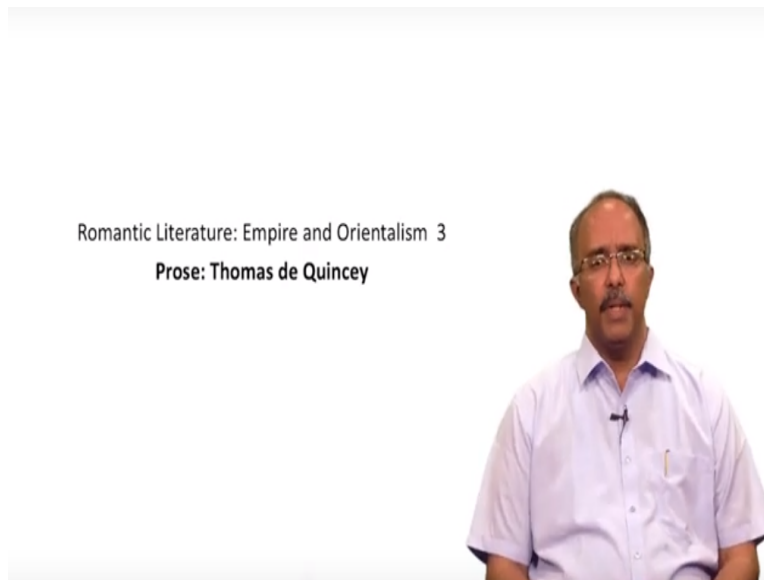


English Literature of the Romantic Period, 1798-1832
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Romantic Literature: Empire and Orientalism 3 Prose: Thomas De Quincey

Hello everybody so we have been talking about Empire and Orientalist as part of our exploration of the English romantic writer 1798 to 1832 in the last session we went through a little list of authors and texts but also themes in the last two sessions actually themes of commodification of the east the erotic east the porno tropics and others we will now narrow our focus a little bit we shall turn to some prose texts in today's session specifically Thomas De Quincey.

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There were several varieties of texts that appear during this period dealing with the empire the east and others allow me to repeat my caution the east is not just India, China, Japan other parts of the eastern region the Arab world were also part of the romantic orientalist texts and the textual can our focus is far more limited in what we are doing here for those of you who would like to explore this further at the end there is of course.

A reading list which will be supplied to you but Nigel esc's famous text on the English romantic writers and the east anxieties of empire an early 90's text is still one of the finest introduction period ant it is interested in India but that apart let us move on to looking at some varieties of the prospects that dealt with the empire the east and the other.

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A wide variety of prose texts dealing with the Empire, the East and the Other appear in this period.

Oriental Tales
Gothic tales
Historical Romances and Historical Novels

Memoirs
War accounts
Travel writing
Political Tracts
Histories of India and the colonies



There were oriental tales they were Gothic tales there were historical romances and historical novels and Walter Scott's the surgeon's daughter would be a prime example of the historical romance, so those are fictional texts but there was a whole bunch of other texts that appeared during this period memoirs war accounts travel riding political tracks and histories of India James Mills the history of British India appears in the first decades of the 19th century.

And the three volume history of British India will then become a standard reference for anybody who wanted to study India James mill by the way never traveled to India he wrote about it from other sources memoirs war accounts travel writing political tracks all have at some point intersections with or in romantic orientalist discourse.

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The prose, as critics have noted, is caught in the dilemma of being fascinated by the Other and repulsed by it.

De Quincey, for example, speaks of his 'loathing and fascinated' for the East in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821, expanded in the 1856 edition).

De Quincey would later write another essay 'The Opium and China Question' (1840)

John Barrell, 'the worst of oriental horrors [in De Quincey] can be represented only by being connected with ... personal traumas'



The pros of this period as critics have noted is often caught in the dilemma of being fascinated by the other and repulsed by it, it would be what Homi Bhabha will famously classify as fetish and phobia you are fascinated by something but you are afraid of it as well a brilliant example of this is Thomas De Quincey known primarily for his confessions of an English opium eater 1821 and an expanded edition in 1856 Quincey spoke about his loathing and fascinating for the east his loathing and fascinating.

So you could you can see both of these tensions this dilemma being fascinated by what he is able to understand the east and being repulsed by it De Quincey is also writing at the time of the great opium wars with China and actually 1840 he would write an essay the opium and China question John Barrell a very distinguished critic of the romantic period has argued that the worst of oriental horrors in De Quincey can be represented only by being connected with personal traumas that is one but the point you need to understand is that for many of the romantic authors the east is also a place of exploration it gives you the chance to fashion yourself in certain ways.

So I mentioned last time Ballantine, Ballantine had young schoolboys having adventures this is the period where English masculinity is being forged why are the famous public school system and as you know there are these anecdotal apocryphal accounts that the battle of waterloo was won on the play field of Eton and thing like that, so a certain ethos of mask unity is being constructed around schoolboys who have had adventures and Ballantine's text are full of these

cases, so that is one the other self-exploration of a different kind, so for instance here is an excerpt coming upon your slide.

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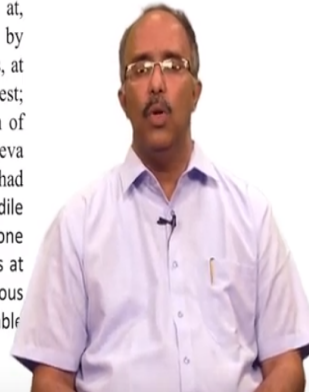
Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sun- lights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Hindostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cocka- toos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed.



Two Slide here and accept from dick when sees confessions of an English opium eater he describes the various things he sees that and he says I brought together all creatures birds reptiles beasts trees plants usages and appearances that found in all tropical regions I soon brought Egypt and all her Gods under the same law I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys by paroquets by cocka-toos, I ran into pagodas and it was fixed for centuries at the site or in secret rooms.

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Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sun-lights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Indostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas: and was fixed, for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia: Vishnu hated me, Seeva laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.



I fled from the rot of Brahma to all the forest of Asia Vishnu hated me Shiva aid in wait for me I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris I had done a deed they said as an they observed about me I had an idea they said by which the Ibis and the crocodile tremble and I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins with mummies and sphinxes and he concludes by saying confounded unutterable slimy things amongst reeds analytic mud.

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De Quincey here describes the heterogeneous collection of objects he gathers in his vision under the influence of the narcotic opium. The vision shows the European's illusory control of knowledge being eroded, eroded by 'objects' (animals and birds) that he thought he controlled by putting them in a museum.



What does De Quincey doing here is he encountering these assorted creature some of the marryin pleasant know what De Quincey is doing is he is putting together a heterogeneous

collection of objects which he gathers in his vision under the influence of copy the vision shows this vision of Dickens's shows that the Europeans idea of control of knowledge is actually taken away by objects that it thought he controlled in other words the Englishman has no sense of self possession the Englishman is shaken in his encounter with the east because something fundamentally gets dislodged.

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From occidental spectacle and sacrificial victim, he becomes, in a moment, the oriental "priest," in effect the undoer of himself. The rapid vacillation between subject positions suggests that for De Quincey opium-as-Orient is profoundly *disorienting*; it readily shifts perspectives and power balances.

Markus Poetzsch



Marcus Poetzsch from whom I am quoting here will argue that from occidental spectacle and sacrificial victim he becomes as an the De Quincey character becomes something else what are we talking about here when you encounter the east I said there is a self-fashioning but there is also undoing of what you are the oriental priest in effect becomes undo of himself as Marcus push the rapid oscillation between subject position suggest that for De Quincey opium has Orient is profoundly disorienting it shift perspectives and power balances.

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The European's epistemological and even ontological certainty breaks down when faced with the non-European, non-human Other. In his trafficking with global creatures, the Englishman loses a sense of self. The Englishman attributes the loss of self, of identity and attachments, domesticity and family, to his links with foreign products, places and actions, whether it is an involvement in foreign trade in the case of Egeon or the consumption of opium in the case of de Quincey.

(Sanjay Krishnan 2006)



That is not an easy thing to understand, so let me explain this what posh is arguing and what Sanjay Krishnan will argue as well is all form of knowledge making breakdown in the east whatever they British thought they know what are the British believed in you breaks down the east is a place where there are frames of knowledge not only not make sense they also break down for those of you who know I am fosters a passage to India you will recognize this problem that in the case if something goes wrong and none of the English are aware of what goes on in the cave.

India defeats them Sanjay Krishna writes the European's epistemological and even ontological certainly breaks down when faced with the non-European, non-human other in his trafficking with global creatures the Englishman loses a sense of self and he attributes this to his links with foreign products places and actions you will recall that in the last session we spoke about moonstone where everything that goes wrong in the English domestic space the family or the home is attributed to the stone the stone comes from setting a pattern of Mysore.

So as soon as the stone arrive something goes wrong the evil spirits begin to invade and so and so forth, now what Sanjay Krishna is arguing is it has to this idea that the English self is collapsing has to do with porous boundary through which the east enters we will move on to a couple of other instances with the Thomas De Quincey text.

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Thomas de Quincey's Malay sequence as an instance of the unnameable anxiety represented by the East. The Malay turns up at de Quincey's door – of Wordsworth's Dove Cottage, incidentally.

In his 1840 essay, he saw China as a threat to England, and thereby extends the meditations in the *Confessions*.



And this is the famous Malay sequence which is the standard reference that people read from confessions of an English opium eater the Malay sequence as an instance of the unnamable anxiety represented by the yeast the Malay turn up at De Quincey's door incidentally at this point in time and in his life De Quincey is living when words was dove cottage and he says this how he records it.

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The sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations



The slow and bilious skin of the Malay enameled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips slavish gestures and adorations and her Asians what is he

saying here the Malay is described less as a human than as an animal as you can see the sallow and bilious skin his face is as small and fierce and his eyes are restless and his lips thin slavish presences and things like that he is effectively animalizing the Malay if you say he is not animalizing you much at least have to admit that he dehumanizes the Malay but this is not description of a fairly decently formed human either but like I said De Quincey also had other interest in opium as a national policy.

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Of all the nations that ever have been heard of, we are the most scattered and exposed. We are to be reached by a thousand wounds in thousands of outlying extremities; the very outposts of civilization are held by Englishmen, everywhere maintaining a reserve of reliance upon the mighty mother in Europe.... Such are we English people such is the English condition. Now, what we are in the supreme degree, that is China in the lowest. We are the least defended by massy concentration; she the most so. We have the colonial instinct in the strongest degree; China in the lowest. With us the impulses of expatriation are almost morbid in their activity; in China they are undoubtedly morbid in their torpor.

'The Opium and China Question' (1840)



As a political and mercantile project in the opium and the china question in 1840 because he actually wrote about and he is not very happy about the china trade in opium and he says of all the nations that ever had been heard of we are the most scattered and exposed via to be reaches by a thousand wound and thousands of bullying extremities outlying expertise the very outpost of civilization are held be Englishmen everywhere maintaining a reserve of reserve of reliance upon the mighty modern Europe such are the English people.

What is saying is the opium question is not only about china it is about England itself and this the point I have been repeatedly making that all the product out there the people out there the land out there is not out there it has come home in short that difference and distinction between center and periphery imperial capital and the periphery has broken down because a periphery had begun to come in has become to infiltrate English identity itself in the Malay segments.

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The Malay is received by an English girl, and he 'placed himself nearer to the girl than she seemed to relish' (56), and thus de Quincey gestures at a sexual anxiety about the girl's safety as well.



The Malay received by an English girl and has a he puts it he placed himself nearer to the girl then she seemed to relish he plays himself nearer to the girl then she seemed to relish and thus De Quincey gestures at his sexual anxiety about the girl safety as well so why is he standing so close to this.

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This Malay (partly from the picturesque exhibition he assisted to frame, partly from the anxiety I connected with his image for some days) fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him, worse than himself, that ran 'a-muck' at me, and led me into a world of troubles.



So the Malay appears at the door and when she opens the door and comes in he is sending a little to close to the English girl if you recall in the last session we spoke about the threats to English masculinity and femininity from the third world global south Asian whatever you want to call it

racist and this is an instance why is he standing to close to her why is he does he have other intentions.

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The Malay, like opium, also serves as a pathogen that infects de Quincey. Unnameable, unidentified, uncategorizable as a person or thing, the 'Malay' is a foreign 'body' infecting/infesting Dove Cottage and de Quincey's mind (the nightmares I cited from de Quincey at the opening of this chapter). The uncanny nature of the visit and the aftermath – a ghostly remains, a revenant – is the foreign at the heart of England itself in de Quincey's near-Gothic account



This is the point I am making that the Malay is a pathogen is a dangerous foreign intrusion that infects De Quincey, John barrel famous work is called the infection if Thomas De Quincey because he understands this he understands that the Malay and opium have infiltrated like a foreign body infecting dove cottage infecting Thomas De Quincey and other, so that I cannot entirely blame myself for what has happened here is a pathogen that had done.

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[De Quincey] was terrorised by the fear of an unending and interlinked chain of infections from the East, which threatened to enter his system and to overthrow it, leaving him visibly and permanently “compromised” and “orientalised”
John Barrell



So John Barrell has said, De Quincey was terrorized by the fear of an unending and interlinked chain of infection from the east was terrorized and note the language here De Quincey was terrorized by the fear of an unending and interlinked period in telling chain of infection from the east which threatened to enter a system and to overthrow it.

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The *Confessions* subvert Wordsworth's privileging of the natural over the artificial by taking as its setting the city, and, as its theme, the artificial paradise of opium.

Julian North



So in effect the confessions actually overturn words worth's privileges of the natural other or the artificial by taking as it is setting the city an esteemed artificial paradise of opium what do we understand by this the across the romantic period the foreign object the foreign person, so this

could be opium this could be the Malay are both threats to Englishness are both threats to the very project themselves all of what we are doing here reinforces the idea that there is the pathogenic threat from the east which might if allow to continue damaged us.

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Additional/Recommended Reading

John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas de Quincey: The Psychopathology of Imperialism*. Yale University Press, 1991.

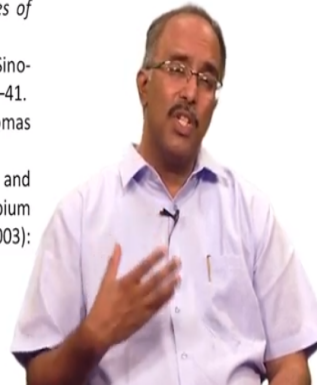
Julian North, 'Leeches and Opium: De Quincey Replies to "Resolution And Independence" In *Confessions Of An English Opium-eater*'. *Modern Language Review* 89.3 (1994):572-580.

Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Languages of Aesthetics; 1716-1818*. Cambridge UP, 1995.

Markus Poetzsch, 'Fearful Spaces: Thomas De Quincey's Sino-Anginophobia', *English Studies in Canada* 41.2-3 (2015): 27-41.

Sanjay Krishnan. 'Opium and Empire: The Transports of Thomas de Quincey', *Boundary 2* 33.2 (2006): 203-34.

Daniel O'Quinn, 'Who Owns What: Slavery, Property, and Eschatological Compensation in Thomas de Quincey's Opium Writings', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 45.3 (2003): 262-92.



And this is the Englishman speaking, so the consumption of opium on one said the arrival of the Malay another are all instances whereby the epistemological and ontological security break but it is also important because at some point you will have to account for your own action you cannot say or just because of the opium it is just because of a Malay I hope turned up at my job so there is the fetish phobia playing out here very clearly romantic orientalism then is a rather problematic engagement with the east, so as the center periphery breaks down question of English identity become more complicated because these question are also now questions of multiculturalization thank you.