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(Un-)Gendered Self-Annihilation: A Comparative Study of Hafiz, Emerson and Keats

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*And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.*

*(Shakespeare's As You Like It)*

## Abstract

While a significant amount of research exists on the works of Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shīrāzī (ca. 1315-1390), John Keats (1795-1821), and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), individually, this dissertation conducts the first overall comparative study of selected lyrical poems by the three poets with a focus on the poet's dynamic self and its connection to (un)gendered identity with the centrality of the concepts of *fana* ('unbecoming') in Hafiz's selected ghazals, of negative capability in Keats's odes, and of self-annihilation and the Over-Soul in selected poems by Emerson. It is guided by the following research questions: How can (un)gendered feminine representations be understood as an integrated component of understanding the dynamic concepts? and In what ways does the close correspondence of processes of gendering and un-gendering affect the fluidity of identities? In answering them, I have explored, analysed and interpreted the selected poems that, to date, have not been sufficiently addressed in any other comparative study.

I employ a set of methods, namely close reading, thematic analysis and historical contextualisation. I also draw on the following theorists and philosophers: Judith Butler, whose theory of gender performativity challenges the traditional notion that gender is a fixed, inherent attribute determined by biological sex; Cornelia Klinger, who argues about how dualisms cement an ideology that positions 'man' as superior to 'woman' while ensuring that the feminised position is gendered whereas the masculine position is both gendered and has a claim to remaining neutral. Furthermore, I consider factual connections and thematic convergences between Keats and Emerson as contemporaries, and thematic convergences between Hafiz and Keats, Hafiz and Emerson. Finally, the kind of self that Hafiz, Keats, and Emerson promote is constantly verging on self-discovery through establishing a dynamic self, achieved through *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Werke von Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shīrāzī (ca. 1315-1390), John Keats (1795-1821) und Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) sind einzeln gut erforscht, jedoch liegt bisher keine vergleichende Gesamtstudie ausgewählter lyrischer Gedichte der drei Dichter vor. Meine Dissertation schließt diese Forschungslücke, wobei der Schwerpunkt hierbei auf dem dynamischen Selbst des Dichters und der Verbindung zur vergeschlechtlichten bzw. entgeschlechtlichen Identität liegt. Im Mittelpunkt stehen dabei die Konzepte der *fana* („Entwerden“) in ausgewählten Ghaselen von Hafiz, der *negative capability* in den Oden von Keats sowie der Selbstauflösung und der „Überseele“, in ausgewählten Gedichten von Emerson. Meine Studie orientiert sich an den folgenden Forschungsfragen: Wie können vergeschlechtlichte weibliche und entgeschlechtlichte Repräsentationen als integrierter Bestandteil des Verständnisses der dynamischen Konzepte? Und: Inwiefern wirkt sich die enge Korrespondenz von Ver- und Entgeschlechtlichungsprozessen auf die Fluidität von Identitäten aus? Zur Beantwortung dieser Fragen habe ich ausgewählte Gedichte der drei Autoren, analysiert und interpretiert, die bisher in keiner vergleichenden Studie behandelt wurden.

In meiner Arbeit kommt eine Reihe von Methoden zum Einsatz, unter ihnen *close reading*, thematische Analyse und historische Kontextualisierung. Außerdem stütze ich mich vor allem auf zwei Philosophinnen und Theoretikerinnen der Gender Studies: zum einen Judith Butler, deren Theorie der Gender-Performativität die traditionelle Vorstellung, dass das Geschlecht ein festes, inhärentes, durch das biologische Geschlecht bestimmtes Attribut sei, in Frage stellt; und zum anderen Cornelia Klinger, die darlegt, wie Dualismen eine Ideologie zementieren, die „den Mann“ als „der Frau“ überlegen positioniert und gleichzeitig sicherstellt, dass die weibliche Position vergeschlechtlicht ist, während die männliche Position sowohl geschlechtsspezifisch ist als auch den Anspruch erhebt, neutral zu sein. Darüber hinaus betrachte ich sachliche Verbindungen und thematische Konvergenzen zwischen Keats und Emerson als Zeitgenossen, thematische Konvergenzen zwischen Hafiz und Keats, sowie zwischen Hafiz und Emerson. Schließlich ist die Art von Selbst, die Hafiz, Keats und Emerson propagieren, ständig an der Grenze zur Selbstentdeckung, indem sie ein dynamisches Selbst schafft, das durch *fana*, *negative capability* und Selbstauflösung erreicht wird.

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## Introduction and Methodology

### Introduction and Methodology

This dissertation is primarily concerned with connections between eastern and western lyric poetry. It aims to conduct a comparative study of selected lyrical poems by Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shīrāzī (ca. 1315-1390), John Keats (1795-1821), and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) with a focus on three concepts – *fana* in Hafiz’s ghazals, negative capability in Keats’s odes from 1819 and self-annihilation in Emerson’s poems – that all have to do with the poet’s identity and its dissolution. The three concepts have far-reaching similarities when it comes to loss of identity, annihilation of the static self and emphasis on dynamic identity.

Hafiz is often associated with Sufism, which is designated as the Islamic belief and practice in which Muslim mystics seek the truth of divine love by gaining direct and unmediated personal experience of the divine. *Fana*, translated into English as ‘self-annihilation’ or ‘self-effacement’, is a central concept in Sufi theory. It refers to the elimination of imperfect attributes from the consciousness of Sufis and their replacement by divine perfect attributes. Many refer to this experiential cycle as ‘death’, in the sense of ‘dying to one’s own qualities to dwell in the divine attributes’. The beloved God, in Sufi poetry, is often represented by feminine attributes. However, since Persian grammar lacks a distinction of gender, the gender of the beloved has not always been specified in Persian ghazals, thus resulting in their bearing a large degree of ambiguity.

Negative capability, the second concept to the exploration to which this dissertation dedicates itself, was first introduced by John Keats in his letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey. It is understood as an aesthetics of “uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (*Selected Letters* 60). According to Keats’s idea, the artist in possession of negative capability, loses the selfhood that necessitates a single perspective or meaning, identifies with the experience of his object, and makes himself into a mouthpiece of this experience. The poet does not essentially absorb the identity of his object of desire but psychologically sees its ins and outs through his power of poetical intensity. He fuses emotional intensity with the object in a manner whereby the object represents the emotion. This complies with disinterestedness and identity-annihilation emphasized all through Keats’s correspondence and poems. In both, Keats insists on the poet’s capability to gain access to the nature of a particular passion without having to get immersed in it.

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Self-annihilation, the third concept central to the dissertation, is a mystical current which goes through many religions, and exists in different forms of spiritual contemplation that are embedded in both Sufism and Christianity. The common aim of all its forms is to transcend the self through its annihilation in the hope of achieving union with God and thus freedom from constraints of self. Ralph Waldo Emerson scrupulously adheres to this through his mystical and abstract idea of the Over-soul. According to Emerson, the soul is eternal as “every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other” (“The Over-Soul” 252) within the Over-soul or the Unity. He further develops his mystical notion that “we live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles,” but that every man contains “the soul of the whole [...] the eternal ONE” (253) of whose beauty every particle equally partakes. His writings echo mystical pronouncements of self-annihilation or *fana*, which function as a potential point of contact between Sufi practices and some other Oriental non-Abrahamic religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, to which Emerson was no stranger. His essays and poems are saturated with references to achieving union with God, which typifies the core purpose of mysticism.

When the above-mentioned concepts – *fana*, negative capability and self-annihilation – emerge in the poems selected as objects of analysis for this dissertation, they often come in connection with representations of the feminine – feminine-coded metaphors, metonymies, and symbols. Since ideas of gender, femininity and masculinity, together with their connections to *fana*, negative capability and self-annihilation are discursively constructed, they necessarily differ in Persian literature of the 14<sup>th</sup>, and in English and American literatures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this study, I endeavour to consider this when analysing individual poems and comparing groups of poems together. Manifestations of the feminine form is a recurring motif in the works of all three male poets, which is often subtly associated with the loss of self, that is presented either as gendered in a female character or as ungendered. As a result, I will also compare the close correspondence of processes of gendering and un-gendering, as far as representation is concerned, in every poem.

The feminist philosopher Cornelia Klinger briefly sketches the historical relationship between knowledge and power and how dualisms in the western philosophical tradition cement power imbalances. To clarify this subject matter, she offers the following dualisms as examples: political space vs. private space, soul vs. body, reason vs. sensuality, human vs. animal, man vs.

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woman, and master vs. slave.<sup>1</sup> Within such dualisms one of the terms is considered ‘superior’, the other ‘inferior’. Not only are these terms posited as opposites, but the first-listed terms are also identified with a “transcendental point of reference” (344, my translation), from which, they deduce their superiority over the second-listed ones. Klinger continues her argument by emphasising the inherent asymmetry of dualisms: “In this way, the first terms are at the top and the second terms at the bottom of the great chain of being”<sup>2</sup> (ibid). This is how dualisms cement an ideology that positions ‘man’ as superior to ‘woman’, while ensuring that the feminised position is gendered whereas the masculine position is both gendered *and* has a claim to remaining neutral.

The above explanation helps me trace the theme of (un-)gendering in Keats’s and Emerson’s poems as their poems originate from western philosophical tradition. In their selected poems, these two poets subvert the traditional positioning of masculine as superior and active, and feminine as inferior and passive. This subversion is connected to the ideas of dynamic self and identity. Despite originating in distinct cultural and philosophical contexts, the concepts of *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation share a common thread that refers to the dissolution or transcendence of the individual self, so the intertextual relationships between these concepts contribute both to explore the individual poems’ themes and to the comparison of the corresponding poems.

Regarding the issue of gender in Sufi poetry, the gender dynamic often reflects the broader themes of love and the pursuit for spiritual union with the divine. This spiritual love is all-encompassing, transcending physical boundaries such as gender. Sufi and mystical poets employ a poetic language that blurs traditional gender roles and identities and rejects static gender identity in favour of fluidity. This allows for a more inclusive representation of love by subverting conventional ideas of gender. Poets such as Rābi’a al-’Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya (718 - 801), an Arab Muslim saint, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207 - 1273), and Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shiraz (1315 - 1390) transcend gender binaries and celebrate the divine love by seeing every individual, regardless of gender, equally capable of experiencing divine love.

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<sup>1</sup> These are my translations from their original language of German. The German terms are respectively “Seele vs. Leib”, “Vernunft vs. Sinnlichkeit”, “Mensch vs. Tier”, “Mann vs. Frau”, and “Herr vs. Knecht” (Klinger 344)

<sup>2</sup> My own translation from German. The original reads “auf diese Weise stehen die ersten Terme oben, die zweiten Terme unten in der großen Kette des Seins.” (Klinger 344)

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While Sufi poetry often transcends traditional gender binaries and identities, there are many instances where Sufi poets use gendered symbolism and imagery to convey spiritual concepts and experiences. The beloved figure usually assumes traditional feminine roles and appears as a beautiful and enchanting woman, and also in a masculine figure with masculine charisma. However, Sufi poets firmly claim that these representations merely symbolise deeper spiritual meanings so they can be reversed or blended, which draws attention to the fluidity of gender in the spiritual realm, the issue which is discussed in chapter one.

The above explanation ascertains the significance and subtlety of the term (un-)gendered in the title of the dissertation for two major reasons: first, it suggests fluidity and dynamicity in the poets' approaches towards self and identity; and second the prefix 'un' breaks the boundary between the dichotomy of male and female, thus there is no assumed superiority of either gender over the other. In this study, I attempt to explain how this tradition, which sees only the feminine as completely gendered, is largely subverted in the selected poems.

The research questions of this dissertation are: How can the (un)gendered feminine representation be understood as an integrated component of understanding *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation in the selected poems. In what ways does the close correspondence of processes of gendering and un-gendering, as far as feminine representation is concerned, affect the fluidity of identities in the selected poems? The dissertation explores the above-mentioned aspects of the selected poems that have not been sufficiently addressed in a comparative study. The dissertation also sets the poems in dialogue with each other.

Through its architecture, this dissertation engages eastern and western poetry and tries to build up dialogues between them. At its core lies a double claim: first that comparing *fana* with negative capability and self-annihilation will produce new insights about all three canonised authors' works; and second that these concepts are multifaceted, out of which other layers of meanings can be extracted when analysed with a view to the roles played by gender and processes of un-gendering on the levels of figuration, metaphorization, and poetics. Furthermore, through a comparative study, this dissertation attempts to shed further light on the complex interplay between cultural, spiritual, and personal dimensions of gender and identity as well as the ways in which gender and identity are perceived and expressed in the selected poems.

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The dissertation is composed of four chapters preceded by a methodology section, which details the research design, elucidates the theory framework that guides the study, and presents its key concepts. Chapters one to three yoke the three poets together in pairs – Hafiz and Keats, Keats and Emerson, Emerson and Hafiz –, which offers the opportunity for an analysis of the overarching themes based on the mentioned concepts. They also examine the cultural and historical contexts of each period, which provides a nuanced understanding of how socio-cultural factors impacted the creation and reception of the works within their respective societies. Conclusion summarizes the key findings of the comparative analysis, reflects on the broader implications for understanding cross-cultural literary dynamics, and suggests potential avenues for future research. Since chapters one and two discuss the three poets' biographies as well as the historical contexts, they are considerably lengthier than chapter three.

I will analyse and compare the poems in the following order: in Chapter One selected lines from Hafiz's ghazals – numbers 1, 3, 9, 12, 22, 47, 63, 70, 85, 107, 117, 119, 134, 142, 150, 151, 260, 272, 273, 293, 311, 328, 334, 338, 343, 362, and 385 – with Keats's "Ode to Psyche," "Ode to a Nightingale," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn". In Chapter Two Keats's "Ode on Indolence," "Ode on Melancholy," with "To Autumn" with Emerson's "Bacchus," "Illusions," "Maia," "Days," "Hamatreya," "Each and All," "Good-Bye," "Water," "The Bohemian Hymn," and "Give All to Love." And in Chapter Three selected lines from Hafiz's ghazals – numbers 3, 11, 17, 26, 37, 47, 50, 54, 64, 72, 75, 79, 107, 110, 136, 140, 148, 179, 194, 262, 273, 306, 327, 328, 334, 345, 346, 349, 367, 373, 403, 431, 477, 484 – with Emerson's "Threnody," Emerson's translations from Hafiz in his essay "Persian Poetry," "Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift," "Mithridates," "Days," "Bacchus," "Illusions," "Maia," "The Bohemian Hymn," and "Brahma." I have selected these poems because in them the above-mentioned concepts and themes are most strongly and most interestingly represented. However, they are also detectable and comparable in other poems by the same authors, as I shall explain in my conclusion.

### I. Lyrical Poetry and Its Universality

All the selected poems are types of lyrical poetry. The lyric is ubiquitous in world literature, and lyric poetry as a genre that precedes most narrative forms, has a long history. It is globally one of "the most widespread kinds of verbal art known to ethnographers" (Maslov 133) and has been universally embedded in aspects of social life, such as all the songs related to the agrarian cycle,

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ritual invocations, and laments. “The more we try to differentiate lyric through cross-cultural comparison,” Jackson and Prins argue, “the more it appears to be a universal phenomenon” (568). One of the most important characteristics of lyric poetry is its marked performance mode, i.e. expressive recitation. In his article “The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualization” (2005), Werner Wolf suggests a list of features for lyric poetry proposed by various critics, and he examines various definitions of the genre. He explains the terminological problems of the genre and then delineates three stages of development of the lyric genre; a) the lyric as a song to be sung; b) lyric poetry as distinguished from narrative and dramatic verse but sharing the same criterion of versification; c) lyric poetry as an umbrella term for most versified literature as a whole (23). Accordingly, the lyric poetry covers a heterogeneous text corpus, ranging from traditional poetic forms such as sonnet and lyric to free verse and modern experimental forms.

Across different languages and nations, lyric poetry employs metre, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and pause since these prosodic properties are language-specific aspects of lyric. Although the metric systems put to work in poetic cultures differs from one to the other, lyric has historically and traditionally been accompanied by a string instrument, or it has called for a special type of performance. Lyric poetry’s association with music is not secondary to its culturally conditioned uses; rather, it is an essential structural property. In other words, lyric’s “reliance on various kinds of parallel structure” plays a prominent role in its dissemination through different literary traditions (Maslov 139-40). Parallel structures are essentially language and tradition specific, yet it can be put on a global scale when parallelism of meaning is considered. Parallelism of meaning truly mirrors poetic parallelism. Such mirroring is most evident in oral poetic cultures. Throughout history, the lyric became “the fundamental means of aligning humanity with the world” (Maslov 139). Lyric poetry is thus one of the typically human responses to the outside world and one of characteristic human’s efforts to realize the nature of the self.

The extensive history of lyric poetry testifies to its transhistorical quality, which spans across cultures and centuries. It has enabled human subjects to employ language as a means of creating a new order out of the outside world. While the poems selected for analysis in this dissertation are all lyric, they are not homogeneous in terms of genre; Hafiz’s poems are ghazals, a form of Persian lyrical poetry, Keats’s selected poems are odes and Emerson’s selected poems fall into

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philosophical and contemplative lyric. Therefore, it is indispensable that I investigate historically nuance account of their poems' place within their literary tradition. Ghazal, originally a lyric genre in Arabic poetry, is, in a nutshell, a genre of lyrical love poems defined by a set of metrical rules and conventions that pertain to rhyme scheme, terseness and ambiguity and formal constraints, to which the English sonnet is the closest western poetic equivalent. An ode is a type of lyric poem that expresses solemn and elevated emotions. It is "in the form of a lengthy ceremonious address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone" (Baldick). There are two different classical models of ode: Pindar's ode, devoted to public praise of athletes in Greek, and Horace's ode, privately reflective odes in Latin. Keats's odes do not adhere to the traditional ode, but they share some of Horatian characteristics, including repeated regular stanzas.

Different scholars conceive differently of the universality of the lyric. Theodor W. Adorno puts the universality of lyric on a socio-poetic scale. He takes up the modern ideal of lyric poetry and argues that "immersion in what has taken individual form elevates the lyric poem to the status of something universal," from which he draws the conclusion that "the universality of the lyric's substance [...] is social in nature" (both 339). Adorno's idea of the universalism of lyric poetry presumes a very large scope for lyric poetry in society. I do not agree with this exaggerated portrait of lyric poetry since it is not intrinsically representational or mimetic but essentially conceived in affective-expressive terms. Yet, whenever we are concerned with lyric poetry, the identification of universal themes provides a basis for comparison because lyric poetry generally expresses personal emotions and feelings, many of which have universal implications and appeal to many people. Some critics, like Earl Miner, make bigger claims about the prominence of lyric and proclaim the role of lyric poetry as "the originative or foundation genre for the poetics or systematic assumptions of cultures" (579). This pertains to the pervasiveness of lyric poetry across cultures. In his essay "The Traveling Poetry," Jahan Ramazani proposes a lyricized vision of a global poetics and maintains the poem's speaker as an "all-encompassing, cross-civilizational, lyric 'I,' the poet's first-person meditative utterance as *omnium gatherum*" (601). Therefore, the lyric 'I' is both limited and limitless, i.e. limited in his/her own personal subjectivity and limitless in terms of emotions and experiences that are trans-local, transcultural, and transpersonal, making the lyric 'I' into a globalised lyric subject.

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The distinction that sets the lyric apart from other poetic genres is related to its openness to various discursive worlds by virtue of its intergeneric nature. We can conceptualise this intergeneric nature as “open to worlds beyond notion, locality, region, or hemisphere” (Ramazani *Poetry in a Global Age*, 246). Hence, the lyric can be conceived as a transnational genre. In his books *The Hybrid Muse* (2002), *A Transnational Poetics* (2015), and *Poetry in a Global Age* (2020), Ramazani argues that lyric, contrary to the long-held view of lyric as merely national and provisional, is often a genre of “transnational affiliation and migration, of travel and hybridization” (*Poetry in a Global Age*, 246). Thus, transnational approaches to lyric can bring to light contacts, commonalities, and differences, which highlight dynamic flows of lyric across national and lingual borders. Besides, transnational approaches raise awareness of “global historical convergences and affinities across discrepant spaces” (Ramazani *Poetry in a Global Age*, 246). Consequently, lyric poetry is receptive to transnational approaches, in particular to comparative analysis to bring to fore thematic convergences.

Comparative studies of the lyric poetry, given its putative universalism, make good contributions to the encompassing study of comparative literature. They cultivate readings across linguistic boundaries and bring to fore literatures that have traditionally been relegated to the rubric of area studies. In the last thirty years comparative literature has been “more inclusive than exclusive” (Eoyang 38) and it has even comprised texts that would have been disdained in earlier periods as vulgar. It is a truism that the conventional differentiations between high and low cultures are no longer acknowledged.

Given that, some scholars argue the decline of comparative literature in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. David Damrosch, Professor of Comparative Literature in Harvard University, delineates the sense of decline in comparative literature in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in his book *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* (2020). Because of the acceleration of globalization, he argues, comparative literature has become “a good setting to explore interests and concerns arising from the conflictual transformation of the world’s economic and cultural landscape” (336). Equally important is the rise of international communication and travel, fostering a more wide-ranging understanding of cross-cultural discourses and literatures. However, Damrosch notes that the shrinkage of humanities persists and the increasing political turmoil in much of the world has made “the revitalized discipline of comparative literature”

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remain in a precarious position (336). It is therefore incumbent upon comparatists to scrutinize new themes and reach out to their colleagues around the world to create interactions and collaborations among disparate perspectives. In the discourse of cross-cultural comparison, this dissertation aims to build up dialogues between eastern and western poetry.

### II. Lyric and Its Circulation

There is also a long history of transnational circulation of lyric poetry, for example the adaptation of the Arabic ghazal into Persian, Turkish and Urdu in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the anglicization of the Japanese haiku by the imagists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or adaptation of ghazal in modern American poetry in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century through numerous translations and imitations. Adapting the traditional ghazal into modern American poetry involves blending the rich, melodic structure of the ghazal with contemporary themes, language, and cultural references. Among this global circulation, it ranks highly, and it is currently developing to become a site for comparative poetics. Despite the ghazal's metrical complexity and enigmatic nature, many modern American poets – most prominently Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), W. S. Merwin (1927-2019), Agha Shahid Ali (1949-2001), and Patricia Smith (born 1955) – have experimented with this genre, incorporating its structure and themes into their work. Some of their ghazals, however, differ from the conventional rhythmic forms and themes, such as pain of loss and separation, the beauty of the beloved, a praise of wine and inebriation or a satire of hypocrisy. Instead, these American poets explore themes such as homosexuality and social rebellion. Yet, due to its expansiveness, lyric has proven so flexible that it simply lends itself to cross-cultural comparison. Consequently, for this study, I have selected lyric poems by the three poets for comparison to conduct cross-cultural comparisons of the genre. This study reveals parallels and convergences between the poets and charts the conceptual convergences of the concepts of *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation, along with the role of feminine imagery. Besides, this study provides instances of cross-cultural influences and adaptations in the selected poems that reveal how lyric reflects and contributes to the understanding of loss of identity, annihilation of the static self and processes of gendering and un-gendering.

Long before the above-mentioned modern American poets, Ralph Waldo Emerson had ventured into translating a good many Persian poems, especially by Hafiz, into English. His translations sensitively engage with the medieval poet and appreciate his complex and antithetical instances.

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Emerson also tried to imitate Persian lyrical poetry. “Persian poetry,” John Yohannan argues, “served primarily to emancipate Emerson’s thought from the narrow confines of convention and to enrich the store of imagery by which he gave expression to that thought” (25). That is the main reason of his borrowing many of the symbols and metaphors of the Persian poetry to enrich his own poetical writing. Emerson’s adaptations and appropriations of Persian poetic themes and imagery is noticeably deliberate. Of Hafiz, Emerson said in a lecture to an English audience: “That expansiveness which is the essence of the poetic element, they [the British] have not. It was no Oxonian, but Hafiz, who said, ‘Let us be crowned with roses, let us drink wine, and break up the tiresome old roof of heaven into new forms.’” (*English Traits* 195). Contrary to his own puritan ancestors, Emerson borrowed from Persian poetry the ideas and images of an imaginative freedom without occidental inhibitions. This argument is explained further in Chapter 3 on “Emerson and Hafiz.”

Corresponding themes of Sufi poetry can be explored in various schools of English literature. However, “the closest corresponding school of English poetry to Persian Sufi poetic imagery,” Leonard Lewisohn argues, “is that of the Metaphysical” (15). Yet, the European turn to Oriental literature in general and Persian literature in particular found its full voice in Romanticism. Lewisohn examines six anagogic themes in both Sufi and Romantic poetry, i.e. *carpe diem* (seize the day), *nunc aeternum* (now forever), *mundus imaginalis* (the world of pictorial), *fana* (annihilation and mystical death), the earthly mirror of divine beauty in the eternal feminine, and the unity of religions, which disclose the common intellectual ground between both poetic traditions (22). In a wider sense, such commonality arises from similar religious trends and doctrines between Islam and Christianity.

### III. The Intersection of Eastern and Western Literary Traditions

From the beginning, mysticism was inherent in Christian and Islamic teachings. Many Sufi theorists, such as Alexander Knysh, divide the Sufi path (*tariq*) into three major parts. The first consists in a scrupulous observance of the precepts of the revealed law (*shari'a*). After fulfilling the basic requirements of this stage, the wayfarer (*salik*) is ready to embark on the path to God per se (*tariqa*). Finally, having reached the end of the *tariqa*, s/he enters the stage of the Ultimate Reality, known as Truth (*haqiqa*). This tripartite spiritual itinerary is often compared to the *via purgativa* (the cleansing way), *via illuminativa* (the enlightening way) and *unio mystica* (the

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union of the mystic's soul with God) in Christian mysticism (301). Without denying influences and causal relations between Islamic and Christian mysticism, spiritual tendency cut across geographical regions and social milieu.

In both Christian and Islamic mysticism, there is always the chosen circle of the elect, to whom mystical knowledge is granted. That is the result of intuition, not of acquired learning. It is attained through asceticism in the quest of union with God, the common feature of Islamic and Christian mystics. There is, however, a major difference between these two monotheistic religions regarding the subject of selfhood and self-denial defined as the mystical willingness to forgo personal pleasures and to curb one's desires. The self-denial practised by Sufis never had "the fiery ascetic edge so notable in the Christian holy men and women of the Middle East." Sufis' asceticism was often "more occasional, more temporary, and more self-forgiving than its Christian counterpart," because in Sufi asceticism, it passed "far more quickly from an end to a means" (all Peters 247). In other words, Sufi asceticism found its mystical objective not merely ending up in self-denial but as a means of following the mystical path.

Muslim Sufis and Christian mystics founded their own social communities, established to gather them in various communal houses to practice their rituals. As in Christianity, "the earlier eccentric hermit saints of Islam came to Sufism as a social enterprise" (Peters 248). Early Sufis would HAVE come together under one roof by reason of a master's attraction, with the master and the circle moving from place to place, so they felt the desperate need for fixed lodgings, similar to Christian monasteries. The final point of Sufi association is the instruction by a recognized holy man, known as *shaykh* in Sufism. The Sufi initiate takes an oath of allegiance (*baya*) to the *shaykh*, which builds up a spiritual connection with the current link in the same spiritual chain (*silsila*) that leads uninterruptedly back to the saintly founder of the order. The initiate in a Christian religious order makes three binding vows to God: "one of personal poverty, one of celibacy, and one of obedience to the rule." There is, however, a difference between the Christian monk and the Sufi in the matter of oath/vow taken, as the latter "swears allegiance to an individual, the former to a rule, or an ideal" (all Peters 249). Sufis believe that from a certain stage onwards, the assistance of the *shaykh* is an exigency to attain higher stages of spirituality. Sufis' further progress thus does not depend much on personal effort but on God's mercy.

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With respect to western interest in Persian literature, translations and other forms of cross-cultural exchange played a crucial role in fostering interest, which reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, following the publication of several translations from the works of late medieval Persian poets. The Frenchman Anquetil Duperron first translated the *Vendidad* in 1759, followed by Sir William Jones's works – the linguist prodigy responsible for compiling the book *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) – and Sylvestre de Sacy, who worked on Pahlavi texts. The Pahlavi texts are translations of the Zoroastrian sacred book, the *Avesta*, into the Middle Iranian or Pahlavi language from “the no-longer-understood older Avestan language beginning in about 250 C.E” (Leeming). These literary figures are among the first western scholars of oriental texts, who introduced them to western audiences through their translations. “To a remarkable degree,” Marilyn Butler argues, “the favourite location of English poetry in the second decade of the nineteenth century becomes the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East” (59). In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries several works were translated from Persian into English, such as William Jones's *A Persian Song* (1799), a selection from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* in 1832 by James Atkinson and Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859). Translations into European languages also inspired works by various Western poets and writers. In the German context, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his *West-östlicher Divan* (1819), a collection of lyric poems inspired by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's complete translation of Hafiz's *Divān*. Among the Persian poets, Hafiz was the most translated of the classical Persian poets during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Goethe's *Divan* is a groundbreaking exploration of cross-cultural dialogue between East and West for its time. In the foreword of his translation of the *Divan* into English, Edward Dowden gives a short account of Goethe's fascination with the East and writes that “Goethe turned to the East as to a refuge from the strife of tongues, as well as from the public strife of European swords” and he refers to the immediate impact of Hafiz on Goethe due to “the inward piety” that Hafiz possessed and that he never pursued with zeal “the outward practices of religion” (all xiii). Hafiz's original ghazals boldly expose religious hypocrisy and target it with an ironic and succinctly sarcastic tone, offering a pointed critique of the religious and ruling establishments of the time. His references to monasteries, convents, and mosques disregard the religious taboos of his period, but the sarcastic tone also served to criticise societal fallacies and challenged his society's shortcomings in the eyes of religious doctrine.

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Topical themes such as the vanity of the world, analogies between experience of nature and of love, and the inability of human's reason to explain or address the world's mysteries prevail in Sufi poetry, as well as in Romantic and Transcendentalist literature. Though Sufi themes and images were often picked up and exploited for aesthetic purposes by the 19<sup>th</sup> century poets, "Sufi poetry did in fact have a more significant effect on Romantic and Transcendental poetry than simply providing a storehouse of Oriental imagery" (Aminrazavi 2). The effect of Sufi poetry on English Romantic poetry is highly thematic. The coterie of English Romantic poets was deeply interested in Sufi poetry because of its "mysticism built on the ideas of individual freedom, liberalism, meditation, seclusion, protest, and reverence for Nature" (Ruma 39). In the same vein, Romantic poets challenged the hegemony of neo-classical reason and rationality in human affairs. They found the genre of lyric poetry as a primary medium for expressing individual and personal ideas about nature, love, beauty, and unity. Similarly, Sufi poets place a high premium on lyrical poetry by employing the poetic genres of the ghazal, qasida (ode), and rubā'ī (quatrain).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American writers were exploring Oriental religious and spiritual traditions, which became an early attempt to establish a dialogue among civilizations and literatures. Thereafter, Sufism became entrenched in the American literary and spiritual scenes in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and later manifested prominently in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In the 1840s, the corpus of Sufi poetry available increased dramatically from that available at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and would increase further as the century continued. By the end of the 1840s, Persian Sufi poetry had reached Concord/New Hampshire, where the Sufi poets found an audience that appreciated them on philosophical, religious, and literary levels.

By means of his essays, lectures and translation of Persian verses, Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the scholars who influenced many fellow American writers, such as Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, and Walt Whitman, who partook of Persian literary modes and tropes in their writings. What most appealed to them was the coexistence of heavenly and earthly delights in Persian poetry. The oscillation between these delights, as Annamarie Schimmel maintains, makes it possible for many images in Hafiz's ghazals to be "understood at different

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levels” (219). This is the peculiarity of Persian poetry that appealed to western writers, such as Goethe, Emerson, and Fitzgerald, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Disenchantment with instrumental reason is another conspicuous theme in Sufi poetry, which features remarkably in Romantic and Transcendentalist writings. “Byron, Shelley, and Keats found solace in Hafez, a poet they had read in their early youth, when Sir William Jones’s translations in the heyday of the Enlightenment period came home to roost” (Dabashi 97). The Romantics felt a mounting dismay at the Enlightenment’s mechanistic philosophy, which regarded reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy. They held that observing nature implied understanding the self and that knowledge of nature could not be obtained by force. Deductive reasoning and the mathematisation of natural philosophy attempted to control nature. This brought about a schism between man and nature, thus restraining imagination, while the Sufi poets celebrated intuition and imagination, which appealed enormously to the Romantics.

### IV. The Lyric Voice

The last of the issues to be considered in the context of the lyric pertains to the concepts of ‘voice’ or ‘persona’. The issue of who is the lyric poem’s speaker has been an ongoing debate among lyric critics, such as Virginia Jackson, Yopie Prins, and Jonathan Culler. The role of authorial intention still informs many fundamental issues of literary criticism of lyricism. There are basically three assumptions about the lyric voice. The first one pertains to the conventional idea that a poem’s speaker is identical to the unmediated, monologic expressions of the poet’s thoughts and experiences and it is merely the authorial voice. In his *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness* (1994), Paul Miller specifies that lyric poetry “projects the image of an individual and highly self-reflexive subjective consciousness” (1). Scholars call this ‘consciousness’ the ‘lyric I’, which is said to be an essential constituent of lyric utterance. The ‘lyric I’ is referred to as the “discursive agency or voice and the alleged *origio* of the text,” which is unmediated and indicates the immediate presence of the ‘lyric I’ (Wolf 27). Yet, the persisting emphasis on associating the lyrical speaker with the poet’s unmediated persona has grown into disagreement among critics. In fact, the focus on lyric poetry as the poet’s personal and self-reflexive thoughts and feelings has led to the lack of consideration for the possibility of multiple voices and perspectives in lyric poetry.

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The second assumption is that there can be a distinction between the author and the poetic voice. J. A. Cuddon describes lyric poetry as one which “usually expresses the feelings and thoughts of a single speaker (not necessarily the poet herself) in a personal and subjective fashion” (412). Yet, he emphasises the subjectivity and personality of lyric poetry, even if the speaker is fictional. Still some critics, such as Helen Vendler, have proposed a third view, mid-way, namely that “the lyric is a script written for performance by the reader – who, as soon as he enters the lyric, is no longer a reader but rather an utterer, saying the words of the poem in *propria persona*, internally and with proprietary feeling” (xi). Accordingly, the linguistic sign ‘I’ in lyric is posited as a blank position which might be taken up by any reader. The debate, however, is still open to theoretical explorations of the lyric speaker. For example, in the *Journal of Literary Theory*, both established and upcoming theorists outline their theoretical positions respecting the creation of textual lyric worlds and various issues related to the lyric concepts of ‘I’ and persona. The journal, however, presents a developing field of study in theories of lyric voice. As regards the selected poems, I conceive of none of the above-mentioned assumptions about the poetic voice as ipso facto hypothesised; instead, the poetic speaker progressively arises out of the poems.

I analyse the point(s) of view expressed in the poems and the levels of mediation that the lyric speakers adopt. I believe that identifying the poetic speaker in Hafiz’s ghazals is not as simple a task as in Keats’s and Emerson’s selected poems, because his ghazals do not straightforwardly reveal their speaker and always demonstrate multiple perspectives and polyphony of voices in a single ghazal, which is a prominent feature of his ghazals. They should not be assumed as the expression of his personal thoughts, but often a combination of various voices in any one ghazal. Keats’s odes and Emerson’s selected poems perceptibly incorporate both types of poetic voices, namely the authorial voice, in which the speaker is identical with the poet, and the speaker’s voice, which assumes a fundamental distinction between the author and the voice in the poem. This will be explored in the relevant chapters on Keats and on Emerson.

The issue of the lyric voice and persona is integrated into the main argument of this, especially when it comes to analysing of loss of identity, the dynamic self and annihilation of the static self and dynamic identity. The voice sometimes seems to reflect the poets’ own assuming of the static self and dynamic identity and their own personal desire to go through the process of self-

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annihilation. However, in the same poems, the lyric ‘I’ sometimes changes into a poetic voice distinct from the poets’ own personal voice although it is expressed in a personal and subjective fashion. This uncertainty to decide which of the voices, namely authorial or poetic, contributes to the main argument of this dissertation.

### V. Methodology

Comparative literature crosses the borders of national literatures and concerns itself with supranational literatures. It was initially conceived as “a variant of literary history since its consolidations in the 1820s and 1830s” (César et al. 4). Yet, comparative literature remains an embattled approach of literary studies. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek considers it “predicated on the borrowing of methods from other disciplines” and conceived as “fragmented and pluralistic” (13-14). However, a major principle of comparative literature is its theoretical and methodological postulate to move dialogue between cultures, languages, and literatures by offering an alternative against “the built-in notions of exclusion and self-referentiality” of single language and literature study (Tötösy de Zepetnek 16). It allows for development of literary analysis from a focus on national literature towards the interdisciplinary study of literatures. The other prominent feature of comparative literature is its recognising the inclusion of ‘Other’.

The core of this dissertation basically relates to comparative literature as an academic discipline that offers an alternative field of study, beyond the literary corpus of just one language. One of its methodological postulates is to facilitate dialogue between cultures, literatures, and disciplines across languages and time periods. This interdisciplinary field properly incorporates elements of literary theory, cultural studies, history, and linguistics to investigate the influences between texts – i.e. poems in this dissertation – and the broader cultural and historical contexts in which they are produced. Such cross-cultural analysis makes it possible to explore the themes and motifs shared or adapted across languages and cultures. Comparative literature also engages multilingual approach that involves translations studies and fosters understanding of cultural subtleties that may be lost in translation. The main two languages of the poems analysed in this dissertation are Persian, the language of Hafiz’s poems, and English, the language of Keats’s and Emerson’s poems. I am fluent in both, yet I use the English translations by Peter Avery of Hafiz’s poems, assuming that most readers will be more familiar with English. However, my

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analysis of the Persian poems is based on the originals, not their translations, but I will draw on them where necessary.

This dissertation's underlying hypothesis proposes that, based on comparative literature methods, a cross-cultural analysis of the poems reveals intertextual references, influences, and commonalities in the poems by Hafiz, Keats and Emerson. With respect to the temporal span of five centuries and the geographical distance separating Hafiz from Keats and Emerson, it is productive to pursue parallels and convergences between them and chart the conceptual convergences of the concepts of *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation, along with the role of feminine imagery and its implication in the annihilation of self in the feminine manifestation. The major methods of comparative literature employed in this dissertation include close reading, thematic analysis, intertextuality, and historical contextualization.

It is absurd to conceive of literature written in each language as self-sufficient. Any literature, be it ever so multi-faceted, contributes to the creation of individual literary artefacts, which can be truly valued through comparison. Haun Saussy equates comparative literature with a tree-shaped discipline the trunk of which is “the universality of human experience,” as the diversity of emotions, ideas and situations seem to “recur across any corpus of world literature” (both 13). The immediate starting point in a comparative study is most likely thematic, as a body of topics for study. For literature in translation, subject matter is the best place to start, since nothing of the work may survive the translation process better than theme. However, it is not enough to simply discover similar themes in different works of literature, but “an account of how the works make their subject matter manifest” (Saussy 13). The ‘how’ – in other words the approach – is of significance in comparative literature. The potential of comparative literature for theoretical elaboration gives rise to the development of two approaches, the first being “marked by a fundamentally historical emphasis” and paying attention to factual connections, and the second attending to “convergences, without necessarily searching for causal relations” (César et, both al 6-7). The latter elaborates on similar literary expressions in distant parts of the world, without confirming a direct relationship between them.

This dissertation considers both factual connections, wherever they are relevant, and thematic convergences, without reaching after causal relations. It approaches the causal relations and draws on similar convergences between the selected poems of Hafiz, Keats and Emerson. Given

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the fact that Hafiz's poems influenced Emerson, the above-mentioned approaches reveal both the causal relations, though they are removed historically from any contact, and similar thematic convergences between them. The concept of self-annihilation and feminine manifestation of Divinity are mystical discourses which establish thematic parallels between Hafiz and Emerson. In the case of Emerson and Keats, they meet convergences in thematics and poetics. Privileged by historical and philosophical approximation, the Transcendentalist Emerson and the Romantic Keats provide parallels in their subject matters, especially that of self-annihilation, echoed in Keats's negative capability.

Despite the undisputed influence of orientalism on British Romantics, there is no historical evidence to suggest that Keats had any direct familiarity with Hafiz's poems. Instead, and his poetic influences are often traced back to poets such as John Milton, William Shakespeare, and John Dryden. However, the thematic convergences between Keats and Hafiz, which transcend cultural boundaries, unveil singularities and differences between their poems, which lay the foundation of the dissertation's research hypo. Notwithstanding Keats's lack of direct familiarity with 14<sup>th</sup> century Persian poetry, he had a large circle of friends, with whom he exchanged his innermost feelings and ideas via his letters, and some of whom were known for their fascination with the exotic and the mysterious, leading them to explore Oriental literature and themes, including Persian literature. For one, Leigh Hunt, who had an undisputed influence on Keats's development as a poet, was fascinated by Persian literature. His poems "Abou Ben Adhem," "Mahmoud," and "Jaffar" indicate direct thematic imitations of Persian poems. This issue is further developed in the chapter related to Hafiz and Keats.

Hafiz and Keats approach the theme of (un-)gendered self-annihilation in comparable manners. As mentioned earlier, the dissertation provides an account of how their works make their subject matter manifest. Given the knowledge that many of Sufi mystics were poets, the most appealing feature of Sufism to the English Romantics was perhaps the idea that poetry, especially lyric poetry, was a vehicle for higher literature. Therefore, lyric poetry allows grounds of comparison. The primary works under consideration constitute lyrical poems because the research question is better addressed in the poets' lyrical poems, as they convey the poet's personal emotions and state of mind.

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Since one single method is not sufficient to serve the purpose of the dissertation, I combine a set of methods, namely thematic analysis, intertextuality, historical contextualization, and multilingual approach. This combined approach, however, does not rule out the possibility of aesthetic clarification of the poems. The main one is that of thematic analysis, since it allows one to closely read and examine the data (being poems here) and identify common themes and patterns of meanings that come up repeatedly. This method involves systematically organizing and interpreting data to uncover meaningful themes that provide insights into the research question.

After reading the poems and conducting a review of literature about them, I have gleaned some preliminary findings about the concepts of the self, the ideal poet, *fana*, self-annihilation, negative capability, femininity, and female representation, which can materialize as specific themes in the respective poems. The analysis is also informed by pre-existing concepts extracted from Keats's letters and Emerson's letters, essays, lectures, and addresses, but from no other kind of writing by Hafiz because it is only his ghazals available to us. Therefore, the analysis approach is a combination of induction and deduction.

Keats's letters and Emerson's letters, essays, lectures, and addresses are a great asset to analysing the poems since the poems can be more accurately and thematically decoded when other forms of discourse are also explored. In fact, the concepts that I have extracted from their writings function as codes to analyse the poems. The themes identified with the codes in every individual poem lay the foundation of comparison of the corresponding poems. In other words, the comparison of the poems is predicated on those themes – extracted from the poems – that are comparable with similar themes in the corresponding poems. Moreover, thematic analysis helps me keep an eye on questions that converge with thematic questions about identity, selflessness, and the way the lyrical self is constituted within the language of poetry.

Given the fact that poetry, like any other artistic endeavour, does not exist in a vacuum, it is helpful to employ historical-biographical criticism in extracting the themes of the poems, which, though independently meaningful and aesthetically enjoyable, cannot be separated from the poets' life background, experiences, and epoch. Still, the poems are of primary importance and central interest for analysis and interpretation. I also draw on the theory of intertextuality, with a special focus on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Her theory, introduced in the

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first chapter of *Gender Trouble* (2007), proposes that “gender proves to be performance — that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (34). In other words, gender is not a fixed identity but rather a performance that we constantly enact through our actions, speech, and appearance. This theory challenges the traditional notion that gender is a fixed, inherent attribute determined by biological sex. Intertextuality as a literary theory and concept involves the study of literature across different cultures, languages, and periods. This theory helps me explore the interconnectedness and interdependence of the poems, the influence they may have had on each other or how they incorporate elements from other respective poems. I can also detect any echoes or traces of other texts to which the selected poems may refer either explicitly or implicitly.

## Chapter 1: The Dynamism of Dying and Becoming: Hafiz and Keats

### 1. The Dynamism of Dying and Becoming: Hafiz and Keats

#### 1.1. Cultural and Historical Background of Sufism

Sufism began to develop as a formalised tradition in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is designated as the mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslim mystics claim to seek the truth of divine love by gaining direct and unmediated personal experience of the Divine. Its history is not the story of mere ascetic sect or aberrant cult. Instead, it is built into the history of the global community of Islam. Wherever Muslims have travelled over the past fourteen centuries, Sufis and Muslim mystics have gone there as well. Spanning vast expanses of time, space and cultural diversity, Sufism's history is full of twists and turns, which make it highly demanding to pin down a clear-cut definition, yet it is worth noting that Sufism and Islamic mysticism are often used interchangeably in both specialized and general texts. The word 'mystic' has its origin in Greek – since mysticism is, historically speaking, connected with the ancient Greek mystery-cults – from whence it passed into other European languages. In this original context, the mystic was one who was initiated into the secret knowledge of things divine and had to keep silent about the knowledge that had been imparted to him/her. The term 'mystical' can pertain to "any esoteric doctrine which was revealed only to the initiated, and in the early history of Mysticism [...] the mystics were regarded as an inner circle of devotees, possessed of a knowledge revealed rather than acquired" (Smith 1). Hence, esoteric knowledge is imparted only to the select few, who show special aptitude for embracing the knowledge, which can be held at great capacity.

The word 'Sufi' is rendered as 'Aref' in Persian, 'Sufilik' in Turkish, and 'ṣūfiyy' in Arabic. Given the origin of the word 'mystic', it should not be necessarily taken as synonymous with the word 'Sufi' in Islamic theosophical and mystical texts. 'Sufi' has specific religious connotations and describes those mystics who profess the Mohammedan faith, though they constantly posed fundamental questions concerning orthodox and orthopraxy Islam. They claim that they do not limit themselves to surface readings and superficial interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith. Their fundamental questions are not often addressed on the level of the *Sharia* (Islamic law), which merely indoctrinates human beings by means of a list of correct and reprehensible behaviour. Even many Muslim philosophers, such as Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (1154 – 1191), Baba Afdal Kashani (died 1214), or Mulla Sadra (1572 – 1641), infuse this Sufi approach. Beginning with disparate individuals known for their piety and asceticism, Sufism came to

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develop several social, ritual, artistic, institutional, and political manifestations in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Sufism is generally characterized by certain conventions, ritual practices, doctrines, and institutions. The theories, which have been advanced as to the nature and source of the Sufi doctrine, are as divergent as the etymologies and definitions of Sufism. Many Muslim and non-Muslim Sufi scholars have attempted to give a clear-cut account of Sufism. Amongst the non-Muslim scholars, Edward Granville Browne, a British Iranologist provides a concise overview of the theories about the origin of Sufism, which is not to be mistaken for the origin of the term ‘Sufi’:

- 1) The theory that Sufism really represents the esoteric doctrine of Prophet Mohammad. This is the prevalent view of Sufis themselves and those Muslims who are more or less in sympathy with them.
- 2) The theory that Sufism must be regarded as the reaction of the Aryan mind – both Indian and Persian – against a Semitic religion imposed upon it by force. This theory relies on an irresolute reasoning because not all early Sufis were of Persian nationality and some of the most notable and influential Sufis of later times, such as Ibn Arabi (1165), and Ibn al-Farid (1181), were native speakers of Arabic speech with no Persian origin.
- 3) The theory of Neo-Platonist influence. As far as Sufism was not an independent manifestation of that mysticism which must be regarded as a spontaneous phenomenon, it is probable that it has been more indebted to Neo-Platonism than to any other system.
- 4) The theory of independent origin. There remains the possibility that Sufism may be an entirely independent and spontaneous growth. This theory proposes that the identity of two beliefs may be results of a like cause, without one generating the other (418– 21).

The proposed theories do not recapitulate the whole doctrine of Sufism, but they do provide a general premise of Sufism and various theories that are formed around its origin and growth. The first of these theories is considered most valid. Most of the noted Sufis have been outspoken about their affiliation to Islamic faith and their desire to follow on Prophet Mohammad’s ascetic and spiritual footsteps. These Sufis were typically poets, and their poems would allude profusely to the Prophet, his companions, and Islamic rituals.

## Chapter 1: The Dynamism of Dying and Becoming: Hafiz and Keats

There are certain premises that are almost unanimously accepted in Sufi scholarship. The first is that “reality, in its highest form, cannot be understood by intelligence [but only by] that inner sense which is called intuition,” by which one can receive direct knowledge and revelation of God (Smith 4). In other words, one can perceive and grasp the truth at first hand, without taking recourse to external information. The second premise assumes that Sufism maintains that to know God, the soul itself “must be a partaker of the Divine nature,” so it firmly claims there is within the soul an “inward light” which seeks reunion with the divine Reality (both Smith 4). Thus, if the soul is related to God, God is essentially related to the soul. It should be noted that the Sufi grasp of Reality comes from Ibn Arabi’s viewpoint (1165-1240) – an Arab, Andalusian poet, and a Sufi scholar of Islam. His works grew to be very influential on later Sufi poets and mystics, especially on Hafiz, and beyond the Muslim world as well.

Ibn Arabi’s cosmological teachings became the dominant worldview in many parts of the Islamic world. He is renowned among practitioners of Sufism by the name Shaykh Al-Akbar (the greatest master). Toshihiko Izutsu elaborates on the Sufi perception of Reality by posing a question: “What, then, is that Something which hides itself behind the veil of the phenomenal, making the so-called ‘reality’ a grand-scale network of symbols vaguely and obscurely pointing to that which lies behind them?” and immediately offers the answer to the question: “it is the Absolute, the real or the absolute Reality which Ibn Arabi calls *al-haqq*” (both *ibid.*). Izutsu here refers to a reality beyond our normal senses, different from the ‘phenomenal’, that is the appearance of things in the world. The phenomenal reality is a symbolic representation of the hidden reality. Yet, these symbols are not the ultimate truth but direct us toward the hidden reality by ‘pointing to that which lies behind them’. Izutsu continues his argument emphasizing that this so-called reality is “a vision,” yet it is not “a sheer illusion” but it is “a particular appearance of the absolute Reality, a particular form of its self-manifestation.” Put differently, it is “a dream having a metaphysical basis” (*ibid.*). Then he continues his argument by referring to the multiple and various forms, properties, and states that the ‘Reality’ consists of while it is in itself “a colorful fabric of fantasy and imagination” and it indicates nothing but the absolute Reality (Izutsu 8). One just needs to scrutinize these forms and properties and take them as manifestations of the Reality.

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Purification from self is a core objective for Sufis on the path toward God. One's soul must be stripped of selfishness and sensuality to behold the divine nature. The soul must pass beyond itself to gain access to the intuition required on the mystical path. Mystical intuition corresponds to seeing the ultimate ground of all beings beyond things in the sensible world. The thing perceptible to the senses is a locus in which Reality discloses itself to us. If a person sees the world through such mystical lenses, they will encounter everywhere a phenomenon of Reality and their sensory experiences will become "of the same symbolic nature as visions [...] in sleep" (Izutsu 12). In other words, the world that can be perceived through the senses and the visionary world merge and unveil Reality; Sufi mystics perceive the Divine attributes and names in the sensible phenomena and events. In their eyes, the whole world of Reality is no longer something solidly self-sufficient and turns into a system of ontological correspondences.

Izutsu's last premise is related to the theme of love. "The life of communion with God," Sufism postulates, "must be rooted and grounded in love" (Smith 5). Sufis conceive of the object of their pursuit as the beloved. They assiduously pursue the consummation of their love in union with God. Seeking to get rid of lower self as the great hindrance, Sufis claim that the self can be elevated by love, and it is the main factor driving the soul in uniting with the beloved. Ibn Arabi places love at the centre of his philosophy of the oneness of being and union with God. He proposes that our love for the Absolute is a reproduction of Its love for us. Through a symbiosis of spiritual and physical – or heavenly and earthly – love, one attains union with the Absolute. It is a Sufi principle maintaining that earthly love functions as an inevitable bridge and the real love must ultimately cross it. Henry Corbin, a French philosopher, theologian, and Iranologist, paraphrases Ibn Arabi's concept of love, assuming that our love is

on the one hand the love of the Creator for the creature in which He creates Himself, that is, which arouses the form in which He reveals Himself, and on the other hand the love of that creature for his Creator, which is nothing other than the desire of the revealed God within the creature, yearning to return to Himself, after having yearned, as the hidden God, to be known in the creature. (149)

Corbin refers to a two-way flow of love. One pertains to God's love for creatures that allow Him to Himself. The other way is related to the creatures' love for God, which ultimately reflects God's presence within the creature. This reciprocal love relationship between God and the creatures divulges both God's desire to be known and the creatures' yearning to return to God as the source.

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Uniting with the beloved, according to Sufism, is a tremendous journey, commonly known as the mystical path, which prompts the Sufi to traverse from temporality to eternity, that is from carnal attachments to divine aspirations, from self-centeredness to self-annihilation, or *fana* in Sufi terminology. Sufis assert that such a journey cannot be traversed in a short time but only after meeting certain conditions in the long run. Ibn Arabi provides a list of nine principal conditions of the mystical path, namely sincerity, hunger, vigil, silence, retreat, trust in God, patience, determination, and certainty (Knysh 308). The Sufi is supposed to meet all these conditions to achieve union with God. These conditions were almost unanimously accepted by Sufis after the 12<sup>th</sup> century and continue to be regarded as valid up to today. The earliest noted Sufis are Hasan of Basra (642) and Rabi'a of Basra (713), who first mentioned the need for constant vigilance and austerity. "The first line of development of Sufi asceticism was that of supererogation" (Smith 161). It means going beyond what was required by the religious law, and what was considered sufficient for others. In fact, Sufi ascetics emphasised on beginning the spiritual journey by exceeding the obligatory practices of Islam.

Sufis' renunciation was not only from things considered unlawful in Islam but from those lawful, so they would pay attention to God. Later Sufis such as Dhul-Nun al-Misri (796), Bayazid Bastami (804) and Mansur Al-Hallaj (858) – known for their ecstatic eloquence of expressing their love for God, while neglecting social customs and consequences – divulged their insights into their relationships with God in writing and speeches. Their exuberant assertions seemed to suggest madness or heresy to their audiences. They often provoked outburst of unorthodox remarks, often recognized as the countervailing interests of the state and orthodoxy.

Sufism basically emphasises introspection and spiritual closeness with God and proposes that divine truth is at times revealed to the Sufi in visions, auditions, and dreams, in colours and sounds. In this spiritual path, there is no way for the Sufi to convey these nonrational and inexpressible experiences to others but to rely upon such terminology of worldly experience as that of intoxication and its derivations such as wine, bartender, and etc. – often objectionable from the orthodox viewpoint. The Sufis have opened their own symbolic universe of Islamic discourse. The symbolism of wine, cup, cupbearer, and drunkard were first popularised by Bayazid Bastami in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and then spread among later Sufis, albeit keeping in mind that the consumption of alcohol is forbidden within Islam, which renders many declarations of wine

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consumption and intoxication ironic and metaphorical. In this respect, wine and intoxication within Persian Sufi poetry represent a state of ecstasy – an expression of love or passion that is often translated into a spiritual union with God.

Intoxication is the most favourite *ḥāl* (meaning ‘condition’) among Sufis. *Ḥāl* is a Sufi term designating “a spiritual state of mind that comes to the Sufi from time to time during his journey toward God” and *ḥāls* (or *Aḥwāl* in Arabic and Persian) are graces of God that are bestowed upon the Sufi when the soul is purified of its attachments to the material world (“*Ḥāl*.” *Britannica Academic*). Such intoxication obviously does not mean the one induced by wine or alcoholic beverages. It is most often equated with the state of being in love. In the Persian school of love-mysticism, love is “a reality that transcends this world,” and while its activity starts in the spiritual world, “its essence goes even beyond that.” In other terms, love is essentially “a divine attribute” and thus ultimately “identical with the divine Essence” (all Pourjavady 129). Yet, the manifestation of this absolute Essence appears in our world, so mystics attempt to make it as tangible as possible by means of worldly, and sometimes erotic and sensual, images. Originating from the transcendental world, love is rendered sacred among Sufis and mystics.

The obvious thing is that love, either in mystical or non-mystical usage, designates a relationship traditionally between two sides, namely a lover and a beloved. In the mystical sense, the mystic stands for the lover and God for the beloved. It is worthy of note that there is no such thing as profane love in the Persian school of love-mysticism. In this school, divine love is “the source of all love,” with the most extreme intensity (Pourjavady 130-1). However, the worldly love between two people is as sacred as the divine love, since it binds human beings together. Human love, therefore, is viewed as the preliminary step for those seeking divine love. The lover, in the mystical discourse, bears different states of joy and sorrow, expansion and contraction, the pain of separation from the beloved and the ultimate bliss of approaching the beloved through *fana*. These psychological states are best expressed by Sufis using the metaphor of wine drinking and its effect on the person. It reveals “the different states of consciousness as well as unconsciousness of the lover” (Pourjavady 133). While drinking wine, one first remains aware. Yet, as drinking it continues, one starts to fall into intoxication and its excessive persistence leads to absence from the self (*ghā'ib*). These spiritual states of mind fill the Sufi with the desire to continue the mystical journey with new energy and higher expectations. In the *ḥāl* of *sukr*

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(“intoxication”) the Sufi, while not totally unconscious of the whereabouts and surrounding, becomes half-dazed because his/her association with God blurs his/her sight of other things. In this state of mind, the Sufi hardly distinguishes between physical pain and pleasure since the beloved draws an overpowering sense of awe from him/her.

The allegory of wine and intoxication raises several problems. There are critics and scholars who consider every reference to wine and intoxication as spiritual intoxication. This is a difficult position to maintain consistently. This may prove correct when it comes to such austere mystics as Aṭṭār, Rumi and Jāmī, but it is not correct to claim that other poets, either mystics or non-mystics, did not employ the language of wine and taverns to refer to both literal and metaphorical drunkenness. Arthur John Arberry, a British scholar of Arabic literature, Persian studies, and Islamic studies, believes there is a third kind of intoxication, namely “the intoxication of the intellect” (116), which is the implication of Hafiz’s vocabulary of wine. Hafiz defies and questions the common conventional intellect and longs for a kind of unreason which stands for the real reason. Hafiz’s reason subverts the current rituals and reasoning of his era that basically constructed the conventions and codes of behaviour.

To the subsequent Sufis, love becomes the wine of life, a draught, which neither fully satisfies Sufis nor leaves them sober, but leads to the mystic’s ecstasy. At the same time, counter to these Sufis, Sufism’s earliest theorists “began to reflect on the often-rough-hewn expressions of their contemporary mystics” and they opted for a more theologically cautious approach “often referred to as sober mysticism” (both Renard 3-4). Such Sufi authors as Harith al-Muhasibi (781) and Junayd of Baghdad (830) approached Sufism in a more theologically cautious way, trying to offset their contemporaries’ less discreet expressions and views. Love is a connected theme of Sufi writings, both in prose and verse, which symbolises the relationship between the mystic and the goal of his/her quest, which is the union with God through absorption into God’s divine attributes.

Poetry, in any form, has high status in Sufi writings that address love. However, no form of poetry is “as closely tied to the theme of love, with all its ramifications, as the Persian ghazal” (de Bruijn 53). The Persian ghazal has certain fundamental characteristics of love themes, especially the lover’s plight on the path of attaining union with the beloved. The Persian ghazal is often compared to sonnet, in part because they are both established lyric forms conventionally

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concerned with the vicissitudes of love. Conventionally, in this form of Persian literature, the lover is more important than the beloved. It is as if the lover wishes to begin a quest and experience union with himself/herself.

From the Sufi perspective, at the heart of faith there is a unique and relational kind of religious experience exemplified in God's choosing, mentoring, and sending prophetic messengers to deliver a divine message to humankind. The revelatory succession, in the Sufi doctrine, begins with Adam and proceeds through a long list that includes Biblical prophets, such as Moses, Joseph and Jesus, and culminates in the non-biblical Prophet Mohammad. Sufi authors see several common features in the religious experiences of these individuals, including "intimate relationships with God, occasional manifestations of miraculous power, and the willingness to be led on a journey of discovery requiring complete trust in the divine guide" (Renard 2). Prophets represent the prime model for Sufi seekers on this spiritual path. They are construed as the successful wayfarers of this excruciating mystical path, which demands a level of experience far beyond what an average Sufi may attain. Amongst all prophets, Sufis regard Mohammad "as a paragon of devotion, simplicity of life, mystical attainment, and spiritual authority" (Renard 2). They also look upon several individuals – for example Ali Ibn Abu Talib Prophet Mohammad's cousin, Abu Bakr and Salman the Persian – as exemplars of an authoritative source of spiritual commitment and an ascetical life.

Sufism has different distinctive orders, but the principal mode of its formal Sufi organization is commonly referred to as *ṭarīqa*, meaning 'path' or 'way'. The orders are, in fact, schools of Sufi spiritual practices and mystical teachings, and named after their founders or the concepts most closely representing the core nature of the respective order. The earliest spiritual seekers and devotees of the orders gathered in local mosques and residences to perform their rituals collectively. Every order has a murshid (spiritual guide), whose role is to guide and verbally instruct the disciples on the Sufi path. As these circles of disciples grew, so did the need for institutional structures designed for accommodating larger and more diverse groups in more focused communities. Among the principal orders are the Ba 'Alawiyya, Chishti, Malāmatiyya, Mawlawīyya, Ni'matullāhī, Qalandariyya, and Suhrawardiyya. The practices and internal structures vary, especially when it comes to modes of livelihood, political activism, social integration and isolation, styles of prayer and ritual. Sufis, however, unanimously consider

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spiritual isolation and mental aloofness from the world as of higher value than a merely physical seclusion. Still most Sufis observe periodic retreats rather than permanent seclusion from communities. Although they recognized the merit of seclusion, they encouraged their readers to form small ascetic communities and consider the interest of society.

### 1.2. Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shiraz

Amongst the notable mystic poets is the Persian Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shiraz (1315). As a lyric and panegyric poet, he is not commonly known for his distinctive association or affiliation with any particular Sufi order. His ghazals, however, have most often been mystically interpreted because Hafiz efficiently elaborates and refines many Sufi metaphors (the most significant of which include wine, intoxication, dancing, the beloved, ecstasy, the veil and union), which were also adopted by Sufi poets. Consequently, he is often associated with Sufism in general, but not with an individual order. Whether Hafiz is considered a genuine Sufi or not depends on how the mixed character of his ghazals is interpreted. Therefore, there is a broad range of interpretations on his ghazals.

Some critics, including Leonard Lewisohn, while not necessarily seeing Hafiz as a member of a Sufi order, accept him as a mystic (*‘āref*). Therefore, his statements about “wine, sin, music and pleasure are interpreted in an invariably metaphorical, even relentlessly gnostic way, reading the iconology of sin and physical pleasure as an elaborate code of transcendent symbols” (Lewisohn 483). In this view, Hafiz’s libertine tone and railing against figures of religious authority, including Sufis, are appurtenances of the Malāmatiyya order, but do not prove his affiliation with it. The notable Persian scholar Peter Avery maintains that Hafiz “emerges from his Divan steeped in a Sufism which he counted as genuine” (9), and that he was a Sufi “seems incontrovertible” (10). He goes on to read his lyrics in light of spiritualism:

When all is said and done, and in this instance the doing must be perusal of the poems, what strikes the reader is that Hafiz was genuinely concerned with the Spiritual Path as the way to the realization of love in release from the distractions and turmoil of this world [...] As for religion, surely like Dante he was inspired by the overriding power of love. Religious he was. (12)

Contrary to this mystical interpretation, there are critics who take hedonism more at face value, or even condemn Hafiz as an immoral and socially corruptive libertine or as a representative of the anti-modern traditions of Sufism. Such critics disapprove of what they draw on alleged

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deficiencies of Sufis in general and of Hafiz in particular, including idleness, celibacy and sodomy, rejection of this world and irrationality. These critics usually refer to Sufi metaphors to express their propositions. The contemporary scholar Ehsan Yarshater decries the mystical interpretations of Hafiz that grow extremely into “an esoteric art, not dissimilar to the explanations offered by the addicts of conspiracy theories in political affairs” (461). He goes on to propose that “while it is clear that Hafez distinguishes sincere, self-effacing, and godly mystics from the false ones, he does not belong to any Sufi school of thought,” and that Hafiz is “very much a man of normal sensibilities with an unmistakable appetite for the beauties and pleasures of life” (ibid.). Conflicting interpretations of Hafiz’s ghazals sometimes go to the extreme of either identifying him as a divine poet or as a vivacious hedonist. There are different reasons for such widely differing interpretations. It should be briefly mentioned that the earliest documented and written ghazals date from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century when, for the first time, sizeable collections of them are known to have existed from the divans of Persian poets. This is when ghazals were used for the expression of mystical love, alongside the expression of secular love. Since then, the fusion between the secular and the mystical in the Persian ghazals has become an indispensable characteristic that makes it difficult to make a proper distinction between them.

Marcelo Stamm elaborates on the nature of such controversial, and often contrary, interpretations of Hafiz’s ghazals. He bases his explanation on the fact that Hafiz’s ghazals are poems in which each and every line oscillates and “their extraordinary beauty and hermeneutical challenge is intrinsically linked to the fact that every line and trope can be read as part of worldly love verses, as love poetry,” yet at the same time one can deploy “a mystic understanding and must be prepared to read them as mystic poetry, not in search of earthly love, but in search of the Divine” (both 89). Hafiz was endowed with the capability of oscillating between poetry and prophesy, “a double-dimensionality equally ascribable to the creative agent as both poet and priest” (ibid.). Hafiz’s creative double-impulse rests upon his employment of ambivalence and the iridescence of his ghazals, which makes the interpretation of his ghazals complex because a single line or device contributes to the overall meaning and interpretation.

That said, the first reason for the differing interpretations of Hafiz’s poems is the intermixture of secular and mystical imagery, which has evoked contradictory critical response. The issue is further complicated by the fact that ghazals were often transmitted as fragmented pieces of

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poetry, detached from their historical context. A seemingly profane poem, due to lack of evidence, may have been meant for mystical and pious occasions, but read literally, the same ghazal might sound frivolous. This ultimately results in ambiguity as a typical – even essential – feature of ghazals. What adds to this ambiguity is the fact that there is no authentic biographical account of Hafiz's life, and much of the available information is based on speculation or extracted from his poems. In addition, his Divān has a number of panegyric verses, which show patronage from several local kings and courtiers, such as Shah Shoja and Shah Mansour, as well as critical verses showing his falling out of favour with some local kings, such as Mohammad Mobarezuddin. Therefore, the intermixture of secular and mystical poetry becomes indispensable within the Divan.

The other reason for contradictory interpretations of Hafiz's poems is that they are found in numerous manuscript sources. "There are at least 1,000 known manuscripts of the Divān in Iran and other parts of the world" (Scott Meisami 476), which complicates the establishment of a reliable text, let alone critical edition of his ghazals. While the texts of other Persian poets have also been the subject of scholarly inquiry and debate, the case of Hafiz seems exceptional. This is partly because his poems were collected posthumously, leaving them subject to various textual variations, and partly because of the complicated lexical structures of his ghazals. In other words, the quantitative valuation of his ghazals – their number, the number of verses in each ghazal and the correct order of these verses – varies, based on the edition or manuscript in question. The other reason for the widely differing interpretations of Hafiz's ghazals is related to the density and complexity of his poetic language that creates a demand for accurate readings. Every attempt aims to be as close to the intended meanings as possible, but that sometimes leads to over-interpretation. In short, the intermixture of secular and mystical imagery in his poems, lack of an authentic and authorial redaction and the complex poetic language are the main reasons for the conflicting interpretations of his ghazals.

### 1.2.1. *Fana* and Female Representations in Hafiz's Ghazals

Bayazid Bastami (804), a prominent 9<sup>th</sup>-century Persian Sufi mystic and ascetic, is the first Sufi to have defined *fana*. From his time onwards, this doctrine assumed a central position in the structure of the Sufi theory. In Bastami's understanding, *fana* is "the passing away of the personal self, and that of *baqà*, the abiding henceforth in God" (Smith 242). To pass away from

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the self is to avoid the egoistic self and to realize that there is no such thing as self when coming in terms with God as the real Being. The mystic does not literally cease to exist, but his/her individuality is eternalised through and in God, which is a fundamental aspect of spiritual experience. Al-Junaid of Baghdad (830), a Persian mystic and one of the most famous of the early Saints of Islam, clarifies *fana* further: “In essence, it is a quality of God, but outwardly of the Sufi himself” and ultimately demands “the annihilation (*fana*) of the servant’s attributes” (both Lewisohn 303). According to Al-Junaid, *fana* essentially forms the prelude to the final abiding and subsistence in God’s attributes.

However, Sufis have been cautious not to advocate the un-Islamic idea of identifying the human ego with God. Instead, they deny the incarnation of God in human. *Fana* is attained through constant meditation and is followed by subsistence (*baqà*) in God. This latter experience is regarded as a free act of divine grace “which might enrapture man and take him out of himself” (Schimmel 178) in an experience called ecstasy, *wajd* in Sufi terminology. Many Sufis refer to this experiential cycle as ‘death’, in the sense of dying to one’s own qualities to dwell in the beloved’s attributes that permit the Sufi a fresh vision of God and the world. As a prelude to the mystical death, *fana* means “the nullification of the mystic in the divine presence” (Schimmel 144). Death, in this context, designates the annihilation of individual qualities, the lifting of the veil that separates the beloved from the lover. The death does not mean death as a biological event. Instead, it refers to a spiritual event consisting of “a man’s throwing off the shackles of the sense and reason, stepping over the confines of the phenomenal, and seeing through the web of phenomenal things which lies beyond” (Izutsu 8). This is, in short, the mystical experience of *fana*, referring to a state of spiritual ecstasy leading to union with God.

As for women’s actual role in the Islamic tradition, they have been engaged with Islam, along with the male domination of the Islamic stage, as recipients of the revelation and participants in the tradition. Their participation has been at two levels: At one level, a devout woman “follows the tenets of her faith and participates in the requirements, rituals, and rewards of Islam, albeit in a lesser capacity than does her male counterpart” (Eccel 209) At another level, “the feminine or ideal woman exists in the Muslim imagination, symbolizing virtue and divine compassion, an ideal to which all women should aspire” (ibid.). Such a dual identity for women found its way into Islamic mysticism. They have always participated in the Sufi life as mystics, and the

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idealised woman has been an essentially inextricable player in the development of Sufi theosophy.

From the earliest times of Islam to the present, many female mystics have been engaged in ascetic and mystical practices and have made great contributions to Islamic mysticism and Sufism. However, one seldom finds information as sufficient on male mystics as on female mystics. The early female mystics are principally characterized by their sexual abstinence, devotional acts of vigils and fasting, and they mostly lived alone as celibates. One main reason for their celibacy is that they did not have suitors who were detached enough from worldly pleasures and were unable to accompany them in their constant prayer and fasting. Apart from any spiritual motivations dissuading them from marriage, the burden of marriage and marital duties – most burdensome were household responsibilities, childbearing, and daily chores – would leave little time and energy for lengthy devotional practices.

There are several popular symbols in Persian mystical literature, one of which is representation of a moth consumed in the fire of a candle, which became popular from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The moth appears fluttering incessantly around the luminous face of the candle. The moth's desire to achieve an ultimate and absolute union urges it to sacrifice itself, so it may reach the *Unio Mystica*, which is man's ultimate aim for his soul to be absorbed in God. It leads to the dissolution of polarity that is the moth's longing for the flame. The other metaphorical usage of the candle represents it as the true lover that stands and is burnt to the end. Hafiz elaborates the candle-moth motif in various dimensions in a way that adds novelty to the motif. He enriches the dynamism of metaphorical dying and becoming; in other words, the metamorphosis of the moth precedes its death. Although many metaphors of the candle-moth motif had already been in use prior to Hafiz, and its imagery had become over-used, he managed to revive them and devise new ones. He also promoted the use of the moth as a lover in love lyrics. For example, in the following couplet, four key images are intrinsically associated with each other, which construct the whole meaning and imagery of the couplet; the novelty of the imagery lies in the associative way the poet creates to build a connection between fire and rose, as well as the coming of the harvest's time, referring to the gathered grain placed in one place:

آتش رخسار گل خرمن بلبل بسوخت / چهره خندان شمع آفت پروانه شد

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The fire on the cheek of the rose burned the nightingale's harvest; / the laughing face of the candle was the moth's calamity. (transl. by Avery 223)

The rose-colour that closely resembles the color of fire burns "the nightingale's harvest," implying ruination and collapse. The nightingale being collapsed is placed in parallel with the moth being annihilated by the candle. The candle-moth imagery offers a tangible presentation of *fana*.

Descriptions of the stages of the path in Sufi works usually identify its goal as the mystic's *fana* in God, leading to the ultimate recognition of the principle of divine oneness (*taw'îd*). In this dynamic process, the temporal identity of the Sufi is dissolved in God and the human self is replaced by divine presence. At this point of the path (*tariq*), wayfaring (*sulûk*) ceases, giving way to what many mystics described as life, or subsistence, in God (*baqâ*). "The doctrine of *fana/baqâ* developed in response to the intoxicated type of mysticism that was associated with the ecstatic utterances of Abû Yazîd al-Bistâmî and al-Hallâj, who tended to emphasize the first member of the pair" (Knysh 309). By introducing the concept of *baqâ*, Sufi theorists endeavoured to show that the ecstatic identification of the human self with God is but a transient state that is supplanted by a more advanced experience permitting the simultaneous vision of both God and the world.

Even though Sufis continued to claim unity with God, the consensus is that such claims do not necessarily presuppose a merger of two essences, human and divine. Gradually, two complementary definitions of *fana* were developed, and accepted by most Sufis and many non-Sufi scholars. The first definition presents *fana* as "the passing away of all things from the consciousness of the mystic, including self-perception," subsequently this experiential vacuum "is filled by a pure consciousness of God that precludes any perception of the other," in the second definition, it is described as the "falling away of the imperfect attributes of the fallible creature and their replacement by the perfect attributes of the Divine Self" (all Knysh 310). According to these definitions, *fana* is not a mere cessation of individual experience, but the development of selfhood. Sufis believe that this transformation cannot be accomplished just through one's effort and will, but it is granted to the select few by their Lord as a grace.

According to Sufism, although love elevates the soul on to the highest bliss imaginable, the path is particularly rough and leads through an abyss of self-denial and humiliation, and the

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experience is often a very painful one. Sufis insist that such pain cannot be avoided but should be welcomed as a sign of the beloved's attention. Love is conceived as a way of gaining knowledge about the desired object, not by reason, but through a form of intuitive perception often designated as *zauq* (taste). To be really in love amounts to focusing completely on the beloved without any regard for one's well-being, until reaching the point of annihilation through love. At this elevated stage of self-denial, the common standards of moral and religious behaviour become irrelevant. Distinctions between good and bad, or belief and disbelief, are not binding any more to the lover. When in love, the Sufi observes no contradiction between belief and unbelief as they both pertain to the one God. As the most universal symbol for the relationship between the mystic and the goal of the quest, love functions as an essential part of the verbal medium that mystics employ in their expressions of their most elevated thoughts about the relationship between man and God.

The concept of love, however, can be deciphered more reasonably with reference to human motives, either earthly or spiritual. Erotic motifs, even in their most abstract usage, are "essentially metaphorical" because they are ultimately derived from "the emotions experienced in the human psyche in the situation of its earthly existence" (both Bruijn 51). But via this derivation, the earthly emotions, involved in this transformation, are basically sublimated into a higher state. In other words, the mystical experiences running through earthly emotions are channelled through a state, which requires metaphorical language to express whatever possible to be put into words. Love as a theme pervades almost all forms of mystical poetry. It is unlikely that one finds no specimen of love poetry in the Persian quatrain, the panegyric ode or the epic genre. But it is the Persian ghazal, which is most closely tied to the theme of love with all its ramifications.

Accounts of mystical union with God are prominent in Christianity and Islam. Mystics of both faiths interpret the goal of their quest and the nature of union with God differently from one another. However, they unanimously emphasise that "the ultimate goal of mystical quest is not to know about God, but to achieve some sort of union with him" (Knysh 309). Christian and Islamic mystics claim that the world is a manifestation of God, but God is also transcendently more than the world. Jakob Böhme, a German Christian philosopher and mystic of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, gives an account of the notion of loss of self-will to achieve union with God and

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not to abandon God's way, which bears similarities with Sufi *fana*. He proposes that "[t]he only true way by which God may be perceived in His [...] essence, [...] is that man arrives at the state of unity with himself, and that, [...] in his will – he should leave [...] self" and it is only in that state that "man enters into divine union with Christ, so that he sees God Himself" (54-5). He then writes about the perpetual desire of the soul to remain in the divine union:

The human selfhood will then follow in the joy of humility, and become able to see what is contained in time and in eternity [...] The soul is then no longer her own property [...] In such a state of calmness [...] should the soul then remain, like a fountain remains at its own origin, and she should without ceasing draw and drink from that well, and nevermore desire to leave the way of God. (56)

This corresponds to the Sufi *baqà* – the subsistence and abiding in God. Among the Romantic poets, William Blake puts forward the idea of annihilation of selfhood in some of his mystical and symbolic writings. His poem "Milton" (1810) proposes that egocentrism is a kind of death: "I will go down to self-annihilation and Eternal Death; / Lest the Last Judgement come and find me unannihilate, / And I be seiz'd and giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood" (ll. 13-15). Blake develops the idea of self-annihilation and subsequent abiding in God. Ananda Coomaraswamy, a Ceylonese Tamil philosopher and metaphysicist, quotes these verses in his "Intellectual Fraternity" and remarks that the quest of annihilation is a universal aspiration in all religious traditions, for "one could not find in Asiatic scripture a more typically Asiatic purpose than is revealed in his [Blake's] passionate will to be delivered from the bondage of division," therefore, "Does one not see that these are the same for all in all ages and continents" (both 113). Blake's elaboration of self-annihilation in God is thematically close to the classical Sufi concept of *fana*, as the annihilation of self-consciousness in divine consciousness.

Mystical intoxication plays a major role in the dynamic process of *fana*, which comes up in connection with female representations and feminisation of the beloved God. Michael Barry argues that "the mystical imagery of classical Persian Sufi [...] lyrical poetry can most definitely configure the Divine Beloved as a female" (222). The feminised beloved God in Sufi poetry is self-sufficient and inaccessible, and the wishful projection of the lover and he is her indefatigable pursuer. The mystical meditation gains momentum in the female manifestation of Divinity. Hafiz often feminises the Beloved, while reiterating the reflection of feminised divine beauty. In the meantime, he may be surrounded by an air of melancholy. There are various reasons for the

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depiction of God with feminine features in Sufi writings. The most outspoken expositor of this concept is Ibn Arabi. To get a better grasp of the feminine representation of the beloved God in Sufi and Islamic mystical writings, Ibn Arabi's realisation of woman and her fundamental role in conceiving the attributes of the divine beloved needs to be more deeply scrutinized.

Total devotion to a human beloved as a medium to gain union with the divine beloved is a theme recurring in Islamic mysticism. Abdollah Javadi-Amoli – one of the prominent modern Muslim philosophers, scholars and expositors of Islamic mysticism – elaborates on Ibn Arabi's idea of Divine attributes actualized in women in his book *Woman in the Mirror of Divine Majesty and Divine Beauty* (2016): “Because His ‘Sanctified Divine Essence’ is impeccable in being beheld without the manifestation chamber<sup>3</sup> and embodiment, any of the embodiments, which better represents the Divine names and attributes, displays God more properly, and woman stands for the embodiment of God more perfectly than man [...] because she absorbs and enamours man” (193-94, my translation). Javadi-Amoli argues that, of all creations representing aspects of God's nature, women more perfectly embody God because they are nurturing and receptive (absorbing) and charming and captivating (enamouring).

According to the Sufi school of thought, God has love for His creatures and God can be conceived of in human attributes. The Islamic tradition divides God's divine names in two categories: 1) those related to His severity, wrath and justice which are His names of Majesty (*Jalal*); 2) those related to His beauty, gentleness and mercy which are His names of beauty (*Jamal*). Therefore, Sufis personify God in their writings, especially in lyric poems, and address Him with human attributes. They maintain that love, mercy and gentleness are the overriding reality of existence and they will ultimately win out His severity and wrath. God, in their thought, is caring, warm and the loving mother, not a demanding and forbidding father. Put differently, they lay stress upon God's feminine attributes. Accordingly, they dwell upon the establishment and union with God. Since the Quran repeatedly affirms that everything is a sign of God, Sufis assume that all things display similarity and signify the ultimate Reality, and these signs establish qualitative analogies between divine attributes and qualities of creatures. In other terms, God discloses Himself through the cosmos and the creatures are the manifestation of God's attributes, the loci of manifestation for the qualities of God. Islam declares that God

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<sup>3</sup> A manifestation chamber means a proper place or site for the appearance of the divine

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cannot be seen in Himself, that is in His own essence. God's essence is beyond any delimitation and relationship, so He appears only as signs in every existent thing. But it is in human beings that God reveals Himself most completely and perfectly, and this is the woman who embodies the divine attributes of compassion and benevolence.

Ibn Arabi emphasises the ultimate union between man and woman, male and female in his writings. Huda Lutfi argues that his mystical philosophy of separation and return to the essence stems from "his very special spiritual and physical experience which unites male and female." She assumes that Ibn Arabi was convinced that "the mystic approaches his female counterpart on all levels of being, the spiritual and the physical," accordingly, this union experienced by both male and female "constitutes a totality which is identical to the very form of the Absolute – who is, of course, of an androgynous nature" (all 9). To Ibn Arabi all existence is one and our own existence is only a reflection, a mirror of the Creator, and he assumes that man's longing for woman is a mirror image of God's longing for the human being. The root of God's longing for the human being originates from one verse in the Quran: "I blew into him of My own spirit" (15:29). In fact, God is longing for Himself in or through the human being.

Sharaf al-Din Qaysari – one of the leading expositors of Ibn Arabi's school of thought in the fourteenth century – clarifies the mutuality of the relationships between God and the human being on the one hand, and between man and woman on the other. Under the same above-mentioned Quranic verse, he argues that it "proves that the relationship of Adam to his Lord is exactly the relationship of the part to its whole and the branch to its root [...] Thereby interrelationship is established between the two sides. Hence each one became lover in one respect and beloved in another respect" (qtd. in Murata 190). This 'unity of being' – in Ibn Arabi's word – is a reality, not a state of mystical consciousness attained in the mystical vision, but one should attain to perfection and become the 'perfect man' to fully experience this reality. The perfect man (the microcosm) as conceived by Ibn Arabi is "at once male and female, reflecting the image of the androgynous God figure. To him masculinity or femininity is but an accident of human reality" (Lutfi 10). For Ibn Arabi the spiritual woman perfectly embodies the medium through which one could accomplish an understanding of and union with the divine beloved.

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As already mentioned, God's attributes fall into two categories, those connected with His beauty (*jamal*) and those with His majesty (*jalal*). The attributes of beauty relate to the attributes of majesty as women relate to men. Hence, a number of God's attributes – of which compassion is but one – are feminine, and since His attributes are essential to His being, “there exists within God a feminine nature” (Eccel 216). The best way to recognize the essential human essence, according to Ibn Arabi's school of thought, is in its dual role as active and passive. Ibn Arabi sees in woman the perfect image of God. On the social level, Islam sustains the primacy of God as not only male-gendered, but dominant and majestic: as king, lord, and ruler. It inexorably establishes a theological patriarchy even if the word father (or mother) be refused for God in Islamic theology and that suggests awe and distance as God's ruling qualities. On the spiritual level, however, many Muslim authorities affirm the primacy of God as merciful, beautiful, gentle, and loving, all of which are attributes traditionally gendered as feminine or even maternal. Sachiko Murata argues that these attributes “establish a spiritual matriarchy” and human's spiritual aspiration “is accepted and welcomed by God” (both 79). In this domain, intimacy and nearness are the ruling qualities. This helps explain why one can easily find positive evaluations of women and the feminine dimension of things in Sufism.

The basic elements of being, according to Ibn Arabi, are divided into complimentary opposites: active (masculine) and passive (feminine), but they are in conjugal relation with one another, and they are united by love. These opposites are in “perpetual interaction on all levels of being.” It is “the Absolute in its Singleness that is the original source of these three essential realities [masculine, feminine, and love] behind the creative process.” It is in this state of Singleness that the divine names were still unseen and loved to see themselves manifested in a mirror, namely, the concrete existence, so this is when “the primordial conjugal union (*nikah al-fardiyyaal-ula*) takes place between the Universal Soul (*al-nags al-kulliyya*) which is the feminine element at this ontological level – and the Intellect (*al-'aql*) – the masculine element” (Lutfi 12). The feminine element is regarded as the locus of receptivity and the masculine is subsequently directed toward that locus which willingly receives it, thereby effecting the world of procreation. The Absolute is subsequently deemed androgynous or conceivably even ungendered. Given that, it is no accident that Ibn Arabi employed terminology abundant in strong sexual connotations in his mystical writings. It is reasonable to argue that his own unique mystical experience of love

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may have had a bearing both on the terminology he used, and his view of the creative process in which he saw creation as incorporating opposite elements in perpetual conjugal union.

Ibn Arabi alludes to physical love between the mystic and his female partner as being the mystical experience through which the oneness of being is attained. He assumes that “those who know the importance of women and their secret do not shun away from loving them, indeed in loving them is the perfection of mystics (*kamal a 'arifin*)” (Lutfi 15). From a historical approach, adoring women in Arabic and Persian ghazals is the heritage of adoring ancient and archetypal – that is pre-Islamic – goddesses, and “the hyperbolic adjectives and characteristics attributed to woman is reminiscent of the majesty of the archetypal woman, being beautiful and real beloved, whom every person aspires to unite with” (Hosseini 37). In loving the woman, the mystic basically does so in divine exemplification. He loves his female counterpart by the same love he loves his beloved God, because she leads him to Him. The mystic’s perfection ultimately occurs through an act of exteriorising the inward aspect. The mystic discernibly follows the precepts of the prophetic tradition: “he who knows himself knows his Lord,” which relates to the mystic’s approaching his female counterpart, as well as the male aspect. On the way knowing oneself, one’s low self must be annihilated to pave the way for full self-cognition. Therefore, the mystic would never perfectly attain *fana* as long as he approaches the female counterpart to the full extent. In this theophanic vision, the concept of divine love is basically the notion of the creative feminine.

Ibn Arabi did have a high regard for women and their spiritual capacity. His love for the Persian woman Nizam, the major inspiration for his Divan, is ultimately not a profane love for her, if contextualised in his mystical thought, but instead a transcendent love for God. In the preface to his *Tarjumān Al-Ashwāq* (1215), he states that “in poems I point (allegorically) to various sorts of Divine knowledge and spiritual mysteries and intellectual sciences and religious exhortations. I have used the erotic style and form of expression because men’s souls are enamoured of it” (4). On the one hand, the role of the physical beauty of the woman as a human being functions as an accessory to the course of mystical life. On the other hand, major Sufis and mystics glorify the ideal woman as the creative feminine, which is the immediate emanation of the divine – a mirror in which God is manifested.

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Though Ibn Arabi's feminisation of the beloved God sparked a strong interest in Sufi poets to employ a terminology, which represents the feminine attributes of God, the gender of the beloved has not always been specified in Persian ghazals, resulting in a large degree of ambiguity in them. Since Persian grammar lacks a distinction of gender, the sex of the beloved is often linguistically unspecified. There are mentions, for instance, of the first trace of a beard, the use of the word *pesar* (young boy) or references to occupations normally associated with male young-sters (cupbearers, musicians, craftsmen, etc.). There is much more to this than a linguistic peculiarity because it marks the very special character of the ghazal as an erotic poem. The Persian ghazal mostly concentrates on love at a level where the distinction between the sexes has become irrelevant, but lyric poets have mainly attempted to transcend eroticism in its mundane sense.

Hafiz is a master of intermingling both earthly and spiritual aspects of love. Some ghazals in his *Divan* fully represent an earthly beloved and some portray a spiritual beloved, all of which can be identified with their own characteristics, yet there are many ghazals whose addressed beloved is not definitely identified with being either earthly or spiritual. What makes the feminine figure laborious to interpret in Hafiz's ghazals is the absence of any direct female word, except only one verse which uses the word woman (*zan*). He uses the word girl (*dokhtar*) but that usually combines with other words connoting wine and intoxication.

With respect to the mystical nature of Hafiz's ghazals, it is almost a vain attempt to decipher his personal attitude toward women. But "the atmosphere of his lyrical poetry," Khaefi maintains, "enfolds woman in a halo of poetic figures of speech such as metaphor, ambiguity, irony and synonyms to such an extent that the addressed woman becomes a perfect representation of his ascension to the most excellent position of emotion and sentiment, which is love" (both 48). Yet, Hafiz, perceptively employs a symbolic language rich in ambiguity, metaphor and other figures of speech that depict, in many instances, a feminine beloved, although at that time it was common to address male beloveds. The woman in Hafiz's ghazals does not have merely spiritual appearance nor just earthly and mundane appeal, but she is the immediate emanation of the divine – a mirror in which God is manifested. She is also endowed with both earthly/erotic and spiritual attributes. However, when it comes to eroticism in Hafiz's most sensuous ghazals, woman "is maintained in a cloak of sanctity and purity" (Khaefi 50). This is the kind of feminine

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representation most pervasive in his ghazals. Hafiz “draws a depiction of woman and her beauty just like Mona Lisa still undeciphered” (Khaefi 50). By employing words and images that depict an attractive woman, Hafiz relates her status to a spiritual beloved or spiritual manifestation of God who is worth all attention and care.

### 1.3. British Romanticism and John Keats

British Romanticism is an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that characterises different forms of art, including works of literature, painting, music, architecture, criticism, and historiography in Western civilization over a period from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It as a whole is a rejection of the precepts of order idealization and rationality that typified classicism in general and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century neo-classicism in particular. However, it never totally opposed the era that had preceded it; the Romantics “emerged from it, carrying into the future its energies, aspirations, and customs” (Wu 10). British Romanticism, in particular, organically evolved out of its preceding era, and is usually understood in two different ways. As a historical period, it refers to the three decades or so (usually from either 1789 or 1798 to 1832) during which Britain, under the influence of the French and American revolutions, was in transition between the old-world order (the pre-industrial age) and the new one. However, this historical definition of Romanticism is rivalled by one that takes its beginning and end (1798 to the end of the 1820s) to those writers considered canonical (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats) produced their greatest works.

In English literature, Romanticism began roughly in the 1790s and peaked with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. A contrasting definition of ‘romanticism’ (with a lower-case ‘r’) is used in literature or art history, and even everyday conversations about art and culture, to describe a trait embodying certain attitudes toward art, emotions, and creativity. But this second definition usually identifies such traits with the historical male Romantic artists. Speaking of an artist with romantic qualities, we usually mean he is a Romantic writer such as Blake, Wordsworth, and Byron. This sense of the term does not help when thinking about women writers, who often critiqued Romantic attitudes.

The Romantic period was a time of great political and social upheaval. Many influential political texts were written, including “A Vindication of the Rights of Men” (1790) by Mary Wollstonecraft, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) by Edmund Burke, and *Rights of*

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*Man* (1791) by Thomas Paine. Concurrent with the French Revolution, in the closing years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, social and political unrest in Britain was mounting rapidly. It was a time of argument and counterargument centred on one issue: the rights of man. On one end of the political spectrum stood radicals, who supported revolutionary changes, that would ultimately result in what we know today as modern democracy.

Thomas Paine, an English-born American political activist, philosopher, political theorist and revolutionary, as well as one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, published his book *Rights of Man* in 1791. It was an eloquent defence of the French Revolution and celebrated the downfall of the French ruling classes and urged the establishment of a democracy. Paine's book questioned the traditional values of Britain and advised people not to accept the way things were and urged people to rise and rebel against what he assumed a long-lasting oppression. Mary Wollstonecraft defended Paine's book in print. She had already published an argument against Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and would go on to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), in which she advocated amended education for women to enable them to act as rational beings equal to men. Events in America and France had, therefore, provoked substantial reflection about the way society was organised along class and gender lines. This kind of thinking appeared new to people and they started to question their place in society.

On the other end of the political spectrum, pertaining to the emerging unrest in Britain were the loyalists, who strongly opposed any social reform, believing that it would bring the ancient British 'constitution'<sup>4</sup> into danger. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke had already recognised the potential that matters would take a violent turn, but in 1790 numerous British people measured his *Reflections* against reforms that meant to enable ordinary working people to take a more active part in deciding how the country was governed. Ordinary people organised into political groups and demanded their rights, but the government regarded any organised society – especially those with an unlimited membership and nationwide association – as dangerous for the stability of government. Their fears were aggravated by the turn to violence taken by the French revolution, and once war with France broke out in 1793, the British authorities drastically curbed the reformist activities of the societies under the guise of national

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<sup>4</sup> It is noted that there was not written British 'constitution' in the way that there was for the US, but only a constellation of documents that fulfil the same function

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security, by commissioning spies penetrating radical meetings and providing reports of treasonous plots. Government-sponsored journalists also propagated this message that British reformers were literally the same as French Jacobins, the most extreme revolutionary faction.

In contrast to pro-government associations and propagandists stood corresponding societies, also known as 'radical societies' and 'Jacobin clubs'. The latter is a term used to denote some forty parliamentary reform organisations formed in London and in provincial cities in the 1790s, which sought to correspond with other national and international groups on the model of American Revolutionary societies. Among the best known was the 'London Corresponding Society,' founded by a certain Thomas Hardy in January 1792, which at its peak numbered 3000 - 5000 members. Among the members were around 1500 activists, organised into divisions. In taverns and pubs, they convened and called for large open-air meetings to petition for reform and attempted to alert people to the violence committed on their rights. The Six Acts of 1819, designed to control popular radical activity and suppress any meetings for the purpose of radical reform, also deteriorated the situation for free speech and expression.

With respect to the rapidly moving and tumultuous time, the English Romantic period is not an age of political revolution, but rather an age of revolutionary thought and art, as well as industrial revolution. Instead of accomplishing real political change, it ushered in a new social and cultural direction. Its historical significance and its art find voice in the emotions and motives that manifest themselves in the political and artistic works of William Blake, Samuel Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, John Keats, Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More and many other Romantics.

From the latter half of the eighteenth century on, European Romanticism, as it emerged historically, may perhaps be generally defined as a reactionary response against the scientific rationalisation of nature during the Enlightenment, which had alienated masses from land and nature. The Romantics saw nature as a pure and uncorrupted source. It also defied the conviction that "the full exercise of ethical reason may grasp that objective ideal" (Bate, *From Classic to Romantic* 94). The classical ideal emphasised on the general and its appeal on the rationally governed emotions, but Romanticism called for emphasis on the particular and the appreciation of the truth realised and declared in art by response to that particular which is often imaginative, emotional and subjective rather than rational, regulated and objective.

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The Romantics also believed that a creative and unifying imagination would allow a visionary insight into the essence of objects. Defined as the primary faculty of creation in art, imagination rose to the level of a creative power in Romantic writings. The idea of creative imagination became the cornerstone for an expanding network of concepts and values, such as poetic power, originality, individuality, sympathy, and even ethics. The idea of imagination also directed literature, aesthetics, philosophy, religion and criticism into new thought patterns and discourse. Romantic imagination tended to mix and draw the new thought patterns into one body, a university of “knowledge and creativity reflecting the interconnected nature of human life and the universe itself” (Engell 3). The idea of imagination was in fact a reaction to certain tendencies, aspects of thought and literary practice in the eighteenth century, such as those associated with neoclassical formalism and materialistic theories of mind and body. In fact, the term ‘visionary’ is a key concept that sutures Romanticism to Sufism since they both value individual and spiritual engagement higher than mediation through institutions, either religious orders or government.

The idea of imagination as a faculty, however, is a hinge that connects the Enlightenment and Romanticism, i.e. periods that are often seen and presented in contrast to each other. Since the seventeenth century, a haunting dualism of man and nature had reached a pinnacle in a new philosophy called “all in doubt” that bifurcated man and nature and “upset the pattern of Western thought and overturned one of its most cherished goals of unity” (both Engell 7). It fostered a mechanistic outlook simply strengthened by the obstacle between man and nature, but imagination reconciled this dualism to “overcome the alienation between man and nature by establishing a power of knowledge and creation common to nature and the mind” (ibid.). The idea of imagination stemmed from both the empirical and the ideal and formed a means for the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century writers to unify man and nature. Imagination can, according to the Romantics, synthesise soul and body and unite man’s spirit with the reality of nature. This synthesis would be fulfilled in the art of creative genius. This is also a central Sufi concept that postulates that everything in existence is eventually a manifestation of one divine essence and nature reflects God’s attributes. Nature functions as a source of spiritual growth and inspiration. Both Sufism and Romanticism share a profound appreciation for nature.

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Creative imagination represents a moving force that redresses the aesthetic balance between ideal and real, subjective and objective. It then promises the arts a role in philosophical thought, in knowledge, and even in religion. Romanticism sustains principles of the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental. Likewise, Sufism explores the transcendental, a realm beyond the physical world. It is a central tenet to Sufism to move beyond the physical towards a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. Similarly for Romantics, the poet's self-confidence meant more than just turning to the inner world per se but also a belief in the reality of a unity of being. In other words, Romanticism held a belief in, or aspiration toward, a unity of being in which all the typical distinctions, such as objective and subjective, man and nature, the conscious and unconscious, are deemed as merely modes of the whole.

The Romantics placed great faith in imagination, and poetry became its strong deliverance. The value of poetry was not decoration but that it expressed spontaneous feelings, with parallels to the poet's own emotional life in the natural world. Poetry was represented as the most articulate expression of arts for the Romantics because it enabled poets to see into the essence of objects. In his essay "A Defence of Poetry" (1840), Percy Bysshe Shelley seeks to prove that poets regulate and uphold morality and establish the legal norms in a civil society, creating the groundwork for the other branches in a community. Those poets who "imagine and express this indestructible order," Shelley claims, "are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life" (4). His conclusive remark that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" indicates more generally a mission or mantle similar to that of the medieval romance quester, who takes the virile role of the chivalric saviour (27). The Romantic poet arms himself to compete for the collective good to stand out as the best for the sake of those who need protection. In Romantic poetry, medieval peasants and ladies are replaced by the lower classes, beggars, virgins, widows and women. Poetry merits the same value in Sufism as it offers a unique medium to express their mystical experiences, particularly those experiences that are difficult to describe in ordinary language. Poetry helps Sufis convey their inner mystical experiences in a way that resonates with ordinary readers.

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When it comes to the concept of art, Romantics break away from the classicists. For the latter, as M. H. Abrams explains in his *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), a work of art resembles a mirror, which is passively mimetic of the existing reality, but for the Romantics a lamp throwing out images not in the 'real' but in the poet's inner world. Therefore, art becomes subjective and intuitive for Romantics rather than objective and pre-planned. Accordingly, romantic aesthetics largely relies on the human imagination's capability to create connections. This capability makes it possible for the human mind to connect with the mysterious and the divine. During the early years of the Romantic period, poetic transcendence "offered an important alternative to the distrusted mysticism of Christianity" (Fay 10). Religious mysticism had almost lost its strong foothold, yet Romantic poets, especially those of the first-generation Romantics, never relinquished inspiration and imagination. Instead, they associated themselves with the kind of artistic inspiration that draws upon the imagination for its grandest acts of creation that were most real and sincerely felt.

According to the Romantics, the artwork itself, when finished, can only be great if it gives the poet the sense of having been inspired and immediately penned down without the poet's ensuing interventions. That spontaneity and immediacy play a major role in Romantic poetry is also made clear in William Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" which "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity" (both 251). Wordsworth's emphasis on the spontaneity of poetry composition is related to the Romantics' idea that their art originated in a superior inspirational gift and that, through their poetic genius, they strived to touch people through their poems. The Romantic poets' approaches to ideas and sensations are generally distinct from mere combination of simple into complex ideas. Romantics coalesce ideas and sensations, i.e. bring about a fusion of ideas and sensations into a new and irreducible whole. Such an associational tendency accounts for the imagination's capacity, which not only recomposes "from original elements," but also as a kind of shaping force, presents "a wholly new creation" (both Bate, *From Classic to Romantic* 119). In other words, the resulted compound may have properties which do not belong to any of the single elements of which it consists. The new properties, according to Romantic writers, can be conveyed by means of suggestion.

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Edward Young (1683 –1765), an English poet, critic, and philosopher, was influential in the formulation of Romantic notions of inspiration. In his *Conjectures on Original Composition* ([1759] 1918), he identifies genius as “that god within” (15), which is located within the poet, not necessarily in the divine or demonic realm. He refers to the artistic inspiration which is the sudden awareness of an idea or image stimulating creativity. Romantics believed that artistic inspiration evoked visions and released a burst of creativity in those engaged in artistic endeavours. The concept of artistic inspiration existed side by side with the idea of religious inspiration, and the two were thought to sometimes combine and even evoke one another. Religious inspiration, then, referred to “the infusion of the heavenly spirit into the mind and soul” (Burwick 137), and its combination with artistic inspiration is theorised in Coleridge’s *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (1849), wherein he compares reading Shakespeare with reading the Bible. Coleridge argues, “Would not every genial mind understand by Shakespeare that unity or total impression comprising and resulting from the thousand fold several and particular emotions of delight, admiration, gratitude excited by his works?” and if somebody said “we must not interpret St. Paul as we may and should interpret any other honest and intelligent writer or speaker,” then it would be the very “*petitio principii* of which I complain” (all 28). Coleridge argues that what is true of Shakespeare’s works is also true of the Bible, therefore the interpretation of both should follow the same process because the artistic inspiration and the religious inspiration both stimulate creativity.

Closely related to inspiration is the notion of individualism. Romantic artists discovered in themselves a new conception of the self as not just part of the surrounding society but as standing in relation to that society. This resulted in both introspection and extrospection, that is a higher awareness of others, while looking within their own selves. At an extreme point, this led to the Romantic artists’ rejection of society, since in their eyes, society had been infected with avarice and immorality. Their dissatisfaction with the societal organisation was often channelled into specific criticism of the bourgeois class, the feeling of oppression, and the authoritarianism of church and state. Against these forces, the Romantics asserted the individual’s rights and dignity of the individual, while rebelling against the neo-classicist emphasis on rationality, formality, and conventionality.

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Several major Romantic writers, such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, either lived apart from London's high society or, like Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, went into European exile altogether. The alienation associated with the division of the self from society became a defining trait of some of Romanticism's best-known figureheads, such as Lord Byron. But other Romantic writers, such as Anna Seward, William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth preferred to live in small hamlets or towns with only tenuous connections to London. Nevertheless, this sense of individualism barely inhibited them from assessing society and observing its progress or regression through art.

The idea that artists had a responsibility for society, particularly during the turmoil expediting the French Revolution, was driven by questioning rigid forms and structures of laws and seeking man's freedom from a rigid autocratic society and monarchy. Poets could pose radical questions because they saw themselves as separate from society, even when they had a powerful public voice. In their writings, Romantic writers reiterated the significance of self-expression, individual uniqueness, mystery, and superstition, and emphasized imagination as a gateway to share their experiences. In the introduction to Keats's selected odes, below, I will expand on his view of imagination as a faculty.

John Keats (1795 – 1821) is recognised as one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic poets, along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. His works were in publication for only four years before his death from tuberculosis at the age of 26. Although his poems were not generally well-received by critics during his lifetime, and even harshly attacked – particularly by *Blackwood's Magazine* – his reputation grew posthumously, and by the end of the 19th century, he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century recognised Keats's status as a poet and letter writer, the brevity of his career, and the appreciation of his poetry, as well as his short life and his remarkable works left at such a brief time of poetic production. Between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four he published three volumes of poetry – *Poems* (1817), *Endymion* (1818), and *Other Poems* (1820) – which have remained influential. Since *Other Poems* contains the five great odes, as well as the famous narrative poems “Lamia”, “Isabella”, “The Eve of St. Agnes”, and *Hyperion*, it is regarded a landmark volume of British literature. The other key fact about Keats is the shape of his poetic career and the suddenness of his development into poetic maturity. He wrote his first poem at the

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age of eighteen and produced some twenty other poems and occasional pieces during the next two years. At the same time, he was finishing his apprenticeship as an apothecary at Edmonton and taking a course in medicine at Guy's Hospital in London.

Keats's *Poems* of 1817 never fared well, neither with contemporary critics nor with later ones. Keats was labelled a Cockney School member. Marjorie Levinson defends Keats and absolves him of any Cockney-associated characteristics: "We put what the contemporary reviews called Keats's 'vulgarity' under the sign of psychic, social, and textual unself-consciousness: roughly, the sign of sensuous sincerity" (2). Often overshadowed by Leigh Hunt, Keats ultimately outgrew him. The two men's relationship centred around poetry from the start and Keats returned to live with Hunt during his final years. The rejection of Keats's initial volume of poetry was mostly a matter of political conflict rather than merely aesthetic assessment, such as word choice or jarring rhyme. Keats's close association with the two controversial liberal journalists of the age, namely Hunt and William Hazlitt, marked Keats as Hunt's protégé in politics and poetry. Though in a politically tumultuous and conservative context, Keats never revealed any kind of political affiliation and muted his political voice, that, I believe, saved him from possibly further attacks on him. As mentioned before, his work was initially met with mixed reviews and some harsh criticism, but his work was posthumously recognised and admired widely until today.

Keats never flatly rejected Enlightenment ideas, yet he hardly accepted Enlightenment models and frameworks unthinkingly, either. In fact, he avoided any ready-made ideas, and invariably modified them by his habit of independent thinking. Instead, his approach to the Enlightenment was relatively revisionary. However, Enlightenment ideas on man, religion, and society "retain epistemological weight in his poetry" (Fermanis 8). The Enlightenment ideas about humanity and religion have influence in shaping his understanding of the world. In fact, his distaste or systematic and speculative thought should not be taken at face value.

Keats's extant letters, beginning in 1816 and ending with his death in 1821, have elicited extensive study and analysis. Some Victorian critics believed that Keats's letters and poetry were too emotional and sensuous. Thomas Ward and Matthew Arnold argue that in Keats's poetry, "Keats as a poet is abundantly and enchantingly sensuous; the question with some people will be, whether he is anything else" (428). Adding to the same argument, Arnold maintains that Keats's

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step beyond mere sensuousness is “something more, and something better” that he has because of “the elements of high character Keats undoubtedly has, and the effort to develop them” (both 430). Since early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Keats’s love letters have been acknowledged to be among the greatest of their kind, and their passages on literary criticism are now thought to be major documents of Romantic aesthetics. During the four or five years of Keats’s active writing career, he attained a penetrating insight into the workings of his art and into the artistic qualities of poetry. The peculiarity of his works is “the consummate stylistic manifestation [...] of a passionate desire for absorption in what for him was poetical” (Bate, *Stylistic Development* 1). Although Keats’s conception of the poetical work undergoes progressive change, he always emphasised the specific and the concrete. Throughout his letters, he constantly orients his own attitudes and efforts toward the canonical works of the past.

Delving into the conception of the poetical character and the nature of an artistic product, Keats’s letters discuss poetry based on his conception of the nature of the artist’s character and his approach to his subject. One of the most significant issues that receives critical articulation is the association of his ideal poet with ‘negative capability’. Thus, the letters not only reflect the events of Keats’s outward life but also the insights of his inner mental development and day-to-day progress that teem with ideas about life and poetry. Some passages stand among the most readable and admired in English literature, including ones to be found in the letter to Benjamin Bailey from 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1817 about sensation, thought and “the authenticity of the Imagination”; in the one to his brothers George and Thomas Keats from 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1817 about “Negative Capability” in philosophy, literature and aesthetics; the one to John Taylor from 27<sup>th</sup> February 1818 about his few “axioms” in poetry; the one to John Hamilton Reynolds from 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1818 about Wordsworth, Milton and “axioms in philosophy” and human life as “a Mansion of Many Apartments”; the letter to Richard Woodhouse from 27<sup>th</sup> October 1818 about “the chameleon poet” representative of a genuine poet; and the one to George and Georgiana Keats from 14<sup>th</sup> February 1819 about human’s life as “a continual allegory.”

### 1.3.1. Romanticism and the Orient

During the politically tumultuous time of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Romantics were developing an avid interest in non-Western cultures. These were imported to Britain by means of translations from philosophical and poetic works in Sanskrit, Farsi, and Arabic, or

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scientific studies conducted across Asia, Africa and the Americas. This, however, should not overshadow the fact that much of the period's interest in Orientalism had little concern with the Orient itself, that is an issue developed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). He maintains that Orientalism is "a created body of theory and practice" (6), which constructs images of the East. Said argues that in an Orientalist studying, there is "the picture of a learned Westerner surveying as if from a peculiarly suited vantage point the passive, seminal, feminine, even silent and supine East" (137-8). The persistent presence of orientalist references, gestures, and subtexts in forms of discourse, that on the face of it, have nothing to do with the East at all, indicates that Orientalism helped to define political, social, and cultural practices in areas far removed from the East itself.

Orientalism also opened new vistas of imagination for Romantic artists and writers. The imperial relationship between Britain and its cultural others compelled writers to conceive of a new imperial British subjectivity against the Afro-Asiatic objects of British dominion. This process could be at times exhilarating, and at times threatening to the British sense of identity. At this very crucial time, Romanticism was already firmly established. There were encounters of individuality and collectivism, as well as a discourse of identity and a discourse of otherness. The Romantic period then witnessed the consolidation of both "bourgeois individualism" and a "new modern imperial project" (both Makdisi, *William Blake* 213). Each of them emerged in relation to the other; the solitary self of the Romantic period – as the dominant cultural and aesthetic category – encountered the largely expanding imperialism that was trying to appropriate other cultures.

The relationship between the imperial politics of otherness in the Romantic period, and the bourgeois subject were essentially mutual in their construction and consolidation. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Edward Said expands on the interplay between Romantic literature and imperial politics and the way the construction of the East as the 'other' played a major role in shaping imperial attitudes. In fact, it is not possible "to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism [...] was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to English" (Spivak 243). It directly influenced the Romantic writing brimming with discourses of self-determination and the rights of individuals.

Most Romantics, implicitly or explicitly, were obsessed with imperial domination in the East. At the very least, they engaged in passing with the most eminent cultural component of imperialism,

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i.e. Orientalism. The Orient represented a point of reference for cultural and political difference between East and West. This was indicated in the early part of the Romantic period in works such as Sir William Jones's translations from poetry in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Robert Bage's *Fair Syrian* (1787), Richard Johnson's *Oriental Moralist* (1797), Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1816). Yet, the East was often conceived as a site of imagination, into which Romantics such as Blake and Byron, escaped from modernity and the site that provided the vantagepoint of critiquing modernity and Europe itself. After arriving in the Levant, Byron conceived the East both as a refuge from modernity and a space wherein he could critique modernity and the West.

An interest in the Orient had been common in Europe since the Middle Ages, especially through the voyages of Marco Polo, an Italian merchant, explorer, and writer. His experiences are recorded in *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1300), a travelogue written down by Rustichello da Pisa from stories that describe Polo's voyages through Asia between 1271 and 1295, and his time at the court of Kublai Khan. The other writer in whose work the Orient has a special place is John Milton. He describes one of the curiosities of the Far East when he writes of "the barren plains / Of Sericana, where Chineses drive / With sails and wind their cany waggons light" (*Paradise Lost*, III, 435-9). When describing Adam awaking from a peaceful sleep, Milton starts it with an imagery, typical of orientalist language: "Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime / Advancing, sowed the earth with Orient pearl" (V, 1-2). But, like many other seventeenth-century puritans, Milton associates the Orient with (sinful) luxury and indulgence, and depicts Satan "High on a throne of royal state, which far / Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind, / Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand / Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold" (II, 1-4). The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a time when some facets of British life were directly or indirectly modified by the East, such as tea or coffee in one's cup, the cup's material and design, or the tablecloth beneath the cup. The second generation of Romantics – Byron, Shelley, Keats – stage so much of their poetry in oriental or orientalised settings the same as their precedents. In the wake of Southey's epics *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), the era saw a flood of interest in the Orient, which resulted in the Western scholar's deep-seated fascination with whatever oriental, including history, languages, and cultures.

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For the Romantics, the Orient provided simultaneously an opportunity for escape from and return to the self. As Warren stresses, the Orient also offered them a setting “to explore and critique the epistemological, existential, and above all political limits of their own solipsistic imaginations” (3). At the same time, their treatment of the Orient becomes itself a critique of the Orientalism practiced by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first-generation Romantics. Where the first-generation Romantics saw a potential solution in the self, the second generation, for instance Shelley and Byron, saw only “an endless desert of questions – an imagined waste populated by their own fears and ideals” (Warren 3). For them, the Orient was no longer just exotic and fascinating but also a locus to project their fears and anxieties. Yet, as Edward Said holds, the Orient in an Orientalist’s viewpoint is not “as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized” and for the Romantics, a mode of Orientalism was the use of “an exotic locale” (104, 118). That phantasmatic projection is more apparent to the second generation of Romantics in Europe’s construction of the Orient.

The second generation of Romantics had problems with the astuteness of the first-generation’s Orientalism because it leads readers into a maze of irony, and doubt, and then urges him/her to find the way back to the rough ground of lived experience and political practices. It, then, satisfies readers more easily “to subsume all Oriental allusion under the vague fabric of exoticism,” but these allusions are often “strategically employed to undercut the West’s imperial stance toward the East” (both Warren 4). The younger poets grapple with one of the most demanding problems of an age dominated by colonial expansion, the fear of revolution, and the information explosion of the human sciences. It was a daunting task to shape a politics that not only incorporated regional difference within a nation, but that also remained attentive to even the most sweeping difference imaginable. What they did employ, however, were migrant genres such as the Oriental tale or Southey’s Oriental epic-romances, which produced and codified new modes of imagining the Empire’s relationship to the East.

For the Romantics, literature became a privileged space to explore, repurpose or critique that political construct. Such explorations, however, such as Shelley’s *Revolt of Islam* (1818) or the peasant rebellion in Byron’s *Lara* (1814) may ironically mark themselves as clear failures of imagination. The Orient was no longer simply a physical site but “an ideological and ideational one – a dream prompted by reading told, retold, and then written into verse” (Warren 8). It

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became the ground on which other contests started, discourses were mediated, positions were defended, and tropes were constructed. These slippages between real and ideal, assemblage and projection, parts and whole, self and Orient shape the second generation of Romantics' engagements with the East.

Tracing something like Orientalism in Keats's work is problematic because of the nature of his doggedly ambiguous verse, which show no direct allusion to the Orient. Besides, Keats does not consider himself as an avid enthusiast of oriental issues. His view of Orientalism as a discursive entanglement provides a natural bridge between "the fiercely solipsistic versions described in the Romantic era and the far more diffuse and consumerist Orientalism of the Victorians" (Warren 7). Although Keats's references to the Orient number far fewer than those of his fellow second-generation Romantics, his engagement with Orientalism is profound, subtle, ambivalent, and often at odds with itself.

Reviewers, particularly those at *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Edinburgh Review*, were quick to label Keats's style as simultaneously luxuriant and 'oriental'. In the works of other Romantics there are direct, or at least overt, engagements with the Orient: Byron mocks consumers of 'Oriental Romances' in *Don Juan*; Shelley overturns Montesquieu's notion of the oriental despot in *The Revolt of Islam*; De Quincey writes about his Asiatic hallucinations in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Keats, however, was not unaffected by the keen interest in non-Western cultures common in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, in "Lamia" (1820), he writes of the Orient without making it the poem's central point. During the time of colonial expansion of the British Empire, the mixture of ancient Greek allusions and locations – in a poem of enchantment and continual power shifts – with fantasy, myth, and minor oriental allusions create constructs of Empire that represent an ideology of superiority and orientalist Otherness.

Although "Lamia" draws from Greco-Roman mythology, it is feasible to detect eastern elements. It opens with Hermes flying off Mount Olympus, "bent warm on amorous theft" (Book I, line 7). Among the gods, Hermes is infamous for his amorous, if mischievous, pursuits, seeking out a nymph who has unparalleled beauty and "a world of love was at her feet" (Book II, line 20). The image of a male god treading upon any land he pleases to pursue and conquer a female nymph reifies the image of British imperialism and its ideas of the Orient. For the West, the Orient represented a distant land filled with erotically appealing women. Rana Kabbani argues that the

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Orient expressed for the Romantic age “the erotic longings that would have otherwise remained suppressed” (68). The nymph, like the East, remains invisible from Hermes’s sight for some time, until Lamia appears, whose initial introduction echoes a voice lamenting how she is unable to “move in a sweet body/ And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife/ Of hearts and lips” (lines 38-40). Lamia is shortly shown to be othered in both a magical way and an orientalist way, lamenting her inability to love and to pleasure, which marks highly charged allusions to the western fantasy of the eastern woman. In the poem, it is deliberately left unclear if the nymph really wants Hermes to possess her or if she is just expected to desire it:

upon the nymph his eyes he bent,  
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,  
And toward her stept: she, like a moon in wane,  
Faded before him, cower’d, nor could restrain  
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower  
That faints into itself at evening hour. (Book I, 134-139)

Lamia is powerless to resist or escape since he is a god, so she has no alternative but to give in to his desire. Regardless of what the nymph gives up, or to whom, she is giving up herself to one superior who came to possess her without her consent. Within the poem are other allusions to oriental ideas: Persian mutes, peris, extravagant riches, jasper, and the flora mentions of cedar, palms, and plantains, which create an oriental imagery in the reader’s mind. Yet, oriental discourses do not dominate Keats’s poetics since Keats’s poems do not closely observe them. His odes reveal few signs of oriental discourses, but “the orientalist surfaces of Keats’s poems are less apparitional projections [...] than they are a language of relationship to otherness” (Wassil 426). This relationship is explored in his expression of identity, which appears clearly in his odes.

A particular similarity between Sufi poetry and Romantic poetry – both in rhetorical and ideological terms – refers to their disenchantment with instrumental reason, which is a conspicuous theme in their poetry. As William Blake came to replace Alexander Pope, and blank verse took over from heroic couplets, “Byron, Shelley, and Keats found solace in Hafez, a poet they had read in their early youth, when Sir William Jones’s translations in the heyday of the Enlightenment period came home to roost” (Dabashi 97). Romanticism can be deemed as a moral reaction to the Enlightenment and an echo of materialism’s impotence. It espoused “Oriental mysticism” as the chief “rhetorical mode” of that turn, for which Hafiz stands as “the

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brightest eastern star” (all Dabashi 97). Despite the undisputed influence of Orientalism on the British Romantics, there is no evidence that Keats was aware of Hafiz’s work, but the thematic convergences between them reveal similarities about the hypothetical problem of this dissertation.

More importantly, Keats had a large circle of friends, with whom he exchanged his innermost feelings and ideas in his letters. Some of these intimate friends, such as Leigh Hunt, who had an undeniable influence on Keats’s development as a poet, were already fascinated by Persian literature. His poems “Jaffar” (1814), “Mahmoud” (1835), and “Abou Ben Adhem” (1838) indicate direct thematic imitations of Persian poems. Thomas Moore also influenced Keats’s poetic career, especially on his composition of the odes from 1819. Moore had been advised by Byron to “stick to the East” as “the only poetical policy” (Byron 324). Byron’s and Moore’s fascination with the East had been particularly cultivated by the travel books, popularized in England in the early nineteenth century.

As Keats’s contemporary poet, whose poems he had read, Thomas Moore influenced Keats’s poetic career, especially on his composition of the odes from 1819. In 1815, Keats strengthened his friendship with the Mathew girls, Caroline and Anne. In the summer of the same year, the girls sent Keats a shell and one of Moore’s poems. He responded with two lyric poems, later published in his 1817 collection, namely “To Some Ladies,” and “On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the Same Ladies.” They contain several images such as sylph, full-blown roses and soft-sighing lute, repeated in Moore’s own poems. It is not, however, an incidental correspondence but a sustained one. Jonathan Bate contends that when Keats was writing his odes in 1819, he had Moore’s *Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems* (1806) in mind. Moore’s fascination with the Orient emerges in his poems, particularly in his romance *Lalla Rookh* (1817). The title is often translated as ‘tulip-cheeked,’ which is an endearment frequently used in Persian poetry. The poem boasts a sumptuous Oriental setting. Keats’s close relation with the mentioned figures, particularly with Hunt and Moore, and their influence on him, fosters the hypothesis that Keats must have had, either mediated or unmediated, contact with Persian Sufi literature, even with Hafiz.

The other notion that makes the comparison between Hafiz’s and Keats’s poems refers to the lyric genre of the poems. The distinction that sets lyric apart from other poetic genres is related

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to its openness to various discursive worlds by virtue of its intergeneric nature, which we can conceptualise as “open to worlds beyond notion, locality, region, or hemisphere” (Ramazani, 2020, 246). Hence, lyric can be conceived as a transnational genre. In his books *Poetry in a Global Age* (2020), *A Transnational Poetics* (2015), and *The Hybrid Muse* (2002), Jahan Ramazani argues that lyric, contrary to the long-held view of lyric as merely national and provisional, is often a genre of “transnational affiliation and migration, of travel and hybridization” (2020, 246). Hence, transnational approaches to lyric can bring to light contacts, commonalities, and differences, which highlight dynamic flows of lyric across national and lingual borders. Besides, transnational approaches raise awareness of “global historical convergences and affinities across discrepant spaces” (Ramazani, 2020, 246). With that in mind, I explore how Hafiz’s and Keats’s lyrical poems, despite Keats’s lack or little influence from Persian poetry, address proximate and similar themes and I try to uncover connections that arise from common and shared experiences across national, hemispheric and temporal borders.

### 1.4. Negative Capability and Female Representations

In his letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1817 to Benjamin Bailey, Keats elaborates on his idea of genius. He places “Men of Genius” above those “who have a proper self,” because the former operates without any “individuality, any determined Character” (all *Selected Letters* 52). Keats finds it detrimental to focus on individual character traits instead of integrating dynamically with other identities. Within weeks, Keats would be equating the character of this genius to what he called “negative capability,” an aesthetics of “uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (all *ibid.* 60). He describes these so-called ‘men of genius’ as categorically without individuality and determined character. Negative capability is the best-known concept among the aesthetic and literary ideas in Keats’s letters, and remains a component of his critical thinking from 1817 onwards. According to negative capability, the artist loses the selfhood that necessitates a single perspective or meaning, identifies with the experience of his object, and makes him/herself into a mouthpiece of this experience. Such an imaginative identification is preceded by an ‘intensity’ that Keats conceives of as “the excellence of every art” because it is capable of “making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth” (both *ibid.* 60). The impact of art relates to its ability to evoke profound thoughts the foundation of which is tied with beauty and truth. Therefore, the

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meaning of an individual particular is concentrated and the concentration of the intensity is inscribed within that particular.

This artistic apprehension results in an imaginative comprehension and expression. In his copy of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1820), Keats made a note on the margins about the poet's power of intensity when he was reading the chapter on *King Lear* in the book. In it he compares "the Passions to different tons and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar," claiming that the poet should after one cup "know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated" (both cited in Bate, *Stylistic Development* 45). Therefore, by means of negative capability the poet identifies with every particular object of contemplation, without becoming totally associated with the particularity of the object. The poet does not essentially absorb the identity of his object of desire but psychologically sees its ins and outs through his power of poetical intensity. The poet fuses emotional intensity with the object in a manner whereby the object represents the emotion. This complies with disinterestedness and identity-annihilation emphasised all through his correspondences and poems. Keats insists on the poet's capability to gain access to the nature of a particular passion without having to get immersed in it, thus seeking out intensity of meaning. This instinctive working toward a purpose, this "elusive but potentially dynamic revelation of being and individuality" was most probably the simultaneous "uniting and co-existence of Beauty and of Truth", which is attained by sympathetic identification (both Bate, 1958, 50). As two intertwined constituents of one object, beauty and truth, according to Keats, reveal themselves through an intense grasp of sympathetic identification. This intensity finds its ultimate embodiment in his 1819 odes.

Keats defines his ideal poetical character in a litany of negation – no self, no character and no identity – and associates these negatives with speculation, as in his letter to Richard Woodhouse from 27<sup>th</sup> October 1818, where he writes: "a poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body" (195). Keats describes such a writer as "the camelion Poet" who has "no self – It is everything and nothing – It has no character" (195). This kind of poet has metamorphic identities, which supply him with persistently sympathetic identification with nature or human beings alike. Richard Woodhouse, telling Keats's publisher John Taylor about this letter, interprets Keats's meaning:

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The highest order of poet [...] will be able to throw his own soul into any object he sees or imagines, so as to see, feel and be sensible of, & express, all that the object itself would see, feel, be sensible of or express – and he will speak out of that object – so that his own self will with the Exception of the Mechanical part be ‘annihilated’. (qtd. In Stillinger 17)

Keats’s apparently clearly gendered poet is a ‘man of achievement’ possesses the imaginative power of negative capability, which marks him as the ideal poet. This is the ideal poet with whom Keats identifies and for whom sympathetic identification with suffering and joy without moral prejudgment is the essential quality of the poetical character. Negative capability implies a kind of annihilation of the fixed and undynamic self. Richard Benton assumes that such a self-annihilation does not result “in the inflation of his personal ego, but in a genuine loss of self-identity and in a discovery of his True Self” (46). Seeking the true self in the loss of self can explain Keats’s self-denying poetical character, which excludes private interests from the sphere of his poetic practice.

The most immediate and frequently mentioned source of poetical characters with metamorphic characteristics are Hazlitt’s remarks about Shakespeare’s characters. He delivered it in a lecture entitled “On Shakespeare and Milton” of which Keats was probably aware:

The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare’s mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds – so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias, or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an *egotist* [emphasis added] that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become [...] He had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it. When he conceived of a character, whether real or imaginary, he not only entered into all its thoughts and feelings, but seemed instantly, and as if by touching a secret spring, to be surrounded with all the same objects [...] the same local, outward, and unforeseen accidents which would occur in reality. (47-8)

Hazlitt celebrates, in Keatsian words, Shakespeare’s negatively capable mind that can imaginatively identify with anything and anyone. Influenced by Hazlitt, Keats also compliments states of mind or consciousness in which the self is lost or absorbed. This clearly questions assumptions and conventions about the nature and autonomy of identity. Keats, instead of abiding by his time’s conventions about male identity, explores a kind of selfhood that rejects egotism. He values the loss of identity as a means of encountering other people’s nature. He

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attacks egotistical and fixed forms of identity and prefers identification with other states of being, which urges the self to reach out to otherness through the channel of poetry.

In his letter to Richard Woodhouse from 27<sup>th</sup> October 1818, Keats defines the main characteristics of the genuine poet. He assumes that the genuine poet is “the most unpoetical of all God’s creatures.” Referring to himself, he writes “If I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more?” though it is assumed that “not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature – how can it, when I have no Nature?” (all *Selected Letters* 195). The Keatsian self is thus constantly in potential, vacillating between ‘everything and nothing’ and verging on self-discovery through writing of a dynamic and flexible self, conceived as a revisable script. In the same letter, Keats elaborates further on the suggestion of metamorphic identity: “When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated” (195). Keats’s susceptibility to the persistent presence of others in his identity indicates a kind of companionship that is productive and creative.

While Keats theorises different identities in his correspondence, he simultaneously explores them in his poetic practice. His most daring of these explorations of selfhood is revealed in the same letter to Richard Woodhouse, which contains his ideas on the poetical character and the chameleon poet. Identity, for the type of poet that Keats advocates, “is not itself – it has no self – It is everything and nothing – It has no character – it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated,” so such a free-floating identity has “as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen” (both *Selected Letters* 195). Instead, this poetical character enjoys all states of being, experiences all sensations while omitting societal classifications that divide people into high and low, rich and poor, and manners into fine and coarse. The poet is amoral and non-judgmental toward the world, experiencing all the binaries and oppositions of life while having a non-discriminatory approach toward life and opening his mind to engage with the world in its entirety. The chameleon poet is a transparent receptacle of all pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

Keats’s emphasis on negative capability arises in his whole outlook of life. Although Keats never exhibits any distinct signs of atheism, he seems rather unconcerned with religion. In response to

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a sermon Bailey had sent him, he explicitly rebukes the only authority of religion on truth: “You know my ideas about Religion. I do not think myself more in the right than other people,” and then he perhaps perplexes his religious friend with his playful ‘chameleonlike’ wish to “enter into all your feelings on the subject, merely for one short 10 minutes, and give you a page or two to your liking” (both 100). Instead, he attempts to transform his own identity to correspond with new ones. The experience of self-annihilation is a feature of the imaginative life of Romantic poets such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, and Percy Shelley, but self-annihilation for these Romantics did not actually mean “the suppression of self, but the removal of all that hinders it” (Fairchild 132.). What these poets aimed at was, according to Hoxie Neale Fairchild, an expansion of their own egos. Fairchild also maintains that although Blake preaches “casting off of selfhood,” he is not only “temperamentally but on principle, an egoist and solipsist” (both 132). Keats, however, devotes undivided attention to self-annihilation and loss of self-identity to such an extent that it is made more real than apparent in his works.

Months before Keats wrote about Wordsworth’s egotism, Hazlitt, in his lecture “On the Living Poets,” had already critiqued the generalised style of the whole Wordsworthian school and detected egotism in his poetry: “A thorough adept in this school of poetry and philanthropy is jealous of all excellence but his own [...] He sees nothing but himself and the universe. He hates all greatness and all pretensions to it, whether well or ill-founded,” and he concludes that “his egotism is in some respects a madness” (163). Months later on October 27, 1818, Keats mounted a similar attack on Wordsworth’s alleged egotism, remarking on the poetical character and meaning of “that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member” and it is “distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime, which is a thing per se, and stands alone” (both *Selected Letters* 196). Keats encourages poets to be receptive, which requires the negation of their egotism, while Wordsworth, in his opinion, embraces it.

Wordsworth’s poetry draws attention to the narrator’s own mental activity, at the cost of giving the poetic self rather excessive conspicuousness. His poetry, according to Keats, is intrusive and constrictive while Keats conceives of poetry as “great and unobtrusive” (*Selected Letters* 87). Keats proposes effacement of subjecthood and dissolution of poetic self-identity as a way to contemplate objects. He posits a high degree of subject-object identification, which requires a complete effacement of the poetic self-identity. It ultimately collapses the subject-object

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dichotomy. According to Keats, poetry brings about a transformation of subjectivity, which initiates from self-negation and finds its realization in the discovery of new identities. This characterises the poet in possession of negative capability.

Keats rejects the inflation of a poet's personal features and favours unselfishness, which allows the poet to communicate with other minds. According to him, both the conscious soul and the world, therefore, achieve dynamic receptivity that leads to the truth of art through its alliance with human's experience. Its beauty, then, is its ability to universalise from that experience, the lasting forms of the heart's desires. On the contrary, man's egotism runs the risk of obtrusive self-absorption. In a letter to Reynolds from 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1818, after a visit to the famous Mermaid Tavern, Keats longed for a poetry of "unobtrusive" beauty: "Let us have the old Poets, & Robin Hood" (both 87). But he probably knew that the modern situation worked against poetry of unself-conscious grandeur. In his *Romantic complexity: Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth* (2006), Jack Stillinger clarifies Keats's sensitivity "to the minute particulars of objects, sounds [...] and motions in the world around him," and that Keats was "the least egotistical of all Romantic poets, both in life and in his poetry" (both 17). This can be also observed in Keats's lyrics and odes that sport a first-person speaker, based on which Keats developed his theory about poetical character and negative capability.

Keats's critical formulation of negative capability maintains that in a life of uncertainty, where no absolute system of thought can explain everything, what motivates the artist is an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality. This, however, involves negating one's own ego. Accordingly, Keats, in a letter from 24 September, 1819 to George Keats, criticises his friend, Dilke, for being a man "who cannot feel that he has a personal identity unless he has made up his Mind about everything," while the only means of strengthening one's intellect is "to make up one's mind about nothing" and to let the mind be "a thoroughfare for all thoughts" (all *Selected Letters* 380). The mind should be a thoroughfare that aspires to new ideas, regardless of morality and selectivity, without any egotistic assertion of identity. The remark 'without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' may appear as though the pejorative words were 'fact and reason', and uncertainties were preferred for their own sake. But the significant words are 'irritable', which implies egotism, and 'capable' which accentuates freewill.

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The capability of not reaching irritably after fact and reason eschews the extension of centralised identities and rationalisation of our ‘half-knowledge’. A negatively capable mind does not entangle personal interests with the ultimate artistic product. The poet is, then, de-personalized through “the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination” (*Selected Letters* 2). Being negatively capable, the chameleon poet does not fanatically stick to any enclosed system of thought, but always evolves. Keats finds the essence of poetry in disinterested, amoral, and selfless contemplation. Consequently, he criticises poetry that has “a palpable design upon us,” but approves of poetry which is “great and unobtrusive,” meaning that poetic words and imagery per se should not be expected to amaze readers but it should enter “one’s soul” with “its subject” (all *Selected Letters* 87). He also stresses the subject of a poem and, subsequently, the poet’s experience, as the poem’s determining constituent. Yet, he severely inhibits any poet from relying on any enclosed systematic thinking, which may stunt the mind’s growth. Although Keats uses the term negative capability only once and does not invoke it explicitly in his writings, he conceives of it as encapsulating the poetical character.

As explained above, the concept of negative capability was used only once by Keats in his letter, and he later elucidated it sporadically in several others written later in 1817 and 1818. However, the concept has demonstrated critical endurance, and it has become very popular in various literary movements, such as in Imagism and Language Poetry. Nonetheless, there is no consensus over an exact and clear-cut interpretation of the concept. The most typical interpretations suggest radical empathy, annihilation of self, philosophical scepticism, and celebration of ambiguity, which can be all drawn from negative capability. The edited volume *Keats’s Negative Capability: New Origins and Afterlives* (2019) is a collection of essays accounting for some of the history of the concept. Proposing new models and directions for the future discourse of negative capability, but it offers no particular and final understanding of the concept, which indicates its multidimensionality.

The omnipresence of negative capability, however, has been lamented by many contemporary critics and writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as Mary Ruefle and Dan Simmons. Ruefle complains about the ubiquity of negative capability profusely overused “to mean just about anything one wants them to,” and for that reason “those words [negative capability] have become like a sickness unto death for me” (both 286). Dan Simmons, an American science fiction and horror

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writer, best known for his Keats-influenced *Hyperion Cantos* (1990), refers to negative capability as an “old hat, of course, drained of most of its vitality by high school English teachers.” Assuming the widespread understanding of negative capability, i.e. annihilation of self, he then teases Keats for his own doubts whether his name would live on after his death: “John Keats could not have imagined an annulment of self so complete and devastating” (all 400, 405). Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, negative capability still shapes assessments of and responses to Keats’s work. In addition to that, the concept has been developing in other contexts ranging from contemporary poetry to punk rock, from scholarly to popular discourse, from psychology to sociology.

Despite the alleged ubiquity of negative capability, a clear-cut definition remains elusive. In this regard, Suzanne L. Barnett underlines the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century literary appropriations of and critical work on negative capability. Much of it has put great emphasis on issues related to poetic identity, annihilation of self, empathy, scepticism, and ambiguity. What is left almost unnoticed by most critical approaches is the addressing of feminine representation and its remarkable role, as an integrated component of negative capability, in invigorating dynamicity and empathy in the creation of poetry. Despite the ubiquitous reference to negative capability in various fields of science, its inbuilt feminine feature requires further critical endeavour, which is pursued in this dissertation.

Much of Keats’s poetry explores the vulnerability of the individual self. It offers a meditation on the fragility of individual subjectivity. He was almost sick throughout his career as a poet. He put his sense of the proximity of death in his final letter to Charles Brown from 30<sup>th</sup> November 1820, which almost convinced him that he was “leading a posthumous existence” (both 485). His 1819 odes, in particular, explore the tentative nature of existence and the limits of the soul, combining “death and erasure of memory that might be seen as the only true deliverance from the tortured confines of selfhood” (Makdisi, 2009, 616). With these confines once pushed back or crossed, negative capability is achieved by resorting to an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality.

Keats’s 1819 odes are implicitly connected to each other. They can be read in light of each other. All of Keats’s previous works is relevant for the odes, but the most important context for each one is provided by the totality of the other odes. Later odes comment on preceding ones; each

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ode both deconstructs and consolidates the previous one(s). While each ode has its independent context and individuality, none could achieve “its own momentary stability without the support of the antecedent constructed style,” unique to Keats’s style (*The Odes of John Keats* 6). The odes qualify each other as a collective group, though they have generally been read individually. They are also Keats’s greatest embodiment of both a sense of irony and negative capability.

### 1.4.1. Feminine Romantic Aesthetics

When it comes to feminine Romantic aesthetics, it must be noted that Romanticism used to be predominantly presented as a conglomeration of male writers, largely of male poets, at least before feminist criticism took up its work. As a representative anthology, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (1973), despite being innovative for its time, included no Romantic-period female author apart from Dorothy Wordsworth. Since the late 1970s, feminist critics started to revise Romanticism studies by including poets, who had hardly been mentioned before or given any serious critical attention, into the canon. Feminist revisions of the late 18<sup>th</sup>- and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century mostly concentrate on the difficulties facing women writers within a dominantly male tradition and context. Male hegemony over publishing, reviewing and education consolidated male-centred discourses in literature, particularly in literary theory and poetics. That left the novel as the most available literary genre open to women writers, and even that only under certain conditions, as “the novelistic conventions and accepted literary language of the time were themselves implicated in patriarchal ideology” (Richardson 13). As poets, women were (un)consciously and involuntarily excluded from the masculine tradition, and thus pushed to the margin of literary history.

In this tradition, women were predominantly delineated as passive and objectified as the Other by the male subject. Women were considered sensible but not reasonable and “denied status as human,” who was capable of rational thinking, and that surfaced in the “devaluation of the feminine,” especially and vehemently in the English Augustan period (both Makdisi, 2009, 14). The male canonical Romantic writers had been valorised to such an extent that the literary traits they shared, and their political activism overshadowed women writing at the same time, to the extent that women writers were, a long time, not thought of as part of the Romantic period.

Lost or quashed female authors were gradually recovered by anthologies and critical works, along with the role of gender being scrutinized in the works of both men and women authors.

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Some landmark books in this field include *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (1980) by Margaret Homans, *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988) by Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism & gender* (1993) by Anne K. Mellor, *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices* (1995) by Theresa M. Kelley and Paula Feldman, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (2000) by Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, and *Borderlines: The Shiftings of Gender in British Romanticism* (2006) by Susan J. Wolfson. The latter work shows how senses and sensations of gender shape and get shaped by sign systems and presents fresh readings of the works, careers, and volatile receptions of Mary Wollstonecraft, Felicia Hemans, M. J. Jewsbury, Lord Byron, and John Keats. Wolfson writes, "Romanticism is nothing if not a various, ever-shifting force field of gender attractions and performances" (28). Romanticism, especially after the late 1970s, gained its more profound criticism and discourse analysis that brought to light such an 'ever-shifting force of field', which entangled self-presentation and poetic representation with the Romantic poets transforming or appropriating gender criticism. Margaret Homans's book also is noteworthy since it traces the development of poetic identity in women writers of the nineteenth century and analyses the way the consciousness of being a woman affected the workings of poetic imagination in the women authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the mid-18th century, a cultural phenomenon known as the 'Cult of Sensibility' developed. The cult celebrated a response to life charged with high emotion, as exemplified in works by Samuel Richardson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. It made sensibility fashionable, propelled by a literature that incorporates its feminine aesthetic, an outcome of which was meticulous attention to sympathy, that gained momentum in the Romantic age. It was the visible outward sign of one's awareness of others and of the community. It became an essential emotional gift for anyone of sophisticated disposition, and crucial to the 'Man of Feeling', the sensitive person of strong sentiments and responsive sensibility.

Romanticism emphasised emotions as a strong alternative to reason. The Romantics' stress on feeling was, in certain respects, a continuation of the cult of sensibility. It encouraged emotional depth and strong imagination, which Romantics took further, conceiving it as a force that had transformative power. They appropriated sympathy to direct subjective experience outward to an appreciation of natural objects. Sensibility was considered as a philosophy based on emotional attitude and provided a way for the artist to imagine human feeling through personal experience.

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The Romantics declared that their art originated in a superior inspirational gift, and through their genius, they claimed to touch all people, because inspiration is not bound to the earth, but it comes from some divine and cosmic force.

As for women's literary endeavours, it was the ideals of motherhood which became conspicuous in the Romantic age. After the entry of Britain into the Napoleonic Wars in 1793, maternal nationalism started to become central in English literature, especially children's literature. The maternal metaphor began to underpin the nation's character and the maternal as a romantic concept became a way of dealing with vital issues such as the identity of the nation. During the French revolution, England's monarchy began to waver and some feared that it, too, would plunge into turmoil, as the revolution had elicited a considerable amount of sympathy among British writers and thinkers. But Britain's fierce war with France, and the declaration of Napoleon as Emperor of France, as well as the question of nationalism and identity began to grip popular imagination, because the idea of a neighbouring Empire was severely threatening to the old idea of kingdom and to the modern idea of a nation, which was democratic and antithetical to empire. Hence, there followed the necessity of devising a sense of national identity strong enough to fend off the threat of imperial absorption.

The concept of the mother of the nation gained impetus, implying tolerance and appreciation of cultural and racial differences. At this time, Britain attempted to incorporate varying racial and cultural groups into one harmonious family politic and construct a more harmonious community. This purpose could not have been served without invoking the concept of the mother of the nation, which evokes maternal affections to harmonise the family. It, however, was used to justify Britain's colonial imperialism since the British Empire endeavoured to integrate peoples of varying ethnicities and cultural identities into a single commercial and political commonwealth.

Imperial propaganda insinuated that Britain was the nurturing and peace-loving mother and it was for the common good to be incorporated into one single nation. It also attempted to promote the idea that the British conquest and colonial rule enhanced "the government of love [...] superintended by a motherly monarch" (Poovey 197). There was subsequently the symbolic expansion of the mother of the British nation into the mother of the British Empire, which was assimilating cultural, ethnic, and political difference into a unified community. The unification

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intended to promote the ideological superiority of Eurocentric, Christian values. Meanwhile, some canonical Romantic writers such as William Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott, Edmund Burke, and James Mill did not approve of such a harmonious and collective identity and self-consciousness of the nation and promoted “a concept of an autonomous self that defined itself in opposition [...] to the racial or ethnic other” (Mellor 145). Contrary to their insistence on autonomous subjectivities, Romantic women writers had more interest in and sympathy for racial and cultural differences. Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s “Eighteen Hundred and Eleven” is a good example of tolerance and appreciation of ethnic and racial diversity in the writings of Romantic women. The poem celebrates the heterogeneous population of London:

The mighty city, which by every road,  
In floods of people poured itself abroad;  
Ungirt by walls, irregularly great,  
No jealous drawbridge, and no closing gate;  
Whose merchants (such the state which commerce brings)  
Sent forth their mandates to dependant kings;  
Streets, where the turban'd Moslem, bearded Jew,  
And wooly Afric, met the brown Hindu;  
Where through each vein spontaneous plenty flowed,  
Where wealth enjoyed, and Charity bestowed. (ll.159-68)

Barbauld composed this poem when Britain had been at war with France for a decade and was on the brink of losing. She advocated for solidarity and unity among British people from different ethnicities. There are numerous other works by Romantic women writers, who embrace the multi-ethnicity and racial intermixture of the growing British Empire, such as Esme Erskine’s epic poem “Alcon Malanzor” (1815), Marianna Starke’s *The Widow of Malabar* (1790), and Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* (1794). These works created a view of the mother (Britain) who produced the new subject rather than the new citizen. During the Romantic period, the maternal breast became identified with a nurturing nation, and women suddenly gained a new symbolic role that associated them with the embodied state, while still disconnecting them from the legislative making of that state.

Regarding Romantic women critics, they promoted a specific ideology, which lay claim to a cultural authority. Ann Mellor recapitulates these critics’ set of beliefs in her book *Mothers of the Nation* (2002). She argues that the women writers of the Romantic era foreswore their male peers’ concern with certain precepts such as that with “the capacities and value of the creative

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imagination, with the limitations of language [...], with the possibility of transcendence or apocalyptic vision, with the development of an autonomous self and the nature of self-consciousness” (86). Among the ideas the male Romantics propagated was the inevitability and necessity of political revolution. Following both Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, women writers started to believe that women were as capable as men of thinking rationally and they should therefore be educated. Moreover, they “conceptualized a subjectivity very different from the transcendental ego standing alone” (Mellor 87). They advocated a subjectivity constructed in relation to other subjectivities, not that kind of Romantic hermit or solitary.

Such a disposition to amalgamate with other subjectivities accounts for the fluidity, receptivity, and susceptibility of the feminine self to a broad range of experiences. This absorptive self is imaged as a floating disappearing/reappearing island in Dorothy Wordsworth’s poem “Floating Island at Hawkeshead: An Incident in the Schemes of Nature” (late 1820s). In the poem, the island emerges as “a slip of earth” cut loose “from its hold” by wind and water and now “obedient to the wind” (ll. 5, 7-8) that had in the first place undermined it and given it an autonomous existence. Now the island is a tiny fragment of land that provides nourishment to a blooming life in it:

Food, shelter, safety there they find  
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;  
There insects live their lives – and die:  
A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room. (ll. 13-16)

Yet, the island will sooner or later be buried “beneath the glittering Lake! / Its place no longer to be found,” it will, however, “fertilize some other ground” (lines 25-8). The floating island is an example of a fluid entity in which an autonomous population cutting loose from the shore can survive. Regarding negative capability, such a fluid self can locate its identity in its connections with a larger human group. This echoes the characteristics of the chameleon poet, who can take on a variety of selves while standing above all of them without being specifically any of them; a self which is elastic, mobile, and infinitely agile. This all leads to the annihilation of a fixed identity.

Writing at a time defined by cultural transitions in personal and professional spheres, Keats had to deal with the problem of gender identity as he constructed constantly mutable poetic identities. This fluidity is the defining element in Keats’s negative capability, as it encourages an agile and

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dynamic identity. Keats sees gender as a variable cultural construct rather than as natural inevitability. This is not to say that he understood himself as an incoherent cluster of contradictory impulses, but he was able to “adopt and lay down the markers of gender as aspects of textuality” (Narayan 17). In other terms, gender was regarded as a constitutional principle organising texts rather than an immutable bodily sign, which had a reciprocal relation with biological sex. Keats inserted several iconoclastic discourses of fluid identity, which would displace a static identity, and subsequently turned gender from a natural corporal fixity into a fluid and cultural construct.

In the Preface of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth makes his pivotal statement about the superiority of emotion over action and situation. He asserts all good poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” which takes its origin from “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (251). The emotion is not purely preserved but is “contemplated till by a series of reaction, the tranquillity disappears” and a new emotion similar to that “which was before the subject of contemplation” is gradually produced “and does itself actually exist in the mind” (252). In tranquillity, the poet recalls his/her emotions which are made into a poem with the help of images of those things in nature which aroused the poet’s emotions in the first place. Wordsworth subjugates action and situation to the stimulating emotion and affirms that after this dynamic process, “successful composition generally begins” and the initial emotion “is qualified by various pleasures” and “the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment” (both 252) and thus radically redefines the importance of emotion, and subsequently literary forms, especially lyric, which indicates that inner and personal feelings were established as the major forms for the Romantics. Negative capability, too, focuses on embracing uncertainty and doubt without the need for logical resolution. Instead, it encourages emotional depth and receptivity to life’s complexities.

The male Romantic poets generally fused together idealised notions of feminine gender and their own poetic voice in pursuit of self-construction. They did so by featuring the imagination as the primary creative faculty. Imagination as a feminine faculty was uplifted by the male Romantics to a creative level, which replaced rationality and enlightenment. In fact, canonical Romantic poets “shrugged off the cultural incrustations built upon their maleness and simultaneously attempted to liberate the imagination from its position as a secondary creative faculty, all the

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while engaging real and imagined women as its symbols” (Narayan 23). Imagination was no longer associated with merely impulsive fancy and fantasy, but redefined as a creative power and divine vision with which poets can see the essence and reality of things.

In his “A Defence of Poetry” (1840), Percy Shelley draws a distinction between imagination and reason. He considers the former “as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another,” and the latter “as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity” (both 11-12). He defines reason as logical thought and imagination as perception. He continues delineating them: “Reason is the enumeration of qualities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those qualities” and “reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things” (12). Like other canonical Romantic poets, he bluntly subordinates reason to imagination. Reason is played down to an instrumental level for a higher mission, which must be accomplished by imagination. By the same token, Keats deems imagination as the creative power of poetry. His concept of negative capability mainly entails the great use of imagination by the chameleon poet to deny his static identity and identify himself/herself with the object of contemplation to ultimately take on its identity. This is all possible through the creative imagination.

### **1.4.2. Keats’s Self-Quest and Femininity**

The Romantic self-quest demands a going out of self, that paradoxically relies on self and simultaneously turns away from self. It echoes Keats’s negative capability, which depreciates any fixed identity. Harold Bloom argues that “the widened consciousness of the poet did not give him intimations of a former union with nature or the Divine, but rather of his former selfless self” (15-16). To retreat that “selfless self,” the Romantic poet had to rely on his/her own self to cut through the old self and gain a new self. For Keats, the only true authority is one’s mind and all other people are creations of the mind. Keats’s poetic self can transform any external object into an aspect of itself.

Romantic lyricism invariably associates the Romantic self to narcissism on a larger scale. Yet, this narcissistic self-expression creates tension in the Romantic poet. While the poet has a high notion of his subjectivity, he longs to relate to the great poetic tradition and to the grand genres, namely dramatic and epic poetry, exemplified in the works of Shakespeare and Milton, which are

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characterised by impersonality and universality of themes. The grandeur of their works endures through what Keats calls negative capability. However, the Romantic poet had to grapple with a latent self-conflict, which was between two seemingly irreconciled longings: lyrical self-expression and universal epic grandeur of theme.

The Romantic poet confronted the epic-lyric dilemma. He struggled to create a voice adjusted to the self's intimacy while recreating the grandeur of epic utterance. Romantic longing for the universality of theme and impersonality features in Keats's negative capability, which characterises disinterested, amoral, and selfless contemplation and rejects 'irritable reaching after fact and reason.' Nonetheless, this problem has a solution, which lies in the intuition of "vast areas of the self stretching beyond the frontiers of consciousness" (Raimond 238). In other words, the old objective amplitude of epic poetry is redefined in terms of the subject's own depth.

The traditional journey into the underworld, as a central theme in epic poetry, gives place to the poet's adventurous journey into the self's unknown territories. The self-expression of Romantic lyricism develops into the poet's self-expression and, ultimately, into a reconstruction of the self as a larger subject, which transcends personal experiences per se and reconstructs the whole subjective self into a vaster self, encompassing both subjectivity and universality. Such a move away from pure self-expression toward self-exploration on a larger scale characterises the core of negative capability, as it essentially discards simple expressions of personality and subjectivity.

Keats identifies the process of poetic creation with that of birth giving, which receives its extended articulation in his metaphor of "Vale of Soul-Making" in a letter from 21<sup>st</sup> April 1819 to his brother George. In this letter, Keats draws a parallel between the process of creating a myth and the process of making a Soul or "Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity" (290). Keats elaborates on the concept of intelligence, proposing that it is the raw material of a soul. Everyone has an intelligence, which should develop an individual identity to become a soul. Soul-making, as Keats names this process, takes place over a span of years. He enumerates three main components which act upon each other and work together for the purpose of soul-making, namely "the Intelligence," "the human heart" and "the World" (291). Keats pays considerable attention to the human heart since it plays a significant role in poetic creativity. The heart is the source of knowledge and the seat from which "the Mind or intelligence sucks its

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identity” (291). Through this metaphor, the heart, according to Keats, is conceived of as a nursing mother, and his system of soul-making or personal poetic self-development grows out of this bond between this maternal heart and the Mind or intelligence it feeds.

Keats’s identification of both poetic creation and the acquisition of knowledge with femaleness is complemented in the letter to Reynolds from 19<sup>th</sup> February 1818, in which he compares the gaining of knowledge to the weaving of a spider’s web. Beginning with justification of a “delicious diligent Indolence,” Keats positions himself in the sphere of feminine passivity rather than masculine endeavour: “it appears to me that almost any Man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel – the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting [emphasis added]” (all *Selected Letters* 92). By gendering the spider as female and associating creativity with a feminine activity (spinning a web), Keats aligns the writing of poems with the traditionally feminine occupations of weaving and spinning.

Keats also associates the gaining of knowledge and wisdom with feminine occupations by underlining the reversed courtship ritual, in which he emphasises the passivity of the feminine role by identifying with the flower in the bee-flower binary: “It seems to me that we should rather be the flower than the Bee – for it is a false notion that more is gained by receiving than giving – no, the receiver and the giver are equal in their benefits,” because the flower’s leaves “blush deeper in the next spring” (*Selected Letters* 93). The giver is female and the receiver male, yet Keats deconstructs the traditional notion of the receiver’s privilege over the giver. He even prefers the feminine passivity to the masculine appetite for gathering knowledge, so “let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive; budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit” (all *Selected Letters* 93). This resonates with his concept of negative capability that emphasises on remaining undecided and passive, instead of irritable reaching after fact and reason.

As stressed in Keats’s other letters, passivity, traditionally associated with women, is the key to gaining knowledge. He claims that man should not “dispute or assert, but whisper results to his Neighbour” (*Selected Letters* 93). So, man does not have to argue about knowledge and wisdom but, according to Keats, share it. The result of such shared knowledge is an egalitarian community: “Humanity instead of being a wide heath of furze and briars, with here and there a

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remote Oak or Pine, would become a grand democracy of forest trees” (ibid.). This has parallels with negative capability, which implies passivity and receptivity – two alleged qualities of women within the framework of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s sex-gender system – as two notable features of an ideal poet and traces a set of speculations on male postures.

Yet, Keats was not particularly fond of femininity and female figures, at least fit in the peculiarly masculine society. This evokes a sense of ambiguity about his feelings toward women. For example, in his letter to Benjamin Bailey from 15<sup>th</sup> August 1819, he asserts that one of his literary goals is conquest of the women writers, then known as The Blue Stockings Society, in his preferred genres: “One of my Ambitions is to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting. Another to upset the drawling of the blue-stocking literary world,” and if this be realised, “I ought to die content, and my friends should drink a dozen of claret on my tomb” (324). His ambivalent attitude toward gender permeates his poetry as well as his letters. On the one hand, the feminine gender is assigned the possession of power and knowledge, as in *Lamia* (1820), to such an extent that her presence may threaten masculine selfhood. On the other hand, Keats anxiously establishes a distance between the male poet and the female object of desire, a space that provides the male poet with a recognisable masculinity. His letter to Benjamin Bailey from 18<sup>th</sup> July 1818 reveals a candid account of his problem with women:

I am certain I have not a right feeling toward women – at this moment, I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot – Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish Imagination? When I was a schoolboy I thought a fair woman a pure Goddess; my mind was a soft nest in which some one of them slept, though she knew it not. I have no right to expect more than their reality – I thought them ethereal above men – I find them perhaps equal – great by comparison is very small. [...] I do not like to think insults in a lady’s company – I commit a crime with her which absence would not have known. Is it not extraordinary? – when among men, I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen – I feel free to speak or to be silent – I can listen, and from everyone I can learn [...] When I am among women, I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen – I cannot speak, or be silent – I am full of suspicions and therefore listen to nothing – I am in a hurry to be gone. You must be charitable and put all this perversity to my being disappointed since my boyhood. (169)

Keats reveals a good deal to his friend about his ambivalent attitude toward women and even diagnoses himself with the recognition that it is pathological, as he recognises, he must absolutely get over “an obstinate Prejudice”. The problem he articulates obviously stems from

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disappointment, the product of a “Boyish imagination,” or his disposition to idealise women, which disillusioned him when faced with real women. He admits the presence of women provokes malevolence and evil thoughts. He describes a transformation of the male self into a self-silencing malevolent figure. However, his admission that he does not like to think “insults in a lady’s company” hearkens back to his boyish imagination when he idealised “a fair woman a pure Goddess” (ibid.). This, to some extent, explains Keats’s ambivalent attitude towards women and the presence of disturbed gender identity in his poems and letters. Three months after his revealing admission to Bailey, Keats wrote a letter on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1818 to George and Georgiana Keats about his encounter with a young woman named Jane Cox. Here, instead of a candid account of his own pathology, he appreciates her as an exotic object:

She is not a Cleopatra, but she is at least a Charmian. She has a rich Eastern look; she has fine eyes and fine manners. When she comes into a room she makes an impression the same as the Beauty of a Leopardess. She is too fine and too conscious of herself to repulse any Man who may address her. (199)

And then, contrary to his previous letter’s pathological words, he continues that in Cox’s presence, “I always find myself more at ease with such a woman; the picture before me always gives me a life and animation which I cannot possibly feel with anything inferior,” and more surprisingly not only does he not feel urged to keep away from her but “I forget myself entirely because I live in her” (199-200). Mesmerised by her look, Keats feels lost in her presence and his selfhood is dissolved.

Keats’s unease with women is neither simply specified in ordinary conversation or gathering to which some women also attended, nor is it the occasionally embarrassed antics of a typical lower-middle-class male adult. He simply criticises his contemporary society in his letters and expresses an acute unease with egoistic and egotistic men of fashion and commerce and often depicts women as “creatures of fashion and style, capable of trapping him in their enervating present” (Whale 139). This conjunction of women, fashion and his unease with the contemporary society emerges in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats from 31<sup>st</sup> December 1818, where he asks his brother about the sort of writing which has “the highest gust” (226) with him and whether Henry Fielding and William Hogarth still appeal to him as contemporary. Keats, then, prides himself on power of his historical imagination: “Recollect that no Man can live but in one society at a time – his enjoyment in the different states of human society must depend upon the

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Powers of his Mind – that is you can imagine a Roman triumph or an Olympic game as well as I can,” but he insists on transcending “our bodily eyes [that] see but the fashion and Manners of one country for one age – and then we die” (226-7). Keats directs his brother’s attention to his assumption that “the more we know the more inadequacy we find in the world to satisfy us,” but he does not stop at just sharing his general observations and claims that the same inadequacy is discovered in “women with few exceptions – the Dress Maker, the blue Stocking, and the most charming sentimentalist differ but in a slight degree and are equally smokeable (ibid.). He places historical imagination over “our bodily eyes.”

The second generation of male Romantic poets were also concerned with erotic love. Many of Keats’s poems, from “Endymion” (1818) and the “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819) to “The Eve of St. Agnes” (1820) and “Lamia” (1820) eloquently explore the delusions and ecstasies of sexual love. But the object of Romantic or erotic love neither gives the beloved woman credit nor appreciates her as an independent subject, but rather it assimilates the female into the male, or it annihilates the woman as an Other that threatens masculine selfhood, so woman is enslaved or destroyed, or she must disappear or die. In William Blake’s “Visions of the Daughters of Albion” (1793), the “enslav’d” Oothoon offers to bring to Theotormon “girls of mild silver, or of furious gold” (l. 198) rather than to gratify her own desires for numerous lovers. Wordsworth’s Margaret cannot survive without her lost son: “Or if the grave be now thy bed, / Why am I ignorant of the same / That I may rest; and neither blame” (“The Affliction of Margaret” ll. 4-6); and his beloved Lucy is in her grave, which imbues his *The Lucy poems* (1800) with melancholic, elegiac tone.

Contrary to most Romantic poets, Keats’s finest poems depict female power so enormously that it threatens male autonomy. He credits ideal poets with loss of self and encourages passivity commonly associated with women. Implicit in negative capability is the ideal poet, who has no self, no character and no fixed identity, but a dynamic and a fluid one. The union with the object of love, in some of Keats’s poems, leads to the elimination of the poet’s self, as in “Ode to a Nightingale.” He deeply desires absolute possession of the beloved, but since this desire is not fulfilled in life, his quest fails, leaving him frustrated, forlorn and sinking into despair.

### 1.4.3. Feminisation of the Orient in Keats’s Poems

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The Orient is often depicted as feminine in Romantic writings. In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said argues that Europe has continuously feminized the Orient and that western writers relate it to “its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability” (206); this is why “every writer on the Orient, from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking), or from the most rigorous scholars (Lane and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval), saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption” (ibid.). The alleged need for protection was common between women and the Orient. Said points out that “the Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien” (207). The Orient Said continues his argument, referring to Orientalism as “an exclusively male province” that “viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders” (208). The Orient was often rendered as female and effeminate.

Partly as a reaction to the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment, Romantic radical writers, such as Tom Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, projected the supposed characteristics of oriental society and culture onto aristocracy and rewrote the faults of aristocracy in terms of the oriental society’s faults. If not all, then most of these oriental characteristics were gendered as feminine, as John Thelwall phrases it, “the proud and the polished, the debauched, effeminate and luxurious” (473). As mainly western assumptions about and projections onto the Orient, these characteristics were developed in and distributed through novels, travel books, letters, manuscripts, documents, and various other textual remnants of cultural material that formed a myth about the Orient, which was represented eccentric, backward, sensual, passive and effeminate.

Mary Wollstonecraft, in the introduction of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), attacks the so-called oriental flowery and dazzling elegance in an effeminate language. She dismisses those pretty feminine phrases that she considers as means employed condescendingly by men “to soften our [women’s] slavish dependence,” and she despises “that weak elegancy of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel” (31). She attacks the oriental language, which had been finding strong voice in Romantic writings, and accuses it of employing a superficial and embellished language. She also refuses such a language because she traces “the true style of Mahometanism” (30) in it; the

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style that she considers to be effeminate. Wollstonecraft reassuringly asserts that Islam, representative of the Orient in general, was the pre-eminent source of that dazzling, showy diction that is associated with effeminacy.

At the same time, the Orient represented in radical writings the ideological locus of aristocratic decadence. As Samuel Rousseau writes: “The genius of the Eastern writers far surpasses that of the Greeks, or the Romans; their taste was undoubtedly inferior, but, in point of invention, they are excelled, perhaps equalled, by none,” and that Persian writers “affect a rhetorical luxuriance, which, to an European, sometimes has the appearance of unnecessary redundance” (36-7). Here Rousseau, an avid enthusiast of oriental texts, contributes to orientalisising Eastern verse. Captain Vans Kennedy’s “An Essay on Persian Literature” (1817) represents another example of orientalisising the Eastern verse: “It must be admitted that [the Persians’] love of metaphor and of figured diction sometimes leads the writer to deviate from his usual purity and simplicity,” and Persians “are all naturally addicted to poetry” (84). He then concludes that “their poetry is deficient in unity, variety, and action” but it is contended that “these defects are fully compensated by the richness of the thoughts and imagery; by the beauty of the sentiments and descriptions; by the grace and animation of the style; and by the sweetness of the versification” (both *ibid.*). These descriptions are the defined terms of the debate that European orientalisists employed when writing about the oriental texts.

European verse strove for the Aristotelian, masculine ideals of unity, action, and simplicity, while the expanding market called for variety, of which oriental tales provided no small share to fascinate European readers. Asian verse forms, particularly Persian, Arabic and Turkish, typically lacked such European poetic staples but they made up for it by the rich and exotic thoughts and imagery, by the beauty of the sentiments and descriptions, by the grace and animation of the style, and “by the sweetness of the versification,” the danger of which was an unseemly “love of metaphor and of figured diction” (both Warren 242). This is what European critics dubbed the effeminacy of style, the problem that inflicted Keats with scathing criticism about its alleged effeminate, loose and implicitly oriental style. William Hazlitt’s description of Keats’s style berates his effeminate style and the poem’s “deficiency in masculine energy of style” although he had “beauty, tenderness, delicacy, in an uncommon degree,” and there was still “a want of strength and substance” (all “On Effeminacy of Character” 346). Hazlitt’s

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description of Keats's style has correspondence with the generally European view of oriental poems, especially Persian literature with its embellished language. He continues with the same argument that "there is nothing tangible in it ["Endymion"], nothing marked or palpable [...] we have none of the hardy spirit or rigid forms of antiquity" (346). Romantics, in general, and Hazlitt, in particular, endeavoured to advance more of action, of character, and imagination, not fancy.

Keats, however, would not value the allegedly Eastern luxuriant verse to Greek and Roman invention, yet it is hard to argue that the writing of any other Romantic poet can compete with Keats's rhetorical sensuousness. Therefore, despite lack of references to the Orient in Keats's writings, his style is not far from the oriental style, which characterises much of Persian literature. Besides, in July 1819, while deeply engaged with composing "Lamia," Keats wrote a letter to Fanny Brawne relating that he had been reading "an Oriental tale of a very beautiful color" (315). His peculiar description of the 'beautiful color' foregrounds the key poetic techniques in "Lamia," i.e. "its dazzling color (characteristic of Keats's taste for synaesthesia), the poetic image, contradiction, the porous border between the real and imagined, and false binaries more generally" (Warren 244). Over the course of the poem, these tropes together build an impression of the Orient, that makes it an explicitly, imagined space or mode akin to poetry itself. Lamia is herself the tangled figure in whom the tropes of colour, illusion and the exotic are blended and rendered tangible. Lamia is a serpent turned woman, and in the Romantic context the Orient was discursively rendered female and effeminate.

However, Keats was criticised for his allegedly effeminate and luxuriant style that lacked rigidity and, in Romantic discourse, masculine spirit. Irony and ambivalence pervade his poems and letters. The rhetorical device of irony creates and expresses Keats's detached engagement with female representation of poetry. The irony that modulates his images of female figures in a great part of his mature poetry, particularly in the 1819 odes, seems to define the nature of female representation. Women, thus, provoke the poet's desire but frequently suspend the promise of a fulfilment. The female figure functions as "the mark of the poet's enchantment with, but ultimate difference from, that which she represents" and she seems to symbolize "the poet's self-division" (both Narayan 9). She serves alternately as a means of preservation and as an agent of destruction to his poetry's male heroes. She is the one that must be both embraced and denied for

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the poet to acquire masculine identity. Keats's poetry, comparably more than any of his contemporaries, represents the feminine figure as symbol of his own fears of alienation and loss of masculine and creative identity.

### 1.4.4. Femininity in Keats's Odes

On a superficial level, in each of Keats's 1819 odes a female object of desire emerges to whom the hymn is addressed. On a deeper and metaphorical level, each of the objects serves exclusively the (re-)constitution of the subject. The female characters in Keats's 1819 odes are simply "a *topos*, detached from any sort of grounding in the 'real' world" (Richers 210) and they are a means to realize his masculine desire of self-possession and to reaffirm his identity. The encounter with these feminised figures serves as a path into the *terra incognita* (unknown land) of the self and enriches its realisation – a process of immersion in otherness. This approach to the feminine is not peculiar to Keats, but "all the Romantic poets to a large extent explored in their poetry one of their culture's dominant ideological fantasies" (Hoeveler 2) and that artistic power would be attainable for men if they unified their masculine and feminine components. Therefore, decisive in understanding Keats's poems, women represent a symbolic quality within the male poet's mind, from which they may not simply be detached since they carry strong overtones and play a crucial role in determining the meaning(s) of his poems. Keats seems to be positioning himself in the realm of feminine gender, especially in his poetical strategy of 'no self' and 'no identity' that shatters the strong self-assertions characterising masculine practices. However, it must be noticed that Keats often employs female figures to realise his masculine desire of self-possession and reaffirm his identity; in other words, the masculine undercurrents never fail to affect his poems, especially his 1819 odes.

Keats presents a great variation on the theme of feminine identity in his 1819 odes and introduces an enigmatic group of poetic females that show Keats's efforts on reconstitution of self-identity. The odes are emblematic of mutability and variability, states that Keats longs to achieve. His poetics of negative capability and 'no self/ no identity' were recruited for "a feminist poetics and ego ideal" (Wolfson, "Keats and Gender Criticism" 89) as an alternative to the strong egotism characterizing masculine practices. Thus, as revealed in Keats's manifest misogyny in his letters, which represent his perception of real women in everyday life, he idealises women in his poems as if they were the real representations of ideal male poets.

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Women of Keats's thoughts and imagination serve a particularly allegorical purpose. In other words, Keats's ambivalent approach to gender and the female sex is revealed in his poems and letters, especially in his famous proclamations of negative capability and the chameleon poet, which implicitly render traditionally considered feminine qualities of passivity and receptivity as major characteristics of ideal poets. His overall syntax of gender is "more zigzag than linear" since he writes from "a confluence of poetic genius," which reveals his engagement with "critical insight and adolescent uncertainty" (all Wolfson, "Keats and Gender Criticism" 90). About women, he is as adoring and sympathetic as he is harsh and hostile, especially as readers and writers. In a letter to J. H. Reynolds from September 21, 1817, he expresses his displeasure at being marketed to female audiences and his bitter assault on a group of women poets:

The world, and especially our England, has, within the last thirty years, been vexed and teased by a set of Devils, whom I detest so much that I almost hunger after an Acherontic promotion to a Torturer, purposely for their accommodation. These devils are a set of women, who having taken a snack or Luncheon of Literary scraps, set themselves up for towers of Babel in languages, Sapphos in Poetry, Euclids in Geometry, and everything in nothing. (35)

Keats does not like being branded effeminate or having to cater to female audiences' tastes. He denounces female poets, when referring to poets 'Mrs. Tighe and Beattie': "I see through them and can find nothing in them" (227). He evidently tries to portray the Romantic female persona as merely a poetic contrivance to himself. In a general sense, this indirectly pertains to the derogatory undertone implied by the nineteenth century cultural construction of femininity in a patriarchal society. Keats, however, resists the construction of a masculine self – a self with egotism and ego boundaries. It is evident that his letters are heavily inflected with an awareness of gender difference. He explores the selfhood of the poet, which is intersected by a competing awareness of gender difference. His letters reveal a passionate engagement with gender and sexuality as they are experienced as a part of a network of male friendships that Keats strove to fit in his anxious encounters with women.

Because of Keats's interest in passivity and receptivity, two traditionally feminine qualities, he was accused of effeminacy. Margaret Homans, after exempting Keats in part from strong egotism shared by other Romantics, suggests that Keats's "humblest origins" and his lack of "classical education" shared "certain aspects of women's experience as outsiders relative to the major literary tradition [...] regardless of gender" (all 240). But Duncan Wu, in his book 30

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*Great Myths about the Romantics* (2015), contends that the long-held view of Keats's insufficient education is merely a myth that started from Leigh Hunt's introduction of Keats in his book *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828). In this book Hunt introduces Keats in this way: "Mr Keats's origin was of the humblest description: he was born 29 October 1796, at a livery stable in Moorfields, of which his grandfather was the proprietor" (409). Wu argues that this statement has been invariably accepted and referred to by scholars. However, it is "the most damaging of the myth's various reiterations" (187). But the reiteration of Keats's allegedly humble origin continues to shape scholarly and popular preconceptions. I also believe that without reasonable command of literary education and scholarship, Keats would not have been able to produce poems with such elegance and rich vocabulary.

We must bear in mind that Romanticism – more accurately called male Romanticism – is historically a patriarchal and masculine phenomenon, which commonly turned women into anchors for male poets' pursuit for masculine identity. The female as a literary object was indeed exploited by the Romantic poet to transcend his fear of her as a symbol of his own creative limitations. As enacted in Keats's poetry, the female power can be both primordial and transcendent, through which Keats identifies with his own imagination and exploits the female figure not only as an ideal to be achieved but as an obstacle to that achievement. As such, Keats seems to have given her both priority over and difference from himself, but by bridging the gap between her and the poet, he works toward an ideal identity that transmutes both priority and difference. If the poet-persona succeeds to consummate his relationship with the respective female figure, he is able to heal his self-division, but this healing may result in the erasure of both his and her difference from each other that, contrary to his expectation, will probably cost the poet his unique identity. Real flesh and blood women were beyond Keats's interest, instead the ideal women he strove to portray in his poetry would ensure his own place among the male Romantic poets. If expedient, however, the poet ambivalently inclines toward an ideally transmuted identity. The collective portrait of Keats's poetic figures is that of an androgynous figure who becomes a "Close bosom-friend" to the male figure of "the maturing sun" ("To Autumn," l. 2). The threat of masculine dissolution, however, looms large for Keats since he progressively delineates and cherishes an ideal female in his poetry.

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Romantic male writers preferred an aesthetic that had strong feminine elements, which marks a kind of gender instability in their textual performances. This gender instability accounts for the anxiety about effeminacy in their writings. In this way, the canonical male Romantic poets could produce “a radical multi-gendered writing subject that allowed them to transcend the stereotypic limitations of gender that their culture imposed upon them” (Narayan 16). In other words, the Romantic poet broke free from the stereotypical gendered limitations conventionally determining the writing subject, and subsequently the content of the work. For Keats transcending the conventional language of his masculine and patriarchal society to step in his own sensuous – and allegedly effeminate – language, was indispensable. His insistence on feelings and affections, celebration of imagination, non-rationalisation of experiences, and beauty – among his other ideas – associate his ideas with the above-mentioned anxiety about effeminacy. It is then no wonder that Keats was heavily criticised for the delicate, overemotional, and effeminate language of his *Endymion*.

In the review “On the Cockney School of Poetry” published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1818, the author, purportedly John Gibson Lockhart, launched a virulent attack on Leigh Hunt, John Keats and their friends. Lockhart drastically starts by questioning Keats’s mental health: “to witness the disease of any human understanding” is “distressing,” but the spectacle of “an able mind reduced to a state of insanity is of course ten times more afflicting” (519). It starts its argument by reducing John Keats’s imagination to insanity although he appears “to have received from nature talents of an excellent, perhaps even of a superior order,” which had better be devoted to “the purposes of any useful professions,” which would have “rendered him a respectable, if not an eminent citizen” (519). Lockhart advises against Keats’s composing poems and recommends he take up medical apprenticeship. He then calls Keats, Hunt and their friends “fanciful dreaming tea drinkers” and accuses them of lack of logic “to analyse a single idea, or imagination enough to form one original image,” or even lack of learning to “distinguish between the written language of Englishmen and the spoken jargon of Cockneys” (521), associating the so-called Cockney School poets with ignorance and lack of education. Then comes Lockhart’s infamous attack on *Endymion*. Purposefully conflating, the eponymous hero with its creator, he argues that Keats’s *Endymion* “is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Greek goddess” but he is merely “a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon” (522). Lockhart firmly insists that the Cockney School poets did not read Homer

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and other Greek tragedians. In fact, his unparalleled capacity for feminine empathy was the main reason that branded him as effeminate and such an empathy does frequently blur the line between masculinity and femininity.

To dismiss the accusation, Keats de-gendered the female into a figure as androgynous and passive as the diluted Apollo from *Hyperion*. His 1819 odes dramatize Keats's struggle to come to terms with his ideas about women and poetry. The myth of androgyny goes back into prehistory and is found in one form or another in primitive societies. Plato's *Symposium* (ca. 385 B.C.) propounds the issue of androgyny in a dialogue, which attempts to solve the mystery of the origin and nature of love. During the dialogue, Aristophanes puts forth his own explanation about androgyny after reprimanding mankind for having neglected the true value of love. Attempting to deal with the nature of man and what has happened to it, he claims that

the original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word 'Androgynous' is only preserved as a term of reproach. (46)

Aristophanes then relates his categorisation to the trinary set of the sun, moon, and earth and that “the man was originally the child of the sun, the woman of the earth, and the man-woman of the moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and moved round and round like their parents”. He asserts that the males were descended from the sun, the females from the earth, and the bisexual being from the moon. The latter, according to Aristophanes, is made up of “sun and earth” (all 46). Due to the co-existence of both solar and earthly qualities in the androgynous entity or being, Aristophanes prefers it over pure male or female. Androgyny describes characters or people with no specific gender or with gender ambiguity. It is the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics, which drew specific attention from Romantic writers and surfaced in many critical texts and literary writings.

This resonates with Keats's idea of negative capability when it invites writers to remain in uncertainty and doubt while breaking free from any static system of thought and philosophy. This leads to a metamorphic identity, being open and receptive to vast experiences of life. Relating back to the metaphorical dichotomy of flower/bee, Keats associates passive receptivity

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with a negatively capable susceptibility as a means to attain ‘a grand democracy of forest tree.’ In the same letter, he further elaborates on the flower/bee metaphor:

Now it is more noble to sit like Jove than to fly like Mercury – let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey, bee-like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at. But let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive; budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit – Sap will be given us for meat, and dew for drink. (93)

Keats elaborates here his states of poetic reception, while implicating the traditionally female feature of receptivity. He insists on placing himself in the passive role, and implicitly the passive sexual role, as flowers represent the sexual organs of plants. The bee is normally the active and mobile participant transferring the pollen from one flower to the other. Keats, however, does not enjoy associating with the active bee that pollinates but with the passive flower that is pollinated because it is both the giver and receiver. It resonates with negative capability since it is a positive capability of negating the self and entering imaginative union and reconciliation of opposites. He recommends a similar receptivity to his brother and sister-in-law while describing one of his extended moods in a letter on March 19, 1819:

This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless [...] my passions are all asleep, from my having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakened the animal fibre all over me, to a delightful sensation, about three degrees on this side of faintness [...] In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. (269)

This passage approves of a receptive languor that Keats identifies as ambivalently effeminate. It is pleasing, according to Keats, to be deficient in conventional codes of masculinity associated with maturation and good business. Effectually, a society in which the receptivity of flowers is emulated suggests forsaking a more palpable ‘what is to be arrived at’ for a politics of negative capability, which is envisioned on a landscape ‘budding patiently.’ This letter probably prefigures biological thinking in which “individuality may no longer be identified with ‘autonomy and separation’ [...] but with a feminized commonwealth of mutual dependence and support” (Roe 76). Female figuration, after all, never ceases to emerge in Keats’s writings, either idealised or underrated. In this letter, as a milestone of Keats’s critical ideas, there is the female,

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erotic and fertile image of ‘budding patiently.’ He vigorously pursues freedom from conventional categories of rank, class and reputation.

Yet, Keats was well aware that manliness was a great issue to be defended in his time. Even feelings and emotions were permissible as long as masculinity was not at stake. If poets showed any feeling or emotion conventionally deemed feminine, they would usually accentuate the overriding manly supremacy. He, however, did not obviously fit into this discourse, and this is what made critics, notably from the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood’s Magazine*, brand him as ‘effeminate’. Keats, in fact, puts forward a demanding proposition when persistently urging the idea of having ‘no character’ in a society which perceived character as an achieved ethical selfhood. Therefore, to deprive oneself of a firmly-grasped identity and character is to risk being marginalised and considered immoral. In a surprisingly apologetic manner, Keats tries to justify the absence of the sort of identity conventionally demanded for an ethical and reasonable person: “It is a wretched thing to confess; but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature – how can it, when I have no Nature?” (195). Keats openly expresses a sense of existential uncertainty since he sees his self as dynamic and evolving, rather than static and unchanging. He acknowledges the fluidity and complexity of his inner life by denying a fixed identity, or in his own words ‘identical Nature’, from which his opinions and expressions naturally arise. He does, however, run the risk of being misinterpreted if his idea of having no character, no identity and no nature are not read in light of his other letters and ideas, in particular the ones about negative capability and the chameleon poet.

In the process of poetic creation, Keats urges poets to pursue no fixed and static philosophical dogma or system of thought, not even onto any gender. No nature and no identity are likely to propose instability and inconsistency; Keats guards himself against such a claim by his insistence that “it does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation” (*Selected Letters* 195). He tries to clear himself of being charged with upsetting misconduct. Despite the clash between his poetic ambitions and the anxiety of the breakdown of communication with his friends, he voices his concerns about friendships when signing off his letters in a humorous, self-mocking fashion, a representative example of which can be his letter to Richard Woodhouse on October 27, 1818, in

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which he plainly exposes his advocacy of dynamic identities: “But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself, but from some Character in whose soul I now live,” but he goes on to reassure his friend that “I am sure however that this next sentence is from myself – I feel your anxiety, good opinion, and friendship, in the highest degree” and then he signs off the letter by writing “and am Yours most sincerely” (all 196). Obviously, Keats distinguishes poetic nature or identity from his unpoetic nature while prescribing a lack of attachment to identity or nature in poetry. But as a person and member of society he reassures his friend that he feels his anxiety and friendship in the highest degree. That said, the poetic world seems to function as the ideal garden wherein he can wander in a carefree manner. Having no identity is, at one level, a convenient way of circumventing conventional ethics of friendship and letter-writing, and a way to let the mind work free of social and ethical conventions. Keats’s definition of the chameleon poet, who is negatively capable of excluding any static identity, is part of an ongoing correspondence with his friends and family members, that operates both on an intellectual level and a level of sociability.

His letter about negative capability itself emerges from a similar concern for sociability. He begins the letter with a passionate account of Edmund Kean’s return to the public in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and his visit to Benjamin West’s picture in the Royal Academy. He then writes about his dinner party at Haydon’s house in which he joined in conversation with a group of cultured gentlemen. He apparently did not enjoy that gathering as they were all “alike,” aware of “fashionables” and critical of Kean’s performance and castigated what Keats considered to be true humour (*Selected Letters* 60). The early friendly part of the letter eventually led to his critique of the guests’ taste for art and then his own revulsion at fashionable wit.

The seemingly amiable part of the letter leads toward his earnest definition of Shakespearean creativity and his proposition of negative capability as the yardstick of the ideal poet. Having returned home, Keats felt his mind “dove-tailed” by several things and at once it struck him “what quality went to form a Man of Achievement,” especially in literature, “I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (all 60). Negative capability is a measure against the men of wit and simply moral censure. From another perspective, as John Whale puts it, Keats’s

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idea of friendship is clearly “pitted against the workings of commercial society” and against the idea of “fashion in which he situates women” (126). This expresses Keats’s unease with the contemporary society, particularly with its pursuit of fashion. That suggests part of the reason that he insistently associates women with the modishness of the Regency culture. Besides that, he deliberately distances himself from a world of youthful fashion and entertainment.

The female figures in Keats’s poems – such as Madeline, Lamia, and Isabella – do not function as a simple site of poetic inspiration. They are given voice and priority in his poems to such an extent that female power threatens male autonomy. This explains one of the major reasons for branding him as effeminate. The main locus of recognising Keats’s language as allegedly effeminate is *Blackwood’s Magazine*, specifically, the early attacks on his poetry in the collection of the infamous Cockney School essays in 1818, which savaged his early poetry in 1817. The central charge of the attacks is that his poetry lacks ‘masculine’ rigor, coupled with the sensuality of his poetry, which purportedly feminised Keats’s work.

When Keats defines his ideal poetical character as that of the chameleon poet, who has no determined character, he takes risks with the established gender discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To theorize ‘Men of Genius’ as categorically without ‘any individuality, any determined Character’ cannot help but evoke a famous feminine figuring of no character that begins Alexander Pope’s *To a Lady on the Characters of Women* (1743): “Most Women have no Characters at all” (line 2). His headlined “Argument” is that “the Characters of Women” as “contradistinguished from the other Sex” are “more inconsistent and incomprehensible” (*The Poetical Works* 56). But Keats is energised by going up against Pope. He notes that men of genius assert no rigid personal identity, but they possess a fluid and adaptable nature.

### 1.5. Hafiz’s Ghazals and Keats’s Odes

As a lyric and panegyric poet, Hafiz’s ghazals have often been mystically interpreted since he efficiently elaborated and refined many Sufi metaphors – the most significant of which include wine, intoxication, dancing, ecstasy, the veil and union – which were frequently adopted by Sufi poets. The disagreement on whether Hafiz is a genuine Sufi or not arises from the mixed character of his ghazals and the interpretations that the ghazals have received. The mystical interpretations of his ghazals are obviously more acknowledged, since Hafiz’s ghazals embrace many of the fundamental characteristics and themes of Sufism. Some critics, such as Elahi

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Ghomshei and Nasr Allāh Purjawādi, while not necessarily seeing Hafiz as a member of a Sufi order, regard him as a mystic (*‘āref*). As such, his statements about “wine, sin, music and pleasure are interpreted in an invariably metaphorical, even relentlessly gnostic way, reading the iconology of sin and physical pleasure as an elaborate code of transcendent symbols” (Lewisohn 483). In this view, Hafiz’s libertine tone and railing against figures of religious authority, including Sufi authorities, are appurtenances of the Malāmātiyya order, but still, they do not prove his affiliation with it.

Contrary to the mystical interpretation, there are critics who take hedonism more at face value, or even condemn Hafiz as an immoral and socially corruptive libertine or as a representative of the anti-modern traditions of Sufism. Conflicting interpretations of Hafiz’s ghazals sometimes go to the extreme of either identifying him as a divine poet or as a vivacious hedonist. The earliest documented and written ghazals date from the early twelfth century when, for the first time, sizeable collections of them reputedly existed from the divans of Persian poets. At the time, ghazals were used to express mystical love, alongside that of secular love. Since then, the fusion between the secular and the mystical, that makes it difficult to distinguish them from each other, has become an indispensable characteristic of the Persian ghazal. With respect to Hafiz’s poetry, it is sometimes arduous to identify their speaker accurately, even in terms of gender identity. The speaker is never revealed while demonstrating multiple perspectives and polyphony of voices in a single ghazal. The polyphony of voices is a prominent feature of Hafiz’s ghazals, which do not present a uniform, single consciousness, so it is not simple to gain access to the consciousness of his lyric speaker(s). His ghazals combine various voices in a single ghazal.

According to Keats’s conception of the poetical character, a poet is not supposed to preside over a world of his own, which was the main problem, namely being totally subjective and adherent to one’s own world of ideas resulting in static identities. He assumes the ideal poet, the paragon of whom is Shakespeare, should fill in numerous worlds without seizing any of them. Keats maintains that the poet’s identity must be dynamic and fluid to meet the desired unpoetical character. This leads the poet to uncertainty and mystery without relentlessly pursuing final reasoning for events and phenomena. According to Keats, the poet finds eternity through dynamic identities, which bestow new lives on him/her when encountering new phenomena. Put differently, the ‘unpoetical poet’ never ceases to enter dynamically the diversity of the world

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without. Such a poet must be negatively capable of annihilating his selfhood, evade any private universe and persist in constant openness to new experiences. Keats emerges as “a prescient modernist alert to the instabilities of selfhood and convinced of the elusiveness of conceptual certainty” (Ulmer 169). As a poet, Keats suspends any kind of static personal identity and remains in ‘uncertainties’ and ‘mysteries.’

Keats’s antipathy to static identity is an extrapolation of his theory of negative capability. William Ulmer argues that contemporary criticism of Keats honours him primarily for “a camelion sympathy, even self-annihilation, in refusal of the egotistical sublime” (169). In his book *Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession* (2009), Jacques Khalip refers to “the conceptual disintegration of the self” (41), which stems from negative capability. The poetical character that Keats proposes relies on detachments from any dogmatic reasoning. Therefore, the ‘unpoetical poet’ is nothing in himself but he appropriates other identities to acquire constantly new identities. The ability of the self to acquire new fluid identities leads to selflessness. Paul Wright, in his introduction to *The Poems of John Keats*, argues that there are two ways of understanding selflessness as “either self-transcendence or self-annihilation” (IX), which concerns much of Keats’s poetry. This tension between the two kinds of understanding surfaces in his odes from 1819. Keats’s tension with self-transcendence and self-annihilation is not fully resolved because he is himself the exponent of negative capability and pursues no ‘irritable reaching after fact and reason.’

Either animate or inanimate, everything and everybody falls within the scope of Keatsian imagination, which possesses some principle of plurality, most often experienced in his poems. This is made possible through the poetical character’s anonymity which results in “his dissatisfaction with identity” that “registers as a retreat from or unwriting of the self-designating features of the poetic work” (both Khalip 2). Such an exploration of subjectivity via anonymity provokes a profound reconsideration of self and selfhood for Keats that should be channelled through negative capability, as a quality that characterises both the poet and the approach to subject and phenomena. Negative capability is not just an objective grasp of experience, nor is it merely an acquiescing self-annihilation, but rather it motivates the poet to actively assimilate every experience. In this way, the poet is “everything and nothing” (*Selected Letters* 195). Keats

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intermingles the states of activity and passivity in formulating his ideas about the negatively capable poet.

Keats's odes from 1819 subtly evolve from such an understanding of fluidity and plurality. In a concentrated form, the odes exhibit many of his key themes, including negative capability and the chameleon poet, and develop them through lyricism. With regard to the period of 1819, Deidre Shauna Lynch and Jack Stillinger claim that "in this period of turmoil, Keats achieved the culmination of his brief poetic career," and his poems already possessed the distinctive qualities of his maturity, namely "a slow-paced, gracious movement; a concreteness of description in which all the senses [...] combine to give the total apprehension of an experience; a delight at the sheer existence of things outside himself," through which Keats seems to "lose his own identity in a total identification with the object he contemplates" (all 902). What motivates the artist is an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to experience new phenomena.

The arrangement of the 1819 odes and their choice of subjects may seem relatively haphazard, but the odes can be read as a semantically related sequence. In other words, it is logical to assume the relation of each ode to its predecessor(s) by reinterpreting it (or them) and consolidating it (or them). Helen Vendler argues that whenever Keats returns to the form of each new ode, he recalls "his previous efforts and used every new ode as a way of commenting on earlier ones" (6). In a letter from 4 May 1819, Keats writes to George and Georgiana Keats about the ode's composition, which is "the first and the only one with which I have taken even moderate pains" (294), but he hopes that it would encourage him to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit. This foreshadows Keats's intention of composing the odes very soon.

However, individual readings of the odes have gained more approval than establishing a basis for reading them as a group. It is probably more acceptable to read them as "Keats's greatest embodiment of a sense of irony and negative capability" (Vendler 9). Whether the odes form a unified, interrelated sequence or qualify each other is not my concern in this dissertation. Instead, I am more interested in how Keats was attempting to construct and embody his idea of negative capability, and alternatively the chameleon poet and selfhood as implications of negative capability, within the texture of the odes, as well as how femininity is represented in them and how they relate to selflessness and self-annihilation.

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The accusations that consistently troubled Keats and associated him with femininity and effeminacy never let go of him in his verse. He even demonstrably equates poetic fame with masculinity, and always wishes to posthumously stand among the great male writers such as Shakespeare and Milton. In his letters, he frequently describes femininity as a source of personal humiliation and poetic failure. For instance, he writes to Benjamin Bailey on 22 July 1818: "I am certain I have not a right feeling towards Women; at this moment I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot. Is it because they fall so far beneath my Boyish imagination?" (169). Keats is grappling with his conflicting ideas about women, struggling to reconcile his idealized view of women with his experience of real women. He worries that real women fall short of his idealised view. If Keats, in his letters, creates feminine characters to control or possess them, in his 1819 odes, there is some remarkable alteration in his representation of femininity and female characters. The male characters are often annihilated by their unions with the female characters, or the female characters become constructive in helping the poet assume various identities.

In the 1819 odes, Keats presents a variation on the theme of feminine identity. Because real women did not particularly interest him, he created his own ideal female in the odes. The theme of "the merging of the poetic 'I' with a woman" abounds in his early poetry, and the theme of the vanishing of "the self into a utopian space of feminine beauty" is a central theme in his 1819 odes (Richers 209). The odes represent idealized versions of beauty often associated with the feminine. This association suggests a space where the odes' speaker finds, at least for a while, solace by dissolving the self into the feminine ideal. However, as Keats matured as a poet, his approach to idealised femininity became more complex and he added the ideas of the fleeting nature of beauty and the limitations of escapism in later poems such as "Ode to a Nightingale."

Historically speaking, the social construction of gender roles in early-nineteenth century England was not consistent. In their seminal text in class and gender history of late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall explore gender relations in the middle class and argue that "identity is gendered and that the organization of sexual difference is central to the social world" (29). It goes without saying that sexual identity is formed through a system of social relations, structured by institutions at every level of political, economic and social establishment. Given that, violations of the accepted norms which delineate gender roles are subject to rejection, ridicule and even accusation. Keats subtly pushes the boundaries expected

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from a male Romantic poet at the time. This relates to Keats's accusations of effeminacy due to his distraction of nineteenth century norms of gender roles, which inflicted Keats with scathing criticism.

Keats's insistence on the dynamicity of identity and his objecting to any fixed subjectivity added to such criticism. He is outspoken in his letters about his tendency towards masculinity, which he celebrates, but his poetry, as I will be demonstrating in this chapter, shows a different side. In their *Family Fortunes* (2019), Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall analyse the way that 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasised distinct roles for men and women, which maintained the social order at the time. They, however, analyse diaries, letters, and other sources to demonstrate that the concept of "separate spheres" (17) was a social construct, not a biological imperative. Women, even if not formally accepted in the public sphere, wielded power and influence. The antithesis of female representation in Keats's letters and poetry reveals his violation of the accepted gender roles. He even takes his premise further in his 1819 odes and, as I will be demonstrating in this chapter, often tries to annihilate both femininity and masculinity. In other words, Keats's poetical character conceives equally of male and female. Keats obviously failed or did not want to meet his societal concerns about gender roles, though he did feel the pressures of nineteenth century gender conventions.

In the odes from 1819, Keats not only concentrates on one symbol at a time (for example the urn as the symbol of beauty and of immortality in "Ode on a Grecian Urn") but also on one trope, namely apostrophe, of which all the odes make use. Keats sequentially presents a progressively assumed identity which must incorporate into itself "a world of pains and troubles" (Keats, *Selected Letters* 291). According to his aesthetic, which is completed in parallel with the composition of the odes, nature is a source of inspiration for creating art. "In nature-poetry," Sidney Colvin argues, Keats is a poet who "goes out with his whole being into nature and loses his identity in delighted sympathy with her doings" (216). Therefore, an artistic product basically starts from nature but does not end up resembling it. Instead, it achieves a new identity, ultimately, obliterating the natural form that is the basis for producing spiritual form.

Nonetheless, Keats insists that there would be neither art and nor identity without the natural base. This resonates with negative capability, which recognises the greatness and naturalness of art in the progressive outgrowth of the artist. As I will demonstrate, the odes subtly incorporate

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this idea. In this progression, femininity and female figures play a major role. The odes constitute Keats's efforts to work the notion of negative capability into verse. They demand that the reader participate in a perpetuation of unfixed and dynamic meaning. Keats, however, never "commits his speculations to the casket of a theory" (Scott xxi). Perhaps because the idea of negative capability appears – only once – in his letter from 22 December 1817 to George and Thomas Keats. This letter has produced hundreds of pages of commentary. Negative capability is "bound within the specific human context of a letter" (Scott xxii). The implications of negative capability are detectable in his letters. The following characteristics can be associated with negative capability, which are either mentioned in or inferred from his letters:

- 1) Indeterminacy (inferred from his letter on 22 December 1817)
- 2) Irony (inferred from his letter from 14 February – 3 May 1819)
- 3) Contrast (mentioned in his letter from 30 November 1820)
- 4) Uncertainty (inferred from his letter from 22 December 1817)
- 5) Dynamicity (inferred from his letters from 3 February 1818; 22 December 1817; 14 February – 3 May 1819; 9 June 1819)
- 6) Distrust of dogma (inferred from his letters from 26 October 1818; 22 December 1817)
- 7) Sensation and speculation (mentioned in his letters from 22 November 1817; 3 May 1818; 26 October 1818)
- 8) Authenticity of imagination (mentioned in his letter from 22 November 1817)
- 9) Annihilation of self (inferred from his letter from 27 October 1818)
- 10) Fluidity of identity (inferred from his letter from 22 December 1817)
- 11) Inconclusiveness (inferred from his letters from 22 December 1817; 22 September 1819)
- 12) Lack of subjectivity (inferred from his letters from 22 December 1817; 17–27 September 1819)
- 13) Passivity and receptivity (mentioned in his letter from 19 February 1818)
- 14) A sympathetic absorption in the essential significance of objects (inferred from his letters on 14 February – 4 May 1819)
- 15) No identity (mentioned in his letters from 20, 21 September 1818; 27 October 1818; 14 February – 4 May 1819)

From this list, the exact phrasing of numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 14 is not mentioned in the letters explicitly but can be inferred from the context of the letters. Along with the significance of female representation and femininity, the above-mentioned characteristics will be investigated in the analysis of the odes and their comparison with the selected poems of Hafiz and Emerson, because they, partially or collectively, represent the employment of negative capability within the texture of the odes.

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Keats's odes, though independently meaningful and aesthetically enjoyable, should not be disembodied from his life background, experience, and cultural disciplines. For the purpose of contextualisation, the letters are a great help for uncovering his personality and real-life experiences because, contrary to the stately elegant language of his poems, his letters "yield the spontaneous and frank observations of a young man: his insecurities, doubts, fears, enthusiasms, prejudices, ambitions, opinions, and ideas" (Scott xxi). It is a salient feature of Keats's letters to integrate his everyday life with his artistic life. In fact, they simultaneously represent his everyday life and intelligent life, which is indicative of his "axioms in philosophy" that "are not axioms until they are proved on our pulses" (*Keats's Selected Letters* 122-23). Keats's mental and poetic life took its measure from everyday life. His letters also include some of his poems placed in an environment more refreshing than weighty anthologies of poetry. The poems appearing in his letters are not isolated aesthetic events but natural extensions and experiences of his life growing organically out of specific contexts. They reflect his thoughts at the moment of poetry composition and the interest of his correspondents.

The marriage of poetry and prose in the letters indicates that poetry composition is not a career but a need for Keats. Contrary to the stereotype of the Romantic poet, who is mainly bent on solitude and life in retirement, while producing poems in a visionary frenzy, Keats was genial and amicable, and he always kept in touch with his network of friends. In his new edition of Keats's letters, Grant F. Scott offers a great perspective on the epistolary portrait of Keats the man, that bears striking similarities to his hypothetical chameleon poet who "is not itself, it has no self. It is everything and nothing" (195). Scott argues that influential critics such as A. C. Bradley, T. S. Eliot, and Lionel Trilling "have ignored the darker Keats, the man who could be rash, cruel, unreasonable, jealous, intolerant, misogynistic, and even anti-Semitic" (xxix). He further argues that Keats's darker side helps us recognize "his capacity for role-playing and the ease with which he assumed a variety of social and psychological identities" (xxxix). Keats is attuned to different audiences in his letters; he is reflective and philosophical, ambitious, solicitous, parental, anxious and amiable. He himself demonstrates negative capability within his own letters by exploring a range of human characters without judgment and any moral prerogative. His letters show his efforts to forge an identity out of uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts.

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A concise account of Keats's biography would be useful, especially when discussing femininity and female representation because knowledge about his short life, his struggles with illness, and his unfulfilled love for Fanny Brawne can illuminate the potential themes that I explore in the dissertation. However, the odes themselves are the primary focus and I do not reduce them to merely biographical details. I will be combining a set of methods to analyse the odes, since the ultimate aim of the dissertation is to shed light on some aspects of the odes that have not been sufficiently regarded and, on comparative investigation, chart the conceptual convergences of negative capability, *fana* and self-annihilation, as well as (un)gendered imagery and its implication in the annihilation and loss of self in the female manifestation. Therefore, a combined approach proves efficient and legitimate since it does not rule out the possibility of aesthetic clarification of the poems and their comparison and I can procure a viable analysis.

The lyric speaker sets the perspective for the entire poem. I explained the significance of lyric speaker in the "Introduction and Methodology" above. As for the odes from 1819, the poetic voice progressively arises out of the odes, each of which appropriates one or some of the approaches incorporated in the ode(s). The odes perceptibly incorporate both types of poetic voices, namely the authorial voice, in which the speaker is identical with the poet, and the speaker's voice, which assumes a fundamental distinction between the author and the voice in the poem. In the analysis of the odes, I will demonstrate the shift of the voice between the two kinds.

The main method employed in the analysis of the odes is thematic analysis, which allows me to closely read and examine odes and identify common themes and patterns of meanings coming up repeatedly. I do not intend to start my thematic analysis of the odes with merely preconceived themes and then, in one way or another, force them onto the texts. After reading the odes and conducting a review of literature about them, I have gleaned some preliminary findings about the concepts of self, the ideal poet, negative capability, femininity and female representation, which materialise as specific themes within the odes. The analysis is informed by pre-existing concepts extracted from Keats's letters. Therefore, the analysis is neither totally inductive nor deductive, but a combination of both approaches in the hope that this may lead to a more rigorous analysis. Keats's selected letters are a great help since the odes can be more accurately and thematically decoded when his letters are addressed. Moreover, thematic analysis helps me keep an eye on

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meta-textual questions that converge with thematic questions about identity, selflessness, and the way the lyrical self is constituted within the language of the odes.

### 1.5.1. Effaced Identity vs. Negatively Capable Identity in the Selected Poems

The comparison of the odes with Hafiz's selected ghazals is basically centred on concepts and ideas that relate to the main concepts that must be investigated in the dissertation. These main concepts – namely negative capability, *fana*, (un)gendering, and feminine representation – come with their own implications and inferences. The following table outlines the concepts and their inferences that are comparable in the selected poems by Hafiz and Keats.

| No. | Concepts                                | Implications / Inferences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Negative capability                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Uncertainty and Inconclusiveness</b></li><li>• <b>Dynamicity</b></li><li>• <b>Distrust of dogma</b></li><li>• <b>Sensation and speculation</b></li><li>• <b>Authenticity of imagination</b></li><li>• <b>Annihilation of self</b></li><li>• <b>Fluidity of identity to become everything and nothing</b></li><li>• <b>Lack of subjectivity</b></li><li>• <b>Passivity and receptivity</b></li></ul> |
| 2.  | <i>Fana</i>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Annihilation of self</b></li><li>• <b>Absence from the self</b></li><li>• <b>Intoxication and Ecstasy</b></li><li>• <b>Simultaneous states of pleasure and pain</b></li><li>• <b>Death as a spiritual event</b></li><li>• <b>Distrust of sense, reason, and dogma</b></li><li>• <b>Perfect attributes of the Divine Self</b></li></ul>                                                              |
| 3.  | (un)gendering / Feminine Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Feminization of the beloved God</b></li><li>• <b>Self-sufficiency and inaccessibility</b></li><li>• <b>Passivity</b></li><li>• <b>Creativity</b></li><li>• <b>Imagination as a feminine quality</b></li><li>• <b>Nature being gendered feminine</b></li><li>• <b>The Absolute being androgynous or ungendered</b></li><li>• <b>Gender ambiguity</b></li></ul>                                       |

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“Ode to Psyche,” Keats’s first exploration of the genre, is the first of a group of poems which Keats composed in April and May 1819. Though one of his most significant poems, it has not attracted as much interest as “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Ode to a Nightingale.” The ode is Keats’s initial exploration into the form of ode. In Greek mythology, Psyche is the goddess of the soul. She starts life as a beautiful mortal and does not initially belong to the pantheon of classical mythology, as Keats explains in his letter to George and Georgiana from 30 April 1819: “You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist [...] and consequently the goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour” (294). Apuleius, the second-century Latin author, created Psyche in the novel *The Golden Ass* (1566), in which Psyche is a merchant’s daughter whose sheer beauty arouses Venus’s jealousy. She orders her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a despicable, deformed creature, but instead he himself falls in love with her. Jupiter grants immortality to Psyche as a reward for her perseverance and that secures their ever-lasting unity. In the same letter, Keats shows concern for the marginalisation of Psyche as a goddess, whose identity must be rescued: “I am more orthodox than to let a heathen goddess be so neglected” (294). He revisits and rewrites the Greek myth of Psyche and breathes life back into the myth. His concern with Psyche’s neglected status relates to his own marginalised position as a poet, about which he laments.

This ode initiates Keats’s inner exploration of some complex ideas he deals with in this and later odes, namely the idea of negative capability, dynamic and passive self, recognition and negligence, freedom and restriction, conformity and nonconformity, and mortality and immortality. Keats shows a keen interest in the metamorphosis of mortality into immortality through perpetuation of love. In this ode, Keats writes a hymn to the goddess traditionally representing the soul, but here he focuses on one aspect of the soul, which is “the soul in love” (Vendler, *The Odes* 48). Keats associates the ideal poet with metamorphic identities, which supply him with persistently sympathetic identification with nature or human beings alike. His insistence on dynamic identity, which is distinctly expressed in his idea of negative capability, leads to the poet’s receptivity to vast experiences of life, as well as to poetic creativity.

Regarding the ode’s versification, it is written in the loosest form of any of Keats’s 1819 odes. The stanzas meet no preconceived formal scheme. They vary in number of verses, rhyme

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scheme, and metrical scheme, and convey the effect of spontaneous rhapsody rather than a considered form. Feet vary from iambic and dimeter to pentameter. There are both rhymed and unrhymed verses, with the rhymed ones being mostly in alternating rhymes (ABAB). The number of verses in a stanza is simply irregular: 23 (stanza 1), 12 (stanza 2), 14 (stanza3), and 18 (stanza 4). Compared to the other odes, “Psyche” testifies to Keats’s spontaneity and freedom in versification rather than to a great deal of effort to follow an elaborate and formal scheme. This ode’s rhyme scheme repeatedly slips between regular and informal or even chaotic parts. Such an inconsistency, as far as rhyme is concerned, hinders the fluidity of reading while allowing for a kind of uncertainty through rhyme.

Although “Psyche” largely oscillates between the quatrains of heroic rhyme (ABAB) and enclosing rhyme (ABBA), the poet often breaks free from the conventional rhyme scheme and metrical pattern. This, however, violates the auditory mode of the ode. For example, in the third quatrain of the first stanza, the /r/ sounds in “[...] beneath the whisp’ring roof / [...] where there ran” (ll. 10-11) stand between the full rhymes of “side” (l. 9) and “espied” (l. 12). The other evidence of rhyme inconsistency occurs in the third stanza wherein the first and second quatrains do not meet any formal rhyme scheme:

O latest born and loveliest vision far  
Of all Olympus’ faded *hierarchy*!  
Fairer than Phoebe’s sapphire-region’d star,  
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the *sky*;  
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast *none*,  
Nor altar heap’d with flowers;  
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious *moan*  
Upon the midnight hours; (ll. 24-31, italics mine)

Here hierarchy and sky form an eye-rhyme because the ‘y’ is pronounced /i/ and the ‘y’ in sky is pronounced /ɔɪ/. However, there is regularity in the rhythm of the preliminary lines. This regularity establishes a consistency, which stands in contrast with the anxiety of the subject: “O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung / By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear” (ll. 1-2). These verses put emphasis on the significance of contrast to adopt the openness of mind to avoid any subjective conclusiveness, which is one of the defining characteristics of negative capability. In fact, the ode’s rhythm shifts between regularity and irregularity; there is both consistency and inconsistency when it comes to formality of the meter. Yet, the ode

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demonstrates a fluid movement in its meter, rhyme and form. In this way, the poetic voice traverses between the past and present, bonds gods and humans, moves back and forth between wakefulness and sleeping. In lines 5-6, the poem's speaker muses, "Surely, I dreamt to-day, or did I see / The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?", which is indicative of a liminal space between dreams and waking consciousness. Uncertainty is created by the phrases 'I dreamt to-day, or did I see' since the ode's speaker is not sure whether it was a dream or a reality. The speaker questions the nature of the perception. This liminal space draws one's attention to the inconclusiveness and indeterminacy that Keats explicitly pinpoints in his letter of negative capability.

In lines 17-18, indeterminacy and uncertainty, major characteristics of negative capability, seem to be eternally trapping Psyche and Cupid: "Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu, / As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber." The poetic voice, in the meantime, posits itself between the real and the imaginary, between the past and present without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. The image paradoxically presents dynamicity of a static scene. The poet obliterates any kind of subjective conclusiveness and wanders in a world of sensation and speculation. In line 19, the inconclusiveness gains strength: "And ready still past kisses to outnumber," in which the poetic voice remains in 'uncertainties' and 'doubts' about passing more kisses. Although, on the surface, the line may also point to the kisses already passed, in a deeper level of reading, it indicates many more kisses left in hesitation to be either lain or not.

The word psyche signifies 'soul' which resonates with Keats's letter, written almost at the same time as the composition of the eponymous ode. In this letter from May 3, 1819, Keats clearly articulates his firm faith in the necessity of identities: "There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions – but they are not Souls till they acquire identities" (290). In this letter, he deviates from the ancient conception of soul as a pre-existing and eternal entity of the divine mind, and he defines it as an intelligence or spark of divinity, which acquires an individualised personal identity through development after being subjected to the "Elemental space" of the world, which is appropriate for the mutual interaction of "Mind and Heart" for the purpose of making soul (291). Keats's conception of the soul is individual and personal. The "Ode to Psyche" springs directly from Keats's "myth of Soul-Making" (Williams 122). The "Vale of Soul-Making" is a metaphor that Keats uses in his letter on April 21, 1819, to his brother George,

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to describe the process of poetic creation. As expounded in the chapter “Hafiz and Keats,” the process of soul-making takes place over a span of years and requires two components, namely the human heart and the world of pain and suffering. The heart acts as the source of knowledge and the teat from which “the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity” (291). Therefore, heart, according to Keats, is female, a nursing mother, and his system of soul-making or personal poetic self-development grows out of this maternal bond. However, it must be noted that, although Keats does clearly affirm that the ideal poet has ‘no self’, he is endowed with soul (individualised intelligence/mind), acquired painfully through hardship and trials. Acquiring the status of selflessness inevitably calls negation to mind.

The selflessness acquires more significance as the ode progresses. The second stanza is laden with echoing negatives that de facto draw on the very core of negative capability, for the ideal poet to be ‘everything and nothing.’ Thus, the speaker allows himself to frankly and boldly admit that Psyche has

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet  
From chain-swung censer teeming;  
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat  
Of pale-mouth’d prophet dreaming (ll. 32-35).

The speaker, though celebrating the goddess, unscrupulously notes all of Psyche’s faults, but he immediately turns to his own capability that “I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired” (l. 43). His own eyes, inspired in a transcendental experience, avail the negatively capable poet with true voice to sing hymns for Psyche. Contrary to his earlier doubtful “Surely I dreamt [...] or did I see” – in which the distinction between imagination and reality becomes blurred – he now emphatically reveals his vision and immediately offers the goddess that

let me be thy choir, and make a moan  
Upon the midnight hours;  
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet  
From winged censer teeming;  
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat  
Of pale-mouth’d prophet dreaming. (ll. 44-49)

However, he would build the temple in “some untrodden region of my mind” (l. 51). The ambiguity arises, here, with notable effect, leading to two differing interpretations. One infers

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uncertainty in the seemingly determined speaker; the speaker stands up firmly for celebrating Psyche, but he would build her temple in an isolated, far-flung area of the mind. He is in lingering uncertainty and doubt about where in his imagination to celebrate the goddess, even though it is supposed to occur imaginatively. He is not so sure about where to situate all the offerings. Another plausible interpretation suggests a domain that is substantially intact for celebrating the goddess, which indicates the speaker's high regards for her. The word "untrodden" at the same time suggests virginity and intactness of that particular part of his mind, wherein they are the same from a patriarchal, misogynist point of view. It suggests that it is de facto negatively capable and receptive to constructing new identities. It is already annihilated of any pre-existing identity. It is a virgin region wherein nothing is the same, but everything grows anew and becomes dynamic. It is a region, wherein new "branched thoughts" grow (l. 52); "Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep" all around the region (l. 55); there are "streams, and birds, and bees" (l. 56); and it is so serene and open that "the moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep" safe and sound (l. 57). That region, however, is not possessed by anybody or anything because "buds, and bells, and stars" exist in it "without a name" (l. 61). No name defies the sense of possession and features fluidity and dynamicity. In both interpretations, the speaker seems to be remaining in uncertainty to revitalize Psyche from classical tradition. The speaker is determined and at the same time hesitant, which leaves openness in his mind without necessarily clutching at any conclusive reasoning.

Despite their contrasting forms, Hafiz's ghazals and Keats's 1819 odes in general, and "Ode to Psyche" in this particular part of the dissertation, share an affinity for investigating the themes of love, the contemplation of mortality, a celebration of the fleeting moments of life's beauty, and the liminal space between the physical world and the realm of the divine wherein neither religious dogma rules nor any title gets credit. In "Ode to Psyche," the title and name provide a starting point, but the specifics of Psyche are not the focus but the subjective experience of beauty that explores themes resonating with a wider audience. In other words, the goddess Psyche's specific details are discarded and she per se holds no special place in the ode. In a similar way, Hafiz denounces boasting any title or names. In the following verses the poem's speaker has a longing for the annihilation of name and title:

همه کارم ز خودکامی به بدنمای کشید آخر / نهان کی ماند آن رازی کزو سازند محفلها

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Through self-gratification all my actions have led to disrepute. Yes, indeed. /

How, gossip parties being held about them, can secrets stay? (transl. by Avery 18)

Here the ghazal's speaker insists on the negative consequences of self-centred behaviour, which is driven by self-interest. This leads to downfall and disrepute. The major literary device is metaphor, which compares the speaker's secrets to gossip gatherings that unravel everything about the speaker. This is the consequence of egotistic behaviour that makes secrets to become known.

از ننگ چه گویی که مرا نام ز ننگ است / وز نام چه پرسی که مرا ننگ ز نام است

What is it you say of shame, when I enjoy repute because of shame? /

What is it you ask of repute, when I have the shame of repute? (transl. by Avery 80)

The speaker here would rather be notorious for disdain than acclaim because it is a longing for reputation that blocks the mystic's path towards the beloved; the path for which any selfhood must be annihilated. The speaker opts for a fluid name, or identity in Keats's word. Similarly, the ode's speaker progressively develops a fluid identity from the initial lines all the way through the final lines. S/he dynamically develops from wandering "in a forest thoughtless" (l. 7) into an individual celebrating Psyche and then into "thy priest" (l. 50). The ode's speaker is negatively capable of remaining content with a passive identity, yet the same passive identity – because it leaves open the capability of taking on other identities – is concurrently dynamic and fluid. The ode's speaker distrusts dogma since it has left Psyche un-worshipped and unattended. Hafiz similarly emphasizes renunciation of dogma, religiosity and even didacticism:

مطرب کجاست تا همه محصول زهد و علم / در کار چنگ و بربط و آواز نی کنم  
از قیل و قال مدرسه حالی دلم گرفت / یک چند نیز خدمت معشوق و می کنم

Where's a minstrel, that all the harvest of asceticism and learning /

I might make to the raising of the boisterous notes of harp and flute?

Now I've sickened of the disputation of the schools /

let me a while again take up attendance upon wine and the beloved. (transl. by Avery 422)

The speaker is dissatisfied with scholastic disputations because they engage him with gratuitous dialogues that are unmerited and distract the lover from the beloved. These lines prepare the ground for the exploration of romantic love and pursuit of pleasure. Pursuit of piety, representing

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rigid religious practices, is rejected as it hinders the lover from spiritual liberation. Regarding the ode's speaker's passivity and activity, there are two forms of the restoration of the forgotten Psyche in Keats's ode. In the first form "the beloved divinity is represented as existing eternally in a world accessible by dream or vision when the conscious mind is suppressed;" and in the second the restoration is by "consciously inward architectural reduplication, where Psyche will lie not in the forest grass but in the shrine of the working brain" (Vendler *The Odes* 55). Accordingly, Vendler concludes that the poet in the first form of restoration is "so passive, a thoughtless, wandering spectator" and in the second "so active, a creator with a working brain" (56). But I would argue a bit differently. The poem's speaker progressively takes on different identities. He assumes the identity of a dreamer from line five through twelve; that of a narrator from line thirteen through twenty-three; that of a sympathiser from line twenty-four through thirty-five; that of a singer from line thirty-six through forty-nine; that of a priest from line fifty through fifty-one; and ultimately, he returns to the first identity he had initially taken, namely a dreamer from line fifty-two onward. The speaker moves between these identities fluidly, starting from passivity (dreamer) to activity (priest) and back to passivity (dreamer).

Although the first dreamer is essentially passive and submissive, the final dreamer is more determined and sensuous. In his mind he will build a temple where "branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain" (l. 52). He is no longer merely a dreamer but now a dreamer with a "working brain" (l. 60), which vitalises the poet's desired offerings, although it all happens in his imagination. The poem's speaker abandons the dream of a passively received vision at the beginning of the ode. This cycle of identities continually repeats itself as long as the subjective self is annihilated, which heightens the receptivity of poetic subjects. Comparably in Hafiz's ghazals, the path towards higher status, namely towards the divine beloved, is predicated on the annihilation of the lover's identity. The speaker in this ghazal asserts that

حریمِ عشق را درگه بسی بالاتر از عقل است / کسی آن آستان بوسد که جان در آستین دارد

The sanctuary of love has a portal far loftier than reason /

Those may kiss that threshold who dare to bare their souls. (My Translation)

Love transcends intellect as it operates on a plane loftier and higher than intellect. The experience of love demands total surrender. One must be willing to sacrifice selfhood since it is a path that demands courage that goes beyond the realm of intellect. The phrase 'the sanctuary of

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love' implies the transformative power of love. One needs to release him/herself of selfhood to be granted the privilege of 'kissing that threshold.'

In Keats's ode, however, neither the cycle of identities assumption nor the recognition of both the speaker's identity and that of the goddess would begin unless Psyche hears "these tuneless numbers" (l. 1). Thus, the female character acts as the key agent and source of inspiration to launch the dynamic movement of identity recognition and self-annihilation. The female character, in a comparable manner, as the source of inspiration appears several times in Hafiz's ghazals:

در مجلسِ ما عطر میامیز که ما را / هر لحظه ز گیسوی تو خوش بوی مشام است

In our assembly mix no perfume, because we /

Every moment from your locks have fragrance sweet to smell (80)

The speaker prefers her tress's natural scent to any other fragrance since it is enough for the speaker to be inspired. The beloved's hair symbolises beauty and allure, which is the source of intoxicating perfume. The speaker celebrates the transformative power of love that transcends the physical realm.

Comparatively speaking, "Ode to Psyche" exemplifies Keats's ideal love, the ideal unattainable in the terrestrial world but attainable in the world of imagination. Hafiz similarly suggests in some of his ghazals that ideal love is met in the world of imagination:

گر دولتِ وصال خواهد دری گشودن / سرها بدین تَخَّیُّل بر آستان توان زد

If the fortune of union grants an opportunity /

Upon this imagination, one can lay one's head upon your threshold. (My Translation)

The power of imagination, the speaker maintains, sustains hope of union. Even if physical fulfilment is unlikely, the mere act of imagining this union may bring solace and comfort. The imagery of 'laying one's head upon threshold' signifies utmost respect and submission to the beloved. The significance of gendering here is open to various interpretations since the lack of explicit gendered language invites multiple readings. However, with the traditional gender roles and power dynamics being considered, the lover is regarded as a male subject desiring the female

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beloved. From a universal perspective, the lover could be either male or female, but the significant point is the lover's longing for the beloved, who could be either male or female.

Hafiz often expresses serious doubts on the attainability of the beloved. All the following lines reveal the speaker's grief over the beloved's behaviour being typically whimsical and quarrelsome.

دیدى اى دل که غم عشق دگر بار چه کرد / چون بشد دلبر و با یار وفادار چه کرد  
آه از آن نرگس جادو که چه بازی انگیخت / آه از آن مست که با مردم هشیار چه کرد

Did you see, O heart, what love's sorrow has done once more, /  
When the heart-snatcher departed, and what he did to the faithful friend?

O what a game that magic-working narcissus spurred on! /  
Alas for what that wanton drunkard has done to sober men! (transl. by Avery 183)

فکر عشق آتش غم در دل حافظ زد و سوخت / یار دیرینه ببینید که با یار چه کرد

Thought of love the fire of grief in Hafiz's heart was kindling /  
See you what the lover of old did to the friend! (transl. by Avery 183)

همچو حافظ همه شب ناله و زاری کردیم / کای دریغا به وداعش نرسیدیم و برفت

Like Hafiz, we wept and wailed every night, /

Saying "Ah the pity! We didn't get to his farewell, and he's gone." (transl. by Avery 125)

The word 'Hafiz' in the above two verses, as well as in other verses mentioned in this dissertation, adds an extra dimension to the interpretation of the ghazals. 'Hafiz,' as mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, is the poet's pen name. The word 'Hafiz' itself means memoriser or keeper, which relates to his possible mastery of the Quran. His pen name, however, adds another layer of meaning to his poems in various ways: 1) that some of the lines may reflect the poet's own personal ideas; 2) that the lines where the pen name appears may relate to the ideas, emotions, and cultural touchstones of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Iran so 'Hafiz' functions as a neutral person referring to every reader; 3) that the pen name may be introduced as a reference to a third person. His pen name, however, adds an extra layer of ambiguity to open-ended interpretations of the ghazals.

میل من سوي وصال و قصد او سوي فراق / ترکِ کامِ خود گرفتم تا برآید کامِ دوست

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My leaning, towards unity; his intention, separation. /

My inclination I have forgotten, to achieve the purpose of the friend. (transl. by Avery 100)

This verse captures the essence of unrequited love. Although the speaker's heart yearns for union, the beloved forestalls any attempt for union.

فکرِ بلبل همه آن است که گل شد یارش / گل در اندیشه که چون عشوه کند در کارش

The whole intention of the nightingale is this, that the rose be his beloved: /

The rose, intent on how to play fast and loose with him. (transl. by Avery 341)

The rose and the nightingale are recurring motifs in Persian literature. The rose often serves as “a literary metaphor for perfection and beauty and might figure the beloved” and the sweet-singing nightingale represents “the lover, or the poet” (Diba). Rose and nightingale form the types of beloved and lover par excellence in Hafiz's ghazals. The rose symbolises the coy, proud and often cruel, beloved while the lover-nightingale sings endlessly of “his longing and devotion” (Diba). In mystical poetry, including in those ghazals by Hafiz with strong mystical overtones, the nightingale's endless singing for the rose serves as a metaphor for every individual's yearning for union with God. The nightingale is associated with masculinity and active pursuit, while ardently pouring out his heart and soul, and the rose is associated with femininity and passivity, being the object of the nightingale's affection that engages the lover in a courtship. The rose's passivity versus the nightingale's activity highlights the dynamics of love. The gendering in this verse plays a vital role in creating its underlying meaning. The beloved's passivity, ironically speaking, creates a powerful longing in the lover's heart and drives the lover to actively pursue union with the beloved.

The female beloved in these last lines is presumably the mystical personification of God, who is both absolute and perfect. Apart from the term *ma' šūq* (Beloved), some other terms have been in use to designate the Beloved, e.g., *maḥbūb*, *ḥabīb*, *yār*, *dūst*, *delbar* (ravisher of hearts), *negār* (image), and *bot* or *šanam* (idol). Generally, in mystical poetry, and particularly in Hafiz's poetry, the Beloved is free from the lover's love. It is transcendental love not profane love. As the lines indicate, the lover must cut the ties that bind him to others and even to himself so that the transcendental love remains purified from any desire.

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The concept of a beloved in “Ode to Psyche” is more nuanced compared to Hafiz’s ghazals. The ode can be regarded as an address to Psyche, the Greek goddess of the soul. the ode’s speaker admires her and wishes to be her “priest” and “build a fane” for her (line 50). However, it is a mental sanctuary suggesting the speaker’s power of imagination. Keats primarily relies on imagination to unite with the goddess. His general faith on imagination appears in his letter to Benjamin Bailey on November 22, 1817: “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination. What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth,” regardless of whether the things seized by imagination “existed before or not” (both l. 54). He puts great faith in imagination and whatever it renders is truth. Thus, the poem’s speaker imaginatively creates a shrine for Psyche; the shrine which never existed before. This imaginary shrine also serves as a holy site for a kind of union with the goddess. The poet diverges from the original Greek myth in which Psyche and Cupid are shrouded in darkness. Instead, he revisits the past by reimagining the mythological figures and retells their story to readers. Being reanimated, the mythological figures break free from their frozen images and transcend time and place.

The poet, however, articulates his perception of Psyche’s plight, which is lack of recognition and celebration. The goddess has no “altar heap’d with flowers; / Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan/ Upon the midnight hours” (ll. 29-31). So, the poet devotedly attempts to have her identity recognised by taking up the matter in his own hand and singing “by my own eyes inspired” (l. 43). This devotion ultimately helps him transcend the limitations of selfhood by experiencing a cycle of different identities throughout the ode. The ode precipitates the speaker’s susceptibility to the assumption of various identities, which is the core characteristic to designate a negatively capable poet.

The assumption of various identities obliges the speaker to let go of his static and fixed identity. In this ode, the annihilation of the static identity becomes achievable once the speaker transcends beyond the distinctions of gender and gender stereotypes. This brings us to the idea of androgyny, which generally refers to the idea that one embraces characteristics that are typically associated with both masculinity and femininity. This issue has already been explained above in this chapter, yet I add some references here that discuss androgyny in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Romanticism and Gender* (1992) by Anne K. Mellor, although not solely focusing on androgyny, provides a broad overview of gender representation in Romantic literature. “John

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Keats and the Complexities of Gender” (2006) by Anne K. Mellor is a chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats* that discusses how Keats’s poems complicate traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as androgyny. *Rethinking the Romantic Era* (2020) by Kathryn S. Freeman addresses androgyny through the lens of androgyny, exploring how they challenged and blurred traditional gender roles in their writing.

The androgynous mind does assist the speaker to transcend sex-bound creations and release his mind from impediment. This dynamic and ongoing cycle of identity assumption results in a metamorphic identity, which comes to realization with Psyche acting as the key agent for immortalizing love. Psyche’s feminine traits lead to the annihilation of the speaker’s selfhood and ultimately to the union. At the same time, the ode reveals Keats’s sexual ambivalence. He does not assign a specific gender to Psyche through pronouns. This allows for readings that explore themes of blurred gender and androgyny. Within the ode, Keats internalises “Psyche and emerges both as a male and a female lover” (Banerjee 54). He assumes the positions of both male and female lover, who bears a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics.

Throughout the ode, the speaker attempts to assert his own poetic identity and establish his own poetic self. He is resolute to create her ‘temple’ and ‘oracle’ of which Psyche was always deprived, and he feels obliged to revere her. However, the speaker simultaneously deprives the goddess of her own role because “I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired. / So let me be thy choir and make a moan” (ll. 43-4). He asks for her permission, which implicitly targets her identity. He is his own inspiration, which means he is essentially keeping the goddess silent. In Hafiz’s ghazals, however, silencing the beloved never occurs and She is the one ordering, and it is the ghazal’s speaker who remains submissive:

اگر دشنام فرمایی و گر نفرین، دعا گویم / جواب تلخ می‌زبید، لب لعل شکرخا را

You spoke ill of me, and I do not mind. God forgive you! You spoke well /

The bitter answer is coming from sugar-crunching ruby lips. (transl. by Avery 21)

This verse is a testament to the lover’s yearning for unrequited love. This is the lover who does not mind however the beloved responds or reacts to his plea for her attention. The lover sees only sweet and beauty from her ‘sugar-crunching ruby lips’ that hints at the complexity of love which can soften bitter words. The juxtaposition of ‘ruby lips’ with ‘bitter answer’ creates a vivid

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contrast, which is resolved by the transformative power of love to convert the bitter into the sweet. The ghazal's lover craves for union with the beloved, while she intends to constantly tantalize him and never gives in to union. She simply neglects him and his constant endeavour to at least address the gap between them.

In a similar manner, the ode's speaker uses Psyche's neglected position in the pantheon of classical mythology, but contrary to Hafiz's ghazal, he employs the neglect to assert various identities for himself in the ode. The paradoxical conduct towards the goddess relates to the speaker's anxiety about his own marginalised status. Nonetheless, his anxiety prepares the ground for the dynamic movement of assuming various identities, thenceforth gaining a metamorphic identity, and finally the annihilation of the static identity, which becomes feasible when Psyche tampers with the identity formation. When we read Hafiz's ghazals minutely, we almost never come across any line in which the ghazal's speaker reprimands or speaks sarcastically to the Beloved, such as the following lines:

ای که در کوچه معشوقه ما می‌گذری / بر حذر باش، که سر می‌شکند دیوارش

Oh, you who are wending by the alleyway of our beloved /  
Watch out, for its wall breaks heads. (My translation)

These lines imply the lover's endeavour, who vainly yearns for spiritual union with the beloved. The lover, however, never bewails and bemoans when facing the beloved's negligence. The significance of this verse relates to the gendering of the word beloved (*ma'shuqa*) as feminine. The Persian word '*ma'shuqa*' is feminine that establishes the speaker's object of the affection as a woman. The gender dynamic reflects the context of Hafiz's era wherein the gendering of the beloved as feminine was often a social norm. The following ghazal also portrays a lover, who implicitly declares his burning desire to relate to the beloved in a moderate tone as if trying to soften the beloved's heart:

گفت و گو آیین درویشی نبود / و نه با تو ماجراها داشتیم

Bandyng words was not the way of the dervish /  
Otherwise, we would have untold adventures with you. (My Translation)

This verse builds upon the themes of longing and the intensity of emotions. The speaker complains that due to the code of conduct followed by dervishes, including asceticism and

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detachment from worldly concerns, he cannot express true feelings (untold adventures). This suggests an old motif in Persian mystical poetry which highlights a sense of unfulfilled desires due to social restraints. Yet, as in the following lines, the beloved reserves rights to herself to reprimand the lover for even sleeping, which metaphorically suggests lack of attention for her, both sexually and spiritually:

سر فرا گوش من آورد به آواز حزين / گفت ای عاشق ديرينه من خوابت هست؟

She mournfully leaned her head close to my ear and said, /

“My old lover, are you already asleep? (My Translation)

Contrary to the last two above verses, this one takes a more intimate and tender tone by shifting from the speaker’s lament about the beloved’s inattention and cruelty to her concern about him. The verse conveys her care for the speaker’s well-being through her gentle inquiry. It expresses a sense of unfulfilled desires while here the beloved longs for the lover’s undivided attention even during sleep. That he is obviously fast asleep agitates her, which may be even associated with post-coital dysphoria, the feeling of sadness, anxiety, or aggression, after orgasm in sexual intercourse.

Compared to the above-mentioned lines by Hafiz, the theme of negligence and inattention did affect Keats’s own life. He himself was not highly regarded as a poet during his lifetime. In relation to the ode, the goddess is a projection of the poet’s own fear of being neglected. The poet assumes various identities, first and foremost, to leave open a dynamic site of numerous experiences, and then to secure his own personal poetic identity through celebrating and featuring the goddess’s identity. In fact, Keats intends to assert “his own poetic identity and establish himself as an immortal poetic soul” (Banerjee 51). Therefore, if Keats extends his sympathy towards the goddess, it is also for the security of his own poetic identity, which can be paradoxically recognised through its annihilation in Psyche. Given that, the significant role of femininity must be noted in the cycle of identity recognition. Anne Mellor points out:

Keats explicitly engenders his own imagination, his soul or psyche, as feminine, following the classical convention that personifies both the soul and the muse as female. At the same time, he portrays his claim to such imagination or soul as a kind of rape. (5)

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As I explained before in this chapter, the effeminacy of style that some critics, like Leigh Hunt, perceived in Keats's poetry, inflicted him with scathing criticism. This may have badly impacted his recognition as a poet, critically accused of effeminate and luxuriant style that lacked rigidity and, in Romantic discourse, masculine spirit. Keats implicitly identifies himself with the goddess and engenders his imagination as feminine. The necessity of recognising and securing the goddess's identity seems immediate for the poet, and the poet feels it incumbent upon himself to affirm her identity, especially because in initial lines of the ode, the mythical figures are glimpsed unidentified and the poet merely "saw two fair creatures, couched side by side" (l. 9). The poet does not even explicitly name Cupid, so the god's identity never breaks assuredly. Quite contrary to Keats, the speakers in Hafiz's ghazals long for negligence and annihilation of their identities. Keats's idea of negative capability, however, demands the annihilation of the poet's personality and subjectivity for dynamic and changing identities. Yet, in Hafiz's ghazals, the speaker goes to the extreme and longs for total negligence of the identity. The following lines support this claim:

میانِ عاشق و معشوق هیچ حائل نیست / تو خود حجابِ خودی حافظ از میان برخیز

There is no screen between lover and beloved /

You yourself, Hafiz, are your own veil. Get out of the way. (transl. by Avery 328)

This verse suggests that the primary obstacle to fulfilling the ultimate aim, namely union with the beloved, is related to the lover's egotistical tendencies that act as a veil obscuring spiritual union. From a mystical perspective, the veil symbolizes the worldly attachments that hinder the lover's undivided attention to the beloved. Removing the veil aligns with the concept of *fana*, which leads to the spiritual union with the beloved. In this verse, the necessity of dispelling the veil resonates with the initial stage of *fana*. The following ghazal, however, subtly illustrates the concept of *fana* through vivid imagery and symbolism that create an evocative picture of *fana*:

حجابِ چهره جان می شود غبارِ تنم / خوشا دمی که از آن چهره پرده برفکنم  
چگونه طوف کنم در فضایِ عالمِ قدس؟ / که در سراچه ترکیب، تخته بندِ تنم

The dust of my body is becoming the veil in front of the face of the soul /

O happy the moment when from off that face I cast the veil aside!

How can I make any circuit in the space of the World of Holiness, /

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When, in the enclosed world of contrivance, I am tied to the plank of my body? (transl. by Avery 413)

This ghazal stands among Hafiz's most mystical poems, the main themes of which relate to the necessity of casting away the veil in front of the soul, namely the materialistic desires and cravings that conceal the truth of creation. The 'dust' symbolizes the body as a physical substance that simply separates the lover from the beloved and must be cast off as a prerequisite toward *fana*. Soaring through 'the World of Holiness' means transcending the restrictions of the physical world as the body is bound to earthly desires.

It is typical of Hafiz's ghazals to yield divergent interpretations, as he has ghazals that are notably absent of mystical overtones because the ghazals contain a blend of erotic, mystical and courtly themes that are so interwoven as to be inseparable. This ghazal, however, has strong mystical overtones. This ghazal principally epitomises the theme of *fana* as a prerequisite for the lover to reach union with the beloved. The annihilation of carnal desires is the major theme of the whole ghazal. It must be noted here that the word *hijāb*, translated as veil, refers to the hindrance and obstacle that hinders union with the beloved and it has nothing to do with the *hijāb* that is literally associated with the head-covering worn in public by some Muslim women.

In a letter to George and Georgiana Keats on May 3, 1819, Keats resumes his argument about acquiring identities: "Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul?" (291). Keats assumes that through arduous pain, one can construct an identity and be a true soul. In the same vein, Psyche signifies the soul, and it is a true soul that constitutes Keats's ultimate ideal to define the dynamic process of identity formation. Despite the "World of Pains and troubles," the goddess calls for the poet's audacity to articulate his desire to become her 'priest' and sing for her. Its offshoot is the extension of the poet's own identity. The act of worship in the last stanza takes a form of self-projection, as the poet endures pains in building "a fane" (l. 50) and dressing "a rosy sanctuary" with "the wreath'd trellis of a working brain" (ll. 59-60). With this explanation, the paradox in "pleasant pain" that grows lengthwise with "branched thoughts" does not run contrary to the kind of pain Keats defines in his world of pains (l. 52). The static identity is annihilated, which calls for new thoughts, the inevitable repercussion of which is pain and trouble. Similarly, in some of Hafiz's

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ghazals, pain and trouble form an inevitable component of the ghazal's speaker's path towards the beloved. The following lines exemplify it:

آلا یا ایُّهَا السَّاقِیْ اَدِرْ کَأْساً و ناولِّها / که عشق آسان نمود اوّل ولی افتاد مشکل‌ها

Ho, cupbearer! pass the wine cup and offer it to me, /

For at first love appeared easy, but then difficulties arose. (My Translation)

The invocation of the cupbearer is a motif in Persian poetry. Here the speaker seeks solace in wine and company of the beloved. Yet, it did not take a long time until the seemingly easy path of love confronted difficulties. The initial allure of love contrasts with its ensuing difficulties.

فراز و شیب بیابان عشق، دامِ بلاست / کجاست شیردلی کز بلا نپرهیزد

The steeps and slopes of the desert of love are calamity's snare; /

Where is the lion-heart that is not wary of the ordeal? (transl. by Avery 206)

Like the above-mentioned verse, the perils of love emerge throughout the path. The phrase 'calamity's snare' emphasises the potential dangers of love that exist within the nature of love. The following lines epitomise the excruciating pain that the path towards the beloved inflicts on the ghazal's speaker:

مرا می‌بینی و هر دم زیادت می‌کنی دردم / تو را می‌بینم و میلم زیادت می‌شود هر دم  
به سامانم نمی‌پرسی نمی‌دانم چه سر داری / به درمانم نمی‌کوشی نمی‌دانی مگر دردم

You see me and at once increase my pain /

I see you and every moment my fondness becomes greater.

Of my condition you do not ask. I do not know what your intention is. /

You make no attempt to effect my cure. Is it that you do not understand my pain? (transl. by Avery 387)

The essence of unrequited love becomes bold in the opening lines of this ghazal. Here the beloved's presence is a source of both pain and longing, showing how the lover, in the mystical discourse, bears different states of joy and sorrow, expansion and contraction, the pain of sepeation from the beloved and the ultimate bliss of approaching the beloved through *fana*. These psychological states are best expressed by mystic poets using the metaphor of wine

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drinking and its effect on the person. The following verses are just a few of many verses in Hafiz's poetry that represent wine drinking representing various psychological states of the lover:

شرابِ تلخ می‌خواهم که مردافکن بُود زورش / که تا یک دم بیاسایم ز دنیا و شر و شورش

I yearn for a wine so bitter whose power can knock man, /

Then for a moment I may recline from the world's chaos and conflict. (My Translation)

This is the first verse of the ghazal that sets the tone for escapism and disillusionment with the ephemeral moments of this world. Resorting to a potent wine to drink into oblivion highlights the desire for solace in wine and intoxication. In the following line, the speaker gives wine full credit for its effect of temporary repose at the Day of Resurrection:

پیاله برکفتم بند تا سحرگه حشر / به می ز دل ببرم هول روز رستاخیز

Bind my cup to my shroud, so at the dawn of the Day of Resurrection /

To appease the turmoil, through wine, at the Day of Resurrection. (My Translation)

The wine is so potent for the speaker that it can numb the speaker's anxieties at the time that, according to many religions, particularly Abrahimic ones, the world ceases to exist and everyone has to face their own personal reckoning. These various effects of wine-drinking reveal "the different states of consciousness as well as unconsciousness of the lover" (Pourjavady 133). While drinking wine, one first tastes it, which keeps him/her in the stage of awareness. Yet, as it continues, s/he starts to fall into intoxication and its excessive persistence leads to absence from the self (*ghā'ib*). At this stage, the lover can no longer perceive his/her own self. This is the point at which the lover is fully inspired and then intoxicated.

In a comparable manner, it is possible to trace the concept of inspiration in one of his letters to Reynolds, on May 3, 1818. In it, Keats produces a metaphor of the life of mind as a 'Mansion of Many Apartments', which foreshadows his inspired poetry of 1819. It is the prototype of the infant-soul's explorations in the world of mind. Keats compares "human life to a large Mansion of Many apartments [...] The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think" (124). Correspondingly, the ode starts with the speaker wandering in the forest "thoughtlessly" (l. 7), as if he is walking in the thoughtless

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Chamber. But, with the coming of the working brain, he is no longer thoughtless, because he is “imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us, we no sooner get into the second Chamber,” which he calls “the Chamber of Maiden-Thought” (124). It is in the second Chamber that the working brain operates.

The Chamber of Maiden Thought is at the heart of mind’s mansion. It determines the poetic principle of self-development, triggered by internal forces. Once in the second chamber, the infant soul becomes “intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere” of its new world and sees “nothing but pleasant wonders” (both 124). Yet, its breathing of the new world is “father” to the tremendous and inevitable part of its growing condition and “sharpening one’s vision into the heart and nature of Man,” which comprises “Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression” (124). This heightened awareness is associated with inspiration that leads to creativity and intuition. The ‘intoxicated’ soul is now susceptible to new understanding.

The afore-mentioned preparation for deeper understanding, compared to the mystical path, is not an easy one, but meant to be a transformative journey. When combined with negative capability, Keats finds the way to negative capability as an arduous one, a descent into pain rather than ascent into romance. In addition, the idea of the Chamber of Maiden Thought upholds Keats’s claim of completeness and wholeness, as a presumed claim to androgyny. In this sense, the effeminacy, for which he was severely criticized, forms part of a conscious poetic manifesto for him, an indication of strength rather than weakness. Androgyny promises a utopian image of wholeness that manifests male poets’ urge to absorb feminine characteristics.

Aligning himself with the goddess, the speaker of “Psyche” acknowledges a gender stereotype and attributes a kind of passivity and need of protection to her. She is not endowed with autonomy and independence but represented as a feminine stereotype, though a goddess, dependent on male attention and security. She needs the male poet’s sympathy to secure her identity, which is subject to his ‘working brain’ and his fancies, as well as his priesthood to salvage her status in the world of divinity. The poet strives to regain a “faded hierarchy” (l. 25). There is poetic ambiguity surfacing in his treatment of the poetic subject; the goddess is both worth worship and desperately in need of sympathy and security. Put differently, the poet embraces the goddess and, at the same time, denies her independent authority and identity.

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Psyche is essentially a poetic contrivance to her male creator. The poem's speaker is both her worshipper and her possessor, but the possession is in mental terms. This kind of mental possession, a liminal standpoint between masculine domination and feminine subjection, is in terms of traditional discourses, which indicates Keats's idea of negative capability. Therefore, the speaker's poetic identity remains irresolute, while, correspondingly, the status of Psyche is precariously undefined throughout the ode. In other words, both the poetic identity and Psyche's status never get fixed. It leads us towards one of the main characteristics of negative capability, namely irresolution, which indicates the openness of the poetic mind. Likewise, the poem's speaker never desperately reaches after a static identity for himself, nor a stable status for Psyche.

Comparable to the rejection of a static identity suggested by negative capability, *fana* affirms a dynamic identity that is constantly evolving. The ghazals' speakers strive to have their selfhood annihilated and, like the speaker of "Ode to Psyche," they clutch at no static identity since it is the static identity that obstructs the progression towards union with the beloved:

دست از مس وجود چو مردان ره بشوی / تا کیمیای عشق بیابی و زر شوی

Like the valiant of the Path, cleanse your hands of existence's copper /  
To discover love's alchemy and turn it into gold. (transl. by Avery 579)

The metaphor 'existence's copper' is an expression that refers to the ego-driven motivations that seek validation from external factors. The lover must get purified from imperfections and worldly attachments. If wishing to attain union with the transcendental reality, the speaker must cut ties with the materialistic life, that metaphorically appears as copper, whereas the copper (materialistic life) must turn into gold (transcendental life). In fact, the desire to turn the copper into gold stems from ancient alchemy; olden alchemists believed that common metals like iron, lead and copper could develop and mature into silver and then gold as the most perfect of all metals. Hafiz employs this idea to create an alchemical image.

Keats's other ode that fits into this comparative analysis is "Ode to a Nightingale." This ode is a personal poem epitomising Keats's journey into the state of negative capability. The poem was inspired by a nightingale's song when Keats had been in the garden of his house in Hampstead. He composed the poem in one day and it became one of the most frequently anthologised poems

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in the English language and literature. In the “Nightingale” ode, Keats’s exploration of negative capability immediately surfaces. The poem’s speaker contemplates a vision that leads to uncertainty rather than a firm declaration. Contrary to his earlier poems and escapist romances, the tone of this ode discards the optimistic pursuit of pleasure and, instead, explores the themes of mortality, selfhood and death, as well as some other themes of nineteenth century British Romanticism, such as unresolved questions about nature, transience, and immortality.

Given several thematic structures in the ode, the most evident structure is that of contrast between the earthbound speaker and the free nightingale. The ode starts with the speaker having fallen into a reverie while listening to a nightingale’s song, which draws an ambivalent response of joy and pain from him. In the beginning, the bird is presented as a real bird, but as the poem progresses, it becomes a symbol of pure or unmixed joy, and the music of nature. The whole ode is inspired by the nightingale’s melodic song. It should be noted that one prominent feature of music is its fluid expressiveness. The fluidity of expressiveness is compatible with the assertion of fluid identity as the most prominent feature of negative capability. The nightingale’s song represents the speaker’s engagement with the musical fluidity of the song; the song of immortality for which the poem’s speaker longs.

The ode’s speaker is initially intoxicated with the melodious song of a nightingale, which foreshadows the immediate signification of negative capability from the very beginning. The poem’s speaker frankly acknowledges a state of extreme drunkenness, which takes him/her not longer than a minute to feel “Lethe-wards” sunk (l. 4). Yet, this self-forgetfulness inflicts no pain or misery on the speaker but promotes happiness. The “drowsy numbness” that pains his sense soon turns into happiness. Numbness immediately prevails over the initial mode of the ode. It suggests passivity, indicating the speaker’s initial susceptibility to negative capability, which soon marks the whole ode. Immersion in negative capability reaches its culmination in stanzas four to seven, in which the ode’s speaker enters the bird’s world, which is explained further in the following section.

Intoxication in “Nightingale” does not merely refer to physical drunkenness but to a state of blissful escape. The poem begins with the speaker bring drunk with “hemlock” (line 2), a highly poisonous flowering plant, or he had taken “some dull opiate” (line 3), a highly addictive narcotic. It is obvious the speaker does not wish to get poisoned but seeks solace in these

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narcotics to ease sorrow. A similar kind of intoxication appears in Hafiz's ghazals. It is a favourite Sufi metaphor, that implies absence from selfhood, and results in constant pleasure. In the following lines, both images of nightingale and intoxication appear together:

کنون که بر کفِ گل جامِ باده صاف است / به صد هزار زبان بلبش در اوصاف است

Good that the pure wine is in available to the flower's cup /

The nightingale sings its praises in a hundred thousand languages. (My Translation)

In Persian literature, the nightingale's plaintive song addresses the beloved and the song is intoxicating for both outside listeners and the beloved. The flower's cup holds the pure wine, representing either physical or spiritual intoxication. The nightingale's melodious song celebrates this intoxication in a multitude of languages, suggesting the universality of praising beauty and joy. The nightingale adores the wine, the flowers, and the world around them.

The significance of the nightingale's song begins the "Ode to a Nightingale." The concern for the nightingale and its song unfolds right from the opening stanza where the speaker asks the nightingale for happiness: "Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, / But being too happy in thine happiness" (ll. 5-6). The speaker exploits the doubling of 'happy', which constructs "a creative uncertainty" as to who is the subject of this second line: the bird or the poet or both? (Whale 102). Who is it that happily appreciates the nightingale's 'happy lot'? If it were the former, the problem would take the form of a "self-absorbed, solipsistic, even narcissistic complacency"; if it were the latter, it would signal "an almost pathological extremity in the poet's capacity for sympathetic imagination or empathy" (both Whale 102). In this chapter, I have explained that beauty and truth, as two intertwined constituents of an object according to Keats, reveal themselves through an intense grasp of sympathetic identification, which marks a negatively capable poet. Such a poet is privileged to have metamorphic identities, which supply him with persistently sympathetic identification with nature and human beings. The speaker's initial sympathetic imagination with the nightingale signifies the potential for sympathetic identification with the nightingale within the ode.

Likewise in Hafiz's ghazals, identification with nature has strong overtones that highlight a sense of unity with the natural world. His use of natural imagery – flowers, grape and wine, gardens, and the sky – often symbolise the mystical union between the self and the divine. Natural

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elements are often driven with profoundly purposive implications. Landscape aesthetic comprises a prominent part in interpreting Hafiz's lyric poems since they inextricably intertwine natural elements with transcendental concepts and ideas. Hafiz largely sees natural elements and wonders as secret phenomena with highly symbolic qualities. Hafiz exalts nature and, even when introducing the transcendental world of paradise, he hints to the earthly gardenlike features of paradise in different manners, as in the following lines:

همه شب در این امیدم که نسیم صبحگاهی / به پیام آشنایان بنوازد آشنا را

All night, I'm in the hope that the dawn breeze /

Might indulge the friend with the friend's message. (transl. by Avery 27)

The breeze acts like a message-bearer, which is a transcendental feature for earthly breeze. The speaker resorts to nature and natural landscapes to render the mystical perceptions tangible. Nature per se does not attract the speaker. He considers nature as the real locus of reflection, contemplation, and imagination, as well as intuitive perception. Natural sights represent the beauty of the Beloved.

مراد دل ز تماشای باغ عالم چیست / به دست مردم چشم از رخ تو گل چیدن

From the spectacle of the garden of the world, our object is what? /

From thy ruby face, by means of the pupil of the eye, rose plucking. (transl. by Avery 470)

"Baghe Alam" (garden of the world) literally refers to nature, but it is elevated into the transcendental. Nature is the locus where the beloved manifests herself, bestowing onto the speaker divine signs that point to the presence of the beloved. Natural events and phenomena simply prepare the ground for the speaker's mystical perceptions, as in the following lines:

چون صبا مجموعه گل را به آبِ لطف شست / کج دلم خوان، گر نظر بر صفحه دفتر کنم

When with the water of grace, the breeze washed the bed of the roses, /

Me, crooked of heart, call, if at the page of the book (where people judge and register people's debts), glance. (transl. by Avery 417)

Unconventionally, it is the breeze that washes the bed of the roses since the breeze is so gentle that dew suffices to do so. Besides, it is the right time to wander in nature without taking heed of the book. The time has come to disregard anything irrelevant to natural sights, at which point the

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speaker does not halt and employs these natural sights for mystical perceptions and reflections. Comparably speaking, Romantic artists emphasised the glory and beauty of nature, and some treat nature in an almost religious way.

In Keats's ode, the nightingale is a significant symbol for poets from a variety of ages and has taken on several symbolic connotations. It is one of Britain's most celebrated birds because its voice is deemed beautiful, and it is celebrated in music and literature. But there was always a common misconception about the sex of the singing nightingale; many writers assumed the female sang while it is in reality the male that has remarkable singing abilities, especially when it is the mating season, which is a highly competitive time. Male songs "may reflect their body condition, resulting in female selection of the best singers" (Schmidt et al., 2005). However, the nightingale's song has usually been associated with the female in art and literature. Helen Vendler, though referring to Keats's bird as "faintly female," casts serious doubts on the unanimous reception of the nightingale as female and conceives of the bird as "sexless" because the poet's identification with "the bird is so strong, and Keats's rejection of the legend of Philomela so conclusive" (82). However, Vendler's line of reasoning for the nightingale's sexlessness is not supported by the ode itself since the nightingale's female gender is firmly established in line seven by identifying her with a light-winged Dryad.

However, it is the female bird that is appropriated by the male speaker. Nandita Batra argues that many Romantic texts construct "masculine identity through the voice of a female" (74). Similarly, the "Nightingale" ode imposes a markedly masculine consciousness on a female bird. In this respect, the ode adopts a singing female bird whose wordless song concedes the signification projected upon it by the male speaker. The ode's speaker is anxious to partake of the bird's happiness immediately at the beginning of the ode. The immediate, sympathetic identification that the speaker pursues results in "an obliteration of selfhood" (Barnard 109). The opening of the second stanza resumes the idea of self-annihilation and expresses the speaker's yearning for "a draught of vintage" (l. 11) to join the nightingale in her immortal world. For this purpose, the speaker calls for "Hippocrene," the mythical spring of poetical inspiration, which he may drink and "leave the world unseen" (ll. 16, 19). The speaker invokes the poetical intoxication as a way to "fade away into the forest dim" (l. 20) with the nightingale. The images of intoxication, starting with the first lines and continuing to the end of the second stanza, signify

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both the speaker's desperate urge and his attentiveness to abandon his static and individual identity.

The first two stanzas attribute significance to the immortality of the nightingale's song, as well as her ability to transport the speaker into immortality, for which he would beseech a variety of drinks and invoke mythical figures to release him from selfhood. Therefore, he can retain an imaginatively open state of mind, which signifies negative capability, and fade away while accompanying the bird towards immortality. The speaker instantly longs for intuition and relies on inspiration approximating passive receptivity. As explained above, Keats regards such a poet as chameleon, whose mind is supposed to be a thoroughfare that leads to new ideas, regardless of morality and selectivity, without any egotistic assertion of identity. It is essentially the interpretation of negative capability, stretched over the whole ode. The prerequisite for negative capability, and subsequently for the creative work of imagination, is an openness that collapses any hunger for settlement, fact, and rationalised system of thought. Negative capability allows the poet to speculation experientially, using a female nightingale as the animating agent in this 'thoroughfare' as the path to a negatively capable mind. The bird acts like a front runner making a path through a previously unexplored area and without her inspiration, the speaker would never achieve negative capability.

When grappling with his intensely conflicted feelings about joining the immortal bird, the ode's speaker is aware that it is a transformative journey. To "fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget /.../ ... the fever, and the fret," he must become a "sod" to the immortal bird's "requiem" (ll. 21-22, 60). In the ode, the speaker imagines the loss of the physical world and sees himself dead – as a "sod" over which the nightingale sings. The contrast between the immortal nightingale and the mortal man sitting in his garden is made more acute by an effort of the imagination. Negative capability is fully attained only after the speaker encounters voluntary death as the ultimate unresolved mystery, which challenges his sense of identity. In fact, the ode shows an ambivalence towards death; it provides release and relief from the earthly pain and at the same time it prompts self-annihilation, which deepens the uncertainty and mystery prevalent in the ode. Resulting from this extended uncertainty across the whole ode, the ambiguity echoes till the last line: "Do I wake or sleep?" (l. 80). It represents an unresolved situation, which clearly exemplifies the productive situation for which negative capability aims.

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Invoking the female bird to transport him into the immortal world, the speaker implicitly draws on some of the Petrarchan conventions, which, in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (1470), depict the beloved as an idealised mistress, who is often absent or otherwise unavailable. It is beyond question that the female bird in Keats's ode is not conceived as an idealised beloved but appears to enjoy a status higher than the poet, due to her immortal song. Besides, similarly to the Petrarchan mistress, nowhere in the ode does the female nightingale even seem to heed his invocation and supplication for flying far away with her. However, the speaker's invocation never wavers, and it is he who blames the world "forlorn" for tolling "me back from thee to my sole self" (ll. 71-2). The female bird constantly triggers his imagination and leaves him wandering in his imaginary world. The unity with the female bird is not easily attainable; the poem's speaker must have his static identity annihilated once he enters her immortal world. He enters her immortal world after three stanzas long as if he required some preparation time to be mentally allowed into her world.

This motif of heedlessness to the lover and unrequited love is also abundant in Hafiz's ghazals, where the beloved disregards the lover and treats him coldly. The following verse comes from one of his ghazals that conspicuously exemplify this motif:

اشک من رنگِ شفق یافت ز بی‌مه‌ری یار / طالع بی‌شفقت بین که در این کار چه کرد

Out of my beloved's unkindness, my tears have taken on the hue of dawn  
/ Behold what my ruthless fate has done in this regard. (My Translation)

The central element here are the tears having the hue of dawn. Comparing the tear to the red colour of dawn or twilight highlights the profundity of the sorrow about the beloved's unkindness.

Femininity gains significance and strength as the "Ode to a Nightingale" proceeds. The poet attempts to "capture the evanescent, to turn the tenuous into the permanent, through the female, who remains the very symbol of the tenuous to the male" (Alwes 122). He wishes to achieve permanence through suspension of experience rather than internalisation of everyday experience. To fade 'with thee' essentially implies his desire to leave behind all the senses accompanying mortality. This kind of departure from the earthly-bound senses is possible only through the female nightingale. The female nightingale is the intermediary through which the speaker aims

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for immortality. Ultimately, he enters her world and hears the bird's sonorous voice that had been heard "in ancient days by emperor and clown" (l. 65). However, before entering her world, he anxiously implores her to "fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget" all the pains and suffering that befall a person in the mortal world (l. 21). But the speaker implicitly gives the glad tidings that she has never known "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" that strikes the mortal world (l. 23). The bird has lived untouched by all the exhaustion and worry that is inseparable from the human's world. She is like a catalyst, where the agent that triggers the whole process emerges from it unchanged.

In the "Ode to a Nightingale" synaesthesia is the literary device that best serves to contrast the mortal with the immortal world. What happens daily in the mortal world is that "men sit and hear each other groan" (l. 24) and what makes it more despondent is that even at daylight "beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes" (l. 29). Whereas in the immortal world, which is ironically night and dark, things are different. In it "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, / Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs," the speaker can "in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet / Wherewith the seasonable month endows" (ll. 44-5). The daylight of the mortal world is simply overshadowed by the darkness of the immortal world. The word "embalmèd" is an ambiguous term. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it has two distinct meanings; 1) "to preserve (a corpse) from decay, originally with spices;" 2) "to give a pleasant fragrance" ("Embalm"). The speaker is already transported into the nightingale's immortal world and feels close to her although it is completely dark. The darkness is neither frightening nor appalling but embalming. However, it remains ambiguous whether its embalming quality merely refers to the fragrance of the darkness, as the second meaning denotes, or it is fragrant because it is well preserved with something external to make it smell pleasant. In any case, the speaker mentions his perplexing state in her immortal world and finds himself unable to fully recognise his whereabouts, being reduced to guessing based on olfaction.

The speaker's perplexing state connects to Keats's metaphor of the "Mansion of Many Apartments," which he develops in his letter to Reynolds from May 3, 1818, into a theory of the life of the mind. It is the prototype of the infant-soul's explorations in the world of mind and includes Keats's conception of a gregarious advance of intellect in cultural history, in which new

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minds can take advantage of previous endeavours without relying on their individual greatness of mind for every step. I quote the whole passage here as it helps with the analysis of the ode:

I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me – The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think, [but once we are] imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us, we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there forever in delight,

But this does not end in pleasantness because

among the effects this breathing is father of that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man – of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression – whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open – but all dark – all leading to dark passages – We see not the balance of good and evil.” (*Selected Letters* 124)

The Chamber of Maiden-Thought is at the core of mind's mansion and it is not the 'bright appearance' of the Maiden-Thought that motivates, but the 'thinking principle', that begins a more profound engagement with life's complexities. This, according to Keats, determines the poetic principle of self-development, generated by internal forces. Once in the second chamber, the infant soul is "intoxicated" by the 'pleasant wonders' of its new world, yet its breathing of the new world is "father" to the tremendous and inevitable part of its growing condition, which comprises "misery" and "sickness." Now the poetic mind is veiled in mist, expressing the knowledge of mystery. Keats leaves his conceit at this point, on the threshold of a new chamber of discovery, since he has not 'arrived' any further. That he leaves off his conceit due to want of arriving other discovery chambers testifies to his faith in experience.

Keats emphasises the significance of experience here and there in his correspondence, when insisting on receptivity to vast experiences of life, excited by negative capability. Once in the nightingale's world, the speaker has moved into "the Chamber of Maiden-Thought" because he is "intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere," and he sees "nothing but pleasant wonders." The speaker's experience about the initial entry into her world echoes Keats's explanation of the mansion theory. He feels "the coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine, / The murmurous haunt of

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flies on summer eves” (ll. 49-50). However, he cannot see anything in the nightingale’s world because he has moved further into the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, wherein one sees nothing but feels pleasant wonders.

Keats’s theory of mansion is an explanation of different levels of thought that people may experience or endure. The reflection of his theory clearly appears in line 34 of the “Nightingale”, where the speaker’s brain becomes “dull”, as it “perplexes and retards.” He is transported into the immortal world, the entry of which leads towards the Chamber of Maiden-Thought. For this arduous journey, he prefers to “fly with thee” alone without being assisted by “Bacchus and his pards” (l. 32). Ironically, he does not even rely on Bacchus, the god of wine, either to assist or accompany the speaker, although he has abiding faith in intoxication per se during his imaginary journey into the bird’s immortal world. Instead, the speaker had rather join the bird “on the viewless wings of Poesy” (l. 33). The wings are viewless, and it is only the negatively capable speaker who is able to fly on them. It is obviously a painful, though simultaneously joyful, path to take. However, when the speaker gains the viewless wings of poetry, he finds himself “already with thee” (l. 35). The speaker’s mind, though heavy because of the burden of life, has already begun to transcend life’s suffering and join the nightingale in a realm of beauty. From here onwards till the penultimate stanza, the speaker is allowed entry into the bird’s world. He, however, immediately finds out that “tender is the night” (l. 35). The immortal world is dark but gentle.

Though susceptible and prepared for embarking on the journey towards negative capability from the initial lines of the ode, the speaker begins the solemn act of self-annihilation once he dares to enter the immortal world evoked by the bird’s song. The speaker gradually surrenders his identity to the nightingale’s transporting song through dissolution of experience. The song triggers dynamicity in the speaker and evokes aesthetic responsiveness from him. It incites him to escape from human suffering in the real life and assert his long-life yearning for the beautiful. “With imaginative self-annihilation complete,” Vendler argues, “Keats cannot any longer speak of himself as a listener, but only of the immortally singing bird and other listeners in the past” (102). At this point, I believe, the speaker is temporarily releasing himself of any dogmatic reasoning and attentively listening to the immortal song, which had been heard by the ancient people. He is now fully dissolved in the song of the female bird.

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With time wearing on in the immortal world, the ode's speaker finds out that the doors of the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, where his "vision into the heart and nature of Man" is sharpened, are gradually set open 'but all dark.' Though Keats bluntly confesses his ignorance of the substance and occurrences of other apartments since 'the doors of the rest' are as yet 'shut upon' him, he claims that it is in the dark Chamber of Maiden-Thought that we become 'intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere' and we think of 'delaying there for ever in delight'. Likewise, it is in the female bird's dark world that he longs to remain eternally. In this world, "the coming musk-rose" is absolutely "full of dewy wine" (l. 49). The luxurious scent of the musk rose involuntarily stimulates the olfactory sense; the musk rose tastes like dewy wine that intoxicates the speaker. The kind of intoxication that leads to poetic self-annihilation and comes from the bird's world is pleasurable.

Hafiz's Divan, too, is filled with verses that portray the speaker's pleasurable intoxication:

ما در پیاله عکس رخ یار دیده‌ایم / ای بی‌خبر ز لذتِ شربِ مدام ما

You, unaware of our constant drinking's sweetness /

In the bowl we have seen the reflection of the friend's [beloved's] cheek. (transl. by Avery 34)  
Drinking wine is a medium through which the lover sees the beauty of the beloved. The reflection of the beloved's cheek represents the connection between the lover and the beloved since with the wine cup ready to be lifted, the lover finds the reflection of the beloved in it.

حافظا می‌خور و رندی کن و خوش باش ولی / دام تزویر مکن چون دگران قرآن را

Hafiz, drink wine, be cheerful, and enjoy life /

But don't abuse the Quran as a means for deception like others do. (My Translation)

Drinking wine recklessly implies revelry and pleasure without inhibition. Regardless of societal constraints, the speaker addresses Hafiz himself to find happiness and joy at the present moment though he must be caution not to be hypocritic in misusing the Quran for personal gain.

The whole stanza five of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" presents an extended paradox; the dark world of the immortal bird is portrayed in such detail as if the speaker were able to see everything. It is, however, resolved when imagination, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words, is perceived as "the living power" (206) that is capable of reassembling ordinary perceptions into

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genuine meanings and creating poetic worlds. In his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge draws a subtle distinction between imagination and fancy. He considers fancy as “a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space,” while it is “blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will” (both 206). Fancy is not bound by constraints but still the influence of our consciousness and conscious choices. It must receive “all its materials ready made from the law of association” (206) and has no creative power but merely an attracting mode, which assembles memories and projects fantasies while imagination is creative and distinguished as primary and secondary. Coleridge considers primary imagination as “the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (205). The primary imagination relates to human perception and individual power. Everybody has this imagination, and most people use it unconsciously. While the secondary imagination echoes the primary one but also “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify” (206). The secondary imagination suggests the fullest exercise of the poetic self and its creating powers. Contrary to the primary imagination available to everyone, the secondary imagination is a power limited to poets, who “dissolve” and “diffuse” the ordinary perceptions to create, idealize and unify the parts into the whole.

Poets employ the secondary imagination consciously and voluntarily and through it, they perceive the world and create new ones. Thus, a poet would be able to build the theatrical stage in dramatic mind. It is the secondary imagination that reassembles the fragments and creates new meanings. It is a synthetic power that operates through the unmediated contact of mind with the nature. Given that, the speaker of the “Ode to a Nightingale” imaginatively creates a world from within and accommodates the immortal bird in it. The secondary imagination enables the poem’s speaker to synthesise a series of sense images and create an imaginary dark world, wherein he can smell and feel the “embalmed darkness” and he can hear “the murmurous haunt of flies” (ll. 43, 50). The second stanza contains a combination of physical senses normally experienced as separate. It suggests an essential unity of events indicative of the oneness of all forms of life. For example, lines such as “Tasting of Flora and the country green, / Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth! / O for a beaker of the warm South,” suggest synaesthesia. Here the poet tastes the visual (“Flora and the country green”), activity (“dance”), sound (“Provencal song”), and mood or pleasure (“mirth”); furthermore, the visual (“sunburnt”) is combined with a pleasurable

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emotional state (“mirth”). With the beaker there is finally something to taste, but what is being tasted is temperature (“warm”) and a location (“South”).

The nightingale’s song transports the negatively capable speaker to a dark world, substantially resembling the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, all doors of which lead to ‘dark passages.’ The same dim occurrence is echoed in the ode. “Darkling,” says the speaker, “I listen,” that emphasises the gradual move towards the other doors. Yet, he hesitates. The ultimate step is to merge with the female bird. As the ode proceeds to the close, the speaker more heartily wishes to leave his “sole self” to unite with the nightingale (l. 72). Nonetheless, he soon realises that merging with the bird and escaping from the self-conscious mortal world is a compelling desire that ultimately leads to a temporary death with which he has already been merely “half in love” (l. 52), and now “more than ever seems it rich to die, / To cease upon the midnight with no pain” (ll. 52, 55-6). Immersed in his intimacy with the female nightingale, he finds it ‘rich’ more than ever to die.

The speaker is assured that the real world of pain ultimately reaches a stalemate, so the only way to unite with the immortal world is to willingly “cease upon the midnight.” This death surely annihilates the speaker’s sole self but grants him the world with no pain. It is a kind of death which he has romanticized and “call’d him soft names in many a musèd rhyme” (l. 53). In other words, it is a pleasurable loss of self even if it lasts merely so long as he is intoxicated with the bird’s song. However, he immediately expresses doubts about the death he has been romanticising. He remains in uncertainty and doubts because if he dies, he will become “a sod” and the bird’s song will be wasted away “in vain” (ll. 60, 59). His uncertainty persists indefinitely into the close of the ode.

Contrary to Keats’s ode’s, Hafiz’s ghazals present death wish as a way to gain the beloved’s attention as well as union with the beloved. the following verse is a conspicuous example:

روز مرگم نفسی مهلت دیدار بده / تا چو حافظ ز سر جان و جهان برخیزم

On the day of my death, let me see you at least a moment /

Then, like Hafiz, I may transcend life and world. (My Translation)

Death is simply humiliated in these lines as death is represented as a sombre reality of life that leads to union with the beloved. This one moment of respite would suffice for the lover to

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transcend all the earthly limitations. In the face of death, the speaker, if the moment is granted, accepts it unconditionally but willingly and submissively.

مژده وصل تو کو کز سر جان برخیزم / طایر قدسم و از دام جهان برخیزم

With good tidings of your arrival, I will simply leave this world /

A heavenly bird, I will rise from the snare of the world. (My Translation)

The beloved's arrival brings about a change so significantly that the speaker willingly gives up this world. He boldly makes a claim that he is a heavenly bird not an earth-bound one trapped in a snare.

However, the "Ode to a Nightingale's" speaker is reluctant and hesitant to even admit the inevitability of death. "Half in love" in line 52 of the ode is a key phrase, which explores negative capability on two levels; 1) that the word half intrinsically suggests uncertainty and lack of irritable pursuit of love; 2) that death itself is the ultimate mystery not yet resolved and the poem's speaker is half in love with the biggest unresolved mystery. The profundity of the latter level is predicated on the former level of interpretation. That the speaker is not at ease with being in love and has doubts about unrequited love suggests the main feature of negative capability, which is "intrinsically associated with intense existential uncertainty" (Castellano 23). This is in part due to the annihilating power of death that overwhelms the subject's sense of identity. The speaker looks into the tragic vicissitudes of existence and empties his mind of personal and social certainty. However, this uncertainty fosters receptivity to various ideas and experiences. Therefore, the poem's speaker does not insist on devotion or commitment to anything, even to death, and even if it is "easeful." This highlights another prominent characteristic of negative capability; that of dynamicity, which connotes constant movement and reconsideration of the significance of objects. The speaker seeks union with the immortal bird. Although, at the same time, he notices his mortality, he keeps his imaginative fantasy of uniting with the nightingale's immortal song.

The speaker's persisting doubts about the total loss of his selfhood and uniting with the female nightingale is met with the overwhelming presence of femininity in the immortal world. Keats's typical ambivalence towards femininity emerges conspicuously. He ultimately leaves the bird's immortal song as he finds the world "femininely seductive" and most importantly "destructive of

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his masculine sense of self” (Richers 218). Keats’s indeterminate stance towards female gender gains more significance in this ode. As Susan J. Wolfson remarks, Keats’s “overall syntax of gender is more zigzag than linear, and the total story more indeterminate than definitive” (2). His attitude towards gender is complex and thought-provoking. Similarly, the poem’s speaker does not take any linear position towards the female nightingale; he wishes, even at the expense of death, to unite with the bird but midway he vacillates. It is in the voice of a female singing bird that the speaker seeks his own poetic voice, but instead of “assertively appropriating the female’s voice for his own, Keats explores the possibility of feminine forms of creation that would merge the poetic Self with the Other through metamorphic empathy, without the act of masculine or poetic aggression” (Batra 75). This indicates the speaker’s doubts about giving himself completely up to the female bird. Yet, “the feminine,” as Richers argues, “has to be conquered and incorporated if the poet is to reach a certain sense of wholeness” (222). The desire for the wholeness, following the desire to escape the self, drives the first half of the ode.

In his request to the bird to fly away, the speaker’s identification results in his asking the bird to ‘dissolve,’ which implicitly demands obliteration of identity and selfhood. However, the bird is supposed to be immortal and such an urge is paradoxical. It is the speaker who sees obliteration through the bird’s song, not the other way around. The bird is already immortalised by own song, and she does not need to fade away from “fret and fever” of the mortal world. Hence, there is no point in the male speaker’s anguish over her. On the contrary, he desperately seeks escape from the worldly suffering, which is best attainable through obliterating his selfhood resulting from ‘easeful death.’

In the “Ode to a Nightingale,” the desired obliteration of selfhood essentially occurs through intoxication. The soft /m/, /n/, /s/, and /l/ consonants and /d/ alliteration in the initial four lines give the opening its drunk and drowsy atmosphere:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk. (ll. 1-4)

These sounds set out the intoxicating context of the ode. In the ancient Greek mythological underworld, Lethe is a river, the water of which is said to annihilate the drinker’s memory. The

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beginning of the ode suggests the speaker's immediate realisation of the limits of consciousness. The rhetorical devices of hyperbole, anaphora and paradox create rhetorical effect in the beginning of the ode and foreground the annihilation of the self. The speaker exaggerates his sense of numbness, drunkenness, and pain by alluding to 'hemlock, the poison that the Greek philosopher Socrates took when he was put to death when indicted of corrupting the youth. Yet, it is paradoxical because his heart 'aches' although this pain is followed by 'drowsy numbness.' It evokes a paradoxical sense of happiness and pain. Anaphora also adds emphasis to the paradox that extends throughout the first stanza. The repetition of "my" in the first lines appeals to the speaker's ego, which is about to be annihilated. In fact, there are lots of egos – namely the possessive adjective of "my" and the pronoun of "I" – in the beginning of the ode, which then dissolve in the ensuing stanzas. The second stanza exclusively develops the significance of other-worldly intoxication: "O for a draught of vintage! that hath been / Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth (ll. 11-12). This stanza is rich in terms related to wine and intoxication, which also connote poetic intoxication. The poem's speaker wishes to give up himself to intoxication, which has a power enough to transport him to an imaginative, immortal world.

In this ode, Keats gradually but deliberately relinquishes all immediate sensory experiences except that of hearing. In this experience he represents himself eventually as pure audience. In this almost perfect aesthetic separation from habitual self, he explores "what one version of the aesthetic response can be" (Vendler 81). Keats's emphasis on profound listening is outstanding in the ode. The poem's speaker, by relinquishing the habitual self, lays open his identity to various associations evoked from the bird's song. The profundity of such a listening comes about when the speaker gets negatively capable to forgo certainties and dogmatic reasoning. In this case, the nightingale represents a major aspect of the poem's speaker; it becomes "a voice of pure self-expression" for him (Vendler 81). The repetition of 'hear' connotes passivity, which is an important constituent of negative capability. In line 63, the speaker's passivity unfolds because hearing "the voice [...] this passing night" is not possible unless the listener is fully attentive to the voice heard in "ancient days by emperor and clown" (l. 64). The listener must be negatively capable to leave the enclosed selfhood and fly with the nightingale imaginatively and track her song far back into the ancient history. The ode, as Barbara Everett argues, moves "beyond the bounds of the romantic-personal and translates itself into other selves" (144). The other noteworthy aspect of aesthetic listening in the ode is triggered by "annihilating touch and

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sight and even, at last, the sense of smell removes us from human woe temporarily by making our physical state corpse-like” (Vendler 86). Hearing functions as a synecdoche for aesthetic attentiveness and receptivity to the nightingale’s song.

The final point about the interpretation of this ode refers to the sojourn that does not last long in the bird’s immortal world since the speaker’s consciousness wakes him up to the real world of fever and fret by the end of the ode. The effect of his spiritual intoxication gradually wears off and he must say ‘adieu’ to the nightingale. His imagination will no longer “cheat so well” since the sensations and ideas it stimulates depends solely on her transporting song (l. 73). With her “plaintive anthem” evanescent “past the near meadows” and “over the still stream” (l. 76), the speaker is gradually brought back to himself. The speaker now returns to the Chamber of Maiden-Thought. With the passage of time, he realises that “the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression” (*Selected Letters* 124). Once the bird’s song vanishes completely from sight and hearing, the speaker hears the word ‘forlorn’ that tolls him back to the mortal world and reminds him of the real pain. Departing from the female bird, he starts to wonder if it was “a vision, or a waking dream?” (l. 79). Ultimately, though, the female nightingale offers no lasting comfort, which disorients him. It leaves him in doubt about the reality of his vision. His temporary victory over the mortal world and its impermanence distracts him from grief about the fleeting nature of all things. Once “fled is that music” (l. 80), he realises that it was probably a waking dream, lasting so long as the nightingale’s song is heard. The speaker does not try to save the female bird or salvage her identity – as in “Ode to Psyche” – to guarantee immortality for her. On the contrary, it is the female bird that confers immortality upon him.

Keats’s other ode that lends itself tellingly to this comparative study is “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” which is one of his most acclaimed poems. Negative capability, the focal concept of this analysis, emerges all over this third of Keats’s odes that I will discuss, in a variety of images, phrases, and structures. The significance of gender and androgyny, which occupies a remarkable constituent of the dissertation’s analysis, comes up repeatedly as a building block of the ode. This makes it feasible and logical to include the ode in comparison with Hafiz’s ghazals.

In “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” there is a negatively capable speaker, who poses a great many questions about the activities depicted on the urn, without reaching after any certain answers.

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The speaker remains satisfied in the situation of uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts. In a sense, the text itself is negatively capable since it epitomises uncertainties, doubts, and mysteries. The speaker accepts contented irresolution. The speaker continues to be concerned with the theme of negative capability. The images on the urn provoke the speaker to pose questions, and together with the urn's silence, the imagination's ability is encouraged to operate more wildly. The speaker contentedly poses the questions left unresolved and acknowledges the indeterminacy of any kind of response or answer. This is an attitude that characterises the man of negative capability. The initial lines of the ode clearly foreshadow the speaker's attempt to narrate a story about figures s/he is unfamiliar with, as well as the attempt to know their identities:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth? (5-8)

The figures on the urn obviously lack identities. The silence of "soft pipes" play "Not to the sensual ear, but ... / to the spirit ditties of no tone" (13-14) and it leaves the reader unsatisfied since the sensual needs are left unfulfilled. In the same vein, the speaker admits that "Heard melodies are sweet," but "those unheard / Are sweeter" (11-12). Hence, the reader's imagination is provoked to probe into the meaning beyond the earthly life.

The significance of transcendental music and melodies, which play tunes to both sensual and spiritual ears, is also well established in many of Hafiz's ghazals:

مطرب عشق عجب ساز و نوایی دارد / نقش هر پرده که زد راه به جایی دارد

Love's minstrel has a wonderful song and tune; /

The theme of every chord he's struck finds a home. (transl. by Avery 165)

The minstrel of the love plays tunes that impress anybody at any place, no matter how far or close the listeners are located. Similar to the urn's unheard melodies of the "Urn" that transcend time and place, the tunes provoked by love exceed time and place, and hence sweeter than any other kind of heard tunes and melodies.

دلم ز پرده برون شد کجایی ای مطرب / بنال هان که از این پرده کار ما به نواست

Where are you, minstrel? My heart's got out of tune. /

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O strike up a lament: our business is in tune with this mode. (transl. by Avery 56)

The ghazal's speaker takes recourse to musical melodies and to the musician to relieve him/her of misery and remorse. In Persian mystical poetry, remarkably in Hafiz's ghazals, musical melodies are capable of transporting listeners and releasing them of self-interest. Musical melodies, on the transcendental level, play a major role in the mystic's development towards *fana*. The melodies are means for the passing away of the personal self through spiritual experiences. The following line echoes the same kind of relief that melodies convey to the speaker:

ساقی به نور باده برافروز جام ما / مطرب بگو که کار جهان شد به کام ما

Saqi, make our bowl glow with the light of wine. /

Minstrel, sing how the world has gone our way. (transl. by Avery 34)

That the musician is the one invoked by the speaker to announce that everything conforms to the speaker's will suggests the spiritual grandeur that Hafiz bestows on music and melodies.

راهی بزن که آهی بر ساز آن توان زد / شعری بخوان که با او رطل گران توان زد

Strike up a tune in harmony with which a sigh can be drawn. /

Recite a verse to which a bumper of wine can be drained. (transl. by Avery 205)

The speaker desperately demands a melody that redresses grievance as well as a poem with which one can simultaneously drink wine and fall into intoxication, as a state of ecstasy that leads to selflessness and ultimately to *fana*. Music and intoxication intermingle in Hafiz's ghazals and prepare the ground for the mystic speaker to rise above worldly vanities:

تا نگردی آشنا زین پرده رمزی نشنوی / گوش نامحرم نباشد جای پیغام سروش

So long as you do not become acquainted with this veil, not a clue will you hear: /

The ear of the non-intimate is not the repository of the message of Soruš [messenger angel].  
(transl. by Avery 351)

The mystical message is unheard unless one becomes acquainted with spiritual understanding, which demands readiness to transcend ordinary perception. This verse roughly acknowledges Keats's 'unheard melodies.' This conformity arises from the ambiguity in the Persian word veil [*parde*] expressing something ineffable. Two possible meanings can be drawn from the word: 1)

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it refers to musical tune; 2) it refers to the spiritual veil that conceals and occults divine secrets. In both interpretations, there is a transcendental element that elevates mundane musical tune/veil and reveals itself only to those with an aptitude for keeping secrets. The musical tune is, in Keats's words, sweeter when unheard by others but those with discretion. The second line emphasises that these unheard musical tunes are exclusively detected and deciphered by the apt people.

The "Ode on a Grecian Urn" itself contains several incongruities, discordances, indeterminacies and contradictions. Negative capability is an offshoot of such ideas. It may be logical to claim that the "Urn" has been deconstructing itself since its inception. There is indeterminacy that is not easily resolved into agreement, in a way that some closures are not really achieved. The urn itself wastes away sooner or later, though more slowly than its mortal maker. There is no certain knowledge of an afterlife, or of eternity, to be hinted in the poem so the viewer must "resign himself to Negative Capability in order to realize that concrete knowledge of what is eternal is not what matters" (Roché 45). Rather, it is the delight of experiencing others' identities, the annihilation of a fixed identity, the process of soul-making, as well as the animating sense of the mysterious, the uncertain, and the immortal surrounding us, being unapproachable for the mind but for the soul. The chameleon poet, Keats reiterates in his letters, assimilates with all humanity across the ages. Like the Grecian urn, capable of speaking both to its generation and the posterity. The annihilation of the static self enables the poet to perceive the truth and beauty.

Beauty is established in Persian mystical poetry with a profound role, intertwining with spiritual and aesthetic themes. Persian literature has its own distinctive imagery for conveying beauty and sensual desire, and such imagery does not easily cross national and cultural boundaries. As such, any literal (direct) translation of Persian symbolism is likely to lose part of its aesthetic charm or semantic splendour in a new language. However, Persian imagery for beauty lends itself to comparison with English Romantic poetry. Hafiz defines beauty and truth in his individualised poetics, as in the following lines:

خلوت گزیده را به تماشا چه حاجت است / چون کوی دوست هست به صحرا چه حاجت است

What need of the show-booth has he who has chosen seclusion? /

What need is there of the wilderness where there is the street of the friend [beloved]? (transl. by Avery 65)

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Either a physical retreat – such as a hermitage – or spiritual and meditative seclusion, the speaker asserts to the fulfilment and satisfaction coming from within since the beloved's presence is felt in seclusion, which is the most beautiful moment for a lover.

Comparable with Keats's claim of transcendental beauty, which is not time-bound, Hafiz's ghazal's speaker resorts to a beauty needful of other people's attention. S/he does not beg others' care or attention since the pleasure and beauty of intimacy with the beloved exceeds any other kind of natural beauty. The following lines roughly express the same idea:

تو نیز باده به چنگ آر و راه صحرا گیر / که مرغ نغمه سرا ساز خوش نوا آورد

You too get hold of wine and take off into the wilderness, /

Because the melodious singing-bird has brought music of a happy note. (transl. by Avery 192)

The verse invites the reader to join the speaker in an enlightenment journey through nature. This journey into the nature, accompanied with wine, leads to experiencing the harmony of the divine. Music of 'a happy note' represents the divine music of nature. Here emerges a combination of scenes and phenomena, which depict emanations of beauty in the ghazal, with a strong discharge of passion and beauty. There is music (harp and musical melodies of the singing bird), natural landscapes (plain and the singing bird), with the favourite mystical image of wine. When it comes to the glory of transcendental beauty, Hafiz's ghazals get charged with insatiable demands, mostly rejected by orthodox Islam:

یا رب به وقت گل گنه بنده عفو کن / این ماجرا به سرو لب جویبار بخش

O Lord, in the season of the rose pardon of the sin of the slave, /

And let bygones be ascribed to the cypress on the stream's edge. (transl. by Avery 339)

The speaker implores unconditional forgiveness without even true repentance for any sins s/he has committed. The reason for such religious inadvertency is associated with the reason of committing sins, being justified by the exquisite beauty and elegant body of the cypress, which symbolises grace and beauty. In fact, the speaker resorts to a kind of selflessness and lack of free will for having committed any sins because it is the natural beauty that leaves him/her of any conscious act. The speaker confesses lack of subjective involvement in the sinful commitment. In a similar manner, the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" does not include any subjective involvement of

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the speaker, but the description of the urn as an object implies a human observer that describes the depictions of common activities – namely an attempt at courtship, the making of music, and a religious rite – that focus on representational art.

Central to “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” negative capability is at play in the ode’s structure, the key aspects of which are ambiguity and uncertainty. The urn’s lack of a definitive voice highlights this ambiguity and uncertainty more deeply in the final lines: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know” (49-50). Since the conception of the ode, it has remained unresolved for the reader to know who is really speaking these words, to whom they are speaking, and what is meant by the words. This line bears countless interpretations, leaving too much to be inferred. In a letter to Bailey from November 1817, Keats records his favourite speculation, stating that “What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth” (54). This could explain the confident authority in the assertive rhetoric of the last lines, which admit no uncertainty registered in the whole. In line with Hafiz’s philosophy of life, that intuition stands far above reason and argumentation. It may be observed in the following lines:

در حریم عشق نتوان زد دم از گفت و شنید / زان که آنجا جمله اعضا چشم باید بود و گوش

In the sanctuary of love there can be no boasting of speaking and hearing, /

Because there all the organs must be the eye and the ear. (transl. by Avery 351)

When it is time to deal with love and issues related to love, there is no place for reasoning and argumentation. One must remain all ears. It is the intuition that works its way out:

بر آستانه تسلیم سر بنه حافظ / که گر ستیزه کنی روزگار بستیزد

Place your head, Hafiz, on the threshold of submission /

Because if you kick over the traces, Fate will kick back. (transl. by Avery 206)

The speaker eschews from arguing and debating with fate since it can lead to catastrophes. It is highly encouraged to submit unreservedly:

قیاس کردم و تدبیر عقل در ره عشق / چو شبی می است که بر بحر می کشد رقمی

I made a comparison and on the Path of love, the disposition of reason /

Resembles a dewdrop that leaves a shape on the surface of the sea. (transl. by Avery 558)

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The speaker disdains any sort of speculation, argument and reasoning on the path towards love since it is so unfathomable that is beyond anyone's reach. Mind and wisdom resemble dewdrops left adrift on the sea. The only means to survive is intuition and reliance on the God's will. Anything else must be suspended and abandoned. In a similar manner, suspension pervades the whole "Urn." Rather than movement toward resolution, the ode employs "movement in the service of stasis and suspension, returning the narrator and reader to questions already asked and found unanswerable" (Mitchell 55). Across lines five to ten, the conjunction "or" recurs, which indicates the speaker's hesitation in recognizing and defining what he sees; the urn itself is compared to an "unravish'd bride," to a "foster-child," and a "historian." The ode depicts figures of suspended animation; the boughs that "cannot shed / Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu" (21-2). Yet, the suspension propels the dynamicity of the poem. The ode is a free expression of the speaker's inner conflict linked to a quest for unfettering the imagination to elevate it to the realm of the "overwrought" urn. The speaker confesses his/her uncertainty about his poetic creativity to disclose the mysterious figures carved on the urn. This is clear as the speaker posits several unanswered questions in the first stanza.

The geometric shape of the urn is most likely circular, which suggests circulation, and hence irresolution. In the third stanza the speaker cannot avoid using "happy" six times! and "forever" four times. The repetition within the third stanza may sound redundant but the lexical and syntactic repetition serves as a crucial function to show uncertainty about the point of happiness and underscores the transient condition of the world. The speaker obviously tries to transfer to the reader a sense of insecurity arising from unknown realities, as well as the transience of his imaginary world.

The fourth stanza of the ode is puzzling. The priest is doubly mysterious: he is "mysterious," bereft of any identity, who, in addition, conducts the mysterious religious procession. The priest is followed by an unidentified multitude of folk, residing in a town of uncertain location "by river or seashore" (l. 35), or built on mountain "with peaceful citadel" (l. 36). The uncertainty enables the negatively capable speaker to let go of the material presence and instead achieve, in Keats's words, protean suggestiveness. The speaker fruitlessly endeavours to identify the enigmatic, mysterious figures.

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The “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is based on uncertainty, as its speaker is immersed in a sense of mystery and fluctuates between personifying and objectifying the urn. In other terms, the narrative of the ode, like the figures on the urn, forever remains in suspension and mystery. It is not even certain whether the pastoral picture on the urn’s surface is “a pastoral romance or a pastoral elegy” but there is surely “a hidden narrative in the pictures” (both Park 213). The urn is personified in the first encounter, yet it is deemed as an object in the last stanza in non-humanized terms such as “Attic shape Fair attitude” (l. 41), and “silent form” (l. 44).

Ambiguity characterises the ode’s title. The ambiguous preposition “on” points both ways to “the spatial existence of the urn (an inscription on the surface of the urn)” and to “the temporal extension of the linguistic description (a poem about or concerning an urn)” (both Kennedy 96-7). The preposition obviously connects and simultaneously separates the urn and the ode. Uncertainty clearly starts off the very beginning of the ode. However, from the beginning, the speaker seems to be irritatingly reaching after facts and reasons through a myriad of questions with his/her imagination having been provoked. Yet, the sense of uncertainty and mystery simultaneously accompanies the desire for fact and reason. The speaker wants to know more than the urn can unravel, but to no avail. There is the sense of something grasped through “perceptive insight without the use of immediate cognition or rational processes” (Perry 185). Much is said with little revealed by the urn since “Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought” (line 44). Not much is revealed by the urn per se, but it draws us out beyond the limits of thought as long as the speaker seeks no settled judgment. It is, however, by the end of stanza four that the poet and speaker find themselves in a position of negative capability.

Similarly, Hafiz resorts to the frequent use of ambiguity as a rhetoric figure in his ghazals. Due to his specific style in creating ambiguous structures, themes, and content, Hafiz is distinctively distinguished from other Persian poets. In fact, ambiguity is the most sublime effect of Hafiz’s poetry. It is futile to impose one definitive meaning on his poems. Ambiguity is indispensable to the interpretations of his ghazals and thus suspension in interpreting and futile attempt, as propounded by Keats’s negative capability, for reaching after fact and reason. The following lines indicate ambiguity in Hafiz’s ghazals:

اگر شراب خوری جرعه‌ای فشان بر خاک / از آن گناه که نفعی رسد به غیر چه باک

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If you drink wine, sprinkle a draught on the dust. /

What is there to fear in a sin from which the benefit goes someone else? (transl. by Avery 365)

The collocation of the words “wine” and “sin” connotes the sin of wine drinking in Islam. Several commentators have interpreted the phrase “that sin” as the sin of wine drinking while, given that this phrase refers to “pouring wine” not “drinking wine,” this verse suggests a new meaning. Thus, the speaker considers wine so valuable that it is sinful to waste even a drop of it as it is banished in the tradition of pouring wine. Even words associated with wine and intoxication are roughly always ambiguous, working out both secular and mystical meanings.

Hafiz uses themes related to wine, wine drinkers, and inebriety to create artistic gratification in the reader and show his artistry. He warily scrutinises the works of the great mystics before him and appropriated their intellectual resources and symbolisation methods, as well as their themes. Hafiz “deliberately practiced ambiguity as part of his campaign against hypocrisy, as a means of rejecting dogma and ideology in general” (Lewis). Undoubtedly, the meanings of “Saki,” “Cup,” and “Bade” imply different layers of meanings. The following verses epitomize the ambiguous employment of words and terms associated with wine and intoxication, which are inherent in the texture of his ghazals:

عکس روی تو چو در آینه جام افتاد / عارف از خنده می در طمع خام افتاد

When your face’s reflection fell onto the mirror of the wine-bowl, /

Because of the wine’s laughter the mystic fell into raw desire. (transl. by Avery 151)

That the mystic is outwitted by the smile of the wine suggests two conflicting and yet ambiguous interpretations; 1) the wine is the real earthly wine made from fermented grapes; 2) since it is the mystic being outwitted, the wine stands for the encrypted expression of mystical concepts. Efforts to pin down one definitive interpretation prove fruitless:

عمرتان باد ای ساقیان بزم جم / گرچه جام ما نشد پر می به دوران شما

May life and success reward the wine-servers at Jamshid’s feast, /

Even though in your rounds (Doran) no wine fills our cup. (transl. by Avery 36)

The word “Doran” entails two possible meanings: 1) a period of time; 2) a round of wine offering carried out by the Saki.

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دي مي شد و گفتم صنما عهدي به جاي آر / گفتا غلطي خواجه در اين عهد وفا نيست

Yesterday he was going away and I saying, “O idol, keep your word!” /

He replied, “You’re wrong, Mister, in this age (‘*ahd*’) there is no keeping of promises.” (transl. by Avery 107)

The word creating ambiguity is age [‘*ahd*’]. It means both a period of time and vow or promise. Extracting ambiguous terms, structures and themes goes on and on in Hafiz’s Divan.

Women were subject to gender constraints in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, among them the stereotype of the proper lady, a feminine ideal that “promotes the spiritual over the physical and that substitutes selflessness for selfishness” (Fay 194). This stereotype came to seem increasingly natural to the point that individual desires would be viewed as unnatural for women and had to be fought off. The Romantic poets, however, broke free from the stereotypical gendered limitations conventionally determining the writing subject, and subsequently the content of the work. Keats felt it indispensable to transcend the conventional language of his masculine and patriarchal society to step in his own sensuous – and allegedly effeminate – language. Throughout the “Urn,” Keats explores the erotic relationship between the masculine poet and the feminised urn. Yet, for Keats, as for the culture to which he belonged, “masculine and feminine are inherently unstable terms, terms that resist any attempt to fix their significance” (Park 28). Keats’s revisions also attest to this instability in this ode, which was explained above.

Keats is recurringly figured as feminine or effeminate in nineteenth century discussions, which cannot be arbitrary misreading. Varying degrees of ideological pressure reflect themselves in Keats’s ambivalence in his own writing about masculine and feminine. In his effort to create a poetic identity, Keats profoundly “internalizes and struggles with social and psychological attitudes about gender:” at times, he is “sensitive to tendencies in himself susceptible to interpretation as feminine;” at other times, he “imagines the masculine self being feminized or rendered effeminate by women exercising power and authority;” at still other times, he projects “feminine figures as forces against manly self-possession and its social validator, professional maturity” (all Wolfson 325). The Grecian urn is gendered feminine, and acts like a powerful force to trigger the poet’s imagination while the speaker’s manly self-possession grows lesser with the ode drawing close to an end as indicated in these lines: “O Attic shape! Fair attitude!” (41); “Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought” (44); “When old age shall this generation

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waste, / Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe" (46-7). Wolfson maintains persuasively that Keats by adopting negative capability, and a poetics of no self might be articulating a feminine poetics set against "the strong boundaries and self-assertions taken to characterise masculine practices" (Park 28). In the ode, the speaker espouses the idea of selflessness and dynamicity of self and appropriation of other selves. In the ode, self-assertion easily ceases to be claimed.

In Keats's odes from 1819, femininity and female play a significant role in the texture of the odes. As an ode, the "Urn" is built upon the principle of "an evolving dialectic that rises from a feminine central symbol and its apparent appeal for the masculine speaker, forcing him into an unresolvable debate" (Batra 75). It is through this debate that the speaker scrutinizes the virgin urn and the figures on it. The urn is depicted as a female; the speaker attempts to penetrate the mysteries of the "still unravish'd bride of quietness" (l. 1). The urn, however, acts like a seductive woman "teasing us out of thought" (44). The negatively capable speaker's uncertainty starts from the second word of the ode "still" which derives from the speaker's undecidability about possession of the feminine urn or about its identification. "Still" can suggest either adverbially an admiration for the urn's permanency and virginity, which traditionally marked female chastity, or adjectivally the urn's immobilising for the sake of possessing it. The adverbial connotation "emphasizes the urn's antiquity and the adjectival reading its materiality and its femininity" (O'Rourke 58-9). Yet, she cannot be the speaker's bride as she slides away from a static identity and drifts away from the fulfilment of that desire.

Ambiguity and uncertainty intermingle with gendering issue that runs across the ode. Considering an unequivocally gendered account of the ode, we have "a narrative of patriarchal conquest" (O'Rourke 59), which conventionally transforms women into docile subjects that should be tended by men. However, the opening lines of the ode cannot maintain "a securely sexualized identification of this uncertainly personified figure" (O'Rourke 59). These two discreet personifications, "unravish'd bride" (l. 1) and "foster child" (l. 2), ensure the urn's figurative relation to our human reality. From the outset, the ode does and undoes gender identification. The ode's first feminine image, the "still unravish'd bride," objectifies the feminine urn for the male possession, but it immediately becomes the 'foster child' and slips away from that position. The rigidity of gender identification, in other words, is undone and the urn, despite holding a feminine position, does not securely attach to conventional gender

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identifications. The next feminine images, the “maidens loth” (line 8) in their “struggle to escape” (line 9) are positioned as a goal that will be forever fair since they “cannot fade” (line 19). Yet, this fixity finally eludes the speaker as such perfection is “human passion far above, / That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy’d, / A burning forehead, and a parching tongue” (28-30). Human passion transcends ordinary life while yearning something beyond reach.

Line 48 strengthens the dynamicity of the feminine image in the ode and de-genders the initially feminised urn. The urn is “a friend to man,” where the “friend” is of ambiguous gender while being other to man. This image is paradoxical: 1) Since the “man” is the unmarked term in the gender binary and stands opposite to woman, this image likely turns down women and reads them out of history, as the urn is a friend just to male observers; 2) the image of “friend” creates friendship with man as a human being of either sex, so the gender ambiguity of the image illustrates the impossibility of disregarding the feminine in the history. However, Keats’s biography elucidates his discomfort toward women in his real life – as admitted in his letter “I am certain I have not a right feeling towards Women” (*Selected Letters* 169) – which shows that the urn’s marginalising of women is consistent with the biographical Keats, but his biographical agitation for women’s presence is not the dominant gender representation in the ode. The ode indicates the instability of the poetic material in devising the cultural concepts of the masculine and the feminine. The urn initially is idealised in a feminine figure, while, by the end of the fourth stanza, the speaker comes to understand the power of temporality to contradict that ideal. Under the impact of the “desolate” streets, the speaker turns away from seeing the urn “as a symbol of an idealized past” (both O’Rourke 76). Instead, the speaker must confront the once-ideal-feminine urn in the temporality of history and its materiality as an “Attic shape.”

This dynamic shift sheds light on the ideal poet, whom Keats dubs a chameleon; the one who is a receptacle of all experiences with a poetic self that takes on a variety of selves while standing above all of them without being specifically any of them. Together with the ode’s chameleon speaker, s/he reveals an egotistical awareness, that is to say the poet impresses him/herself upon his/her materials to create a personalized universe. The “Urn” is “properties of his [poet’s] vision, annexed to his emotional need” which is “the road of egotistical realization” (both Ball 141). But the chameleon-faculty is also exercised to the full since it is the capacity for experiencing and understanding sensuousness in objects and living creatures. Keats tries to

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combine both egotistical and chameleon to explore, discover and ultimately come up with the creation of identity. Though this is a dynamic process and the identity itself never reaches a conclusive form or formation, it remains dynamic.

Mystical intoxication plays a major role in the dynamic process of *fana*, which comes up in connection with female representations and often feminisation of the beloved God. The female beloved God in Hafiz's poetry is self-sufficient and inaccessible, and the wishful projection of the lover and he is God's indefatigable pursuer. Hafiz often feminises the Beloved, while reiterating the reflection of divine beauty as a female. The following line depicts one of the most dazzling passionate scenes in Persian poetry:

زلف آشفته و خوي کرده و خندان لب و مست / پيرهن چاک و غزل خوان و صراحي در دست  
نرگسش عربده جوي و لبش افسوس کنان / نيم شب دوش به بالين من آمد بنشست

Tress awry, sweating, laughing-lipped, drunk, /  
Shirt in shreds, lyric-lisping, wine-cup in hand  
His eyes spoiling for a fight, lips complaining /

in the middle of the last night he [she] came and sat by my pillow. (transl. by Avery 51)

The artistic combination of wine and intoxication associated with the beloved being depicted with feminine terms almost overwhelms the reader with transcendental emotions about the appearance of the female beloved in the first line of this ghazal. The poet portrays the dramatic entrance of the female beloved endowed with heart-ravishing skills to attract the lover. She is beautiful, intoxicated, and has dishevelled hair (*Zolf*), which is a favourite symbol in Hafiz's ghazals. It symbolizes beauty, virtue, and charm generally associated with female images. This female beloved easily transports and enraptures the lover as she draws the lover with any kind of feminine attraction and charm. She, in other words, fulfils the lover's earthbound and mortal demands as well as solaces the spiritual restlessness. The "Urn" ode, in a similar manner, provides transient shelter and solace for the speaker, who attempts to project the long-lasting happiness onto him/herself:

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;

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More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd. (21-6).

The speaker seemingly discharges the earthbound desolation into the urn's figures being animated through the speaker's imaginative power. The urn offers ever-green trees that never "shed leaves" and sweet melodies that play on forever.

As explained above, femininity is a multifaceted theme in Hafiz's ghazals that weave together images of mystery and divine inspiration. Here I would like to give some more examples from Hafiz's masterful use of rhetorical devices that account for femininity and the gender of the beloved. He employs rhetorical devices and themes in the most condensed way ever possible to be employed in short lyric poems. The following lines from one ghazal abound in sketchy narrative passages, each word of which can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically simultaneously, while depicting an earthly human – almost female – beloved and a heavenly divine beloved:

گل در بر و می در کف و معشوق به کام است / سلطان جهانم به چنین روز غلام است  
در مذهب ما باده حلال است ولیکن / بی روی تو ای سرو گل اندام حرام است  
گوشم همه بر قول نی و نغمه چنگ است / چشمم همه بر لعل لب و گردش جام است  
در مجلس ما عطر میامیز که ما را / هر لحظه ز گیسوی تو خوش بوی مشام است

Rose in the bosom, wine in the hand, and the beloved going my way, /  
On such a day the Sultan of the world is slave to me.  
Say, "Fetch no candles for this gathering, because tonight /  
In our assembly the moon of the cheek of the friend is full.  
My ear is concentrated on the voice of the reed and melody of the lute; /  
My eyes on the ruby of lips and the circulation of the bowl.  
In our assembly mix no perfume, because we /

Every moment from your locks have fragrance sweet to smell. (transl. by Avery 80)

The ghazal's speaker is experiencing the most transcendental moment wherein jubilant and delighting phenomena collectively elate the speaker to such a height that no earthly eminence may match up this spiritual status. It is an assembly of flower, wine, harp and concordant melodies, spiced up with the omnipresence of the female beloved and her hair (*Gisoo*), all of

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which transport the speaker. The following lines exemplify the erotic aspect of Hafiz's lyric poetry. Despite the pervasive ambiguity of Hafiz's ghazals, which do not simply unravel the gender of the beloved, the images here almost directly pertain to a female figure:

صبا وقت سحر بویی ز زلف یار می آورد / دل شوریده ما را به بو در کار می آورد

At dawn-time the breeze (*Saba*) was bringing a scent from the tresses of the friend. /

It was setting my crazy heart beating afresh. (transl. by Avery 194)

*Saba* – a gentle and cool wind that blows from the east or northeast, which carries the messenger between the lover and the beloved – is also a feminine name radiating beauty and warmth. Here the *Saba* initially incites our hearts (the mystics) by bestowing the fragrant scent of the beloved's dishevelled hair (*Zolf*). We – meaning the mystics – then get transported beyond the limits of thought. These lines are comparable with the Grecian ode's transporting capability. The ode is a "silent form" that "dost tease us out of thought" (both 44). It draws us out beyond the limits of thought. It provides a temporary respite from worldly thought comparable to the same way that intoxication does in many of Hafiz's ghazals.

## Chapter 2: Transcendence of the Ego: Keats and Emerson

### 2. Transcendence of the Ego: Keats and Emerson

#### 2.1. Emerson and Transcendentalism

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), a prolific American essayist, lecturer, and poet, heralded and then led the American intellectual movement of Transcendentalism, which aggressively reacted against the general state of intellectualism in the late 1820s and 1830s. Transcendentalism developed as an organic consequence of the Unitarian emphasis on free conscience and the value of intellectual reason. Transcendentalism, also known as New England Renaissance, ran from the 1830s roughly until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. American Renaissance, considered for so long “synonymous with American Romanticism” (Knight XI), marks American literature’s full establishment as an expression of a national spirit. During this time, several literary masterpieces were created, as American writers tried to compete with British writers to identify themselves with a unique American literary style. The American Renaissance is regarded as “a delayed manifestation of Romanticism, especially in Emerson’s philosophy of Transcendentalism” (Baldick). Like British Romanticism, its American counterpart emphasizes emotion, individualism, and personality over rationalism and the constraints of religion. American Romantic writers – such as Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Catharine Sedgwick – contributed to generating a strong sense of nationalism and optimism. In his book *Writers of the American Renaissance* (2003), Denise Knight provides a reference guide to seventy four authors, who were actively writing during the American Renaissance in the mid-nineteenth century America.

Emerson was the reigning champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society. His personality and works, however, cannot be investigated sketchily because his character developed dynamically and multidimensionally throughout his life. He did not merely produce stirring lectures, addresses and poems, but was predominantly concerned with cultural analysis and dedicated to cultural growth. His writings mark a turning-point in a crucial moment of American history and ask many questions about the relative claims of conservatism and radicalism, the establishment and the movement, private property, and communism; questions about slavery and freedom, the rights of women, the viability of institutions, the possibility of reform, the efficacy of protest, the exercise of power and most importantly questions about humanity and America itself as a nation.

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Most of the leading male Transcendentalists began their careers as Unitarian ministers, but many of them tried to redefine Unitarian beliefs, and few retained their Unitarian pulpits. The Unitarians attempted to reconcile empiricism with Christianity by maintaining that the accounts of miracles in *The Bible* are evidence for establishing the truth of religion, but Transcendentalists were generally persuaded by David Hume's sceptical arguments that no empirical proof of religion could be satisfactory. In his journals of the early 1820s, Ralph Waldo Emerson adopts Hume's scepticism to discuss the experience of a creator by means of sensual faculties used to perceive external stimuli. "We have no experience of a Creator," Emerson writes, and therefore we "know of none" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. II, 161). Emerson implicitly employs Hume's sceptical proposition about the existence of God. Such arguments had already led to the blurred distinction between religious texts and humanly produced texts, in particular poetry.

To understand Emerson fully, one has to take Henry David Thoreau into consideration. Thoreau, another prominent Transcendentalist, suggests a more objective consideration of society through personal introspection by immersing oneself in nature. His book *Walden* (1854), a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, details his experiences over the course of two years, and two months, and two days in a cabin he built next to Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau recounts his experience with meticulous scientific observations and a literary look at natural phenomena in the book. He writes: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (90). Thoreau suggests that the essentiality of life is to be pursued in nature that conceals realities in itself and he lays them bare only to its intimate companions. Thoreau opts for direct experience and intuition rather than intervened experience that comes from books and other materials. He does not abhor society or socializing with people but believes "we meet at very short intervals" while we need time to acquire "new value for each other" (136). He plays down such meetings that are attended just to kill time without acquiring new value for each other while he welcomes those who speak reservedly and thoughtfully. In the same manner, Emerson never viewed books as ends in themselves but rather as tools that enabled him to amplify and refine his insights. That is the main reason he never defined himself as a literary critic per se.

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Various topoi, philosophies and texts wielded influence in the formation of Transcendentalism, the most significant of which include English and German Romanticism, the Biblical criticism of Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schleiermacher, David Hume's scepticism, oriental philosophies, such as Hindu texts on philosophy of the mind and spirituality and Persian mystical poetry. Transcendentalism first arose among the liberal New England Congregationalists, who departed from orthodox Calvinism and generally propounded two beliefs, both of which relate to human individuals: firstly, the belief in the importance and efficacy of human striving, as opposed to the bleaker Puritan picture of complete and inescapable human depravity; and secondly, the belief in the unity rather than the "Trinity" of God. They held that Jesus was inferior to God the Father but still greater than human beings. However, in a movement so diverse, composed of various personalities and temperaments, no distinct origin of Transcendentalism can be pinpointed with confidence. Transcendentalism, rather, is based on the data of consciousness, which cannot be accurately defined, distinctly verified, or generally recommended. Its chief disciples were clergymen more or less inclined toward religion and religiosity: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Johann Gottlieb Fichte in Germany, in Britain Samuel Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle, whose essays read like sermons in disguise, in New England Emerson, James Walker, J.S. Dwight, and C. P. Cranch, all of whom started their careers as Unitarian ministers.

As mentioned above, German philosophy and literature played a crucial role in the formation of Transcendentalist literary consciousness. An authentic source for the Transcendentalists' knowledge of German philosophy and literature was Frederic Henry Hedge (1805–90), another New England Unitarian minister and one of the founders of the Transcendental Club, originally called Hedge's Club, that actively developed Transcendentalism. In 1836, he suggested to Emerson that they form a discussion group for disaffected young Unitarian clergymen. It included George Ripley and Bronson Alcott, had some thirty meetings in four years, and was a sponsor of *The Dial*, an American magazine published intermittently from 1840 to 1929. Well versed in philosophy, ecclesiastical history, and German literature, Hedge opposed slavery in the 1830s and was a champion of women's rights in the 1850s.

Emerson held his European predecessors in high regard. Among German philosophical and literary figures, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was indisputably one of the most

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influential figures for Emerson. Goethe's works included not only literary but also religious, philosophical, and scientific dimensions that appealed to Emerson, whose works – though seeming merely literary, sermonic, and fiercely critical of his era's societal issues – embed scientific issues of his time. Emerson was not only concerned with the ideas of Transcendentalism, but also preoccupied with the realities of contemporary science and technology. In his early years as a minister, Emerson read widely in natural philosophy (or physics), chemistry, geology, botany, and comparative anatomy. After leaving the church, he desperately sought the truths written in the book of nature rather than in religious scriptures. Having returned from his first European tour, Emerson delivered a series of lectures on natural science while still impressed by his visit to the Paris Museum of Natural History. The series form the basis of *Nature* (1836), which put forth the foundation of Transcendentalism. In this book, Emerson uses spirituality as a major theme and reimagines the divine as something large and visible, to which he refers as nature.

The dualism of Emerson's personal and intellectual life has continuously fascinated critics and readers of his works. As the American literary critic and poet G. E. Woodberry maintains: "Emerson leaves a double image on the mind that has dwelt long upon his memory. He is a shining figure as on some Mount of Transfiguration; and he was a parochial man" (1). It is not easy to pin down Emerson's multidimensional character: the dreamer, the mystic, the parochial or the religious man. Interpretation of his character never simply gives in to any determined solution or reconciliation since it depends on the critic's point of view. Fair criticism, however, should recognise this multidimensional character and not simplify its complexity or not ascribe it to duplicity or inconsistency.

Emerson draws a distinction between materialists and idealists in his lecture "The Transcendentalist" (1842). He suggests that the materialist insists on "facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal want of man" while the idealist insists on "the power of Thought and Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture (164). Yet, he emphasises that the idealist does not deny "the sensuous fact," but s/he sees events as "spirits" (both 165) and will not see them alone. The idealist, he maintains, never rejects the materialistic presence of things but does not stop at this point and looks at things as "the reverse side of the tapestry" and looks at the other end "being a sequel or completion of a spiritual fact" (both 165). Therefore,

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every materialist can ultimately become an idealist, but an idealist does not go backward to be a materialist because s/he has already passed the materialistic level. In the same manner, Emerson lays considerable emphasis on spirituality when defining the core doctrine of Transcendentalism. He maintains that the Transcendentalist adopts “the whole connexion of spiritual doctrine” and believes in “miracle” and “the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power” (both 167). Transcendentalists generally speak of miracles – the great miracle being man, and the noble miracle being nature.

Historically speaking, the rise of Transcendentalism coincided with the progress of the industrial revolution, which marked a turning-point in all aspects of human life. In this transition, human control over natural sources of power such as water and wind picked up speed due to the expansion of mass production centred on consumption of fossil fuels. Cities expanded to unprecedented size, turning into centres of pollution, poverty, and deprivation. Nevertheless, the Transcendentalists symbolised the failure of *laissez faire*, an economic system in which transactions between private parties are free from government intervention. This economic system permitted and encouraged people to pursue vigorously their self-interest. Besides, American society had been dramatically changing in the period from 1815 to 1860, as the economy shifted from agrarian-based enterprises to a market-based structure. Up until 1815, American families would trade and barter their own homegrown produce for services or goods. Labour was not regarded as a commodity, mostly because trade was confined to local exchange.

Emerson’s writing also reflects his intense and continuing interest in science. Not only is he one of the literary figures who helped install science in the popular imagination, he also devoted much of his energy to his career as a literary artist, a cultural observer, and lecturer who explored “a habitable future for an America characterized by phenomenal technological advances, industrialization, and popular fascination with science” (Neufeldt 329). Although Emerson desired solitude and seclusion, he ironically never ceased to discuss societal issues and matters, witnessing inventions, machines, and the coming of age of sciences, gradually dominating the imagination and thoughts of artists, scholars, social analysts, and the public at large in Europe and America.

This whole technological and scientific change led to a materialistic, quantifying worldview, almost prevailing over the nineteenth-century Europe and America. Emerson, however, did not

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advocate the brutalising omnipresence of industrialisation and the machine mania and scientism of his age. Nonetheless, contrary to several English Romantics – such as William Blake – he never refrained from endorsing technological and scientific possibilities for individuals and culture as a whole. His views on technology and science, however, are not simple. While visiting the Paris Museum of Natural History during his first European tour in 1833, he was impressed so profoundly that “as soon as he stepped ashore in Boston, Emerson accepted a speaking engagement at the Boston Society of Natural History” (Walls 2). Less than a month later, he delivered his first public lecture “The Uses of Natural History.” From then onwards, he turned more to technological and scientific progress for indications of intellectual, moral, and imaginative growth in the next generation. His high hopes for the present and future proliferation of technology and science are summarised in a passage from the address “Progress of culture”:

One of the distinctions of our century has been the devotion of cultivated men to natural science. The benefits thence derived to the arts and to civilization are signal and immense. They are felt in navigation, in agriculture, in manufactures, in astronomy, in mining and in war [...] The chief value is not the useful powers he obtained, but the test it has been of the scholar [...] It taught him anew the reach of the human mind, and that it was citizen of the universe. (210)

The reference to citizenship of the universe overrides man’s attachment to his environmental proximity and recalls the concern already in Emerson’s writings over the actual estrangement of human as an intellectual being from the physical environment. Yet, Emerson emphasises that the real value of natural science, beyond its utilities, is “metaphysical” and the chief value is not “the useful powers” human has obtained, but “the test it has been of the scholar” (all 210). In other words, the lowest value is the physical: beyond the physical stand the moral, the imaginative and the intellectual.

By the end of the period, mass production and manufacturing had become the main source of consumption of goods with production shifting from the household to the factory. Agriculture became profit-based rather than a matter of mere subsistence. Commercial enterprise grew rapidly, and financial profits and losses were made as the economy was boom-and-bust-bound. The other economic and political factor was immigration; by 1850 over 2.5 million Europeans had arrived on American shores in pursuit of opportunity. Yet, this booming economy, though dynamic and new, was often ruthless and inhumane.

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During this time of dynamic flux, the Transcendentalist movement flourished. Almost none of the Transcendentalists were unaffected, at least mentally and emotionally if not financially. They felt discomfited by the ruthless excesses of the capitalistic economy, and they generally called for the recognition of labourers' dignity in the new market economy. A conspicuous example is Emerson's essay "Politics," which was based on a lecture delivered in 1837, a year when a financial crisis plunged America into a debilitating recession. It lasted until the mid-1840s, with profits, prices, and wages going down and unemployment going up. Known as the 'Panic of 1837', the crisis brought about the collapse of banks, failure of business, decline of prices, and unemployment of thousands of workers. Emerson's reflection on economic and political issues is imbued with the frequency of such economic upheavals that had been sweeping over people's lives. He observes a desperate need to rectify the mounting imbalance between people and property in America:

The theory of politics [...] considers persons and property as the two objects for whose protection government exists. Of persons, all have equal rights, in virtue of being identical in nature. This interest, of course, with its whole power demands a democracy. Whilst the rights of all as persons are equal, in virtue of their access to reason, their rights in property are very unequal. One man owns his clothes, and another owns a county. ("Politics," 193)

Emerson, however, criticised the excesses of capitalistic *laissez-faire* market economy and never totally rejected the system of capitalism. He frequently affirmed a free market in his writings but was fundamentally ambivalent about capitalism. He feared the pursuit of material wants would dull self-reliance, yet he sometimes referred to the groundbreaking machinery and commerce as stimulating human energies. This seeming ambivalence led to an erroneous conclusion from several critics that Emerson moved from "an early utopian criticism of capitalism to an ideological apologia for capitalist enterprise" (Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook* 144), along with presumably political conservatism and advocacy of the economic status quo. But Emerson was able to synthesize the concerns of both the ideal and actual worlds, and more importantly that he was not naïve about both potential evils and benefits of new commerce and technology. Emerson's concern with the new system of commerce and technology is, in retrospect, an emphasis on human's self-reliance and intellect as transformative agents, which represent the creative powers of individuals and the potential of their faculties of reason and intuition. In other words, Emerson is basically a spiritual poet, who investigates nature as a means of achieving

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aesthetic, intellectual, moral, and spiritual enrichment, rather than merely satisfying materialistic and physical needs. His thinking is mainly imaginative, intuitive, and synthetic, while it, at the same time, embraces the faculty of reason and understanding.

Nature functions as a springboard for elevating his understanding of the essential unity, which he calls the Over-Soul. A conspicuous example indicative of Emerson's seemingly ambivalent stand is the passage from his *Nature* in which, after listing several creative contributions to the industrial revolution, he sharply criticizes the capitalist economy:

At present, man applies to nature but half his force. He works on the world with his understanding alone. He lives in it, and masters it by a penny-wisdom; and he that works most in it, is but a half-man, and whilst his arms are strong and his digestion good, his mind is imbruted, and he is a selfish savage. His relation to nature, his power over it, is through the understanding; as by manure; the economic use of fire, wind, water, and the mariner's needle; steam, coal, chemical agriculture; the repairs of the human body by the dentist and the surgeon. (89-90)

Despite Emerson's acerbic criticism of capitalistic excesses and the gross materialism, which he condemns in his writings, capitalism as a system attracts him because, for him, capitalism was "the manifestation of a natural force, like gravity" (Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook* 142) and as such was a source of power to be potentially capable of doing much good in the world. Emerson sought to promote economic enterprise because he thought that "capitalists, like poets, revealed nature's inherent abundance and thus elevated human life" (Birch 400). This sheds further light on his faithful adherence to complete freedom that stems from self-reliance.

Emerson never found any violent revolution necessary in America. Even at times so heavily engaged with materialistic affairs and discussions, he never fell short of his mystical and metaphysical attitudes, which trace the existence of a larger entity: The Over-Soul that has produced both capitalism and nature, neither of which has limited economic growth and moral progress. Individuals, according to Emerson, just need to align themselves with these two forces to strike a balance between materialism and morals. He expresses his notion succinctly in the essay "Wealth," which is a subtle critique of capitalism, a work in which he contends that "every man is a consumer, and ought to be a producer. He fails to make his place good in the world, unless he not only pays his debt, but also adds something to the commonwealth" (53). He does not defend any minimalist philosophy or severe abstinence from materialism in life. Instead, he affirms that it is of no use to "argue the wants down" although it is the philosophers who "have

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laid the greatness of man in making his wants few.” The question is “will a man content himself with a hut and a handful of dried peas?” and he himself immediately replies that human “is born to be rich” (all “Wealth” 55). But in the period of economic expansion, it was labour upon which most Americans increasingly relied as their only capital resource.

Emerson suggests in the essay “Politics” a political balance of power between people. He argues that “When the rich are outvoted, as frequently happens, it is the joint treasury of the poor which exceeds their accumulations. Every man owns something, if it is only a cow, or a wheelbarrow, or his arms, and so has that property to dispose of” (198). This will counterbalance the aggregated resources accumulated by the rich, but Emerson soon realised that a considerable number of Americans were excluded from both political and economic equality, even from their own bodies. They were slaves, whose gross situation drew his critical attention that would launch him into a campaign for social justice. Emerson’s own writings would resolve presumably ambiguous stands that he may have taken in his life career. He is ultimately a mystical Transcendentalist, who was convinced everyone, including enslaved Afro-Americans, shared in the same divinity that bestows dignity and meaning upon all human life. So, every man has within him “somewhat really divine therefore slavery is the unpardonable” (*The Journals and Miscellaneous*, vol. IV, 357). In essence, Transcendentalists generally embraced an economy with unlimited growth that would lead to uninterrupted improvement characterised by social harmony and economic justice.

American Transcendentalists stood out as pioneers of rethinking and revisiting history and traditional concepts of distinct identities. Consciously or unconsciously, they began to challenge their English colleagues across the continent, such as Herman Melville’s literary challenge of Charles Dickens, Thoreau’s response to Coleridge and Wordsworth, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s adaptation of Keats, Walt Whitman’s competition with Matthew Arnold, and Edgar Allen Poe’s reshaping of Percy B. Shelley. The new American canon made a great contribution to an emerging aesthetic consciousness in American literature. It would, however, be naïve to discard the adversarial relationship between English and American literature in the nineteenth century, especially from the side of American writers, who self-consciously attempted to assume their own literary nationalism and to transcend contemporary British influence.

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American writers of the nineteenth century did not consider British domination merely an aesthetic and literary issue, but a matter of nationalism. In 1832 in the reviewed work of *Defence of Poesy* by Sir Philip Sidney published in *The North American Review*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow berated American writers because “instead of coming forward as bold, original thinkers,” they had just “imbibed the degenerate spirit of modern English poetry” (75). Longfellow seemingly observed a moral urgency in the castigation of British influence. In 1838, Orestes Brownson also declared that “we write as English men, not as Americans. We are afraid to think our own thoughts, to speak our own words, or to give utterance to the rich and gushing sentiments of our own hearts,” and he concluded that this lasts so long as “we rely on England’s literature as exclusively as we have hitherto done” (all Miller 189-90). Brownson would have to repeat himself after another quarter of a century, saying that American literature “lacks spontaneity, is imitative, and, for the most part, imitative of the English” (495). Generally speaking, American nationalists inveighed against imitating thoughts of any other man, yet that other man eventually referred to an Englishman.

However, Emerson is not worried about Homer, Boccaccio, Goethe, or Hafiz. German idealist philosophy and literature did matter for Emerson, Thoreau and Melville, so did Asian religions and literatures. References to non-English Europe played more like escape. Emerson quotes Milton occasionally; Hawthorn often provides psychologized versions of Spenserian romance; Milton’s Eden is played upon in Hawthorn’s works; Melville’s employment of Shakespearean, and more generally, Elizabethan dramatic form in *Moby Dick* (1851).

American writers strove to have their own unique literary identities recognised and to advance their own literary frontier. Yet, the centrality of America to Romanticism’s self-definition is essential. Patrick J. Keane argues that many studies ignore or play down the transatlantic dialogue, which is attributable to two causes: one is simply “academic” and “the specialization factor in professional scholarship” (81) in a parallel with some Americanists, who resist to give due attention to foreign influences. The second cause has to do with the initial pattern of ‘denial’ in that most critics of American literature followed “the major nineteenth-century writers themselves in their aggressive-defensive insistence on their own American originality” (82). In Emerson’s case, the strategy took the form of silence or erasure of English influence on him, especially in texts asserting their originality.

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Emerson should not be reduced to a simple disciple of the British Romantics or German idealists. He never ceased to establish the image of American scholar as an independent thinker. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fear of the “Burden of Britain” and its influential literature was taken as representative for the American’s allegedly deep-seated apprehension of the “influence of the Old World” on the New World (both Mueller-Vollmer 60). Robert Weisbuch’s study *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (1986) may serve as a point of departure in bringing to the fore the issue of Old World and New World, the influence of the former on the latter, and the latter’s self-conscious effort to resist. The book finally focuses on the New World’s attempts to transcend the contemporary British influence and to rise as American literary nationalism. The American elite desired to create a literature that differed from English models. The notion of national literature is undoubtedly part of a larger nationalist ideology of nationhood which, in the case of the United States, had roots in the revolutionary period after the British finally surrendered on October 19, 1781. At this time, America became officially independent of Britain and its citizens set about establishing their own government.

In the past few decades, critics have increasingly come to realise that measuring Emerson’s vast influence merely by its impact on literature, philosophy and aesthetics is woefully inadequate. Kenneth S. Sacks’s *Emerson: Political Writings* (2008) highlights not only Emerson’s practical political involvement in abolitionism and other social movements around the time of the American Civil War, but also examines the philosophical basis of his political writings. Sacks lists 25 extracts from Emerson’s lectures, essays, addresses and poems that reveal his high political involvement. At the same time, contrary to the social and political engagement of Transcendentalists, others maintain that the social activities undertaken by them, especially by Emerson, contradicted “Transcendentalism’s emphasis upon intuitively perceived moral truths” and a corresponding moral and ethical self-reliance that “was antithetical to organizations and institutions of all types, especially political parties and associations for social reform” (Myerson 138). Given that Transcendentalists constantly sought self-reliance and independence as their long-term goals, they proposed that people are at their best when dispatched from every institutionalised distraction, such as society and religion.

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Emerson's considerable emphasis on self-reliance disrupts conventions about individuality and individualism. In the lecture "The Transcendentalist," he claims that people may think him "the child of my circumstances" (167). This phrase explores the idea that people often see themselves as shaped by their social circumstances and external conditions. Emerson, however, claims that "I make my circumstance" because the subject of 'I' is "the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax" (167). Emerson places individuality above random or contingent circumstances that many people find de facto responsible for many events. Like Emerson, Margaret Fuller called for periods of withdrawal from a society the members of which are in various states of "distraction" and "imbecility" from which they can be cured by "a time of isolation" that will give "the renovating fountains time to rise up" (all Myerson, *Transcendentalism* 419). Individuality, according to Fuller, must gain the renovating fountains, a metaphor of nature suggesting individual creativity and naturalness, by retreating into isolation. She had learned that self-development could be simply facilitated or hindered by others. This assertion finds full pronouncement in her interpretation of Goethe's position at the court of the Grand Duke of Weimar, which she published in her 1841 *Dial* essay "Goethe," in which she reflects on the impact of cultural contexts on the artist:

Whoever is turned from his natural path may, if he will, gain in largeness and depth what he loses in simple beauty, and so it was with Goethe [...] A great change was during these years perceptible to his friends in the character of Goethe. From being always 'either too volatile or infatuated,' he retreated into a self-collected state, which seemed at first even icy to those around him. (19-20)

By recourse to Goethe's position as a superb example, Fuller describes the moment of great change as the turning-point of Goethe's creative life. But Emerson's view of Goethe differs dramatically from her insights and vision of the artist. Emerson considers Goethe as the representative artist. In his essay "Goethe; or, the Writer" published in his *Representative Men*, he affirms that Goethe was

unembarrassed by the variety of coats of convention with which life had got encrusted, easily able by his subtlety to pierce these and to draw his strength from nature, with which he lived in full communion [...] There is no trace of provincial limitation in his muse. He is not a debtor to his position, but was born with a free and controlling genius. (267)

In contrast to Fuller, Emerson does not consider the ways that antagonistic or relational circumstances of the society and social contexts may tamper with Goethe's genius and writing

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skill. In his lecture “The Transcendentalist,” Emerson further explains the origin and aim of Transcendentalism by giving a philosophical account. He claims that the so-called ‘new views’ of American writers are not truly new, but rather part of a broad tradition of idealism since “new views here in New England [...] are not new, but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mould of these new times” (164). The new ideas are merely new forms of the oldest thoughts. Emerson clarifies his argument by using a metaphor in the same lecture. He points to the stable composition of light, which is a familiar quality, but it falls on “a great variety of objects, and by so falling is first revealed to us, not in its own form, because it is formless, but in theirs” (164). In like manner, Emerson perceives thought as formless that is perceived in the objects that it classifies. Thoughts are dynamic for Emerson, which must be defamiliarised and cast into new forms to create impact. Emerson continues his argument about the powers of thought by considering the whole world as “the shadow of that substance which you are,” and it is nothing but “the perpetual creation of the powers of thought” (both “The Transcendentalist,” 167). Thus, he brings to the fore the significance of human mind as the generator of thought and attributes the divine power of creation to it.

### 2.2. The influence of Romanticism on Transcendentalism

In his essay “Nature,” Emerson suggests a philosophic metaphor – namely the “transparent eyeball” – to describe a view of life that is absorbent. This metaphor is remarkable, especially with respect to the correspondence between Emerson’s perception of union with Over-soul, on the one hand, and Keats’s understanding of unity with nature and his insistence on dynamic identities and identification with other identities, on the other hand. Emerson remarks that “I become a transparent eye-ball,” which denotes “I am nothing” so that “I see all”, as he can observe “the currents of the Universal Being circulate” through him, which leads him to see himself “part or particle of God” (*Nature* 13). He describes an elevation into infinite space and an ecstatic self-transcending union with the divine. He affirms that becoming a transparent eyeball and subsequently transcending the enclosed self is “a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet” (*Nature* 11). The poet loses his/her own private identity and becomes nothing, so that the poet can see all. This transaction endows him/her with spiritual liquidity. Emerson’s ideal poet, like Keats’s negatively capable poet, has a dynamic identity and resists any stable identity.

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Emerson's "transparent eye-ball" passage is a unique mystical moment in his works. His attributing a transcendental imaginative power to the poet bestows exceptional quality on poets, who can establish a unity with the divine by turning into an organ of perception. He raises the poet's role to that of a seer, who receives insight intuitively through his/her perception of nature. This connects with Keats's understanding of the ideal poet, who is negatively capable and transcends his enclosed self to experience numerous identities. In Emerson's words, the ideal poet simply integrates all parts and enters all the currents of 'the Universal Being' that ultimately annihilates the poet's own low self and uplifts it to the level of a constituent of God. Such a poet can hear the locutions of nature and translate them into verse. Emerson believes that the progress of the self in society requires nourishing it through opening landscapes of thought and ideas. He puts forth that progress is "learning the secret of cumulative power, of advancing on one's self," which implies "a facility of association, power to compare, the ceasing from fixed ideas" (all "Civilization" 24). Like Keats's idea of dynamic identity, Emerson's call is for the advancement of self as a means of 'ceasing' fixed and rigid ideas.

Both Keats and Emerson insist on a poetical sense and character for the poet; the character that integrates all parts of nature and does not conceive of nature as purely functional or only in relation to man's possessions and interests. Emerson emphasises this point when mentioning that there is "an occult relation between man and the vegetable" that is "the greatest delight" but the power to produce this delight "does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both" (all *Nature* 13-14). He sees a dynamic harmony between man and nature, which ultimately contributes to the productive power that resides in the poet, who can integrate nature and all its seemingly disparate parts. Therefore, it is this imaginative power that "distinguishes the stick of timber of the woodcutter, from the tree of the poet" (*Nature* 10). The wood cutter only sees the timber and the poet sees the whole tree. It is only the poet who can integrate all divisions and seeing nature in its wonderful entirety. S/he responds aesthetically and imaginatively to nature and loses himself/herself in the immensity of all beings. More significantly, Emerson never values these mystical experiences for their own sake, but for "those enlargements and that intellectual élan" which accompany them (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. XI, 422). He rarely stops at purely mystical experiences but attempts to develop their implications in his philosophy, and describes his aesthetic experience in mystical terms, thus attempting to relate his mystical ideas to the daily conduct of life.

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English Romanticism had significant influence on Transcendentalism. James Elliot Cabot, in his *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1887), even refers to Transcendentalism as a brand of the Earlier movement, calling it a “remarkable outburst of Romanticism” (248). The most conspicuous traits of Romanticism that are shared with Transcendentalism include an intense inwardness that may at times lead to melancholy; sympathy and empathy for human passion in all forms; questioning the existing institutions, such as church, that threaten the primacy of the self; and a vision of nature as a place of both beauty and authenticity. In this sense, Transcendentalists belong to the Romantic movement because their writings exhibit major Romantic characteristics, especially such traits as the intense inwardness, the veneration of nature, and the disposition to oppose existing institutions with the aim of placing natural phenomena and landscapes above society and institutions.

Both Romantics and Transcendentalists venerate retirement into nature and seclusion to ruminate on *conditio humana*, nature and society. Like English Romanticism, Transcendentalism rose as a reaction against the Age of Enlightenment’s emphasis on science and rationalism as the way of discovering truth. Transcendentalism principally believes in the inherent goodness of people and nature, and the corruption of individuals by society and its institutions. Likewise, English Romanticism reacts against the scientific rationalization of nature and the materialistic changes in society, which accompanied the expanding industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth century. Both Romanticism and Transcendentalism admire intuition rather than logic, elevate poetry and artistically relegated prose to a lower rank, and idealize the common man.

The influence of Romanticism reached the American Transcendentalists at different times. From 1810 to the end of the 1820s, Transcendentalists read Romantics with unabated delight and overwhelming approval. Lord Byron stood out as one of the most admired and popular Romantic writers whose imaginative fertility and wit commanded the attention of those raised on melancholy poetry of sensibility and neoclassical verse. Emerson filled his college journals with quotations from Byron’s *Manfred*. He was past his twenty-first birthday when he heard of Byron’s death. His grieving letters to his aunt Mary Moody Emerson are suggestive of Byron’s inspirational influence on Emerson’s writings: “It is with melancholy to have your well dry up, your fountain stopped from whence you were wont to look for an unfailing supply” (*The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. I, 130). At the same time, James Marsh, a leading importer of

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Romantic ideas into Transcendentalism via his editions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, began as an admirer of Lord Byron. In a letter in 1819 Marsh admires Byron's genius. He describes him as a man who "seems to me to live more than other men" (Marsh 35). Byron was regarded as the creator of an imaginative being who could vicariously live in him/her.

Even though the Transcendentalists were mostly attracted to Byron, Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, there were other less-known Romantics – including Barry Cornwall, Joanna Baillie, James Hogg, and Tom Moore – whose works appear as quotations in Transcendentalists' writings and their lines and stanzas make their way into American commonplace books. But Emerson, as the epitome of Transcendentalist movement, just qualifies many Romantic ideas and emphasises others equally and relates them to "the concrete circumstances of American life" (Carpenter 139). Having qualified and counterbalanced Romantic notions, Emerson relates them to his time and place in the United States. Instead, he emphatically evades considering himself a Romantic toward the end of his address on "The American Scholar":

I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds. (105)

This passage reflects Emerson's desire to connect with the present to find meaning in the familiar and accessible. Emerson attempts to present himself as a practical idealist, who is deeply concerned with American actuality. He is certainly not a Romantic in the sense of dreamer or escapist, especially when his growing activism is considered.

With respect to his classic idea of self-reliance, Emerson emphasises, not the separateness of the individual self, but its relation to the Over-Soul, while Romanticism often idealises the common self with no distinct relation and affinity with any higher entity. Moreover, his admiration of nature and enjoyment in the solitude of nature is not merely a form of escape from industrial civilization, as it had often happened in Europe; instead, it was "part of the American pioneer experience" (Carpenter 140). Emerson relates most of his Romantic ideas to his actual American experience. If he dreams of ancient India and Persia, and of a future America, he still observes the actual events and activities of the nineteenth-century New England. He seeks to mediate between mysticism and practicality, so if he describes one in his writings, he often prepares the grounds for the other one's possible reconciliation. The Romantic spontaneous and intuitive

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discourse with nature is recalled in Emerson's late essay "Inspiration" that employs the Romantics' aeolian harp: "The depth of the notes which we accidentally sound on the strings of Nature is out of all proportion to our taught and ascertained faculty and might teach us what strangers and novices we are, vagabond in this universe of pure power" (263). Emerson talks about the awe at the spontaneous wisdom deeply ingrained in natural phenomena and that our spontaneous actions – "the notes" – can resonate with the natural world. Yet, we are transient beings – "vagabond" – in proportion to this universe of "pure power," wherein we must be humble and open to unexpected revelations of the nature. This passage signifies Emerson's mystical approach to his comprehension of nature. That the 'notes' we sound on 'the strings of Nature' should be spontaneously and intuitively tuned rejects any dogmatic knowledge that we gain through pure logic and sense and advocates intuitive knowledge.

Emerson's *Nature* forefronts the privileged status of nature in the belief system of Transcendentalism. The book divides nature into four categories: Commodity, Beauty, Language and Discipline, which outline the ways by which humans employ nature for their own basic needs. Emerson explores the relationship between humans and nature from different perspectives in the eight sections of his *Nature* and lays emphasis on the 'wholeness' with nature for which we must be separate from distractions imposed on us by civilised society and organized institutions. He proposes that solitude be embraced as the real mechanism of engagement with the nature, claiming that "to go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society" (9). Here is the binary of nature/society that English Romanticism and American Transcendentalism have in common.

Emerson favours some outlooks, conceptions, and tendencies more than others, yet he deems it essential to struggle against his own preferences to value almost everything. He asserts that "a man should be a guest in his own house, a guest in his own thought" ("The Sovereignty of Ethics" 187). Feeling too confident with one's own inclinations, one becomes neither fascinated by different ideas nor feels it incumbent upon oneself to take them into account. Emerson is, however, unwaveringly committed to self-reliance and his words express unreserved beliefs when contributed to the ideal of self-reliance. Henry James writes about Emerson's dynamic approach to different ideas: "He liked to taste it but not to drink it – least of all to become intoxicated." (265). Emerson's dynamicity resonates with Keats's statement in his copy of

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Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, when he insists on the poet's power of intensity and compares "the Passions to different tons and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar" that the poet should by one cup "know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated" (Cited in Bate 45). Hence, by means of negative capability, the poet should identify with every particular object of contemplation. Emerson's house-metaphor corresponds to Keats's theory of "mansion of many apartments," explained above. Keats's theory explores the world of mind and includes his conception of a gregarious advance of intellect in cultural history, in which new minds can take advantage of previous endeavours without relying on their individual greatness of mind for every step. This features a negatively capable poet. Similarly, Emerson encourages detachment from static ideas and promotes openness within one's mind to remain fully receptive to new experiences, which ultimately leads to union with the Over-Soul. The most obvious similarity between Keats's negative capability and Emerson's idea of the Over-Soul relates to such dynamic receptivity.

This identification with every object complies with disinterestedness and identity-annihilation, emphasized in Keats's correspondence and poems. It indicates the poet's capability to throw oneself into the nature of a particular passion without having to get immersed in it. Such a sympathetic understanding, according to Emerson, even includes the "alien and grotesque" because "there is nothing but is related to me [...] and by careful comparison I can soon find my place in it; find a strict analogy between my experiences and whatever is real in those of any man" (both "Introductory" 19). This analogy, as Keats and Emerson both emphasise, unequivocally calls for a creative imagination.

Emerson claims that a multitude and variety of aspects account for truth, not a single aspect, which ultimately results in the exaggeration of one single topic and discards the other ones. He relates this matter to the cause and effect of the world's constitutive antagonism, stating that "Man is not order of nature, sack and sack, belly and members, link in a chain" but "a stupendous antagonism, a dragging together of the poles of the Universe" ("Fate" 16). Some lines earlier in the same essay, Emerson has already argued that we must "respect Fate as a natural history, but there is more than natural history" (16). So, he views human being not totally hindered and ordained by fate and deciphers the opposite poles of the universe as complimentary constituents of human being. He develops his assertion of antagonism profusely in his writings,

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claiming that there are two “metaphysical antagonists,” each of which is “a good half, but an impossible whole” (“The Conservative” 289). He insists on balanced antagonisms, so that the thinker, in his understanding, temporarily stands by each antagonistic element in turn.

Emerson has a sustained multiple perspectivism, that is he does not favour any fixed perspective and system of thought, which emphasises the significance of receptivity to various angles. This reflects his belief in the fluidity of thought, which is a prerequisite to move towards the Over-Soul as the universal spirit that encompasses a multitude of viewpoints and experiences and connects all individuals. Multiple perspectivism enables individuals to foster a more profound connection with others and, hence, a holistic view of life. This echoes Keats’s idea of negative capability, which invites writers to remain in uncertainty and doubt while breaking free from any static system of thought and philosophy. In addition to this uncertainty, Keats emphasises the communication of experiences by being fully open to opposites. One relies on oneself rather than seeking support in external commitments. One stays within oneself to “enter imaginatively into all the commitments that social life displays” and one increases the amount of value in the world by “keeping oneself from embracing favourite ideas and works exclusively” (Kateb 5). In the same manner, Keats insists on excluding private interests from the sphere of the ideal poet’s practice while being committed to no fixed idea or character and remaining largely aloof from his private feelings.

Emerson is fascinated by the fact that meaning or beauty can be found in conflicting ideas, principles, and forces. He does not seek any provisional or definite classification and clarity and does not engage himself in combat with seemingly irreconcilable antagonisms but strives for a self-mastery that rises above cravings for simple clarity. This is closely related to receptivity, which cultivates a mindset that better aligns with the Over-Soul. Each of his texts is “more than a statement of a mood, but its core is a mood” even if it is not a present mood but “a remembered or expected or imagined one” (Kateb 14). Each mood may adjust itself to the matter of consideration and contribute greater receptivity of various aspects or qualify an earlier statement on the same matter in a different mood. Different moods provide different perspectives of the same matter. These perspectives by and large engage imagination – regardless of the ontological, epistemological, or philosophical rationale that such outlooks employ. Romantic criticism proposes that through immediate and sympathetic intuition, imagination is capable of identifying

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itself with its object of contemplation and by means of such an identification, the sympathetic imagination, through direct experience, grasps the individual nature and identity or ‘truth’ of the object.

An outlook similar to Emerson’s insistence on receptivity is found in Keats’s idea of negative capability. Keats’s critical formulation of negative capability maintains that in a life of uncertainty, where no absolute system of thought can explain everything, what motivates the artist is an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality. This, however, involves negating one’s own ego. The mind should be a thoroughfare that aspires to new ideas, regardless of morality and selectivity, without any egotistic assertion of identity. Emerson’s multiple perspectivism is in line with Keats’s understanding of receptivity. In one of his numerous programmatic formulations, Emerson says that an intellectual person must have “no engagement in any thought or feeling which can hinder him from looking at it as somewhat foreign” (*Natural History* 35). He strenuously advises poets against any artificial stimulants. This has pronounced resonance with Keats’s negative capability that propounds mental openness to various perspectives and experiences. True poets, in Keats’s words, should similarly remain in uncertainty, clutch to no fixed idea or dogmas and remain open to fresh experiences and identities. Keats finds the essence of poetry in disinterested, amoral, and selfless contemplation, which can happen by rejecting irritable reaching after fact and reason.

Emerson’s self-reliance essentially orients the poet in the direction of openness to everything around the self. It resonates with Keats’s passage about the unpoetical feature of the ideal poet: “A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity — he is continually in for and filling some other body” (*Keats’s Selected Letters* 195). This kind of poet has metamorphic identities, which supply him/her with persistently sympathetic identification with nature or human beings alike. The ideal poet, according to Keats, remains open to new characters and bodies that can correspondingly make whole or part of his existence into an aggregate of other individualities, whom he represents.

Likewise, Emerson believes in a collective individuality, but nonetheless, he never rejects one’s own identity and personality. He does not give in to circumstances but “I make my circumstance” because the subject of I is “the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax” (“The Transcendentalist” 167). Emerson places human’s individuality above random or

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contingent circumstances that many people find de facto responsible for many events. On the contrary, Keats theorises men of genius as categorically with no individuality and determined character in his concept of negative capability. The artist, Keats suggests, loses the selfhood that necessitates a single perspective or meaning, identifies with the experience of his object, and lets that experience speak itself through him/her.

Emerson is a theorist of democratic individuality and Keats a theorist of no individuality for poets although they both insist on a dynamic development of the self. Emerson's assertion on self-reliance is more daring than Keats's conservative negative capability. Emerson, unlike Keats, does not detach the poet from other persons, but urges everyone to have moments with the identities being lost for the sake of poetical apprehension. In such detachment, the intellect captures the truth or reality of experiences, which allows individuals to embrace the diversity of perspectives that enables them to connect with the Over-Soul as a universal spirit that binds all individuals. By the passage of time, the detachment is supplemented by purgation of egoism and self-interest, so an intellectual man has "the power to go out of himself and see himself as an object," therefore his defects and delusions "interest him as much as his successes" whilst "the cloud of egotists drifting about are only interested in a success to their egotism" (all *Natural History* 36). Accordingly, the mind of the detached ego is more genuinely active than the self-engrossed ego.

Emerson believes in the omnipresent soul, and his metaphor for it is derived from the idea of emanation. The Over-Soul is conceived as "an ocean of light" from which beams of light emanate to individual "souls" if the individuals open their physical selves to this influx of power and rely on it rather than on material circumstances (both "The Over-soul" 267). Although being a literary metaphor, the existence of an omnipresent entity is the philosophy of intuition shared by many mystical and transcendental philosophers. Emerson remarks, "I believe in the omnipresence" which alludes to "the All" that exists in "each particle" and the entire "Nature reappears in every leaf and moss" (all *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VII, 186). It is not hard to come up with analogous texts with Emerson's line of thought that sums up everything in each particle by becoming nothing to see all, becoming mystically at one with nature and vanishing into the world, while simultaneously taking the whole world into oneself.

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Emerson firmly asserts that few adults can see nature. He argues that they have only “a very superficial seeing,” but “the sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child” (*Nature* 11). This is a profound distinction between the perspectives of adults, who see the world through the lens of experience and rationality, and children, who, conversely, see through wonder and receptivity. They are more attuned to the beauty of the world since the sun “shines into the eye and heart” of children, that is their perception is mostly emotional and spiritual. It is almost all children whose “inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other” while few adults have retained the spirit of infancy into “the era of manhood” (both *Nature* 11). Most adults only see nature for what it is and what it offers to their interests, but they barely see how it is responsible for the sense of sight. Children, on the contrary, are receptive to natural wonders and offerings. A child makes an indefinite relation with nature. The child indeed reserves the true origin and goodness of human being to which the poet aspires. Emerson, before elaborating on the metaphor of the transparent eye-ball, makes a comparison between a man casting off his “years” as “the snake his slough” in “the woods” and a child (*Nature* 12–13). In the woods – referring to proximity to nature – we return to “reason and faith” and “all mean egotism vanishes” (both *Nature* 12–13). A man or woman casts off his/her years like a snake that removes its skin to rejuvenate. The rejuvenated man/woman just becomes a child who is the “transparent eye-ball” (*Nature* 13) and sees all through the eye not with the eye. The integrated self of man can retain the spirit of childhood well into the powers of adulthood.

Emerson distinguishes between human fantasy and imagination. He perceives imagination as seeing by becoming. For him, imagination is “a very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees, by sharing the path, or circuit of things through forms, and making them translucent to others” (“The Poet” 80). In the same vein, Keats develops the essentiality of poetic imagination. According to him, the negatively capable poet does not merely react to external stimuli of life, which are continually dictated and consecutive, but to the interior reality of poetic experience mediated by imagination. The poet will not then project his own perceptions on the phenomena and will instead allow himself to be subsumed by them through annihilation of his own self. Such self-annihilation is the prerequisite of poetic imagination.

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Emerson never ceases to see beyond immediate and unmediated experiences. He urges the detached ego to “know the history and destiny of a man” (*Natural History* 36) in thought and retrospection. Immediate experiences and perceptions can be accurate, but introspection assists the revelation of their meaning. Revelation of the meaning interests the intellectual man. In his lecture “Chaucer,” Emerson relates such an introspective wisdom to the true poet who “quits himself and throws his spirit into whatever he contemplates and enjoys the making it speak that it would say” (1). His statement echoes that of Keats about the negatively capable poet. Himself being a manifestly bookish scholar, Emerson tells his bookish audience that books become “noxious,” both for ordinary people and scholars, because “the sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude” takes its stand on some books since they are “slow to open to the incursions of Reason” (all “The American Scholar” 95). Men of intellect do even worse. They found colleges upon the books written by “thinkers” not by “Man Thinking;” they are written by men of talent “who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles” and bookworms “grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views,” hence instead of “Man Thinking, we have the bookworm” (all “The American Scholar” 95). Emerson challenges bookworms to leave libraries and rather than re-thinkers, they think originally for themselves.

### 2.3. Emerson’s Self-Annihilation and Female Representations

Emerson denounces everyday egotism, steering clear from philosophical egotism and its praise. He advocates for a connection with the Over-Soul to overcome egotism. In his lecture “Private Life,” he maintains that “when I remember the manifold cord – the thousand or the million stranded cord which my being and every man’s being is [...] I say I am an alms of all and live but by the charity of others?” (251). Stressing how ‘the manifold cord’ of the whole human being has been attuned in his individual existence, he perceives the whole past generations composed of minute parts that flow through everyone, including through his own individuality. His existence is therefore both the whole and part of the collective human consciousness. Emerson frequently suggests that “to truly be an individual one must become public,” which means losing “personality as well as losing the partiality or distinctiveness flowing from one’s own identification with a group,” and he continues with his statement about the inevitability of overcoming obstacles to receptivity by going out of “ourselves so that we may enter the world, rather than remaining imprisoned in ourselves” (all Kateb 29). Emerson renders this going out of

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oneself as a kind of self-forgetting or self-annihilation, through which the low self is to be forgotten.

Emerson believes that the self is a prisoner in the habitual associations recognising novelty as exoticism. He compares the self to a traveller, who sticks to “the perpetual self-preservation” while there is not a moment that he forgets “himself” and yields to “the new world of facts that environ him” *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* vol. VII, 235). Then he wonders if he can “once abandon himself to the wonder of the landscape he would cease to find it strange” (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* vol. VII, 235). The regular going ‘outside’ of our selves paves the way for the loss of self, or put differently, a kind of mental self-annihilation that gives way to sympathetic imagination that grasps the individual nature and identity or ‘truth’ of objects of contemplation and makes one lose the self in ecstatic contemplation.

Emerson’s essay “Spiritual Laws” (1883) proposes that if a man precisely observes his own daily activities, then he could discern the presence of a higher power will that regulates events. This characterises people of discernment who “in their honest moments, have always sung ‘Not unto us, not unto us’” (128). They attribute their success to a higher power. In other words, they believe that “that which externally seemed will and immovableness was willingness and *self-annihilation* [emphasis added]” (128). Emerson strongly argues that great people in the history could ultimately conclude that their own determination and will power have been of no or little effect, but it was the will of the higher power and their willingness and readiness in embracing His will. This is subsequently followed by the annihilation of their self, which offers a mystical suggestion embedded in Emerson’s philosophy.

In the same essay, Emerson further elaborates his idea of the higher will. He recommends we look around at what takes place around us and realize that “a higher law than that of our will regulates events” and if we consider ourselves strong, such a strength lies only in “our easy, simple, spontaneous actions,” so it is essential that we content ourselves “with obedience” if we wish to “become divine” (all 132). This corresponds to his insistence on union with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender. He simply relates every event to a higher will because he believes “there is a soul at the centre of nature, and over the will of every man” (132). Emerson acts like a deterministic orator who attempts to attribute every act to God or to previously existing causes: “for you there is a reality, a fit place and congenial duties” for

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whose fulfilment, one must place himself/herself “in the middle of stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats,” then s/he will be “the world, the measure of right, of truth, of beauty” (all 132). Emerson’s optimism and justification of the world’s events forms an essential constituent of his philosophy. In his essay “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic” (1850), he again puts forward the issue of reconciliation with the Over-Soul “by being assimilated to the original soul, by whom and after whom all things subsist, the soul of man does then easily flow into all things, and all things flow into it: they mix; and he is present and sympathetic with their structure and law” (98-9). The whole deterministic idea that is propagated in Emerson’s writings is associated with his larger idea of the Over-Soul. In his essay “Compensation” (1883), he explains that everything is contained in the Over-Soul and “it is thus written, because it is thus in life” and our action is “overmastered and characterized above our will by the law of nature” (106). He perceives natural laws to be regulated by the higher power.

There is a circle in which the mystic ultimately returns to himself/herself, but first and foremost the self should detach itself from its illusions and then realise its significant role in the whole. At the end of the essay “Compensation,” Emerson recuperates life’s losses and miseries by remarking that the most evidently unbearable suffering, such as “the death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation,” in time brings a countervailing enlargement of the self because “it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy [...] and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character” (both “Compensation” 121). He considers miseries as prerequisites for the development of one’s character. They foster the character and elevate it to a higher status, closer to the union with God.

As early as 1830, Emerson was reading the writings of German Romantics such as Goethe, Fichte, and Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg. Hardenberg, who had chosen the pen name “Novalis,” influenced Emerson, mainly through his mysterious, mystical, still captivating and provocative aphorisms. Novalis had read Goethe’s works early in his career life, and undoubtedly had drawn some of his own worldview from Goethe’s, but it is in Novalis’s writing that we find the closest correspondences with Emerson’s own writing, which derives out of “a similarity in intellectual proclivity” (Versluis 130). Emerson’s prosaic writings often look like a collection of aphorisms grouped into paragraphs. Several scholars have recognised his indebtedness to Novalis’s work. Henry A. Pochmann goes so far as to claiming that all the major

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thematic elements of Emerson's *Nature* can be traced back to Thomas Carlyle's article on Novalis:

Indeed, except for the illustrations drawn from natural science, and the homespun phrases and figures, Emerson's *Nature* contains few ideas that have not their counterparts in Carlyle's words on Novalis or in the quotations from Novalis that are adduced for illustrative purposes. (607)

There is then little doubt that Emerson was already familiar with Novalis's work before writing *Nature* (1836). At the centre of both Emerson and Novalis's work is self-awareness and self-transcendence. In his essay on Novalis, Thomas Carlyle included an aphorism by Novalis that "the true philosophical Act is annihilation of self (Selbsttötung); this is the real beginning of all Philosophy [...] This Act alone corresponds to all the conditions and characteristics of transcendental conduct" (181). Emerson likewise writes of selfless experience that allows realisation of the unity between us and the natural world. He insists we arise above our petty selves and establish a union with nature. This comes about with the aid of intuitive processes that reinvigorate self-reliance and enlarge the self and its imagined potential.

Self-reliant individuals can insert their energies into the divine fountains in the depth of the self. Then they can channel the inner creative energy of the Over-Soul until their speech "flows with the flowing of nature," that is fulfilled better by an ideal poet such as Shakespeare or Milton because "he stands one step nearer to things and sees the flowing or metamorphosis" (both "The Poet" 25). The 'flowing or metamorphosis' is in fact a transpersonal sense of imaginative empowerment that provides the poet with imaginative identification. Near the beginning of *Nature*, Emerson turns into a "transparent eyeball," which is in fact absorbent and suggests that the poet is a single, huge eye that sees everything, so "all mean egotism vanishes" and "I am nothing" but a transparent eyeball that sees "the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me" and ultimately "I am part or particle of God" (all 13). Emerson attempts to arrive at the realization of God by obviating his own presence. "Nothing" plays an essential part in understanding Emerson; it necessitates one's being devoid of egotism, that takes precedence over one's selfless acts.

The Over-Soul aligns closely with mysticism, which emphasizes unity with the divine. Mysticism has several meanings. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first meaning of mysticism relates to unity with the higher reality: mysticism is "belief in the possibility of union

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with or absorption into God by means of contemplation and self-surrender; belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect” (“mysticism”). The second meaning implies attainment of direct knowledge of God or Ultimate Reality through subjective experience such as intuition or insight. Something of the first sense did influence Emerson when describing mystics in his essay “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic.” His writings, however, abound in the second meaning of mysticism. Emerson is a spiritual poet, who did not rely on intellectual induction and deduction to achieve wisdom, but he appealed to immediate insight and intuition to seek the truth. He can be designated as a mystic by this definition, since, like his Sufi predecessors, which has already been explained in the first chapter, who broke away with traditional modes of learning, he favoured revealed insight over rational deduction. In his essay “The Over-Soul” (1883), Emerson explains that “the philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul” (252). In this respect, Emerson sounds like followers of Sufism, who challenge the strictures of Islam and strive for union with the eternal One.

Emerson never deemed mysticism a passive experience, but a dynamic means of insight in the active conduct of life. Contrary to catholic mysticism, Emerson always described mysticism, and subsequently a direct union of the soul with the Over-Soul, as natural rather than supernatural. Even the simplest person “who in his integrity worships God, becomes God” (“The Over-Soul” 274). He assumes the possibility of such a union even within the simplest person’s capacity and not just confined to the mystic elite. The term Over-Soul denotes a supreme underlying unity which transcends duality or plurality. Emerson expands his mystical and abstract idea of Over-Soul, defined as the collective indivisible soul, of which all individual souls or identities are included, and it is “that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other” (“The Over-Soul” 252). He insists:

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. (253)

The Over-Soul, according to Emerson, is a level of existence, or a vital force in the universe in which all souls participate and all individual souls meet regardless of any rank or fashion; it is,

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therefore, a spiritual essence in which individual consciousness is transcended. For the substance of soul, he assumes that it is not “an organ, but animates and exercises all the organ,” and it is not “a faculty, but a light” and when considered from “within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all” (all 254). Here Emerson refutes the classical soul-body duality and preaches the doctrine of monism that attributes oneness or singleness to one supreme being, namely soul, which is itself a particle of the Over-Soul. The soul is a ray of the vital light, of which all souls partake. This is a mystical idea that relegates the mortal body to ‘nothing’ if separated from the light. Every soul, accordingly, is substantially of the same essence of the Over-Soul. Therefore, there is no “bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins,” then it is possible for us to “lie open on one side to the deeps of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God” (both 255). Emerson here reiterates the cosmic unity that has been an intellectual discipline in mysticism.

With characteristic self-disparagement, Emerson repeats his inadequacy in a variety of subjects, especially in philosophy. He suffered a succession of personal tragedies that may seldom strike one individual: namely his wife’s death, Ellen, just a year and a half after their marriage in 1829; the death of his admired, eloquent and learned brother, Edward, in 1834; the untimely death of his other brother, Charles, in 1836; and the last blow came with the death of his son, Waldo, six years after Charles’s death. These tragedies could have crumbled him and his artistic virtuosity, but he maintained composure. He never publicly paraded the tragedies that his heart had been suffering. Instead, he sought to heal “the scars of tragedy by a life of action, rather than to cultivate them for purposes of artistic exploitation” (Carpenter 12). This suggests that Emerson’s psychology was more pragmatic than romantic. In an age of personalities, he appeared like a man, who keeps his individual affairs in the background, rarely tells anything of his private history, and lets thoughts flow through him.

Although Emerson owes a large measure of his influence to his lectures and addresses, one searches his volumes in vain for a trace of egotism or any ‘self-fashioning’ to depict himself in a carefully intended manner. He seems to be “completely under the spell of his idea, so wholly abstracted from his audience, that he is as one who waits for the thoughts to come, and drops them out one by one, in a species of soliloquy or trance” (Frothingham 247). Having been disciplined by poverty and suffering, Emerson concluded that beyond tragedy and loss lies the

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peace of accepting the world as it is. He also never claimed to have attained any pure mystical experience, and he just wrote disparagingly of his own insights. In a journal entry from 1837, he reveals a his own mystical experience: “A certain wandering light comes to me which I instantly perceive to be the Cause of Causes. It transcends all proving. It is itself the ground of being; and I see that it is not one & I another,” and he instantly recounts that “in certain moments I have known that I existed directly from God,” but he intuitively realizes that “in my ultimate consciousness Am He” (all *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. V, 337). It resonates with many, if not all, kinds of known mysticism that insist on ‘ecstasy’ that literally refers to the mystic standing outside the self so that the soul is given liberty to transcend the body and to achieve identification with God or the Ultimate Reality. As in this particular experience, Emerson evidently had an ecstatic experience in certain moments that lifted temporarily the veil between him and the Ultimate Reality.

Emerson transcended the limits of his individuality and ultimately found himself part of the whole, sharing the omnipresence of the Over-Soul. He affirmed that this was a difficult path to traverse and reiterated it in various writings, in particular in the essay “Swedenborg; or, the Mystic,” in which he propounds his idea of mystic and asserts that the mystical path is “difficult, secret, and beset with terror” since it is “a getting out of ... bodies to think.” Although it “comes in terror, and with shocks to the mind of the receiver,” it is a “beatitude” that increases “mental power” (all 99). The idea of unity, or identity with the whole natural and supernatural world has affinities in the ancient Hindu scriptures, Islamic mystical teachings, German transcendental philosophers and in some European Romantic poets.

Among the representatives of spiritual philosophy and mysticism stands Amos Bronson Alcott, older than Emerson by four years. He was a real devotee of spiritual ideas and mysticism; the writer and reformer who taught the doctrine of the soul’s primacy and pre-eminence. Instead of seeking “wisdom by intellectual processes, using induction and deduction, and creeping step by step towards his goal,” Alcott appeals at once to “the testimony of consciousness” (both Frothingham 251) and claims immediate insight and intuition and proclaims the truth he has seen by studying the mystery of being in inward nature and the fundamental data of the soul. In 1837, Alcott was the reputed leader of the Transcendentalists. He was active in diffusing the ideas of the spiritual philosophy, while being uncompromising in interpreting them.

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In the essay “Spiritual Laws” (1883), Emerson attributes the success of historical figures to something other than their own power, but to nature:

Not less conspicuous is the preponderance of nature over will in all practical life. There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it. We impute deep-laid far-sighted plans to Caesar and Napoleon; but the best of their power was in nature, not in them. Men of an extraordinary success, in their honest moments, have always sung Not unto us. (128)

Their success, according to Emerson, must be sought outside their restricted egotism. He insists on the transcendence of egotism as a means of moral perfection. He does not downplay the significance of human’s self-reliance and confidence, but self-reliance can become “the goiter of egotism,” thus “the pest of society is egotists,” who “runs round a ring formed by his own talent, falls into an admiration of it, and loses relation to the world” (all “Culture” 80-81). Emerson fiercely denounces egotism and always tried to differentiate it from self-reliance; the former keeps one from seeing things as defamiliarised and obscures the ‘eye-ball’ and the latter heightens one’s confidence. Emerson believed in freedom, but it consists in “a rejection of what is individual and selfish, for a personal self-determination is in harmony with God” (Cooke 352). This is Emerson’s idea when he dwells so strongly upon what is individual and rejects it as the soul’s greatest rival. When he recommends that we renounce all that is individual, he does not ask us to cease to exist, but he bids us have self-reliance.

When it comes to female representation in Emerson’s poetry, his view on women and femininity needs to be considered. Emerson does not extensively explore gender-related themes in his works. Still, it is noteworthy to analyse Emerson’s writings from a gender perspective in terms of the broader cultural context of America’s 19<sup>th</sup> century. An avid champion of the abolitionist cause and a supporter of women’s rights, Emerson consistently spoke out in favour of the oppressed and exploited. However, his position toward women and femininity, put on the scale of timeline, is not constantly the same and developed during his lifetime. Already at the beginning of the American suffrage movement in the 1850s, the development of his thoughts on women and their right to political equality was taking place, as he was then convinced of speaking out for its necessity. At the same time, his ideas of women’s role were evolving.

Emerson propounds that all souls, regardless of gender, ultimately belong to the Over-Soul. however, he believes that men and women have natural, essential qualities that suit them to

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different social roles. He contends that “the man loves hard wood, the woman loves pitch pine” (*The Heart* 109). This reflects a blend of his transcendentalist ideas and the prevailing gender norms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the one hand, men and women possess strengths that complete each other, and they can reach a harmonious union with the Over-Soul, on the other hand, men’s associating with hard jobs and women’s with gentle ones recall the dominant gender norms of his time. By 1855, Emerson’s ideas of women’s intrinsic capability and extrinsic capability had broadened enough to urge women’s “rights of all kinds” since they encompass “one-half of the world” and they had to be entitled “the right to education, to avenues of employment, to equal rights of property, to equal rights in marriage, to the exercise of the professions and of suffrage.” (all “Address” 374). More significant is Emerson’s developing awareness of women’s issues after the Civil War when many Americans became conscious of women’s rights movement. With the women’s movement gaining momentum in the late 1840s and into the 1850s, Emerson slowly changed his views and candidly championed women’s rights. He was drawn more into the cause when finding that many women themselves supported the women’s movement.

Emerson’s “Address at the Woman’s Rights Convention” was a lecture read before the Woman’s Rights Convention in Boston on September 20, 1855. Contrary to his initially traditional posture, Emerson emerges as a prominent advocate of women’s rights. Yet today, some of his views could be termed as ‘essentialist,’ implying an inborn difference between the male and female temperaments that held true across the bounds of cultural and historical conditioning. But, in Emerson’s time, such an essentialist view was normative. When he says, “Man is the will, and Woman the sentiment” (368), he reinstates the traditional essentialist view. He, however, immediately emphasizes that in this “ship of humanity, Will is the rudder, and Sentiment the sail” (ibid.). He goes beyond a solely essentialist view and does not merely subjugate women to men.

Aligned to his era, Emerson’s assumption of intrinsic emotional and physical discrepancies in men’s and women’s strength shows his developing awareness. Even Margaret Fuller, an American journalist, critic, and women’s rights advocate, states unequivocally in her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) that “woman is the weaker party” (13). As debatable as it may be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not many in the nineteenth century would have disagreed with Emerson’s remark that “sex is universal, and not local” and that “virility in the male qualifying every organ,

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act, and thought; and the feminine in woman” (“Swedenborg” 128). But Emerson’s dynamicity in aligning himself with his context and developing his awareness of societal issues, as mentioned above, appears in his later writings, which presciently indicate today’s hypothesis that social conditioning is influential in creating gender traits. His dynamic thinking about women is almost clear in his writings prior to 1855. Ellen Tucker, Emerson’s first wife, is portrayed as the model for his vision of womanhood as he muses in his journal: “I can never think of women without gratitude for the bright revelations of her best nature” (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 381). This can be read as Emerson’s nascent developing awareness of women’s rights that became more powerful in the later years.

Emerson comments on his developing understanding of women’s rights in a letter to Caroline Sturgis Tappan from 13 November 1868. His letter is a response to people’s developing awareness of women’s rights movement. He says that he previously believed that “women did not wish [to enter into public life], that those whose decision would be final, the thoughtful serene typical minds shrank from it” (*Letters*, vol. IX, 326-27). However, he continues that “I have been much surprised to find that my saints or some of them have a feeling of duty that however odious the new order may appear in some of its details they must bravely accept and realize it” (*ibid.*). It is today surprising to note the word ‘odious’ when referring to women’s right to vote and equality. But, many women and scholars, such as Emerson himself, still valued some qualities of women such as unselfishness, gentleness and caring. Their concern mainly arose from the fear that being socially engaged in work and politics would deprive women of these qualities. Although Emerson was an eloquent spokesman for intellectual freedom and self-determination, it took him quite a long time to come to terms with women’s rights. Nevertheless, he persistently took his female audience seriously although it could have become a hindrance to his public reputation.

Women were constantly charged against lack of virtuosity and flair. In response to this charge, Emerson says that women excel at life, and he admires in his journal this “putting of the life into [women’s] deed” (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. X, 345). This reveals his developing approach towards his earlier reflection of the stereotype that women were simply to inspire men. This should be noted that Margaret Fuller transmitted her ideas to Emerson through frequent conversations and correspondence, which influenced his developing awareness of

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woman's rights. A close study of Fuller's book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) reflects her influence on the core of Emerson's thinking about the women's issues. Emerson started his advocacy of women's rights from the start by underscoring the importance of the issue. In his journal in 1868, he states, "I wish the American Poet should let old times go & write on [...] Woman's Suffrage" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. XVI, 88). He advocates engagement with contemporary issues, in particular with recognising women's rights.

Along with Emerson's developing awareness of women's rights, he moved toward a more androgynous ideal. His most eloquent remark about the androgynous ideal is noted in his journals: "A highly endowed man with good intellect & good conscience is a Man-Woman" and he continues: "He asks in woman sometimes the Woman, sometimes the Man" (both *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 175). He then concludes, "always there is this Woman as well as this Man in the mind" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 230). Margaret Fuller has remarked on the significance of androgyny that acknowledge Emerson's approach to an androgynous mind. She associates wisdom with releasing soul and letting "us have one creative energy, one incessant revelation," because "man partakes of the feminine in the Apollo, woman of the masculine as Minerva" ("The Great Lawsuit" 44). He, however, avoids assigning women a separate, domestic sphere of influence.

Emerson's ideas about women's social status and capabilities are also reflected in his literary works. In his journals he observes the "feminine element" is always found in "men of genius" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. X, 394). It becomes more explicit when it comes to poetry writing. He argues that "when a man writes poetry, he appears to assume the high feminine part of his nature" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 356). However, as mentioned above, Emerson never rejected the inner trails of man and woman, and the feminine and masculine roles they may undertake. Yet, it is in "thought, in knowledge, in virtue" that there is "no sex" (both *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. III, 192). His ideas about feminine representation in poetry break free from the conventional attributes traditionally ascribed to women, which is explained in the comparison part of his poems.

Emerson, however, could never let go of the idealised feminine gentleness and see women fully integrated in a masculine society. He is not concerned about woman's rights to vote, hold property or even the full benefits of citizenship. Rather, he fears that a fully public role may de-

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feminise women. As Ralph Rusk comments in his edition of Emerson's *letters*, Emerson "hoped that women would not after all wish an equal share with men in public affairs," for "his imagination balked when he pictured women with masculine aggressiveness wrangling in public" (*The Letters*, vol. IV, 229-30). That Emerson feared masculine aggressiveness in women is related to his idealisation of them and the ideal he created in his imagination, and subsequently in his poems. Masculinity of women recoiled from his imagination. This aligns with his ideas of ideal womanhood, beauty of the feminine character and the androgynous ideal. He felt that the feminine qualities of sentiment and intuition are central and vulnerable, yet they provide the connecting link to the Over-soul.

Despite Emerson's developing awareness of women's rights and societal issues, he never shunned considering men to be reasoning and women to be unthinking and instinctive. "Man's conclusions are reached by toil. Woman arrives at the same by sympathy" (*The Topical Notebooks*, vol. III, 314). This is one aspect of Emerson's man-woman dichotomy, which is the contrast between reason and instinct. He associates women's intuition with thinking instinct. To him, a woman who exhibited masculine characteristics overstepped her role, but a man demonstrating "feminine traits is a higher form of man" (Warren 48). Therefore, Emerson praises Plato in his *Representative Men* for combining both feminine principle, symbolized by Asia, and the masculine principle, symbolized by Europe. Klinger's rationalisation of dualisms, explained in this dissertation's "Introduction," clarifies how dualisms cement an ideology that positions 'Europe' as superior to 'Asia' since it was a prevailing norm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to consider masculinity superior.

In major American fiction, there is lack of fully drawn female characters. Critics have commented on the limited or stereotypical role of women in American fiction. Joyce Warren argues, "Whether elevated to abstract symbols of idealized straits or reduced to images of sin, female characters in American novels have, for the most part, been uninteresting nonpersons." (2). There are exceptions in American literature, for example Hester Prynne, the protagonist of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). Yet, this lack of strong female characters has meant that "women readers cannot see a place for themselves in the literature of their own culture" (Warren 2). Consequently, the female reader must seek a role model by identifying with the male protagonist that would hearten her individuality. This contravenes the

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nation's main slogan, calling for the development of individual. Reflected in Emerson's writings, nineteenth-century individualism "encouraged an insular self-assertion that prevented the individual from recognizing the selfhood of others" (Warren 4). There was little room for women and blacks in American fiction.

There are, however, occasions when Emerson puts himself in a feminine position, which emerges more outstanding when articulating a kind of affective connection with God. He tends to cast the beloved as female, as in "God the Lord has bound / My days to a sweet-lipped girl; / I am her devoted slave / She only is my lord" (*The Topical Notebooks*, vol. II, 128). "Slave," here, is hyperbole that demonstrates the depth of love. The speaker shows a kind of romantic submission by empowering the female beloved. Emerson's lecture "Address at the Woman's Rights Convention" shows his views on the nature of woman. The lecture makes the case that "true womanhood, with its natural and peculiar powers of affection and divination, is not antithetical to representative manhood but, rather, its ideal" (Lang 137). Emerson, anyway, does not ultimately recognise an independent existence for women, but they assume a high status in his poetry. In many ways, the feminine element was a fundamental aspect of Emerson's Transcendentalist philosophy, and the principal stimulus in his career as a reformer.

Emerson was generally attracted to the feminine character, and this attraction rose steadily along with his involvement in recognising the justice of women's demand for their social rights and a more active role in shaping and defining their lives. However, there remains the conflict between beauty and justice in his works. This dialectic between beauty and truth also runs throughout Keats's works. According to Keats, what motivates the artist is an imaginative openness of mind and heightened receptivity to reality. His ideal poet, i.e. the chameleon poet, possesses passivity and receptivity, which are traditionally regarded as feminine qualities. Likewise, Emerson emphasizes the poet's receptivity being traditionally a feminine quality in his time. Yet, Emerson relies on "gendered connotations to establish the poet's reclaiming of masculinity" (Radford 12). This indicates Emerson's independence of his ideal poet from social norms rather than from traditionally feminine attributes.

Still, even after 1850, Emerson tried to keep the woman safe and intact at home because he feared that a public role might demean, or even obliterate, feminine virtues regarded highly in his time. On the one hand, he exalts women and, on the other hand, demands their submission, even

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after rising as a prominent advocate of women's rights in the 1850s. Though perceiving 'woman' as an ideal and complementary element to 'man', he does not seriously embark on femininity and female characters in his poetry. Contrary to his prose, which deals with the question of woman and her role in both society and imagination, his verse does not fully address on the question of woman and her representation.

### 2.4. Negatively Capable Identity vs. Annihilated Identity in the Selected Poems

Emerson had long been acquainted with Keats. In his journal entry from 30 November 1839, Emerson quotes six passages from Keats: two lines from "The Eve of St Agnes:" "And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue / Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor" (ll. 20-1); and some excerpts from "Hyperion:" "As when, upon a tranced summer-night ... As if the ebbing air had but one wave" (ll.72-8); "Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst ... Came like an inspiration; and he shouted" (ll.105-9); "One avenue was shaded from thine eyes" (line 186); "As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far / Than Chaos and blank Darkness" (ll.206-7). The footnote to the quotation from "The Eve of St Agnes" says that "Mr. Emerson loved to repeat these lines, as also the Saturn passage given in the text" (364). Emerson's references to Keats also appear in *Parnassus* (1875), his own edition of an anthology of poetry. His references to Keats fall into two clusters in this anthology, "the years around 1840 and the period 1868-1874" (Haworth 62). The above direct quotes from Emerson indicate his long-lasting familiarity with Keats.

An entry in the journal for 1868-70 demonstrates Emerson's view on the values Keats's poetry offers, as well as the principles by which he made selections of Keats's poetry in *Parnassus*:

A new poet dazzles us with his lustres, the sparkle of new rhetoric, with his gay vocabulary, shop-new, and it takes some time to see him truly. But I wish to say that I like only the important passages. Thus, I read in a newspaper Keats's line: "In the large utterance of the early gods." (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. XVI 107)

In the long list of extracts to be included in *Parnassus*, Emerson noted to himself: "Be sure to insert the good lines of Keats' Hyperion" (*JMN*, 16:270). His selection of Keats's poems add variety to his Keatsian favourites; three of the extracts are from "Hyperion," lines from "The Eve of St Agnes," and the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," and stanza seven of "Ode to a Nightingale" reveal his effort to include lines of Keats's poems. The passages from Keats that Emerson selected are "remarkably similar in style and content," as if, through careful

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selection, Emerson has created “his own Keats” (both Haworth 64). Emerson, however, finds more values in Keats’s poetry. Of crucial importance to Emerson, subjectivism and aspiration are two dominant trends of modern literature that Keats possesses:

Nothing certifies the prevalence of this taste [for the infinite] in the people more than the circulation of the poems – one would say most incongruously united by some bookseller – of Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. The only unity is in the subjectiveness and the aspiration common to the three writers. (*The complete works*, vol. XXI 319)

Aspiration and subjectivity are two hallmarks for Emerson when it comes to the distinction of poets. Apart from some excerpts from Keats’s letters published in *Western Messenger* (1836) by James Freeman Clarke, with whom Emerson had personal and professional relationships, he could not have been aware of the ideals expressed in Keats’s letters. *Western Messenger* was “a short-lived magazine he [Clarke] edited while at Louisville” (“James Freeman Clarke”). Thus, Emerson could not have known to what extent Keats shared a common demand with him for subjectivity and aspiration in literature or that “he and Keats recognized, and valued, the same attribute in Shakespeare, a lack of egotism” (Haworth 65). Here Haworth is referring to Keats’s negative capability, which generates an unprecedented demand for the absence of fixed identity and self.

Keats and Emerson both seek a higher level for the self, which is obviously feasible or probable through the annihilation of the fixed self. Keats proposes negative capability to serve this purpose, while Emerson seeks self-annihilation, which is closely tied to the concept of self-reliance, as a gateway to the universal spirit, what he calls the Over-Soul. By relinquishing societal expectations and conventional wisdom, one can annihilate the false self that society imposes. Emerson associates the idea of self-annihilation with the transcendence of the individual self to connect with the Over-soul, so it does not refer to literal self-destruction.

Keats and Emerson, however, do not approach subjectivity the same way as they conceive of it differently. For Emerson, subjectivity is more sophisticated than Keats’s outright condemnation of subjectivity. Emerson affirms that the term of subjectivity leads to “a pernicious ambiguity” (*The complete works*, vol. XXI 315), which is associated with the way subjectivity is approached. Subjectivity, in fact, leads one to egotism. Emerson continues his argument by reprimanding those he calls “the narrow-minded” because “what will help them to be delivered from some burden, eased in some circumstance, flattered, or pardoned [...] is sure of their interest, and

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nothing else (ibid.). These narrow-minded people are egotistical. They have “a vicious subjectiveness,” whereas “a man may say *I*, and never refer to himself as an individual; and a man may recite passages of his life with no feeling of egotism” (both 315). But Emerson sets the criterion to discriminate these two modes of subjectivity; these two modes in the poet’s mind are related to the tendency of his composition, “whether it leads us to nature, or to the person of the writer” (both *The complete works*, vol. XXI 315). Then he explains further the two modes of subjectivity: that the selfless people, namely “the great” are those who “always introduce us to facts” but the narrow-minded, namely “small men,” have no interest but to “introduce us always to themselves” (all 315). In a similar manner, Keats repudiates selfishness in his writings.

That Emerson starts the section “Contemplative – Moral – Religious” in *Parnassus* with lines 206-7 of “Hyperion” emphasises the significance of this passage for Emerson’s thought. Beauty, as the ultimate goodness of the universe, aligns with Emerson’s perception of nature in its largest scale: “Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All” (*Nature* 30). Yet, Keats’s approach to beauty is not as divine as that of Emerson who, after all, was a religious person. He continues that “beauty in nature is not ultimate” but “the herald of inward and eternal beauty” which “must stand as a part, and not as yet the last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature” (all *Nature* 30-1). Natural beauty per se is not an end but a reflection of the spiritual beauty. Nature cannot be the destination in one’s quest for meaning although it is undeniably beautiful, but it is the “inward beauty,” i.e. our quest for love and connection with the Over-soul, which is greater than ourselves. For both Keats and Emerson beauty symbolises beneficence of the eternal law of universe, yet Emerson may have felt that Keats did not go far enough in stating the higher relationship between beauty and the universe.

To begin the comparative analysis of the selected poems of Emerson and Keats, it is useful to review the key concepts of negative capability in Keats’s writings and self-annihilation in Emerson’s writings, as well as the concepts associated with them. Tracing the poetic presence of Keats in the writings of Emerson pinpoints important touchstones of how Emerson engaged with interactions between the self and world. These interactions revolve around questions of “process and final end state, of existence and non-existence, of the transcendental and the material, of subjectivity as a continual flux of becoming or subjectivity as a revelatory state of being” (Sandy

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29). Keats's emphasis on the fluidity of the self is a defining element in his negative capability, as it encourages an agile and dynamic identity. Like Keats, Emerson identifies in the outward signs of nature "an analogy for human creativity and the workings of the human mind" (Sandy 30). The two poets both insist on a self that is perpetually realised in a vital process of becoming. Before analysing the poems chosen for this chapter, this uncovering of the key concepts and their parallels prepares the ground for a comparative analysis. Keats's concepts of negative capability, and the chameleon poet, Keats's ideal, are comparably analysed with Emerson's concepts of self-annihilation and Over-Soul, along with other pertinent implications drawn from these concepts.

In a core passage from *Nature*, one can detect connotations suggesting elements of Keats's negative capability, when Emerson insists on becoming a transparent eye-ball – a view of life that is absorbent rather than reflective:

Standing on the bare ground, – my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing; I see all; the currents of Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (13)

Here Emerson is attuned to Keats's idea of the chameleon poet, who is a transparent receptacle of all experiences. Similar to Emerson's selfless poet, this poet "has no Identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body" (*Selected Letters* 195). Emerson's *Nature* reveals his mindfulness of Keats's account of the 'poetical character' as "negatively capable and self-annihilating" (Sandy 22). Likewise, Emerson stresses a mystical mode of selflessness as long as all mean egotism vanishes, which evokes Keats's negatively capable poet. Emerson's essay "Spiritual Laws" (1883) proposes that if a man precisely observes his own daily activities, then he could discern the presence of a higher power will that regulates events. This characterises people of discernment who "in their honest moments, have always sung 'Not unto us, not unto us'" (128). They attribute their success to a higher power. In other words, they believe that "that which externally seemed will and immovableness was willingness and *self-annihilation* [emphasis added]" (128). Emerson strongly argues that great people in history could ultimately conclude that their own determination and will power have been of no or little effect, but it was the will of the higher power and their willingness and readiness in embracing His will. Emerson's formulation echoes Keats's empathetic ability "to enter, unobtrusively, into other

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states of being and feel those inner psychic and physical spaces beyond ourselves” (Sandy 22). The key idea in both poets’ formulations of ideal poet rests on the phrase ‘beyond ourselves’, which leads up to unity with nature, in Keats’s writings, and the Over-soul, in Emerson’s words.

The term Over-Soul denotes a supreme underlying unity, which transcends duality or plurality. In the essay “The Over-Soul,” Emerson expands his mystical and abstract idea. The Over-Soul is the collective indivisible soul, of which all individual souls or identities are included, and it is “that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other” (“The Over-Soul” 252). The Over-Soul, according to Emerson, is a level of existence, or a vital force in the universe in which all souls participate and all individual souls meet regardless of any rank or fashion.

Emerson’s metaphor of the transparent eye-ball is equally remarkable, especially given the correspondence between Emerson’s perception of union with the Over-soul, on the one hand, and Keats’s understanding of unity with nature and his insistence on dynamic identities and identification with other identities, on the other. Emerson’s remark that “I become a transparent eye-ball” describes an elevation into infinite space and an ecstatic self-transcending union with the divine. He affirms that becoming a transparent eye-ball and subsequently transcending the enclosed self is “a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet” (*Nature* 11). Losing his/her own private identity and becomes nothing, the poet can see all. This transaction endows him/her with spiritual liquidity. Emerson’s ideal poet, like Keats’s negatively capable poet, has a dynamic identity and resists any stable identity. Even Emerson’s central idea of self-reliance opposes what Keats pejoratively terms “consequitive reasoning” (*Selected Letters* 54). They both reject absolute rationalization of thought and instead celebrate revelation achieved through uncertainties and mysteries.

Emerson does not extensively explore gender-related themes in his works in the same explicit manner as some other writers or feminist thinkers. Still, it is noteworthy to analyse Emerson’s writings from a gender perspective in terms of the broader cultural context of America’s 19<sup>th</sup> century. An avid champion of the abolitionist cause and a supporter of women’s rights, Emerson consistently spoke out in favour of the oppressed and exploited. However, his position toward women and femininity, put on the scale of timeline, is not constantly the same and developed during his lifetime. Already at the beginning of the American suffrage movement in the 1850s,

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Emerson developed thoughts on women and their right to political equality, as he was convinced of its necessity. At the same time, his ideas of women's role in society were evolving. Emerson had come far since the 1830s, when he attempted to comprehend gender differences by means of distinctions as "the man loves hard wood, the woman loves pitch pine" (*The Heart* 109); and since the 1840s, when he quoted "stereotypes of the nineteenth-century ideal of the passionless woman" (Gilbert 234). By 1855, Emerson's ideas of women's intrinsic capability and extrinsic capability broadened enough to urge women's "rights of all kinds" since they encompass "one-half of the world" and they had to be entitled "the right to education, to avenues of employment, to equal rights of property, to equal rights in marriage, to the exercise of the professions and of suffrage" (all "Address" 374). Yet, as debatable as it may be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not many in the nineteenth century would have disagreed with Emerson's remark that "sex is universal, and not local" and that "virility in the male qualifying every organ, act, and thought; and the feminine in woman" ("Swedenborg" 128). But Emerson's dynamicity in aligning himself with his context and developing his awareness of societal issues appears in his later writings, which presciently indicate today's hypothesis that social conditioning is influential in creating gender traits.

Along with Emerson's developing awareness of women's rights, he moved toward a more androgynous ideal. His most eloquent remark about the androgynous ideal is noted in his journals: "A highly endowed man with good intellect & good conscience is a Man-Woman" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 175). Here he does not exclusively refer to the poet, but to human beings in general. He asks in "woman sometimes the Woman, sometimes the Man" (ibid.). He then concludes, "Always there is this Woman as well as this Man in the mind" (ibid. 230). Emerson's ideas about androgyny becomes more outspoken in the context of poetry writing. He argues that "when a man writes poetry, he appears to assume the high feminine part of his nature" (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. VIII, 356). This suggests that poetry allows male poets to express the feminine part of themselves often repressed by norms and expectations of masculine society. His ideas about feminine representation in poetry break free from the conventional attributes traditionally ascribed to women. Therefore, the poet can experience a full range of emotions, regardless of their masculine or feminine associations and implications.

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Emerson felt that the feminine qualities of sentiment and intuition were central while providing the link to the Over-Soul. Despite Emerson's developing awareness of woman's rights and societal issues, he never avoided considering men to be reasoning and women to be unthinking and instinctive. "Man's conclusions are reached by toil. Woman arrives at the same by sympathy" (*The Topical Notebooks*, vol. III, 314). From Emerson, men arrive at conclusions through hard effort and women through intuition and sympathy. This stereotype – that women are inherently more intuitive and men more logical – is one aspect of Emerson's man-woman dichotomy, which is the contrast between reason and instinct.

There are occasions that Emerson articulates a kind of affective connection with God. He sometimes tends to cast the beloved as female, as in "God the Lord has bound / My days to a sweet-lipped girl; / I am her devoted slave / She only is my lord" (*The Topical Notebooks*, vol. II, 128). "Slave" is hyperbole that demonstrates the depth of love. The speaker shows a kind of romantic submission by empowering the female beloved. In many ways, the feminine element was a fundamental aspect of Emerson's Transcendentalist philosophy, and the principal stimulus in his career as a reformer. He was generally attracted to women, and this attraction rose steadily along with his involvement in recognising the justice of women's demand for their social rights and a more active role in shaping and defining their lives. However, there remains the conflict between beauty and justice in his works. This dialectic between beauty and truth also runs throughout Keats's works. Emerson admired Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" since it addresses this Romantic dialectic of the proper relationship of beauty and truth.

Keats's ideal, chameleon poet, possesses passivity and receptivity, which are traditionally regarded as feminine qualities. Emerson correspondingly emphasises on the poet's receptivity although it was equally a traditionally feminine quality in his time. Yet, Emerson relies on "gendered connotations to establish the poet's reclaiming of masculinity" (Radford 12). This indicates Emerson's independence of his ideal poet from social norms rather than from traditionally feminine attributes. Emerson, though perceiving 'woman' as a complementary element of 'man', does not seriously embark on femininity and female characters in his poetry. Contrary to his prose, which deals with the question of woman and her role in both society and imagination, his verse does not fully address the question of woman and her representation.

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Apart from the mentioned familiarity that Emerson had with Keats's writings, there is no record of direct contact or correspondence between the two poets, yet what makes drawing parallels between them feasible is their similar mentalities; both resist the strict traditions and religious rules of the time, and encourage individuals to discover their own truth, while attempting to exclude selfishness and fixed identity in poetry composition. Nonetheless, Sandy argues that, despite differences between the Romantic Keats and the Transcendentalist Emerson, "the poetic practices and theories of Emerson [...] are indebted to Keats's Spring Odes and their distinctive self-conscious artistry which, as does so much of American Romanticism in their wake, ponder the status of poetry and the role of the poet" (Radford 31). It is inferred from Emerson's writings that Emerson, either knowingly or unknowingly, revisited and revised aspects of Keats's poetics. For example, he reworked the dictum "Beauty is truth, truth Beauty" ("Ode on a Grecian Urn" line 49) into "Beauty is its own excuse for being" ("The Rhodora" line 13). Similarly for Emerson, the presence of rhodora's beauty is its own justification without any metaphysical underpinnings, as the speaker implies that nature is itself divine since whichever "self-same power" brought the speaker to the woods also placed the rhodora in its path (line 16). The speaker implies that man and nature are kindred spirits in the sense that they are both God's creations. No logical justification, the speaker suggests, is needed for the existence of the flower.

### "Ode on Indolence"

"Ode on Indolence" is one of five odes composed by John Keats in the spring of 1819. The poem follows the poet's contemplation of a morning spent in idleness and laziness. Historically speaking, by the time of composing the spring odes, Keats had left his poorly paid position as a surgeon at Guy's Hospital, Southwark, to devote himself to poetry. It is most probably reflected in his inner conflict over keeping or banishing poesy. The ode is unique in not depicting, personifying, or describing any titular character. It has ten-line stanzas with a rhyme scheme that begins with a Shakespearian quatrain (ABAB) and ends with a Miltonic sestet (CDECDE). The ode relies on a first-person speaker, who is in a state of poignancy and immobility and begins with his daydreaming about three figures he noticed on an urn. The poem centres on human nature that longs to possess a variety of things while he is immensely enjoying indolence. The poem opens with the appearance of three figures, which are initially mysterious:

They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,

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When shifted round to see the other side;  
They came again; as when the urn once more  
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return; (ll.5-8)

In his indolence, the speaker hardly even sees these three figures. The cause of such temporary blindness is “the indolence that is dramatized only by its effects” (Spiegelman 93). Until stanza 3, the speaker’s ability to see the figures is reflected by an unwillingness to name them consistently after identifying the figures. This suspension happens as a result of indulging in the pleasure of indolence. Eventually the figures turn toward him, and it is revealed that “The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name; / The second was Ambition, pale of cheek” and the last one is “my demon Poesy.” (ll.25-6, 30). The three figures – namely love, ambition, and poesy – constitute the main characters of the ode. However, the speaker fears that they are out of reach, so he tries to reject them. He dismisses love by questioning what it actually means: “What is Love? and where is it?” (line 32). It requires more effort to reject ambition, but he finally does rebuff it: “And for that poor Ambition! it springs / From a man’s little heart’s short fever-fit;” (ll.33-4). When it comes to poesy, unlike the personas of love and ambition, he cannot easily convince himself to banish poesy.

The ode’s speaker ultimately realises that he cannot have love, neither fulfil his ambition, nor is he able to spend his life with poesy. Andrew Motion maintains that the figures induce the speaker to regard indolence as “the privilege of the leisured class to which he did not belong” (404). The speaker seems uncertain about whether he is entitled to indolence or that is itself out of reach, yet he does not reach after certainty. In the first place, the speaker does not strive to figure out what the mysterious figures are until after the second stanza. The key phrases that infer the speaker’s reluctance to make any serious attempt to decipher the three figures include “idle days, the drowsy hour, the blissful cloud of summer-indolence” in the second stanza, as well as the initial stanza, which vividly describes a lethargic speaker, without bothering himself to find out what the figures are. They simply “pass’d, like figures on a marble urn, / When shifted round to see the other side” (ll.5-6). Finally, the speaker accepts life as it is. He leaves his views unreconciled without pursuing any ‘consecutive reasoning’ or philosophical certainty. At his point, the speaker remains uncertain and prefers to let go of any dogma, which evokes the concept of negative capability.

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The speaker does not adhere to a single perspective or meaning, but identifies with the experience of his object, and turns himself into a mouthpiece of this experience. The speaker endorses an aesthetics of uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. This is illustrated in these lines:

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise  
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;  
For I would not be dieted with praise,  
A pet-lamb in a sentimental Farce! (lines 51-4)

In these lines, the speaker discards the three ghosts – that is Love, Ambition, and Poetry as the main characters – and prefers the tranquillity of “cool-bedded” head in the grass to any pursuit of reaching after fact and reason. This complies with the disinterestedness and identity-annihilation emphasised all through Keats’s correspondence. The speaker has metamorphic identities, which supply him with persistently sympathetic identification with the mysterious figures. At the same, he meets the figures in a dynamic way. Encountering as a negatively capable speaker, he grasps no rigid and conventional dogma and ultimately banishes the three figures, which are conventionally celebrated: “So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise / My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass” (ll.51-2). He even sarcastically addresses the figures as “ye three Ghosts.” He breaks free from any static system of thought and philosophy that traditionally holds love, ambition, and poesy in respect.

The speaker’s manner towards the figures changes dynamically throughout the ode. By the end of the ode, the speaker even taunts the figures that were initially recalled with respect – Love “a fair Maid,” Ambition “watchful with fatiguèd eye,” and poesy “The last, whom I love more” – but they altogether become “Phantoms” in his eyes (line 59). The whole ode is filled with doubt and uncertainty, yet the poem ends with a promising message that the speaker is ultimately free of any desire for Ambition, Love, and Poesy. Ironically, the three figures have no “visions” to offer him, and he has “visions for the night, / And for the day faint visions there is store” (ll. 57-8). The final message is contained in the “visions” the speaker must develop for the day and night. Endowed with negative capability, he does not fanatically stick to any enclosed system of thought, but constantly evolves towards new visions.

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The ode establishes the basis of Keats's notion of soul-making. As explained previously, soul-making is a concept that Keats proposes in a letter on April 21, 1819, to his brother, George. It is a dynamic process, which takes place over a span of years and requires two components: the human heart and the world of pain and suffering, where "the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways" (290). Keats pays considerable attention to the human heart since it plays a significant role in the poetic creativity. It is a method by which the individual constructs his soul – or Intelligence in Keats's words – through suffering and personal experience. A month earlier, on 19 March 1819, in a letter to George and Georgiana, Keats describes his emotional state of indolence:

I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless ... from my having slumbered till nearly eleven [...] In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me; they seem rather like three figures on a Greek vase – a Man and two women – whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. (*Selected Letters* 269-70)

This passage approves of a receptive languor that Keats identifies as ambivalently gendered or effeminate. It is pleasing, according to Keats, to be deficient in conventional codes of masculinity associated with maturation. I previously explained that, in the letter to Reynolds on February 19, 1818, Keats compares the gaining of knowledge to the weaving of a spider's web. Beginning with justification of a "delicious diligent Indolence" (92), Keats positions himself in the sphere of feminine passivity and prefers it to the masculine endeavour and appetite for gathering knowledge. This passivity forms one of the major characteristics of negative capability, which leads the speaker to deeper understanding. "The state of feminized languor," Willard Spiegelman argues, "leads to a contemplation of the circumstances that mass around one like clouds" (99). This resonates with his concept of negative capability that praises remaining undecided and passive, over irritable reaching after fact and reason. Keats's oeuvre chiefly renders passivity and receptivity as feminine qualities and at the same time as major characteristics of ideal poets.

The idea of indolence and the virtues of leisure occupy a considerable part of Keats's poems and letters. Willard Spiegelman considers his oeuvre "as a series of ongoing experiments in depicting indolence" (85). The rigid dichotomy between labour and indolence concerned Keats for various

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reasons, most obviously for his inevitable worries about the decline of his poetic ambition in the face of his health. Such obsessions with indolence and laziness develop in his letters almost from start to finish. At best, Keats views the state as “the organic incubation period necessary for giving birth to solid work” (Spiegelman 99). This is the state that gives the required time for a creative idea to develop and become fully mature. During this “incubation period,” the idea is processed and refined in indolence, wherein no conscious effort is necessary but lazy time that allows for new insights. This is clear in his remark in his letter to his brother and sister-in-law:

A little change has taken place in my intellect lately. I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed, I, who for so long a time have been addicted to passiveness. Nothing is finer for the purposes of great productions than a very gradual ripening of the intellectual power. (80)

Keats firmly insists that a period of passivity was prerequisite before he creates a great work. Indolence acts like a stimulant, which provides the poetic material in the mind, similar to what Wordsworth famously writes in the preface to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, that poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (251), taking its origin from “emotion recollected in tranquillity.” Keats’s approach to the idea of indolence in such a wide range of writings endows the meaning of indolence with more than just laziness, idleness, or comparable meanings. According to this letter, indolence also includes quietude, serenity, and tranquillity, after which poetry is created on the peak of its ripeness. Therefore, indolence evokes a sense of tranquillity. This is the tranquillity of indolence permeating the entirety of “Ode on Indolence.”

There is a remarkable passage in Emerson’s essay “Experience,” which is comparable with the meaning of indolence deciphered from Keats’s letters and his “Ode on Indolence.” Emerson, too, calls upon indolence as a source of energy for creativity and accomplishment:

If any of us knew what we were doing, or where we are going, then when we think we best know! We do not know today whether we are busy or idle. In times when we thought ourselves indolent, we have afterwards discovered, that much was accomplished, and much was begun in us. (50)

Emerson reserves accomplishment for the time after a period of indolence. In other words, he echoes Keats’s affirmation about the prerequisite of passivity and indolence for the work of imagination and the creation of artistic works. True imagination, according to Emerson, originates from a period of passivity. Only in such “suspension of active power” (Ladyga 103)

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does the vigour of imagination reveal itself. Freedom and liberation are, according to Emerson, products of passive harmony with the world. His approach to passivity does not fundamentally differ from the determining significance of passivity in Keats's poetic ideas. They both mark as significant the propelling effects of mental passivity and indolence for a particular period. Emerson's "suspension of active power" resonates with Keats's negative capability, which promotes intellectual uncertainty, passivity, and receptivity to culminate the poet's creative power by holding the mind in a state of expectation. One way to achieve such indolence through "wine, mead, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium, the fumes of sandalwood and tobacco," but Emerson's seeming admiration for such substances modulates to a warning, as he calls them "quasi-mechanical substitutes for the true nectar" that lead to "dissipation and deterioration" and eventually bring upon artists "animal intoxication" ("The Poet" 32). He approaches the effects of intoxicating substances very cautiously and differentiates between literal and metaphorical usage of wine and inebriation.

The concern with intoxication ties in with Emerson's writings, particularly in his "Bacchus." This poem draws upon the stylistic device of paradox to make a distinction between the two wines at the very beginning: "Bring me wine, but wine which never grew / In the belly of the grape" (ll. 1-2). That the speaker paradoxically asks for a wine, which is not ordinary wine coming from a physical source like grapes, refers to the transcendental nature of the wine that inspires and originates from a spiritual source. Here wine stands for something more profound that transcends intoxication caused by earthly grape but a kind of mystical intoxication that is transformative. The wine that he desires "feels the acrid juice / Of Styx and Erebus" (ll. 8-9), and "whose ample leaves and tendrils curled/Among the silver hills of heaven" (ll.15-16). Upon first drinking this wine, not grounded in the physical world, the speaker leaves the earth where the grapes physically grow, down into the Underworld where Styx and Erebus are the sources of the wine, and ultimately up into heaven where the leaves are. This suggests the power of wine, of which a small amount suffices to intoxicate and connect the speaker to the spiritual world. This wine, though tasting bitter and unsavoury, offers the speaker a deeper understanding of realities of life, which likewise are often unpleasant and bitter.

"Bacchus" exemplifies Emerson's adaptation of the images of wine and intoxication in a more metaphorical manner. The wine that Bacchus brings insinuates the non-physical excitement for

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which the speaker longs. This kind of intoxication engenders indolence and joviality; it is the wine which “turns the woe of night, / By its own craft, to a more rich delight” (ll. 19-11). The transformative power of the wine changes every sorrow into joy. Yet, the poem presents signs of strong physicality that suits the festive, merry god of wine:

Pour, Bacchus, the remembering wine;  
Retrieve the loss of me and mine;  
Vine for vine be antidote,  
And the grape requite the lot. (ll.51-4)

Obviously, “animal intoxication” is inevitable in this poem, even if the speaker seemingly tries to stick to the spiritualising of Bacchus. The wine acts like a liberating element that relieves the speaker from the world’s pain and suffering and brings forth a state of poignancy and immobility. By comparison, indolence – as in Keats’s “Ode on Indolence” – indolence plays a major role in evoking feelings and ideas for the speaker. Both indolence and intoxication have the capacity to provide both poems’ speakers with a brief respite, at least for a short while. Lapsing back into indolence, Keats’s ode’s speaker feels passivity overwhelming him, allowing metamorphic identities and sympathetic identification with the mysterious figures. Intoxication likewise enables the speaker of Emerson’s “Bacchus” to transcend the current earth-bound identity, “hear far Chaos talk,” and walk with “kings unborn” (ll.39-40). Emerson’s speaker undergoes, in Keats’s words, the process of soul-making, which illustrates how this world can school an intelligence to become a soul with an identity. In this process, the poem’s speaker realises that “music and wine are one” (line 37). The fusion of wine and music enables the speaker to “unlock / Every crypt of every rock” (ll. 43-4), since he is no longer shackled to ordinary and conventional reasoning, but he assimilates both the seen, namely wine, and the unseen, being music. This is feasible when one promotes a dynamic self, unshackled from consecutive reasoning and not abiding by conventional fact and reason. Ordinary wine from “the belly of the grape” does not give rise to this spiritualized intoxication, but “wine of wine” that indulgently intoxicates the speaker in a way that “by the draught assimilated,” he “may float at pleasure through all natures, / The bird-language rightly spell, / And that which roses say so well” (all ll. 22-5). On the surface, the speaker indulges himself, enjoying a floating feeling of pleasure. On the deeper level, the speaker is experiencing the intoxicating feeling of poetic

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inspiration, especially poetic inspiration. Such an intoxicated poet is not bound to this transitory world and takes on – in Keats’s words – a negatively capable identity.

Like a selfless mystic, the intoxicated speaker of “Bacchus” can decode the language of natural objects and phenomena. The poem draws a parallel between intoxication and poetic inspiration, under the influence of which the speaker uses the bird-language to communicate and give all of nature a voice through the language of poetry, which is endowed on him by the spiritualised wine. This wine relieves him of grief, retrieves “the loss of men and mine,” and cures “the old despair” (both ll. 52-5). The speaker’s creative power reaches its culmination through spiritual intoxication.

By comparison, the indolent mind of Keats’s speaker of “Ode on Indolence” reaches the culmination of its creativity through the virtues of lethargy, out of which grow quietude, serenity, and tranquillity. The ode presents the themes of imagination, illusion, and anguish of mortality through its sensuous language, along with the speaker’s oscillation between temptation and rejection in the face of the passing figures, which indicates the speaker’s lack of motivation to explore profoundly the impact of love, ambition, and poesy in real life. In other words, indolence is preferable to the more excitable states of love, ambition, and poesy. Therefore, he will not confront the inevitable agonies of human life, and the “short fever-fit” (line 34) of life no longer seems so agonizing. The speaker longs for “an age so shelter’d from annoy” and cares no more “how change the moons” (ll.38-9). These figures inadvertently require him to feel his life acutely so there is “not a joy” (line 35) so sweet as the nothingness of indolence.

Providing a point of comparison, Emerson’s untitled poem at the beginning of his essay “Illusions,” which was published in his *The Conduct of Life* (1860), depicts an illusory image of the world. Comparable to the “Ode on Indolence’s” transient appearance of the three figures, which never remain permanent with the speaker, the motto poem of Emerson’s essay portrays the “waves” as “accursed, adored,” being “of mutation” (ll. 1-3). It fosters the belief in the illusory nature of the tangible world and human being’s sense-fettered separation from pure joy, the same as the idea promoted in the ode. Man must perforce settle for less lofty aspirations in this world.

Emerson’s motto poem also brings up the issue of feminine illusion that acts as a beguiling complication in everyone’s life and sets out to allure men and women. In “Illusions,” Emerson

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asserts that “I find men victims of illusion in all parts of life” (190). However, he intends to perpetuate the idea of the feminised illusion not being purely seductive and deceitful but rather a lesson to be learned: “Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle. There are as many pillows of illusion as flakes in a snow-storm. We wake from one dream into another dream” (191). Hence, the solely seductive figuration of a tempting female is deconstructed in the essay itself, as well as in its opening poem.

Emerson’s other poem comparable with Keats’s “Ode on Indolence” is “Maia,” which features the conventional feminine seductiveness, raising the issue of femininity common in both poems. Maia presents a two-fold picture of illusion. On the one hand, illusion is portrayed as a woman who “works impenetrable / Weaving webs innumerable” (ll. 1-2) – not easy to comprehend – and, like a weaver, producing webs that deceive and entice. The webs stand for the diverging perceptions that illusion creates. On the other hand, illusion is not merely a temptress but also a charmer. The illusion is a “Charmer who will be believed / By man who thirsts to be deceived” (ll. 5-6). It is obvious that man knowingly opts to let himself fall into her deception. The illusion adjusts herself to the beholder to entice him:

Illusions like the tints of pearl,  
Or changing colours of the sky,  
Or ribbons of a dancing girl  
That mend her beauty to the eye. (ll.7-10)

Either changing colours or turning into flowing ribbons, the illusion alters herself to serve her own purpose. By comparison, as the visions rejected by the “Ode on Indolence” are illusory, they are portrayed in a similar two-fold manner: they are simultaneously embraced and rejected. Seen in that light, the figures appear as pleasant illusions while being out of reach. The speaker addresses them directly and wonders how he did not recognise them in the first place and how they managed to sneak up on him. He suspects they are trying to “steal away, and leave without a task” his “idle days” (ll. 14-15). Just as illusions may disturb one’s mind, the figures disturbed his enjoyment of the lazy summer day. Keats’s speaker wonders why the figures did not disappear and leave him to this indolent numbness while, by contrast, the speaker of Emerson’s

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poem does not merely insist on the seductive nature of illusion but also on her enthralling capability, for which man intentionally falls.

As before mentioned above, Emerson passed on to American philosophy concepts gleaned from Hinduism, one of which was the oriental view of the material world as *maya* or illusion. Maya has multiple meanings in Indian philosophy, with prominent employment in Hinduism. The term maya mostly refers to “the magic or power of the divinity.” The term developed a specialized meaning of “illusion,” especially “the illusory nature of the world of phenomena” (all Jones 282). In fact, Emerson incorporated the concept of *maya* into his essays, lectures, and poems, in such prose works as “Nature,” “History,” “The Over-Soul,” “Experience,” “Plato,” “Fate,” “Illusions,” and “Works and Days,” and in poems such as “Hamatreya,” “Brahma,” and “Maia.”

Spelled as *maia*, the term also refers to one of the Pleiades and the mother of Hermes in ancient Greek mythology. The fusion of the Hindu sense of the word with the Greek reference brings forth the simultaneous attribution of *maia* to the gendered image of illusion, both in the sense of deception and charm. She is so potent that “her gay pictures never fail” (“Maia” line 3). The imagery is Indian, yet more popular than religious in style. A possible source for this imagery is found in Henry Thomas Colebrooke’s *Miscellaneous Essays* (1837), from which Emerson copied this passage in his *Journals*:

Nature is likened to a female dancer exhibiting herself to soul as to an audience (and is reproached with shamelessness for repeatedly exposing herself to the rude gaze of the spectator.) She desists however when she has sufficiently shown herself. She does so because she has been seen. He desists because he has not seen her. There is no further use for the world: yet the connexion of soul and nature still subsists. (*The Journals* 292)

The feminization of nature in Colebrooke’s essay and that of illusion in Emerson’s poem shows a marked appropriation of oriental imagery. Colebrooke feminizes nature by giving a strong picture of nature, free to exhibit herself as far as she pleases and the soul is masculine, for whom the nature dances and exposes herself to his “rude gaze.” However, there is the connection of the female nature with the male soul. Likewise in the poem, man is the spectator who has a penchant for being intentionally deceived. In any case, nature functions as an illusory dancer attempting to tempt man.

### “Ode on Melancholy”

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The narrative of Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" describes the perception of an emotion through a lyric discourse between the speaker and the reader, along with the introduction to ancient Grecian characters and ideals. Unlike the speaker of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode to a Nightingale," and "Ode to Psyche," the speaker of "Ode on Melancholy" speaks directly to the reader about a feeling rather than addressing an object or a personified emotion. Its first stanza admonishes against false melancholy, which is pursued for the sake of the supposed oblivion. "For Keats," Harold Bloom argues, "true melancholy involves a sudden increase in consciousness, not a gradual evasion of its claims" (403). The ode's speaker warns the readers against seeking solace in things that allegedly drive them into oblivion. The speaker addresses the reader directly; even if you are sad, "go not to Lethe, neither twist / Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine" (ll.1-2). Lethe, the personification of oblivion, and wolf's-bane plants do not truly dull the brain. The first stanza warns against different ways, including self-poisoning and drinking from the ancient river of Lethe, that people may respond to melancholy.

The idle pursuit of melancholy is yet inviting as the last two lines of the first stanza appear so: "For shade to shade will come too drowsily, / And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul" (ll. 9-10). Initially the reader is advised to keep distance from anything that supposedly causes oblivion from pain since it is false, yet by the end of the same stanza the same prohibited things will just numb the reader to pain. This uncertainty posits the concept of negative capability, which is subtly developed in the ode. The negativity of the first line and the contradiction that appears in the ease of the tone that follows the next lines both suggest lack of certainty about the efficiency of the melancholy evoked by activities in the first stanza.

In the second stanza, there is a turn of approach towards melancholy, and it becomes more inviting. The prerequisite, however, is its occurrence without one's having provoked it; "when the melancholy fit shall fall / Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud" (ll. 11-12). The vivid metaphor that compares the emotion of melancholy to "a weeping cloud" captures its overwhelming nature, hitting suddenly and dramatically. The impact of melancholy continues in imagery created in the next lines: "That fosters the droop-headed flowers all, / And hides the green hill in an April shroud" (ll. 13-14). The pervasive and depressing nature of melancholy shrouds "the droop-headed flowers" – comparing the flowers to doleful and dejected people – and the green hill, which is covered in "an April shroud," which is a metaphor for melancholy.

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At this moment, one need not restrain in feeding melancholy further, so “glut thy sorrow on a morning rose” (line 15). The ode’s speaker personifies melancholy as a being that can be glutted. In fact, the resolution against the fit of melancholy boils down to embracing melancholy by seeking out beauty in the natural world. The morning rose – referring to a fresh flower blooming in the early morning – rainbow, and globed peonies have one essential trait in common, i.e. their impermanence and fleeting existence. As such, the speaker asserts that melancholy should be embraced by bearing witness to the most melancholic fact of all: that natural phenomena are by their very nature short-lived.

In contrast to the artificially evoked melancholy of the first stanza, that of the second stanza is genuine because it is not called for, but it is sudden, sent from heaven like “a weeping cloud” (line 12) in April to cover the hills with green. It is yet shocking because this heavenly blessing is associated with the fall of melancholy. Spring’s green is called “an April shroud” (line 14), evoking a white colour, and this comes as a shock to the reader because the heavenly blessing, for all its beauty, obscures the colour of fresh life. The reader’s sorrow, nevertheless, can be overwhelmed “on the loveliness of such supposedly non-sorrowful emblems as a morning rose, a shore rainbow, or globed peonies” (Bloom 405). The speaker literally prescribes unusual advice to the melancholic, which is overindulging in nature, as if the reader’s melancholy were dissolved by meditating on the specific parts of nature: the wave, a rose, or peonies.

The fluidity and dynamicity toward melancholy, without any irritable reaching after reason, establish the subtle use of negative capability in these lines. The speaker shows intellectual uncertainty about the nature of melancholy while simultaneously leaving the reader equally in an uncertain state. The speaker’s approach to melancholy is still complex. To complete this complexity, the speaker offers one’s mistress’s “rich anger” (line 18) as food for melancholy. The force of the second stanza is mitigated until the first line of the last stanza: “She dwells with Beauty-Beauty that must die” (line 21). The line has an expository force and relies on ‘must die’. The mistress’s anger is significant in its richness because “it offers a possibility of feeding deeply upon an animated beauty that is doomed to lose all motion, all force” (Bloom 405). The speaker insists that the natural is beautiful and ephemeral. Inherent to beauty is a sense of pointed sadness given the fact that beauty will one day be gone.

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The last stanza has an exact diction. It delves deeper into the complex relationship between joy, beauty, and melancholy by showing the harmony of “continued apprehension of its unresolved contraries” (Bloom 405). Beauty must die since it is a natural phenomenon; Joy cannot survive without simultaneously “bidding adieu” (line 23); pleasure endures only by “turning to poison” (24). The contrary persists because “in the very temple of Delight / Veil’d Melancholy has her sovran shrine” (ll. 25-6), and it affirms that melancholy is contained within all of life’s good things. This is the disillusionment of ordinary experience, yet only those who have “strenuous tongue” can “burst Joy’s grape against” their palate and fully embrace joy and beauty to see the multi-layered melancholy (ll. 27-8). These people will “taste the sadness of her might” and their soul will be kept as “her cloudy trophies” (ll. 29-30). Such people are accordingly negatively capable to comprehend the fact that without melancholy, beauty would not exist.

It is worth mentioning that melancholy has been tied to the Romantic literary tradition and its preoccupation with intensely emotional experiences. The poetic forms that best accommodate these experiences include odes, elegies, and laments, which prominently epitomise the English Romantic canon, and represent the nineteenth century as a time “steeped in melancholy” (Bowring 38). Romanticism is also marked as an age of melancholy, yet not many women poets fully expressed their experiences of melancholy. “The masculine gendering of melancholy and its connection to poetic genius and transcendence,” Dana Mitchell argues, “ultimately reduces the ability of women writers to achieve an eternal reputation in the canon of Romantic literature” (3). In the eighteenth century, medical writers struggled to provide a definition for melancholia to counteract British culture’s rising disquiet with emotional extremes attributed to melancholia.

Melancholy has different connotations, depending on the gender of who suffers from it. Melancholia started to be associated with excessive rationality, preparing a safe side for male writers to evade accusation of effeminacy. In the early- and mid-eighteenth centuries “medical portraits of melancholics had emphasized both their refined sensibility and their extraordinary rational capability” (Dolan 238). In other words, medical depictions of melancholic individuals emphasised their sensitivity and intellect. They, however, avoided “any connection to the increasingly feminized and problematic cult of sensibility” (ibid.). These medical depictions distanced themselves from the growing association of sensitivity with femininity and its negative connotations. It enabled male poets of the period to write about melancholia, since the medical

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definition propounded it to be a symptom of rationality and intelligence for men. In contrast, women poets who invoked the literary tradition of melancholia “ran the risk of being culturally disempowered by medical definitions of women’s nervous illnesses or by an association with unfeminine reason” (Dolan 238). Women, who drew inspiration from this tradition, faced marginalisation and this would challenge gender norms of the time and, ultimately, accuse them of being unfeminine, undermining their artistic authenticity. Women, therefore, had to navigate between the cultural and medical limitations of melancholia. In this regard, the prominence stands out as melancholy, contrary to its traditional association with cultural disempowerment, and empowers the ode’s speaker.

In Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy,” however, the eponymous emotion is feminised by the speaker. Melancholy, whose prominent role in creating the negative capability is certain, maintains a powerful status to confuse the presumably male speaker. In parallel with the melancholy’s dynamicity, the speaker assumes different perspectives – the feature demonstrated by the chameleon poet – without passing judgement. In her article “Keats Reading Women, Women Reading Keats,” Margaret Homans argues that Keats’s poetic views align him with a certain feminine passivity (344). Yet, I believe, it is his masculinity that allows him to occupy multiple identities and appropriate multiple perspectives. This dynamic move accords with his distaste for the irritable reaching after fact and reason that he propounds in his concept of negative capability. In other words, Keats’s masculinity grants him access to the realm of dynamic identities and melancholia, especially given acute sensitivity and exceptional intellect of melancholics. This assumed safe side allowed Keats to feel more comfortable to deal with the feminine melancholy and her feminine aspects.

As explained in the chapter “Hafiz and Keats,” Keats was accused of effeminacy because of his tendency to embrace traditionally feminine qualities, specifically passivity and receptivity, throughout his correspondence and poems. The threat of masculine dissolution, consequently, looms large for Keats and ultimately accuses him of effeminacy since he progressively delineates and cherishes an ideal female in his poetry. In this ode, the female melancholy looms large as a major player in shaping the speaker’s intense emotional experiences. Despite female melancholy’s empowerment, the personified emotion is ultimately appropriated by the poem’s masculine speaker. She is in fact a desirable experience, with her own “sovrän shrine” seen by

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“none save him whose strenuous tongue/ Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine” (ll. 26-8). Despite empowerment, melancholy is still overcome by the force of male agency. Nevertheless, not any man is granted access to her temple but only those with ‘strenuous tongue’, and a certain level of skill to experience “the sadness of her might,” through which a man earns his place “among her cloudy trophies” (ll. 29-30). The negatively capable speaker does not need to define the kind of insight he has achieved in a determinative way.

“Mistress” is a word in “Ode on Melancholy,” which suggests femininity. The speaker advises the melancholic persona to “emprison her soft hand” and “feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes” (ll. 19-20), which means to take possession of her body to overcome his melancholic state. Although the poem’s addressee is not explicitly gendered, the eroticised encounter with the mistress and the female melancholy insinuates that the addressee could have a masculine identity. The male addressee is also advised to take recourse to nature, namely “a morning rose,” and “globed peonies” to overpower his melancholy. Nature is then aligned with women to depict them as beautiful objects for the purpose of a male viewer.

The sublime is traditionally gendered masculine. With regards to Book XIII of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, Aidan Day argues that “nature and feminine facilitate this moment of sublime apprehension,” but, as Romantic tradition holds it, “the feminine is accorded a secondary, supportive role” (163). Nature and the female melancholy are likewise given a secondary place in relation to the male persona’s experience of the sublime moment. In “Ode on Melancholy,” the mistress is employed as a means for masculine self-realisation. Feminising melancholy aids the male persona, who is gradually gaining negative capability, in his quest for a sublime moment. Despite the female melancholy’s empowerment, the concept of possession is intrinsically connected to the male authorial power. The opening line of the final stanza demonstrates the female melancholy’s impermanence: “She dwells with Beauty-Beauty that must die” (line 21). She is identified with beauty, and by extension she is relegated to an earthly sphere, in which she dies along with natural beauty.

By comparison, Emerson’s poem “Days” presents anxieties about impermanence of time and the inevitable end of living. In a state of lethargy and indolence, the speaker compactly expresses the shame of undue procrastination in using the “gifts” offered by the days. Yet, the speaker realizes it too late: “I, too late, / Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn” (ll. 10-11), as if the speaker

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comes to grips with the realities of life although it is too late, and the gifts of the days are gone. Both Emerson's poem and Keats's ode refer to one common thing: the daily pressure to fulfil the capacities of one's intentions against the inevitable impermanence of the passing days and moments.

The days are gendered as female in the poem. They are "Daughters of Time" (line 1). Yet, their gender does not seem to be rigidly fixed because the days are immediately likened to "barefoot dervishes" (line 2). Dervishes, "any member of a Şūfī (Muslim mystic) fraternity," have been largely men and when the word dervish comes up, it calls to mind the image of a man not a woman ("Dervish"). The evident interchangeability of gender of the days – from daughters of time (female) to barefoot dervishes (male) – can be linked to the idea of self-annihilation since the poem's speaker does not take notice of materialistic desires and body-based differences, which determine "daughters" or "dervishes" are irrelevant.

The speaker attempts to equilibrate the female presence. Homans argues, a female figure "promises a dissolution of the poet's identity" although it is at once "pleasurable and profoundly threatening" (both 355). However, the male speaker defends himself by taking on negative capability; that is by eschewing any absolute fact or reason and adapting a dynamic identity, he rejects her empowerment. The dissolution of the poet's identity, in Homan's words, paves the way for negative capability as it is the prerequisite for a dynamic identity. The female figure indeed plays a major role in the male persona's attempt toward negative capability.

Yet, the gendering of melancholy is a very conspicuous element in empowering the male speaker to limit the female melancholy's power. The feminised associations with melancholy also relate to the transcendence of the self. The speaker's self transcends mundane certainty and prefers a dynamic fluctuation within doubt and uncertainty without reaching after reason. Feminising melancholy and connecting her to nature relegate her to a vehicle for the male speaker's endeavour for negative capability. The gendered implications of melancholy thus subordinate her to the male authorial power.

"Hamatreya," another poem by Emerson comparable to Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," consists of three sections and represents the cycle of life and death, as well as humankind's mortality and his/her greedy nature. It vividly reflects the transience of life and pride in exploits that do not indeed belong to human beings as they lose their charm in the face of death. The poem basically

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explores the illusion of human ownership through presenting several contrasts, including materialism versus a more spiritual mysticism, transience versus permanence, and separateness versus unity, all of which reverses the value of land ownership. Furthermore, anything – including the good – is going to end, Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy” suggests that all beauty, too, is suffused with a kind of poignant sadness. Like the impermanence and fleeting existence of the natural world presented in Keats’s ode, “Hamatreya” reflects the fleeting nature of materials. In the first stanza of “Hamatreya,” the omniscient speaker of the poem refers to Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, and Flint who possessed lands “rendered to their toil” (line 2). These landlords express their authority over their worldly possessions. The poem develops their characters as materialistic men, described solely in terms of ownership. The purely worldly nature of their appreciation is emphasized in the listings of their concrete commodities: “Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood” (line 3). Even their enjoyment of life is measured by the possessing features of landscape: “How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees! / How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!” (ll. 6-7). One of the landlords prides himself on the west wind that is blowing through his trees. He even imagines that there is a special intimacy between himself and his land: “I fancy these pure waters and the flags / Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize; / And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil” (ll. 8-10). He confidently boasts that his relationship with his property is unbreakable.

The second stanza responds to the illusion of permanent possessiveness. The speaker asks: “Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds” (line 11). Ironically, there is more truth than they claim in their connection with the materialistic world over which they imagine they exert control. In fact, they soon pass away, and strangers take over and “their furrows plough” (line 12). This metaphor refers to their inevitable dispossession of their fields, which will be tilled by others. Their misguided belief that their ownership is permanent proves illusory. The reality is that they eventually lose their own bodies to the same ground of which they claim ownership. Ultimately, both their existence and their ownership prove transient. Keats’s ode also acknowledges the impermanence of time and the inevitable end of living, which reproaches the idle pursuit of materialism.

The “Earth-Song” section of Emerson’s “Hamatreya” further amplifies the theme of mortality by contrasting the transient nature of human life with the long-lasting existence of the land. In this

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section, the personified Earth rhetorically asks, “But where are old men?” (line 35), who thought they owned her, and now they are gone, whereas the natural objects and bodies live on: “Stars abide / Shine down in the old sea; / Old are the shores” (ll. 31-3). The illusion of permanent ownership is shattered since it is the land that owns men, not the other way around: “How am I theirs, / If they cannot hold me, / But I hold them?” (ll. 57-9). The unalterable finitude of human existence is here defied. That human’s influence can be extended over time through material possessions is presented a misguided belief that merely testifies to their egotism.

The last section of “Hamatreya” highlights this reality that once egotism is subdued, one can transcend materialism and arrive at a more profound understanding of reality. After hearing the mystical Earth-Song, which suggests a spiritual vision of human’s impermanence, the speaker acknowledges that avarice is like “lust in the chill of the grave” (line 63). Those who take on a materialistic approach to the world in fact pursue self-indulgence ending up in an unexpected finality. The last four verses represent anyone’s susceptibility to the illusion of proprietorship’s permanence. The purely physical nature of the founders’ appreciation of their land is set off against a more encompassing and spiritually suggestive vision of the permanence of nature as it exists independently of the claims and actions of these men. The poem’s speaker, when set before the concept of negative capability, has come to grips with the realities of materialistic possessiveness, as well as the nature of spiritual permanence versus material impermanence.

“Each and All,” another nature poem by Emerson that lends itself to comparison with Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy,” invites readers to see the world in a new light, namely through the concept of the Over-Soul. The main theme of “Each and All” is interconnectivity of everything in the universe to each other, giving rise to the concept of the Over-Soul. The first ten lines present three images – the image of clown, the image of heifer and that of a sexton – seemingly unrelated to each other, but the next lines argue the interrelatedness of everything, both male human and female non-human, and promote the idea of unity: “Nor knowest thou what argument / Thy life to thy neighbor’s creed has lent” (ll. 9-10). The reader is asked whether they know how their life is linked to their neighbour’s beliefs, and by extension to everything in their vicinity and distance. The key argument of the poem is formulated in the next lines: “All are needed by each one; / Nothing is fair or good alone” (ll. 11-12). These two lines epitomise the notion of unity that Emerson emphasised all over his oeuvre: “that Unity, that Over-soul, within which

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every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" ("The Over-Soul" 252). The Over-soul, according to Emerson, is a level of existence, or a vital force in the universe in which all human souls participate and they all meet regardless of their rank.

Separation from the Over-Soul as the main source is lamented in the poem. This lamentation is presented through images of sparrow and shells, which have been taken away from their natural habitat. The speaker brought the sparrow "home, in his nest" but his song "pleases not now" because he "did not bring home the river and sky" (all ll. 15-17). It is only after reunion with its natural habitat that its song appeals to both the ear and the eye. The speaker transitions into another example of disrupted unity in nature. The shells, removed from the beach, turned into "poor, unsightly, noisome things" because they had "left their beauty on the shore" (both ll. 24-5). Separation from their origin causes substantial disruption in the shells. This idea also becomes immediately obvious in another of Emerson poems, titled "Good-Bye." The idea of reunion with the Over-soul is developed in the poem: "Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home: / Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine. / Long through thy weary crowds I roam" (ll. 1-3). The anxiety of returning home develops throughout the poem. The speaker finally mocks "the lore and the pride of man, / At the sophist schools, and the learned clan" and finds relief in meeting "God" (all ll. 27-8, 30). The poem ends comparatively the same as does Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," where the speaker outright wins her/God's trophy. Negatively capable people, this ode concludes, comprehend the fact that without melancholy, beauty would not exist. Having realised this quite commonplace truism, their soul "shalt taste the sadness of her might, / And be among her cloudy trophies hung" (ll. 29-30). Melancholy embraces them and they find relief in unity with her.

In Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," female melancholy is impermanent as she dwells with dying beauty. In a similar manner, Emerson's poem declares, "beauty is unripe childhood's cheat" (line 38), meaning that beauty is temporary. It is comparable with melancholy's status as the desirable experience of the male speaker. The maid is ultimately appropriated by the masculine speaker as she is associated with women's cultural disempowerment. In other words, the concept of possession is intrinsically connected to male power, who, by deflowering her, simply dispossesses the maid of the permanent status she could have had through her connection with nature.

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### “To Autumn”

“To Autumn” is the final one of in Keats’s odes written in 1819. It has three eleven-line stanzas, which describe a progression through the season, from the late maturation of the crops to the harvest and to the last days of autumn, as winter is drawing near. The striking quality of this ode lies in its concreteness, namely a profusion of objects of daily perceptions, which we tend to see and simply ignore. These ordinary commonplace objects, specifically natural phenomena and objects, combine to create an impression of beauty. A prominent figure of speech in “To Autumn” is the personification of the third season, and the description of its bounty, sights, and sounds. Having been personified, autumn can also be read as a negatively capable subject, with a dynamic and fluid identity holding onto no static system of thought. Autumn dynamically takes on various identities without being specifically any of them.

The ode itself represents dynamicity through its sequence of the three stanzas that sketch a dynamic natural process. The first stanza gives “the first sights of the harvest in its final stages”; the second stanza “post-harvest sounds”; and the third stanza “heralding the coming-on of winter” (all Bloom 422). The dynamicity of the stanzas suggests a prominent feature of negative capability. Ian Jack maintains that the remarkable success of “To Autumn” lies in the fact that “the poet himself makes no appearance” in the poem, and “like a painter he loses himself in the contemplation of what he is describing” (both 119). The poet merely observes and describes the beauty of the season while immersing the reader in autumnal sensory experiences, such as “fill all fruit with ripeness to the core” that evokes visual experience. Lack of the poet’s presence is related to Keats’s own idea about the necessity of the poet’s loss of identity to become negatively capable. Aileen Ward maintains that this ode portrays Keats’s formulation of the negatively capable poet, who is “completely lost in his images, and the images are presented as meaning simply themselves” (322). This echoes Keats’s own perception of poetry writing, where he claims that when in a room, he no longer speculates on “the creations of my own brain,” but it is “the identity of everyone in the room [that] begins to press upon me” (both *Selected Letters* 195). Keats goes beyond typical association with images but embraces total erasure: “I am in a very little time annihilated” (195). Keats’s susceptibility to the persistent presence of others in his identity indicates a kind of companionship that is creative.

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The three stanzas of “To Autumn” represent the progress of the season. The ode’s maturity is often credited to “a philosophical acceptance of process” (Sheats 97). Its process designates the uncertainty associated with negative capability, which culminates in the disinterestedness and impersonality of the ode. Anna Jean Mill points out that Keats, in “To Autumn,” is “haunted by that sense of the transience of earthly beauty, by the perpetual process of ripening and decaying, unfolding and withering,” and, she notes that – in contrast to the “Ode on Melancholy,” Keats’s “wakeful anguish of the soul” is simply replaced by “a calm acceptance of tragic destiny,” an attitude characterising the man of negative capability (all qtd. in Benton 42). In other words, the speaker of “To Autumn” is close to attaining the ideal condition of dynamic self that Keats describes in his writings, which has been described as “sombre but serene acceptance of life and death” (Bernbaum 1191). Indeed, the speaker contentedly looks down from a high vantage point at the eternal cycle of seasonal changes, such as growth, mutability, decline, and death. The speaker’s contentment is related to his self-annihilation that avoids any static identity while preparing the ground for dynamic and metamorphic identities. This dynamism is what negative capability propounds and appears in the speaker’s perceiving the reality of life and death, permanency and transiency.

The dynamic process of “To Autumn” has to do with the denial of any conclusiveness. The speaker neither tries to reconcile contradictory aspects nor to fit them into closed and rational systems. The syntax of the first stanza enacts the dynamic process of the ode by incorporating a string of infinitives, e.g., “to bend,” “to swell and plump,” “to set budding” (ll. 5,7,8). These infinitive verbs delay completion yet stimulate an ongoing process. Even the final lines of the first stanza imply postponement of the coming of winter, since Autumn conspires to

set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o’er-brimm’d their clammy cells. (ll. 8-11)

The Autumn mentioned in the first stanza is a beneficial agricultural conspirator, plotting covertly with “the maturing sun” (line 2) to bring everything to the peak of ripeness. The word “conspiring” denotes the clandestine mating between the male sun and the female autumn. The metaphorical sexualisation begins immediately, in the first stanza, with the phrase “close bosom-

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friend” (line 4), and the erotic undertone grows with the coming line, as the season generously loads, blesses, bends, plumps, and coordinates the growth of more fruits. In fact, the identity of the personified Autumn is never allowed to settle. Readers, however, are ultimately left with “an idea of a composite figure comprised of multiple associations and most obviously of all the season itself” (Ghosh 59). This trait of giving, though Autumn is not explicitly engendered as female, develops a feminine image of the season. Paul Sheats argues that Autumn’s gender is left “indeterminate, so that it is the reader who imagines it as male or female” (97). Indeed, it is not made clear whether Autumn is gendered or androgynous, and this, I argue, enhances the easy flow of negative capability. Throughout, the ode endorses disinterestedness and impersonality, heightening receptivity and openness to reality. Moreover, the agricultural imagery of the first stanza highlights a pastoral setting characterised by fertility and productivity. Gendered feminine, images of fertility and productivity create highly suggestive relationships between the feminised Autumn and female empowerment. With the second stanza opening, the Autumn is already “amid” her “store” (line 12). The promised surplus of the harvest season has been fulfilled as the images of “the winnowing wind” (line 15), “half-reap’d furrow” (line 16), “the fume of poppies” (line 17), “thy laden head” (line 20), and “a cyder-press” (line 21) represent the success of the harvest plot, hatched by the Autumn and “the maturing sun” (line 2). Autumn is henceforth no longer an active process but a passive place of repose that “whoever seeks abroad may find / Thee sitting careless on a granary floor” (ll. 13-14). Anyone wandering about likely finds Autumn sitting lazily and passively on the floor, where grain is stored.

Autumn is finally relieved as if there had been sexual intercourse between her and the “sun,” and now, as the productive activity is completed, she sits passively amid all the fresh abundance, which still needs to be stored. Autumn looks like a peasant girl intoxicated with the “fume of the poppies” (line 17), as well as with odours of gathering, reaping, and gleaning. The wind, softly lifting her hair, indicates the winnowing yet to be done. Being winnowed by the wind, the tufts of golden grains create the image of a watching girl, whose hair is softly lifted.

Taken together, Keats’s odes show progressive ideas about women and sexuality developing, but in “To Autumn,” the eponymous season develops through several sexual phases: initially a bride, she is then a goddess of fertility, a careless dreamer, a vigil-keeper and finally a dying mother. Tracing Keats’s struggles with female characters throughout his poetry, Karla Alwes insists that

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he, toward the end of his life, found “restoration” and “fruition” in the “degendered and neutralized” figure of “Autumn” (all 7). This reading emphasises Keats’s struggle against feminine empowerment. Yet, it is important to remember that, as I explained in chapter one, Keats’s identification with femininity and effeminacy also fuelled him poetically. The odes of 1819 present a whole spectrum of variations on the theme of feminine identity. The female characters of these odes “are emblematic of the essence of mutability” (Alwes 113), indicative of the state that features the dynamic essence of negative capability and leave the poems’ speakers in uncertainty, while they neither “sustain” nor “destroy the poetic identity sought” (both Alwes 114). The speakers of Keats’s odes seek immortality, for instance in the mutation cycle in “To Autumn,” the uncertain status of the female characters increases, and the presumably male speakers’ identity becomes precariously dynamic. That is to say, the male speakers progress toward negative capability, which rejects any immediate reach for certainty.

The other implicit quality that highlights negative capability in “To Autumn” refers to the static features that mostly appear in the first stanza. In this stanza, the images of “the moss’d cottage-trees” (line 5), and “flowers for the bees” (line 9), represent static states. However, the second stanza presents dynamic activities, such as winnowing, reaping, and gleaning. This shift from the stationary to the moving, on one hand, indicates the assimilation of juvenescence with maturity, and on the other hand, the dynamic movement of the ode.

The speaker of “To Autumn” remains almost irresolute throughout the ode. Douglas Bush reads the poem as escapism and contends that the poem is “less a resolution of the perplexities of life and poetic ambition than an escape into the luxury of pure [...] sensation” (337). This interpretation is associated with biographical interpretation, which sees the poem partly as Keats’s meditation on his impending death. It is true that “To Autumn” is the ode wherein Keats most obviously “realised his tendency towards a self-projecting and self-abnegating mode of creativity” (Whale 111). The speaker merges with the natural world and stands aside as an observer of the cyclical nature of life, while paying high regard to otherness. One could argue that this ode exemplifies a non-didactic kind of poetry that through self-abnegation and entering imaginative union when the speaker is “in a very little time annihilated” (*Selected Letters* 195). In other words, through his annihilated identity, the speaker appreciates the otherness of other things by speaking as if it were from the identity of those things.

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Keats attacks egotistical and fixed forms of identity and prefers identification with other states of being, which make the self reach out to otherness through the channel of poetry. He defines his ideal poetical character in a litany of negation – no self, no character and no identity – and associates these negatives with speculation, as in his letter to Richard Woodhouse on October 27, 1818, where he writes: “a poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body” (195). “To Autumn” takes “the occlusion of the ‘I’ of the speaker/poet [...] to its limit (Whale 111). Consequently, this poem, which features a speaker, who is almost unidentified, is probably the least anxious of Keats’s odes.

At the same time, “To Autumn’s” call for negative capability and dynamicity points to the contrast between nature and human life: in nature, there is a growing after every gathering, reaping, and gleaning, whereas in human life, there is no growing after the ‘ending’. The perpetual renewal of nature stands in stark contrast to the nonrenewal of human’s existence. The ode, however, tells us of our desire to “belong to something larger than the self” (O’Rourke 177), something that reaches beyond the ending cycle of human’s life, something that links the human nature to the rest of the natural world. Deborah Ellen Lewis explores Keats’s preoccupation with death and the forces that drive the intricate relationships the poet maintains between his gendered characters and death. She argues that “Keats’s work insistently pairs death with feminine figures, and when examined in the context of his culture’s stance on issues of gender, power, and success, this coupling reveals Keats’s paradoxical attraction to death in his poetry” (1). I agree with Ellen as far as this death is considered as a metaphor for the annihilation of the static self and replacement for a dynamic self. In Keats’s poetry, the feminine delivers poetic death to the masculine character, which underscores Keats’s obsession with “self-effacing transcendence” (Lewis 2). The presumably male speaker of Keats’s poetry does not often totally control or possess feminine figures.

Keats never completely conformed to accepted nineteenth-century conventions and constructions of masculinity. As I explained in chapter one, because of his interest in passivity and receptivity, two traditionally feminine qualities, he was accused of effeminacy. In fact, He failed to “write those genres of poetic production that he himself defined as masculine: the Miltonic epic, the classical tragedy, the Shakespearean comedy” (Mellor 167). Instead, he devoted his career as a

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poet to those genres and subjects essentially associated by his contemporaries with women: the ode and the romance; intense affections; nature. As suggested above, Keats's odes often focus particularly on female power. In his letter to John Hamilton Reynolds on September 21, 1819, after an evening walk near Winchester, Keats describes the scene and gendered autumn as female: "How beautiful the season is now, how fine the air, a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather, Dian skies" (345). The season is associated with chastity and purity traditionally attributed to women.

In parallel to Keats's "To Autumn," Emerson's short poem "Water" establishes an analogy between nature and human life. Its speaker, too, personifies nature in one of its forms, i.e. "water" (line 1), and immediately creates the image of a perpetual union between human and nature: "The water understands Civilization well" (line 1). The poem depicts the magnitude of nature, which is more inclusive than human being since one natural substance solely perceives the whole civilization of human being. Nature is not "disconcerted" (line 5), but in tune as one complete entity, the treatment with which influences man's destiny. If nature is "well used, it decketh joy," and "Adorneth, doubleth joy" (ll. 6-7). The kinship between nature and humans is determined by human's treatment of it. This is reminiscent of Emerson's insistence on living a simple life, harmoniously and attuned to nature. Although known as a perennial source of inspiration, nature can spark off an adverse reaction to any of man's aggressive or destructive venture, yet nature's counteraction is "in perfect time and measure / With a face of golden pleasure" (ll. 9-10). This irony is justifiable since nature's time and measure are perfect, or at least, fair when it comes to reciprocity.

As explained above, the speaker of Keats's "To Autumn" looks down from a vantage point at the eternal cycle of the changes of season with such a contentment, which turns out to be the outcome of the speaker's self-annihilation and genuine loss of self-identity in pursuit of true self. This idea finds an echo in Emerson's "The Bohemian Hymn." This poem is one among many, in which Emerson develops the concept of self-annihilation, which, in turn, bears marked similarities with that of negative capability. Both poems acknowledge the significance of uncertainty without reaching after conclusiveness when perceiving and recognising truth beyond the reach of dogma and conventional reasoning. Both Keats's ode and Emerson's poem make conventional contemplations of truth irrelevant, but only Emerson affirms that once wise people

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attempt to decipher the secrets of creation or “utter God’s infinity” (line 2), they are left “in the lurch” (line 9), meaning they are left to themselves without any assistance. They remain in uncertainty and mystery since it is impossible to fathom the biggest truth, namely God’s infinity.

The speaker of Emerson’s “The Bohemian Hymn” asserts that human endeavours are in vain to comprehend the infinite. “Nor art, nor power, nor toil can find / The measure of the eternal Mind” (ll. 10-11), where the capacities of every individual and efficacy of religious institutions are effaced and negated because once one attempts “to utter God’s infinity,” instantly “the great idea baffles wit,” and “language falters under it” (all ll. 2, 7-8). The speaker sees art, wit, power, and toil inadequate to realise God. The one who attempts to utter God’s infinity is not an ordinary person, but one who has transcended the materialistic disposition and abandoned earthly pleasures to achieve unity with the Divine. S/he, however, soon realizes that there is no idea or language to utter the experiential ecstasy since it is merely annihilation of the self, which ultimately counts in this path. The negatively capable speaker of Emerson’s poem realises that one should remain objective and emotionally detached by surpassing any religious practice and institution and deems “hymn,” “prayer,” and “church” incapable of measuring and understanding “the eternal Mind” (ll. 11-10), since “the great Idea baffles wit” (line 6). Wise people ultimately remain in uncertainty, mystery, and intellectual confusion, which mark the characteristics of negative capability.

One of the journal passages bearing on Emerson’s Platonic view of love, the necessity of self-annihilation, and ephemerality of worldly aspirations and desire dates from 1837. In it he writes about the impression made at the first sight between a young man and woman. He does not admire this impression; on the contrary, he degrades such first transitory sensations: “How little think the youth & maiden who are glancing at each other across a mixed company” and that “by all the virtues that appear, by so much kindness, justice, fortitude, by so much are they made one,” since they finally discover that “all that at first drew them together was wholly caducous, had merely a prospective end like the scaffolding by which a house is built” (all JMN 5:297-298). The young couple realises that the impression that drew them together is essentially nothing long-lasting but merely a passing glance. Emerson returns to the same subject on November 21, 1840, and further delves into the ephemeral nature of instant love precipitating premature relationships, therefore “All loves, all friendships are momentary.” He argues that “we

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are happy together” as long as we see the “same truth,” but when “one of us passes into the perception of new truth, we are divorced, and the force of all nature cannot hold us to each other” (all JMN 7:532), maintaining that the sentiment that consolidates any relationship is contingent upon holding the same vantage point of truth.

Emerson’s poem “Give All to Love” is basically built upon the above-quoted passages from his journal. The poem strives to clarify the way one should truly love and represents Emerson’s transcendental beliefs, which primarily advocate the transcendence of the poet. Its first line states the main theme, namely submission and surrender to love. “All” encompasses the entire reality of an individual’s experience and possessions: “Friends, kindred, days, / Estate, good-fame, / Plans, credit” (ll. 3-5). Everything, enfolding both the materialistic and spiritual aspects of reality, must be given up to love.

Love, contrary to passing glances exchanged between couples, annihilates one’s entire identity and redefines it. Love is “a brave master” with a powerful force that “utterly” holds sway over the choices of an individual (ll. 7, 9). With everything having been given up to love, new possibilities unfold new heights since love “Knows its own path, / And the outlets of the sky” (ll. 16-17). These new horizons offer “hope beyond hope” (line 10). After the annihilation of the lower self, lofty aspirations arise and elevate the follower of love “high and more high” (line 11). These aspirations are not “for the mean,” (line 18) in the sense of lacking in personal strength, but for those with “courage stout, / Souls above doubt” (ll. 19-20). The major obstacle to achieving these lofty heights is one’s own lower self, which encompasses everything, either materialistic or spiritual. This kind of self-annihilation is the first and foremost move to be made in the path toward higher aspirations.

I mentioned above that in Keats’s “To Autumn,” the speaker contentedly looks down from a vantage point at the eternal cycle of the changes of season, which constitutes growth, mutability, decline, and death. In Emerson’s “Give All to Love,” the speaker builds all the six stanzas upon connecting the finite cycles of natural order with the infinite eternal order through individual feelings and experiences that are governed by love. Its speaker advises the audience to withhold nothing but to offer up everything, as the poem’s title suggests, “to love.” The third stanza starts with a rephrasing of the title, that one should “leave all for love” (line 26). However, a reminder of caution is given about pursuing the transcendental path with “One word more,” which requires

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“firm endeavor,” in embracing love fully (ll. 28-9). It is a call for self-annihilation as love endures as long as everything is left for it.

The third stanza indicates that all relations within the natural order are finite and temporal. Yet, an individual's autonomy can connect the natural and the spiritual dimensions through absolute freedom. One should tie oneself to love itself. Therefore, one may “cling with life to the maid,” but not do anything to keep her from being “fancy-free” (ll. 34, 39). The maid must be free, just as the intended addressee and the speaker of the poem should be free. As a matter of fact, the love relationship does not necessarily compromise the maid's (or the beloved's) freedom. The individual's freedom surpasses the natural, finite order and conjoin the corporeal with the spiritual. Although separation from her, i.e. the beloved, “dims the day” (line 45), it makes the listener's freedom plausible since there is no more attachment, even to the beloved. With genuine freedom being attained, love reveals the transcendental heights to a fuller form of spiritual gratification as the individual realizes that “When half-gods go, / The gods arrive” (ll. 48-9). This is the moment after the separation; the moment of transcendence, which brings one closer to divine presence. This is the time that the speaker firmly claims that one should ‘give all to love’ not to ‘the beloved’.

The vigorous and unquestioning pursuit of love, as set out in the poem, prepares the ground for spiritual self-annihilation. The souls that manage to follow this ‘brave master’ must demonstrate “valor unbending” (line 21). It requires a supreme sacrifice that “the mean” are not able to make, but only those with “souls above doubt” (ll.18, 20). They must sacrifice everything at their disposal so that they will “return” from this spiritual journey “more than they were” (ll. 23-4). Those successful to complete this soul-destroying yet rewarding journey will transcend the normal bounds of mundane life and connect with a higher reality. It is associated with their self-transcendence and the dissolution of individual ego to surpass one's limited individual identity to merge with a larger, more expansive reality, which Emerson calls the Over-soul. Therefore, the successful wayfarer will be “ever ascending” (line 25) toward realization of one's deeper, more spiritual nature. This idea aligns with transcendentalist principles, most significantly with those that emphasise intuition, individualism, and the interconnectedness of all things.

Regarding gender themes, Emerson, as mentioned before, does not extensively explore them in his works. However, it is possible to analyse gender-related issues in his “Give All to Love,” as

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in many of his other poems, in terms of the broader cultural context of his time. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by distinct gender roles and expectations. Women were often relegated to the domestic sphere. Emerson's insistence on individual self-reliance and the rejection of conformity promotes a sense of autonomy that surpasses societal expectations, as well as traditional gender roles. His invitation for inner guidance and intuition, defying societal norms, is irrespective of gender. Accordingly, the invitation that one should give all to love does not restrict the call only for men but addresses all people. This discards distinct gender roles and emphasises human being's inner goodness, and most significantly unfulfilled potentiality to merge with a larger, more expansive reality, which is not limited to or by any gender. The return from this spiritual journey does not merely pertain to masculine or feminine. The poem cultivates self-discovery and the transcendence of the individual self, surpassing gender roles and limitations, and connecting with a higher reality. In the context of self-annihilation, the poem explores the transcendence of the individual self, and the connection between the individual and the universe.

## **Chapter 3: Mystical Self-Transcendence: Emerson and Hafiz**

### **3. Mystical Self-Transcendence: Emerson and Hafiz**

#### **3.1. Emerson and the Orient**

Transcendentalists were among the first Americans to embrace Asian religious ideas as an essential constituent of the world's heritage. Later generations came to terms with the religions and philosophies of the East most notably through the pervasive impact of Transcendentalist writings on oriental celebrated figures, philosophies, and literature. This subsequently popularised Asian religious ideas and literary canon, which precipitated an upsurge of interest among younger Americans after 1850. It is important to acknowledge that advocacy of Asian religious texts was not characteristic of all or even most of the Transcendentalist circle. Rather, there were a few ardent enthusiasts – notably Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Amos Bronson Alcott – who proved to be, in the long run, among the most recognized and influential writers of the Transcendentalist community. Still, some Transcendentalists treated such texts with indifference, such as the otherwise learned and educated Margaret Fuller, who displayed no particular interest in the Asian material per se. By contrast, Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott regarded oriental literature, at least for a time, with unconstrained enthusiasm. They traded books and ideas, conversed together about Asian sources and philosophies, and infused into each other a mounting appreciation of Asian texts. Unlike the critical and unfavourable view of the Transcendentalist minister Theodore Parker about Eastern religions, Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott warmly welcomed the religious and literary contributions of India and the Far East.

Except Theodore Parker, hardly any of the leading Transcendentalists tried to read the Asian texts in their original languages, such as in Persian, Indian or Sanskrit and remained content with their translations. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's German translations of Saadi and Hafiz were Emerson's major source of Persian translations. This might explain why Transcendentalists hardly approached their reading of Asian texts in a systematic and scholarly way, and why their views tended to remain unabashedly subjective. After the end of the Civil War in 1865, the novelty of Asian religions began to wear off, and the character of Transcendentalist interest in them underwent a change. A systematic approach was required to satiate the demands of a wider reading public with respect to the expanding body of information becoming available on the subject that called for an approach more substantive than a personal one. James Freeman Clarke, an influential first-generation Transcendentalist and a friend of Emerson's, lectured on the

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comparative study of religion at Harvard Divinity School. His classic study on the subject, *Ten Great Religions* (1871), made available a useful conduit for the systematic study of religions, in particular for a reading public accustomed to thinking about religion through a Christian lens.

From the perspective of subsequent history, none of the Transcendentalist contributions managed to break out of the confines of orientalist discourse and ideology, and rarely did they venture beyond the limitations of translation. This comes as no surprise, in view of what has been described as “the Transcendentalists’ relative cultural isolation and distance from the great centers of European learning” (Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook* 35). In the nineteenth century, there were a few American scholars comparable to the distinguished Indologists and Orientalists of England, Germany, and France. Among the most recognised ones stand Yale professors Edward Salisbury, William Dwight Whitney and some of their gifted students, who were mainly Sanskrit experts. Furthermore, no American thinker or figure ever set foot in India or the Far East during the active years of the Transcendentalist movement.

Despite these deficiencies, the Transcendentalists prepared the ground for later American generations to be attracted to Eastern cultures and traditions, particularly those latter-day American Romantics enamoured of the philosophical aspects of Asian religious traditions. Even more consequential was the influence on Beat writers, such as Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) and Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), whose central tenets include the rejection of standard narrative values, and who embarked on a spiritual quest and explored Native American and Eastern religions. Especially the Transcendentalist’ advocacy of Asian religious texts and ideas legitimised the Beat generation’s fervent perusal of Asian writings.

Unlike Thoreau and Alcott, who came to Asian literature later in life, Emerson had gained familiarity with it since his schooldays, but his approach to Asian literature never remained the same during his lifelong career. In the early 1830s, he did not show much approval for the orient and oriental texts, but by the middle of the decade, his adolescent disdain for Asian cultures “had utterly given way to unabashed approval” (Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook* 29). The following passage from the famous address he delivered to the graduating class of Harvard’s Divinity School in 1838 clearly testifies to this:

The sentences of the oldest time, which ejaculate this piety, are still fresh and fragrant. This thought dwelled always deepest in the minds of men in the devout and

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contemplative East; not alone in Palestine, where it reached its purest expression, but in Egypt, in Persia, in India, in China. Europe has always owed to oriental genius, its divine impulses. What these holy bards said, all sane men found agreeable and true. ("Divinity School Address" 113-114)

In addition to more familiar sources on Neoplatonism and Western philosophy, Emerson's reading list encompassed a wide range of non-Western sources, including Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Hitopadesha* (1786), Joshua Marshman's *Works of Confucius* (1809), and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's German translations of Hafiz (1812). Having obtained H.H. Wilson's translation of *Vishnu Purana* (1840) and Edward Roer's translation of *Upanishads*, Emerson started to form a more comprehensive picture of Hindu religion and philosophy. From this point forward, his journals and essays constitute long references to his constant reading of Asian texts. His mature engagement with the texts of classical Hinduism came to inform the essays and addresses for which he is best known, especially *Representative Men* (1850), *The Conduct of Life* (1860), and *Society and Solitude* (1870).

Emerson's essay "Plato" indicates his indebtedness to a style of thinking typical of nineteenth-century orientalists, who generally show tendency to epitomise eastern thought in stereotypical terms. He juxtaposes the eastern thought with the civilizations of the west:

The country of unity, of immovable institutions, the seat of a philosophy delighting in abstractions, of men faithful in doctrine and in practice to the idea of a deaf, unimplorable, immense fate, is Asia; and it realizes this faith in the social institution of caste. On the other side, the genius of Europe is active and creative: it resists caste by culture; its philosophy was a discipline; it is a land of arts, inventions, trade, freedom. If the East loved infinity, the West delighted in boundaries. ("Plato" 55-56)

This, as Edward Said argues in *Orientalism* (1979), sounds very much like the Western conceptions of the Middle East and the way European scholars deployed this essentialist cultural language, sometimes unwittingly, mostly in the service of Europe's colonial schemes on Asian territories (1-28). Ironically enough, for Transcendentalists and other exponents of American freedom, access to the cultures of South and East Asia would have been almost impossible had it not been for contact with European scholars and works, which were affected by the discourses of colonial expansion and administration of the British Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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It should be noted that commerce – both intellectual and material –, which had connected Asia and Europe during antiquity had been interrupted all through the Middle Ages by the Islamic Caliphates in the Middle East. The gradual demise of the Ottomans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries opened the way for renewed contacts, typically for colonial designs and Western exploitation, between Europeans and Asians. Emerson's own motive in conceptualising the relationship between East and West was at least "in part rhetorical" but it highlights "his general indebtedness to the orientalist mind-set generally" (Myerson, *The Oxford Handbook* 31). But Emerson does not seem to have aspired to be an orientalist; he just turned to Asian textual material as a resource of thought to foster his own distinctive religious and literary aims. The above-quoted same essay on Plato also indicates how the historic dualism of East and West was related to the philosophic dualism of ideal and real in Emerson's mind: "The unity of Asia and the detail of Europe; the infinitude of the Asiatic soul and the defining, result-loving, machine-making, surface-seeking, opera-going Europe" (57). Emerson contrasts Asian focus on the ideal and eternal with a European analytical and materialistic approach that may miss the eternal essence of things. In his lecture "The Transcendentalist," Emerson writes that the spiritualist adopts anything "grand and daring in human thought or virtue" and the oriental mind "has always tended to this largeness" (168). His fascination with the orient originates from the considerable attention that the oriental texts have paid to human's thought and virtue.

#### 3.1.1. Emerson and Hafiz's Influence

Emerson highly valued the literatures of the oriental countries. His interest in Persian mystical poetry developed in the early 1840s, when he wrote one of his longest poems "Saadi" for *The Dial* (1842). The names of the poets Hafiz and Saadi appear frequently in Emerson's journals and notebooks. In 1858, Emerson wrote his lengthy essay on "Persian Poetry" for the *Atlantic Monthly*, producing a short survey of Persian poetry, and presciently prophesying future fame in Europe for 'Omar Kāyyām a year before Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat*. In this essay, Emerson acknowledges that German translations greatly contributed to his knowledge.

In the late 1840s, Emerson's interest in Persian poetry grew considerably and it coincided with the period of his first significant poetic production. J. D. Yohannan takes up this argument and proposes that Emerson's most characteristic manner, that of "a cryptic and often metrically crude expression" (35) is to be found in the plainly rendered German translations of Persian poetry by

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Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall in the books *Der Diwan von Mohammed Schemseddin Hafiz* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1812-13) and *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens* (1818). It is widely accepted that Emerson's attention was directed to these two books by Goethe's use of them to produce his own *West-östlicher Diwan* (1819). In Emerson's essay "History" (1841), we see his first mention of Hafiz in print. There is a parallelism in Goethe's and Emerson's initial response to Hafiz. Emerson, having translated Hafiz from German into English, addresses, and invokes the Persian bard enthusiastically.

Thematically, many of Emerson's transcendent observations – very much like the spiritual teachings of Sufi mysticism – many of Emerson's transcendent observations are engrained in moralising. Although Emerson's philosophical and religious ideas were mainly borrowed from Hindu sources, "the greatest literary influence from the East was that of Persia" (Jahanpour 117). Except for English literature, it may not be exaggerated to assert that Persian literature, in particular Persian mystical poetry, had the most profound influence on Emerson's writings. His first active period of writing poetry coincided with the period that he was immersed in reading Persian poets, which explains his adaptation of Persian genres. In his journals, Emerson declares: "I suppose everyone has favorite topics, which make a sort of museum or privileged closet of whimsies in his mind [...] I like to know about lions, diamonds, wine, and Beauty; and Martial, and Hafiz" (*Journals* vol. 13, 350). There is probably no testimony to Emerson's interest in Persian poetry more eloquent than his own words.

In his lecture "Poetry and English Poetry," delivered on 10 January 1854, Emerson suggests that poets must believe in their own poems if readers are to believe in them, too. He lists five exemplars: Homer, Milton, Hafiz, Herbert, and Wordsworth, who "are heartily enamored of their sweet thoughts" (207). These exemplary poets are primarily amused and fascinated by their own thoughts before absorbing others'. Placing Hafiz in the company of the other four major poets suggests that Emerson deems Hafiz a major world poet. In the essay "Persian Poetry," too, he reveals his high regards for Persian classical poets, and Hafiz especially, for being a great poet as well as a liberally minded intellectual.

Emerson also edited a translation of Saadi's *The Gulistan* (Rose Garden). Furthermore, he altogether translated about seven hundred lines of Persian poetry into English, which inspired him to imagine a semi-mythical 'Saadi' as his own ideal poet. That these translations left their

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impression upon his own writing, is manifest in several ways. J. D. Yohannan concisely delineates the influence: 1) in actual correspondence of thought and of expression between Emerson and the Persian poets; 2) in a similarity of form between Emerson's verse and the German renditions of Joseph von Hammer; 3) in Emerson's concept of the ideal poet called "Saadi" (25). But prior to translating and imitating the Persian Sufi masters, Emerson articulated a way of seeing like Hafiz. This seems more significant when considering that Hafiz and Emerson came from vastly different national traditions, time periods and cultural as well as linguistic backgrounds. Roger Sedarat asserts that Emerson appears to do more than "merely share his Persian predecessor's cultural critiques," such as valuing spiritual insight over hypocritical religious rituals, but he attunes "the stylistic means of his figurative vision to similar Romantically transcendent ends" (both 52). In other words, Emerson attempted to engage Hafiz's figurative style of expression as a means of writing about his own transcendent themes.

One of the prominent features of Hafiz's ghazals refers to his boldness and indifference to many religious rituals and practices. This characteristic is emphasised in Emerson's "Notebook Orientalist": "Hafiz has only just arrived as a competitor to our occidental lyrists [...] he is not to be scared by a name or a religion; he fears nothing" and more prominently for Emerson, "he sees too far, and sees throughout," therefore "such is the only man I wish to see and to be" (118-19). Tellingly, Emerson desires to 'see and to be' like Hafiz, as if the visual appropriation of the oriental poet paves the way for his spiritual way of seeing. In addition, Hafiz's favoured poetic form, the ghazal, as well as his sentiments, must have appealed to Emerson and motivated him to translate dozens of Hafiz's verses. His translations are polyvalent, sensitively engaged with the poet and appreciating his complex and antithetical instances.

Emerson's claims of authority over imagination, both visual and rhetorical, and his willingness to construct his own circumstance manifests itself in his essay "The Transcendentalist." He calls the world "the shadow of that substance which you are, the perpetual creation of the powers of thought, of those that are dependent and of those that are independent of your will," and, at his most extreme assertion, he claims that "the world is poured like melted wax" into "I," therefore, "you call it the power of circumstance, but it is the power of me" (all "The Transcendentalist" 166-7). Emerson's unwavering belief in willpower and self-reliance appears in several of his writings. In this respect, he found Persian poetry primarily serving to liberate his thoughts from

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the confines of Western convention and enhance the store of imagery giving expression to that thought. This is also the main reason why Emerson borrows many of the symbols and metaphors of Persian poetry to enrich his own poetical writing. Of Hafiz he writes in a lecture designed for an English audience: “That expansiveness which is the essence of the poetic element, they [the British] have not. It was no Oxonian, but Hafiz, who said, ““Let us be crowned with roses, let us drink wine, and break up the tiresome old roof of heaven into new forms.”” (*English Traits* 195). Persian poetry offered Emerson the ideas and images of an imaginative freedom without occidental inhibitions.

Emerson was also familiar with George Sales’s translation of the Quran. However, he found Islamic scripture and theology “less compelling than the inspired poetry of classical Sufism” (Myerson 30), the form of mysticism with which Hafiz is often affiliated. Sufism essentially emphasises the illusory nature of the tangible world and human being’s sense-fettered separation from the source of all things, which is depicted as a separation from God. Sufi poets extensively use sensuous images, implying eroticism and bacchanalianism, with which the western reader was only familiar from the *Song of Solomon*.

Sufis and many scholars of Sufism strongly claim that such sensuous images are symbols of the spiritual longing of devout souls and a superficial interpretation of the outward eroticism should not tinge this symbolism. They believe that there are grounds for seeing mystical divinity in such symbols. For example, a *burqa* stands for the soul bound in the body by worldly ties; a *tress* for the lure of God’s grace; the *lips* of the beloved for the opening to the unfathomable mysteries of God’s essence; a *tavern* for the call for contemplation and *wine* for the intoxication of the spirit due to ecstatic transportation. I would argue that not all the sensuous and erotic images imply mystical symbols in Hafiz’s poems. Instead, there are numerous examples indicative of different layers of meanings, the deepest of which suggest mystical meanings through erotic images. Emerson, however, rejects a purely mystical reading of Hafiz’s wine, stating that he would not “strew sugar on bottled spiders,” that is, “make mystical divinity out of [...] the erotic and bacchanalian songs of Hafiz” (both “Persian Poetry” 236). Emerson, however, insists that wine should not be confounded with vulgar debauch. It is a spiritual *carpe diem* that his anacreontic verses denote. In the same essay, Emerson is more explicit when introducing Hafiz:

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Hafiz is the prince of Persian poets, and in his extraordinary gifts adds to some of the attributes of Pindar, Anacreon, Horace and Burns, the insight of a mystic, that sometimes affords a deeper glance at Nature than belongs to either of these bards. He accosts all topics with an easy audacity. (232-3)

Emerson refers to ‘the insight of a mystic’ and not to Hafiz as a mystic per se, the insight then ‘affords a deeper glance at Nature’, which is different from Sufi ecstasy. Hafiz is not perceived as a mystic, but his poetry, according to Emerson, possesses mystical attributes. It is worth considering that mysticism is a slightly fraught term for Emerson. In the essay “The Poet,” he draws a distinction between the poet and mystic: the latter “nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false” (37). Emerson manifestly rejects self-centred and individualistic perceptions of natural phenomena. Mystic symbols per se ultimately lose their novelty unless poetry keeps mystical perceptions transitive and dynamic.

Emerson was not obviously drawn to Hafiz so much due to a mode of mystical ecstasy as because of Hafiz’s self-reliance. He argues in the essay “Persian Poetry” that it is not enough to have “wisdom and experience,” but one must have “a large utterance” (both 235). In the same piece, Emerson delineates the prominent feature of poets and marks the quality of poets, who have “the power of uttering” (235) thoughts. The same statement is reiterated in the essay “The Poet” about the prominence of utterance and expression: “The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression” (11). Emerson acknowledges the poet’s authority and power of uttering his/her thoughts, regardless of the dominant societal discourses and relieved of the religious commands issued by ritualistic religiosity. Hafiz represents such a poet because he wields his free speech by “intellectual liberty,” which is “a certificate of profound thought,” so it would not be erroneous to state that “Wrong shall not be wrong to Hafiz for the name’s sake” because of “his complete intellectual emancipation,” through which he communicates to readers (all “Persian Poetry” 235-36). For Emerson, Hafiz represents the viability of self-reliance in reality.

Emerson saw in Hafiz what he considers the major qualities of a major world poet. Hafiz is known for his scepticism, which can be said of Emerson as well, since the latter’s sceptical turn of mind cannot be separated from his religious vision. Emerson shows mobility of vision, which allows him to radically rethink any position and principle, as he did with the Trinity, and to reach a kind of phenomenological openness to various experiences, like Hafiz’s dynamic and fluid

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mind as it “suffers no religion and no empire but its own” (“Persian Poetry” 235). Put differently, one’s own mind creates a religion that confines liberal thinking and questioning.

Emerson’s esteem for Hafiz arises from Hafiz’s intellectual liberty and self-reliance. Emerson’s famous poem “Bacchus” (1847) is one of his poems that many commentators find being inspired by Persian sources. The source of his inspiration for the poem can be readily found in some lines of Hafiz’s anacreontic verses of his “Sāqi-nāma” (“Book of the Cupbearer”), the better part of which Emerson himself had translated under the plain title “From the Persian of Hafiz, I.” It is representative of Hafiz’s poetic manner. However, since the poem “Bacchus” is not a direct translation of Hafiz, but an imitation, it is not wise to look too closely for parallelisms of word and phrase. Yet, a general correspondence in thought and expression is discernible in the poems. In both, the tone is of high exhilaration, the language is imperative and both esteem wine as more than the mere juice of the grape, seeing in it the power of liberating the mind to new ecstasies and insights, and relieving it of misery.

Many of Emerson’s contemporaries had just a passing notion of Hafiz’s work. Hafiz, however, appears like a signpost “twenty-five times, as often as Aristotle or Wordsworth, on Emerson’s 1841 reading list, and frequently thereafter in his journals and notebooks” (Yohannan, “Emerson, Ralph Waldo”). The frequent mention of his name urges readers and listeners to find out who this Hafiz is. In his *Journals*, Emerson writes: “Hafiz’s poetry is marked by nothing more than his habit of playing with all magnitudes, mocking at them. What is the moon or the sun’s course or heaven, & the angels, to his darling’s mole or eyebrow?” (vol. XVI, 40). Again, he wrote about Hafiz in his notebooks: “He is restless, inquisitive, thousand-eyed, insatiable and as like a nightingale intoxicated with his own music; never was the privilege of poetry more haughtily used” and maintains that “not every poet sings inspired verse” (*The Topical Notebooks* 119). That Emerson was not competent and fluent in Persian is out of question, but his remarks about Hafiz show his reasonable understanding of his poems.

### 3.2. Effaced Identity vs. Annihilated Identity in the Selected Poems

Transcendental poets were not grouped as a distinct category in the earliest American literature, histories, and anthologies. The designation only started with George Willis Cooke’s *The Poets of Transcendentalism* (1903), which contained poems published in the *Dial*, the *Radical*, and the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, which indicates the enormous effect of poetry on American

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literature. It should be noted that transcendentalists have often been categorized as essayists and non-fiction writers, with poetry being regarded as an occasional rather than the chief medium of expression. Lawrence Buell makes a point about transcendentalist poetry: “Transcendentalism’s poetry has often seemed tame and thin by comparison to its prose” (98). While I agree, it must be noted that the transcendentalists accorded poetry a primary role. Their poetry generally promotes the idea that divinity is in every soul and there is divineness within each living being, which must be honoured and protected.

Notions of divinity were particularly vital to transcendental poets, but they departed from traditional theism, from which many transcendentalists had emerged, to locate divinity within humankind, nature, life, and various writings, not within conventional religious figures, institutions or texts. In their poems, they celebrate emotion, imagination and enthusiasm. Some key words include ‘self-reliance’ and ‘nonconformity’, which are also propagated in Emerson’s writings. These terms stress reliance on oneself rather than on dominant social structures and institutions for one’s belief. Within this framework, transcendentalist poetry honours the beauty and sacredness of bucolic life, self-exploration, the power of imagination, and political reformations. It engages with various experimentation within conventional poetic forms, which often contain many epigrammatic proverbs and assertions in interpolated voices.

One reason why Emerson’s reputation rests primarily on his prose relates to the comprehensive collections that compile almost all his non-poetic writings, which has overshadowed his poetry. Many of his poems can be found in his two books of poetry, *Poems* (1847) and *May-Day and Other Pieces* (1867). *Poems*, the more ground-breaking volume, includes some of his best-known poems such as “Hamatreya,” “The Snow-Storm,” “Threnody,” and “The Rhodora.” Emerson’s writing method began with the conventional logic of theology but soon “transcended it for intuitive thought” and subsequently for spontaneous expression (Carpenter 74). Being both an idealist and a realist, Emerson considered every idea both from the point of view of eternity and from that of time, that resulted in the dynamic exposition of his ideas. While he employed different literary methods in his writings, it is widely accepted that they lack ‘art’, in the sense of aesthetic form. In other words, his actual method of composition encouraged “the accumulation, the rewriting, and the ordering of successive, separate ideas and sentences, rather than the aesthetic formulation of perfect works of prose art” (all Carpenter 77). Emerson’s poetic style, I

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believe, is more didactic and philosophical than purely artistic or lyrical. His poems primarily infuse transcendentalist ideas, conveying intellectual and spiritual concepts, which reduce traditional artistic elements such as vivid imagery or emotional depth.

Prose may be Emerson's primary vehicle, yet he always regarded himself first and foremost as a poet. From childhood to old age, he continually composed poems and many great American poets, such as Walt Whitman, looked upon him as a master. George Edward Woodberry neatly summarises the virtues of Emerson's poetry: "The *Poems* are a more brief and condensed form of the *Essays* [...] The thought gains brilliancy and external beauty by being given under the forms of imagination" (159). His poems are rich in imaginative and symbolic virtues. They weave intricate meanings into several layers of meanings, which is possible through imagination. His poems are often thought-provoking and evoke deep emotion. Therefore, critics, who value imagination above logic, have preferred his poetry to his prose.

Reading Emerson's prose separate from the poetry only presents a partial Emerson, and the two must be brought into conversation to get the full Emerson. His poetry and prose stand in a dynamic relationship to each other; in other words, his poetry is not the prose versified and not "a tangential or even supplementary portion" (Kane 112) of his oeuvre, but a body of work in itself that plays a central role in Emerson's work. A reasonable indication of this can be detected in the verses inserted into his prose. Thus, I frequently refer to his prose and those ideas and concepts of his that correlate with his poems.

Emerson's verse forms are chiefly traditional. He rarely observes exact regularity of meter and rhyme. His poems abound in imperfect rhymes of all varieties, and frequently, though not consistently, irregularities in rhyme and meter occur together. Most of his well-known poems – such as "Brahma," "Concord Hymn," "Days" and "The Snow-Storm" – are fundamentally traditional and regular and Emerson's poetic practice was never "as consistently modern as his poetic theory" (Carpenter 94). He theorised and consistently advocated a free and liberal poetry that sharply contrasts with the traditional eighteenth-century poetic theory. But in poetic practice, his best poems hardly follow free verse, qualifying his free verse in deference to the poetic tradition of the past.

Meanwhile, in his poetic theory, Emerson attacks traditional verse forms, meters, and rhymes for not being the essential constituents of poetry. He states that good poetry is not solely a matter of

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technical prowess because “it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem, – a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own and adorns nature with a new thing” (“The Poet” 15). He argues that poetry should be organic rather than simply metrically or musically beautiful. While it does not need to be necessarily an embellished art but should end up as a living form that corresponds to a higher truth. Emerson advocated ideas and imaginative words; for instance, it is the poet’s ‘argument’ or ‘thought’ that must dictate the metric form of the poem, not the other way around. Thought should be expressed by means of symbols as “things admit of being used as symbols, because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part” (“The Poet” 18). Although his irregular poems have been often attacked by the advocates of the traditional school, many modern critics considered Emerson as the harbinger of a distinctly American poetry.

Emerson tries to delve into the symbolism of language, from which deeper layers of meaning stem. He emphasises two major ideas in this regard; 1) the fundamentally symbolic nature of all artistic expression; 2) the organic quality all great works of art share (Carpenter 96). He finds the symbolic nature of poetry as the primary poetic language to be in contrast with the conventional logic and discursive argument. This is in line with his high regard of intuitive thought. Subsequently, his idea of organic theory of art becomes compatible with the symbolic language of art; if art be conceived as an intuitively wrought work that works through symbols rather than reason, the artistic work develops organically in the artist’s mind as the idea potentially pre-exists in the symbol. Emerson attacks the conventional rhyme and rhythm and the neoclassical theory of ornamentation, and he declares that “the lesson taught by the study of Greek and of Gothic art, of antique and of Pre-Raphaelite painting, was worth all the research” because they expounded the idea that “all beauty must be organic,” and “outside embellishment is deformity” (all “Beauty” 176). Emerson suggests that the inner purpose of the artist should dictate the form, and that it should be determined by the imaginative insight of the artist who stimulates much the same insightful experience in reader or observer.

Emerson captures the nature of the poet’s relationship with language through his description of the poet as “the Sayer.” He characterises his ideal poet: “the sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body,” and that poetry is “God’s wine,” and that “the air should suffice for his inspiration” (both 33). Purification of the soul, according to Emerson, is the

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key concept to his Transcendentalist philosophy, which can be summed up in the value of self-reliance. It is in fact the concoction of independent actions and lifestyle unattached to any institution that threatens the primacy of the self. Yet, these qualities paradoxically exist under a kind of amorphous central control, namely that of the Over-soul. Implicit in Emerson's writings, the answer to resolve this paradox lies in the consonance that is maintained with the inclinations of joined souls, which makes actions look out of step with social norms. Persian poetry, likewise, explores deep philosophical and paradoxical themes, such as unity in diversity and love's paradox, which is investigated in this part of the dissertation.

As mentioned above, Persian mystical poetry had profound influence on Emerson's writings since the late 1840s. Farhang Jahanpour argues that

his [Emerson's] most active period of writing poetry coincided with the period that he was studying Persian poets. His use of the images that he found in the poems of Hafiz, his deliberate imitation of Persian models and the use of the same material are so intricately bound with his own poems that the influence is to be felt rather than proved. (145)

Emerson's immersion in reading Persian poets endorses his trans-linguistic adaptations of Persian poetry. In the following, some of Emerson's poems – among them “Threnody,” “The Bohemian Hymn,” “Mithridates,” “Bacchus,” “Brahma,” and the poem at the beginning of the essay “Illusions” – are compared, principally thematically and intertextually, with some of Hafiz's ghazals.

#### “Threnody”

“Threnody” is a poem in which Emerson bemoans the death of his son Waldo. It is a deeply personal expression of grief, reflecting his grappling with the profound sense of loss, which attests the power of art and language that can give voice to the most profound aspects of human experience in a powerful, though calm, meditation on the nature of death and human spirit. The poem is thematically comparable to some of Hafiz's poetry, specifically to the ghazal starting with this line:

بیا که قصرِ اَمَلِ سخت سست بنیادست / بیار باده که بنیادِ عمر بر بادست

Come, for the foundations of the mansion of hope are most unsound, /  
Bring wine: life's foundations are on wind. (transl. by Avery 68)

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Similar to “Threnody,” the whole ghazal revolves around profound aspects of human experience and high aspirations that can barely be met in this short and vulnerable life. The ghazal’s speaker finds the transience of life and his high expectations to be “on wind.” This is comparable to the beginning of Emerson’s poem where the speaker draws an appealing picture of nature as “the south-wind brings / Life, sunshine and desire, / And on every mount and meadow / Breathes aromatic fire;” (ll. 1-4) but “over the dead he has no power, / The lost, the lost, he cannot restore” (ll. 5-6). These lines, though creating a beautiful sense of nature, stand in a contrast to the grief that follows. The transitory nature of the world is well expressed by the image of the south wind, as well as the unreturning characteristic of the dead. In the same mentioned ghazal, Hafiz disproves trust in this transitory life:

مجو درستی عهد از جهان سست نهاد / که این عجز، عروس هزار دامادست

نشان عهد و وفا نیست در تبسم گل / بنال بلبل بی دل که جای فریادست

Seek no word-keeping from the world built on sand /

This old hag’s the bride of a thousand wooers.

In the smile of the rose there is no sign of troth [loyalty] and constancy. /

Lament, lover nightingale. There is occasion for lamenting. (transl. by Avery 68)

The metaphorical “world built on sand” signifies the transitory nature of human’s worldly aspirations and ambitions that may remain unfulfilled. That this world is compared to an “old hag” with numerous “wooers” – that represents disloyalty in Persian poetry – suggests the unreliability of this world. The “smile of the rose” likewise implies fleeting gratification of this world, whilst being in the midst of misery and anguish. Comparably, “Threnody” is also a reflection on the transience of life, and the consolation that can be gained in the eternal cycles of nature. The poem’s speaker also meditates on the larger meaning of death and the role it plays in the natural world. The poem ultimately offers a message of acceptance and reconciliation, suggesting that even in the face of great loss, there is a larger harmony and order that persists. In the poem, Emerson expresses his belief in the soul as an eternal life in God and expresses his convictions in words of the strongest meaning:

Wilt thou not ope this heart to know

What rainbows teach, and sunsets show,

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Verdict which accumulates  
From lengthened scroll of human fates,  
Voice of earth to earth returned,  
Prayers of heart that inly burned;  
Saying, what is excellent,  
As God lives, is permanent  
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain,  
Heart's love will meet thee again. (ll. 260-269)

There is a plea directed at the speaker to leave the heart open to understand what nature teaches: rainbows produce awe, but they are fleeting, and sunsets, while ending a day, promise a new dawn. Opening one's heart to knowledge encourages the addressee to shed limitations of the self for a deeper understanding. These lines also express the speaker's opinion about the eternity of the heart and its ultimate return to God. In Hafiz's ghazals, such an open heart is obtainable through self-annihilation and absolute obedience. The following lines epitomize this idea:

حجاب چهره جان می شود غبار تنم / خوشا دمی که از این چهره پرده درفکنم  
چنین قفس نه سزای چو من خوش الحانیست / روم به گلشن رضوان که مرغ آن چمنم  
The dust of my body is becoming the veil in front of the face of the soul /  
O happy the moment when from off that face I cast the veil aside,  
A cage like this is unworthy of a sweet singer like me, /

I will go to the rose bed of Paradise, because I am the bird of that Garden. (transl. by Avery 413)  
Hafiz's speaker longs for spiritual liberation and enlightenment by casting the veil aside, which symbolises distractions of the physical world that conceals the speaker's spiritual nature. "The dust" of the body refers to the materialistic aspect of existence that burdens the speaker. The moment that this burden is cast aside is joyful, since the body is an "unworthy" cage. The ghazal's speaker, the same as Threnody's, translates human existence into a cage, suggesting the confinement within the corporeal, mortal body – from which the eternal soul ultimately must break away. The body, in Hafiz's words, is nothing but a prison that is not worth pondering, since it is cast aside sooner or later. This reflects the core idea of *fana*. In a comparable manner, Emerson reassures that "what rainbows teach, and sunsets show" is that "Heart's love will meet

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thee again” because God is “permanent” (261, 269, 267). In the last couplet of the above-mentioned ghazal, the speaker yearns to meet the permanent God without any intermediary or hindrance. In a mystical sense, it is the lowly desires that stands as hindrance between the lover and God:

بیا و هستی حافظ ز پیشِ او بردار / که با وجودِ تو کس نشنود ز من که منم

Come and from him snatch away Hafiz’s being /

With your being, nobody will hear from me, “I am.” (transl. by Avery 413)

The couplet perfectly resonates with the idea of *fana*, as well as with Emerson’s acknowledgment that “Hearts are dust, hearts’ loves remain, / Heart’s love will meet thee again” (269). That one’s dust – the short-lived passing desires that confine human body and mind – should be cast away is a common theme in the two respective poems. Emerson’s trust in the immortal soul appears in his description of men of genius who “do not fear to die” because they are sure that “in the other life they will be permitted to finish the work begun in this” and it is only “mere men of affairs who tremble at the approach of death” (all qtd. In Ralph Waldo Emerson *His Life* 357). Annihilation of the low self, according to Emerson, does not indicate the cessation of personality, but a perfect harmony with Godhead or the Over-soul, as long as the individual passions and desires are annihilated.

Men of genius, Emerson reiterates in one way or another throughout his works, initiate such a dynamic process of raising their soul to the higher soul while still alive. The following lines of “Threnody” yield new insights about the themes comparable with some of Hafiz’s ghazals. Both Hafiz and Emerson lay emphasis on self-annihilation and *fana*, highly correlating with the mystical idea of submission to the will of God:

Not mine, —I never called thee mine,  
But Nature’s heir, —if I repine,  
And seeing rashly torn and moved  
Not what I made, but what I loved,  
Grow early old with grief that thou  
Must to the wastes of Nature go. (ll. 126-31)

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The mourning speaker admits that s/he had never had the deceased boy in full possession. From the very beginning, the boy was “nature’s heir,” so the speaker remains content and submissive or feigns submission to the higher will. Hafiz puts forth a similar theme in the following ghazal:

در دایره قسمت ما نقطه تسلیمیم / لطف آن چه تو اندیشی حکم آن چه تو فرمایی

فکر خود و رای خود در عالم رندی نیست / کفر است در این مذهب خودبینی و خودرایی

Within the compass of fate, we are the compass point of assent, /

Kindness is what you intend. Command what you command.

self-opinionatedness and self-conceit are not in the world vagabondage, /

in this Order, self-regard and self-approval are apostasy. (transl. by Avery 588)

“The compass of fate” puts the speaker’s tolerance to test before God’s will. The speaker claims to submit willingly to any predestination since it is the divine foreordaining, which bestows salvation. In the meantime, it is essential that “self-opinionatedness and self-conceit” are discarded. Both Hafiz’s ghazal and Emerson’s poem reflect human’s grandeur and nobility. Emerson’s self-reliance is one of the recurrent themes in his writings: the need for each individual to avoid conformity, and the necessity to follow one’s own instincts and ideas. Hafiz regards the human as the Successor (*Khalifa*) of God. The following lines by Hafiz and then by Emerson bring to the fore the shared mystical idea that assumes the grandeur of human, whose capacity, despite being embedded in a corporeal body, can exceed the whole world:

جلوه‌ای کرد رُحّت دید مَلک عشق نداشت / عینِ آتش شد از این غیرت و بر آدم زد

Your cheek revealed lustre. The Angel saw. It lacked the capacity for love. /

Out of jealousy of this, it turned into a fountain of fire and struck Adam. (transl. by Avery 201)

The speaker boasts about human’s “capacity for love” and that Adam was ultimately found appropriate to embrace divine secrets. Emerson, in a similar manner of demonstrating the grandeur of human being since the beginning of mankind, maintains that his son’s beauty defied the beauty of “the sun” and “moon”:

Perchance, not he, but nature ailed,

The world, and not the infant failed,

It was not ripe yet, to sustain

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A genius of so fine a strain,  
Who gazed upon the sun and moon  
As if he came unto his own,  
And, pregnant with his grander thought,  
Brought the old order into doubt.  
His beauty once their beauty tried;  
They could not feed him, and he died. (ll. 136-47)

The speaker makes claims that the deceased boy's grandeur defied beauty. The speaker admits that it has been a great loss because the boy was "born for the future" but became lost "to the future" (line 175). The metaphorical meaning of the word 'pregnant' adds depth to the description of the deceased boy's mental state, emphasising the weight of his 'grander' ideas. Besides, the use of 'pregnant' highlights his mental occupation with giving birth to intellectually significant ideas, not with commonplace thoughts. The 'grander thought' indicates substantial and potentially revolutionary ideas, which challenge the existing order. 'The world' was not favourable and assuring for the young boy. In fact, this is the world, not the boy, who is facing failure. The mention of the 'infant' suggests both the world's immaturity to appreciate the "genius" boy and the fleeting nature of the world. Hafiz adopts a similar position when addressing the transitory and unfulfilling substance of the world in his ghazals:

بنشین بر لبِ جوی و گذرِ عمر ببین / کاین اشارت ز جهانِ گذران، ما را بس

Sit at the edge of a stream and see life's passing /

and for us this token of the transitory world is enough. (transl. by Avery 331)

In Persian literature, a stream of water frequently signifies the passage of life that is detrimental to human's high ambitions and tends to thwart them. Sitting by a stream signifies the fleeting moments of life that flow by the watcher, underscoring the prominence of appreciating the present moment. Both Hafiz and Emerson emphasise the transitory nature of this life through nature imagery. But this ephemeral life, in fact, serves as catalyst for the annihilation of the ego as it reveals the illusory nature of life. *Fana*, which annihilates the self to unite with God, allows individuals to transcend the limitations the self while recognising the impermanent quality of life. Over-Soul, too, encourages individuals to transcend the finite self and unite with something greater than it by realising the transient nature of life.

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Emerson's "Threnody" explores the transcendent nature of life and death, as well as the idea of the eternal spirit and the notion that death is not an end but a transition to another state of being. The poem reiterates the mystical idea that every soul returns finally to God (or Over-Soul, in Emerson's words), whereby "worlds of lovers hem thee in" (line 187) as there is only "the mystic gulf from God to man" (line 186), which "overflowing Love shall fill" (line 193). This realisation, the poem's speaker asserts, is revealed only to "the pure" who "shall see by their own will" (both line 191). The speaker seems to refer to Emerson's own idea of self-reliance, which emphasises one's free will to decide, and that it is "not within the force of fate" (line 193) but down to one's own judgement. The speaker suggests a kind of serenity after death since it is the time when lovers are convened, and their worlds are merged. These lines – most probably to find consolation in this despair about his son's death – also suggest that the speaker's dead son's soul has transcended earthly limitations. Although not exactly the same as mystical death in *fana*, which death before death as an act of uniting with God, the death in Emerson's "Threnody" is praised as an act of transcending the mortal body and becoming part of the Over-Soul. Death, too, features prominently in Hafiz's poetry. The following lines demonstrate convincingly the ghazal's speaker's self-reliance upon uniting with the beloved totally of his/her own volition:

مژده وصل تو کو کز سر جان برخیزم / طایر قدسم و از دام جهان برخیزم

Where the good news of union with you, for me to rise from desiring life? /

I am the holy bird and would rise from the snare which the world sets. (transl. by Avery 407)

The speaker calls him/herself "the holy bird" that represents human's soul being cognisant of the divine world. For such a person, the world feels like a snare from which the bird must escape, so the speaker does not fear death but regards it as a liberation. In comparison, Emerson's poem goes so far as confronting death fearlessly. The speaker's sense of awe and wonder at the mysteries of death culminates in these lines: "My servant Death, with solving rite, / Pours finite into infinite" (236-37). Death elevates the dead person's soul to a higher level of existence, that Hafiz finds its culmination in the voluntary self-annihilation:

جانِ علوی هوسِ چاهِ زنخدان تو داشت / دست در حلقه آن زلفِ حَم اندر حَم زد

The high-aspiring soul possessed the desire for the dimple in your chin /

It struck out the hand into the ring of those curls of enmeshed tresses. (transl. by Avery 201)

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The burning desire to unite with the beloved never ceases. The high-aspiring soul longs to return to its original locus, which is attainable before physical death merely through chosen self-annihilation. The same idea recurs in these lines:

من ایستاده تا کُئَمَش جان فدا چو شمع / او خود گذر به ما چو نسیمِ سحر نکرد

I, standing, to make my life, like a candle, a sacrifice to him [her] /

He [She], like the morning breeze, did not pass by us. (transl. by Avery 191)

Although like the morning breeze, the beloved is utterly indifferent to the lover and love is not reciprocated, the lover does not hesitate to be sacrificed for the beloved. The image of candle intensifies the love that is burning inside the lover, who is finally consumed by this flame. The idea of self-annihilation emerges in the image of the candle consuming itself. In Emerson's "Threnody," the idea of self-annihilation culminates in the last lines: "House and tenant go to ground, / Lost in God, in Godhead found" (ll. 288-89). These lines unreservedly state the ultimate return of every soul to the Over-Soul. The dead person's soul finally dissolves in God and then found in Godhead, the substance of God in Christianity. The same theme has overtones associated with *fana* in the following ghazal:

چگونه طوف کنم در فضایی عالمِ قدس؟ / که در سراچه ترکیب، تخته بندِ تنم

How can I make any circuit [circle on foot ritualistically] in the space of the World of Holiness, /  
When, in the enclosed world of contrivance, I am tied to the plank of my body? (transl. by Avery 413)

These lines by Hafiz have mystical overtones, which relate to the necessity of casting away the veil of soul, i.e. the materialistic desires and cravings that conceal the truth of creation. In Islamic faith, the ultimate return of soul to God is truly fulfilled in paradise. However, a union with God is spiritually possible in this world if soul is not "tied to the plank of body," referring to the soul's bind to the body that debars the soul from unity with God as long as man is attached to materialistic desires.

As mentioned above, Emerson translated seven hundred lines of Persian poetry into English through the mediation of German translations, essentially with the help of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's German translations of Hafiz *Der Diwan von Mohammed Schemseddin Hafiz* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1812-13) and *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens* (1818).

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Emerson's own translations, and subsequently his increasing admiration for Persian lyric poetry, basically arises from the multilingual relationship – namely the interactive dialogue that is built between Persian and English with German being the rendering medium for English – that links Emerson to the Persian poets. As a result, Emerson borrowed from Persian imagery and sentiments to either produce his own poems or elaborate on his translations. For instance, his quatrain entitled “Hafiz” reads as such:

Her passions the shy violet  
From Hafiz never hides;  
Love-longings of the raptured bird  
The bird to him confides. (2014)

It is a familiar motif in Persian poetry that violets are personified as shy and bashful girls. A conspicuous feature of violets is their humble appearance, that makes them “slightly bend on their stalks, as if looking down for shame” (H. A‘lam 665). A combination of certain botanical features of violets has given rise to three Romantic associations of ideas in Persian classical literature: (1) modesty and bashfulness; (2) neglect; (3) regret, sorrowfulness, and mournfulness (H. A‘lam, 665). The following lines from Hafiz’s ghazals represent the first feature of violets:

تاب بنفشه می‌دهد طره مشکسای تو / پرده غنچه می‌درد خنده دلگشای تو

The twist of your musk-diffusing curl makes the violet writhe /

Your heart-expanding laughter rips the rose bud open. (transl. by Avery 488)

The speaker affirms that “the twist of your musk-diffusing curl” abashes the violet because the beloved’s ringlets of hair are adorned with spectacular twist and warp. Locks of hair – both that of women and men – traditionally suggests beauty in Persian classical poetry. In these lines, the violet gets embarrassed and bashful when encountering the beloved’s ringlets of hair.

بنفشه طره مفتول خود گره می‌زد / صبا حکایت زلف تو در میان انداخت

The violet was crinkling its curling tress /

The morning breeze threw the legend of yours into the midst. (transl. by Avery 43)

Here the other traditional association of violet comes into play, namely that with regret and mournfulness. While the violet is, metaphorically speaking, swinging and tying its hair, the

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morning breeze, symbolising courier and messenger for the beloved, narrates publicly the legend of the beloved's charming hair, which makes the violet feel sorrowful and discredited.

In Emerson's poem, the violet is shy as it is represented in Persian poetry, but it seeks counsel with Hafiz, with whom she can share her passions. At the same time, the bird is raptured, similar to *bolbol-e-mast* (بلبل مست / drunk nightingale) in Persian poetry, in which the bird is inebriated by its love for the flower. In Emerson's quatrain, the bird finds no better confidant than Hafiz to lay bare his "love-longings." The flower–nightingale motif, in which the nightingale directs his desires toward the flower, developed in Persian mystical poetry. While Emerson directs his poem's bird's longing to the violet as well, both the violet and the bird ultimately resort to Hafiz as their confidant and intercessor.

Emerson's remarks about Hafiz show his reasonable understanding of Persian poems although he was not competent in Persian. For instance, in "The Poet," Emerson writes about poets in general and while he does not mention any poet by name, there are lines that – regarding his translations of Persian poetry and many other references scattered in his writings – most likely refer to Hafiz. The following lines contain one of these examples:

He whom God had thus preferred,  
To whom sweet angels ministered,  
Saluted him each morn as brother,  
And bragged his virtues to each other. (ll. 198-201)

These lines are comparable to the following prose translations from Hafiz made by Emerson for the essay on "Persian Poetry": "I heard the harp of the planet Venus, and it said in the early morning, I am the disciple of the sweet-voiced Hafiz" and it is when "Hafiz sings, the angels hearken, and Anaitis, the leader of the starry host, calls even the Messiah in heaven out to the dance" (240). These translations recall Emerson's adaptations and appropriations of Persian poetic themes and imagery. Hafiz's corresponding lines to Emerson's translation are as follows:

صبحدم از عرش می آمد خروشی، عقل گفت / قدسیان گویی که شعر حافظ از بر می کنند

At the time of morning, a chorus was coming from the Throne /  
Reason said: "It seems angels chant poems of Hafiz by heart." (transl. by Avery 254)

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Here, the “Reason” is personified as an interpreter of the divine “chorus” that appreciates and reveres Hafiz’s work. That the angels chant his poems, which they know by heart, represents in what high esteem he is held among masters of Persian poets. It is also a metaphor for the universal appreciation of his poems.

Emerson’s essay “The Poet” indicates that the actual correspondence of thought and of expression between Emerson and Hafiz is not sporadic but frequent in Emerson’s poems. One example of such a correspondence pertains to how the idea of a union with God is developed. Persian mystical poetry delights to dwell on the complete union with God. Persian mystic poets go so far in this direction as to speak of man’s ‘absorption into God’. Before this can happen, the poets unanimously emphasise complete reliance on and trust in God. Emerson, in his poem “Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift,” draws on the same theme: “Hold of the Maker, not the Made; / Sit with the Cause, or grim or glad” (ll. 253-4). These lines remarkably echo the Persian mystical theme that places unwavering reliance on the real cause of the world, no matter what appearances represent. Regarding the lover experiencing mystical moments, Hafiz confidently asserts that the origin of laughter and crying – symbolic of all the lover’s mystical reactions, manners, and emotions – stems from the beloved’s desire:

خنده و گریه عشاق ز جایی دگر است / می‌سرایم به شب و وقت سحر می‌مویم

From another place is the laughing and the weeping of lovers /

In the night (through union with the beloved) I sing in the morning time (through separation) I  
moan. (transl. by Avery 456)

The ghazal’s speaker insists that the lovers’ laughter and weeping are inadvertent, since the cause of any *Hāl* (mystical meditative state) originates from God’s will. *Hāl* is a Persian word that refers to “a modality of the instant, and in its particular sense, to the physical, spiritual, or emotional state of a person” (During 580). In these lines, the speaker claims to have attained the highest *Hāl* possible. It is “getting out of one’s physical self in order to attain a higher state of consciousness, the origins of which are to be sought in mysticism” (During 580). This is essentially the moment in which the mystic attains *fana* (self-annihilation). In such a high state of consciousness, according to Islamic mysticism, one can decipher the (previously) unseen mysteries. This calls to mind Hafiz’s nickname the ‘Tongue of the Unseen’. Such a metaphor, the one who gives voice to the invisible, “closely resembles the function of Emerson’s

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transparent eyeball that becomes a primary statement on an attempt to transcend self-identification” (Sedarat 57). As mentioned before, Emerson fashioned a philosophical metaphor called the ‘transparent eye-ball’. It represents an eye that is absorbent and takes in all that nature has to offer. He remarks that “I become a transparent eye-ball,” which denotes “I am nothing” so that “I see all,” as he can observe “the currents of the Universal Being circulate” through him, which leads him to see himself “part or particle of God” (all “Nature” 13). The concept of “nothing” plays an essential part in understanding Emerson; it necessitates one’s selfhood to be devoid of egotism, that takes precedence over one’s selfless acts. This resonates with the mystical act of self-annihilation (*fana*) in Hafiz’s ghazals.

Emerson’s words, “Sit with the Cause” (line 254) in his poem “Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift,” too, are closely related to many other ghazals in Hafiz’s Divan. I quote here four lines that are extremely similar to Emerson’s lines:

سال‌ها دل طلبِ جامِ جم از ما می‌کرد / و آنچه خود داشت ز بیگانه تمنا می‌کرد  
گوهری کز صدفِ کون و مکان بیرون است / طلب از گمشدگان لبِ دریا می‌کرد

Years the heart was seeking Jamshid’s cup from us /  
That which it itself possessed, it was desiring of a stranger,  
A pearl that is outside the shell of time and place, /

From the lost in the ocean main it was seeking. (transl. by Avery 185)

The speaker reprimands anyone who seeks Jamshid’s cup – the cup that shows the world, and also the heart of the mystic that reflects world’s mysteries – from others while it has always been within his/her own heart, where, according to Muslim mystics, God resides. Here the “stranger” essentially represents the worldly aspect of the speaker, who has been alienated from his own heart. The “pearl,” which is not contained in time and place, is well rendered in Jamshid’s cup. In essence, the speaker encourages everyone’s return to God. Likewise, Emerson seeks companionship with the original Cause in “Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift.” The companionship is essentially possible when one undergoes the mystical act of self-annihilation.

As discussed above, the prerequisite for *fana*, according to mystical teachings, is the annihilation of the egoistic self, which demands that one realise that there is no such thing as self when coming in terms with God as the real Being. In the same manner, Emerson describes an elevation

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into infinite space and an ecstatic self-transcending union with the divine. He affirms that becoming a 'transparent eye-ball' and subsequently transcending the enclosed self is "a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet" ("Nature" 11). Emerson's 'transparent eye-ball' passage is a unique mystical moment in his works. In his words, the ideal poet simply integrates all parts and enters all the currents of 'the Universal Being' that ultimately annihilates the poet's own low self and uplifts it to the level of a constituent of God. Becoming a 'transparent eye-ball', one sheds one's ego and unites with nature through interconnectedness of all natural phenomena. It is also feasible to detect the definition of the 'transparent eye-ball' being crystalised in the writings of many Persian mystical poets, such as Hafiz, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rumi (1207-1273) and Nūr ad-Dīn 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jami (1414-1492). Their poems perceptibly represent the absorbent quality that takes in all natural marvels. This absorbent quality requires the poet's own perception to illustrate the extraordinary through the ordinary, which reveals to the poet the presence of a high power. The following lines by Hafiz indicate the way he draws at an ontological conclusion through natural imagery and illustrates the extraordinary through the ordinary. It is through natural, ordinary phenomena and creatures, that the poet proceeds toward the highest Being, namely the beloved:

بلبلی برگِ گلی خوش رنگ در منقار داشت / و اندر آن برگ و نوا خوش ناله‌های زار داشت

گفتمش در عین وصل، این ناله و فریاد چیست؟ / گفت ما را جلوه معشوق در این کار داشت

A nightingale had in its beak a rose-petal of beautiful colour /

But for that blessing set up a clamour of bitter lamentations.

I asked it, "Why at the very moment of union this crying and woe?" /

It answered, "The beauty of the beloved has reduced me to this." (transl. by Avery 119)

Animals, such as the nightingale, and living things such as the rose, the speaker sees the beloved's beauty. The lamentations sound pleasant since, though separate from the beloved, the sorrow of separation is itself gratifying. Another example is as follows:

بلبل ز شاخ سرو به گلبانگ پهلوی / می‌خواند دوش درس مقامات معنوی

یعنی بیا که آتش موسی نمود گل / تا از درخت نکته توحید بشنوی

Last night the nightingale, warbling in Pahlavi from the cypress branch /

Was reciting the lesson of the Stages on the Way of Spiritual Meaning.

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It was saying “Come, because the rose has displayed the fire which Moses saw, /

So that from the bush the subtlety of the Oneness you might hear.” (transl. by Avery 577)

The nightingale’s warbling, which seems superficial on the surface, transports the speaker by striking a chord with the spiritual world. The nightingale’s singing makes the speaker ponder the Oneness (Tawhid, the indivisible oneness concept of monotheism in Islam). About Hafiz, Emerson writes in his notebooks: “He is [...] like a nightingale intoxicated with his own music” and he insists that “not every poet sings inspired verse” (both 1993, 119). The inebriated nightingale represents the creative poet in a state of blissful absorption in the artistic expression. Emerson looks up to Hafiz and assumes that real poets ought to get inspired to create poetry.

In “Spiritual Laws,” Emerson proposes that if a man observes his own daily activities precisely, he may discern the presence of a higher power or will that regulates the events around him. This characterises people of discernment who “in their honest moments, have always sung ‘Not unto us, not unto us’” (128). They ascribe their success to a higher power. In other words, they believe that whatever “externally seemed will and immovableness was willingness and *self-annihilation* [emphasis added]” (ibid.). Emerson strongly argues that history’s great thinkers could ultimately conclude that their own determination and will power have been of no or little effect, but it was the will of the higher power or God and their willingness and readiness in embracing His will. Emerson explores the idea that what may appear as external will and steadfastness is fundamentally a manifestation of self-annihilation, as an inner state of willingness and selflessness. Such a level of the interconnectedness of the individual soul with the universal spirit, characterised by an inner disposition of openness, surrender, or self-negation is well projected across Hafiz’s ghazals. The following lines from one of Hafiz’s ghazals exemplify this idea:

می خور که عاشقی نه به کسب است و اختیار / این موهبت رسید ز میراثِ فطرتم

Drink wine, because to be a lover is not by personal acquisition or choice /

This gift came as my creation’s legacy. (transl. by Avery 381)

The ghazal’s speaker makes a transcendental claim and attributes the spiritual state of love to a legacy, which is already destined by the higher power. Love is not an outcome of effort and willpower but a gift from one’s own nature. This genuine love maybe gained despite transgressing societal norms. On a comparative scale, Hafiz and Emerson assume that true

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strength and movability come from a spiritual state of selflessness and alignment with higher principles rather than mere external displays of willpower or stubbornness.

#### “Mithridates”

Another example that indicates a correspondence of thought and expression between Emerson and Hafiz appears in Emerson’s “Mithridates.” This poem seems to have been inspired by Emerson’s translation of one of Hafiz’s poems. I quote it here from his essay “Persian Poetry:”

Oft have I said, I say it once more,  
I, a wanderer, do not stray from myself.  
I am a kind of parrot; the mirror is holden to me;  
What the Eternal says, I stammering say again.  
Give me what you will; I eat thistles as roses,  
And according to my food I grow and I give.  
Scorn me not, but know I have the pearl,  
And am only seeking one to receive it. (241)

And here are Hafiz’s original lines, followed by a twenty-first century translation:

بارها گفته‌ام و بار دگر می‌گویم / که من دلشده این ره نه به خود می‌پویم  
در پس آینه طوطی صفتم داشته‌اند / آن چه استاد ازل گفت بگو می‌گویم  
من اگر خارم و گر گل چمن آرایی هست / که از آن دست که او می‌کشدم می‌رویم  
خنده و گریه عشاق ز جایی دگر است / می‌سرایم به شب و وقت سحر می‌مویم

I have said many times and will say one more time /  
That I the lost do not of myself run this course.  
As if I were a parrot, I have been kept the wrong side of the looking-glass /  
What the Master of Eternity without Beginning said, “Say” I say  
Whether I am the thorn or whether the rose, there is an Adorner of the field /  
It is by that power by which he plants me that I grow.  
From another place is the laughing and the weeping of lovers /

In the night (through union with the beloved) I sing in the morning time (through separation) I  
moan. (transl. by Avery 456)

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Here, the speaker acknowledges the power of divine will and predestination. According to the fourth line of the ghazal, the speaker becomes utterly impotent against “the Master of Eternity” – or in Emerson’s translation “the Eternal” – since the speaker is totally submissive to God’s will, which is the prerequisite for the pursuit of *fana*. This also brings to light Emerson’s belief in the first-hand experience of God. Stephen Whicher’s classic study of Emerson’s inner life, *Freedom and Fate: An Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2017), proposes that Emerson’s turn from the outer to the inner world was meant to affirm one’s ability to experience God first-hand. He argues that “Emerson’s dawn came when his soul perceived God in the one place doubt could never reach – in itself” (20). Comparable to Hafiz’s ghazal, the speaker of Emerson’s poem seeks reunion with the original cause. These lines from “Mithridates” are comparable with his translation of Hafiz mentioned above:

Give me agates for my meat;  
Give me cantharids to eat;  
From air and ocean bring me foods,  
From all zones and altitudes.

[...]

Too long shut in strait and few,  
Thinly dieted on dew,  
I will use the world, and sift it,  
To a thousand humors shift it,  
As you spin a cherry.

[...]

Hither! take me, use me, fill me,  
Vein and artery, though ye kill me!  
God I will not be an owl,

But sun me in the Capitol. (ll. 6-9, 20-24, 31-34)

Hafiz’s ghazal is more about humans as a reflection of the divine, which is expressed in the metaphors of mirror and parrot that mimic merely what the Master of Eternity dictates; nevertheless, made in God’s image, the ghazal’s speaker claims that s/he owns a precious pearl and should share it with whoever capable of receiving it. Despite human’s intrinsic weakness, the

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ghazal's speaker endorses human's innate worth. Comparably, Emerson's poem takes the same idea from Hafiz's ghazal and, despite human's mean circumstances, asserts human's dignity and spiritual value. The poem's speaker does not care to be fed "agates" (line 6), or "cantharids" (line 7) nor does s/he mind being "long shut in strait and few" (line 20) or "thinly dieted on dew" (line 21), since it is all corporeal; nevertheless, he is not content to be an "owl" (line 33), but wishes to sit aloft on "the Capitol" (line 34), which symbolizes engagement in society and political affairs. The speaker wishes to be amid affairs rather than being a secluded poet.

However, it is not merely in Emerson's adaptation of Persian imagery that one can detect the influence of Hafiz, but also in his use of many ideas from his ghazals. Emerson condemns British empiricism of their lack of "poetic power, and nothing original or beautiful" ("Literature" 182), except for Shakespeare, who exemplifies "the union of Saxon precision and Oriental soaring" (179). In the next paragraphs of the same essay, he elaborates further on his point, extolling the Persian poets' apathy to magnitudes. Of Hafiz Emerson says in his lecture to an English audience in 1856: "That expansiveness which is the essence of the poetic element, they [the British] have not. It was no Oxonian, but Hafiz, who said, "Let us be crowned with roses, let us drink wine, and break up the tiresome old roof of heaven into new forms"" (195). He comments on a lack of expansiveness in the British character in comparison to Hafiz's poetic spirit. The mention of Hafiz adds a cross-cultural dimension to Emerson's argument. These lines can be read as appropriations of one of Hafiz's poems:

بیا تا گل برافشانیم و می در ساغر اندازیم / فلک را سقف بشکافیم و طرحی نو دراندازیم

(o murshid) come, so that the rose (of ease and of pleasure) we may scatter, and into the cup the  
wine cast /

(by our inward strength) the roof of the sky we rend, and (to the height of another heaven) a new  
way, cast. (transl. by Avery 450)

The tone of these lines is liberating, inviting everyone to revelry and rebellion. The images of wine and roses evoke a festive atmosphere while defying the established authority by rending the roof of the sky, which metaphorically refers to the violation of societal expectations, and devising a new way. These verses exemplify how Hafiz's poetry offered Emerson the ideas and images of an expansive, liberating spirit. Emerson refers to Hafiz by asserting that the phrase 'Let us be crowned with roses, let us drink wine, and break up the tiresome old roof of heaven

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into new forms' exemplifies Hafiz's poetic expansiveness, which reflects Hafiz's willingness to challenge conventional thinking. The speaker of Hafiz's poem claims to be able to create a new design because when one is liberated and self-confident enough, nothing may debar them. Emerson, too, lays ultimate hope on achieving a union with the Over-Soul, so, despite being cumbersome, the way may not be prevented as long as one has enough self-reliance.

#### "Days"

Another instance of the correspondence of thought and of expression between Emerson and Hafiz develops in Emerson's poem "Days." The moral and general idea of this poem clearly resonates with the bitter denunciation of hypocritical authorities and blatant disregard for officials, which is a recurring motif in Hafiz's ghazals. The following lines by Hafiz make an outstanding case for Emerson's poem:

واعظان کاین جلوہ در محراب و منبر می کنند / چون به خلوت می روند آن کارِ دیگر می کنند  
مشکلی دارم ز دانشمندِ مجلس بازپرس / توبه فرمایان چرا خود توبه کمتر می کنند؟  
گویا باور نمی دارند روزِ داوری / کاین همه قلب و دَغَل در کارِ داور می کنند

The admonishers who, in the prayer-arch and the pulpit, grandeur make /  
When into their chamber they go, that work of another kind they make  
I have a problem. Ask the assembly's wise one /  
Why enforcers of repentance themselves so little repent  
It might be said that they do not believe in Judgement Day /

Because in the judge's business they practice all this falsity and jugglery. (transl. by Avery 254)

These lines altogether inveigh against hypocrisy and religious corruption. That the admonishers occupy themselves with affairs contrary to what they themselves preach regarding religious ethics and morality indicates their hypocrisy. That they enforce repentance on other people while they themselves barely repent, is, the speaker concludes, sheer hypocrisy. Emerson's "Days" starts by observing the procession of "the hypocritic Days" that are cast in terms of an Oriental procession, being personified, and feminised as "Daughters of Time" (line 1). The days are deceivers because they rob human being of their lives while they are marching "muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes" (line 2). This is where the image of dervishes comes into play. This oriental imagery of the poem "transforms a commonplace theme into a memorable poem"

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(Angyal). In Persian literature, the dervish is a member of a Muslim religious order noted for devotional exercises, who tries to approach God by choosing material poverty and focusing on the values of love and service. In Emerson's poem, the hypocritical days are compared to barefoot dervishes who "bring diadems and fagots in their hands" (line 4), whilst dervishes are typically symbols of indigence, asceticism, and abstemiousness. The speaker in fact criticises the days, which simultaneously appear as "Daughters of Time" (line 1) with their crowns and fagots, and "barefoot dervishes" (line 2), as symbols of asceticism. This contradiction features the hypocrisy of the days. However, the poem's speaker hastily rejects the riches of life that the days bring. The speaker "watched the pomp" (line 7), meaning the procession of the passing moments and days, but s/he rejected the gifts offered by the days and preferred "a few herbs and apples" (line 9). The speaker leaves it to the reader to infer what the "morning wishes" the speaker had forgotten and abandoned for the more sedate herbs and apples, emblematic of contentment in life.

The state of *fana*, the dissolution of personal interests and egoism, implicitly suggests contentment since it releases one from the incessant sequence of desire and discontentment. Such a liberation brings about peace and tranquillity. In Emerson's "Days," contentment, in a similar manner, is closely associated with the Over-Soul, functioning as a universal spirit creating unity. Individuals, connecting with this spiritual unity of being, experience a sense of contentment and fulfilment, which requires detachment from personal desires, as depicted in the speaker's indifference to worldly gifts offered by the days.

Regarding female gendering, the days – being "Daughters of Time" – are gendered as female. Yet, their gender does not seem to be rigidly fixed because the days are immediately likened to "barefoot dervishes" (line 2). Historically speaking, dervishes have been largely men; thus, when the word dervish comes up, it calls to mind the image of a man rather than a woman. However, the evident interchangeability of gender of the days can be linked to the idea of self-annihilation. In fact, the mixed gendering of the metaphors can relate to the dynamic and strenuous path that dervishes must tread to approach God through self-annihilation. Given that the poem's speaker does not take notice of materialistic desires and does not mind the gender of the days; either they are daughters or dervishes or they can be both.

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Given that the poem “Days” contains some images and concepts of Persian mystical poetry, it is unsurprising that it is full of Sufism associations. Similar to Persian dervishes, the poem’s speaker appears, even if momentarily and pathetically, “indigent, ascetic, and abstemious” (Algar). However, the day scorns the speaker’s choice for having squandered his/her time in contemplation instead of living life to the fullest. Yet, the speaker does not realize this in time: “I, too late, / Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn” (ll. 10-11). When the speaker finally comes to grips with the realities of life, although the gifts of the days are already gone. Comparable to the poem’s idle and abstemious speaker, Hafiz’s ghazals contain images of dervishes who are perfectly content with material poverty:

در این بازار اگر سودیست با درویش خرسند است / خدایا منعم گردان به درویشی و خرسندی

If in this marketplace there is any profit, it is to the contented dervish /

O God make me the beneficiary of dervishism and blessed contentment. (transl. by Avery 520)

The ghazal’s speaker compares the corporeal world to the marketplace wherein everything is turned into a commodity. Hafiz’s ghazal 50 is a comprehensive account of the indigent life that dervishes live, yet they gain the most out of life due to their simplistic lifestyle. These dervishes purportedly deserve spiritual values since they are honest and sincere. This ghazal can be categorized as a mystical poem. The following lines from ghazal 50 show a close thematic parallel with Emerson’s “Days”:

روضه خُلدِ برین خلوت درویشان است / مایه محتشمی خدمتِ درویشان است

The garden of the Highest Paradise is the Dervishes’ private retreat / The essence of exaltation is the service of the Dervishes. (transl. by Avery 86)

The word “garden” is the image that both Hafiz and Emerson employ to create their imagery of the nature as a retreat for exaltation and contemplation. The garden of “Days” serves as a backdrop for the speaker’s reflections on time. It also creates a cultivated space of connection with nature. The seclusion that ‘pleached garden’ provides recalls the image of Sufi recluses, who prefer seclusion to keep intimate company with God. The next lines of the ghazal roughly match with Emerson’s poem:

گنجِ عُزَلت که طلسماتِ عجایب دارد / فتحِ آن در نظرِ رحمتِ درویشان است

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In the compassion of the glance of Dervishes is the unlocking / Of the treasure of glory, that has wonderous talismans. (transl. by Avery)

In the above-quoted translation by Peter Avery, the key word is *uzlat* (عُزْلَت), which is rendered as ‘glory’, and it is better to translate it as ‘seclusion’ because it transfers the meaning of the lines more accurately. Seclusion is per se a treasure making any worldly gift insignificant in the eyes of the ghazal’s mystical speaker. Profound seclusion has transformative power that leads to self-discovery and mystical awakening. In as much as seclusion is regarded as a treasure, as explained in the chapter of “Hafiz and Keats,” it is the prerequisite to achieve *fana*. Comparably, the speaker of Emerson’s poem discards any worldly gifts, no matter whether they are “diadems” or “fagots” of wood. The speaker prefers voluntary seclusion and modest life, which, when juxtaposed with the oriental imagery, calls to mind the image of a mystic seeking self-annihilation, whereby the speaker may obtain awareness of an intrinsic unity.

#### “Bacchus”

As mentioned before, one traditional feature of Persian mystical poetry is the extensive employment of sensuous images, which imply eroticism and bacchanalianism. Emerson’s “Bacchus” is one among many of his poems being inspired by Persian sources. The source of his inspiration for the poem becomes evident in some lines of Hafiz’s anacreontic verses of his “Sāqi-nāma” (“Book of the Cupbearer”), a part of which Emerson himself had translated under the plain title “From the Persian of Hafiz, I.” However, the poem “Bacchus” is not a direct translation of Hafiz, but only an imitation. A general correspondence in thought and expression is manifest between the two poems. They both have a tone of high exhilaration, and the language is imperative and they both esteem wine as more than the mere juice of the grape, seeing in it the power of liberating the mind to new ecstasies and insights, and relieving it of misery.

“Bacchus” exemplifies Emerson’s adaptation of the images of wine and intoxication in quite the same sense they are employed in Persian mystical poetry. Emerson himself was aware of the thought that the poem might be taken as a translation, so in July 1846 – in a letter to Elizabeth Hoar – he writes that he had been working on some poems that he felt impatient to show her, “especially some verses called Bacchus [...] not, however, translated from Hafiz” (1904, 443). About Hafiz, he writes in his notebooks: “He is [...] like a nightingale intoxicated with his own music,” insisting that “not every poet sings inspired verse” (1993, both 119). Emerson looks up

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to the drunk Hafiz and assumes that real poets ought to get inspired by whatever means necessary to be able to create poetry. As in Persian poetry, an intoxicated poet is on a par with an inspired poet, whose poems are privileged. In “Bacchus,” Emerson imitates Hafiz and speaks of wine as something which takes him out of himself, beyond time and space: “Pour, Bacchus! the remembering wine; / Retrieve the loss of me and mine!” (Lines 51-2). The wine acts like a liberating element that relieves the speaker. A characteristic of that is a recurring theme in Hafiz’s ghazals. The following lines are just a few of many examples in Hafiz’s Divan. The following lines bring to the fore the brief respite that wine and its subsequent intoxication brings:

شرابِ تلخ می‌خواهم که مردافکن بُود زورش / که تا یک دم بیاسایم ز دنیا و شر و شورش

It is intoxicating wine I want, the strength of which knocks me out, /  
I might perhaps find respite from the world, and its wrongs and distractions. (transl. by Avery 342)

The speaker yearns for wine as a brief respite from the tumultuous world. The speaker finds momentary solace and peace in wine, which relieves one from the demands of this world.

ما در پیاله عکس رخ یار دیده ایم / ای بی خبر ز لذت شرب مدام ما

You, unaware of our constant drinking’s sweetness /

In the bowl we have seen the reflection of the friend’s cheek. (transl. by Avery 34)

A profound connection between the lover and beloved is created through the metaphorical expression of constant drinking that makes the lover unaware of anything and anybody but the reflection of the beloved in the wine. The moments of intoxications provide peace for the lover.

حدیث از مطرب و می گو و راز دهر کمتر جو / کسی نگشود و نگشاید به حکمت این معما را

Talk of minstrels and wine, and probe less the secret of the sphere /

No one by intellectual reasoning has solved this riddle, nor ever will. (transl. by Avery 21)

The speaker emphasises that there is no definitive answer to the hidden secrets of this world, which baffles everyone, so it is highly recommended to imbibe excessively. These lines correspond to the major theme of “Bacchus,” namely spirituality and mysticism. The speaker pursues a transcendent experience through the imagery of a wine with roots reaching “under the Andes to the Cape” (line 4). The sense of seeking a higher delight beyond the earthly one

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suggests a pursuit of mystical experience similar to the above-quoted lines by Hafiz, which invite others to refrain from solving the world's riddles, i.e. the hidden secrets of the world, instead, people would be better off talking about sweetness and drinking intoxicating wine, which makes it possible to transcend the self. Emerson's "Bacchus," too, celebrates the intoxicating power of wine, through which one can transcend the limitations of the self and merge with the Over-Soul. The wine that "never grew / In the belly of the grape" (ll. 1-2) dissolves boundaries between human beings and the Over-Soul, through which nature and human are connected.

Another theme "Bacchus" shares with Hafiz's ghazals relates to imagination. In "Bacchus," the request for a wine that did not grow conventionally "in the belly of the grape" (line 2) reflects an aspiration for something beyond the ordinary, emphasising the power of imagination, which can perceive realities beyond the immediate. This imagination creates a fantastical depiction of the transformative wine, with an extraordinary origin, which does not go through the ordinary process of winemaking. The mythical elements, such as the references to Styx and Erebus, are incorporated into the poem and reinforce the divine sense of the wine. Similar to the above-quoted lines by Hafiz, the wine in "Bacchus" turns "the woe of night" to "a more rich delight" (ll. 10-11). In some of Hafiz's ghazals, wine likewise effectively transforms woe into delight. In the second above-quoted line, the speaker refers to the constant delight of wine drinking. This constant delight also appears in connection with imagination. The following lines by Hafiz exemplify this close connection:

صَبَاحَ الْخَيْرِ زِدْ بَلْبِلْ، كَجَائِي سَاقِيَا؟ بَرَخِيزْ / كِه غَوَا مِي كَنْدِ دَر سِرِ خِيَالِ خَوَابِ دُوشِينِم

The nightingale has sung "Good morning." Where are you, wine-boy? Get up /  
Because the vision [imagination] of last night's dream has my head turmoil. (transl. by Avery 425)

The speaker wakes up with the sweet dream of last night and requests wine because the dream, referring to the poetic power of imagination, still possesses the speaker's head. This metaphorical expression means the person is still preoccupied with the dream, or the imagination of last night, for which there is only one remedy, i.e. wine, which may, at least, console the speaker. The wine in Emerson's "Bacchus," on the contrary, does not soothe but provokes revelatory experiences connecting individuals to the Over-Soul.

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#### “Illusions”

Persian mystical poetry fosters the belief in the illusory nature of the tangible world and human being's sense-fettered separation from the source of all things, presumed to be God in Sufi teachings. The elaborate poetic system that Persian mystical poets such as Rumi (1207-1273), Hafiz (1325-1390), Jami (1414-1492) extensively employed, engaged Emerson's philosophical and transcendental ideas. He engages with this idea of the illusory nature of the tangible world in his essay “Illusions” published in his *The Conduct of Life* (1860), which is a collection of essays based on lectures delivered in 1851. These essays present the development of his ethical ideas. It is often considered Emerson's most mature work, the essays of which also sound partly confessional and reveal his development towards a better awareness of human's limitations.

Emerson starts his essay with a poem depicting the idea of the illusive world. The poem straightaway brings to the fore elusiveness of the world, but simultaneously its dynamicity, depicting “waves” that are “accursed, adored” and they are “of mutation” (all ll. 1-3). The metaphorical use of the waves is reminiscent of the same image in Persian mystical poetry, where they are a metonymy, specifically, a *pars pro toto*, for the sea. The waves ultimately fade away and unify with the sea as a whole. In other words, the doctrine of unity in plurality is postulated. The following lines, respectively by Rumi and Hafiz, depict this mystical image:

ما ز بالايم و بالا می رويم / ما ز دريايم و دریا می رويم

We belong to the top and go up /

We belong to the sea and go back to the sea. (My translation)

بر لب بحر فنا منتظریم ای ساقی / فرصتی دان که ز لب تا به دهان این همه نیست

O wine-boy, we are expectantly waiting on the shore of the ocean of annihilation /

Consider any chance between lip and mouth to be none at all. (transl. by Avery 115)

Rumi and Hafiz both emphasise that humans are not bound to this transitory world and must ultimately reunite with the permanent world. Emerson's poem follows up on the same idea and maintains that the waves are mutable, dynamic, illusive, and elusive but the sea remains stable and perfect. The waves “are all vanishing” (line 11). The essay then draws on Emerson's own life experience to accentuate the illusiveness of the material world.

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References in the essay “Illusions” shed further light on the analysis of the poem. In the essay Emerson names “Yoganidra, the goddess of illusion,” which is subtly related to the poem of the same essay, wherein illusion is gendered female. Yoganidra is described as a “goddess” in Hinduism (Johnson “Devī Mahātmya”). It literally means “meditation sleep,” which is a form of “yogic trance in which the practitioner is in full control of his mind, but oblivious to the external world” (both Johnson “Yoganidrā”). Such full control of mind, while being oblivious to the external world, recalls the mystical state of *fana*, although *fana* is an ultimate state wherein the mystic is totally oblivious of body and mind. Yoganidrā, in other words, corresponds to the path towards *fana*, not to its final step, since deep meditation is a merely throughfare towards *fana*. From another perspective, Yoganidrā, according to Emerson’s essay, is ‘the goddess of illusion’, whose temptation can be resisted only by those who have achieved self-annihilation.

The archetype of temptress represents the seductive power of the female illusion, that acts as a beguiling complication in everyone’s life and sets out to allure people. Emerson asserts that “I find men victims of illusion in all parts of life” (“Illusions” 190). However, he intends to perpetuate the idea of the feminised illusion not being purely seductive and deceitful but rather a lesson to be learned: “Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle. There are as many pillows of illusion as flakes in a snow-storm. We wake from one dream into another dream” (“Illusions” 191). Hence, the solely seductive figuration of a tempting female is deconstructed in the essay, as well as in its initial poem.

Through Emerson’s poems, the doctrine of the feminine illusions may be traced, but illusions are also often spoken of for their charm, which is a conventional feminine feature, and not just being represented as beguilers. The poem “Maia” is a good example for this. It gives an apparently two-fold but converging picture of illusion. On the one hand, illusion is portrayed as a woman who “works impenetrable / Weaving webs innumerable” (ll. 1-2). She is not easy to comprehend, and, like a weaver, she produces webs that deceive and entice anybody. The webs stand for the diverging perceptions that illusion creates. On the other hand, she is both a temptress and a charmer:

Illusions like the tints of pearl,  
Or changing colors of the sky,

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Or ribbons of a dancing girl

That mend her beauty to the eye (ll. 7-10).

In this poem, the speaker does not merely insist on the seductive nature of illusion but also on her active enthralling. In his essay “Illusions,” Emerson relates the seduction of illusions to the dynamicity of the world: “The world rolls, the din of life is never hushed” (190). He does not reprimand illusions solely on their seductive and enticing nature, but he endorses the diversity they add to life because “Great is paint; nay, God is the painter” (ibid.). He appears almost like a determinist since he attributes the paint, or as in his poem “the tints of pearl” (line 7) to God. Therefore, illusions are both seductive and charming, so “we rightly accuse the critic who destroys too many illusions” (190). In the same manner, the essay continues this deterministic opinion and clarifies it in the case of unhappy marriages, for which “we are not very much to blame,” because “the mighty Mother [...] insinuates into the Pandora-box of marriage some deep and serious benefits, and some great joys” (both 192). Emerson justifies this assertion in this way: “In the worst-assorted connections there is ever some mixture of true marriage” (192). He assumes that it is not solely the fault of the partners that some marriages fail but rather marriage is a ‘Pandora-box’ opened by a ‘Mother’ deity. Marriage entails complexities and joys. Despite challenges and uncertainties, it offers profound benefits.

Hafiz, too, frequently employs the word illusion and concepts associated with it in his ghazals. He associates such concepts with various senses, that suggest seduction, charm, consolation, as well as lofty aspirations and expectations. In the following lines, the ghazal’s speaker expresses lofty aspirations, which sound like illusions that never come true:

نخفته ام ز خیالی که می پزد دل من / خمار صدشبه دارم شرابخانه کجاست

Because of the vain fancies [aspirations/illusions] I concoct, many a night I have not slept /

I have a hundred nights’ hangover, where’s the wineshop? (transl. by Avery 56)

The speaker has not slept for a while due to the lofty aspirations and fancies that are improbable to come true. The fancies, or better translated ‘illusions,’ are all in vain. When compared to Emerson’s poems of question, they may allure people, yet they provide a source of console and comfort for the speaker. The following lines exemplify how the beloved tantalises the ghazal’s speaker and it is all illusive to expect attention from the beloved:

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چو جان فدای لبش شد خیال می بستم / که قطره ای ز زلالش به کام ما افتد

خیال زلف تو گفتا که جان وسیله مساز / کز این شکار فراوان به دام ما افتد

When life became ransom for your lip, I conceived the notion [I held vain expectation] /

That a drop of its pure liquor might fall into our mouth,

The beguilement of your tresses said: “Do not make life the price; /

For this, abundant prey falls out in our name. (transl. by Avery 155)

The speaker's hope for union with the beloved, even for as long as a kiss lasts, is never fulfilled. The speaker has fallen victim, in Emerson's words, to the illusion of union with the beloved. This kind of mystical illusion is not the same as the illusion that created the female temptress. It is in fact a voluntary self-victimisation, meaning that the ghazal's speaker sensibly and consciously exposes to the illusion of union with the beloved because s/he is aware that union with the beloved is almost improbable. However, striving for union with the beloved is delightful for the lover.

As mentioned above, Emerson shows mobility of vision, which allows him to rethink radically any position and principle and reach a kind of phenomenological openness to various experiences. Emerson approaches the conventional view of illusions as enticing and seductive in a dynamic manner. He connects illusions, which are intrinsically disparate, with “the unities, the fictions of the piece [that] it would be an impertinence to break” (190). He ultimately sees unity in plurality, which is also a mystical doctrine in Sufism. In line with his remarks about unity, he asserts that “We see God face to face every hour and know the savor of Nature” (197). This mystical assertion culminates in the Sufi doctrine that postulates God's omnipresent emergence encompasses every particle. According to Sufi teachings, not everyone is qualified to be able to perceive such divine emergence but those who have annihilated their self and moved towards the achievement of union with God.

#### “The Bohemian Hymn”

Self-annihilation, or more aptly the mystical doctrine of *fana*, is a subject that Emerson mediated on in many of his texts, including in the poem “The Bohemian Hymn.” The poem's speaker asserts that “Nor art, nor power, nor toil can find / The measure of the eternal Mind” (10-11), where the capacities of every individual and efficacy of religious institutions are effaced and

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negated because once one attempts “to utter God’s infinity,” instantly “the great idea baffles wit,” and “language falters under it” (ll. 2, 7-8). The poem’s speaker sees art, wit, power, and toil inadequate to realise God. The one who attempts to utter God’s infinity is not an ordinary person, but one who has transcended the materialistic disposition and abandoned the earthly pleasures to achieve unity with the Divine. They, however, soon understand that there is no idea or language to utter the experiential ecstasy since it is merely annihilation of the self that ultimately counts in this path. It is difficult to traverse this path as “Nor hymn, nor prayer, nor church” (line 12) avails. No religious institution has been capable of deciphering God’s infinity. One of Hafiz’s best known ghazals (No. 179) is comparable with the idea of God’s immeasurability the same as it is expressed in Emerson’s poem. The following lines wittily describes the kind of fire that a true lover should expect:

آتش آن نیست که از شعله او خندد شمع / آتش آن است که در خرمن پروانه زدند

Fire is not that with the flame of which the candle laughs. /

Fire is that with which the moth’s harvest was set alight. (transl. by Avery 238)

The speaker emphatically claims that the true fire of God, which completely annihilates the lover’s egoistic self, is not the faux flame, which is teased by the candle, but God’s fire burns up the lover and annihilates his/her self in the true sense. Both Hafiz and Emerson affirm that once wise people attempt to decipher the secrets of creation or “utter God’s infinity” (line 2), they are left “in the lurch” (line 9), meaning they are left to themselves without any assistance. Hafiz notes this idea over and over in his ghazals, including in the one quoted above:

جنگِ هفتاد و دو ملت همه را عذر بینه / چون ندیدند حقیقت ره افسانه زدند

Establish forgiveness for the war of the seventy-two sects; /

Because they did not see the track of the True, they took fable’s way [took the wrong path].  
(transl. by Avery 238)

The seventy-two sects symbolise the disintegration of Muslim communities, all of whom claim to have discovered the truth. The ghazal’s speaker presumes that they have been taking the wrong path since they have no clue of the truth. In Emerson’s “The Bohemian Hymn,” the last line’s words “prayer” (line 12) and “church” (ibid.) echo similar religious concepts, well-noted in Hafiz’s ghazals, closely associated with orthodox Islam. Although these images, particularly those of the mosque and of prayer, often come to represent hypocritical religious rituals, the

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speakers of Hafiz's ghazals emphasise that either they go to mosque or to wineshop, the ultimate intention is to move towards the beloved:

غرض ز مسجد و میخانه‌ام وصال شماست / جز این خیال ندارم خدا گواه من است

My goal from mosque and wineshop is union with you /

I have no thought other than this. As God is my witness. (transl. by Avery 91)

The ghazal's speaker places mosque, a well-respected place of prayer for Muslims, on the same scale with a wineshop, a forbidden place for Muslims, and pays equally the same regard to both of them. The matter of fact is that public attitude towards these two contradictory places plays no essential role for the speaker. Either well-respected or strictly forbidden, neither mosque nor wineshop is the ultimate goal but the path toward the beloved, which may initiate from either of the places. Emerson expresses a comparable idea in "The Bohemian Hymn": God's infinity "Doth as far transcend / An angel as a worm" (ll. 5-6). No matter it be an angel, a spiritual being serving God, or a worm, always grounded in dust and dirt, no creature is capable of deciphering God's infinity. Hafiz's other well-known ghazal that expresses God's immeasurability openly attacks any attempt to decipher it:

چیست این سقفِ بلندِ ساده بسیار نقش / زین معما هیچ دانا در جهان آگاه نیست

What is this lofty ceiling [the world], void of a host of images [simple and ornamented] /

Of this enigma no sage in the world is informed. (transl. by Avery 111)

The combination of metonymy and oxymoron that are employed in these lines precisely alert any so-called wise person to venture into the mysteries of the world. The phrase "lofty ceiling" is a metonymy that is closely associated with the creating system of the world. That this ceiling, a metaphor for the grandeur and complexity of the world, is simultaneously simple and ornamented adds to the complexity of the creation, as well as to the futility of any attempt to decipher it. The oxymoron of 'simple' and 'ornamented' is coupled with the speaker's inquisitive tone. The incapability of human's mind to decipher the mysteries of this world alludes to the limitations of human knowledge that lingers forever. This, too, is inferred from the Over-Soul, since it suggests that every soul is primarily part of a larger spirit, which leads to a sense of humility and is a reminder of limitations.

#### "Brahma"

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Emerson's poem "Brahma," despite alluding to the Hindu rather than the Muslim cultural context, fits well into the comparative study of this dissertation. It is a four-stanza poem, which touches on essential themes of spirituality and oriental mysticism while comprising sublime and metaphysical content. The text is an exploration of the universality of the spirit of Brahma and how he moves through time and space. Brahma is a Hindu god, referred to as the "creator god," who is "self-existent" and "created himself as a boar, raised the world from the primeval waters with his tusks and formed the universe" (all Coulter 105). The central speaker of the poem is Brahma himself, who details his powers about the way he moves effortlessly through the world.

Brahma belongs to the Indian religion Hinduism, which presents the key concept of *Trimūrti*, the trinity of supreme divinity. *Trimūrti* is "the triple form" in which "the cosmic functions of creation, maintenance, and destruction are personified by the forms of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva respectively" (both Flood 139). *Trimūrti* emphasizes the cyclical nature of creation, preservation, and destruction in the cosmos, while underlining the interconnectedness of these three aspects, and suggesting the dynamic movement of the cosmos. In this context, the first stanza approaches the immortality of the soul from two vantage points: first from that of "the red slayer," and second from that of "the slain" (ll. 1-2). The former thinks he can destroy others, and the latter fears pain and the idea of non-existence. The speaker, however, admonishes them for their ignorance of "the subtle ways" (line 3), which refer to the eternal and everlasting existence of the soul since every soul belongs to the eternal Brahman as "the only Universal Self" (Zimmer 101). That the spirit is the only speaker reinforces both its absolute nature and enduring power, which sustains the entire universe, as the poem is metaphorically based on his voice.

The poem postulates the traditional doctrine of panentheism, which has been conceived in various versions but in similar meanings in different schools of thought and religion. Panentheism maintains that "the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him" but it must be noted that "His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe" ("Panentheism"). Panentheistic elements are present in Hinduism, wherein the notion of Brahman is central. Brahman is the cosmic spirit, being the all-encompassing principle that unifies the entire universe, aligning with panentheism where the

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divine is inseparable from the world, yet not exhausted by it. In other words, the divine is both immanent – present within everything – and transcendent – beyond the physical world.

In Sufi philosophy, the corresponding doctrine of the all-encompassing, unifying principle is known as *Waḥdat al-wujūd* (وحدت وجود), which develops in Hafiz's ghazals. Hafiz drew on some of his charming images and propound ideas from this doctrine, as it stresses “the theme of immanence,” “the all-embracing inclusiveness of God,” and that the world is included in “God but that God is more than the world” (all “Panentheism”). In fact, the sense of the divine within and around human beings, which is widely expressed in religious life, is treated in literature, including in the poetry of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

A close look at Hafiz's ghazals reveals the recurrence of *Waḥdat al-wujūd* doctrine through various images and symbols. According to Sufism, each soul is part of the Divine Being with which the Sufi seeks union. This pursuit, one of whose prerequisites is tolerance to dissenting voices, ultimately culminates in *fana* (self-annihilation). The following lines by Hafiz demonstrate the thematic parallels in this regard with Emerson:

این همه عکسِ می و نقشِ نگارین که نمود / یک فروغِ رخِ ساقیست که در جام افتاد

All this reflection in wine and these contrasting figures that have appeared, /

Are a single light fallen into the bowl from the wine-boy's cheek. (transl. by Avery 151)

The transformative power of life connects everyone to one greater entity, being the beloved here. The world and all its phenomena are merely a single light of the divine beauty reflected in the wine bowl. More profoundly, all phenomena reflect one great being, namely beloved in this and many other ghazals by Hafiz:

در عشق، خانقاه و خرابات فرق نیست / هر جا که هست پرتوِ رویِ حبیب هست

In love there is no difference between the Sufi's hospice and the tavern, /

Wherever it is, there is the ray of the face of the beloved. (transl. by Avery 101)

The speaker talks of the universality of divine love that transcends all boundaries. Everything is nothing but a ray of the beloved's face since the beloved is omnipresent, within and without everything. Regardless of gender, setting, and measure, love manifests itself in everything and everybody. The two seemingly antithetical symbols of the Sufi's hospice and the tavern dissolves

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the distinction between these two man-established institutions since love is never contained here or there:

در خراباتِ مُغان نورِ خدا می بینم / این عجب بین که چه نوری ز کجا می بینم

I see the light of God in the Magian Tavern. /

Behold this marvel, from where I see a light. (429)

The direct encounter with divine light signifies that it is not a physical phenomenon but a spiritual realisation that perceives the beloved's presence beyond the material world. The speaker's ability to encounter the divine light without intermediaries suggests the merging of the speaker with the divine, recalling the state of *fana*. The above-mentioned lines also uphold that the ghazals' speakers have high tolerance, since they do not oppose any dissenting opinions and demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. For such people, there is not much difference between mosque and wineshop, sobriety and drunkenness, respect and disrespect. They merely care about their pursuit of the beloved. Emerson's Brahma likewise expresses this idea: "Shadow and sunlight are the same; [...]/ And one to me are shame and fame" (ll. 6, 8). They are equally worthless and valuable. He does not crave one and avoid the other. In other words, this reflects the rejection of duality, revealing that fame and shame are the same. Separate and seemingly unrelated entities and phenomena appear different, yet they are the same at a deeper level as they all stem from the same source. The differences ultimately dissolve. Hafiz similarly terminates the rigid dichotomy between fame and shame in his ghazals. The following lines express this idea:

از ننگ چه گویی که مرا نام ز ننگ است / وز نام چه پرسى که مرا ننگ ز نام است

What is it you say of shame, when I enjoy repute [fame] because of shame? /

What is it you ask of repute [fame], when I have the shame of repute [fame]? (transl. by Avery 80)

The speaker grapples with the diverging emotions of fame and shame. Shame is obviously embedded in the speaker's identity, and fame, conventionally a symbol of socially high standing, inflicts the speaker with shame rather than satisfaction. The distinction between fame and shame dissolves. This is feasible when the ghazal's speaker has attained *fana*, so there is no such thing as self when coming in terms with God, as the real Being.

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Emerson's "Brahma" also resonates with his own concept of Over-Soul, which is, after all, the collective indivisible soul, in which all individual souls or identities are embraced, and it is "that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" ("The Over-Soul" 252). According to Emerson, it is a level of existence, or a vital force in the universe in which all souls participate and all individual souls meet regardless of any rank or fashion. As a piece of writing "Brahma" is the poetic extension of transcendentalism. According to this philosophy, all of us are products of the same One-Soul. The self of one individual is as important as the self of another. "Brahma" is based on the doctrine that the soul is one with the all-pervasive Brahman. If one wants to achieve Brahma, goodness is the only solution and that goodness lies within one's self. In this respect, the poem celebrates the self. Emerson's Brahma, the supreme Hindu god, relies on Hindu sources to assert a cosmic order beyond the limitation of sense perception. Brahma represents the eternal, infinite soul of universe where every individual soul gets united.

In Emerson's poem, Brahma, who is the speaker urges the reader, in a direct address, to dispense with anything materialistic: "But thou, meek lover of the good! / Find me and turn thy back on heaven" (ll. 15-16). It is Brahma, as a state of mind, that one should pursue, not the idealised heaven. Hafiz comparably promotes this idea that one should praise the beloved for her own sake not lusting after heaven:

باغ بهشت و سایه طوبی و قصر و حور / با خاکِ کوی دوست برابر نمی‌کنم

The paradisial Garden, the shade of the Tuba tree, the Houris' palace, /

I do not equate with the dust of the street of the friend. (transl. by Avery 424)

The ghazal's speaker does not get enticed by other-worldly promises, such as the Tuba tree, symbolising the blessings of paradise, and the Houris' palace, symbols of otherworldly allure and temptations. It is traditionally believed that the houris are beautiful dark-eyed women eyes granted as a reward to the faithful Muslim believers in Paradise. The Quran, however, uses feminine as well as gender-neutral adjectives to describe houris. Modern commentators tend to interpret the houris as "virgins only in the sense of being pure or purified souls" ("Houris"). Accordingly, houris appear as both male and female, and it is their function, i.e. companions or guides for faithful Muslims, which should be deemed as important. Annemarie Schimmel argues that the Quranic description of houris is based on a context of love: "every pious man who lives

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according to God's order will enter Paradise where rivers of milk and honey flow in cool, fragrant gardens and virgin beloveds await home" (13). The imagery provided here is meant to convey symbolically the idea of a perfect reward for the male and female righteous. However, it is important to note that houris can be symbols for the ultimate and indescribable bliss awaiting those who lead righteous lives based on Islamic teachings. Anyhow, the ghazal's speaker discards houris because they distract the speaker from the beloved. This is a recurring theme in Hafiz's Divan:

صحبتِ حور نخواهم که بُود عینِ قُصور / با خیالِ تو اگر با دِگری پردازم

I do not desire the society of houris: it would be the height of sin, /

If, having your image, I were to make approaches to another. (transl. by Avery 406)

The speaker devotes undivided attention to the beloved, even if no union is yet probable. Even attainment of and companionship with the houris, whom religious fanatics desire, is a sin because it will occupy the lover, whereas the lover had rather indulge in imagining the beloved by his/her side. In like manner, Brahma urges lovers to devote undivided attention to Him. Brahma obviously expects the lovers to be vigorously engaged in pursuit of him and simply refuse heaven. Both poems undervalue the prominence of the transcendental heaven to highlight the grandeur of the beloved and Brahma.

## Conclusion

### Conclusion

This dissertation has been primarily concerned with connections between eastern and western lyric poetry, trying to build up dialogues between it. It aims to conduct a comparative study of selected lyrical poems by Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Hafiz Shīrāzī (ca. 1315-1390), John Keats (1795-1821), and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) with a focus on the poet's identity and its dissolution. At its centre are the concepts of *fana* (translated into German as “Entwerden” and into English as “unbecoming”) in Hafiz's ghazals, of negative capability in Keats's odes from 1819, and of self-annihilation and the Over-Soul in Emerson's poems. I sought to demonstrate that the concepts have far-reaching similarities when it comes to the loss of identity, the annihilation of the static self, and an emphasis on dynamic identity. Furthermore, I argued that when these concepts emerge in the poems selected as this dissertation's objects of analysis, they often come in connection with representations of the feminine – i.e. feminine-coded metaphors, metonymies, and symbols. Manifestations of the feminine poetic form is also a recurring motif in the works of all three male poets, which is often subtly associated with the loss of self, that is presented either as gendered in a female character or as ungendered. As a result, I have compared the close correspondence of processes of gendering and un-gendering, as far as representation is concerned, in every poem.

Chapters one to three yoke the three poets together in pairs – Hafiz and Keats, Keats and Emerson, Emerson and Hafiz –, which offers the opportunity for an analysis of the overarching themes based on the above-mentioned concepts. They also examine the cultural and historical contexts of each period, which provides a nuanced understanding of how socio-cultural factors impacted the creation and reception of the works within their respective societies. Since chapters one and two discuss relevant details from the three poets' biographies as well as the respective historical contexts, they are lengthier than chapter three.

At its core, this dissertation defends the double-pronged claim, namely that: 1) comparing the concepts of *fana*, negative capability, self-annihilation / Over-Soul will produce new insight about all the three canonised authors' work; and that 2) these concepts are multifaceted, out of which several layers of meanings can be extracted when analysed with a view to the roles played by gender and processes of un-gendering on the levels of figuration, metaphorisation, and poetics.

## Conclusion

Unfolding and supporting the above-mentioned claims, I have been guided by the following research questions: How can the (un)gendered feminine representation be understood as an integrated component of understanding *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation in the selected poems; and In what ways does the close correspondence of processes of gendering and un-gendering affect the fluidity of identities in the selected poems? In answering them, I have explored, analysed and interpreted the selected poems that, to date, have not been sufficiently addressed in any other comparative study. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that a major element in the above-mentioned concepts is the dynamicity of the self. The kind of poetic self that Hafiz, Keats, and Emerson promote is constantly verging on self-discovery through establishing a dynamic and flexible self. They commonly reject the inflation of a poet's personal features and encourage unselfishness, which leads up to dynamic receptivity, achieved through *fana*, negative capability, and self-annihilation.

Although all the selected poems are examples of lyrical poetry, they are not homogeneous in terms of sub-genre. Whenever we are concerned with lyric poetry, the identification of universal themes provides a basis for comparison because it generally expresses personal emotions and feelings, many of which have universal implications and appeal to many people. The lyric is ubiquitous in world literature, and lyric poetry as a genre that precedes most narrative forms, has a long history. It has been universally embedded in aspects of social life, such as all the songs related to the agrarian cycle, ritual invocations, and laments. The lyric 'I' is both limited in his/her own personal subjectivity and limitless in terms of emotions and experiences that are trans-local, transcultural, and transpersonal, making the lyric 'I' into a globalised lyric subject. Therefore, lyric poetry simply lends itself to cross-cultural comparison.

The core of this dissertation is comparative literature, the major methods of which are employed in this dissertation, namely close reading, thematic analysis, intertextuality – with a special focus on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity – and historical contextualisation. Butler's theory is relevant to my dissertation since it challenges the traditional notion that gender is a fixed, inherent attribute determined by biological sex. I have also drawn on the feminist philosopher Cornelia Klinger, who sketches the historical relationship between knowledge and power and how dualisms in the western philosophical tradition cement power imbalances. Her argument on how dualisms cement an ideology that positions 'man' as superior to 'woman' –

## Conclusion

while ensuring that the feminised position is gendered whereas the masculine position is both gendered and has a claim to remaining neutral – has been relevant and helpful in the analysis of (un)gendering in the poems. I have also drawn on Ibn Arabi – one of the most influential figures in Islamic mysticism and Islamic philosophy –, who emphasises the ultimate union between man and woman, and assumes that man's longing for woman is in reality a mirror image of God's longing for the human being. He maintains that the spiritual woman perfectly embodies the medium through which one could accomplish an understanding of and union with the divine beloved. Furthermore, I have considered factual connections, between Keats and Emerson as contemporaries, and thematic convergences, without reaching after causal relations between Hafiz, Keats and Emerson.

*Fana* in Hafiz's ghazals affirms a dynamic, fluid identity that is constantly evolving. The ghazals' speakers strive to have their selfhood annihilated and avoid any static identity, since it obstructs the progression towards union with the beloved. Fluidity, in a similar manner, is a defining element in Keats's negative capability that encourages an agile and dynamic identity by remaining in uncertainties and doubts. Keats associates the ideal poet with metamorphic identities, allowing for persistently sympathetic identification with nature or human beings alike. Emerson also encourages fluid identities through a philosophic metaphor – namely the 'transparent eye-ball' – to describe a view of life that is absorbent. He is, in fact, describing an elevation into infinite space and an ecstatic self-transcending union with what he calls the Over-Soul – the universal spirit – through the annihilation of the self. This transaction endows the poet with spiritual liquidity, in other words a dynamic identity.

This dissertation's main hypothesis proposes that, based on comparative literature methods, a cross-cultural analysis of the poems reveals intertextual references, influences, and commonalities in the selected poems. The temporal span of five centuries and the geographical distance separating Hafiz from both Keats and Emerson, and the resulting differences in cultural contexts notwithstanding, it is still possible to pursue parallels and convergences between their poems and chart the conceptual convergences of the above-mentioned concepts, along with the role of feminine imagery and its implication in the annihilation of self. This dissertation also demonstrates the subtlety of the term (un-)gendered in its title as it suggests, first, the fluidity and dynamicity in the poets' approaches towards self and identity; and second, the prefix 'un' breaks

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the boundary between the dichotomy of male and female, masculine and feminine. Therefore, there is no assumed superiority of either gender over the other in any of the three poets, which makes them exceptional, and they speak to us today more than many of their contemporaries' poetry I have attempted to explain how the tradition, which sees only the feminine as completely gendered, is subverted in the selected poems in each respective chapter.

With reference to Klinger, I have traced the theme of (un-)gendering in Keats's and Emerson's poems since their poems originate from western philosophical tradition. In their selected poems, they subvert the traditional positioning of masculine as superior and active, and feminine as inferior and passive. This subversion is connected to the ideas of dynamic self and identity. As regards the theme of (un-)gendering in Hafiz's selected ghazals, I have shown that the gender dynamic in them often reflects the broader themes of love and the pursuit for spiritual union with the divine. Reiterating the reflection of feminised divine beauty, Hafiz often feminises the beloved, but I have provided some instances in which he employs a poetic language that blurs traditional gender roles and identities, rejecting static gender identity and instead promoting fluidity of identities. In some of these instances, the beloved figure assumes traditional feminine roles and appears as a beautiful and enchanting woman., while in others the beloved appears in a masculine figure. Hafiz's ghazals thus transcend gender binaries and celebrate the divine love by seeing every individual, regardless of gender, equally capable of experiencing divine love.

This study attests that there is no evidence that Keats was aware of Hafiz's work, but the thematic convergences highlight parallels between their selected poems when put in relation to the concept of self-annihilation, which is echoed in Hafiz's mystical pronouncements of *fana* and in Keats's negative capability. The former concept nullifies the mystic in the divine presence and the latter assumes a genuine loss of self-identity to gain metamorphic identities. Between Keats and Emerson, though being contemporaries, there is no record of direct contact or correspondence. However, occurring roughly during the later years of Romanticism, Emerson's poems draw upon and reinterpret some core tenets of Romanticism, specifically individuality, freedom, emotion, and unity with the divine or nature. These ideas have been analysed in a comparative way in Keats's and Emerson's selected poems. Regarding Hafiz and Emerson, 'Sufism' and 'mysticism' played an important part in cultural exchanges between Iran and the Anglophone world, which is noticeable in Emerson's writings. Emerson did not simply produce

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stirring lectures, addresses and poems, but he was predominantly concerned with cultural analysis and dialogues. His interest in Persian mystical poetry developed in the early 1840s, when he wrote one of his longest poems “Saadi” for *The Dial* (1842). The comparable themes, proposed in the research questions as mentioned above, have been analysed between their selected poems.

This study has sought to demonstrate the intersection of eastern and western literary traditions through comparing the above-mentioned concepts and other common themes, such as the vanity of the world, analogies between experience of nature and of love, and the inability of human’s reason to explain or address the world’s mysteries. Regarding western interest in Persian literature, translations and other forms of cross-cultural exchange played a crucial role in fostering interest, which reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, following the publication of several translations from the works of late medieval Persian poets. Ultimately, this comparative study has proved that the explored concepts and themes illuminate a shared quest for transcendence, humanity, and unity with a higher power. While rooted in distinct cultural, social, and historical contexts and periods of time, the three poets’ shared exploration of the concepts reveals the pursuit of spiritual and aesthetic fulfilment across cultures and centuries.

This dissertation aims to contribute to reconcile theory and practice within the realm of comparative study, as well as to building up dialogues between eastern and western lyric poetry. I would like to emphasise that further comparative research on the reception and influence of the concepts and themes, investigated in this dissertation, in other eastern and western poets from different cultures and contexts, will provide valuable insights into: 1) the enduring power of poetry that transcends cultural and contextual boundaries; 2) shared themes of love, self-negation, dynamic identities, and the transcendent.

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