AL-ISRA
Vol.:2, Issue: 1, Jul - Dec 2023 PP: 01-18

OPEN ACCESS
AL-ISRA
International Journal of
Islamic Thought
ISSN: 2959-3603
www.israjr.com

# Symbolic Layers and Cultural Representation of Muhammad (SAW): An Analysis of Gunderrode's 'Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca''

**Published:** 24-12-2023
**Accepted:** 05-12-2023
**Received:** 15-10-2023

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**Abstract**

*Gunderrode's "Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca" presents a unique representation of Islam within the context of early 19th-century German literature. The work, written by Karoline von Günderrode, a German Romantic poet and philosopher, offers a complex and nuanced portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic faith. In her depiction of Muhammad, Günderrode challenges prevailing Western stereotypes and prejudices associated with Islam during her time. She delves into the Prophet's life, focusing on his spiritual journey and the transformative power of his message. Instead of portraying Muhammad as a threat or as an embodiment of otherness, she emphasizes his profound humanity, emphasizing his struggle, introspection, and devotion to his divine mission. Günderrode's portrayal of Islam in "Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca" goes beyond mere historical accuracy or theological interpretation. She presents the religion as a source of deep spirituality, promoting themes of tolerance, love, and unity. She explores the ethical and moral dimensions of Islamic teachings, highlighting their potential for inspiring profound personal and societal transformations. Furthermore, Günderrode's work demonstrates her fascination with Eastern mysticism and her desire to bridge cultural divides. She weaves elements of Sufi mysticism and Islamic philosophical thought into her narrative, showcasing her appreciation for the richness and diversity of Islamic spirituality. While "Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca" may not reflect contemporary scholarly understanding of Islam, it stands as a notable example of a 19th-century German writer's attempt to challenge prevailing biases and present an alternative, more empathetic perspective on the religion and its central figure. Günderrode's work contributes to a broader dialogue on religious tolerance, intercultural exchange, and the potential for mutual understanding between different faith traditions.*

***Keywords:*** *Islam, Muhammad, Mecca.*

**Introduction**

During the 16th and 17th centuries, both Catholics and Protestants employed the figure of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a rhetorical tool against their Christian rivals in their writings. Catholics likened Protestants to rebellious Turks (Saracens, Moors, and Muslims), while Protestants used the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a metaphor to criticize the Pope. Martin Luther, a protestant writer, challenged the pop narrative through the portrayal of Muhammad (SAW) and his comment on the Quran. When the city's fathers declared the Quran as "Fables and heresies", Luther published in the German Translation of *Contra legend Saracenorum* by Riccoldo and claimed, "Let everyone read by themselves merchants lie and fables. One of his statements about Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was, "Oh, how dominated by the flesh of women Muhammad is. In all his thoughts, words, and actions, he cannot speak or do anything without his lust. It must always be flesh, flesh, flesh." He further asserts, "Woman Mehmet's God's heart and eternal life."[1] In short, Luther denounced Pop and Mahomet.

On the other hand, English catholic William Rainolds published his work, *Caluino_torcismus*, presenting Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a reformer, preacher, and visionary. He used Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a foil against the doctrine of Protestants and declared the *Mahommeton* sect" superior to protestant horsy. In comparison, in the 16th C, polemicists, either Catholics or Protestants, used the image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to discredit Christian adversaries. As a result of this comparison, *Nicholi of Cuse* declared Prophet Muhammad (SAW) a reformer rather than an imposter.

Another writer, Thoader Bibliander, showed an ambivalent approach towards Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in his *Ad nominis Christiani socios consultation* (A Godly Consultation), in which he showed Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a 'preacher and reformer'. Bibliander's Prophet Muhammad (SAW) eradicated idolatry by banning images, denouncing Jews, and affirming the fundamental truths of Christianity. He rejects, however, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) because he does not consider Christ as essential for salvation. Bibliander's Translation of the Quran became the authentic source of information about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) for Europe. Considering his spreading danger from the Quran, religious tolerance, and admiration, Johann Isreal, *de Bry, and John Theodor de Bry* recalled the medieval polemical writing by writing *The Act of Mechmet I, Prince of the Saracens*. They reached Bibiliander's Translation with an aggressive approach and dragged out information about" "*Mahumetan law*" for the public. They launched propaganda against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). They rewrote whatever was written by medieval polemical writers about Muhammad (SAW), i-e, false miracles, the story of trained Dove and bull, hidden milk, water and honey in the desert, floating coffin, epilepsy, marriage with *Tajida* (17th Century name of Khadija), and painful death.[2].

In the 17th C, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was portrayed as a model

reformer who smashed idolatry and challenged the greed of clerics. Similarly, this tradition continued in the 18th Enlightenment as well. However, the 18th French, greedy for the power and wealth of the Catholic Church, portrayed Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) image as anticlerical monotheism. This picture can be vividly seen in the writing of this period.

Similarly, Boulainvilliers's *vie de Muhamed* inspired George Sale to publish his English Translation of the Quran in 1734. Sale's Translation brought Western intellectuals a new wave of perception about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Unlike other writers, George Sale considered Muhammad (SAW) a 'prestigious lawgiver king'. However, Sale rejected Prideaux's narrative that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) replaced idolatry with another new religion based on ideology. Sale commented, "The commendable aspect of his plan to introduce the true God to the pagan Arabs cannot be denied."[3] In short, Sale's Muhammad (SAW) was a reformer, destroyer of the idols, lawgiver, and smasher of priestcraft. Voltaire studied George Sale's Translation of the Quran and penned his *Le fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophet.* Voltaire considered Prophet Muhammad (SAW) an attacker of the Catholic Church's fanaticism and its incarnation and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) an imposter. On the other hand, in the latter stage of his life, he considered Prophet Muhammad (SAW) a great man and role model.

Voltaire's Drama is innovative in its approach, as we need help finding a reference to it in earlier polemical writings. In this Drama, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is portrayed as a cynical leader struck by lust for power and feigns prophecy. Voltaire much admired Sale's Translation. He wrote about it to Fredrick II of Persia, "Mr Sale, who has provided a superb English translation of the Quran, suggests that we should view Muhammad (SAW) as a figure comparable to Numa or Theseus."[4]

**Image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Romantic Period**

A complex interplay of historical, cultural, and literary factors shaped the image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Romantic period. This period, which spanned the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, saw a surge of interest in Islamic history, culture, and Literature among European writers and scholars. This interest was driven by various factors, including the growing influence of Orientalism and the Romantic fascination with the exotic and the unknown. At the same time, the image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Romantic period was also shaped by the ongoing Christian-Muslim conflict, which had been a feature of European history for centuries. This conflict had been fueled by political, economic, and cultural factors, including the fear of Ottoman expansion, the rivalry between European powers, and the clash of religious ideologies.

From the above discussion, understanding Gunderrode without a proper understanding of German Orientalism and the representation of Islam in German Orientalism is impossible. German Orientalism is the identification

of German nationalism and seeking the answer to the particular question: who are we? By linking this question to the past, who were we? Then, turning it to the present, how did we become what we are today? Edward Said's Orientalism neglected German Orientalism; his focus was only on British and French Orientalism and those nations who colonized or intended to colonize the East. On the contrary, Germany was not a colonizer, and its Orientalism was scholarly. German Orient, for example, "was not any colony but the subject of lyrics novels and even fantasies commented that German has no sustained National interest in Orient."[5]

Dealing with German Orientalism is tricky, to say the least, because it starts with Said himself. According to Said's narrative on Orientalism, German Orientalism fits within the broader framework of Western intellectual authority over the Orient. While Germany lacked a sustained national interest in the Orient during the first two-thirds of the 19th century, German Oriental scholarship developed techniques for analyzing texts, myths, ideas, and languages acquired almost entirely from the Orient by Britain and France.[6]. This development indicates that German Orientalism, like Anglo-French and later American Orientalism, shared the intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture, which is a crucial aspect of Orientalism as defined by Said.[7].

Two researchers have made notable contributions to the study of German Orientalism by highlighting the connection between German thinkers and victims of imperialism. Susanne Zantop's book *Colonial Fantasies* explores the history of German literary depictions of the New World and its inhabitants, and while not specifically about German Orientalism, it uses Said's claim about the link between knowledge and power over the Other. Zantop observes that many eighteenth-century German thinkers, such as Johann Gottfried Herder, attempted to place "German negroes" alongside other oppressed groups in contrast to the conquering powers. These observations are particularly insightful.[8]. Kontje and Greenfield fail to delve deeper into this ambivalence about Germany's liminal status within the global colonial order. Understanding this complexity is crucial to comprehending the origins of German Romantic Orientalism, particularly about the Indic Orient. August Wilhelm Schlegel, for instance, proudly declared that "if the regeneration of the human species began in the East, Germany must be called the Orient of Europe.

**Analysis and Discussion of the Drama**

Unlike her contemporaries, Gunderrode Portrayed Prophet Muhammad (SAW) positively, and as the sympathetic Protagonist, she also showed her sympathy towards Mohammed through other characters like *HabibIbn Malik, Omar, Al-Abbas,* and his uncle *Abu Talib.* She used this positive portrayal of a standard literary tradition, i.e., German idealism. Through German idealism, she encountered the general perception that the Prophet

does not have any tragic potential; instead, she introduced inner conflicts, questions, and doubts in her Protagonist against the character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), using this German idealism as a cause to overcome material greed and desires (physical) To whom *Edward* said referred as "sympathetic identification."[9]

These strategies can be categorized into three categories:

1. Humanizing Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
2. Use of balanced sources.
3. Used episodes have an affinity with New Testament scenes.

Gunderrod uses this strategy very artistically. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is not a divine but a worldly human, having a past that predicts the present. Gunderrod's Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is father, son, friend, and husband; on his return home, the audience can see his wife K*hadijah* welcoming him:

You are home again, my dear husband? Oh, let me always share the hours of your muse. You seem to me so gladly moved. Say, what delights you that your joy may become more lavish through the addition of mine?[10] He is a father who laments the death of his children:

Once, when my sons died, I was very sad; now they are resurrected for me, therefore I am cheerful. God gave me the peoples of this earth as the inheritance of my deeds, here my Nahlid and the doughty Ali as children of my heart.[11] The people love and praise him; "his virtues are praised through the whole of Arabia".[12]

Unlike other contemporary writers, Gunderrode focused on the children of Mohammed and marked him as a distinct child:

I was still a boy when the heads of our paternal city elected me to bear the consecrated stone to the designated place in the holy Kaaba. The day on which this happened was a great day in my life. As mentioned before, Gunderrode used tragic potential to humanize his Muhammad (SAW) for sympathy.[13]

Similarly, he expressed the origin of doubt to Nahlid as:

I became a youth, and still every morning, with ardent prayers, I turned my hopeful eyes towards the East to see whether the new sun would not bring a new fortune to me. In vain! Deaf, those false gods remained.[14]

Further, he stated, "My faith was now dead, my heart turned from the false gods. I sank back into dull animality and lived only in the beggarliness of my profession; thus years went by."[15]

Gunderrode used her Chorus to narrate the doubts of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in order to humanize him and to apply this technique of tragic potential, the chorus states:

But when the mighty/ Spirits leave him,/ What possessed him,/ He, astonished, pulls himself/ Together from the ground,/ Seems exhausted,/ As if he had borne/ All the spirits,/ What possessed him./ Were now abandoned,/ Tired and empty,/ Sinks in profundity;/ Confuse thoughts/

Cloud his eyes,/ Cloud his spirit.[16]

Hilger remarked on Gunderrode's approach, stating that she delves into the reader's familiarity with the tale of construction and clarifies the process through which Muhammad's (SAW) tormenting vision transformed into his internal struggle. Consequently, Muhammad is portrayed as something other than an inscrutable figure foreign to the reader's religious and cultural background. Instead, he is presented as an individual with a history that elucidates his current predicament.[17]

Gunderrode's second approach involved her incorporation of sources. According to Anna C. Ezekiel and Hilger, Gunderrode drew from Friedrich Eberhard, Boysen's 1773 rendition of the Quran, and biographical records of Mohammed's life penned by Henri de Boulainvillers (translated into German by J.A Mebes in 1786) and J. Gagnier (translated into German by C.F.R Vetterlein in 1802).[18] In these sources, Gainer portrayed Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with negative connotations and established polarity between Islam and Christianity, but Boulainvillers, on the other hand, avoided Such an aggressive approach to provoke sympathy towards Mohammed; Gunderrode used Boulainvillers in order to present the positive image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, she should have paid attention to Gagnier's interpretation. She used Gagnier's hostile interpretation in some of the dramatic scenes in the Drama.

The third and the most crucial strategy of Gunderrode was her use of episodes having an affinity with New Testament sources. She used this strategy to lessen the hostile attitude towards religious others, especially Prophet Muhammad (SAW). She wants to continue to her readers that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was not against Christianity Jesus or did not pose any threat to them.

To introduce Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a positive character to the Romantic period readers who are occupied by the popular perception of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a negative character, she used all the stories which resonate in the Christian context. Anna C. Ezekiel delved into various accounts, including those of Muhammad's meeting with the angel Gabriel, his cessation of idol worship, and the transaction involving Khalid, who received fifty gold coins in exchange for betraying Muhammad's associate Omar. This occurrence was comparable to Judas' betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.[19]

Muhammad (SAW) narrates the story of the seven sleepers (nine Holy Quran and Christian sources)".

Both Anna C. Ezekiel and Higher believe that Gunderrod's Language reflects Lutheran biblical language. For example, when Prophet Muhammad (SAW) suffers from his internal crisis, he prays from God, which resonates with Jesus's words, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[20]

In a similar manner, Gunderrode scrambled Gagnier's reading of Jesus's irrational anger towards the temple money changer. Gunderrode put

this in the speech of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) on the occasion of Mecca's victory, destroyed false pagan gods in *Kaba*, and replaced polytheism with monotheism. Furthermore, Ingeborg Solbrig also commented on the language used by Gunderrode, which reflects the Lutheran "emphasis on conscience and inner devotion" when Muhammad (SAW) speaks:

The voice of God in my breast", and his provocative speech to the people as "The God of your father's Desire no sacrifice that the flame consume.... but he Desires a pure heart that is light my Dwell within and faithful confidence that your spirit may rise to him.[21]

This presentation of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to early 19th-century Christian readers in Lutheran language from the New Testament enables Gunderrode successfully used to change the direction of hostile approaches and prove her claim in one of Her letters about writing the alternate story of the Prophet Islam she wrote as:

My focus is currently on writing a drama, and it consumes my entire being. I immerse myself so fully in the story that my own life feels foreign to me. I have a natural inclination towards this type of deep introspection and contemplation, where I can lose myself in a flow of internal musings and inspirations.[22]

**The Figure of Muhammad (SAW): A Metaphorical Criticism**

It will be no injustice if I claim that Gunderrod's Drama, *Muhammad, The Prophet of Mecca*, is a "metaphorical German Romantic narrative". During Gunderrod's time, Literature was in the shackles of censorship, especially for female writers, and it was challenging to criticize European society directly. Gunderrod metaphorically used the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) figure to criticize European society. To pursue her purpose, she used a foreign setting (Eastern) to treat common themes of philosophy, politics, theology, and aesthetics. She used this foreign setting with a purpose that, like German Orientalism, she believes that the East is the mother of civilization; it will reveal truths about the human being the physical universe and divinity. She used the Orient (Eastern Muhammad) to discuss political issues and events as a metaphor for European society.

This metaphorical representation of this Drama can be interpreted from two perspectives. Firstly, the imagination used in Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) description can metaphorically represent all suffering individuals. He describes himself as:

That is why he (God) sent me to you, that I should call you in his name and quench you, who swelter in the arid desert of temporality, with the fresh running spring of eternal life.[23]

This shows that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) went through personal despair and agony, and now he wants to rescue all those who suffer. He wants them to escape from their sufferings and come to salvation. Secondly, Gunderrod, through the figure of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), commented on

European society and Napoleon because Napoleon made Europe decadent and corrupt, but on the other hand, Napoleon introduced a new and better form of political organization.

Gunderrod's Muhammad (SAW) rebelled against the existing norms and system in Mecca, which led Mecca to the brink of destruction, but later on, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) introduced a new law that unified them. In this context, Gunderrod's Muhammad (SAW) (metaphorical Napoleon) can be seen as a response to Voltaire's hostile Drama about Muhammad (SAW) and Islam (*La fanatisme, ou muhamet le prophet*), which was considered at that time a harsh attack on Christianity and French society.

**Revival of German Romantic Themes**

Gunderrod, through a metaphorical representation of a positive image of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the origin of Islam, wants to re-imagine specific German Romantic themes. In the Romantic period, she wanted to establish a 'new world order where different cultures reconcile, where people unified need one banner, which is the social, moral, or religious cause. She analogically interpreted the story of establishing the "new religion, Islam" to establish such a narrative. Gunderrod's ideal society is founded on the rationality and needs of human beings, but she does not keep aside divinity. The concept of pantheism can be seen in this Drama, which means Gunderrod's ideal new society must be a combo of human and divine entities. For this agenda, she described the mission of Muhammad in a vivid world:

The separation of Christendom from its Jewish roots and the resulting conflicts within Christianity. The author claims to have a divine mission to bring peace by reconciling Christianity with Judaism, assembling all peoples in one temple, and sacrificing heathendom on a new altar.[24]

Other writers like Kant, Novalis, Friedrich, and Schlegel also proposed a similar idea, but Gunderrod's idea was more evolutionary and hegemonic. Gunderrod narrated his idea of establishing a new society through the metaphor of 'world' and put her idea in the mouth of the Chorus. The Chorus speaks, "Produced by Muhammad/ The world will be born anew/ The temple of God arise from the rubble."[25]

And:

> Now the face of the earth/ Will transform itself/ The old, familiar/ Aged and ugly/ Full of worn looks;/ Now will unfold itself/ In smiling youth;/ The weakness of age/ Of ailing times/ Become bold youth/ By the breath of enthusiasm/ Awakened to life.[26]

In Romantic style, Gunderrod needs to destroy the old world and seed a new world order, which has its narratives. Gunderrod used the imagery of physical destruction, strand, and eruptions to challenge the existing Grand narratives. She says:

> When instead of refreshing the earth's children,/ Destruction breaks from the womb of clouds;/ When enraged waves break on the shore,/

> The fire's glow churns up the earth's womb,/ When thunder speaks through the heavens,/ And pain, horror fills every breast; Then the narrow bounds cave in,/ The old world is devoured,/ Yet from the creaturely mind/ A more beautiful is established.[27]

This narration for Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s announcement of the new religion to the world, if we link it to the narration of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s mission, indicates that for the establishment of a new world and dogmas, the damage of the old world and dogmas was necessary.

**Rejection of Medieval Grand Narratives**

In medieval times, especially in Europe, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was considered a divider of the world, thread to Christianity. They considered Prophet Muhammad (SAW) the opposite parallel to Jesus and Islam as opposed to Christianity. Gunderrode rejected this grand narrative and pointed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a "unifier." As we can see in the Drama, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) stresses the unity of religion and people under Islam. Gunderrod is this idea of unity among religious can be connected to early German Romanticism, where all intellectuals demanded unified religion to develop Europe. For example, Novalis, in his essay "*Christendom or Europe*", demanded the same.

Anna C. Ezekiel commented:

> Novalis's essay recounts the development of Europe from an idealized Middle Ages, characterized by an unsophisticated form of unified common life under the church, through a period of schism and fragmentation but greater development of education and trade, to a hoped-for future reunification under a coming religion.[28]

Gunderrod observed that people are divided into Christianity (Catholic and Protestant); she rejected Christianity through Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) character and called for unity under one religion, one God. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) described Christianity as; "odds with itself, its part dispute in grim quarrels."

Gunderrod, through the character of Muhammad, claimed that people are divided by various powerless gods; they have turned from one real God. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) speaks:

> You have abandoned this God? have fragmented him into your idols, fire, sun, moon, and animals? Oh blindness! Because you worship his limbs, his spirit escaped from you; that is why his power in you has lapsed; that is why you are sunken in hollow animality, imprisoned in time, and have no eternal life, no heaven, and no blessedness; that is why you have no vitality.[29]

However, some intellectuals during the Romantic period accused Prophet Muhammad (SAW), ultimately Islam, of the leading cause of turmoil and discord in society. They portrayed Muhammad (SAW) negatively for this cause. Gunderrod took this aggressive approach through her character, *Khalid.*

*Abu Jihad and Sufyan*. For example, Khalid claim, "It is known that Muhammad is no friend of peace and order; he lives on discor."[30] Further, he accused him, "As long as you live, concord is far from us. Your followers nourish discord in our paternal city."[31] Gunderrod encounters this confrontational approach through the main event in the play, where Prophet Muhammad (SAW) faces the charges of "fomenting, sedition and schism".[32] Sufyan claims, "He divided the tribes of Mecca from each other through his teachings and ripped apart all bonds of order."[33]

Further, he expressed his hostile opinion of discord as:

> Then Mecca would soon stop being Mecca, the spirit of discord and partisanship would, like a corrosive aqua fortis, run through all the veins of the body politic and dissolve them.[34]

Gunderrod authoritatively encounters these allegations through the characters of Al-Abbas, Abu-Talib defends Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and at the end of the judgment, the submission of *Habib* shows Gunderrode's defensive approach. She presents her audience through the provocative and convincible dialogues of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Not only through the character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) but also through other characters, like when Al-Abbas speaks with a defensive and persuasive tone to Habib, and *Abu-Talib's* defence of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), her intimation and sympathy towards Prophet Muhammad (SAW) can be seen. As she said about this Drama, "I am engrossed in writing a drama, so much so that I immerse myself completely in it, to the extent that my own life appears unfamiliar to me."[35]

Analyzing the language and tone of the characters mentioned above, keeping in view this statement of Gunderrod, we can say that she debunked the negative portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during the Romantic period and encounters the narrative of her contemporaries that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is responsible for the division of world and discord. For example, in Drama, when *Abu-Jehal* accused Prophet Muhammad (SAW) of charges of high treason and sedition, Habib responded: "Never I heard Muhammad's name spoken with such a disgraceful addendum; his virtues are praised through the whole of Arabia."[36]

Similarly, when *Abu-Jehal* calls him a traitor for negotiating with a tribe for the downfall of Mecca, in response, *Al-Abbas* says, "Forgive me Abu-Jahel! Your statement is not founded."[37]

He defends Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from accusation and clarifies the matter as:

> I am more precisely informed of the negotiations of Muhammad with the Sahamites than all others in Mecca. Muhammad had some grievances against the heads of the Quraysh, long in vain, he demanded reparation, finally, he turned to some Sahamite Emirs, in order through their advocacy to enforce his claims. They did not get involved with him back then, although later on, they sought his alliance in order to ruin Mecca. Muhammad resolved

nothing toward the ruin of his paternal city; much more he destroyed the hostile plans of the Sahamites.[38]

Furthermore, *Abu-Talib* defended Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from the accusation that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) attacked Quraysh as, "It is not as you say, Sufyan! his heart is pure, I know it."[39] Furthermore, he says, "Oh Ermir! This statement is a shameful defamation. Abu-Sufyan, Abu-Jihad and ten Quraysh had set out with a hundred and fifty worriers to kill Muhammad."[40] In response, Habib also encounter the charge as, "You seem untrue and contradictory in your statement, you accusers!."[41]

Moreover, Habib's submission and his demand for a miracle on behalf of Quraysh represent the Romantic attitude toward Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Like some Romantic contemporaries, Gunderrode wrote about the "false miracles" of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), through the character of Habib, shed light on the story of miracles and found the "true miracles" for her audience. Habib's statement about miracles can be interpreted as Gunderrod's belief in the true miracle of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), but she wants to convince her contemporaries.

As Habib says, "Not for me; no; to convince your accusers, I demand that you do a miracle, to set aside doubt the divinity of your mission."[42] On the performing of miracle (splitting of the moon," Habib submitted his prophecy, "Yes, truly, Muhammad is a prophet; you people of Arabia! You men of Mecca! Hear me! There is only a single God and Muhammad is his Prophet."[43] Further, he says, "So Abundan the faithless, oh Muhammad! and come to the desert, I will protect you".[44] This central event in the Drama shows that Gunderrode wants religious unity for the development of Europe. Medieval popular Literature was occupied by hostile approaches and "self-made" stories about the miracles of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The story of the floating coffin of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) at Mecca, the Dove eating from Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) ears, and the trained bull having the Quran in horns and honey in the desert was commonly believed in the medieval world. By narrating only the miracle of the moon splitting, authenticating it, and ignoring the rest of the stories, it can be interpreted that Gunderrode believes them as false. Gunderrode's balanced approach also testifies to the authentic and sympathetic approach *of Boulainvilliers,* which was one of Gunderrode's sources on Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Islam.

**Gunderrode's Muhammad as Mediator: Crisis of the faith for salvation**

As mentioned before, Gunderrode relates Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Jesus to Christian readers to portray Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a positive character. Like Jesus, Mohammed is the mediator between heavenly and earthly realms. He asserts, "I am the priest who weds the human to the divine."[45]

Gunderrode related the mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Jesus as follows:

> The God whom I announce to you can bear no idols besides him; he does not dwell in a temple or a heart that idolatry has stained; for this reason, turn over the despicable altars upon which you brought sinful sacrifices to your idols. Purify your temple, that I may there make further known to you the spirit of truth and his commands.[46]

Through this statement, she wants to convince her readers that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is not a threat to Christianity; instead, he reforms Christianity and wants to spread the mission of Jesus to the world. Mohammad's double status is thoroughly understood in this drama. For example, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in his opening speech, says:

> Twofold life flowed down to me from the start, Gemini, and it was to be a symbol of my double life that partly joined me to the earth and the affairs of the world and partly led me to the unearthly and the strong revelations.[47]

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) clarifies his status as, "But I am only a human being, sent to open for you the gates of heaven".[48] Through this worldly, heavenly dilemma, Gunderrode wants to clarify another German Romantic narrative:

> Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had lust and greed for power; for that, he plays the prophecy and asserts his desires as divine. Gunderrode, through her various characters, sheds light on the issue of personal greed and desire. For example, one of the characters, Sufyan, claims, "He plays the prophet not only in order to play it, oh, no! He plays it for a share of the winnings."[49]

Similarly, Abu Jahl accuses him that "he wants nothing but a rule, and he plays the prophet."[50] The antagonist and some sympathetic characters made these accusations in the Drama. For example, Halima says, "He only wants to rule may the word perish over it that does not concern him."[51] It was a common perception during Gunderrode's time that Muhammad (SAW) was greedy for power and lust to rule, so he plays prophecy. During the Medieval period, when European Christians subdued *Saracen*s, the polemists claimed that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had lost his connection with the Divine. Gunderrode also criticized this central argument of polemics writers. During his exile in the Drama, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) loses his connection with God, and he prays:

> The light of my spirit is extinguished, hushed are the prophecies of my bosom, and the power of God is no longer alone and victorious in me. —Doubt has displaced heaven from me. —The sanctuary of God is a hotbed of passions. How different I have become, the spirit no longer rules in me, my wish and resolution, courage and timidity, faith and fear fight humanly in my soul —now I must worry, reflect, seek — God, how you have slipped away from me! how you have abandoned me in the heat of the day! turned your face away from me in the night!.[52]

In Islamic History, Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) loss of connection is called disconnection of revelation (*Fathrat Ul Wahi*). Similarly, the questions of the character *Khalid* in the drama represent Medieval, Renaissance, and Romantic minds that question Muhammad's (SAW) prophecy. He asked about the great conqueror and Orient legend, probably Napoleon as Muhammad (SAW) and the soul's resurrection.

Gunderrode encountered all these popular negative opinions of the time and proved that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was not guided by his own will but by the Divine. For example, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) claims, "My deed is not my work but the will of God". To the people of Mecca, he spoke, "I have called you to talk with you, not as a man to men, no higher spirits speak through me to you." [53]

Gunderrode explicitly narrated her idea through the character of Muhammad (SAW) that he was not guided by his lust, ambition, and desires; Muhammad (SAW) speaks, "The spirit spoke to me: Muhammad (SAW), fight against idolatry. Now as God commanded me, so I command you, throw the shameful idols, Lat and 'Uzzá'".[54]

And:

> I prayed to God that he might enlighten me, and when I had prayed thus for one hour, the angel of the Lord came to me: his head reached the clouds, and his voice was like the rushing of the brooks that cascade from high cliffs.[55]

Further, "I would rather die in obedience to the spirit that commands my spirit than be king of the world and an apostate."[56] Gunderrode's Chorus also confirms her idea as, "A God it is, who speaks to us of high revelation from his mouth."[57]

Gunderrode believes that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) accomplished all his goals because he was committed to the will of God. In the Drama, when *Omar and Nahlid* plea from him l to devise a plan according to human reason, he rejects their plea by saying, "My deed is not my work, but the will of God." Similarly, when Abu Talib asks him to denounce his faith (Islam), he answers him, "Can I also consider whether the spring shall come and the sun sink today in the West?"[58] The Chorus clarifies this statement by saying, "Does not long ponder what and how he wants; he does as the moment prompts him, and God's will is to him his feelings".

In another place in the Drama, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) claims that those who follow their own will he is turning away from God. He says, "Is it not higher wisdom to abandon oneself to God's providence than a rip oneself free of him and want to have a plan of one's own that is perhaps contrary to the will of God?"[59] He is entirely obedient to God, so he succeeds in his mission in Arabia and worldwide. Gunderrode confirms this idea through Chorus; he says:

> He seems to me unmindful, driven/ By spirit and himself will-less;/ Obeying those dark drives,/ Bred in rapture's womb;/ Then I see,

astonished, how he finds/ Discretion and means easy."[60]

This statement is confirmed by the second Chorus as, "God's will is to him his feeling;/ He finds a path in any winding way, He acts cleverly and is unconscious of it."[61]

Further, at various places, Chorus makes cataphoric and anaphoric references to the same idea that he was not guided by his own will but rather by the divine as:

> Seemed devoted to higher powers, That thus suffused his breast./ To me, the soul of the Prophet seemed/ To stand in discourse with spirits," And, "So highly as the/ The voice that speaks to me." Similarly, "For divine power animates the seer,/ He feels he is the arm of destiny." And, "A God it is, who from his mouth/ Speaks to us of high revelation."[62]

Many dialogues confirm this statement that he was committed to the Divine and not guided by his will and desires; from the Drama, the following encrypts can be taken as supportive arguments.

**Orient other in Gunderrode's, *Muhammad the Prophet of Mecca***

It was a common trend during the Romantic period that the Occident did not consider the Orient. They do not recognize their will, and they are left powerless. Gunderrode discussed this Orient-Occident relation vividly by representing Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a German Ideal, but still, she is struck by the chains of contemporary trends. It was not her personal choice to display Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as Occident, who neglects Orient others, but due to the profound impact of her time's censorship on women writers. In the Drama, all characters are left powerless, and he subdues people's will, especially Khadijah, Halima, and Nahid.

In the Drama, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cannot recognize Kahdijah's existence. He left her behind during his period of banishment from Mecca, though he knew she would die and they would never meet again. Abu Talib tries to remind him of his obligation to her; he states, "Look at your Khadijah, her eyes are full of tears, she cannot speak only sighs; oh!"[63] In response to this, he denies the very existence of her on the Khadijah replies, "I will bear a deep pain under my heart, and its birth will kill me."[64]

And, "My heart feels so heavy, and yet I should be cheerful! Is Muhammad not my husband?"[65]

Khadijah complaints about not being loved as, "If you bear such great love for your friends, my husband! What will remain of you for Khadijah?"[66] These arguments show that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) denies the will of *Abu Talib* and *Khadijah.* Similarly, Halima's character subjects her will to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). She left her father for Mohammed's Faith, but Mohammad, without her consultation, sent her back to her father as a peace offering. On this ,Halima comments, "Everything is successful for him ,and he has always done what he wanted".[67]

On the other hand, *Nahlid* requests Prophet Muhammad (SAW) not to

send Halima back; he also denies his will and states, "Dear Nahlid! It can indeed not happen, resign yourself to necessity."[68]

As a result of this, Nahlid kills himself. On this denial of Orient, another Anna C. Ezekiel states:

> As the deaths of Nahlid, Halima and Khadijah suggest to Gunderrode, this denial is not just restrictive of the other's freedom but the denial of their very selfhood. The refusal to recognize the other as an independent agent ultimately restricts the ability of the other to construct or sustain her or himself as a subject.[69]

**Allusions in Gunderrod's *Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca:* Similarities and Differences with authentic Islamic history**

Gunderrode used Henri de *Boulainvilliers's Muhammad's Life and Friedrich Eberhard Boysen's Quran translation* for her drama. In this drama, she made some allusions to events in Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) life similar to Islamic history; however, some contradict each other. For example, Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s journey to Syria with his uncle's caravan and his recognition as Prophet by *Bahira* is present in authentic Islamic bibliographies of Muhammad (SAW), like *Ibn Hisham.* Similarly, the taking of the heart out of Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) breast and the removal of the dark drop is known as *Shaq-e-Sadar* and is narrated by Islamic historians as well. Moreover, we can also see an allusion to a famous battle before the announcement of Prophethood, named "*Jang-e-Gujjar (Battle of Fujjar),* banishment from Mecca and stay at *Sha'ab Abi Talib (Cliff of Abi Talib),* discussion about his death in Mecca's high council, announcing Sufyan's home as a safe place for all during conquer of Mecca, uncle *Abu Talib's* support, marriage to Khadijah and Omar's acceptance of Islam in this Drama, which is similar to that of Muslim bibliographers and historians.

However, Gunderrode made some allusions that contradict Islamic history. For example, the character *Halima* is portrayed as the daughter of Suffyan, but actually, she was the foster mother of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and the actual name of Sufyan's daughter was *Ramla* (RA), who was married to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Similarly, the meeting with the fictional character *Tariq* and the discussion about the fall of Mecca is not in Islamic history; instead, it was an agreement of peace known as *Half -Ul-Fado'l.* Moreover, the event of Omar's acceptance of Islam is also somewhat contradictory to Islamic history. Gunderrode believes that Omar took preaching of the Quran on which it was written, "I let the word of salvation reach you, not to disturb you in the enjoyment of earthly goods; I announce the mercy of the God who called the worlds to be, and whose light flows out over the sky." However, he took this from his sister *Fatima Bin Khita'b*, in which verse from the Qur'an, "It is true I. I am Allah! There is no god ˹worthy of worship˺ except Me. So worship Me alone, and establish prayer for My remembrance."

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, "Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca" by Karoline von Günderrode is a noteworthy example of how Islam was portrayed culturally in the German literature setting. Günderrode emphasizes the Prophet Muhammad's

spiritual journey, hardships, and dedication to his divine purpose, portraying him as a person of genuine humanity in contrast to current Western clichés. She explores the moral and ethical implications of Islamic teachings, pushing themes of love, tolerance, and unity in her work that goes beyond historical accuracy.

Günderrode's interest in Eastern mysticism and her efforts to overcome cultural barriers demonstrate her desire for knowledge and communication across cultural boundaries. Her portrayal challenges prejudices and offers an alternate, sympathetic perspective on religion and its fundamental figure, even though it may not line up with current scholarly ideas on Islam. Examining the Romantic era provides evidence of the intricate interaction between literary, cultural, and historical elements influencing the Prophet Muhammad's perception of European discourse. The analysis of previous centuries, characterized by the utilization of Muhammad's image as a rhetorical device in religious disputes, highlights the changing attitudes in European society. The image of Prophet Muhammad changed due to several factors, including Thoader Bibliander and William Rainolds' complex perspectives and Martin Luther's critical position.

Furthermore, Günderrode's involvement with German Orientalism broadens the perspective on understanding her art. Unlike its British and French equivalents, German Orientalism was typified by intellectual endeavours as opposed to colonial aspirations. This contextual knowledge becomes essential to understanding Günderrode's distinctive method of portraying the Prophet Muhammad. The Drama's resuscitation of German Romantic ideas fits well with the larger intellectual currents of the day, emphasizing a new world order and rejecting grand mediaeval narratives. Günderrode's conception of a community based on reason, divine aspects, and unity is consistent with the ideas advanced by other Romantic intellectuals. Günderrode's examination of Muhammad's cultural image and symbolic depth bears witness to the changing attitudes towards Islam in European Literature.

**Recommendations**

**1. Promote Cross-Cultural Understanding**

Encourage academic and public discourse that fosters cross-cultural understanding, especially in the study of literature and historical narratives. This can be achieved through interdisciplinary approaches considering cultural and historical contexts shaping representations of figures like Prophet Muhammad. A more nuanced and inclusive understanding of diverse cultural perspectives can be achieved by promoting dialogue between scholars of literature, history, and religious studies.

**2. Expand Curricular Diversity**

Advocate for including works like Günderrode's "Muhammad, the Prophet of Mecca" in educational curricula. By incorporating diverse voices and perspectives, educational institutions can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cultural and religious representations. This enriches students' intellectual experiences and helps challenge stereotypes and biases ingrained in traditional curricular materials.

**3. Encourage Comparative Studies**

Support research initiatives that explore the comparative analysis of literary representations of Prophet Muhammad across different periods and cultures. Scholars can trace the evolution of perceptions by examining how various writers from distinct historical contexts portrayed Muhammad and identify common themes or biases. Comparative studies contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between Literature, cultural contexts, and religious representation.



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