

The Roots of Romantic Topoi: A Local Intercultural Encounter and a Glocal Transcultural Experience

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Abstract: Many critics have speculated on the influence of Western literature on English romantic poets. Mainstream scholars have often referred to Greek, Roman, and Western sources, attributing the genealogy of romantic topoi to the West, while turning a blind eye to the impact of non-Western culture. As a result, the influence of Arabic materials on English Romantic poetry during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remains insufficiently recognized. The present study challenges the pervasive assumption that English Romantic poets were influenced mainly by the Western philosophical, religious, and literary sources. Instead, it provides evidence supporting the view that the roots of romantic topoi derive from both intercultural encounters and transcultural experiences. In particular, the role played by Oriental, Arab, and Muslim writers in helping English romantic poets develop their themes, characters, imagery, and narrative modes is discussed. Moreover, Arab-Islamic influences on Western literature is acknowledged to rectify the misconception that romantic topoi solely resulted from the Western intercultural encounters. The analyses presented in the paper demonstrate that Arabic and Islamic sources inspired British romantic poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats, helping them not only in finding their own voices but also in developing their themes, metaphors, symbols, characters, and images.

Keywords: Arabic-Islamic sources, intercultural encounter, romantic topoi, roots, transcultural experience.

1. Introduction

Mainstream literary critics have often relied on Greek, Roman, and Western sources, ascribing the roots of romantic topoi to the West while ignoring the influence of non-Western cultures. Specifically, the impact of Arabic materials on English Romantic poetry during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has not been well recognized. Influential scholars like Rene Wellek (1949), Bertrand Russel (1996), Isaiah Berlin (1999), and Tim Blanning (2011) have long maintained that European authors in general and German poets and philosophers in particular, are “the precursors of Romanticism.” Furthermore, they postulated that “the canons of Romanticism were first formulated in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century” and that “the European literature of the eighteenth century paved the way for Romanticism, but it is in the art of the nineteenth century, particularly in France, that it reached its zenith” (Rosenthal 2008:8). Although some Arab stories such as the *Arabian Nights* are relatively popular in the West, they are never studied in

depth, as there does not seem to be enough interest in Oriental sources among Western scholars and critics, even though their translations have served as an inspiration to some renowned European Romantic writers.

In this paper, the pervasive assumption that the British Romantic poets depended almost exclusively on the Western philosophical, religious, and literary sources is challenged by offering an alternative perspective based on the interconnectedness of different cultures and the origins of romantic motifs. In the same spirit, the analyses presented within dismiss the prevailing Western discourse that holds to the narrow *Weltanschauung* (worldview), attributing the growth of Romanticism solely to the ancient Greek culture and Western writers. Instead, it is purported that many ideas from Arab-Islamic stories and poems such as the *Arabian Nights* and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* have served as sources of inspiration for Western Romantic poets, helping them find their voices and their themes, metaphors, symbols, characters, and images. As the analyses presented below—focusing on representative poems by the pioneers of British romantic poetry, namely Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, and William Wordsworth—demonstrate, the English Romantic poets borrowed from Oriental, Arabic, and Islamic sources.

In the same vein, an alternative perspective is offered, indicating that romantic topoi are also the fruit of a transcultural experience or *transculturalism*, a cooperative and equal exchange between several different cultures. All these influences were active and equally relevant, as Malinowski (1947:xi) affirmed:

[Transculturalism] is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, not even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent ... it is an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, [and] both co-operating to bring about a new reality of civilization. (*author's emphasis*)

On this basis, and considering the contemporary dynamics of cultural transformations and processes, the arguments presented in this paper counter any separatist or exclusionary vision of cultures. Moreover, they defend Welsch's principle of 'transculturality,' which he also called "cultures' external networking" or "multiple modernities":

The description of today's cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Cultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called transcultural in so far that it passes through classical cultural barriers. Cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations. (Welsch 1999:196)

In sum, without denying the importance of Western, Indian, Greek, and Roman cultures, the present study advances the claim that romantic topoi are also the outcome of a transcultural melting pot, signifying openness to receive, integrate, and negotiate with other cultures. It is also based on the de-centering of all cultures, a *transpatriation*, and a *transculturality* which carries an anti-ideological stance, encourages exchange, and seeks to probe actions of cultural transformation in a

dialogue between powerful nations and less powerful ones, as Anne Holden Ronning (2011:3) explained:

Transculturation [is] a phenomenon of the “contact zones” which are social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination, I agree with Pratt that in these ‘contact zones’ cultures meet but not necessarily in relations which are binary based, since the very core of transculturation is the ability to move freely from one cultural stance to another and back again.

2. Romantic topoi: A local intercultural encounter

OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,

Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,

When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the ends of the earth!

(Rudyard Kipling *The Ballad of East and West* 1889:231; author’s emphasis)

Several Western scholars have adopted a nationalistic approach in their search for the roots of Romanticism and have defended an intercultural paradigm that echoes Kipling’s statement that “East and West can never meet.” In this regard, the British philosopher Bertrand Russel (1967:660) referred to Rousseau as “the first great figure in the movement ... the father of the romantic movement, the initiator of a system of thought which infer non-human facts from human emotions.” He further contended in his book *History of Western Philosophy* that the influence of British romantic poets derives exclusively from other European countries such as France and Germany. Ignoring the ancient period during which the English romantic poets lived, and conceding—albeit briefly—the important role played by the *Arabian Nights*, the Islamic culture, and philosophy in the development of British poetry, Russel (1967:652) maintained that “from Rousseau, the romantics learnt a contempt for the trammels of convention – first in dress and manners, in the minuet and the heroic couplet, then in art and love, and at last over the whole sphere of traditional morals.” On the topic of Romantic Movement, Russel (1967:654) opined, “in spite of owing its origin to Rousseau, was at first mainly German. ... The German romantics influenced Coleridge and Shelley, and independently of German influence the same outlook became common in England during the early years of the nineteenth century.”

Other Western critics like Tim Blanning (2011:7) showed the same callous disregard towards the influence of Oriental and Muslim romantic sources. Instead, they venerated Hegel and Rousseau as the progenitors and pioneers of the romantic movement, and hinted at Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Heloise* and *Confessions* as the essence of the romantic revolution:

It was Hegel who captured the essence of this revolution in this pithy definition of Romanticism as ‘absolute inwardness’ [absolute Innerlichkeit] ... Its prophet was Jean-Jacques Rousseau: if not the most

consistent, then certainly the most influential of all the eighteenth century thinkers.

Tim Blanning also attempted to trace the influence of Rousseau on the romantic movement. He argued that Rousseau is the dawn, the essence, and breeding ground of Romanticism, as Rousseau himself declared in his *Confessions* when he claimed that he is “commencing an undertaking hitherto without precedent and which will never find an imitator” (2011:12). According to Blanning, the word “romantic” first made a significant presence in the poetic masterpieces of German Romanticism. It was in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century that “a clear programme was articulated and called romanticism. To the fore were the Schlegel brothers, Friedrich and August Wilhelm, whose mouthpiece was the periodical Athenoem founded in 1798” (Blanning 2011:5).

In *The Roots of Romanticism* (1999), Isaiah Berlin defended a similar Western and local view of Romanticism and attributed the development of Romanticism to intercultural encounters between Western countries, France and England in particular. Locating the roots of Romanticism in the writings of a few eighteenth-century German writers, he further claimed that the inception of Romanticism and its apotheosis are traceable to the greatest rationalist of the German Enlightenment—Immanuel Kant. Although Berlin (1999:7) admitted that “Rousseau is of course quite correctly assigned to the romantic movement as, in a sense, one of its fathers,” he contended that the movement primarily developed in Germany. Failing to give credence to the Oriental sources that have colored the vision and triggered the genius of English romantic poets, he further purported that the thinkers who laid the ground for the form that Romanticism eventually assumed in the West were also German, like Herder and Kant:

There were two men who were in my view the true fathers of Romanticism. They were certainly of vaster size than any of the people I have mentioned hitherto as being responsible for it, and to them I must now turn. They both emerged from this movement, one sympathetic to it, the other acutely hostile to it but by his work a greater advancer of its ideals, as sometimes ironically happens. The first is Herder, the second is Kant. (1999:57)

Berlin was also of view that the British Romantic poet Lord Byron, in turn, inspired a new generation of French and German authors, including Victor Hugo in France and Wolfgang von Goethe in Germany. According to Berlin, three developments played a vital role in the growth of Romanticism from 1760 to 1830, namely the French revolution, the industrial revolution, and the Romantic revolution. Neglecting the non-Western influence and the contribution of Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, Berlin contended that the real impetus for Romanticism started in the waning years of the Enlightenment in Germany. He referred to German poets, dramatists, and novelists like Friedrich von Schiller, Johann Ludwig Tieck, Hoffmann, and Goethe as progenitors of Romanticism. In his defense of a nationalistic perception of Romanticism, Berlin was deliberately scant in his acknowledgement of the contribution of Oriental and Arab-Islamic sources such as the *Arabian Nights* or the British and American poets like William Wordsworth, William Blake, John Keats, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman.

Along the same lines, Rene Wellek emphasized the influence of Greek philosophy, mythology, and the ancient Greek culture or Hellenism on the romantic poets in different countries. Alluding to Harry Levin's book *The Broken Column: A Study in Romantic Hellenism* (1931) and Bernard Stern's *The Rise of Romantic Hellenism in English Literature: 1732-1786* (1940), Wellek asserted that Greek mythology was widespread in the eighteenth century and found poetic expression in the works of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Wellek (1949:145-46) similarly argued:

it is no denial of originality to see that the great German writers drew freely on foreign sources or on sources in the remote past, both foreign and native, which had been available to the other European nations: Neoplatonism, Giordano Bruno, Bohme, Spinoza, Leibniz. The Germans in turn, influenced other countries.

In England, Wellek (1949:148-49) concluded, "Bohme was important for Blake, Schelling, and August Wilhelm Schlegel was for Coleridge. ... But the German influence on Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and even Byron was negligible."

Clearly, Western theorists and scholars give precedence to the influence of Western philosophical and literary sources on the work of Romantic poets, while overlooking the role of the Oriental writers in the development of their ideas and writing styles. There is no doubt that Thomas Hobbes's theory of human desire, John Locke's concept of the will, and David Hume's view on morals and imagination were instrumental in the emergence of the Romantic philosophy. Ample body of evidence, in fact, suggests that the Romantic Movement emerged from England and Germany, rather than from France, Portugal, or Italy where the romance languages were actually spoken. The influence of these philosophers and writers can be found in the works of renowned Romantic writers, including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats. Yet, according to the view shared by many Western scholars, Kant's theory of the intuitive mind, together with Locke et al.'s tabula rasa theory—described in "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1979)—served as the foundation for the evolution of romanticism as a literary movement. In particular, Locke et al.'s doctrine was interpreted by romantic poets to suggest a new faculty of the mind, allowing them to conceive of new ideas regarding imagination, intuition, and poetic expression. This perspective also concurred with the faculty of intuition outlined in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (2003). This interplay of ideas formed by analyzing Kant's and Locke et al.'s work gave rise to the movement that championed human capacity to interpret reality based on one's worldview, emotions, and imagination, as evident from Wordsworth's *The Prelude*:

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; I came, at length,
To a green shady place, where down I sat.
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness. (Book I, 59-64)

The same perspective can be applied to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry—as exemplified by “Dejection: An Ode”—reflecting divergence between imagination-oriented romanticism and the reason-focused enlightenment:

O Lady! In this wan and heartless mood,
 To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
 And still I gaze—and how with blank an eye!
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars

(25-32).

3. Romantic topoi: A glocal transcultural experience

Academic research on the roots of Romanticism and the influence of non-Western romantic tenets and motifs has started to expand in the last few decades. By discussing the impact of Oriental Romantic poetics on the imagination of the English Romantic poets, scholars like Nigel Leask (1992), Gregory Wassil (2000), and Emily Haddad (2002) have given rise to scholarly research that demonstrates the centrality of Oriental romantic ideas to the development of Western romantic poetry. In particular, the *Arabian Nights*, the poems of the Persian Hafiz, and Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* are increasingly being recognized as the main sources of inspiration for Western Romantic poets like Blake, Wordsworth, and Keats.

In the same vein, in his book *Brahma in the West: William Blake and the Oriental Renaissance* David Weir (2003) positioned his stance against such Western nationalistic posture by acknowledging specific literary, social, and political elements that have framed the writing of both Western and Oriental Romantic poets. When Weir referred to Blake, for example, he presented him as a syncretistic polymath by underscoring the impact of the *Bible*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Weir also argued that Blake was very receptive to Hinduism, India-inspired metaphors, and the implications of the Oriental renaissance. Foregrounding Blake's indebtedness to Oriental and Indian ideas, Weir claimed (2003:8) that “the reference to Brahma in *The Song of Los* shows that Blake was able to incorporate the latest mythographic material into his own evolving system ... the allusion to Brahma in the East is neither the first nor the last acknowledgement of Hindu mythology in the poet's work.”

In his book *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*, Nigel Leask (1992:270) similarly argued that “the anxieties and instabilities of Romantic representations of the Ottoman Empire, India, China, and the Far East ... were not marginal but central to the major concerns of British Romantic writers.” In her book *Orientalist Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth Century English and French Poetry* Emily A. Haddad also defended the view that Western Romanticism found its roots in orientalism. Given the infiltration of Orientalist romantic principles and motifs into Western literary work, Haddad (2002:5) argued that “it should come as no surprise that orientalism has had an extensive and important

impact on the large developments of nineteenth century British and French poetics and poetry.”

Presenting Romanticism as a “glocal” transcultural encounter and highlighting the impact of Oriental romantic ideas and topoi on the English Romantic poets, Lord Byron made a list of all the books he had read and confessed that, like all other English Romantic poets, he was infatuated with the East:

Turkey. – I have read Knolles, Sir Paul Rycaut and Prince Cantemir besides a more modern history, anonymous. Of the Ottoman history I know every event...Arabia- Mahomet, whose Koran contains most sublime poetical passages, far surpassing European poetry. Persia. – Ferdousi, author of Shah Nemah, the Persian Iliad, - Sadi, and Hafiz, the immortal Hafiz, the oriental Anacreon. The last is revered beyond any bard of ancient and modern times by the Persians, who resort to his tomb near Shiraz, to celebrate his memory. A splendid copy of his work is chained to his monument. (Moore 1830:96)

Recently, several Western and Arab scholars have also acknowledged the contribution and influence of Oriental and Arabic-Islamic sources on Western Romantic poets. In his book *Islam and Romanticism*, Jeffrey Einboden (2014:272) maintained that “Islam was a religion that fascinated German romantics such as Johann Herder, Schelegel, Novalis and later Americans such as Washington Irving, Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe.” With the aim of tracing the genealogy of literary influence and treating Romanticism as an international phenomenon, Einboden (2014:15) explored how Western writers have been inspired by Islamic sources and described them as “the catalysing effect which Muslim sources have exercised on Western creativity.” Einboden (2014:272) further pointed out that “Goethe’s genesis of *Weltliteratur* and his collection of lyrical poems *West-Ostlicher Divan* are inspired by the Persian poet Muhammed Shamsuddin Hafiz.”

In his discussion of the impacts of the *Arabian Nights* on English romantic poets, Robert Irwin (2006:267) asserted that Coleridge found inspiration in Oriental literature, which was “a repository of weird and nightmarish images and, beyond imagery, the source of something grander and more impalpable.” In this regard, the main contention of Samar Attar’s book *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl’s Influence on Modern Western Thought* (2007) is that Western scholars have systematically underrated and belittled the Oriental contribution to the European intellectual heritage. Pointing to the influence of Hay Ibn Yakzan on European literature and thought, Attar (2007:102) also contended that “Ibn Tufayl’s book along with other Oriental tales seem to have become central to Voltaire.” On a similar note, Devendra Varma (1991:18) argued in her introduction to Beckford’s poetry that “among Oriental writings, Beckford highly prized those of Hafiz the Persian poet whose Divan was of his special favorites.”

In the same spirit, Roy Ridley purported that the *Arabian Nights* was available to Keats and his contemporaries. In his book *Keats’ Craftsmanship: A Study in Poetic Development* (1933), Ridley called attention to the fact that the two editions of the *Arabian Nights* in English which would have been readily accessible

to Keats are *Arabian Nights Entertainments* translated from the French by Galland, and revised with introduction and notes by Jonathan Scott:

There can be hardly a doubt that this stanza [‘t was said her future Lord would there appear/offering as sacrifice-all in the dream/Delicious food even to her lip brought near:/Viands and wine and fruit and sugar’d cream/of relish: then soft music heard...] comes direct from a source more distant and more romantic, namely the *Arabian Nights*. (Ridley 1933:117)

It is also in this context that the narrator in Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Recollections of the Arabian Nights* (1971:198) called himself a true Muslim who was born in Baghdad’s shrines in the golden age of Caliph Harun Rashid:

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow’d back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat’s shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid. Any lines numbers available?

Against this background, while pointing out the importance of the *Arabian Nights*, John Livingston Lowes (1927) admitted that Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a collage of many fragments from a myriad of books, the most important of which is the *Arabian Nights*. From this perspective, Lowes (1927:416) purported that “to attempt to trace the prints of the *Arabian nights* ... in [Coleridge’s] *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* ... were like seeking the sun and the rain of vanished yesterdays in the limbs and foliage of the oak. But the rain and the sun are there.”

In *Table Talk*, Coleridge, who wrote his poems in times of political and social upheaval in France and England, admitted that he was greatly influenced by Greek and Arabic poetry. He further conceded that he “cannot help surmising that there is a good deal of Greek fancy in the *Arabian Nights’ Tales*” and that “the book of Job is pure Arab poetry of the highest and most antique cast” (1936:404).

In *Borrowed Imagination: The British Romantic Poets and Their Arabic-Islamic Sources*, Samar Attar (2014:124), in the same manner, emphasized the amazing impact of the *Arabian Nights* as “a common canon for the literate elite in the Western world.” In addition to the *Arabian Nights*, Attar also discussed the influence of the Persian poet Hafiz and Ibn Tufayl’s novel *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* and its translation by Simon Ockley in 1708 on Western writers, including romantic poets. According to Samar Attar, British romantic poets, including Coleridge, had admitted that the *Arabian Nights* had a perennial effect on their lives, as evident from Victor Hugo’s confession in *Les Orientales*: “Oriental studies have never been so advanced. In the age of Louis XIV, one was a Hellenist; now one is an Orientalist” (Rodinson 1991:58). To substantiate her claim, Attar (2014:27) began

with an examination of the introduction to the *Arabian Nights* and argued that Coleridge borrowed the frame story and the narrative technique and came to the conclusion that “certain technical devices, characters, themes, images and symbols [in the *Arabian Nights*] have found their way to Coleridge’s ‘Ancient Mariner’.” Before completing his composition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, Attar (2014:270) quoted Coleridge saying:

At six years old I remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and Philip Quarles and then I found the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments, one tale of which (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) had so deep an impression on me.

An exploration of Keats’s poems also reveals some influence of the *Arabian Nights*, which is not sufficiently documented by mainstream Western critics. Keats’s “Endymion,” for instance, might have a Greek frame and Greek names, but the core and the imagery of the poem seem to have been borrowed from a mixture of Arabic tales. On the grounds of the hidden philosophy of the *Arabian Nights*, Keats (1982:282) was inspired by this Oriental literary work to defend his belief in the eternal beauty of art when he said in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all. ... Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” Keats was also inspired by the *Arabian Nights* in his defense of his *Negative Capability* concept in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” given that, at the end of the poem, the poet expressed his desire for immortality. However, he was full of doubt and sorrow when he cried the same cry that many lovers in the *Arabian Nights* utter “Was it a vision, or a waking dream? Fled is that music: – Do I wake or sleep?” (1982:283). In Letter to Fanny Broawne (July 15, 1819), John Keats admitted that he had been reading “an Oriental tale of a very beautiful colour – it is a city of melancholy men, all made so by this circumstance” (Forman 1948:359).

More recently, Wordsworth (1997:128-29) also conceded that the composition of his poem *The Prelude* was inspired by the *Arabian Nights* when he claimed that he “had a precious treasure at that time, a little yellow canvas-covered book, a slender abstract of the *Arabian tales*.” Although Wordsworth did not seem to show concern for the supernatural creatures or events of the *Arabian Nights*, Attar contended that a careful examination of his poetry indicates that Wordsworth had borrowed his basic themes that dealt with the natural goodness of childhood, the moral value of the simple life, and inspiring and healing powers of nature either directly from Ibn Tufayl’s book, or indirectly from the various sources that were influenced by the Andalusian philosopher. (Hayy Ibn Yaqzan 2014:84)

In view of these assertions, the young woman in *The Solitary Reaper* is full of delight, just as the prince is mesmerized by the beautiful maid and thrilled by the murmuring on a desert road in one of the Arabic tales when Wordsworth (1954:77) cries:

Behold her, single in the field ...
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! For the vale profound

Is overflowing with the sound.
 No nightingale did ever chaunt
 More welcome notes to weary bands
 Of travelers in some shady haunt,
 Among Arabian sands. (1-12)

In his poem “The Prelude”, there are indications that Wordsworth made the same journey from the visible to the invisible as Hayy In Yaqzan did, as he transitioned from the sensuous to the sublime by conflating the power of reason and emotion. In this poem, Wordsworth used a ‘Yaqzanian’ poetic diction and a “thinking heart” to describe the sense of pleasure he derives from nature. Throughout this description, the Arab is always present in the speaker’s dream:

My senses yielding to the sultry air,
 Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
 I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
 Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
 And as I looked around, distress and fear
 Came creeping upon me, when at my side,
 Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared
 Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
 He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:
 A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
 Of a surpassing brightness. Line numbers? (Wordsworth 1997:155-57)

4. Conclusion

The analyses presented in the preceding sections primarily aimed to rectify the prevailing misconception that romantic tenets and topoi are the fruit of exclusively Western intercultural encounters. The findings yielded advance the counter-claim that the romantic motifs trace their roots in intercultural as well as transcultural experiences, highlighting the Oriental and Arab-Islamic influences on Western literature. In presenting masterpieces of English Romantic poetry as the supporting evidence for these assertions, it becomes evident that the Arabic and Islamic sources inspired Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats and helped the British, French, and German romantic poets in finding their own voices and their literary themes, allegories, symbols, characters, images, and narrative styles.

Still, it must be acknowledged that the aim of this work is not to claim that Western Romantic poets were solely inspired by Oriental, Arabic, and Islamic literary sources. Nonetheless, given that these sources were available during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is misguided to ignore, neglect, and insufficiently explore their influence as most Western and Eastern critics and scholars have done. Thus, the main message that can be derived from this work is that, contrary to the common misunderstanding of Rudyard Kipling’s theory, the East and the West *can* meet. Indeed, Kipling made this point in the last two lines of his often ignored and deliberately misinterpreted statement:

OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,

*Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends
of the earth!*

(Rudyard Kipling *The Ballad of East and West*, 1889:231; *author's emphasis*)

The present study can also be seen as a requiem for the dead Arab pioneers of Romanticism. It is also a call to the living Arab and Western scholars to revisit the roots of Romanticism and an invitation to reinstate the glory of Arabic Romanticism. Its further aim is to remind the upcoming generations of readers of the Oriental, Arab, and Muslim writers who deserve credit for inspiring English romantic poets to develop their themes, characters, imagery, and narrative modes. Nevertheless, this endeavor will remain futile unless it prompts others to conduct their own analyses. Indeed, as Alfred Lord Tennyson (1971:88) wrote in his "In Memoriam":

I sometimes hold it as a sin
To put in words, the grief I feel
For words, like nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within. Line numbers?

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