

## **Two Literary Reactions in the Romantic Period: Romantic Anti-Slavery Idea and Romantic Orientalism in Selected English Romantic Poems**

**Hilal Kaya\***

**Abstract:** The Romantic Period in England can be considered as indicative of ‘an age of crises’ because the era witnessed several political affairs, ideologies and strategies such as slaver trade, colonialism, American and French Revolutions. These political and social changes all signalled ‘chaos’ which would dominate European political, cultural, and literary life for the next quarter of a century. Therefore, it was inevitable that Romantic writers were influenced by the political and social events in Europe. They were considerably aware of British expansionism. It would not be incorrect to claim that there is a direct correlation between socio-political revolution and the literary revolution in Britain. No matter what their ideological stance was, some Romantic poets of the era, like S. T. Coleridge, William Cowper, William Blake and Robert Southey, reflected their observations of the colonialist activities in their works. Some other poets of the era, however, like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, tried to especially avoid subjects concerning European colonialism in their writings. They were concerned with escape from day-to-day reality, with images and narratives remarkable for their historical or geographical exoticism. This paper will analyse these two reactions of the English Romantic poets; those who directly dealt with colonialism and those who principally presented orientalist and exotic elements in their poems.

**Keywords:** Romantic period, colonialism, orientalism, exoticism, Coleridge, Blake, Shelley, Byron

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Romantic Period in England witnessed several political affairs, ideologies and strategies such as slaver trade, colonialism, American and French Revolutions. It would not be incorrect to claim that there is

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\* Hilal Kaya (✉)

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Turkey; The University of Edinburgh (Visiting Lecturer), Scotland, UK  
e-mail: hkaya07@yahoo.com; hilal.kaya@ed.ac.uk

a direct correlation between socio-political revolution and the literary revolution in Britain. “At the start of the period South Seas were assumed that these regions were available for European exploitation because of continuous maritime exploration by the Dutch, French, and English” (Jarvis 2004, 39). In the Romantic period, the colonialism ideology underwent an important transformation. It was the era when “a new system of British Imperialism” (Fulford 1998, 13) emerged. Gananath Obeyesekere argues that

it was in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that the concept of the ‘colonialist’ changed. The voyages that he [Captain James Cook] heralded a shift in the goals of discovery from conquest, plunder, and imperial appropriation to scientific exploration devoid of any explicit agenda for conquest of and for the exploitation and terrorization of native peoples. (1992, 5)

Moreover, Mary Louise Pratt claims that “around this time, there occurred the end of the last great navigational phase of discovery and its replacement by a growing concern with the exploration of the interiors of the continents” (1992, 38). Moreover, Fulford expatiates that in 1818, the British government organised the first of several Arctic explorations and “the sublime polar seascapes which haunt the Romantic imagination are, in part, a response to this scientific endeavour. It was to seek the North West Passage” (1998, 14).

#### THE ROMANTIC ANTI-SLAVERY POETRY

Taking the afore-mentioned statement as a point of departure, S. T. Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798) can be read as a poem which deals with the contemporary colonialist activities. Coleridge uses the Antarctic as a means to explore the metaphor of mental and maritime exploration. The poem describes “a voyage that has similarities with Captain Cook’s second expedition” (Fulford 1998, 14) as follows:

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.  
And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.  
And through the drifts the snowy cliffs  
Did send a dismal sheen:  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken –  
The ice was all between.  
The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound! (Coleridge 1840, 60)

According to Lee, “when Coleridge composed ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,’ he was thoroughly engaged in the social and political issues of the day, from the latest theories of epidemic disease to the debates on abolition and slavery” (1998, 676). Coleridge, along with Robert Southey, was an active abolitionist in Bristol. “The Ancient Mariner” can be interpreted as a poem about the slave trade because of Coleridge’s material concerns with travel literature, colonialism, and the slave trade. Lee maintains that

J. R. Ebbotson is just one of a number of readers to view the poem as an indictment of British maritime expansion, where “the central act of ‘The Ancient Mariner,’ the shooting of the albatross, may be a symbolic rehearsal of the crux of colonial expansion, the enslavement of native peoples”. Patrick Keane, in a recent book on Coleridge, has traced most of ‘The Ancient Mariner’s images to their sources in debates on abolition and emancipation. (as cited in Lee 1998, 677)

Likewise, Empson also propounds that “the guilt felt by the mariner after shooting the albatross might be a displacement of a more general guilt experienced by the Western maritime nations for their treatment of other cultures” (1964, 300). Until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, most segments of society in England accepted racial hierarchies that placed white Europeans in a superior position to ‘people of colour.’ These hierarchies naturalized the slave system. Africans were considered inferior, and so slavery was justified. However, in 1780s and 1790s, this notion started to change due to the abolitionist movement. “Coleridge in article for *the Courier* wrote that ‘A slave is a Person perverted into a Thing; Slavery therefore is not so properly a deviation from Justice as an absolute subversion of all morality’” (cited as in Keane 1994, 71). Such awareness, of course, brought a sense of guilt among the social-conscious people like Coleridge. Moreover, the

situation of the other mariners in the ship is reflected as in the following:

One after one, by the star-dogged moon,  
Too quick for groan or sigh,  
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
And cursed me with his eye.  
Four times fifty living men,  
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
They dropped down one by one.  
The souls did from their bodies fly,  
They fled to bliss or woe!  
And every soul it passed me by,  
Like the whizz of my crossbow! (Coleridge 1840, 62)

Lee associates the above-quoted situations of mariners with a disease, 'yellow fever' which was regarded as the widespread illness for British mariners when they carried slaves on board of ships:

After the mariner's albatross murder dislodges the ship from the icy fields of the South Pole-fever sets the poem afire.<sup>12</sup> Coleridge takes the reader from climatic realities (the "broad bright sun," the standing water, and the Western wave "all aflame") to bodily symptoms ("parched throats and "cold sweat[s]") to symbolic fever: the "charmed water" that "burnt always / A still and awful red" (3.174, 3.171, 3.144). But even more dramatic than this is the fever of the British imagination, the "uncertain hour" when "agony returns: / And till my ghastly tale is told, / This heart within me burns" (7.582-85) ... "The Ancient Mariner," like abolitionist and emancipation literature of the period, draws on early nineteenth-century medical and ecological models used to analyze yellow fever-the most deadly and widespread disease for British seamen on slave voyages. But discussion of fever within the discourse of slavery, and discussion of slavery within the discourse of yellow fever, really addresses a wider question: could Britain establish a social system free from the diseases of tyranny and subjection? (1998, 677)

Moreover, McKusick suggests that the albatross is "an emblematic representation of all the innocent lives destroyed by European conquest," (1992, 106) including the guilt associated with the slave trade. When it is killed by the mariner, he is condemned to carry the dead bird on his neck until he discovers and accepts his guilt. But the

albatross is just one emblem of guilt. The living-dead situation of the crew can also be interpreted as another emblem of guilt.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor reek did they:  
The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.  
An orphan's curse would drag to hell  
A spirit from on high;  
But oh! more horrible than that  
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die. (Coleridge 1840, 63)

The guilt of colonialism and slave-trade, in the context of Coleridge's poem, is punished with yellow fever. "The mariner finds disease and thus nightmarish deformation everywhere: it appears not just in the rotting bodies of birds, men, and a white woman, but in heavenly bodies as well, such as the 'bloody Sun ... with broad and burning face'" (Lee 1998, 691). Even the ship itself is diseased: "The planks look warped and see those sails, / How thin they are and sere!" (Coleridge 1840, 63). The Hermit is also a figure for decay as he prays at a "rotted old oak stump" (Coleridge 1840, 65).

"The Ancient Mariner' can be read as a process where the mariner tries to reconcile 'identity' and 'alterity' in a political, as well as a philosophical way"<sup>1</sup> (Lee 1998, 678). The mariner's self-confrontation, his blessing of "the slimy water snakes" linked by their "flash of golden fire" to the epidemic waters, is a move to acknowledge what is radically 'other.' It is a move to attempt on a material level Coleridge's idea of "losing self in another form by loving the self of another as another" (Lee 1998, 693). The strangest and greatest moment in the poem is the one when the curse is undone, the albatross falls from the mariner's neck:

O happy living things! No tongue  
Their beauty might declare:  
A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
And I blessed them unaware: ...  
That self same moment I could pray;

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<sup>1</sup> By 'alterity' Coleridge means "the healthful positiveness of complete polarity, instanced in that chasm between the Subjective and the Objective" (Coleridge 1957, 33).

And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea. (Coleridge 1840, 63).

William Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint" could also be taken as another example of the Romantic poetry in which the contemporary issues of colonialism and slavery were reflected on. In the poem, Cowper 'grants' a slave the right to speak. Cowper wrote the poem in support of abolition. The slave has a simple form and diction:

Forced from home and all its pleasures  
Afric's coast I left forlorn,  
To increase a stranger's treasures  
O'er the raging billows borne.  
Men from England bought and sold me,  
Paid my price in paltry gold;  
But, though slave they have enrolled me,  
Minds are never to be sold. (Cowper 1835, 365)

The slave in the poem is sold and bought by Englishmen for a little sum of money. Fulford asserts that Cowper "rendered his enslaved African a victim whose brutal exploitation had not destroyed his innocence" (1998, 26). In the poem it is revealed that the slave is angry at his oppressors who are so cruel to treat him like a sub-human creature. In the poem the slave can find a right question the colonialists' hypocrisy. At the same time, the slave demands compassion from the reader by asking the reader to check if God lets them buy and sell "the sons of Africa." He appeals to the reader's religious conscience as follows:

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,  
Is there One who reigns on high?  
Has He bid you buy and sell us,  
Speaking from his throne, the sky?  
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,  
Matches, blood-extorting screws,  
Are the means that duty urges  
Agents of his will to use?  
Hark! He answers!--Wild tornadoes  
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks,  
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,  
Are the voice with which he speaks.  
He, foreseeing what vexations

Afric's sons should undergo,  
Fixed their tyrants' habitations  
Where his whirlwinds answer— 'No' (Cowper 1835, 366)

Then he assures the reader that the slave is not a violent, brutal or savage threat. Cowper subverts the accepted hierarchies that regard the white man as a superior to the black man; therefore, his 'Negro' is able to overturn the reader's racist assumption of moral superiority.

Writing this poem, Cowper tries to challenge the prejudiced readers in society. The 'Negro' in the poem is not an ordinary slave; he is at the same time 'a victim' and 'an interrogator' who should also be regarded as a human being in spite of his 'different' physical features. "In Negro's Complaint" abolitionist discourse transforms the stereotype with which it operates, so that it destabilises rather than reinforces the assumptions of the imperialist culture" (Fulford 1998, 27).

William Blake is another Romantic poet who dealt with racism and abolitionist subjects in his poetry and visual art. Famously, his "The Little Black Boy" (1789) is also an early representative of abolitionist discourse. "The Little Black Boy," according to Aidan Day "stresses the equality of souls between black boy and white English boy. The poem is written 'in the spirit of contemporary radical anti-slavery writing'" (as cited in Day 1996, 18).

My mother bore me in the southern wild,  
And I am black, but oh! my soul is white.  
White as an angel is the English child,  
But I am black as if bereaved of light. (Blake 2008, 9)

It is claimed in the poem that the little black boy has the spiritual generosity to imagine helping the soul of the white boy to see the presence of God when both have lost white and black skin colours.

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;  
And thus I say to little English boy:  
When I from black and he from white cloud free,  
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,  
I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;  
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,  
And be like him, and he will then love me. (Blake 2008, 9)

Blake takes the issue, as Cowper has earlier analysed, when he stresses on the idea of man's equality before God regardless of their social statuses and boundaries, which is being a master or slave. No matter what colour a human being's skin is, black or white, his/her 'action' is the significant thing for Blake. The little black boy tries to help the white boy, and this action is enough to glorify him as a human being. In other words, all that matters is "the assertion of spiritual excellence" (Day 1996, 18).

Moreover, Blake's other poem namely "America: A Prophecy" (1793) represents his radical sympathies for revolution and freedom. "In 'America' he [Blake] retrospectively celebrated the American Revolution as a triumph of life and liberty over the death-dealing oppression of British rule" (Day 1996, 21).

The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent,  
Sullen fires across the Atlantic glow to America's shore:  
Piercing the souls of warlike men, who rise in silent night,  
Washington, Franklin, Paine & Warren, Gates, Hancock & Green;  
Meet on the coast glowing with blood from Albion's fiery Prince.  
Washington spoke; Friends of America look over the Atlantic sea;  
A bended bow is lifted in heaven, & a heavy iron chain t158  
Descends link by link from Albion's cliffs across the sea to bind  
Brothers & sons of America, till our faces pale and yellow;  
Heads deprest, voices weak, eyes downcast, hands work-bruis'd,  
Feet bleeding on the sultry sands, and the furrows of the whip  
Descend to generations that in future times forget. (Blake 2008, 52)

Blake generalises the success coming after America's War of Independence as a universal energy of revolution "which would sweep away all tyrannies" (Day 1996, 22). Blake's character in the poem, Orc is used as a mouthpiece and becomes the voice of the dawn of a new world of freedom:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their  
stations;  
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;  
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd.  
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening!  
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst;  
Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field:  
Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;  
Let the chained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,  
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years;

Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open.  
And let his wife and children return from the oppressors scourge;  
They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream.  
Singing, The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning  
And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night;  
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease. (Blake  
2008, 53)

Robert Southey's sonnets written towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century could be regarded as a set of poems that supported the abolition of slavery. Among them "Sonnet VI" (1797) illustrates his protests at the institution of slavery:

High in the air expos'd the Slave is hung  
To all the birds of Heaven, their living food!  
He groans not, tho' awaked by that fierce Sun  
New torturers live to drink their parent blood!  
He groans not, tho' the gorging Vulture tear  
The quivering fibre! hither gaze O ye  
Who tore this Man from Peace and Liberty!  
Gaze hither ye who weigh with scrupulous care  
The right and prudent; for beyond the grave  
There is another world! and call to mind,  
Ere your decrees proclaim to all mankind  
Murder is legalized, that there the Slave  
Before the Eternal, "thunder-tongued shall plead  
"Against the deep damnation of your deed." (Southey 1829, 608)

Southey, with Coleridge, discussed setting up an idealistic community (pantisocracy) in America where they imagined a pure, innocent and just life. Their needs and life should be "simple and natural; their toil need not be such as the slaves of luxury endure; where possessions were held in common, each would work for all (Dowden 2010, 35).

#### THE ROMANTIC ORIENTALISM/EXOTICISM POETRY

As mentioned before, although some poets preferred to use contemporary social and political issues in their writings, some other poets preferred to particularly avoid such topics and instead, they focused on the Orient and exotic places in their poems because they saw it as a way out of the political chaos in Europe.

In literary history, Romantic orientalism is the recurrence of recognizable elements of Asian and African place names, historical and legendary people, religions, philosophies, art, architecture, interior

decoration, costume, and the like in the writings of the British Romantics. With the expansion of trade with the East, tales of exotic places very different to England stimulated the imaginations of the Romantic poets. Coleridge, Shelley, Byron can be taken as poets who composed poetry dealing with Orient. Bygrave states that “Romantic writers adopted their exotic images from various sources including medieval and Gothic culture. [...] They also looked to the Orient, which usually meant the Islamic world familiar to European readers of the translation of *The Arabian Nights*” (1996, 227).

In the first part of this paper, Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” has been read as a poem dealing with colonialist and slave issues. However, his other important poem, “Kubla Khan” (1816) sets a good example for Romantic poetry of exotic places. Bygrave even claims that it is the greatest orientalist poem in the English literature (1996, 228). “In its use of strange-sounding names, irregular stanzas, and lush sound effects, Coleridge is trying to evoke the “otherness” of this world so far away from the everyday existence of his readers--to evoke an otherworld and take his readers emotionally there” (*Norton Anthology* “The Romantic Period”). The poem’s Preface mentions “how at the time of falling into opium-induced reverie Coleridge had been reading Marco Polo’s account of the Mongol emperor Cublai Can’s (Kubla Khan) ‘palace and stately garden’ at Xamdu (Xanadu)” (Bygrave 1996, 229) in a travel account entitled *Purchas his Pilgrimage*. Moreover, the famous opening lines of “Kubla Khan” oozing with exotic imagery set the scene of an absolute dictator (Kubla) who commands the creation of paradise:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery. (Coleridge 1840, 55)

The second stanza of the poem starts with “But” contrasting the nature’s power with that of Kubla. In the first stanza Kubla orders his

men to build a palace, which symbolises his attempts to control and order his immediate surrounding, namely Nature. However, in the second part, it is evident that he cannot control natural forces.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced. (Coleridge 1840, 55)

In the poem, there are two stereotypical and opposing images that Coleridge presents of the East. On the one hand, he describes Kubla Khan's pleasure-dome as an earthly paradise of "gardens bright with sinuous rills / Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree...enfolding sunny spots of greenery" (1840, 55). On the other hand, Coleridge mentions a young, Abyssinian woman playing a dulcimer and singing with "such deep delight." However, Coleridge also reveals another side to the Orient: "a savage place! as holy and enchanted/ As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted/ By woman wailing for her demon-lover," and when he describes the fountain emerging from the "deep romantic chasm," his diction suggests aggression and violence: "a fountain... forced," "whose half-intermitted burst/ Huge fragments vaulted," and "It flung up momentarily the sacred river" (1840, 55). Coleridge depicts the allure and glamour of the Orient, a place of passion, temptation, and at the same time pagan savagery. Western man's curiosity of the Other leads him to meet 'the threat'; or vice versa because the threat simultaneously arouses curiosity.

In the second part of the poem, the setting changes from "Asian Tartary to African Abyssinia" (Bygrave 1996, 231) and the vision of the Abyssinian maid's singing of Mount Abora is expressed:

It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me  
That with music loud and long

I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed  
And drunk the milk of Paradise. (Coleridge 1840, 55)

What is significant about Coleridge's preference of settings is "their interchangeability for the Romantic poet as exotic, oriental locales, rather than their actual geographical location in quite different continents" (Bygrave 1996, 231). To put in a nutshell, the orient of "Kubla Khan" is represented as a place of almost magical beauty and power, but also of tyranny and danger in the western eyes of Coleridge.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous sonnet "Ozymandias"<sup>2</sup> (1818) can be taken as another example displaying the Romantic orientalism. Like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", Shelley's sonnet also presents a tyrant who is destined to exist in ruins.

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command (Shelley 1870, 164)

In the sonnet, the powerful pharaoh's angry and arrogant face, which was sculptured in ancient times, is depicted now as a piece of wreck in the middle of wilderness.

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'" (Shelley 1870, 165)

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek name for the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II.

Ironically, although inscription on the statue says “My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:/Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!” (1870, 165), it is now in ruins. The ruined statue is now merely a monument to one man’s hubris, and a powerful statement about the insignificance of human beings to the passage of time. “Ozymandias” is first and foremost a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of political power or the pride and hubris of all humanity, in any of its manifestations. Shelley by pointing out an oriental symbol of power conveys his universal message about the whole mankind: man’s weakness and defeat in the face of time.

In this paper, Lord Byron, whose “The Corsair” (1814) presents West’s confrontation with East’s luring and at the same time threatening atmosphere, is the last poet to be studied. Bygrave asserts that “one writer who more often poured scorn on Britain’s imperial aspirations than most was Lord Byron. Yet in this light it is ironic that Byron’s tremendous poetical success was partly based upon his ability to capitalise upon the popular taste for things oriental” (1996, 236). Byron drew upon his recent tour of the Mediterranean region for the colourful setting of his poem. “The Corsair” tells the adventures of Conrad, the aristocratic leader of a band of pirates who lived by terrorising the coastal waters of Turkish-dominated Greece:

Sun-burnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale  
The sable curls in wild profusion veil;  
And oft perforce his rising lip reveals  
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals. (Byron 1869, 3)

Portrayed as a disappointed young man, a typical Byronic hero, Conrad and his pirates fight against Turkish Pasha Seyd, so Byron urges his European readers to identify with Conrad and his crew in their struggle against the Turkish foe. The below-given quotation describes Conrad at the Pasha Seyd’s court. He is disguised as a dervish or an Islamic holy man:

High in his hall reclines the turbaned Seyd;  
Around—the bearded chiefs he came to lead.  
Removed the banquet, and the last pilaff—  
Forbidden draughts, ‘tis said, he dared to quaff,  
Though to the rest the sober berry’s juice  
The slaves bear round for rigid Moslems’ use;  
The long chibouque’s dissolving cloud supply,  
While dance the Almas to wild minstrelsy. (Byron 1869, 6)

Driven by traditional Western prejudices, Byron portrays the oriental stereotype of the eastern tyrant, Pasha Seyd, with paying attention to every detail. Byron insinuates that Muslim Turkish people are hypocritical because they perform sinful actions although they are forbidden by Koran. For instance, Pasha Seyd is depicted when he drinks alcohol. Moreover, when Conrad is imprisoned by Pasha, and when harem's queen, Gulnare, offers to help Conrad, he refuses her help as his western code of honour tells him to die bravely is better than getting help from "a woman, a prostitute and a Turk" (Bygrave 1996, 240). However, in spite of his objections, Conrad is saved by Gulnare as she kills her master, Pasha Seyd to get rid of his tyranny. In "The Corsair" two opposing but complementary notions, danger and attraction, in the oriental subject matter is expressed explicitly. However, along with the prejudiced way of treating the Eastern setting and people, the imperial anxiety of the West is also felt.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, this paper has explored two groups of English Romantic-period poets who had different approaches to the contemporary changing socio-political issues. The first group, as analysed above, fervently opposed to imperialism and slave trade so they created poems such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "The Negro's Complaint," "The Little Black Boy," and "America: A Prophecy." All these poems have to some extent anti-slavery overtones. The second group of poems are "Kubla Khan," "Ozymandias," and "The Corsair" which exemplify another way of reacting to harsh political incidents of the Romantic era. In the last three poems mentioned above, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron intend to offer exotic, fascinating and alternative experiences to the reader's everyday reality. This attempt can be called Romantic orientalism. In the spirit of revolutionary freedom, they expanded their imaginary horizons spatially and chronologically. They turned back to the Ancient Egypt and Middle Ages for themes and settings. All in all, a final conclusion can be drawn that English Romantic poets, particularly those mentioned in this paper, register their true devotion to imagination, inspiration, abolitionist movements, exotic elements and nature in their poems.

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