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## BYRON AND UMAR: THE SINGERS OF PAIN

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### **Abstract:**

*This essay aims to present a comparison between the two famous poets: Lord Byron the voice of Romanticism in English Literature, and 'Omar Ibn Abi Rabi'ah the unsurpassed of all 'ghazal' poets in Arabic Literature. Besides their similarities in character and personality, the essay focuses on their similarities as two romantic poets. Though the two poets were different in time. Place, culture and language, both share some characteristics such as nobility rank that both descended from aristocratic families and lived a pampered life that 'spoiled' them, both were of good looking and charming, loving and adventuring with 'Noble Dames' – married with Byron and unmarried with Umar, both have lameness. Moreover, both had the same end: the life of exile and death. It seems as if 'Umar's soul passed at death into Byron's body (transmigration).*

*In their similarities, the two famous poets were true romanticists even as rebels; they were innovators of the genres of lyric/ghazal and satire which proves that the romantic spirit goes beyond time and place. The essay deals with their love-affair` as followers of Beauty of "Noble Dames", and shows their common romantic features as singers of pain. Umar devoted his life as well as his property to praising and singing the charms of pretty women, and revealing in his poems his adventures with them. Like Byron, Umar has a rich poetic sensibility. He could depict scenes well, picture situations and give vivid descriptions of the charms and emotional reactions of the women who courted him. Both poets present themselves as true debauchers.*

**Keywords:** Romantic, Ghazal, 'Noble Dames', Qurashite, Ummayyad, Lahj, Hijaz,

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Umar and Byron shares some romantic characteristics: both were nobles of considerable rank in their societies, following women and composing flirting poems mostly to defame women of high ranks. Both are well known of their self-admiring and aristocratic feeling. And, which is more, both share lameness and has the same end of life: exile and death. But this essay is restricted to read their poetry and talk about their love-affairs as singers of pain -- the pain of love resulting from the lover's rejection and abandonment where one can touch the poets' true sincerity of feeling.

The self-admiration and proud of their social position lead them to picture themselves as

lovers followed by women. Here Umar mentions the nickname of his grandfather (al-Mughiri) proudly:

قفي أسماء هل تعرفينه؟ \* أهذا لمْ غيري الذي كان يذكّر

((His beloved's friends say) Stop walking Asma, do you know that man? Is he "about whom we are just talking?")

Like 'Umar, Byron also prides himself on his poetry, but differs from 'Umar in that he does not mention his name directly, but the first pronoun is used instead, thus:

And if my voice break forth, it is not that now I shrink from what is suffered :

And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse

(Childe Harold, Canto Iv, L.1199-1206)

And as Rutherford writes (1961, P.1) ...and he (Byron) refused to be regarded as a mere poet or man of letters: always conscious of his rank, he prided himself more on being a man of fashion and of noble birth, while he also linked to think of himself as a leader, politician, and man of action".

### Adventuring with 'Noble Dames'

The two poets stamp their adventures with conviction as they really happened; and their poetry is about love, adventure especially with women, and liberty. Byron was carrying on ' highly publicized affairs with several women of fashion. but ended by hating the fair sex; he says (Canto VI,XXII, Don Juan):

I'm a philosopher; confound them all!

Bills, beasts, and men, and - no 'not' women kind!

### SINGERS OF PAIN:

In *Would That Hind* 'Umar for the first time abandons his self-admiration; and gives up the feeling of his belonging to the Qurayshite tribe. He humbly asks Hind to fulfill her promise." It is only with Hind", says Shukri Faisal (1986, P.430), "that 'Umar is shown as a humble lover and not as the beloved." "Umar complains of grief, pain and melancholy:

إنه خبّل قلبى فاجتوى ضدّ عفتى سابريّ تطّرد

(My heart is destroyed (by grief), so it sighs in a continuous trembling)

Comparing the poems: Byron's *Well! Thou Art Happy* and Umar's *Amat al-Wahhab*, some more common romantic characteristics emerge. In both melancholic tones and strong passion can be seen; and sadness and sorrow of the two poets at the moment of separation emerge as with 'Umar, or the meeting after long separation, as with Byron. Both poems bring out the deep emotions and passions and melancholy of the two poets.

'Umar had been exiled from Hijaz to Yemen by his elder brother, Al-Harith, because he composed verses on Al-Thurayya. So, when he was love sick for his first love; Al-Thur

ayya who was in Hijaz, he could not stop composing verses on her. Here 'Umar is 'weeping', complaining of loneliness, resembling his sweet flirtation days with his beloved:

هيهات من أهلة الوهاب) منزلنا إذا > لملنا بسيف البحر من عدن.  
واحتل أهلك أجداداً) فليس لنا إلا التذكر أو حظ ملح زان

(There is a great difference between the home of AmatAl-Wahhab (in Hijaz) and the coast of Aden (Yemen) where we live now,

Your family is situated in "Ajnad" near Mecca. We can do nothing except remember the sorrow of our fate.)

Byron met his first beloved Mary Chaworth after a long separation, and she aroused his old passion and love. Seeing her with her husband, Byron "suppressed his sighs" and sent this romantic piece:

Well! Thou art happy, and I feel  
That I should thus be happy too;  
For still my heart regards thy weal  
Warmly, as it was wont to do.

And he was so much affected when her small daughter was brought into the room that he turned into a lover; full of sorrow, and full of the feelings of fatherhood, and deeply stirred. Jealousy tore his heart apart:

When late I saw thy favorite child,  
I thought my jealous heart would break;  
But when the unconscious infant smiled,  
I kiss'd it for its mother's sake

Byron deemed Miss Chaworth to be a model of womanly beauty. She had rejected his suit and therefore:

Mary, adieu! I must away  
While thou art blest I'll not repine  
But near thee I can never stay;  
My heart would soon again be thine.

Byron remembered his youthful days when he had been greatly attached to Chaworth before her marriage. As a man who was crossed in his boyish love, Byron reveals his suffering in the following verse :

I deem'd that Time, I deem'd that pride  
Had quench'd at length my boyish flame;  
Nor knew, till seated by thy side,  
My heart in all, save hope,--- the same

'Umar, too, shares this romantic melancholy in ample • measure: and like Byron, 'Umar is full of the sincerity of feeling: and though he seemed proud, he could not hide his real grief and pain :

يا وَهَبُ إِنِّي كُنتُ إِذْ شَاطِئُ الْبَعَاوُفِ رَكَّيْتُ الشَّمْلُ مَدَّ صَرَفٌ ذَا الزَّمَنِ  
فَكَمْ وَكَمْ مِنْ حَدِيثٍ قَدْ خَلَّيْتُمْ بِيَهُمْ \*عِ مِنْكُمْ أَوْ مِنْظَرٍ حَسَنٍ  
وَكَمْ وَكَمْ مِنْ دَلَالٍ قَدْ شَغَفَتْكُمْ هُ \* متى يرَهْ ذُو الْعَقْلِ يَفْتَتِنُ  
بَلْ مَا نَسِيتُ بِيَطْنِ الْخَيْفِ (موقفها \* وموقفي، وكلامنا ذو زَنَ .

(Oh, Amat Al-Wahhabi If time has separated us and sundered our unity,

I still remember the old days , when I was talking to you, and we were alone, and I was accompanied by your lovely voice and attractive looks.

I still remember your beauty that turns the wise man into fool. Moreover, I cannot forget our standing together at Al-Khif in Mina, when we were both sad and in suffering) .

In these two poems, both poets meet face to face at the point of their first love, and at the moment of separation from their beloveds. Both were rejected. 'Umar was exiled from Hijaz to Lahj-Yemen by the order of his brother, because he described the physical charms of Al-Thurayya in his poetic compositions AI-Thurayya was an illustrious Qurayshite lady whom 'Umar loved when he was young. He fell in love with her but she was married to a Yemeni called (Suhail) who took her to Egypt. 'Umar remembers all her movements and follows her passionately, though he was known for his instability in his love to any woman; he says:

أَيَّانَ هَوَّاهَا قَبْلُ أَنْ أَعْرِفُ الْهَوَى \*فَصَادَفَ قَلْبًا فَارغًا فَتَمَكَّنَا

(Her love had visited me before I knew what love was; and because it found me of a free heart (not engaged) it settled).

The same happened to Byron when he was fifteen and a half; when his heart was boyish and free. He fell in love with Mary Chaworth who was seventeen and engaged to a young sporting squire in the neighborhood, John Musters. Byron loved her; and as Treasa Geoffrey (1969, P.34) says, "Perhaps she enjoyed the quality pleasure of a mild flirtation that she never took seriously". And though she injured him because of his lameness, Byron could not recover from her infatuation and love. It seems "*The First Kiss of Love*"<sup>(1)</sup> was hers. Hence when he saw her after long separation, his heart leaps up not to the rainbow like Wordsworth, but to Marry, the "early dream" and could not resist; and " Lethe's fabled stream" surely had not "quenched his boyish flame ,"

Away! away! my early dream,  
Remembrance never must awake:  
Oh! Where is Lethe's fabled stream?  
My foolish heart be still, or break.

<sup>1</sup>This is a title for one of Byron's poems .

'Umar, on the other hand, exhibits high feelings of pain and melancholy; that his beloved and his homeland are welded together like the day before the first day of creation that is well expressed in Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness". 'Umar has nothing to do at such a situation but to raise his hands to the sky asking Allah to reunite them again :

فلست أملكُ إلا أن أقولُ إذا \* ذُكِرَ لِي: يُعِدُّ لَكَ اللهُ يا سَكْنِي

(I have nothing to do, when your name is mentioned, but to stand with empty palms asking God to being me near my 'homeland').

In this verse 'Umar alludes to the 'Holy Koran', where husband and wife are said to be 'sakan' for each other; (Surah AL-RUM, V.21).

Like to Byron, 'Umar complains bitterly of his sufferings of pain because of the separation from his beloved :

فلو شهدنَ غداةَ البينَ عِبرَ لَيْلِي \* تَغَرَّدَ قَمْرِيٌّ عَلَى فَنَنِـ  
لَأَيَقُنْتُ غيرَ ما ظنَّتُ بِصاحبِها وَأَيَقُنْتُ أن لِحْجاً لَيْسَ مِن وِطْنِي

(If she had witted our tears welling up in the eyes at the time of separation (and they did well up) at every song of the nightingale on a bough,

She would be sure that her 'friend' (i.e., lover) was not as she thought; and would have realized that Lahj (where I am now) is not a part from my homeland).

It appears that the two poets learn a lot in suffering and in pain: and to this Byron refers when he says, "the great object of life is sensation; to feel that we exist, even though in pain." Both composed good verses when prevented to be near their beloveds or at the moments of separation; that sincerity, simplicity and fiery melancholy is visible in each word:

Thy husband's blest and 'twill impar  
Some pangs to view his happier lot:  
But let them pass - Oh! how my heart  
Would hate him if he lov'd thee not !

In the same situation as Byron's, 'Umar could not bear seeing another man marring his beloved. But it was not enough for him to "hate the husband". 'Umar lets his cannon of jealousy shooting at the husband and satirizing him, presenting a real Arab 'beduein' lover of 'hot blood':

أيهالِمُ الكُرَيَّةَ سُهَيْلاً<sup>(2)</sup> عَمَّ مَرَكَةَ اللهُ، كيف يلتقيانـ ؟  
هي شاميةٌ إذا ما استقلت وشهد هيلٌ إذا استقلَّ يمانِي

(O, one who married Thurayya to Suhail; may Allah prolong your life, How can these two stars (i.e. Suhail and Thurayya) unit?

She is Syrian standing by herself and Suhail standing by himself a Yemeni).

<sup>2</sup>Here is a Pun, Thurayya and Suhail are two well-known stars in sky, Thurayya in Syria and Suhail in Yemen.

'Umar, Abu Juan (the father of Juan), and Byron, the author of 'Don Juan', appear in these two poems as real romanticists that the requisites of lyrics: sincerity, simplicity, directness and musicality being achieved . Both composed poetry with little reverence for art and never cared to "polish" there verses. Both were singers of Beauty, and composed many poems to be sung. Both were men who spoke only what they had seen, and experienced; they spoke without exaggeration, except when 'Umar talks about his "Conquests" - in the word of Byron. Both spoke without mystery, without enmity, particularly Byron. Shortly after Miss Chaworth married, Byron lets out a cry similar to that of 'Umar (Fragment, Byron Works, P.11):

Hills of Annesley bleak and baren,  
Where my thoughtless childhood stray'd,  
How the northern tempests, warring,  
Howl above thy tufted shade!  
Now no more, the hours beguiling,  
Former favorite haunts I see;  
Now no more my Mary smiling  
Makes ye seem a heaven to me.

Byron seems go back to the Augustan writers for his model in his earliest work in particular, and 'Umar goes back to his first teachers such as 'Abd Beni Al-Hisehas and to the Pre-Islamic poets such as Imru al-Qais, but for the greater part of their lives, both the poets are of inspiration alone, following no man's lead, and obeying no voice but that which they heard in their own romantic souls, that is of their perception of romantic realism.

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