P. Happe (1965), J. P. Myers (1973), B. J. Fishman (1976), K. P. Wentersdorf (1981), Eugene Hill (1992), H. B. Norland (1992-1993), Allyn Ward (2008), and Maya Mathur (2014) have interpreted it in the contemporary socio-historical conditions. They have not analyzed it from Saidian perspective which further indicates the Eurocentric perspectives of the West. Thus, this paper evinces a departure from traditional scholarship. The researchers contend that The Western playwrights have been deliberately misrepresenting the Orient and Oriental people for centuries with a view to establishing domination and hegemony. It is in this context, Preston has misrepresented the Persian characters in his play *Cambyses*. The researchers will explore the following questions in this paper:

- a) In what way(s) does Preston (mis)represent the Oriental characters in his play *Cambyses*?
- b) To what extent does the representation of the Oriental characters in *Cambyses* reflect Preston’s Eurocentric perspectives?
- c) What sort of effects does Preston want to achieve through the representation of the Oriental characters as cultural stereotypes?

2. Methodology

While employing the qualitative research paradigm, the researchers have applied Edward Said’s views to Preston’s *Cambyses* for the literary explication of the play. Said’s focal point that the Western writers have misrepresented the Orient and Oriental people due to their Eurocentric perspectives has been analyzed and examined in detail in the play. For this purpose, special focus is given on the dialogues, representation of the Islamic characters, interaction of the characters with each other and the discourse employed in the play. The whole analysis has been substantiated with the textual references and scholarly evidences wherever it is possible.

3.1. Representation of Cambyses

One of Said's (2003) main assumptions in *Orientalism* is that the Western writers and scholars have misrepresented the Orient because of their specific interests and dogmas. Out of those dogmas, one dogma because of which the West misrepresented is "the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior; and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped and inferior" (p. 300). This is true in case of depiction of the most of the Oriental rulers, especially like Cambyses, Soliman, Murad, Selimus, and Abbas. The play portrays Cambyses, king of Persia, as a tyrant and a despot. Except one good act of punishing the corrupt judge Sisamnes, Cambyses commits many heinous crimes which are enough to declare him a tyrant, a despot, a murderer and a cruel king. He has no sympathy for children and women as it is shown through the shooting of Praxaspes' child and the royal orders to kill the Queen. He does not listen to the sincere pieces of advice and friendly criticism which comes either from his counsellor, Praxaspes or from the Queen. He relentlessly and ruthlessly responds and silences the opposing voices forever. He commits fratricide by issuing the orders of the murder of his brother, Smirdis due to jealousy. His public image is also not good. People dislike and hate him because of his excessive "Lechery and drunkenness" (Preston, 1561, L. 345, p.16). Therefore, when he dies because of a wound caused by himself, the First Lord says: "A just reward for his misdeeds the God above hath wrought" (ibid, L.1193, p. 45). Cambyses' crimes raise a few questions in one's mind: whether he was as evil as the play itself and its sources portray him or he had a few good characteristics for redeeming grace, to what extent Preston, the playwright and his dramatic representation is faithful to the original historical character of Cambyses, a king of Achaemenid Persia. The answers of these questions will be explored in detail and then analyzed in terms of Edward Said's (2003) assumptions which he has introduced in *Orientalism*. To Said, the Western-European scholars and writers have not represented the Orient truly or faithfully since the ancient times due to their Eurocentric perspectives. To him, there is little "truth" in the representations of the Orient because they lack "natural depictions of the Orient" (p. 21). The researchers will examine Preston's Cambyses in the light of this assumption and investigate to what extent Said's views have validity in relation to this play. On another occasion Said notes that "The idea of representation is a theatrical one" (ibid, p. 63). The West created the Orient through "a textual attitude" (ibid, p. 92) which helped it deal with and dominate the Orient. He further adds that "representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, and they accomplish one or many tasks. Representations are formations, or as Roland Barthes has said all operations of language, they are deformations" (ibid, p. 273).

John Preston created this drama in 1561 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. According to Bevington (1962), it was performed by the Earl of Leicester's Men at Court for Christmas season of 1560-1561 (p. 60). Like other playwrights of the period, Preston uses the material from contemporary sources which were available to the reading public of that time. Legouis and Cazamian (1933) argue that Preston has used Herodotus' History as a material for his play. (p.

251). D.C. Allen (1934) opines that Preston has taken his material from John Carion's *Chronicorum* (1550) which was printed at Frankfurt (pp. 384-387). William Farnham (1936) asserts that Preston has drawn on Richard Taverner's *The Garden of Wysdom* which was published in 1539 (pp. 266-267). Keeping these sources in consideration, W. A. Armstrong (1950) seems to agree, on the basis of his un-refutable evidence, with Allen's viewpoint regarding the source of Preston's *Cambyses* and believes that Preston used Carrion's pocket history which was available at least six years before Taverner's work (pp. 129-135). Besides these three possible sources, the references to *Cambyses* and the Achaemenid period also appear in the works of other classical writers like Xenophon, Justinus, Diodorus Siculus and Seneca (Ibid, pp. 129-130). These later historians replicated their predecessors without questioning the veracity of their information. As Louis Wann, (1915) notices that "Each historian copied from his predecessor, with or without acknowledgement, and felt no compunction in coloring the narrative to increase its interest ..." (p. 434).

The discussion related to the Western-European sources of *Cambyses* points out one fact that all these sources have their origin in the works of classical authors, particularly in Herodotus' *History*, and there are many similarities in all these versions despite some minor deviations made by different writers. One thought common to all these sources is the representation of *Cambyses* as a tyrant and despot which is mainly in line with Herodotus' portrayal of *Cambyses*. The main outline of Preston's play is explicitly based on these sources disregard of the fact that Preston has slightly exploited the material taken from these sources to suite his purpose. For instance, Herodotus ascribes *Cambyses*' crimes to his madness and his death to the killing of Egyptian sacred bull, *Apis*. John Preston modifies it and attributes *Cambyses*' crimes to his excessive drinking and lust. Consequently, his death because of a self-inflicted wound in the play is shown a right punishment for his sins. The researchers will compare the truth of *Cambyses*' character in the light of some recent scholars' research and investigation to see how some other ancient sources, except Herodotus and other classical writers, have narrated the history of King *Cambyses*. These sources include the accounts of *Udjahorresene*, the Admiral of *Amasis* and *Psamtik*, *Elamite* documents, *Aramaic* materials, the *Bisitun* inscription of *Darius I*, *Babylonian* cuneiform sources, the *Cyrus Cylinder*, the *Egyptian hieroglyphic* writings and the *Memphis Serapeum*.

It is by incorporating these sources in their works that the recent scholars have tried to present a balanced information of the Achaemenid period of Persia. In doing so, it is not to assert that the counter narratives claim truth or Herodotus was totally wrong. The aim for looking at the alternative ancient versions is to get at a comprehensive view of *Cambyses*' history and his character. A. T. Olmstead (1948) keeping these ancient sources into consideration argues that the stories of *Cambyses*' savagery and the "Tales of mad doings of *Cambyses* in Egypt must be discounted. The oft-repeated slander that he killed an *Apis* bull is false" (p. 89). He further adds that the reports that he killed his brother *Bardiya* (*Smirdis*) are also wrong as *Cambyses* died

before reaching Persia “by his own hand when he received the news of Bardiya’s usurpation” (ibid, p. 92).

T. Cuyler Young, Jr. (1988) on the basis of his reading of Western as well as non-Western sources also agrees with Olmstead and describes Cambyses an “effective king of Babylon” who defeated the Egyptians and “consolidated the Persian position in Egypt with such success that there was no rebellion until the end of the reign of Darius” (p.47). When King Cyrus, Cambyses’ father, requested Marduk, the great Lord, for his aid in the Persian wars, he reports Marduk’s response in The Cyrus Cylinder. While citing Cyrus’ words, Young writes “Marduk, the great lord, was well pleased with my deeds and sent friendly blessings to myself, Cyrus, the king who worships him, to Cambyses, my son, the offspring of my loins” (ibid). According to the documents of Babylonia, Cambyses was a sane and prudent king who won the title of “the King of Babylon and the King of Lands” (ibid) and ruled peacefully for eight years till his death. Cambyses also ruled peacefully in different states as a crown prince during his father, Cyrus’ life and Cyrus was proud of his son. The above-mentioned ancient sources do not mention anywhere that Cambyses killed his brother, his Queen and the Egyptian sacred bull, Apis. It is not sure whether Cambyses knew about his brother, Bardiya or Smirdis’ rebellion but it is reported that, according to Bisitun words, Cambyses died because of self-inflicted wound on his way back to Persia during his return journey from Egypt.

In case of religious tolerance, Cambyses allowed the Egyptians to worship according to their local customs. He also went in a festival and knelt before Apis and organized all other religious ceremonies with great devotion. However, there is a truth that Cambyses reduced the wealth which was given to the temples and the priests and ordered the priests “to grow more crops and raise more animals on their own land” (ibid, p. 50). Even in this respect, Cambyses was “selective” and his government kept on supporting some temples with “full honor and glory” (ibid). In the light of these reports, it seems quite illogical that a person, who ruled for eight years peacefully, conquered Egypt with his prudent strategic plans, and expanded the Achaemenid empire, can be insane as Herodotus repeatedly calls Cambyses ‘mad’ who was suffering from this sickness since his birth in the book third of his History (Herodotus, 3. pp. 1-67). It is due to this evidence, Young (1988) suspects that “the poor reputation which Cambyses carried into posterity, as recorded by Herodotus - the reputation of a madman is historically unfair and may reflect Herodotus’ prejudiced sources” (p.51). Similarly, Encyclopedia Britannica in its article Cambyses II published on January 19, 2016, comments that “The 5th-century-BCE Greek historian Herodotus accused Cambyses of many atrocities in Egypt, attributing them to madness, but contemporary Egyptian sources suggest that his accusations must largely be discounted”.

Herodotus is considered a father of history and, no doubt, his work falls under the category of primary sources regarding knowledge of the ancient periods. Nevertheless, the rigorous research of the recent scholars related to Cambyses highlights that Herodotus is somewhat biased which makes him a controversial person and his version of King Cambyses raises suspicions in the minds of the readers. This may be because of a few reasons which can be given to defend

Herodotus. Firstly, Herodotus created his work approximately after one century of Cambyses' death and gathered his data through oral tradition i.e. by listening to people and visiting the places. For this purpose, he heavily drew upon the people's opinions and reports of the religious priests of Egypt. There is stronger possibility that these priests may have developed hatred against Cambyses because of his strict religious reforms, particularly his measures to reduce the income of the priests would have caused it (Young, 1988, pp.1-51). Secondly, Herodotus, under the influence of his predecessors such as Aeschylus and other Greek tragedians narrated the Persians the way they had described them in their works.

Whatever the reasons may be, it becomes quite clear that Greek philosophers and writers were biased in representing the Orient and Oriental characters. For instance, Herodotus' own famous work *History* which describes the Greco-Persian wars is explicitly biased from the beginning. The first two books of this work which describe these wars were printed in 1584 as *The Famous History of Herodotus with the detail of "the renowned adventures of the Grecians and Barbarians"* (Houston, 2014, p. 456). Grecians are Grecians, they have their identity but the Persians' identity is their barbarity. Similarly, Aeschylus and Euripides misrepresented the Orient and Oriental characters to assert their superiority in their dramas *The Persians* and *The Bacchae* respectively. Therefore, Herodotus is no exception in this list. As Edward Said (2003) in *Orientalism* puts it that "In classical Greece and Rome geographers, historians, public figures, ... and poets...[tried] to prove that Romans and Greeks were superior to other kinds of people" (p.57). Later on, the West inherited this sense of superiority because the West considers the Greeks and Romans as its ancestors and this is, obviously, not without a reason since the modern Western civilization owes a lot to them. Therefore, Preston, like Aeschylus, Euripides, Herodotus, and some other contemporary Western writers who have particularly written on Cambyses, also seems biased in his drama *Cambyses*. There seems persistency in the misrepresentation of Cambyses as these writers have exploited the material on Cambyses the way they wanted to. Allyn Ward (2008) observes that "In developing the emphasis on the infernal nature of Cambyses' actions, Preston took explicit account of contemporary discussions about political resistance and obedience, predestination and divine providence" (Ward, p.153). Its explicit example can be found in the opening of the play when the Prologue announces that Cambyses ruled for a short period and then died due to his misdeeds:

To bring to end with shame his race, two years did not he reign. His cruelty we will relate, and make the matter plaine" (Preston, 1561, p.5).

But, historically speaking, Cambyses nearly ruled for eight years. Almost all the above-mentioned non-Western sources agree that Cambyses' reigned peacefully for eight years. Don Cameron Allen (1934) quotes Herodotus, the Greek historian, who also writes in book third of his *History* that "the usurping magus completed the remaining seven months of Cambyses' eight years" (p. 385). This may be called a modification or a dramatic necessity but Preston's stance of Cambyses' two years tyrannous regime appears distortion of historical facts and reveals his biased attitude.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that Preston probably had no access to the afore-said non-Western sources as they were translated and available to the reading public later. But this does not diminish the fact that Preston is not biased in depicting Cambyses as an Oriental despot, a tyrant and an unruly person. Similarly, it is also unacceptable “that if Elizabethan dramatists erred in presenting false pictures of history or life [of the Orient], the blame was not theirs but that of the historians they followed” (Wann, 1915, p. 438). Therefore, if John Preston used these classical sources to create a play on the character such as Cambyses, he relied on these sources because their authority was well-established and unquestioned. He took them for granted. In creating Cambyses, Preston has followed the tone which was set by the classical writers and misrepresented the Oriental characters as his predecessors had earlier done in their works. It has been a part of “European imaginative geography” (Said, 2003, p. 57). The former orientalist were the pioneers in this respect and the later orientalist cited their works considering them as authority. As Edward Said remarks that “The idea in either case is 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” (ibid, p.93). Said calls this phenomenon “a textual attitude” (ibid, p. 92). It is through this textual attitude, the Western-Europe created the reality of the Orient by writing the texts that allude to other texts. That is why Said (2003) demonstrates that “Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors” (p. 23). While taking Said’s views into account, it becomes clear that Preston’s Cambyses registers continuity of the Eurocentric perspectives which were initiated by the classical writers of Greece and Rome and later on followed by the writers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Burton J. Fishman (1976) puts it “Cambyses was, after all, regarded in the middle ages and Renaissance as an unredeemably vicious and cruel man” (p. 201).

3.2. The Concept of Binaries

Said’s second assumption with respect to the Orient is that the Western discourses, particularly literary representations, reveal the abundance of the binaries which present the West in terms of superiority and the East in terms of inferiority and so on. Said discusses this concept of binaries under the second definition of the term Orientalism. As he says, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (ibid, p. 2). Once it became an established fact, all the writers and scholars “accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point” (ibid) for their works related to the Orient. It is through these binaries that the West created “the recurring images of the Other” (ibid, p.1) which helped it define and construct its identity. Seen from this perspective, Preston’s Cambyses is rife with these binaries. The play depicts the story of an Oriental despot, a tyrant, a cultural other that belongs to Persia, an alien land. Preston dramatizes this story of a barbarian and “a wicked king” (Preston, 1561, p.45) to teach moral lessons to “the gentle audience”, the noble Queen and her honourable council” (ibid, pp. 45-46). Through the use of these binaries, Preston conveys the message that Persian rulers and Persian people are uncivilized, cruel and sensual whereas English rulers and people are civilized, noble

and paragon of all virtues. From the beginning of the play, Cambyses is portrayed as if he were an incarnation of evil. Like Sultan Soliman in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (c.1589), Sultan Selimus in Robert Green's *Selimus* (1592), and Sultan Murad in Thomas Goofe's *The Courageous Turk or Amurath the First* (c.1615), Preston also represents King Cambyses as another cultural stereotype, a demon. These are the examples of a few plays which portray the Eastern rulers as monsters and demons. Otherwise, this list can be extended. In the Prologue, Cambyses is compared to Icarus who fell down into the sea and perished due to his pride. Thus, the audiences are foretold that Cambyses' downfall will result from his arrogance and pride. The personified character, Shame, reports Cambyses' crimes in these words:

Lechery and drunkenness be doth it much frequent; The tigers kinde to imitate he hath given full consent; He nought esteems his Counsel grave us vertuous bringing-up, But dayly stil receives the drink of damned Vices cup (ibid, L. 345-348. p. 16).

Except one just decision of punishing the corrupt judge, Sisamnes, all of Cambyses' decisions reflect his barbarous nature and stem from his drunkenness, lust and pride. Praxaspes, Cambyses' sincere counselor, admonishes him to refrain from drinking:

The vice of drunkenness, oh king, which doth you sore infect,

With other great abuses, which I wish you to detect. (ibid, L.481-482. p. 21).

King Cambyses ignores his words and replies:

To pallace now I will returne, and thereto make good cheere. God Baccus he bestows his gifts, we have good store of wine, And also that the ladies be both passing brave and fine (ibid, L. 484-486). When once again Praxaspes advises him to discontinue his habit of drinking, Cambyses becomes infuriated and to revenge, he shoots the heart of Praxaspes' youngest son. After this heinous crime, he issues the orders of the deaths of his brother, Smirdis and his wife, the Queen. Before his death, Smirdis affirms that

Consider, the king is a tirant tirannious, And all his dooings be damnable and parnitious (ibid, L. 724-725. p. 29). Similarly, when Hob, Lob and Ambidexter discuss King Cambyses' cruelty, Ambidexter concludes:

I insure you he is a king most vile and parnitious, His dooings and life are odious and vicious (ibid, L. 778-779. p.31). Though, later on, Ambidexter threatens Hob and Lob with the charges of treason for speaking against their king. Before Cambyses' death, Ambidexter once again summarizes Cambyses' career in the words:

What a king was he that hath used such tyranny! He was akin to Bishop Bonner, I think verily! For both their delights was to shed blood, But never intended to do any good (ibid, L. 1147-1150. p. 43).

At the end of the play, Cambyses himself is convinced that his death is the natural cause of his crimes. As he utters:

A just reward for my misdeeds my death plain declare (ibid, L. 1172.p. 44).

After Cambyses' death, the First Lord repeats Cambyses' words:

A just reward for his misdeeds the God above hath wrought (ibid, L. 11193. p. 45).

All these textual citations highlight Cambyses' sensuality, depravity and irrationality. These negative images of Cambyses are truly in line with the Eurocentric perspectives which Said (2003) suggests in his *Orientalism*. As he stresses that "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, normal" (Said, 2003, p. 40). If positive traits of Cambyses' personality are expressed in the drama, they are just expressed in one or two lines. For instance, his severe punishment of Sisamnes and his virtuous brought-up which he forgets when he becomes a king, are the only good deeds which have been mentioned in the drama. Otherwise, Preston represents Cambyses totally as a negative character in the whole drama to give a moral lesson to his audience, and particularly to the royal audience, through the story of his character. H. B. Norland (1993) refers to this fact that "The avowed purpose of the play is to offer advice to the ruler through this negative exemplum..." (Norland, p. 340). Preston successfully achieves this purpose by introducing the most significant binaries of "this wicked king" and "our noble Queen" in the Epilogue of the play (Preston, 1561, Epilogue. pp.45-46). The use of these binaries in concluding lines of the play indicates as if the whole play were designed to achieve this objective.

3.3. Relationship between Discourse and Power

While borrowing the concept of discourse from Michel Foucault, Said (2003) argues that the discourse of Orientalism enabled the West to hegemonize the East. Preston's Cambyses as a literary discourse is the part of all other contemporary discourses which represent Cambyses as a negative character. Preston represents Cambyses as a 'wicked king', a cultural other to teach the Elizabethan audience the lesson of passive obedience to the English rulers on the one hand, and to admonish the 'noble Queen' i.e. Queen Elizabeth to practice justice and kindness during her reign on the other hand. Critics like W. A. Armstrong (1950), P. Happe (1965), J. P. Myers (1973), B. J. Fishman (1976), K. P. Wentersdorf (1981), Eugene Hill (1992), H. B. Norland (1992-1993), Allyn Ward (2008), and Maya Mathur (2014) who have interpreted Preston's Cambyses as a didactic play, or an allegorical work, or a propaganda play, or an advice literature in their works seem to emphasize the idea that Cambyses has been represented as a negative character to enforce the moral and political truths. Granted, the play Cambyses contains all these interpretations which have been mentioned by the worthy critics, but at the same time, the play as a literary discourse relates to the other imperialist discourses of early modern England which represent the Orient as a demon and cultural other. The playwright conveys to his audience that the Oriental rulers are wicked, sensual and irrational. We, the Western, are civilized, noble and

different from them. This has been a part of the Western plan and propaganda. The Western playwrights employed this imperialist discourse in the early modern period to promote “the imperialist cause” (Bartels, 1993, p.XIV). This discourse helped them disseminate their superiority and finally dominate the Orient. That is why, Emile Bartels (1993) raises a question: “What made figures like Dionysius and Cambyses the choice exemplars of such outrageous tyrants in moral plays such as Richard Edward’s *Damon and Pythias* and Thomas Preston’s *Cambyses, King of Persia*” (p. X111)?

3.4. Othering and Construction of Identity:

Preston represents Cambyses as an Oriental barbarian to score the point if we, the Western people, want to become superior, noble, virtuous and leaders of the world, we should distinguish ourselves from others. It is through the process of othering, the West has created the reality of the Orient, defined itself and subsequently constructed its identity. Said (2003) demonstrates that “The construction of identity ... involves establishing opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from us” (p. 332). The Western representations of the Orient during early modern period mostly rely on such differences between self versus other and we versus them and it is through these representations the writers have educated their people and constructed their identities. In this way, the writers of the period have inculcated their cultural superiority on the minds of English people and assured them that we are intellectually and culturally superior to others. Being noble and superior, it is our right to dominate and rule others. Thus, the idea of portraying the others on the stage has profound ideological implications for the writers of the early modern England. As Emile Bartels (1992) maintains that “while the demonization of the Oriental rulers provided a highly charged impetus for England’s own attempts to dominate the East, their valorization provided a model for admiration and imitation, shaming or schooling the English into supremacy, or providing an excuse for defeat” (p. 5). Jyotsna G. Singh (2009) stresses the same idea when she notes that “Whether depicting tragic scapegoats or comic butts for jokes, English Renaissance drama frequently deployed figures of otherness – outsiders – who evoked social, cultural, and religious anxieties in the expanding world” (p. 23).

Such imperialist discourses helped England establish her supremacy over the Orient. Though, there is no doubt that the real imperialism started in 18th century yet its foundations were laid in early modern England. Similarly, though it may be argued with certain reservations that England was not superior to the Muslim states in terms of military or industrial power as Matar (1999) expresses it (p.12) yet England was linguistically and intellectually superior to the Muslim states of the period since what Renaissance gave to Europe was this sense of intellectual superiority which came in the wake of the age of discovery, the expanding trade relations and growing maritime industry. As Jyotsna G. Singh (2009) notes that “In effect, the expanding commercial world enlarged the intellectual, cultural, and linguistic boundaries of Europe” (p. 5). Europe became the center of intellectual activities and the fountainhead of philosophical advancement. Because of this linguistic and intellectual progress, Europe started considering itself as a center

and the rest of the world as a periphery or the other. Goffman (2002) aptly points out that since the early modern times, Europe “especially Western Europe has imagined itself politically, philosophically, and geographically at the center of the world” (pp. 4-5). This position of centrality enabled the West to establish and assert its own cultural, literary canons and judgment criteria in the whole world. Therefore, what the West considered and declared was appropriate and authentic and the rest was inappropriate. Goffman further remarks that “Europeans and neo-Europeans in America and elsewhere have routinely judged art, literature, religion, statecraft and technology according to their own authorities and criteria” (ibid, p. 5). Edward Said (2003) also makes the same point when he emphasizes that “The West is the spectator, the judge and the jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior” (p. 109).

What England was unable to achieve in the absence of a powerful military during early modern period, she achieved it through linguistic and intellectual superiority. Before projecting an image of a powerful nation abroad, it was significant that England should, first of all, instill this sense of superiority in her own people. Outside the country, England achieved these objectives with the aid of the trading companies and diplomatic relations, but inside the country, she achieved these objectives by representing the cultural others as ideological weapons in their written works and on the stage. As Emile Bartels (1993) remarks that “For how was the state to impose its dominance across the globe until the ideological backing was vitally and visibly in place at home” (p. Xiv)? Therefore, Preston’s *Cambyes* employs the contemporary imperialist discourse which was becoming pervasive as an ideological tool. While quoting Vico, Edward Said (2003) writes in *Orientalism* that “human history is made by human beings” (p.331). In making history, Said explains that, “the struggle for control over territory and the struggle over historical and social meaning” (pp. 331-332) are two significant parts of this process. The thing that English struggled first was getting control over historical and social meaning by disseminating such imperialist discourses and creating such ideological works which later on paved the way to get control over the territory.

Conclusion

The application of Said’s assumptions to Preston’s *Cambyes* reinforces the researchers’ contention that the playwright has deliberately misrepresented the Orient and Oriental characters. The play clearly reflects Preston’s Eurocentric perspectives which characterized the circulating discourses of the period. It was through such imperialist discourses, the writers of the period helped England disseminate and establish her cultural superiority over the Orient.

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