

Sufi-Romantic Self Loss: The Study of the Influence of Persian Sufism on English Romantic Poetry

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Elham Nilchian

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Abstract

This PhD thesis explores the influence of Persian Sufi Literature on the development of the concepts of self and Other in English Romantic-period prose and poetry. The thesis considers the notions of self, idealisation, and annihilation in the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron as well as the Persian Sufi literature from which these Romantic poets have drawn their inspiration and influences. The Persian poets discussed include Hafez, Maulavi, and Nezami, whose works were translated and adapted by the eighteenth-century scholars such as William Jones and Isaac D’Israeli. The thesis presents a comparison between the two schools of thought, Lacanianism and Sufism, in order to pave the way for a comparative analysis of Sufi and Romantic conceptions of the self and Other. The thesis then goes on to discuss a range of representations of the Orient in the pre-Romantic era, including the translations and adaptations rendered by eighteenth-century Oriental scholars such as Jones and D’Israeli. Finally the thesis focuses on the influence of Persian literature on the works of Shelley and Byron. An attempt is made in these chapters to explore the extent to which the Romantic subject’s desire for union with the ideal Other is made possible through idealisation of and dissolution in the Other, first in the literary historical context of the Sufi tradition, and secondly in the framework of the theoretical models in Lacanian psychoanalysis. In order to analyse the concepts of self and Other in their Romantic and Sufi contexts the thesis invokes Lacan’s discussion of supplementary *jouissance* and sublimation. These Lacanian formulae prove helpful in analysing the path the Romantic subject pursues toward perfection and his desire for a return to the primal state of unity which is possible through dissolution in the ideal(ised) Other.

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Introduction

The British Romantics drew on and were mainly inspired by two different aspects of Oriental culture and literature: exoticism and mysticism. On the one hand, the Romantics were fascinated with that side of the Orient which represented finery, luxury, voluptuousness, sensuousness, tyranny, and vengeance. They adopted these aspects of the Orient, in the form of tales and narrative poems, mostly as a means to analyse the political and social situation inside their own country.¹ Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), Robert Southey (1774-1843), Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), and George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) were among the Romantics who portrayed the wild exoticism and the extravagance of the Orient in their narrative poems and romances. Works such as Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817), and Byron's 'Turkish Tales' (1813-16), as Abdur Raheem Kidwai observes, 'depict revolutions, [...] aiming at the overthrow of some despotic Oriental ruler', implying a 'close parallelism between these Oriental and contemporary tyrannical European regimes'.²

¹ Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London: Tauris, 1996 [1994]), p. xxi.

² Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Orientalism in Lord Byron's 'Turkish Tales': The Giaour (1813), The Bride of Abydos (1813), The Corsair (1814) and The Siege of Corinth (1816)* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Lampeter:

Apart from the exoticism of the tyrannical voluptuousness that seemed to have enthralled the Romantic imagination in their encounters with the East, the Romantics were also fascinated by Oriental mysticism, particularly Persian Sufism. In other words, the Romantic subject, in search of a perfect self, showed a keen interest in the other side of the Orient which dealt with a spiritual unity of the self with the ideal Other. One of the critics who raised the idea of the presence of mystic concepts interwoven into the texture of Romantic literature is Suzanne Kirschner in her *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis* (1996). Kirschner offers a detailed survey of Neoplatonized Christian mysticism, the narratives of the Protestant mystic Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), and the subsequent secularization of these narratives by the English and German Romantics. For the rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment who were versed in Christian mystical doctrines, as Kirschner observes, ‘the inner light of God in the soul’ was transformed into ‘the inner light of reason’.³ Drawing on Meyer H. Abrams’s assertion that in Romanticism there was ‘a counter-Enlightenment impulse to preserve worldly mysticism in secularized form’, a desire to ‘naturalize the supernatural and to humanize the divine’,⁴ Kirschner

Mellen University Press, 1995), p. 28. Also see Sharafuddin’s profound study on the influence of Oriental literature in British Romanticism, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*. Rendering a detailed study of Landor’s *Gebir*, Southey’s *Thalaba*, Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, and Byron’s ‘Turkish Tales’, Sharfuddin argues that there is a transition from an Islamic overtone, which was characterised for Southey as being ‘dominated by tyranny and submission’, to Christian compassion in *Thalaba*. See Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 67.

³ Suzanne Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 151-52.

⁴ Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p.68, cited in Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, p. 153.

concludes that the ‘Romantic narrative pattern is essentially a secularization of Christian mysticism’.⁵ Perhaps this tendency to secularise the existing Christian mysticism as well as the elements of the Neoplatonist system that had been incorporated into the theological and spiritual doctrines of Christian thinkers⁶ were among reasons for the Romantics to redirect their interest toward the mystic literature of the Orient, particularly Sufi literature.

Naji Oueijan justly raises the interaction of Romanticism with Sufism in his 1999 article ‘Sufism, Christian Mysticism, and Romanticism’. Acknowledging the influence of Christian or even Far Eastern mysticism on Romantic literature, Oueijan argues that the Romantics were influenced by Sufism because it suited their earnest purposes and goals. Drawing on Michael Sells’s discussion of the different types and themes of Sufi poetry, Oueijan contends that ‘the Sufi and the Romantic poets share common poetic concerns that entail poetic themes and forms’.⁷ ‘In Sufism and Romanticism,’ Oueijan continues, ‘separation from the self involves a detachment from the material self and other’, and ‘an attachment to or a fusion of the spiritual self with the spiritual other’; the former ‘involves pain and suffering’, the latter ‘redemption and reconciliation’.⁸ The Romantic subject thus seeks a return to the primal unity and becoming one with the ideal(ised) Other.⁹

⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

⁶ Ibid., p. 122.

⁷ Naji B. Oueijan, ‘Sufism, Christian Mysticism, and Romanticism’, Presented at the University of Erford, The German Society for English Romanticism (November 1999) < <http://hojjanusreddin.livejournal.com/1554161.html> > [accessed 8 November 2010]

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ In this thesis, I employ the term ‘other’ interchangeably with a Lacanian capitalised version of the Other. In Lacanian analysis the lower case ‘other’ belongs to the imaginary order; it is the other of the

The Romantic subject's quest for the Other is sometimes associated with the notion of the subject as dominating or possessing the Other. The identity of the Romantic subject has been defined, since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, as a domineering subject in relation to the Oriental Other, in an attempt to obliterate the difference and otherness of the Other. According to Said the Romantic subject's identity is founded on the notion of the 'Other', that is, an Other conceived as an aspect or reflection of the subject and not as an independent entity.¹⁰ The subject's identity therefore is established in light of the imperative of creating an image of the Other and projecting a possessive imposition on the Other as such. Accordingly, the Romantic subject seeks to obliterate the difference and otherness of the Other. The Romantic subject's imperialist intentions of possession in colonising the Other would hardly seem to leave space for us to consider the Romantic subject as being capable of selflessness and loss of self in its interaction with the Other – be it the Orient, an earthly love object, or an ideal visionary beloved. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the Romantic period was an era of spiritual expansion

mirror stage who is presumed to satisfy the infant's desire. Therefore the other is treated 'as whole, unified or coherent egos, and as reflections of ourselves they give us the sense of being complete whole beings'. The capitalised 'Other' belongs to the symbolic order and is 'that absolute otherness that we cannot assimilate to our subjectivity'. This big Other is also the lacking Other through whom the subject ideally wishes to find the satisfaction of his desire, yet it is the task of psychoanalysis to confront the subject with the fact that the Other is a lacking Other and not whole. See Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 70, 72-3. My references to the other are mostly capitalised and slightly different from the Lacanian version. The 'Other', in this thesis, refers to the Other as the ultimate absolute Other. It has resemblances with the imaginary other, yet it is an other which is sublimated to the locus of the absolute Other by the subject and thus at times it belongs to the Real.

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 22.

and the Romantics did pursue a sense of mystical oneness with the divine – God, Nature, or an ideal beloved. My aim in this thesis is to examine those mystic moments in which the Romantic subject seeks perfection through obliteration of its own self in the face of the idealised Other conceived as a whole.

The Romantic subject's search for an ideal Other and his desire to become one with that Other has connections with Sufism in general. As observed by critics such as Raymond Schwab and Hossein Nasr, the appeal of Sufism in Europe was largely due to the writings of Persian Sufi poets and philosophers,¹¹ whose ideas were known to and conveyed by the Romantics through numerous works of authoritative Orientalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Studies involving the traces of Persian literature in the works of the Romantics have mainly been carried out since the 1950s and are predominantly limited to a catalogue of Persian translations that might have been perused by the Romantics. The consensus among critics is that the Romantics were not deeply influenced by Persian literature. Only a few attempts have been made with regard to the actual influence of the literature of Persia on the Romantics. In 1960, John Draper studied the influence of Persian lyric style and measurements on Shelley's poetry.¹² In her doctoral thesis in 1983, Parvin Loloi Pursglove provided a comprehensive study on the various translations of Hafez and their influence on English poetry since 1771. Her article 'Byron in Persian Costume' (1988) drew on

¹¹ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Persian Sufi Literature: Its Spiritual and Cultural Significance', in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992), pp. 1-10 (p. 2) and Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, trans. by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, foreword by Edward Said (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 6.

¹² John Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', *Rivista di Letterature Moderne*, 13, (1960), 92-95.

Byron's interest in Persian literature and his Persian reading. She emphasises that Byron was mainly influenced by Hafez through the agency of William Jones.¹³

The Romantics' inspiration from Persian literature, as it was studied by the abovementioned critics, has not developed the idea of Persian Sufism and its probable impact in the work of the Romantics.¹⁴ In this research, I aim to explore the extent to which the concept of the Romantic self, in its relation with the Other, is influenced by the representation of the self in Persian Sufi literature. In order to carry out such research I will look into the notions of self, idealisation, and annihilation in the poetry of Shelley and Byron as well as the Persian Sufi literature from which they drew their inspiration and influences. I will focus on the poetry of such Persian poets as Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209), Jalal ud-Din Mohammad Balkhi (1207-1273) known in Iran as Maulavi and in the West as Rumi, Shams ed-Din Mohammad Hafez Shirazi (1325-1389), and Nour ud-Din Abd ur-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) as translated or adapted by such eighteenth-century scholars as William Jones, William Ouseley, and Isaac D'Israeli.

¹³ Parvin Pursglove (Loloi), 'Translations of Hafiz and their Influence on English Poetry since 1771. A Study and a Critical Bibliography' (Doctoral Thesis, University College of Swansea, 1983); Parvin Loloi, 'Byron in Persian Costume', *The Swansea Review*, 5 (1988), 19-40. Also see John D. Yohannan, 'The Persian Poetry Fad in England, 1770-1825', *Comparative Literature*, 2, 4 (Spring 1952), 137-160; Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature, with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Costa Mesa.: Mazda Publishers, 2005 [1983]); Abul A. B. Hasnat, 'Some Aspects of the Impact of Sir William Jones's Persian Studies on English Romantic Poetry', *Indo-Iranica*, 41 (1988), 72-90; Imdad Husain, *English Romantic Poetry and Oriental Influences*, ed. by Amer Rashid Sheikh (Lahore: REMA: Nadeem Book House, 1994).

¹⁴ For a comparative study between English Romantic and Persian Sufi poets see Leonard Lewisohn's article 'Correspondences between English Romantic and Persian Sufi Poets: An Essay in Anagogic Criticism', *Temenos Academy Review*, 12 (2009), 185-226.

Apart from illustrating the literary influences and traces of the Persian sources on the Romantics I will approach the notion of the ‘Sufi-Romantic’¹⁵ self from a Lacanian perspective in order to illuminate and examine the path toward a perfect self through the Sufi notions of idealisation of the Other and self-loss or *fanaa*.¹⁶ In representing self in Romanticism and Sufism, I will invoke the Lacanian notions of *The Woman*, supplementary (mystic) *jouissance*, and exaltation of the Other as Truth, among other concepts. I will thus attempt to examine the Romantic subject along with his Sufi counterpart within the scope of Lacan’s theoretical models. In the course of my analysis I will examine the extent to which the Romantic subject seeks perfection and a return to the primal state of unity through dissolution in the ideal(ised) Other, first in the literary historical context of the Sufi tradition, and secondly in the framework of the theoretical models and formulations in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan’s analysis of supplementary *jouissance*, for instance, provides the grounds for the ‘mystic’ subject to experience a different form of subjectivity, a real ‘not all’-ness¹⁷ as opposed to the false wholeness of the symbolic subject who goes through the phallic *jouissance*. The subject who undergoes supplementary *jouissance* will thus experience a non-illusory form of wholeness through idealising the Other into the locus of the Thing. I will provide a comparative study between Lacanianism and

¹⁵ I will use the term ‘Sufi Romantic’ as a critical term to indicate a conceptual interaction of Sufist and Romantic ideas such as self loss.

¹⁶ Later I will draw a comparison between the ideas of idealisation and *fanaa* in Sufism and the notions of sublimation and supplementary *jouissance* in Lacanianism.

¹⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005 [1986]), p. 73. Also see *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore 1972-1973*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998 [1975]), p. 72.

Sufism in the first chapter of my thesis, through which I will pave the way for the analysis of Sufi-Romantic self in its relation with the ideal Other in the following chapters.

Before I discuss the common tendencies in Sufism and Romanticism, I will provide an overview of the importation of Persian Sufi literature to Britain through the principal works of the Orientalists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Throughout my thesis I will refer to the translations and works of the following Oriental scholars as the definite or probable sources of inspiration for and influence on the works of such Romantics as Shelley and Byron.

Pre-Romantic Interest in Persian Literature

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an increasing number of European scholars created a huge body of literature, either translating and adapting from original texts or producing travelogues from their own observations and inspirations of the Orient. Jean Antoine Galland (1646-1715), Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), and Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) in France, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) in Austria, and George Sale (1697-1736),¹⁸ William Jones (1746-1794), William Ouseley (1767-1842), John Leyden (1775-1811), Francis Gladwin (1744-1812), John Nott (1751-1825), and Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848) in

¹⁸ George Sale edited a compendium of the lives of the Persian poets and legendary figures in *The Lives and Memorable Actions of Many illustrious Persons of the Eastern Nations, such as Khalifas, Soltans, Wazirs, or Prime-Ministers, Generals, Philosophers, Poets, &c. who have Distinguish'd Themselves, either by War, Learning, Humanity, Justice, &c. Extracted from the most Authentick Oriental Chronologers and Historians. Never before Englished* (London: printed for J. Wilcox, at Virgil's Head, opposite the New Church in the Strand, M.DCC.XXXIX. [1739]).

Britain were among the leading European Orientalists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who bore the messages of Oriental literature to the Western reading public.

Raymond Schwab challenges the general consensus that considers Egyptian culture as having been primarily influential on the European mind, by asserting that the beginning of the Oriental influence is marked by Anquetil du Perron's translations of the *Upanishads* and the *Avesta*¹⁹ between 1771 and 1786:²⁰

It was from Persia, through Anquetil, that everything began to open up: with Persia as the base, everyone from scholars and politicians to polemicists built up the East-West parallel, and the number of discoveries multiplied, as did liaisons between scholarship and creativity.²¹

Earlier, in 1764, Warren Hastings (1732-1818), the first Governor-General of Bengal, who was deeply skilled in Persian and Arabic literature, argued that 'the cultivation of Persian literature might with advantage be made a part of the liberal education of an English gentleman'.²² Although British Oriental pioneers, such as William Jones and Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837), are believed, by Schwab as well as other critics following him, to have viewed the 'spiritual aspects' and 'literary value' of the

¹⁹ The *Avesta* is the primary collection of sacred texts of Zoroastrianism and the *Upanishads* are Hindu scriptures that constitute the teachings of Vedanta.

²⁰ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²² Warren Hastings, 'Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings, First Governor-General of Bengal' (London: 1841), in *The Works of Lord Macaulay, Complete: Critical and Historical Essays*, ed. by Baron Thomas Babington Macaulay, 8 vols (London: Longman, Green, And Co., 1866), VI, pp. 543-644 (p. 551).

literature of the Orient being only ‘an added bonus,’ and ‘after all else had been considered’, the impact of such spiritual aspects on their successors, the Romantic figures of the age, should not be taken for granted.²³

Parallel to Schwab’s argument, Hossein Nasr remarks that it was through Persian Sufi literature that the rise of interest in the Orient first took place during the nineteenth century in the West. Nasr reasons that it was ‘the universal spiritual appeal’ of Persian literature and the effect that the inner meaning of the Quran and the spirituality of the Prophet had on the souls of the Persians that attracted some of the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Orientalists ‘at the beginning of contact between the Romantic movement in Europe and the culture of the Islamic world’.²⁴ He goes on to claim that the appeal of Sufism in Europe is to a remarkable extent due to the writings of Persian Sufi poets and philosophers such as Sana’i, Maulavi (Rumi), Attar, Sa’di, Hafez, Mahmud Shabestari, Shah Ne’matollah Wali, and Jami.²⁵ These poets were peculiarly recognized in Persia and the Islamic world for their shares in spreading Sufism. One of the reasons that the European scholars took an interest in translating and (re)producing adaptations of the works of these Persian poets seems to be the admiration the Islamic world and the Persians themselves had for those poets.

One of the foremost figures who imported a large body of Persian literature into England was the Welsh philologist, Orientalist, and jurist William Jones.²⁶

²³ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 41.

²⁴ Nasr, ‘Persian Sufi Literature: Its Spiritual and Cultural Significance’, p. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁶ Jones’s complete works, edited by Anna Maria and with a lengthy biographical preface by Lord Teignmouth, were published in 1799; a second edition followed in 1807. See Michael J. Franklin, ‘Jones, Sir William (1746-1794)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford

Jones's essay 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus', first published in the third volume of *Asiatick Researches* (1793), depicts the similarities between the systems of thought of seventeenth-century European theology and the Indian Vedantis as well as Persian Sufis. Jones suggests that they all concur in believing that the souls of men are *particles* of and will ultimately be 'absorbed' in the divine spirit, that the love of God, who is the perfect truth and beauty, is real love, and that the beauties of nature are resemblances of the divine charms.²⁷ Assuming that numerous metaphors and poetical figures flow from these principles in poems of Persians and Hindus, Jones illustrates particular Sufi concepts in the works of a number of Persian poets, such as Hafez, Nezami, and Maulavi. He refers to Nezami's *Leili and Majnun* as 'avowedly allegorical and mysterious', indicating that 'the introduction to it is a continued rapture on *divine love*' and that the allusion to Laili in the *Masnavi* of Maulavi and odes of Hafez is used to stand for 'the omnipresent spirit of GOD'.²⁸ From Hafez's *Divan* he collects distichs from different ghazals²⁹ that relate to 'the mystical theology of the *Sufis*'.³⁰ He then renders a translation of the first poem of

University Press, 2004), online edn, May 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15105>> [accessed 8 November 2010]

²⁷ William Jones, 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus', *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, MDCCXCIX. [1799]), I, p. 450.

²⁸ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 452.

²⁹ Ghazal is 'a lyric form common to Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu literature, typically concerned with earthly or mystical love' and 'in couplets'. See *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, ed. by William Herbert New (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 433.

³⁰ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 453.

Maulavi's *Masnavi*, emphasising that according to Maulavi the Sufis 'profess eager desire, but with no carnal affection, and circulate the cup, but no material goblet'.³¹

Another Oriental scholar who translated a large number of Persian poems, anecdotes, and memoirs into English was William Ouseley. In his *Persian Miscellanies: An Essay to Facilitate the Reading of Persian Manuscripts* (1795),³² and two years later in his edition of *The Oriental Collections Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous Papers* (1797),³³ Ouseley provides the reader with numerous translations from such Persian poets as Ferdausi, Attar, Hafez, Sa'di, Maulavi, Nezami, Jami, Saeb, Khosro, Anvari, Orfi, and Khaqani. Ouseley also provides the reader with a translation from the famous legend of Khosro and Shirin,³⁴ under the name of *The Loves of Khosru and Shireen*.

³¹ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 458. This poem that Maulavi opens his *Masnavi* with, titled 'Ney-naameh' ('The Song of the Reed'), is the story of the reed (flute), allegorical of man, 'cut off from the eternal ground of his existence', resonating in separation and telling 'the secrets of love and longing'. See Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993 [1978]), p. 211.

³² William Ouseley, *Persian Miscellanies: An Essay to Facilitate the Reading of Persian Manuscripts; with Engraved Specimens, Philological Observations, and Notes Critical and Historical* (London: Printed for Richard White, 1795).

³³ *The Oriental Collections Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous Papers; Illustrating the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia*, ed. by William Ouseley (London: printed for Cadell and Davies, by Cooper and Graham, 1797)

³⁴ Ouseley translates this prose work from the *Shah Namah Nesr*. This Persian MS., Ouseley informs us, is a prose abridgement of Ferdousi's *Shah Namah*, or Book of Kings. Ouseley also accounts the abridger to have borrowed at times from Nezami's *Khosro and Shirin*. Elsewhere, in a footnote to this translation, Ouseley states that Nezami's *Khosru Shireen* 'consists of about 7300 couplets. There are several copies of it in my collection, some in distinct volumes, and others comprised among the پنج گنج *Punje Gunge*, or *Five Treasures*, of Nizami.' See *The Oriental Collections: Consisting of Original*

Isaac D'Israeli, was a writer, novelist, poet, and an Oriental scholar, who had a considerable reputation as a historian in his own time. He wrote and published *The Loves of Mejnoun and Leila* in 1797, which was a prose adaptation from the twelfth-century Persian poet Nezami's long poem *Leili and Majnun* (1188).³⁵ This Oriental work, which was recognised as the first Oriental romance in English, received a large amount of commentary and notice from the periodicals of the age, inspiring later Romantic poets, such as Byron and Shelley. D'Israeli was well known in several literary circles and his books were mostly published by John Murray through whom he came to be introduced to Murray's other authors and also to contributors to the *Quarterly Review*. Byron greatly admired D'Israeli's *The Literary Character* and when in 1820 a review of Pope's poetry appeared in the *Quarterly* Byron was delighted and recognized D'Israeli as the author by the style.³⁶

Among other British Oriental scholars of the age, who might have been read by Shelley and Byron, one can mention Francis Gladwin and John Nott. In his *The Persian Moonshee* (1800), Gladwin provides a wide number of translation extracts from the poetry of such Persian poets as Sa'di, Hafez, Ferdausi, Nezami, Farrokhi, Anvari, Amir Khosro, and Khaqani. His *Dissertations on the Rhetoric, Prosody and Rhyme, of the Persians* (1813) provides a detailed overview of the poetic

Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous Papers, ed. by William Ouseley, 3 vols (London [England]: printed for Cadell and Davies, Strand, by Cooper and Graham, [1798]-1800), I, pp. 219, 221, 214.

³⁵ Isaac D'Israeli, *Romances* (London: printed for Cadell and Davies, Strand; Murray and Highley, Fleet-Street; J. Harding, St. James's-Street; and J. Wright, 1799).

³⁶ James Ogden, 'D'Israeli, Isaac (1766-1848)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, May 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7690>> [accessed 8 November 2010]

measurement and style in Persian poetry, which is very likely to have inspired the above-mentioned Romantic poets in their Orientalist creations. The poet and translator John Nott translated seventeen ghazals from the *Divan* of Hafez into English verse with a comprehensive preface and introduction on some accounts of Hafez, as well as critical and explanatory notes in *Kitab-i Lalihzar az Divan-i Hafiz* (1787). I will draw on the impact of the translations and adaptations, done by William Jones, Isaac D'Israeli, John Nott, William Ouseley, and Francis Gladwin, on Shelley and Byron in the course of my thesis.

In the next two sections of my introduction I will first introduce Sufism in its historical context. In order to have a better understanding of those notions in Sufism that are also traceable in the works of the Romantics I will then provide an overview of the Romantic literature in its association with aspects of Sufi literature.

Sufism

The term 'Sufism' that first appeared in the nineteenth century, or *tasavvof*, as it is known in the Muslim world, is a mystical movement within Islam that seeks to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. 'Sufi' is the Arabic term for a mystic and is derived from the word '*suf*', meaning 'wool', referring to the woollen garment of early Islamic ascetics. The Sufis are also generally known as 'the poor', in Persian '*darvish*' or 'dervish'. A Sufi was thus a poor dervish who had given up all material belongings in favour of gaining a more spiritual abundance.³⁷

³⁷ There is another denotation to such poorness and that is when the Sufi refers to himself as the beggar longing for the union with the divine beloved. The poetry of the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafez offers bountiful examples of the Sufi/poet as beggar:

Sufism, among a variety of mystic beliefs, was developed in all parts of the Islamic territories and its literary expression reached its zenith in countries located within the sphere of Persian cultural influence from about the tenth to the fifteenth centuries. Sufism in Iran has a 700-year history from the eighth century to the late fifteenth. The mystic ideas spread from Mesopotamia fast eastwards to Persia until the Safavid shahs persecuted the extensive Sufi orders of the time.

The first stage of Sufism appeared in pious circles as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad period (AD 661-749). By the middle of the ninth century the name Sufi belonged to ‘those who practised austerity’ and it took the movement less than a century to acquire a ‘theosophical connotation’.³⁸ Sufism was transformed from an ascetic movement into a mystic one with the introduction of the element of love of God without any expectations for an afterlife by a woman from Basra, Rabi’ah al-Adawiyah (died AD 801). The same century witnessed one of the ten celebrated Imams of Sufism, Bayazid Bastami, in Persia. Bastami promoted love, and not the promised paradise, as an essential attribute of God. ‘Paradise’, according to Bastami, ‘hath no value in the eyes of lovers’, because it is ‘created, whereas love

I, the beggar, with the longing desire for union with Him? Alas!

I might only dream of beholding the image of the aspect of the Friend.

See Translation with little alteration from *Ghazal of Hafez Shirazi: In Persian with English*

Translation, trans. by Henry Wilberforce Clarke, compiled and corrected by Behrouz Homayoun Far, 2 parts (October 2001), I, p. 124

<http://enel.ucalgary.ca/People/far/hobbies/iran/Gazal/hafez_ghazal_bi_p1.pdf> [accessed 9 November 2010]

من گدا و تمنای وصلِ او هیئات مگر به خواب بینم خیالِ منظرِ دوست – حافظ، دیوان

³⁸ Arthur John Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 35.

is an uncreated attribute of God'.³⁹ It was from this moment in Sufi history that love became an inevitable constituent in Sufism and Sufi literature.⁴⁰

The oldest preserved Sufi writings in New Persian originate from the eleventh century. Only then do we encounter fully developed literary forms and a settled terminology. This Sufi literature could be generally divided into prose (*nasr*), long narrative poems (*masnavi*), quatrains (*rubaiyat*), and lyrical poems (*ghazal*).⁴¹ There were poets amongst the Persian Sufis who used quite a profane language in their love lyrics and who worshipped an earthly beloved to the extent that they exalted and idealised them to the locus of God in the path of love. Sufism proposes a loss of self through love for the Other – be it female, male, or God as love object – in order for the ego to become other to itself – i.e. to *become* the Other. Bastami proposed the Sufi doctrine of '*fanaa*' or annihilation of the self in the ultimate Being, later to become the premise of copious examples of Sufi love in the literature of Persia. The Sufi *fanaa* or fanā (as it is transcribed in the *OED*) has some correspondences with the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*, which I will discuss and analyse in the course of my thesis. The notion of becoming God thereafter was reintroduced by the tenth century

³⁹ Ali ebn Osman Hojviri, 'The Kashf al-Mahjúb, the oldest Persian Treatise on Súfiism'

<http://www.archive.org/stream/kashfalmahjub00usmauft/kashfalmahjub00usmauft_djvu.txt>

[accessed 9 November 2010]

⁴⁰ Mansur Hallaj (858-922), Omar Ibn al-Farid (1181-1235), and Jalal ud-Din Rumi (1207-1273), among others, belonged to this group.

⁴¹ Bo Utas, 'The Literary Expression of Persian Sufism', in *Mysticism: Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Mysticism Held at Åbo on the 7th-9th September, 1968*, ed. by Sven S. Hartman and Carl-Martin Edsman (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1970), pp. 206-19 (pp. 207-8).

Persian Sufi Hossein ebn Mansur Hallaj in his ecstatic and heretical utterance ‘*ana ’l-Haqq*’ (‘I am the Truth’), which led to his execution.⁴²

In the process of becoming the other, the love of the Sufi lover for the ultimate beloved reaches a point, *fanaa*, at which the Sufi finds it impossible to convey the experience through words. Many Sufi poets sang ‘the perfection of the Beloved and expressed the inexpressible mystic experience’⁴³ in their ghazals and by means of symbolisation. One of the means for the mind to convey the indefinable is symbolisation. Symbolism, as John Walbridge defines it, is a way to ‘express the inexpressible’.⁴⁴ Symbols play a significant part in Persian Sufi literature. Sufis had to rely upon symbols and worldly terminology, such as the wine, the cup, the rose and the nightingale, the sun, and so forth in order to communicate their ineffable experiences in the momentary revelation of the ultimate truth, which is revealed to them in visions and dreams. Bayazid Bastami was the first Sufi to express the symbolism of wine, cup, and cupbearer in the ninth century, which was soon widespread and used by other Sufi literati. Another symbol prevalent in the Persian Sufi literature was the imagery of the nightingale and rose where the silent rose or ‘gul’ represents God’s perfect beauty and self-sufficiency⁴⁵ and the nightingale or

⁴² The eleventh-century Persian Sufi Hujwiri ‘enumerates no fewer than twelve “sects” of Sufism, of which ten are stated to be “orthodox” and two “heretical”’. See Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, p. 65.

⁴³ Utas, ‘The Literary Expression of Persian Sufism’, p. 218.

⁴⁴ John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (New York: State University of New York, 2001), p. 9.

⁴⁵ As G.M. Wickens remarks sarcastically, there are, in Persian literature, ‘innumerable passages where God is the Silent Rose, driving the wretched nightingale to magnificently expressed distraction, the self-sufficient, capricious Beauty, sure of the hapless lover [...], and therefore displaying such

‘bulbul’ stands for soul. The imagery of ‘gul and bulbul’, which was first used by the thirteenth-century poet Ruzbehan Baqli, is said to have stemmed from the soul-bird symbolism.⁴⁶ In the symbol of the soul bird, which was the centre of Attar’s *Manteq ut-Teyr* (*The Conference of the Birds*), written in 1177, the human soul is likened to a flying bird. Throughout the chapters I will analyse these Persian images and symbols as they are represented both in the original Persian texts and in the works of Jones, D’Israeli, Shelley, and Byron. The study of these images and motifs illuminates those points of interaction of the two cultures without whose aid some features of the Romantic subject in relation to the work in general, and to the Other in particular, would remain vague.

Furthermore, Sufi literature proposes a number of stages in the Sufi quest for perfection. As mentioned earlier, Sufism proposes a loss of self through love for the Other, which is referred to as the Sufi doctrine of ‘*fanaa*’ or annihilation of the self in the ultimate Being. In his quest for complete absorption in God and in the path of love, the Sufi experiences a series of stages, namely, stations (*maqamaat*) and states (*ahvaal*). It is through these stages that love (*eshq*) could be achieved in the Sufi path and the soul could acquire qualities that would lead it to yet higher stages. In Sufi tradition the individual has to pass through several stages or stations and internal modes or states in order to attain perfection of self. A station is ‘a required discipline achieved through exercise and daily practice’, whereas a state is ‘a subjective state of mind, dependent on sensations and not under the control of volition, revealed to the

indifference towards him as to provoke him to cheap taunts’. See G.M. Wickens, ‘Religion’, in *The Legacy of Persia*, ed. by A.J. Arberry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 148-73 (pp. 160-61).

⁴⁶ ‘Sūfism’, *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Online, 2009)

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571823/Sufism>> [accessed 11 November 2009]

Sufi'.⁴⁷ In other words, the station is a result of the mystic's personal endeavour, a step-by-step progress to God, whereas the state is a spiritual mood. 'The states', says al-Qushairi, 'are gifts; the stations are earnings.'⁴⁸ Solitariness and withdrawal, renunciation, silence, fear and hope, sorrow, endurance, trust, and satisfaction are among the stations. The last station is the point of the commencement of the states, where the Sufi announces his servanthood. Accordingly, he experiences such states as desire, contemplation, intimacy, insight, purity, travelling, gnosis, love, yearning, extinction (*fanaa*), and permanence (*baqaa*).⁴⁹

Sufi Romanticism

Persian Sufi figures and poets would appeal to the Romantics by virtue of their common tendencies in acquiring the abovementioned states and stations. During his quest for perfection the Romantic subject, too, experiences some of the states and stations that a Sufi goes through. To put it in a series of sequential stages, the following could be conceivable as the stages the Romantic subject would experience

⁴⁷ A. Reza Arasteh, *Final Integration in the Adult Personality: A Measure for Health, Social Change, and Leadership* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), p. 161.

⁴⁸ Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 75-9. According to Nicholson, al-Sarraj enumerated only seven stations (conversion, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, satisfaction) and ten states (meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquillity, contemplation, certainty). See Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam* (Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc., 2002 [1914]), p. 21. For an account of stations, see 'Sarraj: The Seven Stations from *The Book of Flashes*' in *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. by Michael Anthony Sells (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 196-211; also Arberry provides a list of states and stations in his *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, pp. 75-9.

in the path of return to the blissful primal origin and to achieve the ultimate Truth: firstly, the subject/lover desires unity with a love object; second, finding or rendering the beloved unattainable he then experiences melancholy as an outcome of excessive love; third, due to the desire that ignites such excessive love and the melancholy effect of it, the subject then sets out on a solitary journey; fourth, contemplating on the image of the absent beloved, the lover idealises the beloved's image and sublimates it to the place of an ideal absolute Other, the Truth; and finally, longing to achieve the ultimate Truth, the lover separates from self to become part of the Other as a whole, that is he loses self for the ideal(ised) beloved, and ultimately dies for love. I will expand on the abovementioned stages under two main stages of self-loss and imaginative idealisation in order to provide the grounds for having a better insight into the function of the other stages for the Romantic subject. First and foremost, some preliminary discussion regarding the Romantic self is necessary.

Sufi-Romantic Self- Lessness or Loss

Geoffrey Hartman highlights two types of self in Romanticism: 'the self-conscious self and that self within the self'.⁵⁰ In an effort to find the latter, the Romantic subject seeks a form of self-oblivion or self-annihilation in order to get rid of the former, that

⁵⁰ Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness' (first published 1962), in *The Geoffrey Hartman Reader*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman and Daniel T. O'Hara (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 180-90 (p. 184). The self within the self, according to Hartman, resembles Shelley's 'epipsychidion' (Ibid). This self within the self echoes what Shelley in *Epipsychidion* refers to as 'a soul within the soul', which seems like 'echoes of an antenatal dream', signifying a spiritual union. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Epipsychidion* (ll. 455-56), in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts Criticism*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977).

is, the self or consciousness that alienates him from his real self and ‘imposes the burden of a self which [...] death or a return to the state of nature might dissolve’.⁵¹ Such alienation, which manifests later in the form of a desire of the self for an Other,⁵² be it an earthly beloved or a divine Being,⁵³ generates a sense of constant longing to return. It is what Hartman refers to as the Romantic fantasy of a return to the imaginary bliss of non-separateness, a unity of being, through a process of going beyond self-consciousness which is ‘the product of a division in the self’.⁵⁴ The only way for the Romantic subject to eventually overcome this alienation seems to be through loss of self in the idealised love object which consequently leads to either symbolic or actual death.

The Romantic attitude toward the obliteration of self was approached from different perspectives by the Romantics. In his ‘A Defence of Poetry’ (written 1821, published 1840), Shelley refers to selflessness as a sort of compassion:

⁵¹ Mark Lussier, ‘Enlightenment East and West: An Introduction to Romanticism and Buddhism’ (Arizona State University) <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/buddhism/lussier/lussier.html>> [accessed 1 September 2007]

⁵² This desire of the self for the Other is not a desire to attain the Other as possession, but rather a desire to become one with and lose self in that Other. I will discuss this later from a psychoanalytic perspective in my thesis.

⁵³ Maulavi commented in his *Mathnawi* that ‘[w]hat is “beloved” is not merely *ma’shuqa* (your female mistress) but actually she is a ray of God, the divine Truth.’ See Leonard Lewisohn, ‘Romantic Love in Islam’, in *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. by Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), pp. 512-15 (p. 514). Hence the possibility of idealising the beloved to the level of God.

⁵⁴ Hartman, ‘Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness’, p. 183.

The great secret of morals is Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others [...]

The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination [...].⁵⁵

Having the power to imagine oneself ‘in the place of another’ therefore is equal to love and goodness for Shelley. It is a going out of one’s self, as it were, selflessness, which is only possible through poetry.

What Shelley views as a good man with intense imagination finds its definition as the true poet for John Keats. For Keats, the true poet is someone who can be empathic toward others and has the ability to lose his self-identity. In a letter to Richard Woodhouse on 27 October 1818, Keats wrote:

As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort [...] distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; [...]) it is not itself – it has no self – it is every thing and nothing – It has no character – [...]. A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 480-508 (pp. 487-88).

⁵⁶ John Keats, *John Keats: Selected Letters*, ed. by Robert Gittings, intro. and notes by Jon Mee, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 147-48.

When Keats talks of the poet as having no self and merely filling some other body, he means the poet in his relation with others. Keats's understanding of the poet's selfless character in relation to others is reminiscent of Shelley's definition of moral goodness as going out of one's nature. For both poets the poetical character signifies the poet in his individual connection with someone other than himself. However, Shelley's definition falls within the philanthropic notions of the self in its interaction with society, a selflessness in relation with the world outside, whereas Keats proposes a total loss of self, which is a mystic attribute. Or as Richard Benton puts it, '[h]e has "no character" because he has "no self" in the sense of a personal ego that is in control.'⁵⁷ In other words the poetical character attains his real self at the cost of a loss of ego.⁵⁸

According to Keats in *Endymion* (1818), our happiness lies in 'that which beckons | Our ready minds to fellowship divine' (Book I, ll. 777-78).⁵⁹ Although friendship is to Keats 'the crown of all [enthralments]', there still is another 'orbed drop | Of light' whose influence 'genders a novel sense' and that is 'love',⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Richard P. Benton, 'Keats and Zen', *Philosophy East and West*, 16: 1/2 (1966), 33-47 (p. 47)

<<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/ew27106.htm>> [accessed 10 November 2010]

⁵⁸ I use the terms ego and self interchangeably in the course of my thesis, as what the Sufis and Keats refer to as self is equivalent to what Freud terms 'ego'.

⁵⁹ John Keats, *John Keats: Selected Poetry*, ed. with an intro. by Elizabeth Cook (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 57.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Book I, ll. 798, 806-07, 808, 801.

At which we start and fret; till in the end,
Melting into its radiance, we blend,
Mingle, and so become a part of it, —⁶¹

Now, if Keats sees friendship and fellowship as a divine attribute that brings us happiness, he views love as transcending this feeling as it leads us to the source of light with a yet more original sense than friendship.

Shelley, too, distinguishes between the two in his poetry. In *Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude* (1816), for instance, the poet displays two distinct attitudes toward a true poet: the first one is a ‘self-centred’ recluse poet, who ‘loving nothing on this earth [...] keep[s] aloof from sympathies with [his] kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief’, is ‘morally dead’.⁶² Shelley goes on to say that ‘[t]hose who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives’.⁶³ However, this is not all Shelley proposes in *Alastor*. In fact in the course of the poem he introduces a poet whose seclusion he praises in that it comes as a result of a vision and the desire provoked by that vision for ‘intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself’.⁶⁴ It is a poet who ‘images to himself the Being whom he loves’⁶⁵ and seeks his real self through losing his ego for that imaged ideal Being. Whereas the selfless sympathetic attitude of the former poet is a moral imperative for society, the latter becomes a Romantic solitary hero whose seclusion and loss of self leads him toward a deep understanding of his own real self. It is the difference between fellowship (self’s

⁶¹ Ibid., Book I, ll. 809-811.

⁶² Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, (Preface in *Alastor*), p. 69.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

relation with the world outside) and love (self's relation with the Other as its own self) that generates the distinction between selflessness and self-loss. Whereas selflessness is when the self has the ability to go out of its self and inhabit the place of the other, the idea of loss of self originates from the self's desire to either unify with the other or dissolve in him/her.

According to the Sufis the self is in constant search of unity with the Other in order to overcome its alienation. The urge for such search originates from the loss of a primal unity in the traditions of Neoplatonism and Sufism. In Neoplatonist doctrines, 'all entities originate in and emanate out of an undifferentiated unity'.⁶⁶ In Sufism, too, being 'was of an undifferentiated unity interrupted by material creation which resulted in the separation of humanity (as lover) from God (as Beloved)'.⁶⁷ Such estrangement of man from God generates an urge for man to return to his origin. This estrangement is not merely the separation between the subject and 'the object of his perception', but also 'an inner division in man's selfhood'.⁶⁸ It is due to this state of alienation the soul longs to return to its origin.⁶⁹

This return to the origin, as mentioned above, necessitates a sort of oneness, a negation of self, and extinction in unity (*al-fana' fi 'l-tauhid*). The Sufi aims at uniting his self with God; that is, extinguishing himself in Him. This extinction in God, which is referred to as '*fanaa*', takes place as a result of 'the intoxication of immersion in the

⁶⁶ Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, p. 124.

⁶⁷ Hamid Dabashi, 'Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani and the Intellectual Climate of his Times', in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 2 vols (New York and London: Routledge, 2002 [1996]), I, pp. 374-419 (p. 381).

⁶⁸ Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, p. 161.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

divine Presence',⁷⁰ in an entire loss of self-consciousness. During this transient state of the intoxication of immersion in God, the Sufi does not see anything outside of Him. This transitory state of inebriety then becomes 'the prelude' to a sober state, known as *baqaa* or permanence, where the Sufi sees Him in everything.⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, Bayazid Bastami, one of the originators of the concept of passing away (*fanaa*) in mystical union with the divine being,⁷² was among the first Sufis to announce *fanaa* publicly. According to him *fanaa* is the dissolving of the attributes, will, and I-ness of man in the attributes of God and is achieved only when the Sufi leaves all belongings and negates and overcomes his sole self. Bayazid's analogy for this status is the flowing of the river to the sea (see Shelley's similar analogy of the river and sea below).⁷³ Another Sufi, who thought this double experience so essential that he saw Sufism being merely defined through it, was Junayd-e Baqdadī.

⁷⁰ Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. and foreword by Roger Gaetani (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2010), p. 14.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷² 'Sarraj on Bistami's Mystical Utterances: From the Book of Flashes (Kitab al-Luma')', in *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, trans., ed., and intro. by Michael Anthony Sells (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 212-50 (p. 212). *Fanaa* refers to 'the subjective loss of the human ego and permits Sufis to refer summarily to experiences of both introspective union and nothingness'. See Daniel Merkur, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 204.

⁷³ Persian Sufi poetry offers numerous examples, considering 'the Infinite Being as one ocean of existence from which the waves of the phenomenon arise only to sink back again into it'. See Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, Faramarz S. Fatemi, and Fariborz S. Fatemi, *Love, Beauty, and Harmony in Sufism* (New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1978), pp. 163-64.

‘*Tasawwuf*’, according to him, ‘is summed up thus: the Real [or, the Truth,] i.e. God] makes you die to yourself, and causes you to come alive again through Him’.⁷⁴

The notion of union with the divine was also introduced and conveyed to the Romantics through Christian mystical narratives as well as the works of such mystical philosophers as Jacob Böhme. Böhme’s account of the notion of loss of self-will in order to achieve union with God and not to leave the way of God has similarities with the states of *fanaa* and *baqaa* of the Sufis. According to Böhme, ‘[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’.⁷⁵ It is only in that state that man ‘enters into divine union with Christ, so that he sees God Himself’.⁷⁶ ‘He is all, and whatever you wish to know in the All is in Him.’⁷⁷ Once you step out of all your selfish will (desiring), then will the Holy Spirit of God ‘take a living form within yourself and ignite the soul with its flame of divine love’:

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.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Al-Qushayri, *Risala*, p. 280., cited in Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ *Mysterium*, xli. 54-63., cited in Jacob Boehme, *Personal Christianity a Science: The Doctrines of Jacob Boehme the God Taught Philosopher*, ed. by Franz Hartmann (London: B. Harding, 1919), p. 54.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷⁷ *Forty Questions*, i. 36., cited in Boehme, *Personal Christianity a Science*, p. 55.

⁷⁸ *Calmness*, i. 24., cited in Boehme, *Personal Christianity a Science*, p. 56.

The self thus in the mystic tradition longs to dissolve into or become one with the One in essence. Such longing underlies the Romantic mystic subject's quest for unity. It is a type of oneness where the self of the subject is obliterated and annihilated. It is a dying into the other, and a self-loss.

What distinguishes the two types of traditions, the theological Christian mysticism or Islamic mysticism from secular Persian Sufism, is that in the latter the mystic subject finds the ability to achieve the same results of *fanaa* and *baqaa* through idealising an earthly beloved to the place of the One. The Persian Sufi idealisation of an earthly beloved finds its parallel in the work of the Romantics, as they, too, pursue a sense of mystical oneness with an earthly other as divine. The Romantics' account of the longing of the self for oneness with the One, as God, Nature or the Universe can be detected in the works of such Romantics as Shelley, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. For Shelley, man's soul is but a part of 'one harmonious Soul', a 'Soul of the Universe', a river flowing 'to the sea'.⁷⁹ Wordsworth, too, views God as 'one mighty whole' which contains within itself all beings – a pantheistic oneness of the beings with God – when he says: 'All beings live with God, themselves | Are God, existing in the mighty whole'.⁸⁰ This is, according to Wordsworth in 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey' (1798), 'a spirit, that impels |

⁷⁹ Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), act IV, l. 400, *Queen Mab* (1813), Canto VI, l. 190, *Prometheus Unbound*, act IV, l. 402.

⁸⁰ From a fragment found in a MS. notebook containing *Peter Bell.*, cited in William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: or, Growth of a Poet's Mind. The 1805 Text*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt and Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. xxxiii.

All thinking things, [...] | And rolls through all things' (ll. 101-03),⁸¹ or what Shelley refers to in *Hellas* (1822) as 'that spirit | In which all live and are.'⁸² According to Coleridge it is 'God | Diffused through all, that doth make one whole' and human beings are 'Parts and proportions of [that] one wondrous whole!'⁸³

Imaginative Idealisation or Sublimation

What diffuses and then unifies, according to Coleridge, is the imagination. It is through this faculty of imagination that the Romantic mind can experience what the Sufis would do in terms of becoming one with the One through idealisation. This can be further explained by Coleridge's definition of imagination in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817). Here, Coleridge proposes a definition of imagination as a unifying principle comprising two degrees, primary and secondary:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be 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. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still

⁸¹ William Wordsworth, *The Major Works: Including the Prelude*, ed. with an intro. and notes by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸² Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman, ll. 600-01.

⁸³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*, ed. by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 16, 'Religious Musings' (1794), ll. 130-31, 128.

at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects [...] are essentially fixed and dead.⁸⁴

The secondary imagination therefore ‘re-creates’ what it perceives through dissolving, diffusing, and dissipating and ‘struggles to idealize and to unify’ its material. Thus Coleridge views the secondary imagination as a movement from separation to unification.

The imagination plays a significant role in the poetry of the Romantics and is referred to by the Romantics as a source of contemplation, idealisation, and unity. It is a faculty that mediates between the self and the Other, a means of perception in its primary level, referred to as mind, that idealises the perceived image and unifies the self with the Other. Similarly, in Sufism the imagination signifies the mental faculty, which contains ‘image’, form, or idea,⁸⁵ and is termed as ‘*khiaal*’. *Khiaal* ‘refers to the mental faculty which conjures up images and ideas in the mind’. It also pertains to ‘the whole “world” or realm from which they [these images and ideas] derive’.⁸⁶ However, William Chittick argues that the imagination in Sufism receives the images and ideas not [just] from the mind and the memory,⁸⁷ but rather ‘from a separate

⁸⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works: Including Biographia Literaria*, ed. with and intro. and notes by H.J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 155-482 (pp. 313).

⁸⁵ William Chittick and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, trans. by William C. Chittick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 249.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁸⁷ Cf. Coleridge’s definition of the fancy as different from the imagination: ‘The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.’ See

World of Imagination'.⁸⁸ This World of Imagination is at a higher level than the 'rational mind' and the 'individual human faculty of imagination [which] determines the form in which images present themselves to the consciousness'.⁸⁹ Man gains access to this higher world 'through the visions he may receive on the spiritual path'.⁹⁰ The imagination therefore refers as much to the faculty of mind as it does to the spiritual world.

The image that the mind or memory presents to consciousness is the primary level of the imagination. This image corresponds to Coleridge's definition of fancy, which is 'a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space'.⁹¹ Whereas the primary level is rendered a mechanical and mundane characteristic, the higher level of the imagination is characterised as organic and spiritual. The imagination, as Coleridge asserts, is that 'living power [...] of all human perception' that 'diffuses' to 're-create' and 'struggles to idealize and to unify'.⁹² It becomes the domain within which both the Sufi and the Romantic idealise the image of the beloved, which was perceived through the senses, to the highest level. I will look into

Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*, ed. by Jackson, p. 313. William Blake, too, holds a distinct definition for Fable or Allegory, as opposed to Imagination, as being 'Formd by the Daughters of Memory'. See William Blake, 'A Vision of The Last Judgement' (1810), in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David V. Erdman, foreword and commentary by Harold Bloom (California: University of California Press, 2008), p. 554.

⁸⁸ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 248-49.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Coleridge, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Jackson, p. 313.

⁹² *Ibid.*

the notion of the imagination as such, as a means to idealising the Other, in Chapter five.

In short, the mind of the Sufi-Romantic subject becomes obsessed with a certain love object in a way that through exalting it to the locus of the absolute Truth it transforms the object into an idea(1), and dissolves into it. There is a subject-object fusion as the subject/lover dissolves into the object/beloved and becomes him/her. The process of idealisation, unlike the general consensus that places the subject in the position of possessing the Other in order to establish his own identity, provides the ground for the Sufi-Romantic subject to voluntarily accept the Other or the idealised image of the Other's mastery over his self and as a result to lose self and dissolve into that idealised Other. As such, the subject's desire to lose self originates from his desire to overcome a primal alienation and to return to a lost primal unity. The subject dies for love, either symbolically, that is, a death to self and a rebirth thereof, or in reality and by dint of the excess of grief and melancholy afflicted on him by the pain of love. The death of the subject becomes significant in my analysis for it represents the moment of the self's dissolution in the Other. The source that I have chosen as the main point of reference for the notion of self-loss, which manifests itself in either symbolic or actual death in the works of Shelley and Byron, is D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*.

Before I start analysing the works of these two Romantics in light of the Oriental literature that inspired them, I will provide a comparison between Sufism and Lacanianism in the first chapter. The chapter will be an attempt to examine the states that the Sufi-Romantic subject experiences in the path toward becoming one with the Other in light of the models that Lacanian psychoanalysis offers. Chapter one paves the way for the analysis of Persian Sufi and English Romantic literature in the

following four chapters. In the first chapter, I will thus focus on the interactions of self and other as incorporated within a Sufist-Lacanian framework with respect to the degree of the compatibility of as well as any areas of overlap between the two schools of thought in the analysis of the relation between self and other. In order to provide grounds for further research on the Sufi implications of self within the context of Persian literature and its possible influences on the Romantic self, I will consider, in the second and third chapters of my thesis, the work of two of the most influential pre-Romantic scholars, namely, William Jones and Isaac D'Israeli. Chapter two will be an attempt to analyse 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' by William Jones along with the original ghazal it was adapted from. In Chapter three I will provide an analysis of Isaac D'Israeli's romance *Mejnoun and Leila*. In the fourth and fifth chapters I will look closely at the influence of Persian literature on the works of Shelley and Byron.

CHAPTER I: Self in Other

Lovers do not meet one day somewhere.

They have always been one in the other. (Maulavi, *Divan-e Shams*)¹

Lacanian analysis embodies certain assumptions about subjectivity which echo characteristics of the self as described by the Sufis. Apart from the apparent similarity of patterns that exists between the two schools of thought, Sufism and Lacanianism, which I will draw on in detail in this chapter, there is another more significant incentive in my approach to Lacan's formulations and that is an attempt to examine and explore a rationale for the states that the Sufi subject experiences in the path toward becoming one with the Other by means of the formulations that Lacanian psychoanalysis offers. The subject's desire to become one with the ideal Other originates from his² desire to return to a lost source, be it the mother, or the 'primal loss' as an unknown object, or an undifferentiated primal being or state. Lacanian psychoanalysis, in general, precludes any return to the origin as being fictive, yet it never denies the reality of the subject's desire for return. Whether the notion of a

¹ Klaus Holitzka, *Islamic Mandalas* (New York: Sterling, 2002)

ز اول که حدیث عاشقی بشنودم جان و دل و دیده در ره ش فرسودم

گفتم که مگر عاشق و معشوق دواند خود هر دو یکی بود، من احوّل بودم – مولوی، دیوان شمس

² Throughout my thesis I will apply the pronoun 'he' for the subject, and 'he' or 'she' interchangeably, and with respect to the occasion, for the love object.

return to a primal origin is illusory or real is not the concern of this thesis. My contention is mainly to illustrate the *raison d'être* for the momentum that triggers the desire for return, which leads to an excessive desire for an ideal Other. Furthermore, Lacan's theoretical formulations of self, such as sublimation and supplementary *jouissance*, make it possible for us to explore the various modes that the subject implements in the course of his quest. Lacan proposes that the woman (or the mystic subject) as not-all can experience a sort of feminine or supplementary *jouissance* that paves the way for her or him to liberate her- or himself from the boundaries of an egotistic self. It is this liberation from one's own self/ego that the Sufi subject aims at in his journey.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr renders a broad ontological reason for the logic behind the reality of Sufism in its relation with our being. 'Sufism', he remarks, 'exists to enable us to become what we should really be, [...] to become ourselves', that is, 'to become that archetype or essence which is our [...] inner reality'.³ This state is only achievable through the subject's excessive love for the ideal Other, with whom the subject yearns to assimilate himself, and through his loss of self into the Other. In other words, the subject attains the 'inner reality' of his own self only when his essence dissolves into the 'sublime Essence'⁴ of the beloved and thereby becomes one with her/him.

³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Persian Sufi Literature: Its Spiritual and Cultural Significance', in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn, 3 vols (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), II, pp. 1-10 (p. 3). Our self, according to Lacan, was split at the very moment of alienation and introduction to the external world of the symbolic. The inner reality refers to the self before it was split.

⁴ Ibn Sina, 'A Treatise on Love', ed., trans., and intro. by Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies*, 7 (1945), 208-228 (p. 214).

To start with, I quote Djavad Nurbakhsh's succinct definition of Sufism as 'a way towards the absolutely Real'.⁵ The Sufi is he who sets off on a journey toward the absolute Real (or the Truth, or *al-Haqq*, or *Haqiqat*) with the motive force of love. The Sufi's constant motivating force is termed *talab* which is a sort of 'tension' and 'aspiration', or anxiety and desire in the path toward his final goal. The hindrances in the way toward the ultimate goal generate an intense 'sadness' that, along with the Sufi's longing, reinforce his aspiration to attain a state 'where he can rejoice in a surer and more durable existence'.⁶ This longing for the absolute Real in Sufism is triggered due to the Sufi's 'spiritual poverty' (or *faqr*).⁷ The term '*faqr*' in Persian means poverty and signifies 'the non-possession of a thing and the desire to possess it'.⁸ The Sufi's feeling of 'a certain lack of the sublime human Perfections' and the aspiration to possess it thus renders him the attribute of the poor (*faqir*).⁹

The transcendent movement toward the Real/Truth in Sufism is expressed in the bulk of Persian Sufi literature through earthly imagery of a beloved other whom the Sufi idealises to the locus of the Truth. The imagery of the beloved other in Persian Sufism has abundant examples from poets and philosophers such as Hafez,

⁵ Djavad Nurbakhsh, 'Sufism and Psychoanalysis', *International Journal of Social Psychotherapy*, 24 (1978), 204-219 (p. 204).

⁶ Ibid., p. 206.

⁷ According to the etymology of the word '*sufi*', it is derived from the word '*suf*' or wool. This signifies the patched woollen robes the Sufis wear as a sign of spiritual poverty (*faqr*). See Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. by Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2010), p. 5.

⁸ Nurbakhsh, 'Sufism and Psychoanalysis', p. 206. I will discuss the idea of lack in the Lacanian discussion on the Real as a lost object, an unknown Thing, a cause of desire, and a *no-thing* that the subject constantly desires to re-find.

⁹ Ibid.

Sa'di, Maulavi, Nezami, Jami, among others, manifesting itself in the form of either a self-sufficient beloved, an unattainable beloved, or a sheikh who is a perfect man. The attainment of the absolute Real is therefore possible for the Persian Sufi through the imagery of the earthly beloved, yet only when the latter is idealised by the Sufi into the place of the absolute Real or Truth. The Persian Sufi experiences union with the ultimate Divine through his love for the idealised version of the earthly beloved, during the course of which the Sufi's 'I' is made one with the 'thou' and the self¹⁰ no longer has a place: the ego is lost.¹¹ Now the question is why would the Sufi seek such annihilation?

The ultimate goal of the Sufi life is to be united with the ultimate Real, viz. God, a union which is referred to as 'the divine Oneness'. With respect to one of the definitions of Sufism as a school of the Unity of Being (*vahdat-e vojoud*), there is only one being through whom all other existence exists. Due to the monotheism implied by this definition of Sufism, that 'there is no god but God' (*la elah-a ella' Allah*),¹² the concept of 'union' with God entails a paradoxical assumption. The only

¹⁰ In the course of this research the term 'self' is interchangeably used in place of 'ego'. I do not intend to equate the ego with the self as for instance it is the case in Ego psychology. The self in Sufism has the same connotations as the ego does in Lacanianism. Therefore when the Sufi attempts to liberate himself from the 'self', it is his 'ego' that he wants to get rid of.

¹¹ See Leyla Rouhi, 'Persian Love Lyric', in *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. by Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, 2 vols (Santa Barbara, Calif. : ABC-CLIO, 2008), I, p. 462.

¹² Hafez Esfahani, a Persian poet of the eighteenth century, has nicely put this into the refrain of one of his ghazals as: There is only One and nothing but Him, | He is the only One and there is no one but Him. See Javad Nurbakhsh, 'Two Approaches to the Principle of the Unity of Being', in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1992), pp. ix-xiii (p. ix).

way out of this paradox is that the Sufi vanishes in the face of the Absolute and loses self or attains ‘extinction in God’, referred to as *fanaa* in Sufism. When the Sufi reaches the border of the absolute Real or *Haqiqat* he undergoes two phases: *fanaa* (annihilation or death to self) and *baqaa* (permanence or subsistence in the Other). *Fanaa* and *baqaa* are two successive states that occur in the path toward the Truth. In Sufism, the word *fanaa*, literally meaning ‘passing away’ or ‘cessation of existence’, denotes the complete denial of self and the realization of God: one of the steps taken by the Sufi toward the achievement of union with God. The Sufi initially loses his free-will and then goes through an annihilation of his qualities and being in those of the ultimate Real. For the Sufi, such complete absorption and annihilation of the self in God is the highest goal.

Depriving the Sufi of all sensation, the stage of *fanaa* provides him with a brief moment of ecstasy. But what possible means exist to enable the subject to pursue such ecstasy? Can the subject retain the effect of the ecstatic moment forever? The ecstasy that ensues as an outcome of the subject’s undergoing the state of *fanaa* is temporary and the Sufi soon ‘becomes aware of the outer world even though his being has ceased to exist’.¹³ As such, the death of the subject is a death to himself or a dissolution in the Other – a figurative death. The Sufi persists in sustaining the new state he has attained, which is a paradoxical situation: a simultaneous dissolution in the Other and existence in the world outside. To this new stage of *Haqiqat*, the Sufis refer as ‘*baqaa*’ (permanence), since he is maintaining the qualities of the ultimate

¹³ Nurbakhsh, ‘Sufism and Psychoanalysis’, p. 212.

Being.¹⁴ This permanence or subsistence in the ultimate Being can ultimately entail the disappearance of the ‘mortal qualities’ of the Sufi. The veil that separates the Sufi from the Truth is removed and therefore the ultimate Unity takes place.¹⁵

Once the Sufi undergoes the state of *fanaa* he loses his own self and assumes the qualities of the ultimate Real and thus becomes Him. The notion of becoming the ‘Other’ (that idealised ultimate other) takes its derivations from the tenth century Persian Sufi Mansur Hallaj’s ecstatic and heretical utterance ‘*ana ’l-Haqq*’ (I am the Truth), which led to his execution. A century prior to that, the Persian Sufi Bayazid Bastami had proposed the Sufi doctrine of ‘*fanaa*’ or annihilation of the self in the Other or in God, later to become the premise of copious examples of Sufi love in the literature of Persia. What leads Bastami and Hallaj into proclaiming, ‘I am God’ or ‘I am Thou’ or ‘I am He whom I love and He whom I love is I’ is a complete self annihilation in God.¹⁶ The ego becomes other to itself through being absorbed or losing itself in that Other and not by objectifying the Other. Hence the subject’s announcement that he *is* the Other.¹⁷

¹⁴ The ecstatic state of *fanaa* and successively the state of *baqaa* echo the Lacanian definition of *jouissance* as associated with the Real and death. I will examine this in detail later in this chapter as well as in Chapter four.

¹⁵ Nurbakhsh, ‘Sufism and Psychoanalysis’, p. 212. I will discuss the notion of death in the chapters on *Mejnoun and Leila* and Shelley where both Mejnoun and the *Alastor* Poet reached the second stage of *fanaa* and *baqaa* as they died and took away the veil of separation between themselves and the Other.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive study of *fanaa* and *baqaa* see Andrew Wilcox’s ‘The Dual Mystical Concepts of Fanā’ and Baqā’ in Early Sūfism’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38, 1 (2011), 95-118.

¹⁷ Cf. Majnoun’s proclamation: ‘I am Leili’. This subject-object fusion, as the subject/lover dissolves into the object/beloved and becomes him/her, reaches its culmination in the legend of *Leili and Majnoun*, which I will discuss in detail in the following chapters.

Bastami proposed the idea of ‘the ultimate identification of the worshiper and the worshiped, or the lover and the beloved’.¹⁸ Long before Hallaj made his eminent declaration ‘*ana ‘l-Haqq*’, Bastami identified himself with God, saying: ‘I am like a fathomless ocean identified with God’, and ultimately declaring: ‘Verily, I am God, so worship me.’¹⁹ Four centuries later Rumi declares:

O my Soul I searched from end to end:
I saw in thee naught save the Beloved;
Call me not infidel, O my soul, if I say
that thou thyself art He.²⁰

Such identification with God takes place when the Sufi reaches the stage of annihilation (*fanaa*) and becomes God. ‘Whoever is annihilated in God and attains to the reality of everything,’ as Bastami claims, ‘he becomes all Truth, if he is not there, it is only God that sees Himself.’²¹

¹⁸ Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, Faramarz S. Fatemi, Fariborz S. Fatemi, *Love, Beauty, and Harmony in Sufism* (New Jersey: A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1978), p. 162.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 163. Bastami is said to have been famous for his *Shatahaat* or divinely inspired statements and ecstatic utterances. The Sufis utter *shatahaat* in their mystical state of *fanaa* and claim that ‘there are moments of ecstatic fervor when they are overwhelmed by the divine presence to such a degree that they lose touch with worldly realities. In such moments they utter statements that may seem incoherent or blasphemous if taken literally but are understood by fellow Sufis who have shared the same experiences’. See *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions*, ed. by Wendy Doniger (Springfield, Mass.; [Great Britain] : Merriam-Webster, 1999), p. 992.

²⁰ Fatemi, et al., *Love, Beauty, and Harmony in Sufism*, p. 165.

²¹ Ibid., p. 163.

Furthermore, the identification of I with Thou/He, which takes place at the state of *fanaa*, transforms the I-Thou relationship into I-I or Thou-Thou relation. The following apologue by Maulavi is an exemplar of such a relationship:

There came one and knocked at the door of the Beloved. And a voice answered and said, 'Who is there?' The lover replied, 'It is I.' 'Go hence,' returned the voice, there is no room within for thee and me.' Then came the lover a second time and knocked, and again the voice demanded, 'Who is there?' He answered, 'It is thou.' 'Enter,' said the voice, 'for I am within.'²²

It is worth remembering at this point that such Thou-Thou relationship comes as a result of the Sufi experiencing solitude, contemplation, and yearning to attain unity with the beloved. Such relationship is a sort of love that negates all multiplicity, duality, and I-Thou-ness: a state where the Sufi transcends 'the quality of making distinction between the things of this world', including any distinction (difference) between himself and the other. Thus is the Sufi 'completely annihilated from his selfhood and is united with God'.²³

Sufi Romantic Self

The Sufi stages that I pointed out above find their parallel in the Romantic subject's quest for the ultimate Other. The following stages are among the most frequent

²² *Flowers from Persian Poets*, ed. by Nathan Haskell Dole and Belle M. Walker, 2 vols (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & co, 1901), I, p. 206.

²³ N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: Central Asia and Middle East* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), p. 230.

common tendencies between the two traditions:²⁴ desiring the love object (desire, *eshtiyaag*); excessive love (passionate love, *eshq*); setting out on a solitary journey (seclusion, *enzevaa*), sublimating or idealising the earthly beloved;²⁵ longing to return to the origin and to achieve the ultimate Truth (yearning, *shawq*); separating from self to become part of the other as a whole (unity of being, *vahdat-al vojoud*); loss of self in the ideal(ised) beloved (extinction, *fanaa*), and ultimately dying for love.

English Romantic literature has often been described in terms of an individual life journey in solitude and in search of ‘the unknown point of origin’, toward a

²⁴ For a study of a variety of states and stations in Sufism consult Carl W. Ernst’s article, ‘The Stages of Love in Early Persian Sufism from Rabi’a to Ruzbihan’, in *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), pp. 435-455. Also for a yet more complete account of the stations and the states consult Qasem Qani, *Taariḫ-e Tasavvuf dar Eslām: va Tatavvuraat va Tahavvulaat-e Mokhtalefe-ye ān az Sadr-e Eslām taa Asr-e Hafez* (Tehran: Chapkhane-ye Naqsh-e Jahan, 1330/1952), pp. 217-409. The path of the Sufi is classified into three stages of ‘*tariqat*’ (the path), ‘*ma’refat*’ (gnosis), and ‘*haqiqat*’ (the absolute Truth/Real), the first of which comprises ‘*maqamaat*’ (stations) and ‘*ahvaal*’ or ‘*haalaat*’ (states). Qasem Qani gives in detail an account of seven stations and ten states in the stage of *tariqat*, namely, *tobeh*, *var’*, *zohd*, *faqr*, *sabr*, *tavakkol*, and *rezaa* as stations, and *moraaqebat*, *qorb*, *mohabbat*, *xof*, *rajaa*, *shoq*, *ons*, *etminaan*, *moshaahede*, and *yaqin* as states (Ibid). As mentioned in *Global Encyclopaedia of Education*, according to Ibn Arabi, *fanaa* (extinction) is the apex of the *ahvaal* (states) after which comes the state of ‘*baqaa*’, which is the subsistence in God after realisation of the stage of ‘*fana*’, or the soul’s passing-away in God. See *Global Encyclopaedia of Education*, ed. by Rama Sankar Yadav and B.N. Mandal, 4 vols (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2009), I, pp. 232, 360.

²⁵ The stage of idealisation of the earthly is not among the Sufi states or stations, as the God of the Sufi is already the ultimate Ideal. However, with regard to the discussion I raised above and in the following chapters, the Persian Sufi poet idealises the beloved into the locus of the ultimate Being. Hence the imperative of the stage of idealisation in the path towards completion.

revelatory reintegration and unified state.²⁶ The Romantics looked into mystical themes and patterns in reaction to the rationality of the Enlightenment perceptions of the world. According to Suzanne Kirschner they approximated their own ideals of a return to the perfection of the primal yet unknown state of unity in order to have their spiritual requirements satisfied.²⁷ Furthermore, the desire for perfection originates from the Romantic subject's desire to return to the lost primal state of perfection. In addition to drawing inspiration from Christian mysticism, it is arguably the case that the Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationality was inspired by their reading of Neoplatonic and Sufist philosophy. The desire to return to a primal lost unity takes its origins from these two mystic philosophies. Being, in both Neoplatonism and Sufism, 'was of an undifferentiated unity interrupted by material creation which resulted in the separation of humanity [...] from God'.²⁸ Such estrangement of man from God generates an amorous urge for man to return to his origin. As Kirschner continues, man's division from God is not merely a separation between the subject and 'the object of his perception', but also 'an inner division in man's selfhood'.²⁹ It is due to

²⁶ Anne T. Ciecko, 'Androgyny', in *Encyclopedia of Romanticism: Culture in Britain, 1780s-1830s*, ed. by Laura Dabundo (Oxon: Routledge, 2010 [1992]), p. 6.

²⁷ Suzanne Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 160-61.

²⁸ Hamid Dabashi, 'Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani and the Intellectual Climate of his Times', in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 2002 [1996]), I, pp. 374-433 (p. 381). I will discuss the idea of return in Chapter four in light of the allegorical yearning of the reed to return to its origin in one of Maulavi's poems 'Ney-Naame' or 'Song of the Reed', as it was translated by William Jones.

²⁹ Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, p. 161.

this state of alienation the soul longs to return to its origin.³⁰ The prospect of overcoming this alienation seems to be achievable through loss of self in an idealised love object, an Other.

The Sufi-Neoplatonic notion of the self's desire to return to a state of lost primal unity was revived in the Romantic era. As Christopher John Murray has suggested, the Romantic Neoplatonic philosophy was founded on the principle that 'all creation originally existed in a harmonious unity (the One), then fragmented (the Many), and now longs to return to a state of unity'.³¹ Since human beings are separated from original unity, we all possess some part of the original 'One' within ourselves as present in us and all other things. This original One leads us to 'sense the cosmos within ourselves' and provokes in us 'the divine impulse for reunification of the cosmos'.³² In Persian literature this quality of the soul as being torn apart from its origin and yearning to return to it is epitomised in a poem entitled 'The Song of the Reed' (or '*Ney-naame*') from *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi*, by Maulana Jalal ed-Din Rumi, known as Maulavi.³³ This poem is an allegorical account of the separation of the lover, the reed (*ney*), from its native land, the reed-bed (*neyesta'an*), where it had belonged. The notion of us having been torn apart from our original unity, the 'One', and each of us possessing some part of the original 'One' within ourselves as present

³⁰ Ibid., p. 125. Cf. the Lacanian idea of the Thing as the lost object that is constantly being sought to be retrieved by the subject.

³¹ Christopher John Murray, *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, 2 vols (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), II, p. 1129.

³² Ibid.

³³ This poem was first translated into English by William Jones. See William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), 1799), I, pp. 458-60.

in us also is another premise that Maulavi posited in his book *Masnavi*. According to Maulavi, the truth is a mirror that falls from the hands of God and shatters into pieces and fragments, each of which is possessed by every one of us.

The ultimate object of such relation between man and the ultimate being would be, according to Shelley, the former's yearning for resemblance, correspondence, and assimilation to the latter, indicating a desire for perfection: a 'miniature' of 'our entire self', 'the ideal prototype of everything excellent [...] belonging to the nature of man', which is not only 'the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particulars of which our nature is composed'.³⁴ Shelley refers to this characteristic of man's nature as 'a mirror whose surface reflects only the forms of purity and brightness: a soul within our own soul' to which we 'eagerly [...] refer all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble or correspond with it'.³⁵ Shelley's image of the mirror of man's soul that reflects *only* 'the forms of purity and brightness' echoes the Sufi conception of the self being so purified that it only reflects the qualities of the ultimate being or God. As Franklin Lewis observes, in connection with Rumi, it is when burnished of all its rust that 'the mirror of the soul perfectly reflects the attributes of God'.³⁶ The Sufi's heart thus becomes 'an unstained mirror' that reflects 'the Divine light and reveal it to others'.³⁷

³⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'On Love', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts Criticism*, ed. by Donald Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 473-74 (pp. 473-74).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

³⁶ Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), p. 417.

³⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 13.

The idea of the Romantic subject's desire for identification with an ideal 'prototype' has been interpreted by some recent critics as possessive love for the ideal other. The ideal other is thus referred to as the wishful projection of the subject's ego on whom the subject's identity is imposed. Nonetheless, the Romantic subject's identification with an ideal Other is not always due to his egotistic desire to possess the subject. The Romantic subject, like the Sufi subject, seeks ultimate union with the ideal Other, a desire which necessitates the subject's own dissolution and annihilation and is far from any sense of possession or imposition. In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between the subject and the ideal Other, I will look into the notion of the Romantic subject's love for the ideal other from both Hegelian and Sufi perspectives in the following two subsections.

Against the Hegelian Dialectic

It is arguable that the Romantic subject finds identity not through imposition on the Other, nor self-love and possession of the Other, but rather through love and self-loss. I realise that this may seem a rather vague claim at this stage in my argument, but as I will go on to show, the idea of Romantic love for the Other differs markedly in terms of its theoretical complexity and ideological nuance from traditional Western assumptions. In general terms, the subject is said to be in need of defining his own identity through an other in order to establish a coherent sense of self. To satisfy this need the subject might pursue a quest for the Other in order to be recognised by the Other. The ordinary phallic subject, as opposed to the mystic (Sufi) subject whose mere concern is to lose self in the Other, assumes that he can attain identity through the imposition and domination of the Other.

I will start my analysis with an overview of the Hegelian Lordship and Bondage or master-slave dialectic as a plausible point of the subject's identity formation. Reading the Romantics from a Hegelian perspective, Anne K. Mellor argues that since the object of romantic love is rather the 'assimilation of the female into the male,' and not the recognition of her as an 'independent other', the woman must finally be enslaved or destroyed, must disappear or die.³⁸ Due to feeling self-love, the poet ignores the human otherness of the beloved 'in order to impose his own [...] identity' upon her. 'What he most desires', Mellor goes on to suggest, 'is absolute possession of the beloved; but since this desire is never realizable in life his quest always fails, leaving him frustrated, forlorn, sinking, trembling, expiring, yet still yearning for his impossible ideal'.³⁹ The lover, thus, according to Mellor, holds no identity for the beloved and imposes his own identity on her and as a result the beloved dies and the lover expires. Nevertheless, in his search for the ideal Other, the Romantic poet does not always obliterate the identity of the Other. In fact, conversely, there are moments when the Romantic subject, assuming the role of a mystic/Sufi subject, longs for loss of his own self in the Other as a means of attaining a genuine and lasting cure for his inner alienation.

Elsewhere Mellor asserts that a binary model is 'deeply implicated in "masculine" Romanticism [which] receives its ultimate philosophical statement in Hegel's dialectic'.⁴⁰ This principle of polarity, Mellor goes on to suggest, 'requires the construction of an Other which is seen as a threat to the originating subject'⁴¹ and

³⁸ Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

hence must be mastered or eliminated.⁴² In other words, the subject, being threatened by the Other, and in order to survive and retain his identity, generates a sense of mastery over the Other.

Hegel's discussion of the master-slave relationship explains the extent to which the subject can attain self-recognition and identity through mastering and objectifying the other. The idea of the other as being overcome, mastered, and possessed reflects Hegel's assumption of the master and slave relationship as being unilateral. In his article 'Hegel's Ethics', Allen W. Wood expounds on spirit, in Hegel's view, as standing 'in an essential relation to otherness,' and asserts that the actualisation of the spirit's freedom consists in 'overcoming that otherness', mastering the other, and 'making it one's own'.⁴³ The master/subject attains self-recognition, i.e. recognises himself as self-consciousness, through 'the intermediation of the other' and through denying the existence of that other as 'a desiring consciousness'.⁴⁴ The master therefore precludes the slave from attaining self-consciousness in order for his own self-consciousness to be recognised as it is only through enslaving the other that the master's desire is satisfied. On the other hand, the slave, as a consciousness, aspires to be recognised as an authentic self-consciousness.⁴⁵ Hegel, however,

⁴² Whereas from a Hegelian viewpoint the other functions as a mirror in which the subject sees its own self and not as an essential independent being and is superseded by the subject, in Sufism it is the subject who allows the other to supersede it. Therefore the other is not utilized as a means/object to reflect the self; the self becomes other as it loses self in the other.

⁴³ Allen W. Wood, 'Hegel's Ethics', in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 211-233 (pp. 218-19).

⁴⁴ *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language*, ed. by Joël Dor, Judith Feher Gurewich, and Susan Fairfield (New York: Other Press, 1998), pp. 176, 177.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

proposes a deconstructive view of the relationship between the master and slave, for, as Edward Casey and J. Melvin Woody observe, the master ultimately ‘must acknowledge his dependence upon the slave,’ and therefore this reverses the situation as the slave must ‘recognize his own mastery’⁴⁶ over the master. Hegel suggests that the means for the slave to eventually achieve satisfaction and recognition is his ‘labor’. ‘By laboring to satisfy the desire of the other,’ Casey and Woody remark, ‘the slave *works through* his natural fear of death and realizes his freedom by mastering the natural world, thereby achieving self-recognition.’⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the slave procrastinates the process of reaching the ultimate master, death, as he fears the loss of the master’s love.

By way of contrast, the Sufi subject transcends such fear, as through love and excessive desire for the Other, he no more fears death.⁴⁸ This is justifiable in light of the subject’s desire to lose self in the path toward the recognition of the Other. The master-slave relationship between the subject and the object in Sufism undergoes a sort of modification, in that the subject in love willingly idealises the object and chooses the Other as his master. We have a reversal of positions here which runs counter to the Hegelian dialectic. Contrary to Hegel’s dialectic, in Sufi love it is the subject himself who surrenders to the object willingly and thereby loses self.

⁴⁶ Edward S. Casey and J. Melvin Woody, ‘Hegel and Lacan: The Dialectic of Desire’, in *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, ed. by John O’Neill (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 223-232 (p. 229).

⁴⁷ Ibid. The slave must work through his natural fear of death in order to achieve self-recognition as it is this very fear of death that in the first place represses his desiring consciousness and thus creates the unilateral relationship between the slave and his master.

⁴⁸ I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter four when I analyse the character of the Poet in Shelley’s *Alastor*.

In their comparative study of Hegel and Lacan, Casey and Woody remark that Lacan uses the dialectic of master and slave relationship in analysing the relationship between the analyst and analysand in psychoanalytic transference. ‘The analysand’, according to Lacan as observed by Casey and Woody, ‘assumes the role of the slave, who agrees initially to undertake the “work” of analysis in order to satisfy the analyst/master’.⁴⁹ However, towards the end of analysis, ‘the analyst must eventually eschew the role of master and help the analysand toward self-recognition through the labor of free association, thereby freeing an authentic “I” from captivation by the ego’.⁵⁰ The optimal scenario, according to Lacan, is when the relationship between subject and object is a mutual recognition of self and other interactively. Neither plays the role of master in the end as the analyst himself consciously gives up the role of master in order for the analysand’s captivated ego to be liberated and freed as an authentic ‘I’.

Now, if for Hegel it was ‘through the overcoming of what is other’⁵¹ that the one-sided freedom can be overthrown from possessive master-slave⁵² relation to reciprocal communication, and for Lacan it was the master/analyst himself who gave up the role of master in order to liberate the slave/analysand’s captivated ego, the Sufi’s ego is liberated through a willing dissolution into the Other. Therefore the subject, by doing so, *chooses* to lose self in the Other and hence through losing

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods: G-P*, ed. by Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Tim Futing Liao, 3 vols (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: SAGE, 2004), II, p. 778.

⁵² ‘The slave is the Lord and the Lord is the slave; how can one tell which of the two is the debtor?’ See Ibn al-‘Arabi, cited in Wendy Doniger, *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1999), p. 992.

subjectivity goes beyond mere master-slave relationship with the Other. The Sufi subject, instead of mastering the Other and taking him into his own possession to gain recognition from that Other, willingly endows the role of master to the Other, the idealised Other, in order to liberate himself from his ego/self. Whereas the Hegelian model is based on the assumption of a fundamental antagonism between subject and object, the Sufist model is based on a desire for self-abnegation in the Other. Such negation of self seems to be necessary for the Sufi subject to be liberated from his ego/self.

In Sufism there is no such notion of the subject as possessing the Other to define its own identity. 'The Sufi', according to Abu 'l-Hasan Nuri, 'is he that has nothing in his possession nor is himself possessed by anything.'⁵³ 'This denotes the essence of annihilation', asserts Seyed-Gohrab in his *A Narration of Love*, 'since one whose qualities are annihilated neither possesses nor is possessed'.⁵⁴ It is rather an entire identification of the subject – in the sense of becoming one – with the object than the possession of either by the other. The love and aspiration of the Sufi direct him towards beauty, goodness and perfection and to seek to possess forever these qualities.⁵⁵ According to Ibn Sina (known in the West as Avicenna), the Persian philosopher of the eleventh century, all that exists desires to become assimilated to the

⁵³ Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *A Narration of Love: An Analysis of the Twelfth Century Persian Poet Nizami's Layli and Majnun* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2001), p. 37.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Nurbakhsh, 'Sufism and Psychoanalysis', p. 206.

Absolute Good.⁵⁶ In other words, it is an aspiration to possess a quality in the Other rather than to possess the Other as an object.⁵⁷

In view of what we discussed above, it is not the absolute possession of the beloved as object that the lover desires in Sufism, but rather the subject's mind becomes so obsessed by the image of the love object or the Other that he becomes one with it; in other words, he becomes the Other. The Other finds an ontological bond with the subject rather than being in his possession. It is as a result of such process that the subject expires in the end or the object dies. Sufism, in other words, proposes a loss of self through love for the Other in order for the ego to become *other* to itself – i.e. to *become* the Other.

Sufi Psychoanalysis

Lack of Distinction: Narcissistic vs. Mystic

We have now arrived at a point in the argument where a more precise account of the relation between subject and Other in the Sufi and psychoanalytic tradition may be advanced. I will look into the implications of the subject's desire to return or retrieve the primal state of unity from Freud and Lacan's perspective. The subject's constant desire to attain such lost state of unity generates the urge in him to be reflected through the existence of an external image of his own self or an other. Hence the

⁵⁶ Ibn Sina, Introduction to 'A Treatise on Love', trans. by Fackenheim, p. 228.

⁵⁷ Just as in Lacan the subject desires to possess the thing, which itself is *no-thing* and not an object; it is the possession of a quality in the thing and not the thing as object. See Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 84-5.

subject's love of self at the stage of primary narcissism and a love for the other in later stages of the development of the ego.

In view of this, I will first examine Freud's perception of narcissistic perfection in relation with the ideal other or 'ego ideal'. Freud disapproves of the mystical lack of distinction between the self and the other as purely narcissistic. The lack of distinction between the self and the other in light of the Sufi notion of self-loss runs counter to Freud's rejection of the fusion of the self and the other as 'regressive'. According to Freud the search for an ideal other originates from the lost narcissism of one's childhood. Freud holds that there is a narcissistic perfection in one's childhood which is disturbed by the external world. The loss of that state of perfection leads the child to seek to recover it in a new form of an 'ego ideal': 'What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal.'⁵⁸ In his article 'On Narcissism' (1914), Freud describes this lost or 'primary narcissism' as a phase between those of auto-eroticism and object-love. In this early form of narcissism the subject takes itself as its love-object, or, as Freud put it, '[t]he subject behaves as though he were in love with himself'.⁵⁹ This early phase of life, when all libido is attached to the ego, is the starting point of development. 'In Freudian psychology', as Laura Flanagan remarks, 'healthy narcissism has only one line of forward development – from self-love to object love.'⁶⁰ Freud sees '[t]he

⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 558.

⁵⁹ Freud, 1912: 89, cited in Mario Jacoby, *Individuation and Narcissism: The Psychology of Self in Jung and Kohut*, trans. by Myron Gubitz (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 41.

⁶⁰ Laura Melano Flanagan, 'The Theory of Self Psychology', in *Inside Out and Outside in: Psychodynamic Clinical Theory and Practice in Contemporary Multicultural Contexts*, ed. by Joan Berzoff and Laura Melano Flanagan, 2nd edn (Lanham, Md.: Jason Aronson, 2008), pp. 161-188 (p. 166).

highest phase of development of which object-libido is capable [as] seen in the state of being in love, when the subject seems to give up his own personality in favour of an object-cathexis'.⁶¹ It is only when in love that the ego is willing to lose itself for the other:

[T]he ego becomes more and more unassuming and modest, and the object more and more sublime and precious, until at last it gets possession of the entire self-love of the ego, whose sacrifice thus follows as a natural consequence. The object has, so to speak, consumed the ego. Traits of humility, of the limitation of narcissism, and of self-injury occur in every case of being in love.⁶²

Nevertheless, later in life 'the libido that has been directed toward others' might be 'withdrawn from objects back into the self' and Freud terms this 'secondary narcissism'. Since this secondary narcissism is the return of cathexis from the other on to the self, 'an infantile state of self-involvement is re-created', which Freud considers 'to be unhealthy and in need of resolution'.⁶³

Freud also disapproved of the mystic sense of union that was first experienced in the pre-oedipal stage followed by primary narcissism. According to Freud the first mystical experience originates at the stage when no distinction between self and object has yet developed and the 'infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish "his

⁶¹ Gay, *Freud Reader*, p. 547.

⁶² Sigmund Freud, SE XVIII: 113, cited in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. by Richard Feldstein and others (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 333.

⁶³ Flanagan, 'The Theory of Self Psychology', p. 166.

ego from the external world”’,⁶⁴ that is from the (m)other. For Freud, any lack of distinction between self and other is regarded as regressive since it is related to primary narcissism.⁶⁵ Subsequently, Freud dismisses mystical based intuition as ‘primitive, instinctual impulses and attitudes – [...] worthless for orientation in the alien, external world’.⁶⁶

Freud’s interpretation of mystical oneness, however, must be distinguished from the Sufi’s mystical desire for oneness, in that in the former there is an element of narcissistic imposition from the subject onto the love object. In other words, what Freud condemns as unhealthy is not love of the subject for the other, but rather the subject’s narcissism, his possessive love and desire to return to the state of the primary narcissism he once had experienced in the earlier stages of his life. Hence Freud’s disapproval of any lack of distinction between self and other, the principal characteristic of primary narcissism. Nevertheless, the lack of distinction between the subject and the other which in Sufism occurs in light of the subject’s loss of self in the other, and not as the narcissistic imposition of the other, becomes contiguous with Freud’s notion of a developed ego as one that has shifted from the love of oneself to the love of the other.

⁶⁴ S. Freud (1930) *Civilization and its Discontents*, SE21 pp. 64-145, 66-7., cited in Janet Sayers, *Divine Therapy: Love, Mysticism, and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 56.

⁶⁵ Paul C. Cooper, *The Zen Impulse and the Psychoanalytic Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 205.

⁶⁶ To Rolland, 19 January 1930, in Freud 1961 pp. 392-3, cited in Sayers, *Divine Therapy*, p. 57.

However, as Sayers notes, Freud became more sympathetic to mysticism later in his career. He likened mysticism to psychoanalysis in so far as both see to free the truth of the id and ego from the superego.

– Ibid.

In summary, the subject's desire to attain oneness with the other originates from an urge to retrieve the primal state of unity. It is in fact by dint of such constant desire to regain the lost state of unity that the subject seeks oneness with an external image of his own self or an other. The following section is an attempt to illustrate the idea of the yearning to return to some lost origin. I will first draw on Freud's notion of a return to the 'former *Heim*' and then will discuss Lacan's analysis of the notion of the return to the primary origin.

Yearning to Return

Freud declared his view on the development of consciousness as '[w]o *Es war, soll Ich werden*.'⁶⁷ The translation of this famous sentence varies from '[w]here id was, there ego shall be', to '[w]here it was, there I ought to be', to '[w]here it was, there I shall be', to '[t]here where it was [...] it is my duty that I should come to being', etc.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'The Dissection of the Psychological Personality', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 1932-36, New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1964), XXII, pp. 57-80 (p. 80).

⁶⁸ The second sentence translation is suggested by Jane Gallop in *Reading Lacan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 95; the third is in *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, ed. by Philip David Zelazo, Morris Moscovitch, and Evan Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 408; and the fourth is rendered by Lacan as '*Là où c'était, [...] c'est mon devoir que je vienne à être*', which Sheridan translates as the last sentence above. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, new edn (London: Routledge, 1995 [1977]), p. 129. Although Freud addressed himself primarily to the monotheism and the paternal deity of Judaism and Christianity and not the Ultimate Reality of Neoplatonism, Robert B. McLaren in his 'The Psychodynamics of Neoplatonic

According to Jane Gallop's astute comment, 'Freud's sentence is about the orientation of a return: something shall be, is obligated to be, in the same place where something was in the past.'⁶⁹ In other words, it is a compulsion for the ego to return to the id. All of these translated versions of Freud's ambiguous sentence have a common denominator: the impulse for a return to a past locus represented as 'Es', 'id', or 'it'. All locate the imperative of the existence of the ego on the basis of its dependence on that 'something in the past'. It is a temporal-spatial imperative of an ontological necessity longing to retrieve the lost object and be relocated in the place where it was. Freud refers to this lost place as the mother's womb:⁷⁰ 'the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings'.⁷¹

The subject's longing to return to a lost former *Heim*, generates a sense of dejection for it seems to him that the primal state is lost forever and is impossible to be retrieved. As Gallop observes, '[i]n *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud suggests that all drives are drives to return to an earlier state.'⁷² In an attempt to explain the notion of 'return to an earlier state', Gallop introduces the idea of 'nostalgie'. Drawing on the dictionary *Le Petit Robert*, Gallop states three definitions of the word 'nostalgie': first it is a '[s]tate of withering or of languor caused by the haunting regret for one's native land, for the place where one lived for a long time: homesickness';

Ontology' attributes some mystic notions of Neoplatonism to Freud. See *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. by Lenn Evan Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 411-26 (pp. 411-12).

⁶⁹ Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 95.

⁷⁰ Freud, 'The Uncanny,' S.E. XVII, 245, cited in Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 148.

⁷¹ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', *Writings on Art and Literature*, with a foreword by Neil Hertz (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 221. Cf. the Platonic notion of the prenatal perfection and unity.

⁷² *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, S.E. XVIII, 37-38, cited in Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 150.

second, it signifies '[m]elancholy regret (for something elapsed or for what one has not experienced)', and third, an 'unsatisfied desire'.⁷³ According to Freud the first one is 'a longing to return to the womb, that the lost homeland is the mother's womb'.⁷⁴ Gallop goes on to conclude that because 'the mother is not phallic', the mother as womb, homeland, source, and a point of return 'is lost forever' and 'irretrievably past'.⁷⁵ Gallop draws on Lacan's premise of the illusoriness of a retrievable past. The second definition of nostalgia suggests a sense of loss and a lament for what is lost, which can be merged both into the first definition and the third definition as the loss can both refer to a lost origin as well as a lost inexperienced desire, an 'unsatisfied desire'. Gallop interprets the third definition as a 'desire for an object that has never been "known"', or as Antoine de Saint-Exupery defines it 'the desire for the indefinable something [*le désir d'on ne sait quoi*]'.⁷⁶ She then draws the Lacanian conclusion that '[t]here is no past state that was once present to which one could return, even in fantasy' and because the object of desire is not knowable, i.e. an 'indefinable something', the return cannot be imagined.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, Gallop's Lacanian analysis does not refute the desire of the subject for a return to an unknown object, when she states that desire 'has no (conscious) idea of its object, because of repression. But of course the repressed was once conscious and so the desire is for a return to an object whose [...] knowledge is only contingently unavailable to the subject.'⁷⁸ The Lacanian notion of the unknown object is reintroduced in his Seminar

⁷³ Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 148.

⁷⁴ Freud, 'The Uncanny,' S.E. XVII, 245, cited in Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 148.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, pp. 151, 150.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 151

⁷⁸ Ibid.

VII when he brings in the idea of the Thing as that unknown object which is the cause of desire. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how the concept of the lost object is created in the process of sublimation, in its Lacanian sense, in which the subject exalts the object to the dignity of that unknowable lost object: the Thing.

Furthermore, the notion of something lost echoes Freud's definition of melancholia in his essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), where he defined melancholia as being caused by the introjection of a loved lost object.⁷⁹ The subject's mind thereby becomes obsessed with the lost object. As Steven Vine remarks, the melancholic becomes '*unable to replace with another object* the thing he/she has lost; instead, the melancholic remains *wedded* to the lost object'.⁸⁰ This devotion and fixation of the subject's mind to the lost object can lead to the subject's idealisation or sublimation of the object to the locus of an ideal Other or the Thing. In excessive cases, the melancholy subject dies of grief for the lost object. I will discuss this type of death in Chapter three under the discussion of Uzri love.

At this point, before I discuss the notion of the Thing, I intend to examine the paradoxical situation in Lacan's analysis of the notion of the return to the primary origin. After the child undergoes the separation from that original 'homeland' it then enters another phase of unity with the mother. However, this brief stage of totality and unity disappears soon before the child starts to recognise the reflection of its image in the mirror. Lacanian analysis views the mirror stage as the point of origin and 'the

⁷⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 1916-1917, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis (Part III)*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press in association with the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1963), XVI, pp. 237-58.

⁸⁰ Steve Vine, 'Introductory Note: Hamlet in Psychoanalysis', in *Literature in Psychoanalysis: A Practical Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), ed. by Steve Vine, pp. 18-24 (p. 21).

moment of constitution of that self'.⁸¹ It is already from the mirror stage of one's life that one seeks to acquire the sense of a coherent self. The image provides the subject with an imaginary sense of wholeness. The mirror image becomes 'a totalizing ideal that organizes and orients the self'⁸² in the prospect. The image, however, has an alienating effect for the subject because the image is confused with the self; therefore the subject is alienated in its very being and not from anything outside. The subject in its future relations seeks the same sense of self coherence through the Other as reflecting his image and finds the Other as the guarantor of himself.

The image that the child first recognises in the mirror stage, along with its imagined oneness with the unified image of itself in the mirror, gives the child 'the first sense of a coherent identity in which it can recognise itself'.⁸³ The subject's relation to himself is thus first mediated through a mirror image, a 'totalizing ideal', from outside, that seems to organise and orient the self.⁸⁴ To look at it from a Hegelian point of view, '[i]n an act of self-conscious reflection, one first "posits" oneself as an object other than oneself [...] and then recognizes this "other" as that which is identical to oneself'.⁸⁵ The external object that one perceives thus represents an ideal version of one with whose appearance one identifies.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the ego is an imaginary function as it takes its form from the organizing and constituting properties of the image with which the infant identifies. However, this totalising

⁸¹ Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 79.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005 [1986]), p. 53.

⁸⁴ Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 79.

⁸⁵ Robert Wicks, 'Hegel's Aesthetics: An Overview', in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 348-377 (pp. 367).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

image is no more than a fiction or misrecognition (*méconnaissance*), as Lacan puts it, because it conceals the infant's 'profound lack of co-ordination of its own motility'.⁸⁷ The child therefore is divided between these two senses of itself as fragmented and its image as whole.⁸⁸ The function of the ego, itself based on an illusory image of wholeness, is to maintain this illusion of coherence. Lacan's critics argued that '[i]n order for the subject to identify with an image in the mirror and then to mis-recognize themselves, they must first have a sense of themselves as a whole self'.⁸⁹ Moreover, the Lacanian alienated subject presupposes a 'non-alienated' subject, a pre-existing unity, or a primary whole self in the first instance for it to be alienated from. Lacan's response to this critique would be that 'the subject is not alienated *from* something or from itself', but rather it is the very alienation that constitutes the subject. In other words, 'the subject is alienated *in* its very being',⁹⁰ as alienation takes place precisely when the infant, through the mirror stage, imagines that it achieves mastery over its own body but in a place outside of itself. This place outside of the body of the child entails a 'lack of being' which leads to alienation. Lacan rejects any primary unity or whole self prior to the mirror stage and holds that an illusory sense of coherence occurs just after the child identifies with its own whole image in the mirror. Lacan

⁸⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), 113; *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 18-19., cited in Graham L. Hammill, *Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 6. Freud, too, assimilating the identification of the lover with his beloved to that of the Christians with Christ as an ideal version of themselves, assumed that the idea of oneness with another is no more than an illusion. See Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 198-99.

⁸⁸ Sayers, *Divine Therapy*, p. 227.

⁸⁹ Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, pp. 25, 26.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

refers to this as a ‘primary loss’ or an ‘ontological gap’ at the very core of our subjectivity.

Nevertheless, Lacan’s rejection of a real primal unity as an external reality outside of the subject does not preclude the subject’s desire to retrieve the primary loss: a desire to return. This primary loss inaugurates the movement of desire within the subject. The subject, according to Lacan, desires something that is missing forever. Lacan finds this something as missing forever because it is not in reality an object that is obtainable and is therefore unable to satisfy the desire of the subject. This something is therefore not a lacking object that can be discovered and possessed, but rather it is the very lack itself. Lacan refers to this lack as the Thing in his Seminar VII (1959-60), which was later replaced by the *objet petit a* in 1964. Being unknowable in itself, the Thing is a lost something (and not an object) that must be continually found. Therefore, it ‘is “objectively” speaking *no-thing*’.⁹¹ It is only through the desire of the subject that the Thing becomes something. What creates this desire in the first place is, as we saw, the subject’s feeling of having lost some original Thing. In other words, the sense of having been separated from an unknown source creates the momentum for the subject to seek the unknown original Thing. In Sufism such moving force is ascribed to the Sufi’s love of God, that is, as an external source.⁹² Apart from the apparent differences between the Lacanian thought and

⁹¹ Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 85.

⁹² Compare the Lacanian notion of the Thing as not being an object but rather as a lost something, an unknown entity, with what William Chittick refers to as ‘the Supreme Reality’. According to Chittick, ‘[a]ll the hopes, loves, and affections that people have for different things – fathers, mothers, lovers, heaven and earth, [...] – all these are desires for the Supreme Reality, and those things are masks.’ Chittick argues that unless we know who the Supreme Reality is and ‘how he is present in all things, we will continue to love the masks and veils. Overcoming false love demands searching for true

Sufist ideas, one thing remains the same: the split self of the subject prompts him to think that somewhere he can retrieve the primal state of unity.

The Perfect No-Thing

In his attempts to achieve coherence, the subject persists in believing that ‘somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth’.⁹³ It is precisely at this point that ‘the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another’ or an Other.⁹⁴ The Other, according to Lacan, is a ‘lacking’ Other, that is, like the subject, it suffers from the lack/absence of the phallus. Lacan posits that it is ‘through the Other that the subject secures its position in the symbolic’.⁹⁵ Yet, contrary to the Lacanian subject, the Sufi subject does not seek security within the symbolic order. In order to secure himself, the Sufi subject is rather in need of an Other that is not lacking. The subject therefore resorts to exalting and idealising the ‘lacking’ Other to the locus of an ‘ideal’ Other. The Other thereby becomes an idealised whole as he or she must function as a point of certainty to which the subject can refer. In other words, what prompts the subject to exalt the lacking object into the locus of the Thing is the subject’s awareness of the fact that it is only through a perfect not-lacking Other that he can find the absolute point of certainty.

knowledge.’ See William C. Chittick, ‘Navigating the Ocean of the Soul’, *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*, 1, 16 (December 2010), 29-45 (pp. 34-5).

⁹³ Jacqueline Rose, ‘Introduction – II’, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press LTD, 1992), pp. 27-57 (p. 32).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 72.

The Other must be perfect: first because it must function as the guarantor for the subject; secondly because it plays the role of a whole into which the subject loses self and dissolves. The Sufis' perception of the perfect Other is either an ultimate divine being, namely, God, or, as mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter, an earthly beloved who is idealised by the Sufi to the dignity of God. Idealisation therefore becomes an indispensable means for the Sufi in his quest for the ultimate perfection, a prerequisite for the next stage: *fanaa*. On a mundane level, the mind of the Sufi subject becomes obsessed with a certain (unattainable) love object in a way that through exalting it to the locus of the divine being or absolute truth, it transforms the object into an ideal and ultimately dissolves into it. A Lacanian reading of the above account would suggest that by idealising the image of the Other, the subject continues to misrecognise itself. However, the Sufi subject's intention in idealising the Other is to enable himself to lose self and dissolve in the ideal image of the Other in order to become one with him or her.

The subject's idealisation of the object is termed 'sublimation' by Lacan and is defined as what 'raises an object [...] to the dignity of the Thing'.⁹⁶ The subject idealises and exalts the image of the object to the place of an absolute perfection. In other words, perfection is attributed to the beloved *by* the lover.⁹⁷ The object is exalted to the locus of the sublime because of her inaccessibility. On the other hand, it is this same sublimity of the Other that renders her inaccessible. As Philip Shaw justly

⁹⁶ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. with notes by Dennis Porter, Book VII (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992), p. 112.

⁹⁷ The idea of the ideal Other as being created by the subject rather than being ideal on its own corresponds to Lacan's phenomenological perspective, the mind's active perception of the objects – objects as not existing independently as things on their own – and constituting the phenomena.

observes in *The Sublime*, ‘the infinite, proves [...] to be inaccessible and unknowable’.⁹⁸ Therefore the sublimated object (literally exalted to the sublime) is also a thing unknowable. Lacan offers a definition of the Thing or *das Ding* as the unknowable in itself associated with the real, a lost object that must be continually found. ‘As the example of courtly love shows,’ Shaw points out, ‘the love object becomes sublime on account of its elevation to the inaccessible place of the Thing’.⁹⁹

In Seminar VII, in his account of courtly love, Lacan argues that ‘the inaccessibility of the object is posited as a point of departure’¹⁰⁰ for the courtly lover. ‘On the level of the economy of the reference of the subject to the love object,’ as Lacan argues, ‘there are certain apparent relationships between courtly love and foreign mystical experiences’: the object involved is introduced through ‘the door of privation or of inaccessibility’.¹⁰¹ However, if in courtly love the lover is denied access to the beloved, and the inaccessibility of the beloved is the prime impetus to her exaltation, in Sufi love, as mentioned earlier, the lover himself exalts the beloved to the locus of an unattainable divine being, regardless of the (im)possibility of such access, precisely because of the same reason that Lacan discusses: ‘what man demands [...] is to be deprived of something real’.¹⁰² The only condition for the beloved to achieve the point of exaltation seems to be her unattainability. Unlike courtly love, for the Sufi subject, such unattainability of the beloved is not necessarily by dint of the law of a social code such as the latter’s marital status. It is rather the very subject himself who places the object in a position where he finds her

⁹⁸ Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 151.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁰⁰ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, p. 149.

¹⁰¹ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 149.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 150.

unattainable. The Sufi subject, through creating an ideal image of the absent beloved, becomes one – in terms of mirroring the ideal Other's qualities – not with the Other as object but with the ideal image of the Other. The reality of the unity with the *image* of the Other, and not the Other as object, is not necessarily due to the unobtainability of the object as an external source, but rather the Sufi knowingly chooses the absent, the *no-thing*, rather than the corporeal presence of the object, as a means to the fulfilment of an eternal human desire.

The mind's obsession with the image of the absent object necessitates idealisation, which comes as a result of the subject's imagination as having been directed into the channel of creativity: a process which can be termed sublimation. For Freud, sublimation involves the redirection of the drive to a different object,¹⁰³ namely, art. Lacan's formulation of the child's entrance into the Symbolic order can be considered as equivalent to Freud's formula of sublimation, as it is a redirection of the desire for the object (m)other to the creation of the word, sign, or symbol. Yet, Lacan's own formula of sublimation is when later in adulthood, the subject idealises the object love in order to recreate a figment of the (lost) Thing. The Freudian and the Lacanian sublimation converge in that the subject's awareness of the unattainability of the object prompts him to sublimate (idealise) her to the locus of the ideal Thing, from a concrete object of desire to the abstract ideal non-object, an idea, a figment of imagination. As I will now go on to argue, it is a redirection of the drive to a non-object, a Thing, which, in Sufism, ultimately leads to mystic *jouissance* or *fanaa*.

¹⁰³ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006 [1996]), p. 200.

Mystic Jouissance

Jouissance, a term used by Lacan as early as 1953, is a complicated concept in Lacan's psychoanalysis and can be translated as 'excess of joy', 'ecstasy', or 'excessive enjoyment'. As Lorenzo Chiesa observes, 'Lacan avails himself of at least four different variants of the notion of *jouissance*' in his last seminars: 'The first variant concerns the phallic *jouissance* of *objet petit a* in the fundamental fantasy'; '[t]he second variant relates to the *jouissance* of the Other under the hegemony of which we "make One" and "make sense"'; '[t]he third variant refers to what Lacan names Other-*jouissance*,' which in the early 1970s is 'famously associated with feminine *jouissance*', and in Seminar XX 'seems to indicate the pure *jouissance* of the Real beyond any symbolic contamination (indeed, it is located "beyond the phallus")'; and in the fourth variant, which is 'the *jouissance* of the barred Other', 'feminine *jouissance* could be redefined' in terms of it, being barred.¹⁰⁴ In this thesis I will focus on the third type of *jouissance*, namely, the feminine *jouissance*. The third type is an example of *jouissance* that illustrates mystical ecstatic experience.

Lacan's work of the 1970s moved away from the mere physical attitude toward women that his earlier work offered. While in his earlier work Lacan 'attributed to women a *jouissance* associated with the phallic stage and the clitoris,' in his later work he posited for women 'a specifically feminine *jouissance* that is "beyond the phallus"'.¹⁰⁵ In the 1970s, Lacan suggests that the idealised face of the

¹⁰⁴ Lorenzo Chiesa, 'Lacan with Artaud: *J'ouïs-sens, Jouis-sens, Jouis-sans*', in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 336-64 (pp. 355-56).

¹⁰⁵ *Jouissance - Lacan in the 1970s: Masculine and Feminine Jouissances*

<<http://science.jrank.org/pages/9860/Jouissance-Lacan-in-1970s-Masculine-Feminine-Jouissances.html>> [accessed 7 September 2010]

Other can be interpreted as based on feminine or supplementary *jouissance*.¹⁰⁶ In Seminar XX (1972-1973), Lacan stated that if he had any belief in God it would be expounded in terms of his belief in the *jouissance* of the woman, to which he referred as ‘supplementary’ or that which is ‘something more’. Lacan assimilated this supplementary *jouissance* with the mystical experience.¹⁰⁷ The phallic or sexual *jouissance* prevents man from enjoying woman’s body, continues Lacan, ‘precisely because what he enjoys is the *jouissance* of the organ’,¹⁰⁸ since ‘[j]ouissance, qua sexual, is phallic’ and accordingly ‘not related to the Other as such’.¹⁰⁹ Lacan posits feminine or supplementary *jouissance* as opposed to or something more than its counterpart in that although it has access to sexual or phallic *jouissance*, it can go ‘beyond the phallus’, too.

It is in his search for the ideal Other, ‘*The woman*’, that the mystic subject ultimately experiences supplementary *jouissance*. If, as Lacan holds, *The woman* is nothing but a fantasy for the subject with phallic *jouissance*, it [*The woman*] becomes real for the mystic subject with supplementary *jouissance*, insofar as the subject idealises the woman to the locus of *The woman*. The subject is thus eradicated of his own subjectivity in experiencing that mystical supplementary *jouissance*: a new being

¹⁰⁶ XX, 71; MR, 147, cited in Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 156.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Lacan, ‘God and the *Jouissance* of The Woman’, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press LTD, 1992), pp. 137-48 (p. 147).

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore 1972-1973*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998 [1975]), p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

not generated by ‘phallic *jouissance*’ or through renouncement of love or by means of the Other within the symbolic order, but rather by ‘supplementary’ *jouissance* or renouncement of self outside of the realm of the symbolic. Now if we accept that it is the renouncement of love that renders phallic *jouissance* possible, then we can draw the inference that all mysticism does is to provide the grounds for man to experience the supplementary *jouissance* as opposed to the phallic *jouissance*. The mystic subject idealises the beloved to the locus of *The* woman, or the ideal Other, in order to enable himself to die into her.

Attributing the supplementary *jouissance* to woman, Lacan holds a dual state for her: ‘The woman [...] is already doubled, and is not all’.¹¹⁰ Ironically, the phallic subject, the man who falsely believes in his ‘being all’ in the symbolic, is yet unable to transcend the phallic *jouissance*, whereas the woman (or the mystic subject) who can have both is said to be ‘not all’. Similar to the Lacanian woman or the mystic subject, the Sufi’s awareness of his own not-all-ness leads him to a dissolution of the self into the Other, a supplementary *jouissance*, or what is referred to in Sufism as *fanaa*. To put it another way, it is through experiencing the supplementary *jouissance* that the subject can transcend the symbolic and renounces his symbolic all-ness in favour of becoming like the Lacanian woman as not-all.

In short, the Sufi subject’s idealisation of the Other is not prompted by a wish for mastery/possession over the Other but rather out of a desire to submit to the wholeness of the Other. The wish to submit to the Other as whole gives the subject a

¹¹⁰ Lacan 1982, 152, 153, cited in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000 [1996]), p. 31; also see *Jouissance - Lacan in the 1970s* <<http://science.jrank.org/pages/9860/Jouissance-Lacan-in-1970s-Masculine-Feminine-Jouissances.html>> [accessed 7 September 2010]

sense of selflessness and provides the grounds for him to lose self in the face of the idealised Other as whole. The Sufi subject's loss of self seems to be the only way he can unfetter the chains of egotistic self and untwist the links of the chain to which his ego/self is bound. The concept of self-loss, as we saw earlier in this chapter, entails two implications for the subject in the path toward unity: *fanaa* and *baqaa*. The former is a death to self, that is, the Sufi loses self/ego in a state of ecstasy and assumes the qualities of the beloved. As such, this assumption of the qualities of the Other is allegedly referred to by the Sufis as the annihilation of the self, as the self deprives himself of his egotistical being so that he may be subsumed by the Other's being. In other words, the self, willingly, becomes a mirror to the qualities of the Other and reflects them after he undergoes the stage of *fanaa*. It is precisely here that the shift takes place, that is, the subject is de-subjectivized and all that remains is the object as Other. Hence the self is said to become one with the Other as there is no more division between himself and the Other. After turning back to the external world of consciousness, the Sufi maintains the qualities of the ultimate Other and the state in which he enters is termed *baqaa* or permanence. It is a perpetual subsistence in the Other, sustaining his qualities, as if holding a mirror before him to reflect all his qualities. Therefore the Sufi's heart, which is a mirror of God, is said to be burnished of all rust and unstained to reflect the qualities of God and reveal it to others. 'As the pure heart is a mirror of God, those whose hearts are perfectly purified and polished can serve as mediators for God's beauty.'¹¹¹ Thus, if for Lacan and Hegel the subject uses the Other as a point of reflection and a mirror to see himself in, for the Sufi it is reversed, that is, the subject becomes the mirror to reflect the qualities of the Other. As Annemarie Schimmel points out, 'the lover's mirror-like heart is filled so

¹¹¹ Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God*, p. 31

completely with his beloved's picture that finally mirror and image can no longer be distinguished and his beloved is, in this mirror, closer to the lover than to himself'.¹¹²

Although this claim might seem too idealistic, yet we shall see in the following chapters the literature of both Sufis and Romantics offer such mysterious moments to the material world of outside. The point of the Sufi subject's dissolution in the Other is where he declares his oneness with the Other, saying 'I am Him' or 'I am the Other'. Such dissolution occurs when the subject dies either figuratively to his own self and *in* the Other, or literally *for* the Other. Whether the Romantic subject finds himself in the Sufi position of becoming Other is to be examined in the following chapters.

In the next two chapters I will discuss and analyse two Oriental works: an ode entitled 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' by William Jones as well as a romance called *Mejnoun and Leila* by Isaac D'Israeli in their relation with the original works they were adapted from. I consider these works in order to provide an introduction and analysis of certain elements of Persian Sufi literature and as a foundation for the two chapters that follow. In Chapters four and five, I will examine the influence of Persian literature on the works of Shelley and Byron with special reference to the abovementioned works along with other Oriental adaptations and translations of the age. In both Persian Sufi and English Romantic works I will analyse the relation of

¹¹² 'The idea of the heart as a pure mirror for the Divine Beloved', as Schimmel observes, 'is alluded to in Bayazid Bistami's remark that he was the blacksmith of himself until he had made his self into a pure mirror ('Attar (1905), *Tadhkirat al-awliya*, vol. I, p. 139).' See Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God*, p. 32. Or as Maulavi states in his *Masnawi*:

همچو آهن ز آهزی بی رنگ شو در ریاضت آئینه‌ی بی رنگ شو
خویش را صافی کن از اوصاف خود تا بتویی ذات پاک صاف خود
— مولوی، مثنوی، دفتر اول

the Sufi/Romantic subject with the earthly and idealised Other. Moreover, I will discuss the concept of the unattainability of the Other in relation to the lover's idealisation of the beloved along with the notion of sublimation as a resolution to the poet/lover's melancholia. The Sufi concepts of yearning to return to the origin and dissolution of self or *fanaa* (or supplementary *jouissance*) will be examined in relation with the Sufi-Romantic love in the following chapters.

Chapter II: A Persian Song of Jones

In this chapter I will present a comparative analysis of William Jones's 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' (1771) and the original ghazal on which the poem is based. The ghazal was written by one of the well-known Persian poets of the fourteenth century named Hafez Shirazi (1326–1389) and was addressed by the poet to a 'Turk of Shiraz' as the source of self-sufficient beauty. I will first provide an introduction to the life and work of William Jones in its historical literary context and will illustrate the extent to which Jones drew on Hafez's ghazal in producing the 'Song'. My main contention in the second section is to examine the relation of the poet/lover with the beloved as an ideal, self-sufficient and thus unattainable Other along with the necessity of idealisation and sublimation in both poems.

Persian Jones

Sir William Jones (1746-1794) was one of the most famous Orientalists in Europe who attained the triple character of linguist, poet, and critic during his career. At the age of sixteen he learned Persian from a Syrian in London, his primary sources in acquiring Persian was Franciscus Meninski's *Thesaurus*,¹ and Georgius Gentius's

¹ Franciscus A. Mesgnien Meninski, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae*, 6 vols (Viennæ Austriae, 1680-1687).

Latin translation of the *Gulistan* of Sa'di.² He was frequently quoted and admired by the nineteenth-century English poets as an Orientalist and poet. In fact, Jones held a prominent place as a poet for half a century after Alexander Chalmers ranked him highly in his *The Works of the English Poets* (1810). Chalmers, who admired Jones's productions for their 'true poetical fancy, ardour, and sensibility',³ claimed that the poet 'presented to the English reader a new set of images, and opened new sources of the sublime [...] by familiarizing the scenery and manners of the eastern regions'.⁴

In 'Un Traité sur la poésie orientale' (1769), Jones includes separate French versions in prose and in verse of ten ghazals by Hafez, which was an introduction for his *Commentariorum*.⁵ Jones's 'Traité' and *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) simultaneously established his international reputation as Oriental or 'Persian Jones', as he was referred to by the contemporary periodicals. He concludes his *Grammar*

² Sadi, *Musladini Sadi Rosarium Politicum; Sive Amœnum sortis Humanæ Theatrum de Persico in Latinum Versum*, ..., trans. in Latin by Georgius Gentius (Amstelædami: Ex typographejo Joannis Blaeu, 1651).

³ *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper: Including the Series Edited with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. by Alexander Chalmers, 21 vols (London: Printed for J. Johnson, ..., and Wilson and Son at York, 1810), XVIII, p. 440.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Other translations of Hafez include: John Nott's *Select Odes from the Persian Poet Hafiz* (1787), John Richardson's *A Specimen of Persian Poetry or Odes of Hafiz* (1774), and John Hindley's *Persian Lyrics, or Scattered Poems from the Diwan-i-Hafiz* (1800). More than 40 other individual translations of the poems by Hafiz existed in English prior to 1807. See Parvin Pursglove, 'Translations of Hafiz and their Influence on English Poetry since 1771: A Study and a Critical Bibliography' (Doctoral Thesis, University of Wales, University College of Swansea, 1983). Hafez's first ghazal appeared in Latin as early as Sir Thomas Hyde's *Syntagma Dissertationum* (1700).

with a translation of one of the ghazals⁶ of the Persian fourteenth-century poet Hafez both in prose – literal translation – and in verse.⁷ The *Grammar* became so popular that by 1828 it had gone through nine London editions, besides being included in numerous anthologies. Jones also published this famous version in his slender volume of *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772).⁸

‘A Persian Song’ enjoyed a long popularity, and may, perhaps, be classed with William Beckford’s *Vathek* as one of the chief sources of that dream-world of Oriental pleasure which haunted the imagination of so many English poets of the early nineteenth century. Jones’s ‘Song’, is said to have been ‘the first English verse translation – or rendering – of a Persian poem’⁹ and is, as Garland Cannon remarks, ‘one of the most famous English renderings from Persian, surpassed only by the *Rubáiyát* and *Sohrab and Rustum*’ which ‘still helps guard Jones’s small niche in British poetry’.¹⁰ Byron quotes the poem in one of his early letters,¹¹ and imitates it in one of the best of his own lyrics published in 1809:

⁶ Jones transcribes and translates this word to *Gazals* and assimilates them to *Anacreontick Odes* in his ‘The History of the Persian Language’.

⁷ Jones had already finished his verse translation ‘A Persian Poetry of Hafiz’ in January 1770.

⁸ See Jones’s ‘A Persian Song of Hafiz’ in David Nichol Smith, *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century English Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 543-44. It was in *The Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) that ‘A Persian Song of Hafiz’ was first published.

⁹ William Crawley, ‘Sir William Jones: A Vision of Orientalism’, *Asian Affairs*, 2, 27 (June 1996), 163-176 (p. 168).

¹⁰ Garland Hampton Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 49, 52. Edward FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, the Astronomer-Poet of Persia* was first published in 1859; Matthew Arnold’s *Sohrab and Rustum* was first published 1853.

Remind me not, remind me not,
 Of those belov'd, those vanish'd hours,
 When all my soul was given to thee;
 Hours that may never be forgot,
 Till time unnerves our vital powers,
 And thou and I shall cease to be.¹²

Byron also wrote a burlesque of Jones's 'Song' in 1811, which only recently appeared for the first time in the Oxford edition of Byron's *Complete Poetical Works*, edited by Jerome McGann in 1980. In this parody Byron skilfully retains the exact form of versification of Jones's 'Song', the metrical octosyllabic pattern, the rhyme pattern *abcabc* as well as the stanza form as offered by Jones in his poem.¹³ Jones's first stanza reads:

¹¹ In a letter to Mr. Dallas on 7 September 1811, Byron wrote: 'As Gifford has been ever my "Magnus Apollo," any approbation, such as you mentioned, would, of course, be more welcome than "all Bocara's vaunted gold, than all the gems of Samarcand."' See George Gordon Byron, *The Life of Lord Byron: With his Letters and Journals*, ed. by John Wilson Croker and Thomas Moore (London: John Murray, 1851), p. 136.

¹² George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), I, p. 217. This poem was first published in *Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics: Together with Original Poems Never Before Published*, col. by John Cam Hobhouse (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809), under the title of 'A Love Song. To *****'.

¹³ For a detailed comparative analysis of these two poems see Parvin Loloi, *Hafiz, Master of Persian Poetry: A Critical Bibliography: English Translations Since the Eighteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 62-3.

Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.¹⁴

Now Byron's first stanza explicitly indicates his imitation of Jones's 'Song':

Bar Maid, if for this shilling white,
Thou'dst let me love, nor scratch or scold,
That ruddy cheek and ruddier hand
Would give my Bardship more delight
Than all the ale that e'er was sold,
Than even a pot of 'Cyder-And'.¹⁵

However, there is no resemblance between the versification form of these two songs and the original ghazal that was composed by Hafez. Hafez's ghazal is comprised of nine couplets or distichs, each line of which has 16 syllables. The couplet is termed a *beyt* and the line within each *beyt* is called a *mesraa*. The ghazal's rhyme scheme is *aa ba ca da* and so forth. To have a better grasp of this form of versification I will

¹⁴ William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, MDCCXCIX. [1799]), IV, pp. 449-52 (p. 449).

¹⁵ George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), I, p. 342.

provide the reader with a transcription, in a similar tradition done by Jones and his contemporaries, of the first two *beyts* of this ghazal:

agar aan Tork-e Shiraazi be dast aarad del-e maa raa

be xaal-e henduyash baxsham Samarqand o Bokhara raa

bede saaqi mey-e baaqi ke dar jannat naxaahi yaaft

*kenaar-e aab-e Roknabad o golgasht-e Mosalla raa*¹⁶

As shown above, the first two lines of the couplet rhyme and the second *mesraa* ' of the remaining couplets rhyme with the ending word of the first *beyt*, known as a *radif*.

At this point, it is worth looking at the extent to which Jones was successful in conveying the meaning and the style from the original ghazal in composing his 'Persian Song'. In the concluding part of his *Grammar*, Jones states,

The wildness and simplicity of this Persian song pleased me so much, that I have attempted to translate it in verse [...]. I have endeavoured, as far as I was able, to give

¹⁶ Jones's transcription reads:

Egher an Turki Shirazi

Bedest ared dili mara,

Be khali hinduish bakhsham

Samarcand u Bokharara.

Bede, saki, mei baki,

Ke der jennet nekhahi yaft

Kunari abi Rocnabad,

Ve gulgeshti Mosellara. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, IV, p. 449.

my translation the easy turn of the original; and I have, as nearly as possible, imitated the cadence and accent of the Persian measure.¹⁷

Jones, preferring a less literal translation process, abandons the *beyts* of the ghazal form in his verse translation. He expands each of the nine *beyts* in the original ghazal to a stanza of *abcabc* of octosyllabic lines. The ‘Song’, as Hasan Javadi observes, ‘is not very faithful to the original, but it gives a favorable idea of the content and rhythm of Háfiz’s poem to the reader’.¹⁸ Apart from the rhythm of the ghazal, Jones maintains what the content of the ghazal offers, namely, the persona’s mystic love for an earthly beloved, the unattainability of the beloved, the persona’s idealisation of the beloved.¹⁹

Persian ghazals typically concern topics such as love, hedonism, and mysticism, usually comprising eight to fifteen couplets (*beyts*), the most important characteristic of which is that each of these couplets, independent of the previous or following couplet, represents a complete poem in itself. In one of his letters to Jones dated 24 February 1768 in London, Charles Revczki states that, ‘in each distich of the *Gazel*, the sense must be complete and finished’.²⁰ There are different theories about the ghazal’s origin; one suggestion is that it refers to the erotic prelude of the old Arabic qasida and another suggestion is that it goes back to the setting of a kind of lyric recited in pre-Islamic Persia. According to Arthur Arberry, the ghazal was originally referred to as ‘a short love-poem’ – signifying ‘the talk of youths and

¹⁷ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, II, p. 243.

¹⁸ Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature, with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2005 [1983]), p. 52.

¹⁹ I will discuss these notions in due course in this chapter.

²⁰ John Shore Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of Sir William Jones*, 2nd edn (London: John Hatchard, 1806), p. 47.

maidens' in Arabic – and 'had a distinguished career in Arabic literature before the Persians took it over for the same purpose'.²¹

The ghazal is considered to be the main form in Persian among the other genres of Sufi literature, generally divided into prose (*nasr*), didactic and narrative poems (*masnavi*), quatrains (*rubaiyat*), and lyrical poems (*ghazal*).²² It was above all in the ghazal that Persian mysticism found its highest expression and, as Bo Utas remarks, it was through this specific literary genre that a great number of poets sang 'the perfection of the Beloved and expressed the inexpressible mystic experience'.²³

As such this mystic experience has always been subject to a sort of ambivalence during the history of the ghazal. On the one hand, the usage of certain words of earthly and sensuous quality would denote the profanity and libertinism as experienced by the poet. On the other, those same words were construed by the more conservative readership as allegorical and symbolical of religious mystic ideals. In his 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus' (1792), Jones introduces the ghazal as a 'singular species of poetry which consists almost wholly of a mystical religious allegory'. However, Jones seems to have been aware of both standpoints within the history of Sufism in Persia when he declares that on a transient view ghazals seem 'to contain only the sentiments of a wild and voluptuous libertinism'.²⁴ Jones therefore seems to associate mysticism with a more transcendental and

²¹ Arthur John Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969 [1950]), p. 113.

²² Bo Utas, 'The Literary Expression of Persian Sufism', in *Mysticism: Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Mysticism Held at Åbo on the 7th-9th September, 1968*, ed. by Sven S. Hartman and Carl-Martin Edsman (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970), pp. 206-19 (pp. 207-8).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

²⁴ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 445.

religious allegorical language and rules out the more erotic impulses as having no mystic implications. Perhaps what prompted him to eschew any usage of voluptuous and audacious language in his ‘Song’ was due to this same interpretation of Sufi literature.

The eleventh-century Persian Sufi Hujwiri, according to Arberry, ‘enumerates no fewer than twelve “sects” of Sufism, of which ten are stated to be “orthodox” and two “heretical”’.²⁵ The latter used quite a profane language in their love lyrics. Among them one can point to such poets as Abu Sa’id Abu’l Khair and even Hafez to whose poetry only, as Bo Utas observes, ‘the changed context conveyed a mystical signification’.²⁶ However, it is not just by dint of the change of context from profane to pious that Persian love poetry conveys mystical signification. Even the profane language of some of the poets can have mystic connotations. The Sufi poet of the second group sees faith and truth in what the orthodox group preclude and ban as infidelity and sin.²⁷ For instance, to the Sufi of the second group the wine house or tavern (*meykade*) and not the mosque becomes the place of worship. In other words, the tavern becomes the Kaaba of the Sufi, as these two *beyts* of Hafez’s ghazal read:

Last night from the Masjed towards the wine tavern our Pir came:

O friends of the Path! after this, what is our plan?

²⁵ Hujwiri, op.cit. p. 176, cited in Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 65.

²⁶ Utas, ‘The Literary Expression of Persian Sufism’, p. 216.

²⁷ ‘What to men is infidelity and sin | For me is Faith and true doctrine.’ See Divan-i Maghribi, in ‘A Critical Edition of the ...’, ed. by L. Lewisohn, Ghazal 35., cited in Leonard Lewisohn, ‘The Transcendental Unity of Ploytheism & Monotheism in the Sufism of Shabistari’, in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. by Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqhi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992), pp. 379-406, p. 394.

How may we, disciples, turn to the Ka'ba, when
Our Pir hath his face towards the house of the Vintner.²⁸

The Sufi would thence oppose the restrictions and constraints of the religious order of the orthodox group.

Many of Hafez's ghazals are superb demonstrations of the poet's skills in composing poetry about both divine and worldly love. However, as for the 'Turk-e Shirazi' ('The Turk of Shiraz') ghazal, Parvin Pursglove observes, some critics like R.M. Rehder argue that 'there is nothing in this poem to cause us to believe that this is a religious or *sufi* poem, or that the beloved is in any way divine', rather it is a 'secular love lyric'.²⁹ Having a 'deep regret for the transitoriness of life' and a 'passionate desire to enjoy the moment,' Hafez, according to Javadi, despised all narrow mindedness whether it belonged to 'the orthodox *ulema*' or to the ascetic

²⁸ Hafez, *Ghazal of Hafez Shirazi in Persian with English Translation*, compiled and corrected by Behrouz Homayoun Far, 2 parts (October 2001), I, p. 22
<http://www2.enel.ucalgary.ca/People/far/hobbies/iran/Gazal/hafez_ghazal_bi_p1.pdf> [accessed 23 August 2010]. *Masjed* or *Masjid* is the Arabic-Persian term for mosque and *Pir* signifies the old sage or the Sufi guide. 'To humiliate [...] hypocrites,' as Ehsan Yarshater observes, Hafez 'takes the dregs and derelicts of society and enthrones them as paragons of virtue, even as *pirs* or saintly Sufi leaders. These are the *rend* "debauchee," the *qalandar* "dissolute hoodlum," *pir-e meyforus* "wine-selling *pir*" and *pir-e mogan* "the *pir* of the Magians –" both meaning in Hafez's ironic vocabulary "tavern keeper –".
<<http://www.iranica.com/articles/hafez-i>> [accessed 23 August 2010]

دوش از مسجد سوی میخانه آمد پیر ما چیست یاران طریقت بعد از این تدبیر ما
ما مریدان روی سوی قبله چون آریم چون روی سوی خانه خمار دارد پیر ما
— حافظ، دیوان

²⁹ R. M. Rehder, 'The Unity of the Ghazals of Hafiz', *Der Islam*, 51 (1974), pp. 67-73, cited in Pursglove, 'Translations of Hafiz and their Influence on English Poetry since 1771', p. 585.

Sufis.³⁰ Nonetheless, we do not do Hafez's poetry justice if we deny him his mysticism.³¹ As Jones points out in his 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus':

It has been made a question, whether the poems of HAFIZ must be taken in a literal or in a figurative sense; but the question does not admit of a general and direct answer; for even the most enthusiastick of his commentators, allow, that some of them are to be taken literally [...]. HAFIZ never pretended to more than human virtues, and it is known that he had human propensities; for in his youth he was passionately in love with a girl surnamed *Shákhī Nebât* [...] and the prince of Shiraz was his rival [...]. [...] After his juvenile passions had subsided, we may suppose, that his mind took that religious bent, which appears in most of his compositions.³²

As proof of the above, Jones brings examples collected from different ghazals that, according to him, 'relate to the mystical theology of the *Sufis*':

In eternity without beginning, a ray of thy beauty began to gleam; when Love sprang into being, and cast flames over all nature;

On that day thy cheek sparkled even under thy veil, and all this beautiful imagery appeared on the mirror of our fancies.

³⁰ Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature*, p. 204. The *ulama* are the scholar-legists of Islam, trained in the religious sciences such as the Quran, exegesis and interpretation of the religious law, shari'a. See *Overview of World Religions* <philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/indon/nahdat.html> [accessed 9 August 2007]

³¹ Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature*, p. 204.

³² Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, pp. 452-53.

From the moment, when I heard the divine sentence, *I have breathed into man a portion of my spirit*, I was assured, that we were His, and He ours.

Where are the glad tidings of union with thee, that I may abandon all desire of life? I am a bird of holiness, and would fain escape from the net of this world.³³

Apart from such couplets that have an obvious Sufi touch both in the meaning and the selection of words, Jones informs the reader that there are copious examples in Hafez's poetry that a secondary figurative meaning has been imposed on the actual this worldly sense of it. Jones provides the reader of this article with a list of Sufi terminology, asserting that many of admirers of Hafez had by then rendered ghazals a secondary figurative meaning over and above what they ostensibly express. He states:

Many zealous admirers of HAFIZ insist, that by *wine* he invariably means *devotion*; and they have gone so far as to compose a dictionary of words in the *language* [...] of the *Súfis*: in that vocabulary [...] *idolaters*, *infidels*, and *libertines* are men of the purest *religion*, and their *idol* is the Creator himself; the *tavern* is a retired oratory, and its *keeper*, a sage instructor; *beauty* denotes the *perfection* of the Supreme Being; [...] *lips*, the hidden mysteries of his essence; [...] and a *black mole*, the *point* of indivisible unity; lastly, *wantonness*, *mirth*, and *ebriety*, mean religious ardour and abstraction from all terrestrial thoughts.³⁴

³³ Ibid., pp. 453-54.

در ازل پرتو حسنت ز تجلی دم زد عشق پیدا شد و آتش به همه عالم زد – حافظ، دیوان
چنین قفس نه سزای چو من خوش الحانیست روم به گلشن رضوان که مرغ آن چمنم – حافظ، دیوان

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 455-56.

‘The poet himself’, continues Jones, ‘gives a colour in many passages to such an interpretation’, without which it can hardly be conceived that ‘his poems [...] would be tolerated in a *Muselman* country’.³⁵ However, this ambivalence would expose the style to ‘dangerous misinterpretation’; also it would supply ‘real infidels with a pretext for laughing at religion itself’.³⁶ Jones’s fascination with Sufism was as old as his love for Hafez and according to Arberry, as observed by Cannon, ‘[u]sing Sufic sources, Jones was the first European to discuss the complex subject authoritatively’.³⁷ He acknowledges a tradition of Sufi interpretations of the poems of Hafez, which point beyond the poem’s literal meaning.³⁸ Nevertheless, Jones’s ‘Song’ reveals that he devotes himself to an appreciation of this specific ghazal mostly on a mundane, sensuous level.

From the above account it is easy to gain a sense of how mystical poetry has been under attack from orthodox critics throughout the history of Sufism. Arthur John Arberry provides a table of earthly terms with spiritual connotations, based upon a little pamphlet by a seventeenth-century Persian Sufi author Muhsin Faid Kashani, entitled *Risala-yi Mishwaq*. Kashani’s concern was to defend mystical poets against their orthodox critics as well as to clear them of charges based on too literal an interpretation of their technical vocabulary. Of all the words given by the author, I only selectively choose those relevant to the present ghazal:

³⁵ Ibid., p. 456.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, p. 338. Jones describes the doctrine of Persian theists, both ‘ancient *Húshangis*’, and ‘modern *Súfis*’ as ‘a figurative mode of expressing the fervour of devotion, or the ardent love of created spirits towards their beneficent Creator’. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 445.

³⁸ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 456.

Rukh (face, cheek): the revelation of Divine Beauty in Attributes of Grace, e.g. the Gracious, the Clement, the Life-giving, the Guide, the Bountiful; Light; Divine Reality.

Khal (mole): the point of Real Unity, which is concealed and is therefore represented as black.

Khatt (down on the cheek): the manifestation of Reality in spiritual forms.

Lab (lip): the life-giving property of God, and His keeping man in existence.

Sharab (wine): ecstatic experience due to the revelation of the True Beloved, destroying the foundations of reason.

Saqi (wine-bearer): Reality, as loving to manifest itself in every form that is revealed.

Jam (cup): the revelations of (Divine) Acts. The whole seen and unseen world is like a *khumkhana* (vault) containing the wine of Being and the inborn love of god; each atom of the world, according to its receptivity and particular aptitude, is a *paimana* (goblet) of the wine of His love, and the goblet is full of this wine.

But (idol): every object of worship other than God. Sometimes it is used to indicate a manifestation of the Divine Beauty, to worship which is the same as worshipping its Creator; sometimes it connotes a Perfect Man (*kamil*)³⁹ or a Guide (*murshid*) who is the Pole (*qutb*) of his time.⁴⁰

Considering Hafez's Turk-e Shirazi ghazal, creating such spiritual abstraction from earthly concepts would be to impose orthodox Sufi thoughts on the depiction of profane love in this ghazal. Nevertheless, there is no reason why one should not see the beauty of the earthly beloved's 'face' as perfect beauty, her 'beauty spot' as real

³⁹ Hafez refers to the Perfect Man as '*pir-e daanaa*' (the sage) in his Turk-e Shirazi ghazal.

⁴⁰ Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 113-15.

unity, and her 'lips' as life-giving power, as evidence of the ghazal's representation of secular Sufism.

According to Iraj Bashiri, in his structuralist analysis of the ghazal, a word may sometimes have a meaning and explanation different from its modern connotations. Therefore, the same word may simultaneously have a mundane as well as a Sufi meaning.⁴¹ Bashiri gives an account of love (*eshq*) – which is a Sufi station as discussed earlier – as 'the totality of five stages' in Sufism:

1. Loss of heart.
2. Regret, the lover repeatedly regrets that he is alive and away from his object of love.
3. Ecstasy, during this stage the lover sees transient flashes of intense light as they appear and disappear.
4. Loss of patience.
5. Ardour of love, the lover loses all control over his senses, and overwhelmed by love rests unconscious.⁴²

He then draws a chart in which he attributes each of the above stages to one of the *beyts* of Hafez's ghazal, adding two more stages to the primary list of five stages of love: loss of mind and annihilation. In this second chart he provides a Sufi value of each word in the ghazal:

⁴¹ Iraj Bashiri, "'Hafiz' Shirazi Turk": A Structuralist Point of View'

<<http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Hafiz/Hafiz.html#72>> [accessed 2 August 2007]

⁴² Ibid.

dil (heart), first *beyt*: loss of heart

luilyan-i shukh shirin kar-i shahr ashub (vivacious, beguiling, commotion-inspiring gypsies), third *beyt*: *wajd* (ecstasy)

khwan-i yaghma (festal board), third *beyt*: intensity of impatience

yusif, fifth *beyt*: loss of consciousness

zulaikha, fifth *beyt*: sacrifice of the Sufi (self-abnegation)

mutrib (minstrel), sixth or eighth *beyt*:⁴³ loss of mind

hafiz, seventh or ninth *beyt*: annihilation

Nonetheless, Hafez gives a rather lucid earthly colour to this ghazal. The earthly love that is presented by Hafez can embody all the abovementioned Sufi values. What approximates the poet's earthly love to a mystic one is his idealisation of the beloved to the locus of some divine Being. The Turk of Shiraz is at first sight merely an earthly maid who Hafez is courting till the end of the poem. However, what Hafez does is idealise such an earthly figure and exalt her to the place of a perfect self-sufficient being.

Hafez's Sufism must be distinguished from the kind of Sufism that he associates with the notorious '*maktab*'. '*Maktab*s' were institutions where a group of people practiced a series of conventional and religious traditions. Hafez attributed the traditional practices as such to ascetics and zealots and opposed their type of Sufism as being ostentatious and subjugating. If there were any Sufi aspect that can be attributed to Hafez's poetry it would be belonging to the type of Sufism that was

⁴³ There are two versions of the ghazal, nine- and seven-*beyts* versions. Some critics believe that the seven-*beyt* version is structurally more unified and harmonized than the longer one. Qazvini and Ghani's edition, which is the seven-*beyt* edition, excludes *beyts* six and seven. Obviously, Jones has preferred and used the longer version in recreating the ghazal.

practiced by Bayazid Bastami and Mansur Hallaj: a Sufism that liberated the Sufi from the fetters of reason and tradition,⁴⁴ from which the Sufi love for the beloved goes to the extent that the only veil between the lover and the beloved is the existence of the lover. This is the point at which the lover desires an entire self-annihilation and dissolution into the beloved in order to become (one with) her/him.⁴⁵ Although there are moments of such yearning in Hafez's poetry, the present ghazal celebrates the urge for the lover to merely gain the desire of the beloved seemingly on an earthly level. The poet, however, from the outset seems to be aware of the impossibility of the fulfilment of such desire as, by idealising the love object to the locus of the absolute Beloved, he attributes absolute self-sufficiency and perfection to the beloved.

The poet finds the secret of life through idealisation of the earthly beauty of the *yaar* (beloved),⁴⁶ along with the intoxication he gains from wine and poetry. In order to have a better insight into the notion of the idealisation of the earthly beloved, the following section provides an analysis with special reference to the formulations of self and Other by Lacan and Freud. This section also focuses on the idea of love for the idealised beloved as it was developed by Jones in his article 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus', as well as in his 'Song' as inspired by Hafez's ghazal.

⁴⁴ Abdu l-Hossein Zarrinkub, *Az Kuche-ye Rendaan: Darbaare-ye Zendegi va Andishe-ye Hafez* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1373/1994), p. 105.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ 'Yaar' is a term that Hafez repeatedly uses throughout his *Divan*, meaning 'the sweetheart'.

The Imperative of Idealisation

As discussed in Chapter one, according to Lacan, the subject persists in thinking that ‘somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth’ and believes that he can address his demand to an Other.⁴⁷ But Lacan postulates that the Other is but a fantasised place of such certainty.⁴⁸ The subject elevates the *objet a*, or the cause of desire, ‘into the place of [...] God’.⁴⁹ This elevation of a mundane cause of desire into a divine cause, that is, into an idealised image of the Other as whole, according to Lacan, is the ultimate fantasy.⁵⁰ According to Lacan as quoted by Slavoj Žižek,

[F]alse idolizing idealizes [...]. [...] It blinds itself to the other *as such*, using the beloved as a blank screen on to which it projects its own phantasmagorical constructions; while true love accepts the beloved the way she or he is, merely putting her/him into the place of the Thing, the unconditional Object.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the very act of putting the beloved into the place of the Thing is paradoxically to have idealised her. Yet such idealisation does not place the beloved as a blank screen on which the lover can project his desires and his own perceptions

⁴⁷ Jacqueline Rose, ‘Introduction-II’, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan, 1992 [1982]), pp. 27-57 (p. 32).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 49-82 (p. 74).

⁵⁰ As Rose points out, ‘[t]he status of the woman as fantasy in relation to the desire of the man was a central concern of Lacan’s later writing’. See ‘God and the *Jouissance* of The Woman’ and ‘A Love Letter’ in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan, 1992 [1982]).

⁵¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2001 [2000]), p. 128.

of the ideal, but rather it exalts the beloved to the place of the ideal Other (see the discussion of the Thing in Chapter one). Hafez raises the earthly beloved to the place of God, ascribing to her such divine attributes as beauty, self-sufficiency, and perfection, in order to justify his excessive desire for and submission to the *yaar*. Moreover, in order for the subject to be able to transcend ‘false idolizing’, he should practice a sort of unconditional non-possessive love for the Other. One way to access this state of mind for the subject is through giving up of all that is worldly: a stage in the Sufi path. According to Sufism, so long as one wants to obtain control over the external world and *have* the object, one cannot attain perfection. In other words, the Sufi finds spiritual perfection in giving up control over the external reality.⁵² This giving up of the external world finds its culmination in giving up of the desire for *having* the object, which I will discuss later in Chapters three and four in the course of analysing Majnoun’s love for Leili as well as the Poet’s love for the veiled maid in *Alastor*. At this point I will draw on the notion of non-possessive love as it was depicted by Hafez and Jones in light of the lover’s submission to the ideal beauty of the beloved. I will then discuss the subject’s holding the love object as self-sufficient as another index of the subject’s idealisation of the object.

Submission of/to Beauty

Jones considered the international trophy for love poetry to belong to the Persians in general, and specifically to the fourteenth-century poet Hafez.⁵³ In his ‘On the

⁵² See below for a discussion of Hafez’s manner in giving up of all that is worldly in the first *beyt* of the ghazal.

⁵³ William Crawley, ‘Sir William Jones: A Vision of Orientalism’, *Asian Affairs*, 2, 27 (July 1996), 163-176 (p. 169).

Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus', Jones first presents two accounts of love from a seventeenth-century English theologian Isaac Barrow and an eighteenth-century French statesman Jacques Necker before he introduces Sufi love in Hafez's poetry. Having an almost empirical view of beauty and the appraisal of and love for beauty as entirely possessive, Barrow describes love as:

an affection or inclination of the soul toward an object, proceeding from an apprehension [...] of some excellence [...] in it, as its beauty, worth, or utility, and producing, if it be absent, a proportionable desire, and consequently an endeavour, to obtain such a property in it, such possession of it, such an approximation to it, or union with it [...]; with a regret and displeasure in failing to obtain it, or in the want and loss of it; begetting likewise a complacency, satisfaction, and delight in its presence, possession, or enjoyment, which is moreover attended with a good will toward it, suitable to its nature; that is, with a desire, that it should arrive at, or continue in, its best state; with a delight to perceive it thrive and flourish; with a displeasure to see it suffer or decay: with a consequent endeavour to advance it in all good and preserve it from all evil.⁵⁴

From this extract, one might draw the conclusion that the subject's love for that source of 'some excellence' is due to the subject's interest in attaining enjoyment and satisfaction through possessing and unifying with the object. The excellence and beauty that Barrow draws on as an origin of the love object, however, cannot be associated with perfection, since it has the potential for suffering or decay.

The imperfection of the object of love couched in this passage is even more clearly depicted by Edmund Burke whose work was known by Jones at least as early

⁵⁴ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 446.

as 1769.⁵⁵ In his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke claims first that perfection is not the cause of ‘Beauty’, and secondly renders an empirical definition of beauty as ‘some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses’.⁵⁶ Beauty, argues Burke, found at its ‘highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness’.⁵⁷ Accordingly, since beauty is considered the object of love that stands for weakness and imperfection, Burke draws the conclusion that ‘we love what submits to us’.⁵⁸ It is the subordinate that ‘turn on reliefs, gratifications, and indulgences; and are therefore more lovely, though inferior in dignity’.⁵⁹

The Burkean idea of loving that which submits to us can at this point be challenged from two perspectives: first, the tradition of the unattainability of the beloved as intensifying and reinforcing the desire for the love object, and secondly, the reversal and shift of power from the subject lover to the beautiful love object. The latter, apart from the factor of beauty which plays a significant role for the object’s superiority and power, seems to occur as a consequence of the former, that is, the unattainability of the love object. Although the inaccessibility of the beloved seems to be the point of departure for the subject’s celebrating the exaltation of the object to the locus of the Other, paradoxically, it can create a sense of melancholy for the subject as he comes to realise the impossibility of the fulfilment of his desire. I will discuss the notion of melancholy in detail in due course when I analyse the legend of

⁵⁵ Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 102.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Leili and Majnoun in the following chapters and its possible influences on Shelley and Byron through the translations of D'Israeli. In this chapter, however, I will demonstrate how Hafez overcomes this sense of melancholy consciously, delighting in earthly pleasures.

In his *Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum Libri Sex* (1774), Jones concedes to Burke's definition of beauty, in that he views beauty as a quality perceivable through the senses.⁶⁰ However, in his 'Song', Jones challenges Burke's idea of beauty as weak and inferior. He draws on this quality of the beloved as that other whose mere beauty has such resistless power that 'robs' his 'soul of rest'. Jones's idea of the other as powerful runs counter to Burke's precondition of loving 'what submits to us' in his definition of the object of beauty as weak and inferior. It also contradicts Barrow's association of union with the beloved with its 'possession'. Jones suggests that it is the subject who submits to the Other in love. What Burke terms the weaker and inferior in dignity has that great power of gratifying and indulging the subject, as Burke himself puts it, as well as the power to overcome the subject's resistance. The subject/persona of Jones's 'Song', as it is with Hafez's ghazal, is not only eschewing any thought of possession of the beloved, but is also tending to yield to the beloved whose mere beauty would give the persona all imaginable delight. Jones's stanza reads:

O! when these fair, perfidious maids,

Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,

⁶⁰ See Burke's empirical definition of beauty as 'some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses', in his *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 102. Also see Garland H. Cannon, 'Sir William Jones and Edmund Burke', *Modern Philology*, 3, 54 (February 1957), 165-186 (pp. 165-6).

Their dear destructive charms display,
Each glance my tender breast invades,
And robs my wounded soul of rest,
As Tartars seize their destin'd prey.

As does Hafez's corresponding *beyt*:

Ah! These wanton sweet beauties
So plundered patience from my heart
As did the Turks
The festal board.⁶¹

The two poets' depiction of the object's beauty as a means of disarming the subject runs counter to the traditional way of looking at the subject as active and the object as passive, in the clichéd form of active masculine and passive feminine. Freud, for instance, represents femininity as an inferior version of masculinity, marked by the absence of the phallus. His accounts of voyeurism associate masculinity with the phallus, with active looking, and with power and knowledge, a desire for mastery, while associating femininity with (symbolic) castration and a passive role as the object of looking and the object of knowledge. Despite this traditional division, and although the maid of the ghazal is rendered passive through a mere exhibition of her beauty desired by the poet, yet she has got her own power over the voluptuous poet, who at times, confesses to having been invaded by the power of the maids. This is the

⁶¹ The translation of the lines of the ghazal is mine unless otherwise mentioned. For all citations and references made to Hafez's ghazals in the present chapter and throughout the whole thesis, I have consulted Hafez, *Divan-e Hafez*, ed. by Bahaa'ed-din Khorramshahi (Tehran: Dustaan, 1384/2006).

point at which the active role of the subject gives way to passivity and the subject/viewer dissolves in the viewed object. Once the subject loses its role of subjectivity, it loses consciousness and experiences transport. The subject is thus disarmed before the object as phallus.

According to Lacan, the phallus is the signifier of lack, representing the fundamental lost object, which never existed in the first place. Therefore the phallus does not exist as an object, but rather as a veiled something that is out of reach.⁶² The subject presumes he can have access to it when it sits ‘in the place of the Other’.⁶³ However, Lacan means that the subject must ideally recognise the lack in the Other so that he is not enthralled by the fantasy of the Other as being the phallus:

[S]ince this signifier is only veiled, as ratio of the Other’s desire, it is this desire of the Other as such that the subject must recognize, that is to say, the other in so far as he is himself a subject divided by the signifying *Spaltung*. It is thus an Other who is lacking herself and who desires due to its split self. Therefore the phallus functions as ‘the signifier of the desire of the Other’.⁶⁴

Whereas the phallus as signifier, according to Lacan, has no signified and remains empty, for the poet-lover it functions differently. The Other for the poet *is* the phallus:

⁶² Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 56.

⁶³ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, new edn (London: Routledge, 1995 [1977]), p. 288.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

self-sufficient and not lacking. Hence the necessity of idealising the love object to the place of the absolute – self-sufficient, whole, and perfect – Other.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, the self-sufficient beloved is depicted as an earthly maid, ‘fair’ and ‘perfidious’, whose ‘dear destructive charms’ infest the poet’s secret haunts and invade his tender breast with her eyes. Those eyes – the glance of the maid – plunder the composure of the poet’s soul in a manner related to the Tartars seizing of plunder. The poet consciously gives way to the destructive charms of his beloved and takes joy in that. Even in the penultimate stanza, despite the maid’s cruel answer, the poet’s love for her is so excessive that he doubts if there could be any bitter words that can fall from lips that fill streams of sweetness:

What cruel answer have I heard!
And yet, by heaven, I love thee still:
Can aught be cruel from thy lip?
Yet say, how fell that bitter word
From lips which streams of sweetness fill,
Which nought but drops of honey sip?

From a Hafezian perspective, to the lover even the beloved’s bitter tongue is sweet and pleasant:

⁶⁵ The phallus, as functioning in the register of the Imaginary, represents the imaginary object that is presumed to satisfy the mother’s desire. Later the subject’s search for the fundamental lost object prompts him to desire to retrieve it. It is only in the register of the Real that the subject, the mystic subject, can have access to the beyond of the unattainable. The phallus comes back in the form of the Thing for the subject and is unveiled momentarily once the subject experiences the supplementary *jouissance*. I will discuss this more in detail in the chapter on Shelley.

If you curse me or malign me,
I will still pray for you,
For bitter word is what befits
Sweet ruby-coloured lips.

It is the beauty of the self-sufficient beloved that invades and dominates the subject who willingly accepts the invasion and surrenders the 'festal board' to the invading 'Turks' (the sweet beauties). This giving up of the worldly is already proposed by the poet from the outset. In the first stanza, Jones describes the sweet maid from an earthly perspective, focusing on her natural beauty as perceived by senses. The stanza reads:

Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

In a series of synesthetic images Jones sensuously communicates a visual and tactile desire – both relating to natural human senses – as opposed to the vaunted gold and gems of two cultural magnets, Bokhara and Samarcand, through the lines of the stanza. As mentioned earlier, Jones, bearing in mind Burke's empirical definition of beauty as a quality that acts on mind through the senses,⁶⁶ concurs with the idea of

⁶⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 102.

earthly love for the beautiful maid. Nevertheless, the poet's delight in the sensual description he renders of the maid precedes all other material worldly delights, namely, 'Bokhára's vaunted gold', and 'the gems of Samarcand'.⁶⁷ Hafez's corresponding *beyt* reads:

If that Turk of Shiraz
Would gain my heart,
I would give up Samarqand and Bokhara
For her [his] Hindu beauty spot.

'*Tork-e Shirazi*' or the Turk of Shiraz refers to the Turks who emigrated and inhabited Shiraz during the reign of the Timurids. In Persian literature the Turks are symbols of beauty. This giving up of Samarqand and Bokhara, the loveliest of cities, which is figurative of all the material riches, in favour of gaining satisfaction from that beautiful beloved, is a characteristic of Sufi love which is little more than imperceptibly interwoven with earthly love in Hafez's ghazal. In a similar manner, yet less exaggerated than the persona's proclamation in the ghazal, Jones's persona

⁶⁷ Samarkand was the famed conqueror Timur's (Tamerlane's) capital and Bokhara his kingdom's finest city. In one famous tale, Timur angrily summoned Hafez to his presence and asked for an explanation for this first *beyt* of the ghazal. 'With the blows of my lustrous sword,' exclaimed Timur, 'have I subjugated most of the habitable globe, and laid waste thousands of towns and countries to embellish Samarqand and Bokhara, my native towns and the seats of my government; and you, miserable wretch that you are, would sell them both for the black mole of a Turk of Shiraz!' 'Sire,' replied Hafez, 'it is through such prodigality that I have fallen on such evil days!' Delighted and pleased by this quick response, Timur dismissed Hafez with handsome presents. See Edward G. Browne, *A History of Persian Literature Under Tartar Dominion (A.D. 1265-1502)*, 4 vols (Cambridge: The University Press, 1920), III, pp. 188-89.

abandons the worldly delights as being surpassed by the delight the sweet maid might offer. On the other hand, the persona seems to suggest that the desire to gain the Other's desire is the ultimate fantasy. This is indicated in both Hafez's ghazal and Jones's 'Song', as both poems are conditioned by the word 'if' from the very first sentence, as if the poet is declaring a desire always already there which remains in a stasis till the end (of the poem):

The Song:

Sweet maid if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

The Ghazal:

If that Turk of Shiraz
Would gain my heart,
I'd give up Samarqand and Bokhara
For her [his] Hindu beauty spot.

By idealising the earthly maid the poet therefore places himself in a state of submission to beauty and finds himself deprived of the maid's desire due to her self-sufficiency.⁶⁸

Self-sufficiency

Another characteristic of the beloved that is developed throughout the poems is her/his self-sufficiency. Jones quotes the eighteenth-century Jacques Necker's account of love as,

⁶⁸ Cf. my discussion on Jones's reading of Burke's equation of beauty and weakness.

[T]he brightest ornament of our nature, love, enchanting and sublime, is a mysterious pledge for the assurance of those hopes; since love, by disengaging us from ourselves, by transporting us beyond the limits of our own being, is the first step in our progress to a joyful immortality; and, by affording both the notion and example of a cherished object distinct from our own souls, may be considered as an interpreter to our hearts of something, which our intellects cannot conceive.⁶⁹

This disengagement from oneself and cherishing the object distinct from one's own soul is recast by Freud in the form of anaclitic and narcissistic types. Postulating a primary narcissism in every one, Freud makes a comparison between male and female sexes in his 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' (1914). Acknowledging the non-universality of this idea, Freud considers the complete object-love of the anaclitic or attachment type to be characteristic of the male. The love of the attachment type is a sexual overvaluation derived from the primary narcissism corresponding to 'a transference of that narcissism to the sexual object'.⁷⁰ Freud refers to this sexual overvaluation as the origin of the 'state of being in love [...] which is traceable to an impoverishment of the ego [...] in favour of the love-object.'⁷¹ Women, on the other hand, undergo an intensification of the original narcissism and therefore 'develop a certain self-contentment which compensates them for the social restrictions that are

⁶⁹ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, pp. 449-50.

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 545-562 (p. 554).

⁷¹ Ibid.

imposed upon them in their choice of object'.⁷² Such women, one might conclude, would love only themselves just as intensely as a man would love them.⁷³

At this point I will examine the way Arberry's Sufi perspective operates on this formula. The fair charmer, beautiful, proud, and unapproachable, according to Arberry, 'would be this-worldly reflection of the immortal loveliness of the Divine spirit'.⁷⁴ 'Self-sufficiency (*istigna*)', Arberry claims, 'is the characteristic of the Divine beauty; God does not require our love, yet it is our overpowering need that we should love Him.'⁷⁵ As such this self-sufficiency of beauty is cruel since it draws the lover 'out of the peace and safety of his formal faith and leads him onward through the wilderness of boundless suffering'.⁷⁶ In the 'Song', Jones's persona finds himself in a moment of desperate sentimentality before the beloved's self-sufficient charms in the fourth stanza:

In vain with love our bosoms glow;
Can all our tears, can all our sighs
New lustre to those charms impart?

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Cf. my discussion on possessive and non-possessive love above.

⁷⁴ Arthur John Arberry, 'Orient Pearls at Random Strung', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 11 (1946), 699-712 (p. 706).

⁷⁵ Hafiz, *Fifty Poems of Hafiz*, trans. and intro. by Arthur John Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 142.

⁷⁶ Hafiz, *Fifty Poems of Hafiz*, trans. by Arberry, p. 143.

The persona of the ghazal, however, seems to have accepted this disappointment as a fact when in the fourth *beyt*, being captivated by the beauty of the object, he describes the beauty of the *yaar* as having no need of his ‘imperfect love’:

Our imperfect love
The beauty of the *yaar* requires not.
What need has a beauteous face
Of the ‘borrowed gloss of art’?

In fact, the lover in the ghazal intentionally creates such self-sufficiency out of the beloved’s ideal beauty in order to justify and value his own excessive love for that love object. On the other hand, it is through this very self-sufficiency that the poet’s awareness of the unattainability of the beloved makes sense. In other words, the reason why the subject is deprived of the desire of the Other for himself is the Other’s self-sufficiency.

Drawing on the story of Yusef and Zuleikha in the following *beyt*, Hafez immediately contextualises the notion of the *yaar*’s beauty as self-sufficient, in an attempt to underpin the imperative of the beloved’s self-sufficiency in its interaction with the lover’s submission to such a trait in the beloved. The story of Joseph (Yusef) and Potiphar’s wife, Zelikah (Zoleikha), is one of the favourite themes in Persian mystic poetry of love. This is of course a Biblical and Quranic story which discusses mankind’s love for beauty. This theme is developed from the very beginning of the ghazal in almost all the lines. The poet postulates that what would lure Zoleikha from her chastity would be the ever-increasing beauty of Yusef, shifting the aesthete from the male poet/persona to a woman and the object of beauty from that Turk of Shiraz or the sweet maid to a man – a prophet – from history. Whereas Yusef, like the female

beloved of the two poems, epitomises self-sufficient, inaccessible beauty, Zoleikha plays the role of a lover who has renounced narcissism.⁷⁷ Zoleikha's desire is against all social codes and the law of her time. She is rebellious in that she breaks out of what Žižek calls 'the vicious superego cycle of the Law/sin'.⁷⁸ This is what Yusef simply fails to do, due to his subjection to the *nom du père*, that is, the Name *and* No of the Father. Through love Zoleikha renounces chastity and thus transcends all bounds.⁷⁹ In fact Zoleikha, as a subject/lover, obtains virtue through loss of chastity and not in preserving it. As such, the loss of chastity as virtue is justifiable for the subject due to her/his excessive love for beauty.

The concept of beauty, which has been developed through the lines of the poem, reaches its climactic point in the sixth stanza of the 'Song' when Jones considers beauty as having such resistless power, that 'even the chaste Egyptian dame | Sigh'd for the blooming Hebrew boy'. The Hebrew boy's coyness comes alongside his loveliness as a virtue attributed to him. Jones seems to have a tendency to propose a rather moralising version of Hafez's audacious language. He simply censors the intensity of Zoleikha's desire for Yusef and omits any mention of her tearing the 'veil of chastity'. A brief look at the original line would suffice to prove the claim: 'I knew from the ever-increasing beauty that Yusef had | that love would bring out Zoleikha from the veil of chastity', as if the poet finds it naturally inevitable for one to lose chastity – self-consciousness – in favour of a union with beauty. In his appraisal of (earthly) beauty, Hafez goes even one step further than Jones. Virtue is no more to be

⁷⁷ See Freud's models of female and male narcissism above.

⁷⁸ Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute*, p. 145.

⁷⁹ Cf. Cynthia of Keats's *Endymion*: 'My happy love will overwing all bounds' (Book II. l. 814). See John Keats, *John Keats: Selected Poetry*, ed. with an intro. by Elizabeth Cook (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 106.

found in chastity and coyness for Hafez, but rather in losing one's ego through an apprehension of beauty.

By bringing in the story of Yusef and Zoleikha and the latter's excessive love for the former, it can be concluded that Hafez deconstructs the binary opposition of woman and man as, respectively, narcissist and self-abnegating lover. At this point it is worth mentioning that some believe that Hafez's addressee is male; however, the language does not reveal it, since there is no distinctive pronoun for the third person in Persian language.⁸⁰ The fact that Jones translated 'that Turk of Shiraz' to 'sweet maid' can yet again be attributed to 'his sense of morality', which, according to Cannon, 'dictated his altering the sex of the male, so that the male is charmed by a maid instead of by another male'.⁸¹ Hafez's not having specified the gender of the beloved once again indicates that he holds no precondition, in terms of the social codes, for love. This 'indecipherable sexuality',⁸² to use Jacqueline Rose's phrase, makes it all the more joyful and mysterious in Hafez's poetry. It is love itself which counts, since a Sufi is free from all boundaries that society might have engendered.

⁸⁰ As Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart remark, in Persian ghazals 'as a rule, the beloved is not a woman, but a young man. In the early centuries of Islam, the raids into Central Asia produced many young slaves. [...] Young men, slaves or not, also served wine at banquets'. See Ehsan Yarshater, 'Persian Poetry in the Timurid and Safavid Periods', in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. by Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1986]), VI, pp. 965-94 (p. 973). These young men are the ones that the poet would refer to as the '*saaqi*' or the cup-bearer.

⁸¹ Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, p. 39.

⁸² Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005 [1986]), p. 229.

Inebriety: Sublimation of Melancholy

The inaccessibility and self-sufficiency of the beloved, whether that beloved is referred to as Yusef or the sweet maid or *yaar* of the persona, exerts a melancholic effect on the persona. Nevertheless, he consciously overcomes this melancholy through the intoxication of wine and music and the vigour that he develops for his love throughout the poem. If the inapproachability of that beauty generates melancholia, it is at the same time a creative force for the poet leading him towards a sublimation of that impossible desire. The poem starts with a vigorous hope of a lover for the fulfilment of his desire. The poet/lover, however, in the end, can only celebrate a fulfilment attained through sublimating the desire for his beloved to art (here the ghazal itself and music). This transformation or sublimation ‘in the form of artistic and intellectual interests’, as Rosalind Minsky observes, gives ‘rise to pleasure’,⁸³ and helps the persona to overcome the melancholy generated by the unattainability of the beloved.

Apart from the intoxicating aspect of the wine that is emphasised in the ghazal, Jones’s translation provides an additional visual characteristic. To invoke a Lacanian metaphor, the visual aspect of the wine makes one lose the perception of reality as is the case in hypnosis.⁸⁴ The poet of the ‘Song’ seems to be aware of the gaze that the ruby goblet invokes in the viewer and of the pleasure that music creates in the listener:

⁸³ Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis and Gender: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Rosalind Minsky, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 37. I will discuss this more in detail in the chapter on Byron.

⁸⁴ Lacan assimilates the gaze (*objet petit a*) of the analyst as equivalent to the hypnotist’s crystal stopper. See Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), p. 66.

While musick charms the ravish'd ear;
While sparkling cups delight our eyes,⁸⁵
Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.⁸⁶

Exactly as a crystal stopper in hypnosis fulfils the function of the gaze, the object which shines in itself shows its internal fascination as well as the external joy it gives the subject viewer. Hence the poet's inviting the reader to gaiety through the mesmerising effect of music and wine.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ The loss of (the pains of) reality is only possible at the moment when the *objet a* '(the gaze or voice) is included in reality' – as it is the case in psychosis. See Slavoj Žižek, "'I Hear you with My Eyes": or, The Invisible Master', in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000 [1996]), pp. 90-126 (p. 91).

⁸⁶ Compare this with this translation by Jones from another ghazal of Hafez:

Bring the wine, my dear companions, bring the wine! [...] Reach the liquor, that sparkles like a flaming ruby. [...] O thou who art in love, drink wine with eagerness; and you, who are endued with wisdom, offer your vows to Heaven. Imitate *Hafez*, and drink kisses, sweet as wine, from the cheek of a damsel, fair as a nymph of paradise. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, II, p. 322.

And with this one: 'bring us the wine, boy, which may refresh our souls, and dispel our sorrow'. See *Ibid.*, p.324. And with this one from 'A Persian Ode, The Approach of Spring':

[...] let the goblets brimful shine,
With bright nectareous racy wine!
Wine can the tender pangs remove,
And cause forgetfulness in love.

See William Jones, *Poems in Three Parts ...* (Calcutta: Printed by Thomas Hollingbery. Hircarrah Press, 1800), p. 5.

⁸⁷ As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan observes, Lacan elaborated the four causes of Desire in his essay 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*' (1959), 'in their relation to human dependency on the

Jones's regard for and delight in visual effects, whether from the beauty of the maid, 'where living roses blow', 'odours', or the 'sparkling cups' of wine is the point of deviation from the unconsciousness Hafez achieves through drinking wine, singing of the minstrels, and nature (the stream of Roknabad and the rose-bower of Mosalla) in this specific ghazal. It goes without saying that there are ghazals where Hafez, too, magnifies the visual effect of the goblet of wine, to which he refers in most cases as the '*Jaam-e Jam*' or the 'cup of Jamshid'. Jamshid, a mythical king of Persia, is said to have had a cup or '*jaam*' in which he saw the reflection of the whole reality. Seyyed Hossein Nasr renders a Sufi interpretation of this famous cup of all ages in Persia:

In Sufism it has become the symbol of the heart of the Gnostic in which all realities are reflected, the eye of the heart ('*ayn al-galb* in Arabic or '*chasm-i dil* in Persian) with which the mystic 'sees' the supernal realities.⁸⁸

outside world'. These four causes comprise of the void, the voice, the gaze, and the Phallus. See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 80. The mesmerising effect that is generated by the shining object in the subject viewer, creates a sort of visual inebriation, and in turn creates the momentary effect of filling the void between the I of the viewer and the *a* of the object.

⁸⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1973), p. 33. In some ghazals Hafez goes so far as to internalise the '*jaam-e jam*' as an attribute in the heart of the Sufi, through which he can reflect the secrets:

Why should the sentient heart that has the *Jaam-e Jam* within
Be worried of losing the *Jaam* for a while?

دلی کہ غیب نمای است و جام جم دارد ز خاتمی که دمی گم شود چه غم دارد

— حافظ، دیوان

This mythical cup of wine has a mirroring effect that reflects the very secret of life to Hafez.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, the intoxicating quality of wine surpasses its visual aspects in this specific ghazal. What Hafez seeks in the ‘mey’ (wine) is the very state of ‘fanaa’ or self-loss, achieved through intoxication, which eradicates the veil between him and ‘the secrets of life’. *Beyt* eight of the ghazal reads:

Come, sing of wine and minstrels – seek less the secrets of life;
none has solved – nor can – this enigma with the logical mind.⁹⁰

It is as though Hafez is proposing that the only way to either forget about the secret of life, which is another source of melancholy for the poet, or to come to an understanding of the enigma is not through the logical mind or reason or intellect (*hekmat*), which is in Arberry’s term, ‘powerless to fathom the mystery of life’,⁹¹ but

Earlier in the twelfth century, Sanāi Ghaznavi confidently maintains that ‘Know that for sure, the *Jaam-e Jam* is your own heart’.

به چاه دان که جام جم دل توست – سنایی غزنوی

⁸⁹ This famous imagery was later used by the Romantic poets and scholars in their works. In a note to *The Giaour*, for instance, Byron informs the reader of ‘the torch of night’ and the ‘cup of the sun’ and the ‘celebrated fabulous ruby of Sultan Giamschid [Jamshid]’ (*The Giaour*, l. 479), mentioning both D’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale* and Richardson’s *Persian Dictionary* as his sources of reference. See George Gordon Byron, *Lord Byron: Selected Poetry*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 45.

⁹⁰ Hafez, *The Poems of Hafez*, trans. by Reza Ordoubadian (Bethesda Maryland: Ibex Publishers, 2006), p. 82.

⁹¹ Hafiz, *Fifty Poems of Hafiz*, trans. by Arberry, p. 142.

rather through inebriety.⁹² Wine is a significant motif in Hafez that, as Arberry observes, ‘symbolizes his rejection of all formal, “sober” life, whether it be the life of the cloistered Sufi, the orthodox theologian, or the philosopher’.⁹³

The implicit melancholy caused by the notion of the unknowability of the ‘mystery of life’ in Hafez’s *beyt* finds an explicit form in Jones’s stanza. Jones associates this unknowable theme with ‘fate’, ‘cloud’, and ‘sacred gloom’ and employs vigorous talk of odours and wine and the blooming flowers to free his mind from the gloom and melancholia that theme produces:

Speak not of fate: – ah! change the theme,
And talk of odours, talk of wine,
Talk of the flowers that round us bloom:
’Tis all a cloud, ’tis all a dream;
To love and joy thy thoughts confine,
Nor hope to pierce the sacred gloom.

Both Hafez and Jones, seeking the oblivion of worldly intoxication, tend to reject the thought of exploring what exists behind the veil of existence.⁹⁴ All the poet advises is

⁹² Quietists and Neo-Platonists, too, held that the supreme destiny of man and his highest happiness consists in rising to the contemplation of the One, not by thought but by ecstasy (*ekstasis*).

⁹³ Arthur John Arberry, ‘Orient Pearls at Random Strung’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 4, 11 (1946), 699-712 (p. 706). There are critics who ‘take every reference to the crimson cup as intending spiritual intoxication’ rather than worldly, drawing on the Sufi idea that the human soul is in need of eternal intoxication. See Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 115.

⁹⁴ In his article ‘On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus’, Jones quotes Necker’s mystic account ‘*seek not to remove the veil spread over the secret of your existence*’, which reflects this same

for the maid and consequently himself to be ‘gay’ and confine to love and joy her thoughts and bid her ‘pensive heart be glad’, instead of speaking of the cloudy fate – referred to as the ‘sacred gloom’ – and being pensive. This is possible, according to the poet, only once the beloved maid can put aside the ascetic way of living that the ‘frowning zealots’ and, in general, society impose on her. In Sufism, as mentioned earlier, there is a notorious group called *zaahed* (ascetics), translated as ‘zealots’ by Jones in his ‘Song’. This group of ascetics are frequently referred to by Hafez in his works as the most hypocritical of all. In the second stanza the ‘liquid ruby’ becomes the means by which the persona releases his own sad thoughtful mind. He ignores whatever the fanatics would say as long as he is certain of his own corporeal heaven and the wine served in there, which is far sweeter than the illusory Eden the zealots have promised.

Divinising the Earthly

The final stanza has caused controversy amongst the interpreters of Hafez. In his article ‘Like Orient Pearls at Random Strung’, Arberry argues that the last stanza is

a most regrettable translator’s gloss, having no justification in the original and maligning the ancient skill of the oriental jeweller, who assuredly knew well that the perfection of the necklace depends upon the artistry with which the pearls are subtly graded, so that the double string will exactly match in size and texture.⁹⁵

beyt of the ghazal, ‘seek less the secret of life’, as translated by Jones himself. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, I, p. 450.

⁹⁵ Arberry, ‘Orient Pearls at Random Strung’, p. 703.

Arberry goes on to claim that Hafez was ‘misrepresented’ by Jones who confessed himself ‘a casual, careless jeweller of words’.⁹⁶ The word ‘ease’ refers to freedom from constraint, which has been the poet’s concern throughout the whole song. When the poet talks of the ‘orient pearls at random strung’, he is not ascribing this to Hafez, but rather to himself as the poet of the ‘Song’, separate from that of Hafez’s, since in the literal version of his translation, he acknowledges Hafez as having made an artistic string of pearls in the composition of his verse:

O Hafiz! when thou composest verses, thou seemest to make a string of pearls: come, sing them sweetly: for Heaven seems to have shed on thy poetry the clearness and beauty of the Pleiads.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, he believes *his* song to have been as natural as having orient pearls strung at random and without requiring any artificial effort. This last stanza determines Jones’s song as specifically *his* and not a mere translation or even an imitation. Jones’s emphasis is rather on the natural as a positive aspect than the ornamental.

On the other hand, Hafez, too, celebrates his beauteous verse artistically composed as having been blessed by the spirit of nature, that is, the necklace of the Pleiades (*‘eqd-e sorayyaa’*):

You wrote the ghazal, you pierced the pearl.

Come, sing it sweetly, O, Hafez!⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, II, p. 243.

For Heaven shall loose over thy verse

The Pleiades' pearls.

Jones's omitting any mention of the Pleiades in his 'Song', Pursglove writes, 'destroys an important relation of imagery in the final *bait*'.⁹⁹ However, my contention is that this omission intensifies the opposition between natural and artificial: 'orient pearls at random strung' as opposed to pearls in beauteous and classical order strung.¹⁰⁰ Here Jones retrospectively refers to the fourth stanza where he announces the excellence of the natural beauty of the beloved over any 'borrow'd gloss of art', including his own 'Song':

Can cheeks, where living roses blow,

Where nature spreads her richest dyes,

Require the borrow'd gloss of art?

Not even the poet's wooing 'love' can impart new 'lustre to those charms'. In fact, in the end, he renounces any proportion or artificiality in the hope of gaining the pleasure of the sweet maid, who by now has turned to a nymph – a semi-immortal natural divine being and yet more inaccessible than an earthly maid:

⁹⁸ Traditionally, the last couplet of ghazals contains the poet's name, *nom de plume*, or *taxallos* as it is termed in Persian.

⁹⁹ Pursglove, 'Translations of Hafiz and their Influence on English Poetry since 1771', p. 594.

¹⁰⁰ John Nott seems to recognise a greater degree of conscious art: 'The verses that compose thy song | Are pearls, in beauteous order strung'. See Hafez, کتاب لالهزار از دیوان حافظ: *Select Odes, from the Persian Poet Hafez*, trans. and notes by John Nott (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1787), p. 91.

Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say;
But O! far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung. ('A Persian Song')

The persona finds ultimate beauty not in the 'artless ease' of his 'simple lay', but rather in the pleasure that these 'orient pearls' might give the beloved. This selflessness occurs in the guise of an expression of love for beauty.

In this final stanza there are two mediums of expression for the same gender: a damsel, and a nymph or a divine maid. Throughout the whole song this is the first and only time that the poet calls his beloved 'the nymph' and he would consider his song blessed only if the nymph to whom these notes have been sung is pleased by them. A nymph is a divinity in classical mythology represented as a beautiful maiden dwelling in nature. Perhaps, by introducing the word 'nymph' into his 'Song', Jones has tried to imply a transformation of the mundane tone of his poem to a more spiritual one. It is worth remembering that nymph is a divine being and its usage therefore approximates the idea of idealising an earthly beloved to a Divine Beloved.¹⁰¹ This tendency indicates the inevitability of a desire in the subject to exalting and elevating the object of love into the locus of the divine. What remains the same for both Hafez and Jones's personae in the end is the transformation of the earthly beloved to the divine throughout the poem.

In this chapter, I have analysed the relation of the Sufi self with the beloved other, earthly and idealised, in a ghazal by Hafez and Jones's adaptation of Hafez's

¹⁰¹ The imagery of the nymph has of course been treated differently throughout literature. Whereas the nymph for the sixteenth-century Edmund Spenser is a young unmarried chaste woman linked with wisdom and the arts, it is for the eighteenth-century Alexander Pope a clichéd neoclassical term for a girl, and for the nineteenth-century Walter Savage Landor it is 'a Nymph divine'.

ghazal. I argued that both poets presented the unattainability or self-sufficiency of the beloved as a disposition of the perfect Other that could exert a melancholic effect on the lover/persona. However, both Hafez and Jones suggest that melancholy could be overcome through wine and music. Moreover, the persona comes to the resolution that if the inaccessibility of the beloved generates melancholia, it can be at the same time a creative force that leads the persona towards a sublimation of that impossible desire, that is, through his art/poetry. I also discussed the idea of elevating the love object into the locus of the divine or God, which is a frequent theme in Persian Sufi literature. The significant point about idealising the earthly maid by Hafez is that through idealisation the persona places himself in a state of submission to ideal beauty and offers a non-possessive love to her. Furthermore, the idealised beloved is represented as a self-sufficient Other of whose desire the persona is deprived. Both Jones and Hafez would celebrate the prospect of gaining the desire of the beloved for themselves, even though ultimately it remains a wish, a desire, whose fulfilment is constantly deferred to the moment of attaining the desire of the Other, yet paradoxically finds the prospect of a fulfilment through their art.¹⁰² I will discuss the concept of the unattainability of the Other in relation with the lover's idealisation of the beloved in Chapters three and four. The following chapter will be an attempt to analyse Persian Sufi love in another Oriental work, entitled *Mejnoun and Leila* by Isaac D'Israeli.

¹⁰² I will discuss the notion of sublimation in detail in Chapter five.

Chapter III: D'Israeli's 'Mejnoun and Leila'

Among the numerous examples of Sufi literature that have been translated and brought to the West, special mention should be made of the tragic love story of the seventh-century Arab lovers Leili and Majnoun for having played a significant role in conveying the influence of Sufi ideas into Western culture. The story's translation by various scholars in the late eighteenth century provided the contemporary Western reader with an insight into the nature of the Sufi self, its love for the earthly other, and its dissolution in the Other as the ultimate divine beloved.

The legend of Leili and Majnoun has always been popular in the Middle East. The story became so popular in Persia in particular that at least thirty nine poetic versions of it were authored by such Persian poets as Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209), Abdorrahman Jami (1414-1492), Abdollah Hatefi (1454-1521), Amir Khosro Dehlavi (1253-1325), and many more.¹ The story appeared for the first time in Europe in a French translation by M. de Cardonne in *Bibliothèque Universale des Romances*, April 1778.² Just a few years later in 1785, William Kirkpatrick translated the story under the title of *Mujnoon; or, the Distracted Lover. A Tale. From the Persian*, which was

¹ In her M.A. dissertation, Nasrin Chireh compares and contrasts the story told by Jami, Nezami, Shirazi, and Dehlavi in 'Moqaayese-ye Leili va Majnoun-e Nezami, Amir Khosro Dehlavi, Jami va Abdi Beyk Shirazi' (University of Shiraz, 1380/2001).

² Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2005 [1983]), p. 119.

published in the *Asiatick Miscellany* in 1787 and was reprinted in London as a separate book in 1785. Two other contemporary Orientalists who attempted to communicate the idea of the story to the English reader were, successively, William Jones and Isaac D'Israeli.

In 1788 Jones published a Persian edition of Abdullah Hatifi's *Laili Majnun*. This was one of the five poems Hatifi (d. 1520) wrote in imitation of Nezami's *Khamseh*. In his preface to Hatifi's *Leili Majnun*, Jones mentions that his 'chief inducement for publishing it' was due to the 'scarcity' of Hatifi's version of the legend as compared to Nezami's which had a 'place in most Asiatick libraries' and was 'beautifully copied'.³ However, apart from five couplets of Hatifi's poem that Jones translated in verse, one in the measure of the original, and the other in 'heroick' English measure, he did not translate the whole poem and left the duty to be carried out by other translators. Jones recommended a version in 'modulated, but unaffected, prose in preference to rhymed couplets' and consented that some conceits would be omitted, yet he believed that 'not a single image or thought should be added by the translator'.⁴ Isaac D'Israeli seems to have been the first translator to put this advice into practice in his 1797 *The Loves of Mejnoun and Leila*. The story was incorporated in his *Romances* in 1799 along with three other romances, *Love and Humility, a Roman Romance, The Lovers, or, the Birth of the Pleasing Arts, an Arcadian Romance*, and *The Daughter, or a Modern Romance*.⁵

³ Abdullah Hatifi and William Jones, *Laili Majnun, A Persian Poem of Hatifi* (Calcutta: Printed and Sold by Manuel Cantopher, 1788), p. v.

⁴ Ibid., p. ix.

⁵ The romance of *Mejnoun and Leila* became the source for Isaac Brandon's opera *Kais or Love in the Deserts* (1808) performed at Drury Lane in 1808. D'Israeli's romance also became the source of inspiration for such poets as Byron and Shelley in their works.

In this chapter, I will mainly examine the extent of D'Israeli's involvement with Sufism in his romance, in relation with the original *masnavi* by Nezami as well as a translation of another version of the poem by Jones. Considering Leili and Majnoun to be 'a supreme Sufi way of expressing a union between the human soul and the divine soul',⁶ Jones makes several references to the famous story of Leili and Majnoun throughout his works. In his article 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus', for example, Jones refers to 'the beautiful poem on the loves of Laili and Majnun by the inimitable Nizami' as 'indisputably built on true history, yet avowedly allegorical and mysterious; for the introduction to it is a continued rapture on divine love; and the name of Laili seems to be used in the *Masnavi* and the odes of Hafiz for the omnipresent spirit of God.'⁷ If, in this article, he refers to the name of Leili as used for 'the omnipresent spirit of God' in Hafez and Maulavi's poetry, elsewhere in his *Works* Jones introduces Leili as 'the sun' in a poem he translates from Persian: a poem given to him by Mirza Abdu'Irahhim of Isfahan, which was, according to Jones, an extract from 'one of the many poems on the loves of MEJNUN and LAILI'.⁸

The story of Leili and Majnoun, therefore, is introduced to the Western reader from an entirely Sufi perspective by Jones and becomes a source of inspiration for

⁶ Abul A. B. Hasnat, 'Some Aspects of the Impact of Sir William Jones's Persian Studies on English Romantic Poetry', *Indo-Iranica*, 41 (1988), 72-90 (p. 77).

⁷ William Jones, 'On the Mystical Poetry ...', *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London :Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, 1799), I, p. 452. By 'the *Masnavi*' Jones means Maulana Rumi's *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi*.

⁸ William Jones, 'On the Orthography of Asiatick Words', *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, 1799), I, pp. 217-18. D'Israeli gives an account of this poem in a note at the end of his romance *Mejnoun and Leila*.

other Oriental scholars of the age. In what follows, I will first provide an introduction to D'Israeli's romance along with Nezami's version of the poem which was D'Israeli's immediate source to produce this well-known Oriental romance in the West. I will then discuss D'Israeli's treatment of Sufism as lacking consistency as well as having more secularising tendencies than the original *masnavi* and Jones's translation of the poem by Mirza Abdu'lrahhim. D'Israeli allocates a two hundred page romance adaptation of one of the most famous versions of the story, that is, of Nezami's *Leili va Majnoun* (*Leili and Majnoun*). The result was an adaptation of the story under the title of *Mejnoun and Leila; or, the Arabian Petrarch and Laura*, arguably the earliest Oriental romance in the English language. As reported in *The Monthly Review*, 'the story of Leila and Mejnoun is the principal romance, and the most highly to be valued for its beauty and pathos'.⁹ As Javadi observes, 'D'Israeli professed himself to be a great admirer of Persian poetry' and was deeply influenced by Persian poets.¹⁰ In the Advertisement to his *Mejnoun and Leila*,¹¹ D'Israeli acknowledges the use of Cardonne's translation: 'The learned M. Cardonne, the late King of France's Oriental Interpreter, discovered in the Royal Library a copy of this

⁹ *The Monthly Review; Or Literary Journal*, ed. by Ralph Griffiths and G. E. Griffiths, 29 (1799), 121-28 (p. 122).

¹⁰ Isaac D'Israeli, romances, Consisting of a Persian, a Roman, and an Arcadian Romance, 3rd ed., London 1807, p. XI., cited in Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature*, p. 120.

¹¹ The story of Leili and Majnun was 'as popular in the East, as the loves [...] of Petrarch and Laura [...] in the West'. See Muriel West, 'Poe's "Ligeia" and Isaac D'Israeli', *Comparative Literature*, 1, 16 (Winter 1964), 19-28 (p. 22).

Romance, and has given a skeleton of the story.’¹² However, he had first encountered a ‘splendidly illuminated’ Persian manuscript of Nezami’s *Leili and Majnoun*, which was ‘preserved among the literary treasures’ of his friend, Francis Douce.¹³ Apart from his adaptation of Nezami’s poem, D’Israeli also worked into his Oriental romance an ode by Jami and Sa’di’s apologue on the influence of associates, as well as a number of pieces of verse adapted from translations by various Orientalists, such as ‘The Land of Cashmere’, ‘A Persian Ode to Spring’, ‘A Festive Ode’, the adaptation of one of Hafez’s odes, and ‘Mejnoun in the Desert’.

Nezami’s ‘Leili va Majnoun’: A Summary

The *masnavi* of *Leili va Majnoun* is the second of the five poems (treasures) in Nezami’s *Panj Ganj* or *Khamse* (*Five Treasures* or *Quinary*). Nezami was the first poet who composed this story in Persian in 1188. Nezami’s *Leili and Majnoun* comprises approximately four thousand and six hundred *beyts* or couplets in the form of *masnavi*. *Masnavi* is a poetic form consisting of rhyming couplets, each different from the next couplet and is a form mostly used for long narrative poems such as the ones in Ferdausi’s *Shahnaameh*, Nezami’s *Khamseh*, and Maulavi’s *Masnavi-ye Ma’navi*.

¹² Isaac D’Israeli, *Romances; Consisting of a Persian, a Roman, and an Arcadian, Romance*, third edn. revised (London: Printed by C. Whittingham, 103, Goswell Street; For John Murray, Fleet Street; and Arch. Constable and Co. Edinburgh, 1807), p. i.

¹³ Ibid. The Persian manuscript is now preserved in the Bodleian’s Douce collection.

The poem is based on a tragic Arab legend of two lovers, Qays ibn al-Mulawwah,¹⁴ the son of an Arab sheikh from the Ameri tribe, and Layla bint Mahdi from another tribe, who fall in love with each other in school and whose desire for each other remains unfulfilled. The story is yet in its early stages when the young lovers learn that their mutual passion is prohibited by Leili's father. This prohibition becomes a starting point for the young lover Qays to fall into a series of Sufi states in the path of love, leading to idealisation of the Other and loss of self. These Sufi states, from the moment the young lovers recognise each other's love to the moment they die for love in entire sincerity or '*ekhlaas*', are very delicately portrayed by Nezami in his *Leili and Majnoun*. In his path, the anguished Qays becomes a wanderer in the deserts, composes fragments of poetry and ghazals, lives a melancholy life in solitude in the desert and on the mountain Najd, becomes one with Leili, and dies of love. The chapters as represented by Nezami illustrate four states in the Sufi path of love, namely, recognition of love, pain of love, wandering in solitude, and self-loss. The chapters are catalogued in Nezami's *Leili and Majnoun* as follows:

Falling in love – Describing Majnoun's love – Suiting Leili – Majnoun's woe for the love of Leili – Pilgrim of Caaba – Majnoun viewing Leili in the palm grove – Nofel meeting Majnoun – Nofel battling with Leili's tribe – Majnoun blaming Nofel – Nofel's second combat – Majnoun setting antelopes free – Majnoun conversing with the crow – Leili's father marrying daughter to Ebn Salam – Majnoun finding out about Leili's marriage – Majnoun hearing about father's death – Majnoun's fondness

¹⁴ Other transcriptions for Qays are Kais or Qais and for Layla are Leila or Leili or Layli. *Layl* in Arabic means night. Nezami states the significance of this appellation as such: 'Her tresses were like *layl* and her name Layli'.

of wildlife – Majnoun mourning – Leili’s letter to Majnoun – Majnoun’s respond – Majnoun’s uncle Salim Ameri and mother calling on him – Majnoun finds out of mother’s death – Majnoun reading ghazals to Leili – Salaam Baqdadi meeting Majnoun – Leili and Majnoun coming together in chastity – Majnoun mourning at Leili’s presence – Description of fall and death of Leili – Majnoun’s death while mourning Leili.¹⁵

The two fell in love at first sight when still in school and gradually the secret of their love was divulged everywhere, as Majnoun found it impossible not to announce his love for the beloved. Although they deployed all patience they could to conceal their love, they failed:

They shewed patience to endeavour
 And conceal their love bare.
 But will one ever benefit from patience in love?
 The sun shall not be coated with mud.¹⁶

¹⁵ All citations of Nezami’s *Leili and Majnoun* in this thesis are from Douce’s Persian manuscript, Nizami’s Three Mathnawis, dated by Mirak bin Khwajagi of Balkh, 980/1572, 1573, at Samarkand, the original source that Isaac D’Israeli consulted for his romance. See Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 348, fols. 1b-61b. I have extracted only some of the headings of the chapters according to my contention with regard to describing the stages of love.

¹⁶ Translations are all mine unless otherwise mentioned.

کردند شکیب تا بکوشند وین عشق برهنه را بپوشند
 در عشق شکیب کی کند سود خورشید بگل نشاید اندود
 – نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

And this failure provided the cause of disgrace for the tribe of Leili, for it was considered ignominy in the Arab society of the time for any two persons in a love relation to get married, as marriage was to be an arranged vow and under entire control and agreement of the tribes.¹⁷

Due to the excess of pain and grief for his unfulfilled love for Leili, Majnoun wandered about on the Mountain Najd where Leili and her tribe inhabited. It was on that mountain that he composed ghazals in ecstasy and became intoxicated with the thought of Leili in solitude:

From the pain of grief and fire of love
He did not rest unless on that mount
He clapped the hands while roaming up there
Tumbling and uprising like the sots
He warbled on and ran here
And there in rapture.¹⁸

Majnoun's taking refuge into nature was undertaken for a variety of reasons: as a reaction against the restrictive norms of Arab society; as an affirmation of the natural or authentic self; as a source of poetic inspiration, and as a cure for melancholy.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jalal Sattari, *Haalaat-e Eshq-e Majnoun (The States of Majnoun's Love)* (Tehran: Tous, 1385/2006), p. 282.

¹⁸

از آتش عشق و دود اندوه ساکن نشدی مگر بر آن کوه
بر کوه شدی و میزدی دست افتان خیزان چو مردم مست
آواز نشید بر شنیدی بیخود شدی هر طرف دویدی
— نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

¹⁹ A detailed discussion of the relation of the poet-lover and nature will be provided in Chapter four.

The story ends tragically with the death of Leili and Majnoun successively.
Majnoun, mourning Leili's death day after day, ultimately beseeches God to release him from all that pain and dies:

He raised his hands toward the heavens
Spread out fingers and closed his eyes:
That thou the creator of all there is,
I adjure thee by the chosen
To relieve my pain
And take me to the presence of my own 'yaar'.
[...]
He said this and laid head on the ground
And enclasped the dust.
As the *yaar*'s dust he enfolded
He said 'ey *doust*' and expired.²⁰

I will discuss the notion of death later in this chapter, as suggesting two different perspectives: first, a symbolic death of self into the Other and a rebirth of the Sufi's

²⁰ The Persian expression 'ey *doust*' is used when a lover addresses and calls his beloved. It can be literally translated as 'O, thou friend', yet it means, 'O, thou beloved'.

برداشت بسوی آسمان دست انگشت گشاد و دهنه بریست
کان خالق هر چه آفرین است سوگند بآنچه برگزین است
کز محنت خویش وارهانم در حضرت ظل خود رسانم
[...]

این گفت و نهاد بر زمین سر وان نیت را کشید در بر
چون تربت دوست در بر آورد ای دوست بگفت و جان بر آورد
— نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

self, or '*fanaa*' as it is termed in Sufism; second, dying of/for love, a characteristic of Uzri love, a literal death out of grief.

D'Israeli's Adaptation: Persian Imagery or Sufi Motifs

D'Israeli's adaptation of the legend of Leili and Majnoun provided the Western reader with copious examples of imageries, scenes, and motifs specific to Persian literature.

According to *The Critical Review: or, Annals of Literature* of 1808,

Mr. D'Israeli has retained the substance of the history, and has inserted some fragments of Persian poetry mixed with some pieces of his own. He has attentively preserved the local peculiarities of the country which was the scene of the passion; and his style resembles the soil of Persia, which is covered with fragrance and with flowers.²¹

D'Israeli retains such Persian motifs as the nightingale's legendary love for the rose.

In a letter to Leila, Mejnoun assimilates himself with the legendary bulbul as the 'lone bird' whose 'pensive heart with lonely passion glows' for his one and only rose.²²

Elsewhere in one of Mejnoun's early poems, 'A Persian Ode to Spring', 'the nightingale personifies the poet',²³ the paramour whose sighs and songs are heard through every bower for the rose:

²¹ *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature*, ed. by Tobias George Smollett, 12 (1808), 257-61 (p. 257).

²² Isaac D'Israeli, *Romances* (New-York: Printed and Published by D. Longworth, at the Shakespeare-Gallery, 1803), p. 135.

²³ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 29.

Queen, hearest thou not through every bower
The NIGHTINGALE, thy paramour?
Oft has he lift each leaf and sighed,
Lo! on his wild wing hear him chide!²⁴

D'Israeli assimilates Kais to a nightingale and Leila to his Rose:

[B]ut ye have seen the minstrel of Spring inhaling to ebriety its fragrant soul; the
more mellifluous his pathetic song, the more his bosom leant on the piercing thorns:
ah! he sings but to bleed, he leans but to faint; he 'Dies on the ROSE in aromatic
pain.'²⁵

Apart from assimilating Majnoun to the loving nightingale and Leili to the loved rose,
Nezami attributes the features of Majnoun to the nightingale and those of Leili to the
rose, when he says:

The nightingale craned from the tree
And sighed Majnoun-like
The rose like Leili's visage

²⁴ Ibid., p. 30. The nightingale then asks the '[w]hispering and kissing' gale that bears the incense of his
love where he would 'rove'. D'Israeli might have taken the imagery from this *beyt* by Hafez:

O Zephyr, bring thou a scent of the soil trodden by the *yaar*

Take away the sorrow of my heart and bring the good news of my sweetheart

ای صبا نکهتی از خاکِ ره کار بگلر ببر اندوه دل و مژده ی دلداری بگلر — حافظ، دیوان

²⁵ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1803), p. 37. Shelley seems to have borrowed this in composing his 'The
Indian Serenade'.

Her head protruded like a crown.²⁶

With this Nezami creates a prototype of Leili and Majnoun to which he ascribes love in nature, the love of the nightingale for the rose, as though Majnoun and Leili's love is the model which nature should emulate. The two lovers thus become one with nature in their antagonism to the prohibiting society. In the following two chapters, I will discuss the influence of the motif of gul and bulbul (the rose and the nightingale) in Shelley's and Byron's works.

D'Israeli made some minor modifications to Persian conceits, due to his concerns for the intended reader. He reproduces the eccentric imagery as produced by the Persian poets in an English form so that it is more tangible to the mind of the English reader. In the description of the land of Cashmere, for instance, he substitutes the 'moonlight foreheads veil'd with flow'rs' for the original Persian expression 'moon-faced'.²⁷ He refers to Ouseley's assertion that 'a Persian mistress would be highly flattered by its application; an epithet, however, for which I believe few of our fair countrywomen would thank a lover. Anvari describes a favourite damsel, with *a face lovely as the Moon*. Another poet describes a beauty "*moon-faced*, with looks like the timid glances of the fawn."²⁸ Although D'Israeli admits that this expression might at first appear to the Western reader 'uncouth', he finds this pertinent to 'that

²⁶

بلبل ز درخت سر کشیده مجنون صفت آه بر کشیده
گل چون رخ لیلی از عماری بیرون زده سر به تاج داری
— نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

²⁷ Griffiths, *The Monthly Review*, p. 121.

²⁸ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 17.

tender melancholy which the aspect of the moon produces on a pensive feeling mind', and finds the *moonlight* 'even more tender than the view of the *moon* itself'.²⁹

Another difference is made by D'Israeli in the passage of the prince Nofel's combat with Leili's tribe. In the original story, as we mentioned earlier, the Arab society of the time prohibited marriage for any two persons in a love relation, as it was considered a disgrace for the girl's tribe.³⁰ In the original Leili and Majnoun story, therefore, although Nofel wins the combat and can fulfil Majnoun's desire to marry Leili, Nofel refrains from doing so as Leili's father pleads with him to retain the dignity and grace of his family. In D'Israeli's romance, however, this part of the story is treated in an entirely different way: Nofel falls in love with Leila and hence fails to keep his promise. D'Israeli brings up the theme of the triangle of love of two men for the same woman, which is more familiar to the Western mind than Nezami's version. This particular scene, on the other hand, is approached from a totally different perspective in Jones's translation of the poem.

Jones views the above scene from a Sufist perspective. There is a Prince in Jones's translation of the poem who offers to gratify Majnoun's soul by bringing Leili to him. The Prince suggests that he would give Majnoun 'the object of [his] passion': 'To exalt thee with dignity and power, to bring Laili before thee gratifying thy soul?'³¹ Majnoun replies: 'far, far is it from my wish, that an atom should be seen

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sattari, *Haalaat-e Eshq-e Majnoun*, p. 282.

³¹ Jones, 'On the Orthography of Asiatick Words', *Works*, I, p. 225.

گفت کای گم شده وادی غم هیچ خواهی که تمنای دهم
سرفرازت کنم از مکننت و جاه لیلی آرم ببرت خاطر خواه
گفت نی نی که بعید است بعید ذره را هم نظری با خورشید

[...]

together with the sun’ and ‘[t]o gratify this contemptible soul of mine, a single ray from that bright luminary would be enough’.³² The ultimate union of Majnoun’s soul with the divine soul of the beloved, the poem here implies, is not for the lover’s soul to be gratified by the actual physical presence of the beloved, but rather it is gratified with ‘a single ray’ from that sun. The lover is an atom who is not to be ‘seen together with the sun’, but rather the one who dissolves in the sun and becomes a part of it.³³ Jones highlights Leili as the ultimate divine beloved and the source of light before whom Majnoun renounces his self.

The lover’s dissolution in the Other is raised by Nezami towards the end of the story when both lovers find the opportunity to come together. They are transported in ecstasy for a whole night and experience true love through self-loss and becoming one.³⁴ It is at this moment that Leili offers the mirror of light to Majnoun and he becomes her. Nezami at this point announces that love is the high mirror of light and distinguishes it from earthly lust accordingly. Similarly, towards the ending of D’Israeli’s romance the two lovers meet briefly and it is then that Mejnoun attributes perfection to Leila, calling her ‘[p]erfection of beauty, peri of my soul’.³⁵ It is a

بهر خورسندی این جزو حقیر بس بود پرتوی از مهر منیر

³² Ibid.

³³ Cf. Sa’di’s *beyt* in one of his ghazals:

Like a dewdrop in the Sun

I evaporated and rose up to Capella.

چون شبنم اوفتاده بُدم پیش آفتاب مهرم به جان رسید و به عیوق بر شدم

³⁴

دوری ز ره دو قطب شد دور گشت آینه دو صبح، یک نور – نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

³⁵ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 116.

romantic meeting, yet their love remains unconsummated. After they part Mejnoun experiences another state of delirium and at length swoons. In Nezami's *masnavi* the two lovers swoon and experience *fanaa* during the time they come together, whereas in D'Israeli's romance, Mejnoun experiences a type of *fanaa* after the two lovers part. Contrary to Nezami's *masnavi*, the meeting of D'Israeli's Mejnoun and Leila is limited to a mere romantic one. D'Israeli's nuanced treatment of the story's Sufism indicates the degree to which he was interested in Sufi ideas, yet he refused to treat them as precisely as they were raised by the Persian poets. One should not overlook D'Israeli's mentioning of some Sufi states such as Mejnoun's swooning (*fanaa*) after he sees Leila or his *samaa*', which I will discuss later in this chapter, in an earlier scene when he is longing to see her.

D'Israeli's Mejnoun is rather a poet-lover than a chaste Sufi lover. When Mejnoun awakes, crying 'it was but in a dream, that I have seen Leila', he then declares, 'happiness, is not banished, from the cell of the hermit, if he has, but A DREAM OF LOVE!',³⁶ and then addresses an ode to the moon, under the title of 'The Lover's Dream'. D'Israeli remarks that it is from one of Jami's ghazals, translated by William Ouseley, that he derived the idea of this ode. The ghazal's first two lines read:

Last night my eyes were closed in sleep, but my happiness awake;

The whole night, the live-long night, the image of my beloved was the
companion of my soul.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

These lines should be compared with the second and the final stanzas in Mejnoun's ode to the moon:

Last night, in sleep, my Love did speak,
I press'd her HAND, I kissed her CHEEK.
Her FOREHEAD was with fondness hung;
Soft as the timid Moon when young.
[...]
I grasp a SHADOW OF DELIGHT!
A PAINTED DREAM is all my BLISS!³⁸

These two odes by Jami and D'Israeli (Mejnoun) depict the extreme bliss that the lover experiences merely through a dream or a vision of the beloved. What D'Israeli pictures as Mejnoun's delirium and the ecstasy he gains due to the 'wild'³⁹ vision of union with the beloved can be compared to *fanaa* in Sufism.⁴⁰ The concept of *fanaa* or loss of self in Sufism, as discussed previously, is a state in the path of love through which the Sufi's self is annihilated as a result of excessive love for the beloved. It is through *fanaa* that the Sufi becomes other to himself. D'Israeli's Mejnoun does not renounce his self at this point. Nonetheless, D'Israeli seems to have been aware of the notion of self-loss when earlier in the romance he treats the Sufi notion of losing one's own self and being the Other in a scene where a hunter asks Mejnoun if he is

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 119, 121. In the next chapter I will examine the influence of these two odes by Jami and D'Israeli on Shelley's work.

³⁹ The narrator states: 'Every day his verses, became more wild, but certainly, not less poetical.' See D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 122.

⁴⁰ See Chapter one.

Kais, and the latter replies, 'I was Kais',⁴¹ that is, he renounces his own self. D'Israeli also portrays Mejnoun as a dervish who practices the Sufi ritual of *samaa*':

Misery had sufficiently disguised his features, and Melancholy had shaded his face, with a religious semblance; he dressed himself, in the humble garb of a Mevleheh dervise, whose practices he had learnt, and approached the tent of Leila. [...] He whirled himself with great velocity on one foot, and held a red hot iron between his teeth; and sometimes with the *Neh*, or traverse flute, so musically warbled his wild and enthusiastic notes, [...] till exhausted by pain and fatigue, he fell on the earth, and seemed to faint.⁴²

The above scene replicates *samaa*', which is one of the states in the Sufi path of love. The term *samaa*' in Arabic means 'listening' and in Sufism it connotes a practice of listening to music and chanting in order to prepare the Sufi to experience a sort of ecstasy and elevate his spirituality. Maulaviyeh dervishes, referred to by D'Israeli as 'Mevleheh dervise', combined a type of whirling dance with this Sufi ritual. The Sufi's experience of ecstasy in *samaa*' has resemblances with *fanaa*, in that the Sufi loses consciousness (self) in both states. Yet the difference is that the latter occurs in the higher states of love and unwillingly, whereas the former is a ritual which is chosen to be practiced by the Sufi.⁴³

⁴¹ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 106.

⁴² D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 35-6. D'Israeli has adopted the concept from other sources such as Dallaway's 'Constantinople' as he remarks in the footnote to this passage.

⁴³ Qasem Qani, *Taarix-e Tasavvof dar Eslam: va Tatavvoraat va Tahavvolaat-e Mokhtalefe-ye aan az Sadr-e Eslam taa Asr-e Hafez* (Tehran: Chapkhane-ye Naqsh-e Jahan, 1330/1952), p. 388.

D'Israeli's depiction of such Sufi states as *fanaa* and *samaa* ' throughout his romance indicates his sympathy with Sufism. Nonetheless, there are still some minute differences between his perception of Sufism and what Nezami and Jami represent as Sufism in their *masnavis*. In Jami's *Leili va Majnoun*, for instance, there is a famous part where Majnoun refuses to see Leili and in fact does not acknowledge Leili's presence. He asks her to leave the place as the fire of her love has ignited his heart so that he never longs for her physical presence.⁴⁴ In Jami's story, Majnoun refrains to see Leili in the end, not because he wants to practice abstinence, but rather because of the excess of 'absolute love' he fears the physical presence of Leili might divert this absolute devotion for the idealised image of her.⁴⁵ As Jami alerts the reader, it is wrong to deem Majnoun as having been infatuated by the physical beauty of the beloved. Although at first he desired to drink from the goblet that Leili offered to him, yet he dropped the goblet and broke it, since he was intoxicated by the True wine and not by the goblet wine.⁴⁶ Jami then tells the reader that the true lover's love is not

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گفتا: "تو که ای و از کجایی؟ پیچوده به سوی من چه آیی؟"

گفتا که: "منم مراد جانت! کام دل و رونق روانت!"

"عری لعلی که مست اویی اینجا شده پای بست اویی"

گفتا: "رو! رو! که عشقت امروز در من زده آتشی جهان سوز"

"برد از نظرم غبار صورت دیگر نشوم شکار صورت!"

— جامی، *لیلی و مجنون*

⁴⁵ Sattari, *Haalaat-e Eshq-e Majnoun*, p. 294.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

هان تا نبیری گمان که مجنون بر حسن مجاز بود مقتون

در اول اگر چه داشت میلی با جرعه کشی ز جام لیلی

اندر آخر که گشت از آن مست افکند ز دست جام و بشکست

مستیش ز باده بود نه از جام از جام رهیده شد سر انجام

attributed to the earthly world, but rather to the world of the Truth.⁴⁷ However, it takes Majnoun thirty years to achieve such devotion from earthly love to True love. This notion of rejecting the earthly manifestations of love provides the ground for the lover to become one with the beloved, as it were, to *become* the beloved.⁴⁸ In all the three versions true love is represented as chaste. Leili in both Jami and Nezami becomes the divine source of light into whom Majnoun is dissolved. In D'Israeli's romance, however, she remains the perfection of earthly beauty. Here D'Israeli falls short of Nezami and Jami's Sufism in that he fails to justify the chastity of the lovers' desires. He overlooks the fact that Majnoun is transported at Leili's presence. Although he points out that their union is a 'strange' union of 'chaste desire',⁴⁹ yet he never brings up the concept of 'true love' as opposed to false love that was explicitly distinguished by Nezami in these *beyts*:

That which is far from chastity

– جامی، لیلی و مجنون

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آری، عاشق که پاکبازست عشقش نه ز عالم مجازست – جامی، لیلی و مجنون

⁴⁸ I have discussed the notion of becoming one with the other, or, other to one's self, in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis of the Other-*jouissance* or feminine *jouissance* throughout my thesis (see Chapters one and four). The Sufi subject, intoxicated by the True love of the Other, becomes other to himself, just as a Persian musician would feel while performing an improvisation, going beyond his sole self, experiencing the other within himself, becoming other to himself. Or as woman would be other to herself when experiencing feminine *jouissance*. I will examine the notion of becoming other to one's self in the poetry of Shelley and Byron in the following two chapters.

منم مجنون منم لیلی در اینجا – شرح فریالذین عطار ریشابوری، جوهر الذات، دفتر دوم
هم او صورت هم او معنی هم او مجنون هم او لیلی – شاه نعمت الله ولی، دیوان

⁴⁹ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 120

Is not love; it is licentious zeal.

True love is the high mirror of light

Lust is poles apart from love.⁵⁰

Instead, what fascinates D'Israeli most is the hero's ability to create and compose poetry due to his melancholy state of mind and in moments of frenzy.⁵¹

In order to explain melancholy in its relation with love, I will now draw on the notion of 'melancholia' or 'nostalgie' from a psychoanalytic perspective. As I discussed in Chapter one, Jane Gallop defines the word 'nostalgie' as an 'unsatisfied desire' and a '[m]elancholy regret (for something elapsed or for what one has not experienced)'.⁵² The melancholy regret suggests a sense of loss and a lament for what is lost or what is not experienced, i.e., an unsatisfied desire. In his essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), Freud refers to melancholia as being caused by the introjection of a loved lost object.⁵³ According to Jennifer Radden melancholia is 'a frame of mind characterized by a loss of something', 'a lack or want of something, or

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عشقی که ز عصمت جداییست آن عشق نه شهوت هواپیست

عشق آینه بلند نور است شهوت ز حساب دوست (عشق) دورست - نظامی، لیلی و مجنون

⁵¹ In an endnote, D'Israeli describes one of the miniature paintings that he had viewed in the Persian manuscript where 'Mejnoun is represented seated, nearly naked, and feeding a spotted fawn', his face being portrayed as 'famished and melancholy'. See D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 108.

⁵² Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p. 148.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 1916-1917, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis (Part III)*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press in association with the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1963), XVI, pp. 237-58.

rather *someone*'.⁵⁴ Elsewhere, as a probable counterpoise of the loss, Freud offered the notion of sublimation.⁵⁵ Sublimation, in Freud's terms, involves the redirection of the drive to a different object,⁵⁶ such as art. As we see, there are several ghazals composed in the course of the romance. These ghazals are all composed by Mejnoun due to his melancholy state and as a way of sublimation. There is also another type of sublimation involved in the story that corresponds to the Lacanian definition of the term. Whereas Freud's definition has to do with the redirection of the drive to a different object, Lacan's general formula of sublimation involves a mode that 'raises an object [...] to the dignity of the Thing'.⁵⁷ In other words, the subject diverts his attention from the other as love object into an idealised image of the object.

In the second part of the romance, there is a passage where Mejnoun does not recognise his father and does 'not appear to perceive that he was surrounded by people', 'would at times hold a self-dialogue, seeming to reply to what he imagined some one conversed with him; sometimes he carolled wild, tender verses; and now he shrieked, and now he laughed'.⁵⁸ In the Advertisement to the 1801 edition of his

⁵⁴ *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 282, 45. I will discuss this in light of the premises raised by the Persian philosopher of the eleventh century, Avicenna in Chapter five.

⁵⁵ In the 1915 text 'On Transience', Freud contends that a genuine appreciation of beauty presupposes the capacity to mourn the object's transience: sublimation is the counterpoise of the loss to which the libido so enigmatically fastens itself. See Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 98.

⁵⁶ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 200.

⁵⁷ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. by Miller, p. 112.

⁵⁸ D'Israeli, Isaac, *Romances* (London: Printed for Cadell and Davies, Strand; Murray and Highley, Fleet-Street; J. Harding, St. James's Street; and J. Wright, Piccadilly, 1799), pp. 105-06.

Romances, D’Israeli informs the reader that Kais, ‘the son of an Arabian Chief’ and ‘a most accomplished and amiable youth’, became ‘frantic from disappointed love’ for Leila who ‘was the daughter of a neighbouring Chief, and was also eminently accomplished’.⁵⁹ It is not until the last part of the first half of the romance that D’Israeli introduces Kais as Mejnoun through a Bedoween who described for Kais’s father what he had seen, ‘a MEJNOUN!’, in the form of ‘a spirit’ on the ‘bridge next to the sky’.⁶⁰ In a footnote to the word ‘Mejnoun’, D’Israeli points out:

This surname, in Arabic, means *a Maniac*; but sometimes an *enthusiast*, and a *man inspired*. – Is not this a proof of the universality of the notion, that *inspiration* is a *species of insanity*? [...] The Orientals (observes M. Cardonne), do not consider *madness* as so great an evil as we Europeans; nor is it so liable to reproach: they think that it may only be an error (or, in the language of Dr. Darwin, and hallucination of the mind), or perhaps a gentle inebriation, which, though it troubles the order of our ideas, may soften our pangs as likely as augment them.⁶¹

The hero was hence characterised in the romance by the name of Mejnoun⁶² or Maniac. And as *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal of June* in 1799 points out,

⁵⁹ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. xii-xiii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² The word ‘*majnun*’ is synonymous with: possessed by a demon or jinn, insane, mad, furious, a fanatic, a maniac in Francis J. Steingass’s *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. See Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary: Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be Met with in Persian Literature, Being, Johnson and Richardson’s Persian, Arabic, and English Dictionary, Revised, Enlarged, and Entirely Reconstructed* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005). Steingass’s *Arabic-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005

Kais ‘receives the appellation of Mejnoun’, which signifies in Arabic and Persian ‘a man inspired, an enthusiast, [and] a madman’, due to his ‘enthusiastic frenzy’⁶³ in the path of love. Having no concern for name, fame, and reason, however, Kais finds ‘majesty in lonely grief’ and declares:

I quit the Fame that crowns my polished song,
And in a Desert, strangling Glory’s voice,
I feel the madness and approve the choice.⁶⁴

Ironically enough, it is through this same madness and frenzy that he gains name and glory as a poet-lover. Mejnoun’s philosophic friend, the Effendi, observes that Mejnoun is not insane or maniac, as he does not recognise them, but he is only delirious, stating that: ‘His soul, is so penetrated, with his unhappy passion, that it only exists to that solitary conception, and his ideas are consistent, as they relate to that sole object.’⁶⁵ The image of the beloved, as created in the subject’s mind and as an outcome of the subject’s desire for and pain of lacking the love object, leads to an obsessive desire for that love object: it is on ‘the sole object of Leila’ that Mejnoun ‘concentrat[ed] all his faculties and all his sensations’.⁶⁶ At this stage, the mind becomes obsessed with the love object in such a way that it transforms the object into

[1884]) provides the following synonyms for the same word: possessed by a demon, raving; mad with love.

⁶³ Griffiths, *The Monthly Review*, p. 123.

⁶⁴ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 152.

⁶⁵ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 85. I will discuss the notion of the fixation of the mind on a single object as a trait of melancholy in Chapter five.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

an idea(l), an absent ideal instead of a present real. Mejnoun's 'gloomy imagination' and his delirium thus lead to overestimation and idealisation of the beloved.⁶⁷ In short, the lover's mind acquires the capacity to transmute physical absence of the object to mental presence of the image and divinises/idealises that image. The lover's earthly love is thus transformed into a divine type of love.

The last moment of Majnoun's life in Nezami's *masnavi* is an exemplar of the idealisation of the beloved, when he calls the ultimate beloved as '*ey doust*' and dies. I will now explain how this phrase indicates the lover's idealisation of the earthly beloved. The following passage is an extract from Mejnoun's dying scene:

The dying form paced, slowly, with tottering steps; every step was audible in the vast silence. [...] on his murmuring lips they listened to the name of Leila; and slowly, and hollowly, they heard one vast and feeble sigh, and it ceased to respire. His friend placed his hand on the bosom of the mejnoun, and his heart no more palpitated.⁶⁸

There are resemblances between the scene of Mejnoun's death in D'Israeli's romance and Nezami's *masnavi*. In both the hero mourns the beloved's death day after day until he ultimately dies of her love. The significant point of similarity is that both Mejnoun of the romance and Majnoun of the *masnavi* have the name of Leila or '*ey doust*' on their lips at the very moment they die. Yet, as I have indicated, D'Israeli falls short of Nezami's Sufism in that he ignores the lover's divinisation of the beloved in the end. One can compare D'Israeli's 'on his murmuring lips they listened to the name of Leila; and slowly, and hollowly, [...] one vast and feeble sigh, and it

⁶⁷ Further analysis on the idea of idealisation of the beloved will be provided in more detail in Chapter five and under the discussion of sublimation.

⁶⁸ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 166. Cf. the ending of *Alastor*, the scene of the Poet's death.

ceased to respire' with Nezami's '[h]e said "*ey doust*"⁶⁹ and expired'. In Sufism the phrase '*ey doust*' is the way the Sufi addresses his beloved, whether it is an earthly beloved or God. The fact that Nezami's Majnoun says '*ey doust*' in the end and expires can be interpreted as the lover's ultimate divinisation of the beloved where there remain no earthly names and appearances and the earthly Leili becomes God for the hero of the *masnavi*. Unless the other is an ideal Other the subject cannot experience loss of self. In Sufism the ultimate beloved is God, who is the symbol of all perfection and it is only with such an ideal perfect beloved that the Sufi can achieve the highest state of love. D'Israeli's version of the death scene overlooks the idea of the beloved as the ultimate divine Other and retains the earthly love of Mejnoun for Leila in the end.

On the other hand, D'Israeli views Mejnoun's death as a result of the excess of pain in the path of unattainable love. This type of death occurs when the pain of separation is to such an extent that the lover dies in order to liberate his suffering soul from all the worldly despondency. In other words, the lover experiences a spiritual renunciation of his own self and all that is earthly. The notion of death, as we discussed earlier, is significant from two different perspectives: symbolic and literal. The former is a death of self in the face of the Other, which is also termed '*fanaa*'. The latter is a dying of/for love and out of grief, which is a characteristic of Uzri love. The lover's dying for love is comparable to *fanaa* in that they both are a renunciation and annihilation of the lover's self, yet the element of hope is missing in the former. For Sufis, death means death to self and thus it is figurative and the point of commencement of a spiritual level. It is rather a spiritual rebirth, a transformation, and

⁶⁹ '*Ey doust*' means 'O, thou beloved!' and here Leili.

a willing loss of self in the ideal(ised) beloved.⁷⁰ D'Israeli's Mejnoun experiences both types of death throughout the romance. He experiences *fanaa* in moments of frenzy, which along with the melancholy state of his mind functions as the driving force of his poetic creations. He also highlights Mejnoun's grief as the ultimate cause of his death at the end of the story. It is worth mentioning that such death is not suicidal, although intended, but rather an outcome of excessive grief, in all sincerity⁷¹ of love, which leads to death. In an endnote to his romance, D'Israeli observes that 'many words in the Arabic and Persian languages which express LOVE, imply also MELANCHOLY, MADNESS, and DEATH' and 'Dying for love' in Eastern countries is more than 'a mere poetic figure'.⁷² Dying for love in this manner is the anticipated ending for an unattainable unfulfilled love as such, a spiritual renunciation of the earthly and all the suffering and pain it sets forth, and a liberation from worldly despondency. Jalal Sattari ascribes this type of death to the Uzri love, which referred to the type of chaste and pure love, away from all worldly fulfilment and which burns the lovers till they die from the pain of separation.⁷³

In sum, D'Israeli's treatment of Sufism in his romance is broadly sympathetic but not as engaged as Nezami's and Jones's. D'Israeli seems to have been concerned to reproduce a version of the legend which was more familiar to the Western mind. He portrays Mejnoun's excessive love for Leila, the solitude he pursues in the path of love, and the lover's melancholy due to the unattainability of the beloved. Although

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 288. I will discuss the notion of death as both figurative and literal in the next two chapters in detail and with reference to works by Shelley and Byron. I will also draw on the extent to which melancholy plays a role in Byron's works in their relation with D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*.

⁷¹ Sincerity here is the final state in the path of love and is referred to as '*ekhlaas*'.

⁷² D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 168-69.

⁷³ Sattari, *Haalaat-e Eshq-e Majnoun*, p. 287.

D'Israeli draws on some Sufi states of love, such as *samaa* ' and *fanaa* sporadically, yet he overlooks the type of Sufism that the original *masnavi* or even Jones's translation depicts. The more authentically Sufist version of the story would represent Leili as the source of light and their love as the 'high mirror of light', whereas D'Israeli's version keeps Leila confined to an earthly level. What D'Israeli highlights most is the lover's melancholy love and the poems he composed due to his melancholy. Nonetheless, D'Israeli's adaptation of Nezami's *Leili and Majnoun*, along with a wide range of annotations he provided in the romance, was, I believe, a successful attempt to introduce a comprehensive overview of Sufi love in Persian literature. In the next two chapters I will draw on D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila* as an influential work on the poetry of Shelley and Byron, where I will find more space to analyse the romance in more detail and in relation with the specific works of the above-mentioned Romantic poets.

Chapter IV: Persian Mystic Love in Shelley

It is proclaimed in Romantic criticism that English Romantic writers adopted images of exoticism from various sources including the Orient and the Islamic world.¹

Although broadly true, it was not merely images of the exotic that Romantic writers adapted from Oriental sources. They were also ardent admirers of Oriental philosophical ideas. In other words, it was not merely notions of exoticism that Romanticism derived from the East but critically sophisticated ideas of selfhood, otherness and the concept of the beyond. In the following two chapters I intend to illustrate the extent to which two of the second generation of canonical Romantic poets, namely, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron were influenced by Oriental sources, with special reference to Persian literature.

During his Eton days (1804-1810), Shelley developed a liking for books of Oriental travel and fancy. It was through James Lind that Shelley was first introduced to the Orient. He encountered in Lind's library at Windsor the poetical works of Sir William Jones,² and took inspiration from Jones's works and translations to a remarkable extent. To mention only a few examples, Jones's *The Palace of Fortune, an Indian Tale* (1769), which features 'a dream-vision motif', was 'later deployed by

¹ See Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996).

² Imdad Husain, *English Romantic Poetry and Oriental Influences*, ed. by Amer Rashid Sheikh (Lahore: REMA: Nadeem Book House, 1994), p. 91.

Shelley in *Queen Mab* (1813) in which a human protagonist becomes magically transported to a celestial fairy world where he observes the persisting war of mind in human history between the attractions of sensual pleasure and the rigorous pull of duty'.³ The 'champak's odours' of 'The Indian Serenade' are derived from the 'Hymn to Indra', the 'planet-crested shape' of Love with 'the lightning braided pinions' of *Prometheus Unbound* is much more like Jones's 'star-y-crowned' Camdeo with 'locks in braids ethereal streaming' than any classical deity; and as early as 1942 in an essay titled 'Harmonious Jones', Reginald Hewitt has shown that 'The Hymn to Narayena' was the source both of the metrical form and of much of the thought of the 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'.⁴ Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' also depicts the notion of mind as power from Jones's 'An Epode: From a Chorus in the Unfinished Tragedy of Sohrab', which is an adoption of a passage in the Persian *Shahnameh* by Ferdousi.⁵ According to Stephen Bygrave, Shelley was even 'more

³ Greg Kucich, 'Romance', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 463-481 (p. 469). For a study of the influence of Jones's works on Shelley's *Queen Mab*, see Eric Koeppel, 'Shelley's *Queen Mab* and Sir W. Jones's "Palace of Fortune"', *Englische Studien*, 28 (1900), 43-53. Also see Marie Elisabeth de Meester, *Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1915) and A. J. Arberry, *Asiatic Jones: The Life and Influence of Sir William Jones (1746-1794) Pioneer of Indian Studies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. LTD., 1946).

⁴ R.M. Hewitt, 'Harmonious Jones', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, XXVIII (1942), pp. 42-59, cited in *Tropic Crucible: Self and Theory in Language and Literature*, ed. by Ranjit Chatterjee and Colin Nicholson, (Singapore: Singapore University Press: National University of Singapore, 1984), p. 241.

⁵ *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper: Including the Series Edited with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. by Samuel Johnson and Alexander Chalmers, 21 vols (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1810), XVIII, p. 462.

impressed by Jones's poetic side, frequently the Persian poetry, [and] the *Thousand and One Nights* triumphing over the Vedas'.⁶

During the autumn of 1820 Shelley's correspondence indicates his ambition to learn Arabic, where he requested friends to find 'Arabian grammars, dictionaries & manuscripts'.⁷ He then wrote to Claire Clairmont that he had begun studying Arabic with his cousin Thomas Medwin, who had recently returned from India, 'for a purpose and a motive'.⁸ Shelley's interest in the philosophy of the East and Islam, his poetry inspired by Arabic and Persian mystic literature, and his constant allusions to their literature, one might speculate, could be considered among his purposes and motives to learn the language.

Nevertheless, some critics deem Shelley's work as merely having coincidental similitude with Persian literature and exclude the possibility of any influence from those sources. For instance, although Imdad Husain remarks that, of all the Romantic poets, Shelley was 'the person best endowed to [...] identify with Persian mysticism and Hindu philosophy',⁹ he views the identity of outlook that is observable between the abstract thought of Shelley and some of the Eastern writers as more a matter of analogy and coincidence, rather than of influence.¹⁰ Similarly, Arthur John Arberry, in a brief survey of Persian literature, twice points out parallels of thought in Shelley's poetry; but, as he remarks, most lyric themes are so universal that similarity hardly

⁶ *Romantic Writings*, ed. by Stephen Bygrave (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 300-01.

⁷ *Letters*, II, 237, cited in Michael Rossington, 'Shelley and the Orient', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 6 (1991), 18-36 (pp. 26-7).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Husain, *English Romantic Poetry and Oriental Influences*, p. 107.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-09.

proves influence.¹¹ However, one might go so far as to claim that part of Shelley's identification with Persian mysticism goes beyond mere similarities, considering Shelley's acquaintance with and possible influence from contemporary Orientalists, his lyrical attempts in imitating Persian poetry and traces of Persian classical poetry, both in terms of stylistic and philosophical influences.¹²

In the Introduction to *The Faust Draft Notebook*, Nora Crook and Timothy Webb maintain that 'the only known reference by Shelley to the Persian poet Hafiz' can be found in one of Shelley's last notebooks, Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. E. 18. However, this seems to be a rather hasty judgement on Shelley's acquaintance with Hafez and Persian poetry.¹³ In *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*, Edward Trelawny, attempting to console Shelley on his *Epipsychidion* being denounced by the reviewer of 'a monthly review' as the 'rhapsody of a madman', announces that '[t]he Persian poet Hafiz would have consoled you by saying, "You are like the shell of ocean that fills with pearls the hand that wounds you."'”¹⁴ Trelawny informs us that

¹¹ *Legacy of Persia* 210, 214., cited in John Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', *Rivista di Letterature Moderne*, 13 (1960), 92-95 (p. 92).

¹² As Draper suggests, Shelley may well have read translations of Hafez and other Persian poets done during the preceding fifty years by Sir William Jones, Francis Gladwin and other oriental scholars (Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', p. 95). John Holloway, on the other hand, observes that '[i]n all probability, Shelley had no knowledge of Gladwin's book: but he seems to have picked up a good deal from collections of Oriental verse which were appearing in some numbers in the period when he himself was writing.' See John Holloway, *Widening Horizons in English Verse* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 48.

¹³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, Nora Crook, Timothy Webb, Bodleian Library, *The Faust Draft Notebook: A Facsimile of Bodleian Ms. Shelley Adds. E. 18*, 21 vols (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), XIX, p. xxvii.

¹⁴ Edward John Trelawny, *Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author*, ed. and intro. by David Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 121.

Shelley 'was delighted with the Eastern metaphors, and I repeated many others to him, talking of Eastern civilization, from which all poetry had originated'.¹⁵

Although Shelley's direct reference to Persian poets is limited in his works, one cannot ignore the inspiration Shelley drew from Persian poetry, in terms of imagery, style, and theme especially in some of his later works. In the pages that follow I will first consider the traces of Persian literary style, topoi, and imageries in the works by Shelley which were mainly written within the last two years of his life. I will then go on in the second section to discuss those elements of Persian Sufi literature that might have been Shelley's probable sources of inspiration in composing *Alastor: or, The Spirit of Solitude*. The Persian sources I intend to examine in relation with the theme, characterisation, and structure in *Alastor* include Ouseley's 'Persian Ode', a translation of a ghazal by the fifteenth-century Persian poet Jami, D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*, and William Jones's translation of Maulavi's '*Ney-naame*', titled 'The Song of the Reed'.¹⁶ Of all the works I will analyse in this chapter, it is Shelley's *Alastor* that seems to have most in common with Persian Sufism. The hero's search for love, his idealisation of the beloved in order to lose self in her face, his desire to return to a lost state of union, and finally his dying of love all are characteristics and elements that are present in Persian poetry. In the third section I will attempt to explore the mystic imperative of the idealisation of the Other in relation with the desire of the self to retrieve the lost state of unity with special reference to the Lacanian formulations of mystical *jouissance* and in an interaction with Sufism.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, 1799), I, pp. 458-60.

Persian Imageries and Motifs in Shelley's Later Poetry

This section introduces and considers the range of Persian motifs and imageries that were drawn on by Shelley in his later poems such as 'Lines to an Indian Air' (published 1823), 'To ---' (1821), 'Music' (1821), 'To Jane: The Recollection' (1822), and 'From the Arabic: An Imitation' (1821). I will look closely at the repeating imagery of the love of the rose and the nightingale, the image of the poet as the nightingale, the wine cup and the cupbearer (*saaqi*) in Persian poetry as having been represented by Shelley in the abovementioned poems, as well as his imitation of some poetic devices and measures of Persian poetry in composing those poems.

William Jones's collection of translations and adaptations from Persian literature, contemporaneous with Shelley, provides ample analogues for the motif of the love of the nightingale for the rose. In *The Flowers of Persian Literature* (1805), for instance, Jones quotes the contemporary translator and scholar John Nott in a footnote that '[t]he Persians have several poetical fables, to which they often allude in their compositions, but to none so frequently as that which supposes the nightingale to be violently enamoured with the rose.'¹⁷ The nightingale in Persian literature sometimes is the herald of love, as in this couplet by Sa'di: 'Dost thou know what that early nightingale said to me? "What sort of man art thou, that canst be ignorant of

¹⁷ William Jones, *The Flowers of Persian Literature: Containing Extracts from the Most Celebrated Authors, in Prose and Verse, with a Translation into English: Being Intended as a Companion to Sir William Jones's Persian Grammar: To which is Prefixed an Essay on the Language and Literature of Persia* (London: Printed for James Asperne by S. Rousseau, 1805), p. 157.

love?””¹⁸ The nightingale is also a metaphor for the poet in Persian literature, as John Nott’s translation of one of Hafez’s ghazals reads:

O Hafez! thy delightful lay,
That on the wild wind floats,
Resembles much, our poets say,
The nightingale’s rich notes;
What wonder then, thy music flows
In the sweet season of the rose.¹⁹

To this Nott adds in the footnote: ‘The Persian writers frequently compare their poets to nightingales; indeed our Hafez has acquired the constant appellation of, the Persian nightingale.’²⁰ Perhaps Shelley draws on this same imagery of the nightingale

¹⁸ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), II, p. 158.

دانی چه گفت مرا آن بلبل سحری تو خود چه آدمی کز عشق بیخبری – سعدی، غزلیات

¹⁹ Jones, *The Flowers of Persian Literature*, p. 176.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 276. It is worth mentioning that the motif of the nightingale had also attracted the attention of other Romantics such as Keats and Coleridge in their poetry. Coleridge associates the nightingale with melancholy in his ‘To the Nightingale’ (1794), when he refers to him as the ‘minstrel of the moon, | Most musical, most melancholy bird’. However, in his other poem ‘The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem’ that he wrote four years later in April 1798, he calls him ‘the merry Nightingale’ who hurries to ‘disburthen his full soul | Of all its music’ and ‘love-chant’ in a short ‘April night’. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*, ed. by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 99, 100. In both cases the nightingale is referred to as a lover, either melancholy or merry. Coleridge seems to have been aware of the Persian motif of the rose and the nightingale when he comments on Juliet’s love, in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, as having ‘all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring’. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge’s Criticism of Shakespeare: A*

as poet in his 'A Defence of Poetry', when he states: 'A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds'.²¹

In 'The Indian Serenade', in the second stanza, Shelley compares the persona's love for the beloved with that of the nightingale for 'her', the rose:

Selection, ed. by R. A. Foakes (London: Athlone, 1989), p. 55. Keats, too, seemed to have been familiar with the concept of the rose and wine in association with spring when in his 'Ode to a Nightingale' he talks of the 'coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine' as 'mid-May's eldest child'. Compare this with William Ouseley's translation of this couplet by Hafez: 'It is a festival, and the season of the rose; boy, bring wine. – | Who ever saw, in the time of the rose, a cup placed down without wine?' See William Ouseley, *The Oriental Collections: Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous papers; ...*, 3 vols (London [England]: Printed for Cadell and Davies, Strand, by Cooper and Graham, [1798]-1800), I, p. 277. Keats's lines also indicate his perusal of Jones's Persian translations where the flower is used as a cup of wine. See Jones's translation of another ghazal by Hafez: 'Rise, boy; for the cup of the tulip is full of wine.' See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), II, p. 324. The following lines from his 'Ode: "Bards of Passion and of Mirth"' show another evidence that Keats was aware of the nightingale singing tales of mystery and truth for the rose:

And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries. See John Keats, *Selected Poetry*, ed. by Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 146.

²¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts Criticism*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 478-508 (p. 486).

The wondering airs they faint
 On the dark, the silent stream –
 The champak odours fail
 Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
 The nightingale's complaint –
 It dies upon her heart –
 As I must on thine,
 O beloved as thou art!²²

'The nightingale', as B. A. Park in his brief article 'The Indian Elements of the "Indian Serenade"' affirms, 'is surely brought in with the Persian "gul u bulbul" legend in the back of the mind'.²³ Park sees the nightingale's hopeless love for the rose as analogous to the persona's love for the beloved.²⁴

Drawing on William Ouseley's translation of Jami's 'Persian Ode' in *Oriental Collection*, Park notes that Shelley's 'Indian Serenade' shares the 'dream motif' with

²² Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, p. 369. Reiman and Powers explain in the footnote the titles under which the poem had been known as: 'Song, Written for an Indian Air' (as first published in the *Liberal*, no II, 1823), 'Lines to an Indian Air' (*Posthumous Poems*, 1824), and 'the Indian Serenade' (transcripts by Mary Shelley in *The Harvard Shelley Notebook* and the Pierpont Morgan Library). The poem remerged in 1962 as 'The Indian Girl's Song' from Shelley's own fair copy.

²³ B. A. Park, 'The Indian Elements of the "Indian Serenade"', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 10 (Winter 1961), 8-12 (p. 11).

²⁴ Cf. the idea of the lover (Mejnoun) as nightingale and the beloved (Leila) as the rose also illustrated in D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila* in Chapter three.

this Persian ghazal.²⁵ Moreover, Jami has another poem, translated by William Jones as ‘The Muse Recalled: An Ode of Jami’, that might have inspired Shelley in composing his ‘Indian Serenade’. It is very likely that Shelley might have taken the imagery of the love of the rose and the nightingale and the melancholy tone that he employed in his ‘Serenade’ from this ode of Jami. The two poems also have similarities with regard to the sequence of plot. In Jami’s Ode the persona opens with the delightful optimistic ‘News, that the rose will soon approach | the tuneful bird of night, he brings’.²⁶ Shortly thereafter he suddenly realises that these are all but ‘false tales’ and becomes aware of a painful ‘absence’. The poet’s tone thus shifts from the gaiety of the first six couplets to the melancholy tone of the last eight couplets. In a similar mood, Shelley’s persona starts with awakening from the ‘first sweet sleep of night’, with the bright shining stars and low breathing winds. However, the prospect of an awakening from a sweet sleep in the same lighthearted atmosphere that the poet provided in the first stanza proves a false hope. Due to the absence of the beloved or unrequited love, the serenader in the second stanza realises that, at the ‘chamber window’ of the beloved,

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream –
And the champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;

²⁵ Park, ‘The Indian Elements of the “Indian Serenade”’, p. 9.

²⁶ William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols (London: Printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly; and J. Walker, 1807), II, p. 501.

The point of contrast is when the only liberating way from such ‘heartsick love-lorn’ wilderness for the poet/persona of Jami’s Ode is to bring ‘his name and rambling lay’ to the beloved’s ‘all-piercing sight’, in the hope for redemption. In other words, it is in the very act of singing his song for the beloved, like the nightingale for the rose when she approaches ‘the tuneful bird of night’, that the poet overcomes his melancholy. This reminds us of Jones’s ‘A Persian Song’ where the poet’s sole desire and point of redemption in the end is for his ‘simple lay’ to ‘please | The nymph for whom these notes are sung.’

In Shelley’s poem, however, the poet/persona keeps wooing the beloved in the hope for a ‘consummation of love in death’.²⁷ It starts from the second stanza where the poet compares himself with the nightingale:

The nightingale’s complaint –
It dies upon her heart –
As I must on thine
O beloved as thou art!

Although the serenader is aware of the fact that his heart will break at last, yet he chooses to die on the beloved’s heart. As such, ‘the consummation of love in death’ is the very core of mystic love in the love of the rose and the nightingale. As the last stanza reads:

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fail!²⁸

²⁷ Park, ‘The Indian Elements of the “Indian Serenade”’, p. 11.

Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart heats loud and fast.
Oh press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.²⁹

The notion of dying for the Other is a frequent concept in Persian poetry. In his *Persian Miscellanies*, Ouseley amazedly describes ‘the extreme facility with which a Persian lover gives up his heart, his soul, his life, to a beloved Mistress. He offers them for the earth on which she treads; and if she does not appear, his soul abandons his body.’³⁰ Ouseley brings an extract from the ‘Divaun of *Senai*’, where ‘the Lover declares, that “Life forsakes his frame when his beloved is no longer near him; as the nightingale takes wing from the garden, on the disappearance of the rose.”’³¹ Ouseley then cites a couplet from one of Jami’s ‘[s]onnets that compose his Divaun’: ‘my

²⁸ These lines are echoed in ‘Ode to the West Wind’, when the poet states: ‘Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! | I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!’ (Stanza IV). Yet if behind these images, according to Reiman and Powers, ‘lie Jesus’ crown of thorns and Dante’s metaphor of life as “a dark wood ... rough and stubborn” (*Inferno*, I. 1-5)’ (Shelley, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, p. 223), the point of the reference in Shelley’s ‘Indian Serenade’ is clearly the Persian love of the nightingale for the rose.

²⁹ Shelley, *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, p. 370.

³⁰ William Ouseley, *Persian Miscellanies: An Essay to Facilitate the Reading of Persian Manuscripts; with Engraved Specimens, Philological Observations, and Notes Critical and Historical* (London: Printed for Richard White, opposite Burlington House, Piccadilly, 1795), p. 163.

³¹ Ibid.

inanimate body, it is true, continues here: but my soul accompanies the fair object of my love, where'er she goes.³² And finally he refers to Hafez 'in the beginning of an admirable Ode, inculcating perseverance in amorous pursuits, [where he] declares "that he will either resign his existence, or succeed in the accomplishment of his desires."³³ Such is the extent to which a Persian lover expresses the excess of his love for the beloved. Persian poetry is filled with abundant examples of such extremity, the degree of which, in fact, does not seem to the Persian as extreme and exaggerated as it might to the European audience.

Another poem that Shelley wrote under the direct influence of the literature of the East was titled 'From the Arabic: An Imitation'.³⁴ Yohannan thinks that 'the first lines of "From the Arabic", which suggest the verse-form of a ghazal, were probably modelled on the translations of Jones'.³⁵ Hewitt has found a 'genuine Persian accent' in Shelley's 'From the Arabic'. In order to have a proper comparison with regard to its imitative form and measure, I arrange the lines in the form of Persian couplets:

My faint spirit was sitting in the light	Of thy <i>looks</i> , my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon	For the <i>brooks</i> , my love.
[...]	

³² Ibid.

به هر منزل که جانان من آنجا است تتم اینجا ولی جان من آنجا است – جامی

³³ Ibid.

دست از طلب ندارم تا کام من بر آید یا تن رسد به جانان یا جان ز تن بر آید – حافظ، دیوان

³⁴ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poems*, compiled by Isabel Quigly (London: Penguin Books, 1985).

³⁵ J. D. Yohannan, 'The Persian Poetry Fad in England, 1770-1825', *Comp. Lit.*, IV (1952), 137 ff., cited in John Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', *Rivista Di Letterature Moderne E...*, 13 (1960), 92-5 (p. 92).

In the battle, in the darkness, in the need, Shall mine *cling to thee*,
 Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love, It may *bring to thee*.³⁶
 (italics mine)

Hewitt has suggested that Shelley was influenced in it by ‘The Muse Recalled: An Ode of Jami’, translated by William Jones in ‘the form and measure of a Persian poem’.³⁷ The ode reads:

How sweet the gale of morning breathes! Sweet news of my *delight he brings*;
 News, that the rose will soon approach the tuneful bird of *night, he brings*.³⁸
 (italics mine)

³⁶ Having compared this poem by Jones’s, I am also tempted to draw on another measure in Persian poetry that was introduced by Gladwin in his *Dissertations*. ‘Mos-ta-zad’, Gladwin states, ‘is when a line of prose is introduced after a hemistich or a distich, the sense of which prose line must be connected with the poetry, but the verse must be so constructed as to be complete without it’.

فارغ ز شراب صاف گلرنگ مباحش چون درد کشان

بی باده و مطرب خوش آهنگ مباحش در دیر مغان

Quit not the pure and rosy wine, Like dreg-drinkers:
 Be not without wine and melodious minstrels, In the house of the vintners:

See Francis Gladwin, *Dissertations on the Rhetoric, Prosody, and Rhyme of the Persians* (Calcutta, printed: Reprinted, in London, at the ORIENTAL PRESS, by Wilson & Co., 1801), I, p. 25.

Also see J. Draper, ‘Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style’, p. 94.

³⁷ ‘Harmonious Jones,’ op. cit., p. 52, cited in Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature, with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2005 [1983]), pp. 52-3. Bearing the ‘definite similarity of Shelley’s poem with the ghazal of Jami’ in mind, Javadi also points out that ‘according to Thomas Medwain, Shelley’s poem is almost a translation from a passage in *Antar, a Bedoween Romance*, translated by Terrick Hamilton (London, 1819-20)’. Ibid., p. 53.

The last three rhyming words of each couplet, two of which exactly identical, in both Shelley's and Jami's poems that I have italicised, are characteristic of a Persian poetic device termed '*radif*' and it goes without saying that Shelley, whilst writing this poem, has drawn on this specific Persian device. This type of rhyme pattern that Shelley composes in the first lines of 'From the Arabic', 'suggest the verse-form of a ghazal'.³⁹ As John Draper remarks, Shelley's rhyming is 'beyond anything that had previously appeared in English poetry,' and this resulted in 'a lyrical *tour de force* such as no English poet had ever produced before'.⁴⁰ Draper believes that Shelley might have taken this 'web of accent and tone' and the swift, light verse-melodic style of his lyrics, such as those in 'To Night' (1820), and his attempts at so complex a pattern of rhyme and meter as in his 'The Cloud' (1820) from the Persian tradition.⁴¹

Shelley also might have taken from Persian literature the imagery of the 'cup', the 'wine', and the 'Enchantress' filling the cup of wine in his 'Music' (1821).⁴²

As one who drinks from a charmed cup

Of foaming, and sparkling, and murmuring wine

³⁸ In this edition, Jones himself has italicised all the penultimate rhyming words, including delight, night, excite, white, spite, light, wight, and sight, in order to highlight the Persian form and measure. Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1807), II, p. 501.

³⁹ A. J. Yohannan, 'The Persian Fad in England, 1770-1825', *Comp. Lit.*, IV (1952), 137 ff., cited in Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', p. 92.

⁴⁰ Draper, 'Shelley and Arabic-Persian Lyric Style', p. 92.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

⁴² This poem was published by Mary Shelley in 'Posthumous Poems', 1824. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Posthumous Poems*, ed. by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (London: Printed for John and Henry L. Hunt, 1824), p. 201.

Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
Invites to love with her kiss divine. ('Music', st. 4)

The imagery of wine is copiously used by Hafez, Sa'di, Jami, and Maulavi among other Persian poets and is mainly considered from two contrasting perspectives: earthly and divine. Shelley's poem draws on the former. Below I bring examples from the translated poems by Jones with regard to both the earthly and divine meanings of wine. The following extract from Jones's translation of Dara Shecuh draws on the divine aspect of wine, purity and a means of oblivion for the earthly: 'He only has drunk the pure wine of unity, who has forgotten, by remembering God, all things else in both worlds'.⁴³ Contrary to Dara Shecuh's divine account of wine, the following is a ghazal by Hafez, where the poet asks for pure wine that 'sparkles like a flaming ruby', and suggests that lovers and the wise should drink wine as he would 'drink kisses, sweet as wine, from the cheek of a damsel':

The dawn advances veiled with roses. Bring the morning draught, my friends, the morning draught! The dew-drops trickle over the cheeks of the tulip. Bring the wine, my dear companions, bring the wine! A gale of paradise breathes from the garden: drink then incessantly the pure wine. The rose spreads her emerald throne in the bower. Reach the liquor, that sparkles like a flaming ruby. Are they still shut up in the banquet-house? Open, O thou keeper of the gate. It is strange, at such a season, that the door of the tavern should be locked. Oh, hasten! O thou, who art in love, drink wine with eagerness; and you, who are endued with wisdom, offer your vows to

⁴³ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), I, p. 462.

Heaven. Imitate *Hafez*, and drink kisses, sweet as wine, from the cheek of a damsel,
fair as a nymph of paradise.⁴⁴

The cup-bearer is another figure that the poet is enamoured of. Hence the poet's calling the 'cup-bearer' to bring him wine and fill him with joyfulness, as it is in this line: '*Come, O fortunate cup-bearer, bring me the tidings of joy*'.⁴⁵ The joy is to the extent that the poet knows none beyond: '*Call for wine, and scatter flowers around: what more canst thou ask from fate?*'⁴⁶

Hewitt points out another *ghazal* device termed '*takhallos*' in one of Shelley's poems, 'To Jane: The Recollection' (1822):⁴⁷

Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters, seen. ('To Jane', ll. 87-8)

⁴⁴ Jones's translation of this *ghazal*, among many others, is in prose. Jones tried his hand at rendering copious translations of Hafez's *ghazals* both in prose, with special attention to meaning only, and verse, considering both meaning and measurement, in his works. The translations of Hafez's *ghazals* in this article 'The History of the Persian Language' are all rendered in prose, as Jones focuses rather on the Persian language in its historical context than the measurements and style of the poems. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), II, p. 322.

مخمّد صبح و کله بست سحاب الصبوح الصبوح یا اصحاب
[...]

بر رخ ساقی پری پیکر همچو حافظ بنوش باده ناب – حافظ، دیوان

⁴⁵ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799) II, p. 318.

بیا ای ساقی فرخ بیار مژده دولت – حافظ، دیوان

⁴⁶ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1807), IV, p. 226.

می خواه و گلفشان کن از دهر چه میجویی – حافظ، دیوان

⁴⁷ Shelley, *Poems*, compiled by Isabel Quigly.

Yohannan remarks that '[w]hether accidental or intentional, this verse has the poet's pen-name woven into the last couplet of the *ghazal*'.⁴⁸ In Persian poetry it is often common for the poet to insert a *nom de plume* (*takhallos*), usually in the final couplet of the poem. *Takhallos* in Persian poetry is implemented in ghazals more than any other types of poetry. Hafez, Nezami, Sa'di, and Jami, for instance, are all the pen names of the poets Shams ed-Din Mohammad ebn-e Baha ud-Din, Jamal ud-Din Abu Mohammad Elyas ebn-e Yousef, Abu Mohammad Mosleh ebn-e Abd ul-laah, and Nour ud-Din Abd ur-Rahman ebn-e Ahmad. The following two couplets are examples of the last *beyts* of one of Hafez's and Jami's ghazals:

If the gale shall waft the fragrance of thy locks over the tomb of Hafiz,
a hundred thousand flowers will spring from the earth that hides his corse.⁴⁹

And

May the eyes of Jami long be with pleasing visions, since they presented to my view
 last night
 That object, on whose account he passed his waking life in expectation.

One of the reasons that *takhallos* was used in Persian poems is for the poet to avoid being plagiarised, that is, the poet refers to himself by his *takhallos* as a sort of

⁴⁸ John D. Yohannan, 'The Persian Poetry Fad in England, 1770-1825', *Comparative Literature*, 2, 4 (Spring 1952), 137-160 (p. 152).

⁴⁹ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), II, p. 218.

نسیم زلفت اگر بگذرد بتربت حافظ ز خاک کالبدش صد هزار لاله برآید – حافظ، دیوان

signature. The poets also used this poetic device to address themselves in the end of their poems and not the reader directly. There are different types for the poet's choice of his *takhallos*. It is either named after an attribute of the poet himself, or according to the poet's place of birth, or after another poet's name or a spiritual guide (*moraad*). One of Maulavi's pen names was 'Shams' (meaning the Sun), who was his beloved and guide. Maulavi constantly referred to Shams as the one and only Sun and dedicated to him his whole *Divan* to the extent that he called it *Divan-e Shams* (*The Divan of Shams*). It is worth mentioning that Maulavi was also devoted to another source of inspiration among his disciples named Hesam ud-Din Zia al-Haqq, who he referred to as the light of the sun and 'the radiance of truth',⁵⁰ whereas Shams was the Sun itself.⁵¹ Another *takhallos* that Maulavi used in his poems was the word 'khamoush' (meaning silent). He wonders why he ever uses language when he finds himself overcome by that great silence:⁵²

A great *silence* overcomes me,
and I wonder why I ever thought
to use language.⁵³ (*italic mine*)

As such, the ineffability of thoughts and feelings in some of Maulavi's poems leaves him in silence, through which he cries out the ineffable.

Having established the similarities and adaptations in Shelley's works as inspired by Persian poetry, I will now go on to analyse the probable imageries and

⁵⁰ Rumi, *Rumi: Selected Poems*, trans. by Coleman Banks (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 64.

⁵¹ *Shams* is Arabic for 'sun' and *Zia* is Arabic for 'light'.

⁵² Rumi, *Rumi*, trans. by Banks, p. 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

motifs of Persian Sufi poetry in Shelley's *Alastor: or, The Spirit of Solitude*. The following section will be an attempt to demonstrate such Sufi themes as the desire for a return to the origin with special reference to Maulavi's poetry as well as the possible influence of other Persian poets such as Jami, Nezami, and Hafez in Shelley's *Alastor*.

'Alastor: or, The Spirit of Solitude'

A Persian Reading

The degree to which the theme of *Alastor* takes inspiration from the mystical themes of Oriental stories has so far been limited by critics to Sydney Owenson's *Indian Tale* and Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801).⁵⁴ Most recently Nigel Leask has claimed that Shelley's *Alastor* is modelled on Owenson (Lady Morgan)'s 'oriental Gothic' novel *The Missionary: An Indian Tale* (1811), which itself drew on Jones's translation of Kalidasa's drama *Sakuntala* (1789). It was the character of the heroine, the Vedanta priestess Luxima, most of all whose 'nature-worship and exquisite sensibility had a great impact on Shelley'.⁵⁵ In a letter in 1811, Shelley recommends Miss Owenson's *Missionary* to a friend, seeing the novel as 'a divine thing' and its Luxima 'an angel', and declaring, '[w]hat a pity that we cannot incorporate these creations of fancy; the very thoughts of them thrill the soul!'⁵⁶ While recent critics have argued that Shelley's *Alastor* may have been inspired by Owenson's *Indian*

⁵⁴ As Husain remarks, Shelley may have borrowed the vision of the veiled maid from certain passages in *Thalaba*. See Husain, *English Romantic Poetry and Oriental Influences*, p. 102.

⁵⁵ Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [1992]), p. 102.

⁵⁶ Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1858), I, p. 397.

Tale, the probable influences and traces of Persian literature in this poem have been almost entirely ignored.

As mentioned earlier, Shelley came to be acquainted with Eastern and Persian literature in particular through the translations of Sir William Jones. In a letter to Clio Rickman, he wrote, '[i]n a letter which I received from you on a different subject, you expressed your willingness to receive my orders. – I am now in want of some books, a list of which I enclose' (December 1812).⁵⁷ In that list there was the *Works* of Jones. Apart from Jones's *Works* as a direct source to the translations of Persian poetry, another Oriental figure whose name and translations Shelley might have come across, especially in literary periodicals, is William Ouseley. Periodicals such as *The Monthly Review* (1800), *The Monthly Magazine* (1800), *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1804), *The European Magazine*, and *London Review* (1811), and many more introduced and made comments on William Ouseley's translations of Persian poetry, prose, and history. Ouseley's *Persian Miscellanies, an Essay to Facilitate the Reading of Persian Manuscripts* (1795) and his *The Oriental Collections Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous Papers* (1797) offered a wide range of Persian poetry translated in English as well as essays on Persian literature and history.

Another Oriental scholar whose name is on Shelley's list of reading is Isaac D'Israeli, whose works were read by the Shelleys according to *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*.⁵⁸ Moreover, since Shelley and Byron discussed D'Israeli's ideas,

⁵⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley: Shelley in England*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I, p. 343.

⁵⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), II, p. 645. The journal indicates that on Monday, 6 March 1816, Mary Shelley is reading *Despotism; or the Fall of the Jesuits*, by Isaac D'Israeli (1811).

and because of Shelley's interest in the genre of romance, it is very likely that Shelley had perused D'Israeli's *Romances*, the romance of *Mejnoun and Leila* in particular, which was an adaptation from the famous Persian *Leili and Majnoun*. With all probability, Shelley came across the reviews on D'Israeli's *Romances* that were published in a periodical such as *The Critical Review, Or, Annals of Literature* (1808), which offered a detailed plot of D'Israeli's romance.⁵⁹ Drawing on Jones's interpretation of the character of Leili, *The New Annual Register* depicts 'Laili' as 'mystically interpreted, by the general consent of the ancient Hushangis and modern Sufis, as uniformly typifying the omnipresent spirit of God'.⁶⁰ A year earlier, the same periodical introduces the 'Loves of Laili and Majnun', whether in Nezami's work or in the *Masnavi* of Maulavi or the ghazals of Hafez as being descriptive, 'in their figurative or mysterious meaning, of the union of the human soul with the divine spirit'.⁶¹

As discussed in the previous chapter, the poet-lover Majnoun, in a quest for the Other as whole and divine, idealised his earthly beloved, and finally dissolved into the idealised Other or the ultimate divine. The quest for the divine Other is frequently

⁵⁹ Anon., untitled article, *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, 26 (London: Printed by and for S. Hamilton, 1799), 52-9.

⁶⁰ Anon., untitled article, *The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1813), p. 246.

⁶¹ Anon., 'Domestic Literature', *The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year ...* (London: Printed for G. Robinson, Pater-noster-Row, 1812), 304-19 (p. 309). For a discussion of the distinction between Jones's account of Leili and Majnoun and D'Israeli's, see Chapter three. Later in this chapter, I will consider D'Israeli's possible influence on Shelley in light of what I suggested in the previous chapter regarding the distinction between D'Israeli and Jones in their treatment of the idea of dissolution in the idealised Other, i.e. symbolic dying (*fanaa*) and actual death.

traceable in Shelley's poems, which, according to Nigel Leask, depict a 'psychological quest for the (feminized) "epipsychidion" or "soul within a soul"'.⁶² Such quest is valuable to the poet since it is a quest for the Other as whole. In a poem as late as *Epipsychidion* (1821), the ultimate divine for Shelley is manifested in the form of an ideal woman:

For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine; (*Epipsychidion*, ll. 133-35)

Such yearning for the divine was earlier manifested through the Poet's love for an idealised visionary maid in Shelley's *Alastor*.⁶³ The theme of the quest for the ideal(ised) Other and the lover's dissolution at the end of the journey, as early as 1815, indicates Shelley's fascination with mystical love, particularly from Oriental sources. In order to have a better insight into the extent to which Shelley was inspired by Oriental imageries, I will illustrate the Persian topoi that might have been drawn on by Shelley in the composition of *Alastor* in the following paragraphs.

Depicting the beloved as the ideal beauty, the source of light, and the companion of the poet's soul, along with the use of some Persian images, Shelley, one can say, clearly draws on Persian sources, such as the ghazals of Hafez and Jami. Shelley seems to have borrowed the imagery of the maid's 'locks' in *Alastor* as being

⁶² Nigel Leask, 'Easts', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 137-148 (p. 145).

⁶³ 'In many mortal forms I rashly sought | The shadow of that idol of my thought' (*Epipsychidion*, ll. 267-68). I will discuss later in this chapter how the ideal woman of the Poet's vision is attributed earthly features.

identified with darkness and night in the line '[h]er dark locks floating in the breath of night' from a ghazal by Hafez, where he associates the blackness of the beloved's locks with the darkness of the night: 'The blackness of thy locks is darker than the hue of night.'⁶⁴ In Persian poetry the imagery of the beloved's locks as associated with night suggests two attributes of night, i.e. mysterious and long. Likewise, in *Alastor*, the darkness, mystery, and length that the imagery of the locks implies create an illusive effect:

[...] he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips (*Alastor*, ll. 174-79)

As such, the elusive effect that is created through the 'sinuous veil' and her 'dark locks', maintains the mystery of the beauty of the maid.

Kitty Datta asserts in a footnote to her article 'Iskandar, Alexander: Oriental Geography and Romantic Poetry' that there is a significant analogue to Shelley's maiden in a Persian poem by Jami, translated by William Ouseley in the first volume of his *The Oriental Collections* entitled 'Persian Sonnet, from the Divan of Jami'

⁶⁴ Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), II, p. 153.

بیاض روی تو روشنتر از رخ روز سواد زلف تو تاریکتر از ظلمت داج – حافظ، دیوان

(1797).⁶⁵ This poem was also cited by Isaac D'Israeli in a footnote to his Romance *Mejnoun and Leila*, acknowledging that he derived the idea of the poem 'The Lover's Dream' as recited by Mejnoun. I bring Ouseley's translation of the ode here for us to have a better sight of the point of comparison between this ode and Shelley's poem:

Last night my eyes were closed in sleep, but my good fortune awake,
The whole night, the live-long night, the image of my beloved was the companion of
my soul.

There sweetness of her melodious voice still remains vibrating on my soul:

Heavens! how did her sugar'd words fall from her sweeter lips!

Alas! all that she said to me in that dream has escaped from my memory,

Altho' it was my care till break of day to repeat over and over, her sweet words.

The day, unless illuminated by her beauty, is, to my eyes, nocturnal darkness;⁶⁶

Happy day! that first I gaz'd upon that lovely face!

May the eyes of Jami long be blest with pleasing visions, since they presented to his
view last night

That object, on whose account he pass'd his waking life in expectation.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Kitty Scoular Datta, 'Iskandar, Alexander: Oriental Geography and Romantic Poetry', in *Reorienting Orientalism*, ed. by Chandreyee Niyogi (New Delhi; London: SAGE Publications, 2006), pp. 35-64 (p. 59).

⁶⁶ Cf. 'No night is darker than the day when you are absent.' From Francis Gladwin, *Dissertations on the Rhetoric, Prosody, and Rhyme of the Persians*, Part 1, p. 24.

⁶⁷ *The Oriental Collections: Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, Translations and Miscellaneous Papers*; ..., 3 vols (London [England]: Printed for Cadell and Davies, Strand, by Cooper and Graham, [1798]-1800), I, p.187.

One can hardly doubt that both poems depict the beloved as ideal, the companion of the poet's soul, and her beauty as the source of light. In the Poet's vision the veiled maid's voice is described as being 'like the voice of his own soul | [...] | Herself a poet' (*Alastor*, ll. 153, 161). Shelley writes a more detailed and earthly description of the illumining beauty of the maid, picturing her 'glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil | Of woven wind' as radiating 'warm light' (*Alastor*, ll. 176, 175).

Apart from the analogy of the maid figures, another reason why one could identify Shelley's *Alastor* with Jami's ode seems to be the similarity of themes, which lies in the very vision of the beloved that has illumined the poet's dark life ever since he 'glanced upon that lovely face' in his dream. For the *Alastor* Poet, likewise, there came 'A vision on his sleep', 'a dream of hopes that never yet | Had flushed his cheek' (ll. 149-51). What Jami admires about his own vision is that it reveals to him what he was seeking and expecting all his 'waking life', and, ironically enough, he ultimately saw it in a dream.

What relates the two poets is the urge to retrieve the mystic experience they once had in a dream. It is a dream that becomes a turning point in the lives of both poets to yearn for more similar visions afterwards, as Jami wishes: 'May the eyes of Jami long be blest with pleasing visions' of the sort that he had the night before. As such, these 'pleasing visions' generate a mystical ecstasy for the poet and thus after awakening he feels the urge to return to the excessive bliss which was also experienced by the visionary Poet of *Alastor*. I will discuss the significance of such a mystical experience in the *Alastor* Poet's vision in the light of Lacanian *jouissance* later in the next section of the present chapter.

Although in *Alastor* the desire for a return to the 'secondary' bliss that the Poet experienced in his vision is created and induced after awakening from the same

vision, Shelley seems also to have borne in mind the notion of the primary bliss of union throughout the poem. In fact Shelley, through introducing the vision and the desire to return to the bliss of the vision, alludes to the Sufist idea of longing for a return to the original primary state of unity. In the ‘Persian Song of Hafez’, as discussed in Chapter two, all the poet longed and wooed for was based on a condition that the sweet maid would ‘charm [his] sight, | And ‘bid these arms [his] neck infold’, and if he finds the ‘destructive charms’ of the perfidious maid ‘dear’ and her wantonness robbing his ‘wounded soul of rest’, it is due to the desire of the lover for the Other’s desire. However, the restlessness or despondency that the absence of the beloved’s desire creates differs substantially from the type of melancholy that the loss of a once attained unity might generate. The former is merely a wish to possess the desire of the Other, the latter is a nostalgic melancholy yearning for a return to a lost unity. It is my contention that the *Alastor*’s Poet experiences both. Although Hafez’s poetry, too, offers instances of the desire for a return as such,⁶⁸ the notion of a melancholy longing for a return to the origin is epitomised in a well-known poem from Maulavi’s *Masnavi*, titled ‘Ney-naame’. Shelley might have come across this poem, which was first translated by William Jones as ‘The Song of the Reed’, in Jones’s own works.

The conception of longing for a return to the origin has long been discussed and reflected by philosophers since Plato. In Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophanes explains the notion of the longing to regain a primary lost state of unity in the form of

⁶⁸ See this *beyt* of Hafez translated by Jones: ‘Where are the glad tidings of union with thee, that I may abandon all desire of life? I am a bird of holiness, and would fain escape from the net of this world.’

See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (1799), I, p. 454.

چنین قفس نه سزای چو من خوش الحانیست روم به گلشن رضوان که مرغ آن چمنم — حافظ، دیوان

the myth of Zeus who cut beings, each originally as a unity, into two separate parts, each longing to regain its lost unity. Apart from being inspired by the Platonic sources, Shelley is very likely to have read Jones's translation of 'The Song of the Reed', the well-known 51 *beyt* (couplet) opening of Maulavi's *Masnavi*,⁶⁹ which epitomises this quality of the soul as yearning to return to its origin. This poem is the account of the separation of the lover, the reed (*ney*), from its native land, the reed-bed (*neyesta'an*), where it had belonged. '*Ney-naame*' is the story of the reed's melancholy complaint and represents man's longing to regain and unite with the lost Truth of his being, its long lost origin. The reed-flute (*ney*) is therefore an allegory of man's soul and its plaintive sound is a cry of the pain and moan of the man, like a *ney*, torn from his origin.⁷⁰ According to Reynold Nicholson, as quoted by Firoozeh Papan-Matin, the voice of the personified reed could be perceived as the soul of the poet himself who is filled with divine inspiration, singing the songs of the 'deified' perfect man who is one with the divine.⁷¹ Whether or not we believe that there is a lost blissful origin from which we are torn apart, whether it is but an illusion or a dream, Shelley's *Alastor* very cunningly recreates such a state of unity in the Poet's vision. He confronts us with the necessity of the idea of man's urge to return to that lost origin.

⁶⁹ It has been argued that 'The Song of the Reed' captures the major themes that appear in the ensuing several thousand rhyming couplets of the *Masnavi*.

⁷⁰ Abd ul-Hossein Zarrinkub, *Serre Ney: Naqd va Sharh-e Tahlili va Tatbiqi-ye Masnavi*, 2 vols (Tehran: Elmi, 1386/2007), I, p. 64.

⁷¹ Nicholson, Rumi, *Poet and Mystic*, pp. 20-21., cited in Firoozeh Papan-Matin, 'The Crisis of Identity in Rumi's "Tale of the Reed"', *G E von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies*, paper 3 (July 2005), p. 2 <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/international/cnes/3>> [accessed 27 August 2010]

The image of the reed instrument as an allegory of man's solemn soul torn from its origin finds its parallel in Shelley's *Alastor* in the shape of a lyre, a harp, and a lute. It is worth mentioning that the image of the Aeolian harp is a Romantic metaphor, inaugurated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his 'The Eolian Harp' (1796), seeking 'to express the vital interconnection of human beings with other organisms'.⁷² This 'bilateral transaction [...] between mind and external object',⁷³ to put it in Meyer Abrams's words, is to such an extent that the poet imagines 'all of animated nature' as being 'but organic harps [...] | That tremble into thought', over which 'one intellectual breeze' 'sweeps'.⁷⁴ The Romantic interconnection between human mind and nature is thus clearly indicated through the allegory of the the Eolian harp by Coleridge. However, in *Alastor*, it has other implications.

Drawing on Coleridge's 1796 proposition of the idea that humans were 'organic harps', Timothy Morton suggests that 'the harp simile revises a strong and varied tradition of imagining people as fleshly instruments both in [...] Neoplatonic philosophy and in Christian liturgy and poetry, which accounts for the image's spiritual resonance'.⁷⁵ As such, the spiritual resonance that is created by the harp echoes Shelley's account of meeting 'with a frame whose nerves, like the chords of two exquisite lyres, strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice vibrate with

⁷² James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: Saint Martin's Press Inc., 2000), p. 186.

⁷³ Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 61.

⁷⁴ Coleridge, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Jackson, pp. 28-9.

⁷⁵ Timothy Morton, 'Nature and Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. by Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 185-207 (p. 186).

the vibrations of our own' in his article 'On Love'.⁷⁶ Lisa Steinman sees this description as recalling both the veiled maid of the Poet's vision as well as the Narrator who, like a lyre, awaits the breath of the 'Great Parent', i.e. nature,⁷⁷ 'in order to harmonize with the rest of nature's world'.⁷⁸

[...] serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane, (*Alastor*, ll. 41-4)

The Narrator's desire to be harmonised by the spirit of nature, in the first fifty lines finds its fulfilment through the Poet and in the course of his quest. Towards the end of his journey, when

[...] the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 651-53)

grows feeble, the Poet's body ('frame'), becomes like an Aeolian harp on whose strings the 'breath of heaven' wandered:

⁷⁶ Shelley, 'On Love', cited in Lisa Malinowski Steinman, *Masters of Repetition: Poetry, Culture, and Work in Thomson, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Emerson* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 102.

⁷⁷ For the Narrator, in the first fifty lines of the poem, nature represents a source of inspiration and motherly love.

⁷⁸ Steinman, *Masters of Repetition*, p. 102.

A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander – a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves – [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 667-69)

Whereas for the Narrator in the beginning, and for the Poet in the end, the lyre/lute becomes a means to harmonise with nature, the harp image in the midst of the poem, symbolises the melancholy soul of the Poet and his alter ego (the veiled maid) and becomes a means for them to cry out the ‘ineffable tale’, the tale of longing for a return.⁷⁹ This echoes Maulavi’s allegory of the reed’s melancholy complaint as a representation of man’s longing to regain and unite with the lost Truth of his being: ‘Who roams in exile from his parent bow’r, | Pants to return, and chides each ling’ring hour.’ Similar to the melancholy complaints of the reed, which symbolises ‘the soul of the poet himself’,⁸⁰ we have the ‘solemn tones’ of the veiled maid, mirroring the Poet’s melancholy soul.⁸¹ The veiled maid is described as the one who by playing on the harp expresses the ineffable. Her ‘solemn mood’ is described as having ‘kindled through all her frame | A permeating fire’, with ‘voice stifled in tremulous sobs’ and ‘[s]ubdued by its own pathos’. Likewise, Maulavi’s reed describes his notes as an ‘enliv’ning flame’, whose warmth is created by love:

⁷⁹ Although Shelley does not explicitly bring up the desire for a return to the primal bliss in the scene of the Poet’s vision, it is impossible to deny the notion of the desire as such as being raised throughout the poem.

⁸⁰ Nicholson, Rumi, *Poet and Mystic*, pp. 20-21., cited in Papan-Matin, ‘The Crisis of Identity in Rumi’s “Tale of the Reed”’, p. 2.

⁸¹ The term ‘solemn’ which is used over ten times in the poem is used by Shelley mostly in its seventeenth-century meaning, signifying gloom, darkness, and sombreness according to the *OED*.

<<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/display/50230242?keytype=ref&ijkey=HQxp0oezRWLqQ>> [accessed 24 August 2010]

Such notes breath'd gently from yon vocal frame:

Breath'd said I? no; 'twas all enliv'ning flame.

'Tis love, that fills the reed with warmth divine;

The reed is then assimilated with the 'plaintive wand'rer' who is separated from his 'peerless maid'.

Shelley's description of the maid goes even further in that he pictures her as a part of the symphony into which she merges as though she becomes one with the harp:

The beating of her heart was heard to fill

The pauses of her music, and her breath

Tumultuously accorded with those fits

Of intermitted song. [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 169-72)

Her 'fair hands' sweep from 'some strange harp | Strange symphony' and her 'eloquent blood' tells an 'ineffable tale' (*Alastor*, ll. 166-67, 168). Whether coincidental or not, this echoes the assimilation of the reed's voice with the voice of the poet's soul in Maulavi's '*Ney-naame*'. The third couplet of Jones's translation of the poem reads: 'O! let the heart, by fatal absence rent, | Feel what I sing, and bleed when I lament'.⁸² The voice of the reed and the poet merge when they both welcome the pain that is afflicted by the absence of the blissful bower, where they were one with the beloved. Elsewhere Maulavi, referring to these pains as 'delightful', states

⁸² Cf. these lines in *Alastor*: 'He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude. | Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes' (*Alastor*, ll. 60-1).

that these 'delightful pangs' prolong 'his am'rous tales' and make Majnoun's story immortal: 'Laili's frantick lover lives in song'. In the end, the poet hails 'heav'nly love' as the 'true source of endless gains' and a restoring 'balm' that 'warms this frigid clay with mystik fire':

Blest is the soul, that swims in seas of love,
And long the love sustain'd by food above.
With forms imperfectly can perfection dwell?
Here pause, my song; and thou, vain world, farewell.

The poet only pauses his song and bids farewell to the vain world when he recalls that perfection does not dwell with 'forms imperfectly' and the point of fulfilment of the desire for the primal unity is to leave the world with its imperfect forms. The *Alastor* Poet, too, in the end realises in the course of his quest that the only way to retrieve the 'for ever lost' perfection he had imaged to himself in his vision is through death, as in the outset he asks:

[...] Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 211-13)

In the end his death comes as a fulfilment to his quest, his 'being unalloyed by pain,' 'he lay breathing there | At peace, and faintly smiling', until the last lingering pulse of his heart: 'It paused – it fluttered' (*Alastor*, ll. 642, 644-45, 659).

Nature, with which the poet merges, plays a multifaceted role in this poem. It becomes a shelter for the Poet's solitary and melancholic soul to wander in

bewilderment, a place for purification, a means to seek perfection, and a place for ultimate rest. In *Alastor*, as discussed above, the Poet's melancholy comes as a result of an urge to retrieve the mystical experience of a lost primal bliss. When the Poet's sight is filled with the vision of the veiled maid and smitten by her love, 'driven | By the bright shadow of that lovely dream', the urge to retrieve the mystical experience of the vision entices him to set out on a solitary journey from the very moment he is awakened from the trance. Through 'deep precipitous dells,' he 'fled' and 'wandered on',⁸³ till

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore

He paused, [...]

A strong impulse urged

His steps to the sea-shore. (*Alastor*, ll. 272-75)

It is a type of solitude that one feels the impulse for after one's soul is filled with the excess of a lost bliss or unattainable love; this unattainability can be due to the beloved's own wish or obstacles from the world outside. Let us consider Majnoun's solitude as a point of example for choosing a solitary life due to the unattainability of his love for Leili. What Majnoun and the *Alastor*'s Poet have in common is they both have the desire of the beloved's desire and are loved by them. The unattainability therefore originates from the external world, the former being driven away from

⁸³ *Alastor*, ll. 232-33, 235, 237, 239.

Leili's tribe as a maniac,⁸⁴ the latter in search of a lost visionary ecstasy with the ideal beloved in reality.

Moreover, nature can be regarded as a substitute for the Poet's love object. In the closing sentences of his essay 'On Love', Shelley quotes from 'Stern' [*sic*]⁸⁵ that 'if he were in a desert he would love some cypress ...'. We are then informed by the editor that 'David Lee Clark has found this sentiment expressed not in Sterne but in Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man*', which was not published until 1828, and therefore 'Shelley's source remains unidentified'.⁸⁶ It is very likely that Shelley might have read this passage of D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila* in the second part of the romance, where the author tracks 'the wanderings of the delirious, and poetic Kais, followed by his constant gazel':

He conversed with it untired; his feeling heart ever wanted something to be kind to;
and if he had not found an antelope in the desert, he would have felt an affection for a
sheltering tree.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter Three, Majnoun's refuge in nature was a reaction to the restricting rules of Arab society at that time which led to misanthropic inclination. Therefore, he consorted with the beasts and brutes as they represented nature as opposed to humans who represented restrictive laws.

⁸⁵ Presumably it was Laurence Sterne.

⁸⁶ Shelley, 'On Love', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, pp. 473-4 (p. 474).

⁸⁷ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 63; In 'On Love', Shelley justifies man's tendency to pursue nature by virtue of an inevitable 'solitude' and a 'deserted state', when he finds himself surrounded by human beings and yet not sympathised by them. See Shelley, 'On Love', *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, p. 474. Mejnoun also found nature as a source of inspiration to compose poetry as well as a cure to his suffering heart. On the other hand, the misanthropy that Majnoun felt due to the restricting rules of society led him to consort with the beasts and plants as opposed to humans with their restrictive laws.

According to Lisa Steinman's reading of Shelley's article 'On Love', 'Shelley is proposing that our love of nature springs from an attempt to find in nature a likeness of our ideal prototype'.⁸⁸ Steinman views nature as having a relationship to one's inner soul as a source where the Poet can find that 'likeness of something within himself'.⁸⁹ The Poet thus finds nature a locus for his own inner feelings, solitary and melancholy, in search of his other perfected self. This justifies the lover's substituting his love for the ideal beloved with love of nature and the elements in nature.

Despite the critical consensus of the *Alastor* Poet that condemns his pursuit of solitude and detachment from humanity as solipsistic and deserving punishment, solitude for the Romantic hero, as for the Sufi, becomes a means to a spiritual experience. What Shelley's intended writer or D'Israeli's Mejnoun have in common with the *Alastor* Poet is that they all pursue solitude in the heart of fierce nature, through which they experience purification, can overcome the sufferings of the path, and hence achieve spiritual perfection. Sufi literature is filled with copious examples of such impulses to flee to and wander in a precipitous and rugged landscape.⁹⁰ In a

⁸⁸ Lisa M. Steinman, 'Shelley's Skepticism: Allegory in "Alastor"', *ELH*, 2, 45 (Summer 1978), 255-269 (p. 258).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁹⁰ Hafez takes 'sabaa' or the north eastern wind as witness to mark his flee to 'hills and deserts' due to his excessive love: 'O western breeze, say thus to yon tender fawn, thou hast confined us to the hills and deserts.' In this couplet (*beyt*) by Hafez, translated first by William Jones, 'sabaa' is allegedly referred to as 'western breeze' (Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, vol. 2, p. 209); however, the real equivalent for 'sabaa' is a wind that comes from between the north and the east. The significance of 'sabaa' is it is as an element in nature to whom lovers and poets tell the secrets of their love. In other words it is the poet/lover's confidante. See Jones's *A Grammar of the Persian Language* for an account of fawn in ghazals. See Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, II, p. 194.

ghazal by Jami, translated by William Ouseley in his *Persian Miscellanies* as ‘Sonnet, from the Persian of Jami’, the poet-lover does not feel ‘the affliction of solitude’, in the ‘dreariness of the desert’.⁹¹ In D’Israeli’s *Mejnoun and Leila*, the fierce image of the desert is first pictured where Mejnoun ‘climbed among the rocks,’ where undergoing ‘the exhaustion of travel in the grey and briny sands [...] his withering frame became less penetrable to the terrible elements’⁹².

Moreover, nature becomes a place for worldly suffering in order to achieve divine perfection. As Mohammed Sharfuddin observes justly, Southey depicts a desert mirage in *Thalaba* in order to free his ‘imagination to indulge in fanciful escape from the hardships of the wilderness’.⁹³ Nature, represented in *Thalaba* as the Arabian desert, ‘can help man gain virtue and purity’.⁹⁴ One can see how this fierceness of nature as it was depicted by Southey in *Thalaba* is reflected later in Shelley’s *Alastor*. It is only in the vision of the Poet that Shelley pictures the Romantic ‘soft strain of pastoral idealism’, which happens to be

[...] through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o’er the aerial mountains [...]
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within

صبا به لطف بگو آن غزال رعنا را که سر بجاکوه و بیابان تو داده ای ما را – حافظ، دیوان

⁹¹ William Ouseley, *Persian Miscellanies*, p. 21.

⁹² D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 64.

⁹³ Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 101.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 140-49)

Nature's fierceness and ferocity, contrary to the 'pastoral idealism' depicted by Shelley in the veiled maid scene, is pictured as the 'stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks, | [...] with its accumulated crags,' and the 'rugged path' of a foaming 'broad river' (*Alastor*, ll. 551-52, 567), as was illustrated the 'rugged mountains, deep and dark vales, wild forests, cold icy plains and endless oceans' in Southey's *Thalaba*.⁹⁵ The desert thus, according to Sharafuddin, 'provides an ideal setting for, and representation of, spiritual hardship',⁹⁶ which is required in the path toward perfection. Since nature's great quality is 'its purity', it then becomes a 'means of purification'.⁹⁷ The solitude that the character chooses in the vast purity of nature corresponds to the type of the solitude that the Sufi seeks as a means to 'spiritual experience'.⁹⁸ As such, the pursuit of this type of solitude by the Romantic or Sufi hero cannot be denounced as solipsistic as it facilitates the path for the individual hero to spiritual perfection, which in turn requires self-loss.

In the preface to *Alastor*, we are led by Shelley to believe that the Poet of his poem is ruined as a result of his refusal of sympathy for human beings and excessive desire for the ideal. Shelley refers to his poem as representing 'a youth of uncorrupted feelings' led forth to 'the contemplation of the universe', who 'drinks deep of the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

fountains of knowledge'. But 'the period arrives when these objects' of 'magnificence and beauty of the external world' cease to suffice. His mind is 'awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself'. Familiar with 'speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision [...] unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet [...] could depicture'. However, the Poet seeks in vain, Shelley laments in the preface, for being 'a prototype of his conception and blasted by his disappointment, he [the Poet] descends to an untimely grave'.⁹⁹

In the preface to *Alastor*, Shelley seems to have intended to portray the Poet's downfall due to his 'self-centred seclusion' – a dream world with no sympathy for mankind. As Sally West suggests, the Poet of *Alastor* 'appears to be turning inwards towards the essence of his own imagination' and therefore refuses to notice the 'objective other' in the external world.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the solitude the Poet pursues in the course of his journey is a mystic search inwards in an attempt to lose self in his relation with the Other: a sort of self-loss as opposed to the selflessness of showing the Wordsworthian sympathy for human beings. The extent to which the Poet in *Alastor* was modelled on William Wordsworth's characters the Wanderer or the Solitary in *The Excursion* (published in 1814), has long been the subject of argument among the critics of *Alastor* and the characterisation of the Poet in *Alastor*. The first critics who suggested that Wordsworth might be the prototype of the *Alastor* Poet were Paul Mueschke and Earl Griggs in their 1934 article 'Wordsworth as the Prototype of the Poet in Shelley's *Alastor*'.¹⁰¹ G. Kim Blank associates the Poet with

⁹⁹ Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, p. 69.

¹⁰⁰ Sally West, *Coleridge and Shelley: Textual Engagement* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 68.

¹⁰¹ Paul Mueschke and Earl L. Griggs, 'Wordsworth as the Prototype of the Poet in Shelley's *Alastor*', *PMLA*, 1, 49 (March 1934), 229-45.

the Solitary in *The Excursion*, noting that '[t]he figure who for Wordsworth was an antagonist becomes for Shelley more of a protagonist'.¹⁰² However, according to Cian Duffy, '*The Excursion* itself is by no means a defence of the undeniable solipsism of the Solitary'.¹⁰³ If *Alastor*, too, 'is to be read as a critique of *The Excursion*'s Solitary, then Shelley could actually be said to endorse Wordsworth's theme', which might not have been the case, since 'Mary's journal makes it clear that he, unsurprisingly, disliked the poem'.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Shelley celebrates the solitude of the *Alastor* Poet throughout the poem as a means by which he can achieve a mystic search inward and for the ideal Other.

Another poem that might have inspired Shelley in composing *Alastor* is Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanzas' (1807). In his article 'The Inconsistency of Shelley's *Alastor*', Frederick Jones considers 'Elegiac Stanzas' as the immediate source of the idea which stimulated Shelley's *Alastor*. Having lived in 'a world of beautiful ideas' and neglecting the 'harsh realities of human life',¹⁰⁵ the poet's 'Soul' is ultimately 'humanised' by a 'deep distress'.¹⁰⁶ According to Wordsworth, as quoted by Jones, it is 'better to share the sorrows common to humanity, than to be happy while living in

¹⁰² G. Kim Blank, *Wordsworth's Influence on Shelley: A Study of Poetic Authority* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 90.

¹⁰³ Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 73.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Frederick L. Jones, 'The Inconsistency of Shelley's *Alastor*', *ELH*, 4, 13 (December 1946), 291-298 (p. 294).

¹⁰⁶ William Wordsworth, 'Elegiac Stanzas: Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont', *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 328.

selfish isolation and feeding only on pleasant and beautiful thoughts'.¹⁰⁷ Yet Shelley's Poet in *Alastor* is not portrayed as an isolated happy figure who only feeds on 'beautiful thoughts'. On the contrary, the Poet sets out on a solitary journey due to the effect of the love he was smitten with in his vision. The isolation that follows as an outcome of such individual decision might be indicted as selfish, as the Poet detaches from humanity and consequently does not sympathise with them. However, as Shelley indicates throughout the poem, for a Romantic figure like the Poet in *Alastor* it is a mystic search to achieve a higher level of selflessness, viz., self-loss, in his relation with the Other. The achievement of such a state necessitates a series of stages, namely: longing for the ideal Other, not to possess *her* but to dissolve into her as whole; desire for a return to the bliss of primary state of unity; loss of self or symbolic death to self; and finally death as a consequence of grief.

In the next section I will examine the abovementioned stages mainly from a Lacanian perspective and with special reference to Lacan's formulations of the desire of the Other as well as the necessity of the supplementary or feminine *jouissance* as an urge to return to the lost state of unity. I will draw a comparison between the Lacanian supplementary *jouissance* and the Sufi *fanaa* as the means for the mystic subject to achieve the state of self-loss or symbolic death to self. As such, the following section will consider the distinction between figurative and actual death in Sufism and as it was depicted by Shelley in his *Alastor*.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, 'The Inconsistency of Shelley's *Alastor*', p. 294.

Toward De-subjectivizing: Birth or Death

As discussed earlier in Chapter one, it has been argued recently in a range of fields within literary studies, not least in Oriental studies, that the subject assumes identity by creating the Other and in its opposition to that Other. I also discussed that in Sufi love, contrary to this Hegelian line of thought, the ways in which the subject's identity is shaped is when he is dissolved into the ideal Other through love and loss of self.¹⁰⁸ It is crucial that the Other should be an ideal Other for the Sufi subject to be able to love and lose self in her or him. Hence the subject's urge to idealise his beloved. In *Alastor*, the Poet's infatuation with the ideal veiled maid of his vision indicates a mystic thirst for idealisation of the Other. The desire of the subject to idealise the Other is not an urge to eliminate the identity of the Other in a narcissistic fashion but rather it is a desire to move toward a sort of spiritual perfection through the annihilation of one's own self and not the Other's. In order to examine the subject's loss of self and dissolution in the ideal Other, I will first examine the idea of the subject as possessive, as it was raised by a number of critics such as Anne Mellor, Nigel Leask, John Greenfield, Stephen Bygrave, and Paul Hamilton. I will then look into the notion of the phallus as signifying the Other's desire as well as the different types of *jouissance* in Lacan's formulations.

In her *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), Anne Mellor suggests that the consummation desired by Shelley's narrators, in poems such as *Epipsychidion* or *Alastor*, 'can only be achieved through death, through the literal annihilation of the consciousness of division between the lover and his beloved':¹⁰⁹ 'We shall become

¹⁰⁸ See the discussion of *fanaa* and *baqaa* after which the subject becomes a mirror to the qualities of the Other in Chapter one.

¹⁰⁹ Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

the same, we shall be one | Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?’

(*Epipsychidion*, ll. 573-74). This union, according to Mellor, is one that ‘necessarily entails the elimination of Otherness’.¹¹⁰ Mellor’s reasoning for such annihilation is due to the recognition of the female beloved by the male lover as ‘the assimilation of the female into the male’ rather than ‘an independent other’, in which case the woman must finally be ‘destroyed, must disappear or die’.¹¹¹ According to Mellor, the love the poet feels:

[I]s but self-love: he ignores her human otherness in order to impose his own metaphors, his own identity, upon her, to render her but a clone (or soul mate) of himself. What he most desires is absolute possession of the beloved; but since this desire is never realizable in life, his quest always fails, leaving him frustrated, forlorn, sinking, trembling, expiring, yet still yearning for his impossible ideal.¹¹²

To add to Mellor’s gender-oriented argument, Nigel Leask asserts that in Shelley ‘the Other is often figured as an (often oriental) female who turns out to be [a] [...] wishful projection of the ego of the male protagonist’.¹¹³ Therefore, according to both Mellor and Leask, due to the desire to seek an Other similar to one’s own self, the female Other is assimilated into the male subject and the subject’s identity is therefore imposed on the dependant (female) Other.

In a related manner, John Greenfield follows the outlook of eliminating the Other’s identity and consciousness in light of the Saidian perspective of orientalising

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 26-7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 26-7.

¹¹³ Leask, *British Romantic Writers: Anxieties of Empire*, p. 6.

the Other. Greenfield views Shelley's female characters as 'doubly other, displaced both by their cultural exoticism,' since 'they are created in the European male consciousness', and by their 'female otherness'.¹¹⁴ They are 'portrayed as other or mysterious in their relationship to the male psyche' and are 'phallogentric projections rather than autonomous human characters'.¹¹⁵ As Stephen Bygrave suggests, the image of the male subject's projection as reflected on the female other is reminiscent of Freudian secondary narcissism. Bygrave sees *Alastor* as representative of the dangers of narcissism,¹¹⁶ and hence affirms the inevitability of punishment for the soul of a poet as haunted by the image of his own projection reflected on an ideal nonexistent woman. In his *Romantic Writings*, Bygrave argues that we recognize the theme of the quest for the ideal when Shelley speaks of the poet's search for knowledge and of how it leaves him 'insatiate'.¹¹⁷ Although in the preface Shelley presents the poet's quest for the ideal as causing his destruction in the end, what leads him to such state of annihilation, according to Bygrave, 'seems to consist in a movement from contemplation of "infinite and unmeasured" objects of thought to a search for a loved-object, "a being whom he loves"'.¹¹⁸ The Poet's annihilation in the

¹¹⁴ John Greenfield, 'Transforming the Stereotype: Exotic Women in Shelley's *Alastor* and *The Witch of Atlas*', in *The Foreign Woman in British Literature: Exotics, Aliens, and Outsiders*, ed. by Marilyn Demarest Button and Toni Reed, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 16-44 (p. 18).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ Paul Hamilton describes the fate of the Poet in *Alastor* as representing 'the dangers of narcissism', as he grows enamoured of that which he projects a reflection of himself because it 'enhances' him, that is, enamoured of an image of his own self. Paul Hamilton, 'Literature and Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. by Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 166-184 (p. 183).

¹¹⁷ Bygrave, *Romantic Writings*, p. 155.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

end, along with Shelley's own attitude in the preface to *Alastor*, might at first sight echo Bygrave's idea of the Poet as a 'dupe' of his own imagination or idealism. It seems to me, however, that Bygrave, despite his opinion that the preface does not outline the meaning of the poem, still sees the Poet as deserving his 'downfall'. The Poet is 'unable to find his imagined ideal in the world [...] not only because the ideal cannot exist in the world, but also because it is merely the reflection of his own mind'.¹¹⁹ It is, in other words, a narcissistic search for an 'idealized version of his own self'.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, such narcissistic representation, I believe, seems to be indispensable in the subject's pursuit of oneness with the Other. It is only when the subject encounters the 'idealized version of his own self' as absolute Other that he can transcend his sole self and lose it in favour of becoming one with the ideal self. Hence the subject's urge to create an ideal Other. In what follows I will use Lacan's rejection of the idea of wholeness as fantasy in relation to the necessity of the existence of an ideal Other for the subject.

For Lacan, as observed by Rose, 'wholeness' remains at the level of fantasy primarily narcissistic. The subject persists in believing that 'somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth' and therefore 'addresses its demand outside itself to another,' an Other who becomes 'the fantasied place of just such a knowledge or certainty' and only 'appears to hold the "truth" of the subject and the power to make good its loss'.¹²¹ In order to create such a point of certainty and truth, the subject exalts the Other to the locus of the absolute Other, as it were, '*The woman*', which may be conceived as God or, more specifically, Woman. As Rose

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 155-56.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

¹²¹ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 55-6.

observes, the *objet a*, which is the ‘cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other who then acts as its guarantee’.¹²² This absolute ‘Otherness’ of the woman, Rose goes on to suggest, ‘serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth’.¹²³ Regardless of its fictive attribute, however, the exaltation of the woman seems to be essential to substantiate the ‘unity on the side of the man’.¹²⁴ On the other hand, Lacan, as Rose observes, defies the very existence of *The woman*: ‘being nothing other than this fantasmatic place, *the woman* does not exist’.¹²⁵ Therefore, Rose concludes, Lacan’s statement ‘[*The*] woman does not exist’ means that ‘her status as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy [...] is false’.¹²⁶ Although Lacan rejects the idea of the ultimate and ideal Other as a guarantor of the subject’s unity of self,¹²⁷ yet he concedes to the subject’s need for just such a guarantor. The Sufi subject, disregarding of *The woman*’s place as fictive or real, exalts the Other (the woman) to the place of an ideal Other (*The woman*) in order to prepare the ground to lose self in that ideal Other he has created in his own mind.¹²⁸

Assuming that the Other in and of itself does not hold the ‘truth’, the possibility is raised that the truth is merely created by the subject and in his mind as

¹²² Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, p. 74.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 72.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Lacan tries to get his patients to recognise this need and thus to overcome it.

¹²⁸ Cf. Bayazid’s analogy for this status as the flowing of the river to the sea and its resemblance with Shelley’s analogy of man’s soul in its relation with the soul of the Universe with a river flowing ‘to the sea’.

he idealises the Other. In other words, it is not within the Other that the subject finds the ultimate truth, but rather he finds it through the idealised image of the Other as created, rather than merely perceived, by himself.¹²⁹ However, this argument might be undermined by failing to distinguish between the creation of an ideal Other in the subject's mind and addressing the subject's demands to a projected ideal Other. This counterargument can be true only when it is considered in a Hegelian master-slave relation for the subject and the object, that is, when the subject yearns to master the object and the object becomes a means for the subject's self recognition. What I attempt to indicate is that the ideal Other, even though it might be considered an outcome of the subject's projections, becomes a means for the Sufi subject to shift his subjective position into being mastered by that ideal Other and ultimately dissolving into her/him. The subject is no more in the position of the Hegelian projection of the Other that stabilises mirror of the self, but rather he becomes a mirror that reflects the qualities of the Other.¹³⁰

The Sufi subject's loss of self, referred to as *fanaa* in Sufism, as mentioned earlier in Chapter one, is one of the states in the path of love toward becoming one

¹²⁹ As such, this Hegelian notion echoes Coleridge's definition of the secondary imagination as re-creating what it perceives through dissolving and 'struggl[ing] to idealize and to unify' the perceived object. On the other hand, according to Salt, by about 1815 Shelley 'had adopted the immaterial philosophy of Berkeley, who asserted that nothing exists but as it is perceived, i.e., matter itself is only a perception of the mind (*vide* essay *On Life*, p. 105).' See Henry S. Salt, *A Shelley Primer* (Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, LLC, 2009), p. 25. Nonetheless, Shelley does not apply such a conception of the mind as actively all-perceiving and the matter as passively all-perceived in his *Alastor*. Although the veiled maid of the Poet's dream is merely a product of the poet's imagination, Shelley renders her identity in an interactive relation with the Poet.

¹³⁰ See the discussion of *baqaa* and the ideal Other as mirror in Chapter one.

with the Other. I will now analyse the notion of self-loss in *Alastor* in light of Lacan's formulations of mystic *jouissance*. In Lacan's later work the subject – despite its gender – is introduced as experiencing a different type of *jouissance*, namely, feminine or supplementary *jouissance*, which is similar to the Sufi's view of annihilation (*fanaa*). It is in his desire for *The woman* that the mystic subject experiences the supplementary *jouissance* ultimately and is eradicated of his own subjectivity.

The question raised here is what is a supplementary or mystical *jouissance* and how does it differ from the other type of *jouissance*, that is, phallic *jouissance*? The answer can be found in Lacan's later seminars during the 1970s. Lacan's work of the 1970s moved away from the mere physical attitude toward women that his earlier work offered. While in his earlier work Lacan 'attributed to women a *jouissance* associated with the phallic stage and the clitoris,' in his later work he posited for women 'a specifically feminine *jouissance* that is "beyond the phallus"' ¹³¹. Accordingly, in *Seminar XX* (1972-1973), Lacan expresses *his* belief in God – if he would have any – in terms of his belief in the *jouissance* of the woman, describing it as 'supplementary' or that which is 'something more' and he associates that something more with the mystical experience. ¹³² Lacan posits two main types of *jouissance*: masculine or phallic and feminine or supplementary. According to Lacan, 'sexual *jouissance* is marked and dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such anywhere in the enunciable, [...], the One of the relation "sexual

¹³¹ <<http://science.jrank.org/pages/9860/Jouissance-Lacan-in-1970s-Masculine-Feminine-Jouissances.html>> [accessed 7 September 2010]

¹³² Jacques Lacan, 'God and the *Jouissance* of The Woman', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. by J. Rose (London: Macmillan Press, 1992 [1982]), pp. 137-48 (p. 147).

relationship””.¹³³ This phallic *jouissance*, to which Lacan refers also as sexual *jouissance*, becomes an ‘obstacle’ preventing man from enjoying woman’s body, continues Lacan, ‘precisely because what he enjoys is the *jouissance* of the organ’,¹³⁴ since ‘[j]ouissance, qua sexual, is phallic’ and accordingly not related to the Other as such.¹³⁵ What creates an obstacle to the ‘sexual relationship’ is thus precisely this experience of phallic or sexual *jouissance*.¹³⁶ Lacan posits feminine *jouissance* as opposed to or something more than its counterpart in that although it has access to sexual or phallic *jouissance*, it can go ‘beyond the phallus’, too. Feminine *jouissance* is thus a ‘supplementary’ form of *jouissance* as it transcends the phallic form. Admitting the impossibility of knowing anything about this type of *jouissance* that he attributes to only some women and some mystic men, Lacan cites the examples of Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross.

The experience of such mystical *jouissance* embodies a secondary unity as followed by and complementing the primary lost unity. It is this same mystical *jouissance* the *Alastor* Poet experiences in his vision that creates the impulse to return and regain the once attained unity for the remainder of his life in reality. In this vision,

¹³³ *Seminar 20*, pp. 6-7; *Le Seminaire, livre XX*, pp. 12-13, cited in Paul Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender: From Subject to Drive* (New York: Other Press, 2001), p. 91. ‘Lacan’s use of the term *One* refers to the Platonic myth of the lovers’ unity in the *Symposium*, and to the (presumed) unity of the (male) subject in a philosophical sense. Phallic *jouissance* is thus seen as a barrier to these forms of unity.’
<<http://science.jrank.org/pages/9860/Jouissance-Lacan-in-1970s-Masculine-Feminine-Jouissances.html>> [accessed 11 August 2010]

¹³⁴ *Seminar 20*, p. 7; *Le Seminaire, livre XX*, p. 13, cited in Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 91.

¹³⁵ *Seminar 20*, p.14, cited in Bruce Fink, ‘Knowledge and *Jouissance*’, in *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan’s Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*, ed. by Suzanne Barnard and Bruce Fink (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 21-45 (p. 40).

¹³⁶ *Seminar 20*, p. 7; *Le Seminaire, livre XX*, p. 13, cited in Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 91.

Shelley recreates a secondary state of unity where the Poet and the veiled maid experience the ecstasy of unity and the Poet dissolves in the Other. 'Her voice [being] like the voice of his own soul', the veiled maid is thus described by the Poet:

Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 158-61)

He identifies with her in terms of both spirit and thought. The maid's 'solemn mood' of mind is another point of similarity. Moreover, she reciprocates the Poet's desire in the most erotic and earthly yet divine way:

The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 169-74)

The Poet sees glimpses of her unveiled 'glowing limbs' and bare 'outspread arms':

[...] at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,

Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly. (*Alastor*, ll. 174-80)

It is this desire of the maid for the Poet, this eagerness shown in her ‘parted lips’ and her ‘panting bosom’ that sickens his heart ‘with excess | Of love’ (*Alastor*, ll. 181-82):

[...] He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom: ... she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms. (*Alastor*, ll. 182-87)

The scene reaches its culmination when the Poet’s frame is folded and dissolved in the now unveiled maid’s arms, herself experiencing *jouissance*, while ‘yielding to the irresistible joy | With frantic gesture and short breathless cry’ (*Alastor*, ll. 185-86). Such ecstatic experience creates the impulse for the Poet, that is, after he awakens, to retrieve the unity he once attained in the vision:

[...] Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? [...] (*Alastor*, ll. 196-200)

The point of the absorption of the subject in the Other, which seems to be the ultimate fulfilment of an earthly desire in an ideal form, thus becomes the starting point of a life-long yearning to retrieve the bliss of that secondary unity created and lost at once in the vision. The subject's excessive desire to return to the lost unity, however, proves impossible in the end and leads to his death.

The Sufi-Romantic subject's urge to return to a lost state of unity and his yearning to become one with the ideal Other is due to the subject's desire for perfection and that is only possible through love and loss of self for the Other. Attributing this type of supplementary *jouissance* to woman, Lacan declares that the woman is 'not-whole'.¹³⁷ There is something ironic about this being 'not-whole' or 'not all', as 'being all' for man results in his inability to transcend the phallic *jouissance*, whereas the woman who can have both is said to be 'not all'. This is reminiscent of St. Paul's epistle to Corinthians when he declared:

If I [...] understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. [...] Love never ends. But [...] as for knowledge, it will come to an end.¹³⁸

Slavoj Žižek holds that there is a 'paradoxical place of Love with regard to All' in Paul's letter.¹³⁹ Reading this letter according to 'Lacan's *feminine* formulae of

¹³⁷ *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore 1972-1973*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998 [1975]), p. 72.

¹³⁸ *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments and the Deuterocanonical Books* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Bibles in conjunction with Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 134.

sexuation', Žižek argues that 'even when it is "all" [...], the field of knowledge remains in a way non-all, incomplete'. Žižek goes on to suggest that

[T]he point of the claim that even if I were to possess all knowledge, without love I would be nothing, is not simply that with love, I am "something" – in love, *I am also nothing* but [...] a Nothing humbly aware of itself, a Nothing paradoxically made rich through the very awareness of its lack. Only a lacking, vulnerable being is capable of love: the ultimate mystery of love is therefore that incompleteness is in a way *higher than completion*. On the one hand, only an imperfect, lacking being loves: we love because we do *not* know all. On the other hand, even if we were to know everything, love would inexplicably still be higher than completed knowledge.¹⁴⁰

The woman, or at this point I would rather say the mystic subject, therefore, is characterised as 'not-all' in the very sense that, being aware of her lack (a lack not due to a Freudian penis envy assertion, but rather lacking in the sense that she, as a human being, lacks wholeness as compared to the supreme Being or the ideal Other), is therefore 'capable of love'. She or he becomes, indeed *is*, that lacking 'not-all' being who 'loves' because she knows that she does not know all, and, chooses love over 'completed knowledge' as she finds the former higher than the latter. Now, if we accept that it is the renouncement of love that renders phallic *jouissance* possible, then we can draw the inference that all mysticism does is to provide the grounds for man, through love, to experience the feminine *jouissance* as opposed to the phallic *jouissance*.

¹³⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting for?* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 146.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 146-47.

Postulating a mystical dimension to *jouissance*, Lacan challenges the notion of *The woman as fantasy*. In other words, he gives way to the idea of the existence of *The woman as real*. Although the subject desires to have the Other's desire, yet he knows that if the Other desires then it would be a lacking Other. The subject therefore elevates the Other to the place of a not-lacking whole Other. Accordingly the ideal Other, *The woman*, becomes the phallus. It is in his search for such an ideal Other that the mystic subject can experience feminine *jouissance*. If, as Lacan holds, *The woman* is nothing but a fantasy for the subject with phallic *jouissance*, *The woman* becomes real for the mystic subject with supplementary *jouissance*. The mystic subject idealises her to the locus of *The woman*, the ultimate signifier, and the ideal Other, in order to enable himself to die into her. The subject is thus eradicated of his own subjectivity in experiencing that mystical *jouissance*: an 'ex-istence' not induced by phallic *jouissance* or renouncement of love or the Other, but rather by supplementary *jouissance* or renouncement of self.

The subject's renouncement of self is what the Sufis refer to as '*fanaa*' or figurative death. The notion of death can be approached from two different perspectives: figurative and literal. The former involves a sort of death to self and a restoration thereof. The Sufi term for the extinction of the self in the Other or *fanaa* denotes an ecstatic loss of self in the presence of the ideal Other. This transient state, during which the Sufi does not see anything outside of the Other, then becomes the prelude to a state, known as '*baqaa*' (permanency or subsistence in the beloved),

where the Sufi sees the Other in everything.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the death in reality is an outcome of the excess of grief afflicted on the subject by the pain of lost love.¹⁴²

The Poet in *Alastor* experiences both types of death, that is, in his vision, he dies into the veiled maid, an ecstatic death to self and a rebirth afterwards:

His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom: ... she [...]
[...] yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms. (*Alastor*, ll. 181-87)

After he is dissolved in the maid's arm, his figurative death, blackness swallows up the vision and he awakes to the reality, a rebirth. Shelley illustrates the Poet as seeking 'the contemplation of the universe', thirsting for 'the fountains of knowledge' until his contemplative mind is vexed by the vision of the 'veiled maid'. Prior to this vision the poet pores on memorials and gazes on the 'speechless shapes', but cannot see or hear; his spirit is not freely rolling through mortal forms as it has not yet been awakened by love and is simply based on mere reliance on imperfect knowledge. Leaving behind his search for knowledge, he sets out on a journey in search of the lost 'exultation'. This is a movement from being '[o]bedient to high thoughts' to being '[o]bedient to the light | That shone within his soul' (*Alastor*, ll. 108, 493-4). In other

¹⁴¹ Eric Geoffroy, 'Approaching Sufism', in *Sufism: Love & Wisdom*, ed. by Jean-Louis Michon and Roger Gaetani, foreword by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2006), p. 60.

¹⁴² See Chapter three.

words, there is a sudden awakening of the soul, a sudden illumination toward a spiritual perfection.

Although the *Alastor* Poet's experience of *jouissance* (*fanaa*) that led him to see the light 'within his soul' was transient, yet it served as inspiration for him to complete the rest of his journey. The subsistence of the ideal maid's attributes after the Poet's *fanaa* parallels the Sufi notion of *baqaa* or the subsistence of the beloved after the state of *fanaa*. The apparition of a 'Spirit', perhaps a reappearance of the ideal maid, that 'seemed | To stand beside him', which surpasses the worldly 'grace, or majesty, or mystery' is followed by the scene where the Poet's pensive regard sees:

Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him. (*Alastor*, ll. 479-80, 483, 490-92)

It is at this very moment that the light shines within the Poet's soul. He then encounters a 'stream' with an 'inaccessibly profound' source, an 'invisible course', 'darksome stillness', and 'dazzling waves' that image his 'life' (ll. 502, 503, 507, 506, 505).¹⁴³ The subsistence of the light within the Poet's soul along with the 'dazzling waves' of the stream that typify the Poet's own 'life' can be ascribed to the notion of *baqaa* in Sufism. Nevertheless, the Poet of *Alastor* experiences both types of death. His death in the end is due to his disappointment in the search for the lost love or the lost bliss, when the 'passionate tumult of a clinging hope' turned to 'pale despair'

¹⁴³ Cf. the Poet's description of the veiled maid as dark, mysterious, and dissolving. Also see the previous section for a discussion of nature as a substitution for the ideal beloved.

(*Alastor*, ll. 626-27, 717, 718). The Poet thus dies because of the melancholy generated by dint of the non-retrievability of the lost state of unity.

In this chapter I have examined the extent to which Shelley's later work was influenced by the imageries, motifs, style, and measurements of Persian poetry. I also illustrated the Sufi elements of Persian poetry that are present in *Alastor*, elements such as the hero's search for love, his idealisation of the beloved in order to lose self in her face, his desire to return to a lost state of union, and finally his dying of love. I emphasised the significance of the idealisation of the Other in relation with the desire of the self to retrieve the lost state of unity in Shelley's *Alastor*. In order to substantiate such desire of the self to retrieve the lost origin, I compared and contrasted Shelley's *Alastor* with Maulavi's 'The Song of the Reed', focusing on the Sufi theme of the desire of the soul to return to its origin. Shelley confronts us with the necessity of the idea of man's urge to return to the lost origin. I argued that whether or not there is a lost blissful origin from which the soul is torn apart Shelley's *Alastor* recreates a secondary state of unity in the Poet's vision. In that vision the Poet experiences the ecstasy of unity with the ideal Other and thereby dissolves in her. The Poet therefore feels the urge to retrieve such ecstatic state of union not as an external Neoplatonic prenatal existence, but rather as an internal entity created through his own vision. Yet the result is the same: the subject's urge to return to the lost primal state of unity.

I also argued that the Romantic figure, who is smitten with love, chooses isolation as a mystic search to achieve self-loss in his relation with the beloved in order to become one with her. Examining the state of self-loss from a Lacanian perspective, I drew a comparison between the Lacanian supplementary *jouissance* and the Sufi *fanaa* as the means for the mystic subject to achieve the state of dissolution or

symbolic death to self. There is a distinction between figurative and actual death in Sufism. Shelley's *Alastor* portrays both types of deaths as being experienced by his Poet. Whereas the figurative death is one of the highest states in the Sufi quest for love and involves the dissolution of the self in the Other, the actual death of the subject is an outcome of the excess of grief or melancholy afflicted on him by the pain of lost love. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the notion of melancholy in Sufi love, with special reference to D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila* and its probable influences on Byron's Eastern tales as well as his poetry from 1816 to 1817. If for Shelley's Poet melancholy led to death, it becomes for Byron's character Tasso a means of sublimation and immortality.

Chapter V: Byronic Mejnoun

In February 1812, in a letter to Francis Hodgson, Byron declares that ‘[i]n the spring of 1813 I shall leave England for ever. [...] Neither my habits nor constitution are improved by your customs or your climate. I shall find employment in making myself a good Oriental scholar.’¹ If Shelley indicated his interest in the East merely by ordering and perusing translations of the literature of the East and at most showed an ambition to learn Arabic, Byron directly set out on a journey to the East, to countries such as Turkey, Albania, and Greece. He even announced in a letter to his mother in October 1808 plans for his departure to Persia, and in another letter expressed his hope to proceed into Persia when he arrived at Constantinople.² Byron’s dreams of going to Persia never came true, most probably due to want of remittances. Yet his fascination with Persian poetry and his perusal of the translations of the literature of Persia was to the extent that one can hardly overlook the traces of Persian literature in his work.

Byron’s journals and annotations display his perusal of the works of Persian poets such as Ferdausi, Sa’di, Hafez, Jami, and Nezami, among other Sufi literature of the East. Persian Sufi poetry was readily available by 1813, mostly via several translations of Jami, Hafiz, and Sa’di by the Orientalists of the time. In his 1974

¹ George Gordon Byron, *The Life of Lord Byron: With his Letters and Journals*, ed. by John Wilson Croker and Thomas Moore (London: John Murray, 1851), p. 153.

² Ibid., p. 71.

article ‘Byron and Islam: The Triple Eros’, Bernard Blackstone reminds us that Persian poetry was available to Byron in translation. Byron is said to have read ‘on his arrival at Trinity, perhaps on the advice of E. D. Clarke’,³ Stephen Weston’s *Moral Aphorisms in Arabic, and a Persian Commentary in Verse, translated from the Originals, with Specimens of Persian Poetry* (1805).⁴ Weston provides the first translation in verse from the most admired writers in Persian language. *Asiatic Researches* and *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* also offered a wealth of information on Eastern verse that was available to Byron.⁵ Moreover, as mentioned in the previous chapters, William Jones translated numerous works as well as a number of adaptations from and articles on Persian Sufi literature. In addition to Jones’s account of the Sufi manners, literature, and language in his translations and essays on the Orient, there were other Orientalists such as Edward Scott Waring, who in his *A Tour to Sheeraz by the Rout of Kazroon and Feerozabad* (1804) gave a perceptive description of ‘Soofeeism’, Sufi beliefs, and practices along with translations of Nezami, Jami and other Sufi poets, who might have been read by Byron.⁶

³ In his *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, Mohammed Sharafuddin informs us that E. D. Clarke was a Cambridge Orientalist and author of six volumes of *Eastern Travels* (1810-23). Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters With the Orient* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 216.

⁴ Bernard Blackstone, ‘Byron and Islam: The Triple Eros’, *Journal of European Studies*, 4 (1974), 325-363 (p. 333).

⁵ Jonathan David Gross, *Byron: The Erotic Liberal* (Lanham, Md.; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 57-8.

⁶ Blackstone, ‘Byron and Islam’, p. 358.

Persian Imageries and Motifs in Byron's Eastern Tales

Persian imagery is particularly noticeable in *The Bride of Abydos* (1813). In this poem, Byron draws on popular Persian legends such as *Yusef and Zuleikha* and *Leili and Majnoun*.⁷ In the third chapter of his book *Byron: The Erotic Liberal*, Jonathan Gross provides a thematic comparison between Jami's *Yusef and Zuleika* and Byron's *The Bride of Abydos*, emphasising that 'too much in Byron's "The Bride of Abydos" resembles incidents in "Yusef and Zuleika" and the Koran to ignore the obvious similarities'.⁸ Gross draws particularly on aspects of Jami's *Yusef and Zuleika* in Byron's poem that are not found in Genesis. Byron indicates his acquaintance with the Persian version of this Egyptian legend when in a letter on 13 November 1813 he informs Murray that '*Zuleika* is the *Persian poetical* name for *Potiphar*'s wife, on whom and Joseph there is a long poem, in the Persian'.⁹

Furthermore, *The Bride of Abydos* provides its reader with another well-known legend, *Mejnoun and Leila*, to which Byron refers as 'the Romeo and Juliet of the East' in an annotation to the third stanza of Canto I of this poem, where Selim is recounting for Giaffir why Zuleika, Giaffir's daughter, had not been in her Haram:¹⁰

⁷ During the early 1810s Byron embarked on a series of narratives that began with *The Giaour* (1813), *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), *Lara* (1814), and *The Corsair* (1814) and culminated with *Parisina* (1815) and *The Siege of Corinth* (1815).

⁸ Gross, *Byron: The Erotic Liberal*, pp. 58, 63. It is worth knowing that *The Bride of Abydos* was initially titled 'Zuleika' according to Byron in his journals.

⁹ Byron, *The life of Lord Byron*, ed. by Moore, p. 220.

¹⁰ The tragic love story of these seventh century Arab lovers Leili and Majnoun has always been popular in the Middle East. For a detailed account of the legend of *Leili and Majnoun* see Chapter three '*Mejnoun and Leila*'.

We to the cypress groves had flown,
 And made earth, main, and heaven our own!
 There lingered we, beguiled too long
 With Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song; (*The Bride*, Canto I, ll. 69-72)

Byron's source of information for this annotation in *The Bride of Abydos* is, as Abdur Raheem Kidwai observes, Jones's *Works*, where he uses the same appellation 'Romeo and Juliet' for these Oriental love figures.¹¹ Yet, evidence indicates there was for Byron another significant point of reference to this legend: Isaac D'Israeli's romance titled *Mejnoun and Leila*.¹² Being a great admirer of Persian poetry and familiar with the works of William Jones, William Ouseley, John Nott, and other contemporary Orientalists, Isaac D'Israeli revealed a deep understanding of the materials of Persian

¹¹ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, III, 309, cited in Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Orientalism in Lord Byron's 'Turkish Tales': The Giaour (1813), The Bride of Abydos (1813), The Corsair (1814), and The Siege of Corinth (1816)* (Lewiston, N.Y.; Lampeter: Mellen University Press, 1995), p. 61.

¹² Apart from his transcript of the word 'Mejnoun', which is the exact same as D'Israeli's, Byron borrows some words and scenes directly from D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*. Words such as 'atar-gul', 'gul' and 'bulbul', 'fragrant beads of amber', 'Koran of illumin'd dyes' (*The Bride*); see D'Israeli's note in his *Romances*: 'In the persian [sic] tales mention is made of an illumination which was formed of these letters, and were really verses from the Koran [sic]', (New-York: Printed and Published by D. Longworth, at the Shakespeare-Gallery, 1803), p. 167 and many more references. Another example is Byron's reference to "'Atar-gul," ottar of roses. The Persian is the finest', in these two lines: 'She snatched the urn wherein was mixed | The Persian Atar-gul's perfume,' (*The Bride*, ll. 269-70). D'Israeli refers to 'OTTAR-GUL' as 'essence of roses' in his *Romances*: 'Gul is rose; ottar is essence'. See D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 42, 6.

poetry in his retelling of the story of the crazed love of the legendary Majnoun for Leili in *Mejnoun and Leila, the Arabian Petrarch and Laura*.¹³

In *The Bride of Abydos* Byron employed the legend of *Mejnoun and Leila* for a number of reasons. While Robert Gleckner sees the image of *Mejnoun and Leila* only as ‘a symbolic tableau of the fragility of love in a world of darkness, of youthful joy and aspirations destroyed by the realities of things’,¹⁴ Byron’s use of this famous Persian legend goes far beyond mere definition of love as fragile in ‘a world of darkness’¹⁵ and the usual dichotomy of the fragile ideal and the harsh real. Before *The Bride* reveals the familiar Eastern themes of ‘fratricide, despotism and subjugation of women’,¹⁶ it provides an account of the Oriental Edenic setting with references to the tragic love of Leili and Majnoun and the melancholic love of the nightingale for the rose (the ‘gul u bulbul’).¹⁷ Both the fable of the ‘gul u bulbul’, which is a well-known Persian motif of the excessive and exclusive love of the nightingale for the rose, and the legend of Leili and Majnoun, where the lover dies of love in grief of the loss of the beloved,¹⁸ become significant in that they support the notion of melancholic love in Byron’s Eastern tales.

¹³ John D. Yohannan, ‘The Persian Poetry Fad in England, 1770-1825’, *Comparative Literature*, 2, 4 (Spring 1952), 137-160 (p. 51).

¹⁴ Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), p. 126

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kidwai, *Orientalism in Lord Byron’s ‘Turkish Tales’*, p. 60.

¹⁷ The ‘u’ or ‘o’ in Persian between the words ‘gul/gol’ and ‘bulbul/bolbol’ signifies ‘va’, meaning ‘and’. The phrase ‘gul u bulbul’ or ‘gol o bolbol’, therefore, means the rose and the nightingale.

¹⁸ It is worth mentioning here that such death is not suicidal, but rather an outcome of excessive grief and pain which in the Sufi culture leads to death.

In order to examine the significance of Byron's melancholy characters I will first offer a review of different types of melancholy as categorised by critics. Gleckner considers two stages for Byron's melancholy: early and mature melancholy. Byron's early melancholy or 'ennui' according to Gleckner, 'represented a fashionable pose of superiority born largely of his consciousness of noble lineage':¹⁹ an aristocrat who 'embodied a culturally alienated anti-hero'.²⁰ Byron's mature melancholy was, on the other hand, 'that of a man with illusions, dreams, and a powerful imagination who is reacting to the human condition with a mind incapable of accepting illusions as real',²¹ the latter being that specific human condition that has no perception of love, imagination, and dreams as the reality of life. It is the melancholy of a visionary reacting to the non-visionary.²²

Another melancholy condition, referred to as '*Weltschmerz*', is defined by William Rose as 'the psychic state that ensues when there is a sharp contrast between a man's ideals and his material environment and his temperament is such as to eliminate the possibility of any sort of reconciliation between the two'.²³ It was this awareness of man's limitations, as Thomas Ashton points out, that made Byron *and*

¹⁹ Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, pp. 123-24.

²⁰ Don Juan seems to represent this type of ennui. See Jerome McGann, 'Byron, George Gordon Noel, sixth Baron Byron (1788–1824)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn., Oct 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4279>> [accessed 22 Feb 2009]

²¹ Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, p. 124.

²² Cf. *Childe Harold*.

²³ William Rose, *From Goethe to Byron ...* (London, 1924), p. 5, cited in E. D. Hirsch, JR, 'Byron and the Terrestrial Paradise', in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. by Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp 467-486 (pp. 469-70).

his heroes 'both rebellious and melancholy' – angry and defiant.²⁴ Finally, and most negligibly in the critiques of Byron's work, is love melancholy. What prepares the grounds for the Romantic melancholy of the Byronic hero(ine) is their excessive love for a beloved other.

A survey of the poetry of Byron from his Eastern tales in 1813 through to the poetry of 1817 will show two types of heroes with two different types of melancholy: one an acting and aggressive hero, whose *Weltschmerz* ensues due to the contrast they feel between their ideal and the real world, and the other a passive melancholy imaginative hero obsessed with the object of love. Exposing his heroes to the contraries, revenge and love-melancholy, action and non-action, Byron develops his characters from the roguish revengeful heroes of the Eastern tales to the melancholy imaginative poet-lover such as Tasso in *The Lament of Tasso* some years later in 1817.²⁵ The characterisation of melancholic figures in Byron's poetry of 1813-1817 therefore moves from action to non-action, from simple to complex. The former are melancholy misanthropes who fight their *Weltschmerz* with vengeance, i.e. action; the latter contest their love melancholy with poetic imagination, i.e. non-action.

Moreover, the Eastern tales themselves offer at once the two types of characters in the course of their narration. Whereas Selim, the Giaour, and Lara represent vengeance and violence, Zuleika and Kaled are melancholy lovers who die of grief in love. If the heroes of the Eastern tales mainly had revengeful dispositions, the female figures are melancholic characters. These melancholic heroines ultimately

²⁴ George Gordon Byron, *Byron's Hebrew Melodies*, ed. and intro. by Thomas L. Ashton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 75.

²⁵ George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), IV. All citations to Byron's poetical works in this chapter are from this source, unless otherwise mentioned.

die of love for their hero beloveds.²⁶ For Byron, as Alan Rawes asserts, ‘grief and loss have the power to kill, as instanced by the fate of Zuleika and Kaled’ in *The Bride of Abydos* and *Lara*.²⁷ In *Lara* after the death of Lara, Kaled ‘lies by him she lov’d; | Her tale untold – her truth too dearly prov’d’ (*Lara*, section 25, ll. 626-27) and in *The Bride*, Byron pictures thus Zuleika’s death in grief for the loss of Selim:

The only heart – the only eye –
 Had bled or wept to see him die,
 Had seen those scattered limbs composed,
 And mourned above his turban-stone –
 That heart hath burst – that eye was closed –
 Yea – closed before his own! (*The Bride*, Canto II, ll. 615-20)

These two characters echo the silent heroine Leila of *Mejnoun and Leila*, who loved, was forced to marry another, yet never submitted to the law of marriage, and died of love in silence. What distinguishes the melancholy of these female characters from that of Mejnoun, Tasso, and the nightingale of the thousand tales is the latter’s power to create art.

²⁶ The Giaour is the only vengeful hero of all who experiences transcendental love, a love which according to Peter Vassallo ‘endures beyond the grave’: The Giaour’s soul is possessed by Leila and ‘he craves to spend eternity with her, beyond his mortal confines’. See Peter Vassallo, ‘Narrative Poetry’, in *Romanticism*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 350-67 (p. 359).

²⁷ Alan Rawes, *Byron’s Poetic Experimentation: Childe Harold, the Tales, and the Quest for Comedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 47-8. Kaled’s shift of position from slave to nurturer of Lara after he is wounded in the battle field is a clear example of Byron’s different look at the Oriental woman. For an account of dying of love see Chapter three.

As mentioned above, Byron's Eastern tales were to a great extent inspired by the notion of the love-melancholy of the nightingale for the rose. Among the lines and notes of both *The Bride* and *The Giaour*, from here and there, over the 'sad but living cypress' and 'branch and leaf' that are 'stamp'd with an eternal grief,' (*The Bride*, ll. 666, 667, 668) a voice is heard, the amorous moans of a bird who sings the songs of love for the rose: the 'Bulbul of a thousand tales'. The imagery of the love of the nightingale with its attachment to the rose, is so recurrently portrayed by Byron in these Eastern tales that it takes on a symbolic significance and even reappears in an anthropomorphised guise in his later poems written in 1816 and 1817: the poet becomes a melancholy figure smitten with unrequited or inhibited love whose sole desire becomes the loss of self, just as it is with the nightingale.²⁸

In connection with the melancholy mood of the singing bird, in an 1816 autobiographical poem entitled 'Stanzas to Augusta' (1816),²⁹ Byron explicitly pictures a solitary singing bird that mirrors the poet's melancholy feelings for his beloved:

²⁸ The image of the bird reappears as a wanderer and a bard in 'Lines Associated with *The Siege of Corinth*':

Over the earth, and through the air,
A wild bird, and a wanderer.
'Tis this that ever wakes my strain,
And oft, too oft, implores again
The few who may endure my lay,

To follow me so far away. ('Lines Associated with *The Siege of Corinth*', ll. 38-43)

²⁹ Augusta Leigh, to whom this poem is addressed, is Byron's half-sister, for whom he felt the warmest affection till the end of his life.

In the Desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *Thee*.³⁰ ('Stanzas to Augusta', section 6)

In *The Prisoner of Chillon*, written in the same year, this legendary bird that sings 'a thousand things' reappears:

A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seem'd to say them all for me! (section 10, ll. 268-70)

In these lines the bird functions as a second self to the prisoner, a liberating figure, whose like he 'never saw [...] before,' and 'never shall see its likeness more' (ll. 271, 272). The question is, where does this bird with its 'long entrancing note' and 'mournful' throat (*The Bride*, ll. 694, 693) come from, and why is this bird associated with the poet lover?

The image of the nightingale (bulbul) singing to the rose (gul) is, as discussed in the previous chapters, a trope of Persian poetry that contains the idea of the lover singing to his beloved. Contemporary translations from Persian literature provided ample analogues for the theme of the love of the nightingale for the rose. Among various other references to the Persian poetical fable of the rose and the nightingale,

³⁰ Cf. Shelley's statement '[a] Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds', in Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts Criticism*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 478-508 (p. 486).

one can mention ‘The Gardener and the Nightingale’, a passage from a Persian fable translated by William Jones.³¹ In addition, Jones’s translation ‘A Turkish Ode of Mesihî’ reads:

Come, charming maid! and hear thy poet sing,
Thyself the rose and he the bird of spring:
Love bids him sing, and Love will be obey’d.
Be gay: too soon the flowers of spring will fade.³²

The association of the poet-lover with the nightingale and the beloved with the rose was frequently evoked by Persian poets. In the following ghazal by Hafez, the poet’s lay is assimilated to the nightingale’s ‘rich notes’:

O Hafez! thy delightful lay,
That on the wild wind floats,
Resembles much, our poets say,
The nightingale’s rich notes;
What wonder then, thy music flows
In the sweet season of the rose.³³

³¹ William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 6 vols (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row; and R. H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards), No. 26, Pall-Mall, MDCCXCIX. [1799]), II, pp. 223-29.

³² This ode was also brought in by Alexander Chalmers and Samuel Johnson in *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper: Including the Series Edited with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, ed. by Alexander Chalmers, 21 vols (London: Printed for J. Johnson, ..., and Wilson and Son at York, 1810), XVIII, p. 468. It is worth mentioning that Mesihî’s ode is almost as close to Persian odes as it can be called an imitation.

The ghazal was translated by John Nott in *The Flowers of Persian Literature* and annotated by him thus: ‘The Persian writers frequently compare their poets to nightingales; indeed our Haufez has acquired the constant appellation of, the Persian nightingale.’³⁴

In the romance of *Mejnoun and Leila*, which, as mentioned earlier, was a point of reference for Byron in his Eastern tales, one of Mejnoun’s smaller poems, among other odes and ghazals that Mejnoun composes in different stages of his melancholic love for Leila, was ‘A Persian Ode to Spring’, in which ‘the nightingale personifies the poet’.³⁵ D’Israeli, in a footnote, informs the reader that in ‘[t]he marriage of the ROSE and the NIGHTINGALE, the incessant theme of Persian poetry, is described, with an eastern luxuriance of imagination, by Dr. Darwin, in his Botanic Garden, Part ii. Canto 4. ver. 309.’³⁶

³³ Shelley might have borrowed the idea of the poet as nightingale in his ‘A Defence of Poetry’ from this poem, among others.

³⁴ *The Flowers of Persian Literature: Containing Extracts from the Most Celebrated Authors, in Prose and Verse, with a Translation into English: Being Intended as a Companion to Sir William Jones’s Persian Grammar: To which is Prefixed an Essay on the Language and Literature of Persia*, ed. by Samuel Rousseau (London: Printed for J. Asperne by S. Rousseau, 1805), p. 176.

³⁵ Isaac D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 29.

³⁶ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 32. Erasmus Darwin’s account of the marriage of the rose and the nightingale is pictured with so much subtle sensuality and sensuousness in his ‘The Loves of the Plants’ that I could not resist bringing the passage in this footnote. The lines on the marriage of the rose and the nightingale reads:

The Monster-offspring heirs the father’s pride,
Mask’d in the damask beauties of the bride.
So, when the Nightingale in eastern bowers

Byron thus seems to have had ample sources that might have inspired him in using this famous image of Persian literature in poems such as *The Bride of Abydos* as well as *The Giaour*. Although Robert Ogle overlooks the legendary significance of gul o bulbul when he refers to them as ‘commonplace symbols’, his observation of these two symbols as ‘representing an unspoiled Eden’ is illuminating.³⁷ Observing an affinity between the gul and Leila’s beauty, Gleckner, too, interprets the legendary love of the gul and bulbul in *The Giaour* as ‘a portrait of ideal love in a prelapsarian world’.³⁸ The Edenic realm that Byron illustrates in these two poems, with its ‘gardens of Gul in her bloom; | Where [...] the voice of the nightingale never is mute’ (*The Bride*, Canto I, ll. 8-10), ‘cannot be dismissed as mere embellishments’, for as Ogle accurately observes, ‘they contribute thematically to the dramatic development

On quivering pinion woos the Queen of flowers;
 Inhales her fragrance, as he hangs in air,
 And melts with melody the blushing fair;
 Half-rose, half-bird, a beauteous Monster springs,
 Waves his thin leaves, or claps his glossy wings;
 Long horrent thorns his mossy legs surround,
 And tendril-talons root him to the ground;
 Green films of rind his wrinkled neck o’erspread,
 And crimson petals crest his curled head;
 Soft warbling beaks in each bright blossom move,
 And vocal Rosebuds thrill the enchanted grove! (‘The Loves of the Plants’, Canto IV, ll. 209-222). See Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden, Part II. Containing the Loves of the Plants, a Poem. With Philosophical Notes*, 2 vols (Lichfield: Printed by J. Jackson. Sold by J. Johnson, St. Paul’s Church Yard, London ... (entered at Stationers Hall.), [1789]), II, p. 150.

³⁷ Robert B. Ogle, ‘The Metamorphosis of Selim: Ovidian Myth in “The Bride of Abydos”’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 20 (1981), 21-31 (p. 30).

³⁸ Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, pp. 105-06.

and may thus properly be considered “motifs”.³⁹ The bulbul can therefore be regarded as a symbol of excessive melancholy love, and the rose, of ideal beauty. In *Mejnoun and Leila*, when Kais starts composing ghazals for Leila, his father Ahmed announces:

Kais is indeed a nightingale, and Leila his rose but ye have seen the minstrel of spring
inhaling to ebriety its fragrant soul; the more mellifluous his pathetic song, the more
his bosom leant on the piercing thorns: ah! he sings but to bleed, he leans but to faint;
he ‘Dies on the ROSE in aromatic pain.’⁴⁰

Quoting from Major Ouseley’s *Persian Miscellanies*, D’Israeli observes that ‘it is certain that he [the nightingale] is delighted with its [the rose’s] smell, and sometimes indulges in the fragrant luxury to such excess as to fall from the branch, intoxicated and helpless, to the ground.’⁴¹

In one of Mejnoun’s early poems, ‘A Persian Ode to Spring’, the nightingale is the paramour whose sighs are heard through every bower for the rose: ‘Queen, hearest thou not through every bower | The NIGHTINGALE, thy paramour?’⁴² Byron clearly borrows the image of the rose as ‘queen’ with her ‘softest incense’ in these lines of *The Giaour*:

His queen, the garden queen, his Rose,
[...]

³⁹ Ogle, ‘The Metamorphosis of Selim’, p. 30.

⁴⁰ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 34.

⁴¹ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 32-3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Returns the sweets by nature given
In softest incense back to heaven;
And grateful yields that smiling sky
Her fairest hue and fragrant sigh. (*The Giaour*, ll. 26, 30-3)

In his Eastern tales, Byron treated the legend of the rose and the nightingale tenderly, retaining the essential theme of the unrequited love of the nightingale for the rose.⁴³ In a footnote to his account of the love of the nightingale for the rose in *The Giaour*, Byron informs his reader that '[t]he attachment of the nightingale to the rose is a well-known Persian fable – if I mistake not, the “Bulbul of a thousand tales” is one of his appellations.’⁴⁴

For there—the Rose o'er crag or vale,
Sultana of the Nightingale,
The maid for whom his melody –
His thousand songs are heard on high,
Blooms blushing to her lover's tale; (*The Giaour*, ll. 21-5)

Although in *The Bride* Byron states that '[i]t has been much doubted whether the notes of this “Lover of the rose” are sad or merry', elsewhere in the same poem he pictures the bulbul as melancholy:

A bird unseen – but not remote –
Invisible his airy wings,

⁴³ Yohannan, 'The Persian Poetry Fad', p. 150.

⁴⁴ See Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by McGann (1981), III, p. 416.

But soft as harp that Houri strings
His long entrancing note!
It were the Bulbul – but his throat,
Though mournful, pours not such a strain (*The Bride*, Canto II, ll. 690-95)

Byron's symbolisation of the melancholy love of the rose reaches its culmination in the very last stanza of *The Bride*. First he reverses the place of the nightingale, which in Persian literature stands for the male lover, for the rose, i.e. the female beloved, as here in this poem it is the heroine of the tale who dies of love for the male figure; secondly, when Zuleika dies from excess of grief for Selim the poet calls for other elements in nature such as the mourning cypress in the 'deadly grove', he compares its 'eternal grief' with 'early unrequited Love'. Yet, in the end, there exists one spot 'which ever blooms':

A single rose is shedding there
Its lonely lustre, meek and pale
It looks as planted by Despair – (*The Bride*, Canto II, ll. 666-74)

And ultimately 'that mourning flower' flourishes:

Alone – and dewy – coldly pure and pale –
As weeping Beauty's cheek at Sorrow's tale! (*The Bride*, Canto II, ll. 729-32)

In a nutshell, the imagery of the rose and the nightingale becomes a motif and a symbol of melancholy in both *The Bride* and *The Giaour* and displays the extent to which Byron has been influenced by this Eastern legend of love. Yet, contrary to the

nightingale's depiction as a singing lover, a melancholy poet, Byron's melancholy figures in these Eastern tales remain mostly silent. It is only later in poems such as *The Lament of Tasso* that Byron develops the idea of melancholy lover as a singing poet, echoing such figures as Mejnoun and the nightingale of the Persian sources.

Furthermore, Byron opposes the vengeful protagonists to the melancholy silent figures of the tales. Selim of *The Bride* is depicted as being reluctant to accept the amorous world of 'gul u bulbul' in favour of his thirst for revenge and war. Zuleika's words and the songs she bears as a message from the nightingale fail to attract Selim's attention to the peaceful world of the amorous nightingale and the rose:

This rose to calm my brother's cares
A message from the Bulbul bears;
It says to-night he will prolong,
For Selim's ear his sweetest song (*The Bride*, Canto I, ll. 287-90)

Selim rejects Zuleika's message '[e]ven from [her] fabled nightingale', declaring: 'Think not I am what I appear; | I've arms, and friends, and vengeance near' (*The Bride*, ll. 304, 382).

Where does this thirst for vengeance originate from? Love of glory seems to be a plausible answer in the tales: the hero becomes 'the slave of Glory, not of Love', as Byron declares in *The Giaour* (*The Giaour*, l. 1011). In D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*, after Kais pursues his life as a poet wanderer who lives a solitary life, Ahmed, Kais's father, believes that his son has no more glory, as 'ill is the divinity of poetry

obtained, if its inspired possessor is miserable in proportion to his glory'.⁴⁵ To Ahmed, glory has a phallocentric implication, as it signifies reason, power, and haughtiness in that society, whereas Ahmed's son has lost all three in favour of love. He even loses his name and is thus named after his state of mind, Mejnoun. In a letter that Mejnoun wrote to his beloved, he declares:

I quit the Fame that crowns my polished song,
And in a Desert, strangling Glory's voice,
I feel the madness, and approve the choice.⁴⁶

If Mejnoun would strangle glory's voice and approve the choice of madness for a higher purpose, that is, for his love, Selim of *The Bride* would choose the exact opposite path to gain the glory of victory in a revengeful manner, notwithstanding his love for Zuleika, against Zuleika's father. Byron's choice of the name Selim for his hero, an antonym to the word Mejnoun, should not be regarded as accidental. The Arabic/Persian word '*selim*', signifies 'sane', 'sound', or 'right',⁴⁷ which indicates the significance of appellation of the hero – Selim – in *The Bride*. In this poem Selim has a desire to avenge his father and in order to satisfy this desire he defies Giaffir in two different ways: he first elopes with Giaffir's daughter Zuleika and then wages war

⁴⁵ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 152.

⁴⁷ Steingass's *Arabic-English Dictionary* provides the following synonyms for the word سليم or '*salim*': sound, safe, healthy, whole; without blemish; good-natured, inoffensive, peaceable, tame; wounded by a snake or scorpion. Here are some synonyms for the word '*salim*' that Steingass provides in his *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*: Entire, free from flaw or stain; perfect, sound, healthy, wholesome; pacific, affable; silly, simpleton; bitten by a snake; proper name of a man.

against Giaffir. What Selim *does*, that is, his pursuit of war and action against the repression of Giaffir, both in his love for Leila and his fury for his murdered father, is the exact opposite of what Mejnoun *was*. Mejnoun's response to the tyranny of Leila's father was rather a pursuit of a state than action; it was non-action. Such is the path of Sufi life.

There is a scene where an old venerable man pays Mejnoun a visit in the desert in order to convince him to return home as his father mourns his absence. Here is Mejnoun's respond to this fraternal consolation:

'Thou hast spoken well; it befits me not to rest here a helpless sufferer.' [...] 'I will hasten to my tents; I will call three thousand faithful Bedoweens; their sabres, will fly from their sheaths. Sabres! Ah! what have I said? Leila would never pardon, the murderer of her father!'⁴⁸

⁴⁸ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 51. Compare this with these lines by Tasso from *The Lament of Tasso*:

I have been patient, let me be so yet; [...]
Feel I not wroth with those who bade me dwell
In this vast lazar-house of many woes? [...]
Would I not pay them back these pangs again,
And teach them inward sorrow's stifled groan? [...]
No! – still too proud to be vindictive – I
Have pardoned princes' insults, and would die.
Yes, Sister of my Sovereign! for thy sake
I weed all bitterness from out my breast, [...]
Thy brother hates – but I can not detest (*The Lament*, section 4, ll. 78, 82-3, 100-01, 104-07, 109).

Instead, he chooses the road which leads to solitude and melancholy state rather than an act of revenge:

[L]ove has made me like the sandal-tree, which sheds sweetness on the axe that wounds it. I think [*sic*] thee, old man; I will not return to my father: I will sit here, contemned and abandoned.⁴⁹

Byron adeptly juxtaposes the revengeful action and the melancholy passivity in his Eastern tales through his revengeful males and melancholy females. The passivity of the melancholy characters, however, should not be misconstrued as feeble (-minded) ness. In his article 'Byron and the Romantic Heroine', Malcolm Kelsall argues that in the Eastern tales the 'passive woman' either runs mad or 'dies easily' as the 'woman's happiness lies in service to her lord'.⁵⁰ Kelsall contends that Zuleika and Medora die from excess of grief, as the female cannot survive without the male. The woman's 'mind is soon unhinged,' continues Kelsall, 'for she is passionate as well as feeble' and 'Kaled and Parisina run mad' as '[s]anity depends upon the male lover'.⁵¹ However, the idea of the woman running mad or dying of love should not be simplistically limited to the clichéd thinking that looks down on the Oriental female character as subservient and therefore unable to survive without the male character. It transcends the issues of gender and only represents the type of character – be it male or female – whose excessive love leads to death.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Malcolm Kelsall, 'Byron and the Romantic Heroine', in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Macmillan in association with the British Council, 1990), pp. 52-62 (p. 52).

⁵¹ Ibid.

Similarly, Mejnoun's excessive love leads to melancholy, madness, and ultimately death. The story is as follows: Qays or Kais, 'the son of an Arabian Chief' and 'a most accomplished and amiable youth', who was named Majnoun (Maniac) after he was smitten with Leila's love, became 'frantic from disappointed love' for Leila who 'was the daughter of a neighbouring Chief, and was also eminently accomplished'.⁵² The anguished Kais, whose fragments of poetry, according to *The Monthly Mirror* (1801), 'are still repeated with rapture, and the best works of the Persians abound in allusion to his unfortunate passion',⁵³ was hence characterised in the story by the name of Mejnoun or Majnoun⁵⁴ or Maniac. As *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal of June* 1799 observes, 'from his enthusiastic frenzy, [Kais] receives the appellation of Mejnoun,' which signifies in Arabic 'a man inspired, an enthusiast, a madman'.⁵⁵ The anguished Majnoun thus becomes a wanderer in the deserts, composes fragments of poetry and ghazals, lives a melancholy life in solitude in nature, in the desert and the mountains, and ultimately dies of love. In an endnote to his 1799 edition of *Mejnoun and Leila*, D'Israeli observes that

[T]he catastrophe of this Romance has nothing in it extraordinary or violent to the ardent feelings of an Oriental lover. [...] *Dying for love* is considered amongst us as a mere poetic figure; but in eastern countries is something more; many words in the

⁵² D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. xii-xiii.

⁵³ Anon., untitled article, *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners: With Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage*, 21 vols (London: Printed for the proprietors under the direction of Thomas Bellamy, 1801), 12, 100-02 (p. 101).

⁵⁴ See Chapter three for the possible synonyms of the word 'majnun'.

⁵⁵ Anon., untitled article, *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal of June*, 34 vols (London: Printed by A. Strahan, Printers Street; ... in Pall Mall, 1799), 29, 121-28 (p. 123).

Arabic and Persian languages which express LOVE, imply also MELANCHOLY, MADNESS, and DEATH.⁵⁶

Dying of/for love in the Sufi culture is more than a mere literary expression and has two implications: first, it implies a symbolic death of self into the Other and a rebirth of the Sufi's self, or '*fanaa*' as it is termed in Sufism; second, it is a literal death out of grief and melancholy. In the previous chapter, as I discussed, Shelley's protagonists experienced both types of death. In Byron's Eastern tales, however, it is only the literal type of death that Byron's heroines experience and, unlike the Shelleyan hero, they fail to attain union with the Other. The Byronic hero(ine) of the poems I have discussed in this chapter either dies of the excess of love for his/her beloved, as do Kaled and Zuleika of *Lara* and *The Bride*, or expresses a desire for death as a dwelling of repose, as does Tasso of *The Lament*.⁵⁷ Yet, what distinguishes the melancholy of the former from the latter is the power to create. In order to have a clearer insight on the idea of the obsession of the mind of the melancholy lover with

⁵⁶ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 168-69. D'Israeli's reference to this endnote seems to have been an excerpt from John Richardson's *A Dissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of Eastern Nations. Originally Prefixed to a Dictionary Persian, Arabic, and English. By John Richardson, Esq. F. S. A. of the Middle Temple, and of Wadham College, Oxford* (Oxford: Printed at the Clarendon Press. Sold by J. Murray, No. 32, Fleet-Street, London; and by D. Prince, Oxford, MDCCLXXVII. [1777]), p. 170. Byron might have been inspired by this idea creating characters such as Kaled and Zuleika in his Eastern tales and later the melancholy Tasso in his *The Lament of Tasso*.

⁵⁷ Tasso's declaration of death as a place of rest, and rather as a desire against the burden of the years of his painful life in the prison and the pain of an unattainable love, reads:

'Mid sounds and sights like these long years have passed;

'Mid sights and sounds like these my life may close:

So let it be – for then I shall repose. (*The Lament of Tasso*, section 3, ll. 75-7).

the love object and dying for/of love, I will briefly look into the concept of ‘*ishq*’ or ‘*eshq*’ (or excessive love) and its consequences from the perspective of the Persian philosopher Avicenna whose propositions were broadly received by the Sufi literati and philosophers inside and outside of the country.⁵⁸

The idea of ‘dying of love’ as being ‘more than a mere metaphor’ was brought up by ‘medical theory and popular opinion’⁵⁹ of the Islamic tradition as early as the tenth century. A key figure whose ‘psychological theories’, according to Marion Wells, entered European medical discourse ‘via the twelfth-century translations of Gerard of Cremona’,⁶⁰ was a Persian philosopher and physician called Ibn Sina (980-1037) who was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. Avicenna, the Latinised form of Ibn Sina, was the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of Islam. He subscribed to the doctrine of humours and the four temperaments attempting in his *The Canon of Medicine*, which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine and a standard textbook in European medical schools, ‘to coordinate systematically the medical ideas of Hippocrates and Galen with the biological concepts of Aristotle’.⁶¹ This textbook, which was later perused and made use of by Robert Burton in his *The*

⁵⁸ Avicenna’s ideas on melancholy are very likely to have been read by Byron through Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

⁵⁹ Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), p. 124.

⁶⁰ Marion A. Wells, *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 33.

⁶¹ *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology: With an Epilogue on Psychiatry and the Mind-Body Relation*, edited by Edwin R. Wallace and John Gach (New York: Springer, 2008), p. 206.

Anatomy of Melancholy (first published 1621), contains a section on love-melancholy or ‘*ishq*’.⁶²

As Burton’s reference to Avicenna makes clear, Avicenna distinguishes between extreme love, *al-ishq* or *ilisci*,⁶³ as the concept is conveyed in Latin texts, and other types of love.⁶⁴ The word ‘*ishq*’, also pronounced as ‘*eshq*’ or ‘*ashq*’, in Persian means ‘blindness to the failings of the object loved’ or ‘being sick or dying for love’;⁶⁵ it is the supreme and most fervent kind of love and is possibly derived from ‘*ashaqa*’, meaning a creeper which twines about a tree and gradually causes its death.⁶⁶ Burton’s *Anatomy* devotes the third volume to ‘love-melancholy’, calling on Avicenna in support of his classification. Avicenna, according to Burton, ‘calleth this passion [from love] *Ilishi*, and defines it “to be a disease or melancholy vexation, or anguish of mind, in which a man continually meditates of the beauty, gesture,

⁶² In the 1807-1808 Memoranda of Readings, Byron’s note on Burton’s *Anatomy* indicates his close acquaintance with this seventeenth century book: ‘The book, in my opinion, most useful to a man who wishes to acquire the reputation of being well read, with the least trouble, is “Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy,” the most amusing and instructive medley of quotations and classical anecdotes I ever perused. But a superficial reader must take care, or his intricacies will bewilder him. If, however, he has patience to go through his volume, he will be more improved for literary conversation than by the perusal of any twenty other works with which I am acquainted, -- at least in the English language.’ See Byron, *The Life of Lord Byron*, ed. by Moore, p. 48.

⁶³ As Wells observes, ‘Ibn al-Jazzar uses this term in his *Kitab Zad al-musafir*, but, presumably because Avicenna’s *Canon* became known in its own right via the Latin translation of Gerard of Cremona, it was Avicenna’s usage that fixed *illishi* or *ilisci* as a technical term in Latin.’ See Wells, *The Secret Wound*, pp. 292-93.

⁶⁴ Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 35.

⁶⁵ See Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*.

⁶⁶ ‘*Ashiq* is a kind of ivy according to Steingass’s *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*.

manners of his Mistris, and troubles himself about it: desiring”’.⁶⁷ ‘In the melancholy man,’ according to Avicenna, ‘the strength of the imagination of sorrowful things makes them appear to him, so that the thing whose likeness is represented in his soul seems to be really there, and therefore he persists in his continual sorrow.’⁶⁸ Consequently, this incessant sorrow generates a constant presence of the image of an absent object in the mind of the melancholy person. Drawing on Avicenna’s account of *‘ishq*, Roger Boase remarks:

[I]f a man was in love with a woman who refused to bestow some sign of recognition, then his condition was liable to deteriorate into *amor hereos* or *‘ishq*, a species of melancholia and a disease of the imagination, leading ultimately to death.⁶⁹

According to Boase, the term *ishq*, as used by Avicenna, ‘referred to a mental disorder, caused by excessive meditation on the image of a woman who is sexually unattainable’⁷⁰ – this lack of recognition can be either from the woman or as a result of some prohibition from society. As such, the patient’s dis-ease of the imagination, that is, his obsessive meditation on an idealised ‘internal image’⁷¹ of the beloved, leads ultimately to death.

⁶⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What it is, with all the Kinds, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostics, and Several Cures of it*, 3 vols (London: Printed by J. Cuthell; J. Sewell; ...; And Ogilvy and Son, 1800), II, pp. 207-08.

⁶⁸ Avicenna, *De viribus cordis* 1.5, quoted in Harvey, *Inward Wits*, 26., cited in Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 39.

⁶⁹ Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love*, p. 124.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷¹ Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 39.

In short, the melancholy that proceeds from excessive love vexes the mind of the melancholic to the extent that he first creates an internal image of the absent beloved and then idealises her or him. This idealisation occurs as an outcome of the mind's obsession with the image of the absent object, that is, it comes as a result of the melancholy person's imagination as having been directed into the channel of creativity: a process which can be termed sublimation. In order to have a better idea of the necessity of idealisation for the melancholy subject and the consequences it entails, I will now analyse the process of idealisation and sublimation as the outcomes of melancholy love for the hero in Byron's *The Lament of Tasso* (1817) and the Mejnoun of D'Israeli's romance *Mejnoun and Leila* on whose character Byron might very likely have drawn in order to create a melancholy figure such as Tasso. In order to examine the procedure in which the subject develops the two concepts I will resume my discussion of Lacan's theory of sublimation and the notion of the idealised object as 'the Thing' in his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis (1959-60).

Tasso, The Majnoun

The main appeal of the Eastern tales, as I discussed above, lay in the vengeful actions of the heroes. As such this sense of vengeance is replaced by the sense of sublimation that ensues as an outcome of the heroes' melancholy in poems that follow the Eastern tales, such as 'The Dream' (1816) and *The Lament of Tasso* (1817). It should not be forgotten, however, that the melancholic imaginative heroes of these later poems are descendents and developed forms of the Byronic heroines of the Eastern tales who

scarcely had any voice.⁷² The characterisation of the heroes of this period is thus an (inter-) textual movement from violence to silence and from there to the poetic imagination as an effect of sublimation. The character of the Byronic hero is thus exalted from man to human: a man whose desire for war is transformed into the human yearning for unity, perfection, and immortality. The hero of the later poems, for whom love-melancholy creates the momentum for sublimation, thus develops into an imaginative poetic figure.⁷³

Byron had already introduced the idea of the hero, smitten with love, in his 'The Dream', a melancholy solitary hero with 'unutterable thoughts', who seized a pen and traced words, yet 'with his teeth and quivering hands did tear | What he had written' ('The Dream', section 3, ll. 97, 85-6). Although he suggests the notion of creating words as the outcome of the excessive sorrow for the lost unattainable love in this poem, yet his hero never goes any further than becoming a wanderer, pursuing silence, and standing 'calm and quiet' ('The Dream', section 6, l. 156). A year later Byron creates the lamenting figure Tasso in *The Lament of Tasso*, epitomising the character of a poetic melancholy figure, who sublimates, in both Freudian and Lacanian terms, in order to overcome the grief of the unattainable love and to immortalise himself as a poet-lover. This section is an attempt to analyse the notions of sublimation and idealisation in relation with the melancholy mind of the poet-lover with special reference to D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila* on which Byron might very likely have drawn in composing his *The Lament of Tasso*.

⁷² If Byronism is associated with 'Romantic excesses, heroic despair, and melancholy', then it would be just to believe that Byron's Oriental heroines are apotheoses of such traits.

⁷³ See above for a characterisation of male and female figures in the Eastern tales. Also see Gleckner's *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* for a comprehensive study of Byronic vengeful as well as melancholic heroes.

The Lament of Tasso is based on the legend of the sixteenth century poet Torquato Tasso who was imprisoned for his excessive love for Duke Alfonso's sister Leonora d'Este.⁷⁴ In this poem, Byron underscores the central tenet of Tasso's monologue, in order to affirm 'the redemptive power of imaginative vision and, more specifically, of poetic invention itself', as William Portnoy justly points out.⁷⁵ Byron aligns the 'volatile instability of Tasso's ultra-sensitive mental constitution,' with his 'uneasy apprehension of an intimate connection between passionate love, imaginative creativity [...], and a species of dementia'.⁷⁶ In other words, the poem offers Tasso's poetry as a sublimating means for the troubled heart of its melancholy figure.⁷⁷ Sublimation becomes a redeeming source for the melancholy lover to convert his

⁷⁴ 'Not until the publication in 1895 of Angelo Solerti's exhaustive biography of Tasso was the romantic myth (which inspired Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso*, 1790) laid to rest that Tasso was imprisoned for having dared to love the duke's sister, Duchess Leonora d'Este.'

'Torquato Tasso', *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, online edn (2004)

< <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404706304.html> > [accessed 24 November 2010]

⁷⁵ William Evans Portnoy, 'The Imprisoned Poet: Skepticism, Imagination, and Madness in Byron and Shelley', (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978), p. 352.

⁷⁶ Portnoy, 'The Imprisoned Poet: Skepticism, Imagination, and Madness in Byron and Shelley', pp. 342-43. In March 1816 Byron once wrote to his wife: 'You know that the lover, the lunatic, and the poet are "of imagination all compact."' I am afraid you have hitherto seen me only as the two first, but I would fain hope that there is nothing in the last to add to any grievances you may have against the former.' See *BLJ*, V, 51-52, cited in Portnoy, 'The Imprisoned Poet', p. 427.

⁷⁷ In 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917) Freud explained melancholia to be caused by the introjection of the lost object. According to Julia Kristeva, in the essay 'On Transience', 'by linking the themes of mourning, transience, and beauty, Freud suggested that sublimation might be the counterpoise of the loss, to which the libido [...] fastens itself'. See Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 98.

melancholy into a creative process. In other words, the subject sublimates his ‘suffering into his creativity’.⁷⁸

What the poet-lover needs in order to sublimate his melancholy into creativity is the imagination. In 1818 John Wilson, the principle critic of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, observed that, in *The Lament*, Byron ‘shews us the Poet sitting in his Cell, and singing there – a low, melancholy, wailing lament, sometimes, indeed, bordering on utter wretchedness, but oftener partaking of a settled grief, occasionally subdued into mournful resignation, cheered by delightful remembrances, and elevated by the confident hope of an immortal Fame’.⁷⁹ However, there is something more than just ‘delightful remembrances’, memories or fancies, that leads this melancholy poet to embrace immortality, and that is the poet’s imagination. In order to have a better understanding of the differences between fancy and imagination I will look at the notion of imagination from two different aspects: imagination as working on a mental level that produces images out of memory, and imagination as working on a spiritual level, an organic human power that ‘struggles to idealize and to unify’, as Coleridge put it.⁸⁰

Before I expand on the distinction between the abovementioned types of imagination, I will look into the function of the imagination in the state of ‘love-

⁷⁸ Slavoj Žižek, ‘There is No Sexual Relationship’, in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek and Renata Salecl (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000 [1996]), pp. 208-50 (p. 233).

⁷⁹ Anon., untitled article, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 7, 2 (1817), (Edinburgh; London: William Blackwood and John Murray, October 1817-March 1818), 142-144 (p. 143).

⁸⁰ See Coleridge’s definition of imagination in his *Biographia Literaria*.

melancholy'⁸¹ from Avicenna's perspective. In her *The Secret Wound*, drawing on Avicenna's premise of the soul's internal powers, Wells states that the imagination produces phantasm or image. Avicenna posits five internal powers for the soul: the *sensus communis*, *phantasia* or *imaginatio*, the *virtus cogitativa*, the *virtus extimativa*, and the *virtus memorialis*. The *phantasia* or *imaginatio*, the second of the five internal powers, called by Avicenna 'the forming power,' receives images from the *sensus communis* and is often compared to a wax tablet⁸² or a stone on which these images are 'engraved' and thus 'can recall the impression of objects to our minds in the absence of the object itself'.⁸³ Wells refers to this product of the imagination as 'phantasm' or 'image' and concludes that it causes an unceasing return to the image⁸⁴

⁸¹ Love-melancholy or lovesickness or *amor heroes*, as Marion Wells points out, is 'as much a cultural and poetic concept as a truly "medical" one', a 'disease of the imagination'. See Wells, *The Secret Wound*, pp. 3, 4.

⁸² Further research might be done on the relevance of a similar proposition of the mind, by Freud, as a wax tablet or a 'Mystic Writing-Pad', where he compares the celluloid and waxed paper cover with the system perception-consciousness and the wax slab with the unconscious and 'the appearance and disappearance of the writing with the flickering-up and passing away of consciousness in the process of perception'. See Sigmund Freud, 'A Note upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), XIX, pp. 227-232 (pp. 230-31).

⁸³ Avicenna, *On the Soul*, cited in Wells, *The Secret Wound*, pp. 40-1. It is a power of seeing the absent with imagination, or what Shelley in his *Julian and Maddalo* refers to as the Maniac's ability to 'see | The absent with the glance of phantasy'. See Shelley, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Reiman and Powers, ll.445-46.

⁸⁴ 'Avicenna's account of melancholy develops the Aristotelian link between melancholia and a powerful imagination by clarifying the psychophysiological effect of a perseverative focus on an internal image.' See Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 39.

of the love object lodged within the subject's mind.⁸⁵ However, what generates such fixation of the mind on the subject seems to originate from a delirium of the heart or spirit and in fact it is the melancholy heart that causes such multiplication of the image of the beloved in the poet's mind. In other words, the subject's melancholy heart leads his mind to generate an obsessive fixation upon the love object.⁸⁶

Mejnoun's love, as mentioned earlier, was the apotheosis of such obsessive fixation upon a specific love object. This obsession manifests itself in Mejnoun's dreams and in his poetry:

Leila rises in his reverie, imaged in softness, constant in affection, and celestial in her virgin beauty. [...]

He not only saw what was before him, but through the vividness of imagination he saw more; [...]. [...] he meditates on gestures; [...]. Every passion however was transient, but that passion; every object failed to impress his mind, but the image of Leila; to his visionary eye that form was brilliant in the light of the sun, and that form moved among the waving shadows of the moon.⁸⁷

According to D'Israeli, Mejnoun's voice has a 'melodious melancholy', his poetry indicates 'the unsteady heart of the poet, the united delirium of his art, his love', and

⁸⁵ Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 43. Wells quotes Margaret Ferguson's observation on the crucial importance of the phantasm in Torquato Tasso's writing, suggesting that for him the phantasm is 'both the ghostly voice of a dead or absent person'. See Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 141.

⁸⁶ Cf. Well's statement: 'Avicenna's influential emphasis on the notion of a melancholic "solicitude" helps to consolidate the diagnosis of love-melancholy as a form of obsession – a fixation of thought upon a single object.' See Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 37.

⁸⁷ D'Israeli, *Romances* (1803), pp. 54, 57-8. The 1807 version has omitted the last sentence 'Every passion however was transient [...]'.

‘his troubled heart [is] busied with gloomy imaginations’.⁸⁸ Likewise, for Byron, Tasso announces his frenzy as a result of his delirious heart, a spiritual frenzy as opposed to the mental one, a heart so fixated on the object that it multiplies the image of the object constantly:

I was indeed delirious in my heart
To lift my love so lofty as thou art;
But still my frenzy was not of the mind; [...]
[...] let them go, or torture as they will,
My heart can multiply thine image still (*The Lament*, section 2, ll. 50-3, 57-8)

This type of imagination refers to the faculty of the spiritual world rather than the fanciful mind. It is worth recalling Coleridge’s distinction between the two levels of imagination at this point, namely, primary and secondary imagination. He refers to the primary imagination as fancy or ‘a mode of memory’,⁸⁹ which has a mechanical and mundane characteristic. The secondary imagination, which is characterised as organic and spiritual, is that ‘living power [...] of all human perception’ that ‘diffuses’ to ‘re-create’ and ‘struggles to idealize and to unify’.⁹⁰ The imagination can thus be conceived as functioning as an instrument by which the mind becomes obsessed with a certain object to the extent that through idealising that object and exalting it to the

⁸⁸ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 82, 113.

⁸⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works: Including Biographia Literaria*, ed. with and intro. and notes by H.J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 155-482 (p. 313).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

locus of absolute truth, it transforms the object into an ideal image and ultimately merges with it.⁹¹

There are some significant parallels between Coleridge's definition of the imagination and the notion of imagination in Sufism. The spiritual notion of idealising the image of the beloved, which is perceived through the senses is a mystic/Sufi perception. In Sufism the imagination signifies the mental faculty, which contains 'image', form, or idea,⁹² and is termed as '*khiaal*'. *Khiaal*, as William Chittick remarks, 'refers to the mental faculty which conjures up images and ideas in the mind [...] and to the whole "world" or realm from which they derive'.⁹³ However, Chittick argues that the imagination in Sufism receives the images and ideas not [just] from the mind and the memory,⁹⁴ but rather 'from a separate World of Imagination'.⁹⁵ This World of Imagination is at a higher level than the 'rational mind' and the 'individual human faculty of imagination [which] determines the form in which images present themselves to the consciousness'.⁹⁶

According to Chittick, man gains access to this higher world 'through the visions he may receive on the spiritual path'.⁹⁷ As such, these imaginative visions

⁹¹ Cf. Lacan's notion of sublimation as raising an object 'to the dignity of the Thing'. See Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992), p. 112.

⁹² William C. Chittick and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, trans. by William C. Chittick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 248.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁹⁴ Cf. Coleridge's definition of the fancy.

⁹⁵ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, trans. by Chittick, pp. 248-49.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

comprise the poet-lover's poetic inventions, the presence of which in the lives of the melancholy heroes such as Mejnoun and Tasso substantiates the necessity of sublimation in the path of unattainable love. As Tasso of *The Lament* declares, the undefined feeling for the unnameable thing first manifested itself through his dreams and visions of childhood, 'visions which arise without a sleep' (*The Lament*, section 6, l. 165),⁹⁸ with 'objects all inanimate' that he made 'Idols' from and the paradise he made 'out of wild and lonely flowers, | And rocks' (section 6, ll. 152, 153, 153-54).⁹⁹ It is through Leonora that he finds what he sought all his life. By juxtaposing Leonora with the world and the earth, he emphasises her divine place for himself:

I found the thing I sought – and that was thee;
And then I lost my being all to be
Absorb'd in thine – the world was past away
Thou didst annihilate the earth to me! (*The Lament*, section 6, ll. 170-72)

The subject replaces all earthly, including the earthly Other with a mental – ideal(ised) – image (phantasm) of the Other as the ultimate One. Likewise, and as discussed in earlier chapters, in Sufi love the ultimate Good and Beautiful emerges as a phantasmic image of an earthly object created by the subject. As such, the 'fixation'

⁹⁸ Upon reading Byron's *The Lament*, Shelley was significantly affected by these lines in which Byron 'describe[s] the youthful feelings of Tasso'. In his composition of *Julian and Maddalo*, Shelley too alludes to this section in the statement that 'when a boy,' he devoted his nature to 'love', and that he was known as 'the love-devoted youth'. See Carlos Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of Vision* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 129.

⁹⁹ 'It is the desire [of the subject] to fill the emptiness and void at the core of subjectivity and the symbolic that creates the Thing'. See Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 85.

of the subject's mind 'upon a single object',¹⁰⁰ which as mentioned above, came in the form of obsession as a result of the subject's love-melancholy, runs counter to 'the Platonic ideal of [...] transcendence'.¹⁰¹ 'Rather than prompting the soul's flight toward the beautiful as an emanation of the Good,' as Wells observes ingeniously, 'the phantasm replaces the Good and itself becomes the telos of the lover's search'.¹⁰² The ideal image of the love object that is created by the subject through his/her excessive love, therefore, plays the role of the ultimate One for the subject.

Tasso describes the years of tumultuous pain of his heart before he found 'the thing' he sought, due to the 'Want' of the 'One'. The deeper this 'Want' or void the more excruciating the quest for it becomes and although he comes across the One later in his life, yet he finds it unattainable. The soft pain of the years before he found 'the thing' transforms into the melancholy which is generated due to the subject's realisation of the unattainability of the thing.¹⁰³ Tasso declares:

[...] with my years my soul began to pant
 With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain;
 And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,
 But undefined and wandering, till the day
 I found the thing I sought – and that was thee; (*The Lament*, section 6, ll. 166-70)

¹⁰⁰ Wells, *The Secret Wound*, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ The thing is found at some point in the subject's life. Nevertheless, it remains unattainable due to the reasons I have mentioned in the previous chapters so far. The unattainability of the beloved is either due to some external and social prohibitions, or the self-sufficient beloved has no desire for the lover.

Here, it is worth recalling Lacan's general formula of sublimation, in his Seminar VII (1959-1960), as a mode that 'raises an object [...] to the dignity of the Thing',¹⁰⁴ and as what changes the 'position' of the object in the structure of fantasy,¹⁰⁵ rather than the object itself. In other words, the Other, or the idealised object, in and by itself, is not the true object of desire. The mystic subject very well understands this when he attempts to idealise/elevate the Other as object into the locus of the One in order to enable himself to have access to the lost primordial and ideal state. This anticipates the Lacanian account of sublimation as: 'what changes is not the object but its position in the structure of fantasy'.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it is not the Other as object that the subject changes in the process of sublimation, but rather it is the position of the Other in the subject's imagination.

The unattainability of the Other in the process of sublimation is reminiscent of courtly love. In his article '*The Lament of Tasso* and Poetic Genius', Gordon Spence argues that in *The Lament*, 'Byron has drawn on the tradition of courtly love', because Tasso's love for Leonora is forbidden as she is his social superior;¹⁰⁷ as the poet acknowledges: 'I knew thy state, my station, and I knew | A princess was no love-mate for a bard' (section 5, ll. 122-23). However, it is not Leonora's social status that Tasso attributes glory to, but rather her love. The idea of associating courtly love with Tasso's love for Leonora finds its significance when, as Spence points out, Tasso, as a courtly lover, 'worship[s] his beloved to an idolatrous extent'.¹⁰⁸ Associating the

¹⁰⁴ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. by Miller, p. 112.

¹⁰⁵ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006 [1996]), p. 200.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Gordon Spence, 'The Lament of Tasso and Poetic Genius', *Byron Journal*, 18 (1990), 28-36 (p. 28).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

beloved with a holy spot, Tasso exalts her to the place of a god: ‘Thou wert to me a crystal-girded shrine, | Worshipped at holy distance’ (section 5, ll. 129-30), after which Tasso exalts her earthly beauty to the state of the One:

Not for thou wert a Princess, but that Love
Had robed thee with a glory, and arrayed
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismayed –
Oh! not dismayed – but awed, like One above! (*The Lament*, section 5, ll. 132-35)

The Thing that is sought by the poet is thus exalted in the style of courtly love and mystical intuition. However, Lacan refers to this type of love as ‘a poetic exercise,’ of ‘idealizing themes,’ with no ‘concrete equivalent’ in reality and therefore dismisses it as doomed to failure in practice and in reality.¹⁰⁹

Lacan is consistently sceptical of romantic love, regarding it as having a narcissistic nature. According to Lacan ‘at the level of love, there is a reciprocity of *loving and being loved*’.¹¹⁰ By contrasting love with desire, Lacan presents a negative picture of love, where the ego makes an effort to restore and re-establish its own image through identifying with the ideal image of the Other. In opposition to this narcissistic and egotistic version of love, Lacan introduces the notion of desire as moving beyond the identifications of the ego and ‘as an effort for recognition of the true side of “self”’.¹¹¹ In her doctoral thesis ‘Narratives of Eros and Desire in

¹⁰⁹ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, pp. 148-49.

¹¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: H. Karnac, 2004 [1973]), p. 200.

¹¹¹ Shideh Ahmadzadeh Heravi, ‘Narratives of Eros and Desire in Shakespeare’s Poetry’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1999), p. 82.

Shakespeare's Poetry', Shideh Heravi astutely refers to 'divine love', insofar as it is 'an effort towards the purification of "self" and dismissal of alienations of the ego', as comparable to Lacan's notion of desire, and as different from his definition of love.¹¹² Tasso's love for Leonora corresponds to such divine love, or mystic love, in that it leaves the better part of the subject's existence 'unquenched', yet it grows 'without ambition' and therefore it leads the subject toward the purification of self (*The Lament*, section 5, ll. 112, 121). Tasso's mystic love explicitly runs counter to the Lacanian account of love that reveals the egotistic ambition of the subject to identify with the Other in order to fill the 'unquenched' part of its self, otherwise known as the void. For example, Tasso is aware that Leonora is not reciprocating his love, yet, he still loves. Tasso's love, therefore, even surpasses the type of love that was experienced by Mejnoun, as the latter already had the privilege of the Other's desire, whereas Tasso seems to be deprived of this and yet persists in loving: 'Thy brother hates – but I can not detest; | Thou pitiest not – but I can not forsake.' (*The Lament*, section 4, ll. 109-10). Therefore, through idealisation of the object and hence retaining the desire for the ideal Other for ever, the subject reverses the unfortunate negative picture of love, as narcissistic,¹¹³ into a constituting power. In other words, the subject converts a narcissistic wish to an ego/self-less desire. Therefore, instead of elevating the ego, the subject restructures the loss/lack through elevating the Other – Lacan's definition for sublimation – and losing the ego. It is only when the ego wishes to elevate *itself*, and not the Other, and to identify itself with an ideal image of the ego

¹¹² Ibid., p. 85.

¹¹³ As Ragland-Sullivan puts it, 'Love is a consolation, on the side of everyday narcissism'. See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: Or What Is Love?', *South-Atlantic Quarterly*, 4, 88 (Fall 1989), 725-55 (p. 747).

that Lacan's definition of love is plausible. Once the Other is elevated to the place of the Thing the ego announces its own loss, or renounces its self. Love as a means of renouncing the ego and loss of self, for the Sufi-Romantic subject, leads to *jouissance* or *fanaa*. As such, the experience of *fanaa* is what excessive love for an idealised object in Sufism offers. The Sufi subject's excessive love finds its parallel in Lacan's idea of that desiring ego that in the very act of desiring and exposing its lack liberates itself through loss of self, touching the edge of the beyond.¹¹⁴

The image of the beloved, as created in the subject's mind and as an outcome of the subject's desire over the love object, leads to idealisation of the beloved. This, as discussed earlier, finds its exemplar in *Mejnoun and Leila* as much as it does in Byron's *The Lament*. The minds of both heroes acquire the capacity to transmute the physical absence of the object to mental presence of the image and are thus able to divinise/idealise that image. Ultimately, the significance of the idealisation of the earthly beloved by the Sufi subject is that it provides the ground for him for the next stage in the path of love: loss of self. In other words, the poet creates a goddess, an idealised image of an earthly object, for himself and ultimately dissolves into it.¹¹⁵ Tasso loses his being as well as all that is external and worldly in a Sufi manner,¹¹⁶ immediately after he announces that 'the thing' he sought and found was Leonora:

And then I lost my being, all to be

¹¹⁴ See Lacan's account of supplementary *jouissance* in Chapter four.

¹¹⁵ As Evans observes, Lacan follows Freud in linking sublimation with both creativity and the death drive (S4, 431), for 'the sublime object, through being elevated to the dignity of the Thing, exerts a power of fascination which leads ultimately to death'. See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 201.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Jones's 'Persian Song' where the persona renounces all that is worldly for the beloved.

Absorbed in thine – the world was past away; --

Thou didst annihilate the earth to me! (*The Lament*, section 6, ll. 170-72)

This loss of being occurs instantly after the announcement of the beloved as standing in for the Thing. In standing in for the Thing, the woman becomes *The woman*¹¹⁷ into whom Tasso is absorbed and announces the loss of his being.

There is a subject-object fusion as the subject/lover dissolves into the object/beloved and becomes him/her, to the extent that in the legend of *Leili and Majnoun*, the latter proclaims: 'I am Leili'.¹¹⁸ Therefore, one can conclude that the subject becomes other to his own self. In the legend of *Leili and Majnoun*, although Majnoun's love for Leili was prohibited, in the end, Majnoun and Leili finally find the opportunity to fulfil their long-desired love. However, at this very point, Majnoun willingly evades any sort of earthly fulfilment with Leili as, finding himself in the state of *fanaa* for Leili as the ultimate beloved, he achieves the point of self-loss, becoming one with the Other. Similarly, Tasso's absorption in Leonora reaches its peak when he in the end announces her name along with his as deserving to share the same 'laurel which o'ershades [his] grave' (section 9, l. 243):

No power in death can tear our names apart,

As none in life could rend thee from my heart.

Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate

To be entwined for ever – [...] (*The Lament*, section 9, ll. 244-47)

¹¹⁷ See Chapters one and four.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter three. In D'Israeli's *Mejnoun and Leila*, Mejnoun announces: 'I was Kais', that is, he renounces his own self and becomes other to himself. See D'Israeli, *Romances* (1807), p. 106.

It is at this point that he declares his accomplishment of the sense of completion as an immortal poet and a satisfied lover whose fate is ‘entwined for ever’ with the fate of his beloved who shall share the glory of his fame and have ‘[o]ne half the laurel which o’ershades [his] grave’. Tasso desires his ‘present cell’ to be a temple in the future, where a ‘poet’s wreath shall be [its] only crown’ (*The Lament*, section 9, l. 220, 225). He reveals his desire for immortality some lines earlier when he refuses his death to be marked by madness, yearning to die an immortal death:

The much I have recounted, [...]
[...] ’tis that I would not die
And sanction with self-slaughter the dull lie
Which snared me here, and with the brand of shame
Stamp madness deep into my memory,
And woo compassion to a blighted name,
Sealing the sentence which my foes proclaim.
No – it shall be immortal! – and I make
A future temple of my present cell,
Which nations yet shall visit for my sake. (*The Lament*, section 9, ll. 212-21)

Perhaps Tasso is dreaming to have a fate similar to Mejnoun’s after his death, when he wishes ‘This – this shall be a consecrated spot!’ (*The Lament*, section 9, l. 240). D’Israeli’s description of Mejnoun’s tomb as a ‘consecrated spot’, in the last two paragraphs of his romance, reads:

At the foot of the rock, which the MEJNOUN, haunted, in his delirium, they raise a tomb, to the memory of the lovers. [...]

For many successive years, the damsels of the two tribes, in sympathising groups, annually assembled at the cemetery, and planted in marble vases, around the tomb, aromatic flowers and herbs. One night, in every year, each bearing a taper, they wailed till the morning, the fate of the lovers, [...]. The caravans of Syria and Egypt, which traverse the desert in their way to Mecca, once stopped near the consecrated spot; the tender pilgrim, once, leant over their tomb, and read and wept. [...] The monument has left no vestige, and the trees, no more, wave their melancholy boughs; nothing remains, but THE HISTORY OF THE LOVERS.¹¹⁹

Perhaps it is this same everlasting ‘history of the lovers’ that Tasso dreams of when he declares that ‘it shall be our fate | To be entwined for ever’ (*The Lament*, section 9, ll. 244-45). The immortality that Tasso longs for preserves him from an entire sense of despair and, unlike Mejnoun and the *Alastor* Poet, he does not die of love. Tasso’s dissolution in the Other corresponds to the Sufi *fanaa* and *baqaa* where the subject loses self and is absorbed in the Other and is entwined with the ideal Other permanently. This Byronic hero is thus a poetic figure whose excessive love for the unattainable beloved teaches him the way to immortality through sublimation.

This chapter examined the traces of Persian Sufi literature in Byron’s work from 1813 to 1817. I analysed Byron’s work in light of the famous Persian legend of *Leili and Majnoun* and introduced D’Israeli’s adaptation of this story as the main source of influence on Byron’s work. The poet figure in Persian Sufi literature is usually smitten by the unattainable love for an earthly beloved. I drew on the image of the nightingale’s melancholy love for the rose as symbolising the poet’s love for his beloved. The poet-lover’s desire to become one with the beloved Other leads to his loss of self. Majnoun’s love for Leili is an exemplar of such an excessive melancholy

¹¹⁹ D’Israeli, *Romances* (1807), pp. 167-68.

love. Yet, the poet would need an ideal beloved in order to be able to experience the state of loss of self. I presented melancholy as a driving force for the poet to idealise the beloved and exalt her to the locus of the divine. Such idealisation is associated with Lacan's formulation of sublimation. I also argued that the poet's melancholy drove him to employ his imagination and therefore to sublimate his suffering into art. Byron's lamenting figure Tasso in *The Lament of Tasso*, epitomises the character of a poetic melancholy figure, who sublimates in order to overcome the grief of the unattainable love and to immortalise himself as a poet/lover.

I also discussed the nature of love and desire from both Lacanian and Sufist perspectives and with relation to Tasso and Mejnoun's love for their beloveds. I drew the conclusion that the Sufi love corresponds to the Lacanian perception of desire and reverses the narcissistic picture of love as presented by Lacan. Sufi love and Lacanian desire both transcend the narcissistic wishes of the ego to identify with the ideal image of the Other. Instead the subject moves toward a loss of self/ego in the face of the ideal Other and thereby becomes one with her. Consequently, the subject, instead of aggrandising its own ego, elevates the Other to the place of the Thing and provides the ground for himself to renounce his ego and thus experiences supplementary *jouissance* or *fanaa*. In standing in for the Thing, the woman becomes *The* woman into whom the subject is absorbed and annihilated. The lover ultimately dissolves into the beloved and becomes one with her, as we saw in *The Lament*. It is after Tasso announces that he is absorbed in Leonora's being that he celebrates oneness with her and it is through this oneness with the ideal beloved that he achieves immortality as a poet and lover.

Conclusion

In this thesis I explored the relationship between the concepts of self and Other in English Romantic-period poetry and Persian Sufi literature. The thesis pursued two aims: to trace the influence of Persian thought on the representation of the self in English Romantic poetry; to conduct a comparative analysis of Sufi and Romantic conceptions of the self and the Other using ideas and methodologies drawn from Lacanian psychoanalysis. I considered mainly the notions of idealisation and self-loss in the poetry of Shelley and Byron as well as the Persian Sufi literature from which they drew their inspiration and influences. In representing self in Romanticism and Sufism, I invoked the Lacanian notions of supplementary *jouissance* and exaltation of the Other as absolute Truth and I came to the conclusion that the Sufi-Romantic subject could become one with the ideal Other through a process of ecstatic annihilation or dissolution into the Other. The Sufi-Romantic subject could thus achieve perfection and immortality through the union with the ideal Other.

In the first chapter, I examined the interactions of self and other as incorporated within a Sufist-Lacanian framework with respect to the degree of the compatibility of as well as any areas of overlap between the two schools of thought in the analysis of the relation between self and other. The point of difference between the two schools is highlighted through the idea that the Sufi subject's idealisation of the Other is prompted by a desire to submit to the wholeness of the Other and not out of a wish for mastery/possession over the Other. The wish to submit to the Other as

whole gives the subject a sense of selflessness and provides the grounds for him to lose self into and become one with the idealised Other in the path of his quest for perfection. Thus the Sufi subject endeavours to untwist the links of the chain to which his ego/self is bound.

The research on the Sufi implications of self within the context of Persian literature and its possible influences on the Romantic self prompted me to study two main Oriental works by William Jones and Isaac D'Israeli, namely, 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' and the romance of *Mejnoun and Leila* in the interaction with the original works they were adapted from in Chapters two and three. The former was adapted from an ode (ghazal) by the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafez and the latter from a long narrative poem in couplet (*masnavi*), entitled *Leili and Majnoun*, by the twelfth-century Persian poet Nezami. Chapters two and three provided the grounds for the next two chapters to enable me to examine the influence of Persian literature on the works of Shelley and Byron with special reference to the abovementioned works along with other Oriental adaptations and translations of the age.

The second chapter was an attempt to introduce the life and work of William Jones in its historical literary context and illustrate the extent to which Jones drew on Hafez's ghazal in producing the 'Song'. The chapter then offered an analysis of the conception of the Sufi self in its relation with the beloved Other as it was perceived by the two poets. Chapter two demonstrated how the two poets celebrated the prospect of gaining the desire of the beloved for themselves. Although in the end the fulfilment of the poets' desire was constantly deferred, yet paradoxically they found the prospect of a fulfilment through their art/poetry.

In the third chapter I provided the reader with a comparative analysis of D'Israeli's romance *Mejnoun and Leila* with its original source Nezami's *Leili and*

Majnoun. I raised the idea of the love of Leili and Majnoun as being primarily an earthly love, yet it was transcended into a divine type of love through suffering and hence loss of self in the Other. I initiated the notion of death in Sufi love which is either factual and out of grief or figurative and the point of commencement of a spiritual level. The love of Majnoun for Leili, as it was illustrated in this chapter, was reintroduced in the following chapters as a model for the Sufi-Romantic love.

Divided into two parts, Chapter four first delineated a range of Persian motifs and imageries that were drawn on by Shelley in his later poems. It then considered the Sufi-Neoplatonic notion of longing for a return to the origin. The account of the separation of the lover from its origin is epitomised in the allegorical poem ‘The Song of the Reed’ by Maulavi, translated by William Jones. The image of the reed instrument as an allegory of man’s solemn soul torn from its origin finds its parallel in Shelley’s *Alastor* in the shape of a lyre, a harp, and a lute. Shelley is very likely to have read William Jones’s translation of ‘The Song of the Reed’, the opening of Maulavi’s *Masnavi*, which epitomises this quality of the soul as yearning to return to its origin. Telling the story of the melancholy complaint of a reed that has been torn from its reed bed, this poem represents man’s longing to regain and unite with the lost Truth of his being, its long lost origin. The reed is therefore an allegory of man’s soul and its plaintive sound is a cry of the pain and moan of the man, like a reed, torn from its origin. I then drew on the Lacanian premise that views the idealised face of the Other ‘based on feminine *jouissance*’.¹ I argued that the face of the Other becomes a locus through which the subject can attain a type of mystical *jouissance*, described by

¹ Lacan, ‘God and the *Jouissance* of The Woman’, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. by J. Rose, (London: Macmillan Press, 1992 [1982]), pp. 137-48 (p. 147).

Lacan as supplementary or feminine *jouissance*. Shelley generates the experience of such mystical *jouissance* in the vision of the *Alastor* Poet as embodying a secondary unity which follows and complements the primary lost state of unity. It is this same mystical *jouissance* that creates the impulse to return to and regain the lost unity for the remainder of the Poet's life. Whether or not we believe that there is a lost blissful origin from which we are torn apart, whether it is but an illusion or a dream, yet Shelley's *Alastor* very cunningly recreates such a lost state of unity in the Poet's vision. He confronts us with the necessity of the idea of man's urge to return to that lost origin.

In Chapter five I primarily traced the Persian imageries and motifs in Byron's Eastern tales, illustrating the essential imageries of the gul and the bulbul symbolising the melancholy love of the Sufi-Romantic lover for the beloved. I then depicted poetry as a sublimating point for the troubled heart of the melancholy lover. Sublimation became a redeeming source that converted melancholy into a creative process. In the path to proceed to this type of sublimation the poet/lover underwent two significant states, namely, imagination and idealisation. I argued that the Freudian and the Lacanian sublimation would converge in the light of the fact that the poet's awareness of the unattainability of the beloved object would prompt him to sublimate (idealise) her to the locus of the ideal Thing. The beloved was thus converted in the lover's mind from a concrete object of desire to the abstract ideal non-object, an idea, a figment of imagination. As a redirection of the drive to a non-object or Thing sublimation became a steppingstone for the subject to experience the process of mystic *jouissance* or *fanaa*, a move toward becoming one with the ideal Other.

In the course of my analysis, therefore, I examined the extent to which the Romantic subject seeks dissolution in the ideal(ised) Other: first, in the literary

historical context of the Sufi tradition; second, in the framework of the theoretical formulations of Lacanian psychoanalysis. I juxtaposed the two apparent notions of man's reason to feel the urge to return to a state of a lost primal unity in both Sufism and Lacanianism. I argued that in Sufism man's primal experience of an undifferentiated unity of being and his estrangement from that state of unity generated 'an inner division' in his selfhood. It is due to this state of alienation the soul longs to return to its origin.² In his analysis, Lacan maintains that a sense of illusory unity occurs just after the child identifies with its own whole image in the mirror. Nonetheless, he rejects the existence of any primary unity or whole self prior to the mirror stage. Lacan rather speaks of a 'primary loss' or an 'ontological gap' at the very core of our subjectivity which is an outcome of the child's mis-recognition in the mirror stage. However, the two supposedly different notions of primal loss generate the same sense of alienation and an urge for the subject to return to it, in the hope for returning to a primal state of unity.

I also examined the Lacanian formula of supplementary *jouissance* in relation with the formation of the mystic subject and how it caused him to experience a different form of subjectivity: a real not-all-ness as opposed to the false wholeness of the symbolic subject who goes through the phallic *jouissance*. I suggested that the Other should not be a lacking Other, because the subject needs an ideal Other, a point of certainty through which he is able to experience such a mystic *jouissance*. Therefore, drawing on Lacan's model of sublimation, I emphasised the necessity of the subject's idealisation of the Other. Lacan refers to this new idealised Other as the Thing. As such the Thing satisfies the subject's requirement for dealing with an

² Suzanne Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 125.

absolute Other through whom he can experience the supplementary *jouissance* or *fanaa*. This transient state generates the prospect of a momentary wholeness for the subject that experiences it. The subject experiences the supplementary *jouissance* and renounces his symbolic all-ness in favour of becoming one with the ideal Other.

In Sufism, the concept of self-loss entails two implications for the subject in the path toward union with the Other: *fanaa* and *baqaa*. The former is a death to self, that is, the Sufi loses self in a state of ecstasy and assumes the qualities of the beloved. The self in this state is liberated from his egotistical being. The stage of *fanaa* thus helps the self become a mirror for the Other. Thus, the subject is dissolved and thereby liberated from his egotistical being so that he may be subsumed by the Other's being. Therefore, the subject and the Other become one. After returning to the external world of consciousness, the Sufi enters a new phase of being. The state in which he enters is termed *baqaa* or permanence, as the qualities of the ultimate Other are maintained in the subject's new being. Therefore the Sufi's heart, which is a mirror to the qualities of the Other, is said to be burnished of all rust to reflect the qualities of the Other. Thus, if for Lacan and Hegel the subject uses the Other as a point of reflection and a mirror to see himself in, for the Sufi this process is reversed; that is, the subject becomes the mirror to reflect the qualities of the Other. It is at this point that the Sufi subject declares his oneness with the Other, stating 'I am Him/Her'.

The study of such poems as *Alastor* and *The Lament of Tasso* within a Sufi psychoanalytic context showed that the Romantic subject experiences *fanaa* in his vision or poetic imagination. Either the Sufi Romantic subject dies in despair, after a long solitary journey in search of the lost state of unity, as did the *Alastor* Poet, or, dying to self symbolically, he celebrates his immortality and unity with that beloved idealised Other in his poetry, as is the case with Byron's Tasso. In Chapter four I

concluded that Shelley's *Alastor* Poet experienced both types of deaths. His vision first involved the Sufi *fanaa* and a fulfilment to the desire of a return to the state of unity. He also experienced the actual death – similar to the lovers' death in Uzri love – as an outcome of the excess of grief afflicted on him by the pain of lost love.

I also discussed the pain of love as a form of melancholy which might function as a driving force for the poet to idealise the beloved and exalt her to the locus of the divine. I argued that the poet's melancholy drove him to employ his imagination and therefore to sublimate his suffering into art. I analysed these two functions of the melancholy mind, that is, idealisation and creation, in light of the Lacanian and Freudian formulations of sublimation. Byron's lamenting figure Tasso in *The Lament of Tasso*, epitomises the character of a poetic melancholy figure, who sublimates in order to overcome the grief of the unattainable love and to immortalise himself as a poet/lover. The Sufi-Romantic subject achieves real immortality as a poet and lover only when he announces his absorption in and oneness with the idealised Other.

Appendix

This appendix provides the reader with William Jones's 'A Persian Song of Hafiz' along with a translation I have made of Hafez's Turk-e Shirazi ghazal, as a point of reference throughout Chapter two. The original style and measurement have not been retained in this translation, as my main focus has been to remain loyal to the meaning of the ghazal:

A Persian Song of Hafiz

Sweet maid if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad,
Whate'er the frowning zealots say:
Tell them their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay.

The Ghazal

If that Turk of Shiraz
Would gain my heart,
I would give up Samarqand and Bokhara
For her [his] Hindu beauty spot.

Bring O cupbearer the remaining of the wine
For such banks of Roknabad's stream
Or the rose garden of Mosalla
In Eden's bower will not be found.

O! when these fair, perfidious maids,
Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,
Their dear destructive charms display,
Each glance my tender breast invades,
And robs my wounded soul of rest,
As Tartars seize their destin'd prey.

In vain with love our bosoms glow:
Can all our tears, can all our sighs,
New lustre to those charms impart?
Can cheeks, where living roses blow,
Where nature spreads her richest dyes,
Require the borrow'd gloss of art?

Speak not of fate: – ah! change the theme,
And talk of odours, talk of wine,
Talk of the flowers that round us bloom:
'Tis all a cloud, 'tis all a dream;
To love and joy thy thoughts confine,
Nor hope to pierce the sacred gloom.

Beauty has such resistless power,
That even the chaste Egyptian dame
Sigh'd for the blooming Hebrew boy;
For her how fatal was the hour,

Ah! These wanton sweet beauties
So plundered patience from my heart
As did the Turks
The festal board.

Our imperfect love
The beauty of the *yaar* requires not.
What need has a beauteous face
Of the 'borrowed gloss of art'?

Talk of minstrels, of wine
And seek less the secret of time,
For no one has solved, nor ever shall,
By reason this enigma.

I knew from the ever-increasing beauty
That Joseph had
That love would bring Zuleikha forth
From the veil of chastity.

When to the banks of Nilus came

A youth so lovely and so coy!

But ah! sweet maid, my counsel hear
(Youth should attend, when those advise
Whom long experience renders sage):
While musick charms the ravish'd ear;
While sparkling cups delight our eyes,
Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.

What cruel answer have I heard!
And yet, by heaven, I love thee still:
Can aught be cruel from thy lip?
Yet say, how fell that bitter word
From lips which streams of sweetness fill,
Which nought but drops of honey sip?

Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
Whose accents flow with artless ease,
Like orient pearls at random strung:
Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say;
But O! far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung.²

But Love, heed this counsel!
Far dearer to the youth
Than dear life itself
Is the wise sage's advice.

If you curse me or malign me,
I will still pray for you,
For bitter word is what befits
Sweet ruby-coloured lips.

You wrote the ghazal, you pierced the pearl
Come, sing it sweetly, O, Hafez
For Heaven shall loose over thy verse
The Pleiades' pearls.¹

¹ I have consulted the original ghazal from Hafez, *Divan-e Hafez*, ed. by Bahaa'ed-din Khorramshahi (Tehran: Dustaan, 1384/2006), pp. 2-3.

² Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, IV, pp. 449-52.

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